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Macbeth, John.

A dissertation on the
Sabbath

Number





A
DISSERTATION
ON
THE SABBATH;

IN WHICH

THE NATURE OF THE INSTITUTION,
AND THE OBLIGATIONS TO ITS OBSERVANCE,
ARE STATED AND ILLUSTRATED.

BY THE
REV. JOHN ✓ MACBETH, A. M.

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TO  
JOHN SMITH WRIGHT, Esq.  
OF  
BULLCOTE - LODGE.

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SIR,

A short publication of mine having fallen into your hands, you were pleased to express a kindness for the Author; and since that time, he has enjoyed the favour of your friendship.

When, with some reluctance, you allowed me to prefix your name to the following Work, it was upon the express condition, that I should use this liberty with great delicacy. I will not give you pain, by attempting to display that humble and fervent piety, by which you are distinguished, and of which you have given many substantial proofs to the world.

If my humble labours shall be blessed of Heaven to promote the cause of goodness, I know you will rejoice; and the highest wish of the Author will be gratified.

That you may be long spared to be a blessing to your Family, and to all with whom you are connected, is the earnest desire of,

SIR,

Your obliged humble Servant,

JOHN MACBETH.

*25th December, 1822.*



## P R E F A C E.

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THE following Dissertation on the Sabbath, in which, the nature of the institution—the history of its origin—the obligations to its observance—and the advantages attending its sanctification, are examined and detailed—is offered to the public with much deference. The Author lays no claim to originality, in any of the arguments he has employed. He is perfectly aware, that we live at too late a period of the world, to obtain so rare a merit, on a question that has been so often, and so fully discussed. The subject, however, is one, respecting which, mankind are very much divided in opinion; and he is not without hope, that the present work may prove useful, by calling the attention of the reader to a view of it, which has not been very generally contemplated. He is sensible, that there is much omitted which might, in the opinion of others, have been introduced;

and the discussion of some controverted points may not be so full as a polemical writer would exhibit, or expect. But it has been the Author's study, to reject all extraneous matter—to avoid all unnecessary controversy—and to state and illustrate arguments, which might contribute to advance the knowledge and piety of the reader, rather than display his own acuteness or dexterity.

The present is an age of great profession of religion; and, at the same time, of great profaneness; and it would be particularly gratifying, if the following Treatise should have the slightest effect in checking the spread of the one, and giving excitement and encouragement to the other. Our intercourse with the nations of the Continent, has not contributed to increase our attachment to the ordinances and the laws of the Gospel; and it is much to be feared, that, where a regard to these is neglected, the principles and duties of morality will be but partially cherished and obeyed. The profanation of the Lord's Day has long been loudly complained of, as a growing evil among us; and if it be true, that, on its public observance, our character as a religious people mainly depends, that character must be in imminent jeopardy, from the open and increasing violation of the sanctity

of this sacred institution. It becomes the duty, then, of all ranks in the country, to oppose the authority of their instructions, and the influence of their example, to an evil which threatens us with national demoralization and depravity; and it would be well, if the higher and privileged orders of the state, would open their eyes to the consequences of public profligacy, before it reaches a crisis, at which it may defy their wisdom and power to apply a remedy or restraint.

The desecration of the Sabbath, has, like all other acts of religious apostacy, “arisen from small beginnings; and, by an unperceived, because a gradual growth, it has, at last, gained a most alarming height.” The violation of the fourth commandment, has greatly accelerated and aggravated the violation of the others; because, when the fear and worship of God are publicly and habitually cast off, the private restraints of conscience are easily relaxed,—the feelings of personal apprehension are soon subdued,—and the censure and reprobation of the world gradually disregarded and despised. The truth of religion, however, is immutable; and if the penalties which are denounced against its despisers, are not uniformly inflicted, they are, most certainly,

uniformly incurred. The cup of the wrath of one nation, may be sooner filled than that of another; but, in no instance, can the neglect or contempt of the sacred ordinances of religion escape unpunished. The laws which were promulgated from Mount Sinai, are still binding upon all the nations and kingdoms of the earth; and wherever the more spiritual and comprehensive enactments of the Gospel have been published, there do the justice and the mercy of God, with peculiar sanctions, enforce their obedience.

He, therefore, is the truest friend to his country, who is the most ardent promoter of its moral interests, and he deserves to be most richly emblazoned in the annals of its reputation, who stands in the breach of its public and private immoralities, and warns the guardians of its political rights, and the patrons of its sacred institutions, of the danger they will incur to themselves, and the evil they will entail on posterity, if they relax the restraints, or diminish the obligations of religion on the heart and the life of man. He deserves the highest reward, who holds up to his countrymen, the true portrait of their virtues and their vices; and who ceases not to proclaim to them, that righteousness alone can

exalt a nation, while sin is the disgrace and the ruin of every people. "Wherefore," thus saith the Lord, "be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee—lest I make thee desolate—a land not inhabited."\* Lo, this is what has been sought out of old, and found; hear it, and know it for thy good—"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."†

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\* Jer. vi. 8.

† Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.



# CONTENTS.



|                                                                                                                                                                                           | <i>Page</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| INTRODUCTION,.....                                                                                                                                                                        | 13          |
| SECTION II.                                                                                                                                                                               |             |
| Origin and Antiquity of the Institution of the Sabbath, .....                                                                                                                             | 16          |
| SECTION III.                                                                                                                                                                              |             |
| The Observance of the Sabbath unconnected with the Performance of Ceremonial Rites, .....                                                                                                 | 27          |
| SECTION IV.                                                                                                                                                                               |             |
| Examination of the grounds on which the distinction between moral and positive duties is founded; so far as that distinction affects the moral obligation of observing the Sabbath, ..... | 37          |
| SECTION V.                                                                                                                                                                                |             |
| Moral obligation of the Sabbath, proved from the primary end of its institution, ..                                                                                                       | 57          |
| SECTION VI.                                                                                                                                                                               |             |
| Review of the objections urged against the Antiquity and moral obligation of the Sabbath, .....                                                                                           | 71          |
| SECTION VII.                                                                                                                                                                              |             |
| The Writings of the Old Testament, furnish the clearest and most satisfactory proof, that the observance of the Sabbath had a moral, and not a ceremonial obligation,.....                | 92          |

## SECTION VIII.

|                                                                         | <i>Page</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Moral obligation of the Sabbath, under the Christian Dispensation,..... | 115         |

## SECTION IX.

|                                                                                         |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Reason of the change of the Sabbath from the Seventh to the First Day of the Week,..... | 129 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

## SECTION X.

|                                                        |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Manner in which the Sabbath is to be Sanctified, ..... | 165 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|

## SECTION XI.

|                                                                                             |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Examination of some of the Causes and Consequences of the Profanation of the Sabbath, ..... | 200 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

## SECTION XII.

|                                                                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Advantages which the Sanctification of the Sabbath is calculated to produce,..... | 227 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| NOTES,..... | 265 |
|-------------|-----|



## DISSERTATION, &amp;c.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE institution of the Sabbath, whether contemplated in a moral or political point of view, cannot fail to have furnished to every true Christian, copious matter of varied and pleasing reflection. Its wisdom and utility, in reference merely to the temporal concerns of man, claim for it our highest regard and admiration: for, if we consider that human nature is unable to endure the hardship of incessant or long-continued exertion, and that, by the present constitution of society, the largest portion of our race must continue to be “hewers of wood, and drawers of water,”—in the view only of affording relief to our toilsome condition, the appointment of one day of rest in seven, must appear peculiarly seasonable and salutary. If we do not regard the bulk of mankind as mere drudges, whose destiny it is, to toil in hopeless

poverty, while the higher classes draw from their labours, the means of ease and luxury—if we admit, that all men have a right to personal enjoyment, and have certain duties to perform, as rational and accountable beings—it must be allowed, that it is of the highest importance to their intellectual improvement and happiness, that there should be regular and fixed intervals of rest, devoted to the cultivation of moral and religious truth. This is one end of the institution of the Sabbath; and thus does it prove an effectual means of preventing men from becoming forgetful of their religious and moral duties, and, consequently, from relapsing into a deplorable state of brutal ignorance and barbarity.

But this, comparatively speaking, is a very confined and inferior end, of this, the most ancient and venerable institution known to human society. As the means of uniting us in fellowship with God, and of recalling to our minds his creating power and redeeming love—as the symbol of that peaceful blessedness which awaits the faithful in the land of uninterrupted purity and rest—there is no appointment of Providence, and no ordinance of religion, which point more directly to the present dignity of man, and his future destination to glory. It abstracts him from the cares and the business of life. It lifts him above the influence of his senses,

and of the objects which seduce or distract them. It withdraws him from an intercourse with what is transient, and unsatisfactory, and perishing, to a communion with what is immutable in its existence, and unlimited in the sources of its enjoyment. It raises him above the character and the concerns of a mortal. It carries his wishes and his hopes beyond the associations and employments of an inhabitant of this world of change and decline; and furnishes him with a foretaste of the peace, and placidity, and blessedness, which await him, after the fashions and the follies of time have passed away. It exalts him, in fine, above the pursuits and pleasures of animal existence. It leads him to the fountain of intellectual and moral felicity; and consummates all his labours, and disappointments, and virtues, and sufferings, with the hope and earnest of glory, honour, and immortality.

## SECTION II.

*Origin and Antiquity of the Institution of the Sabbath.*

IN the brief account which Moses has left us, of the early history of the world, the work of creating and replenishing the earth with all the beautiful varieties of its vegetable and animal tribes, is represented as having been progressive. At first, it was without form and void; but, when the Spirit of the Almighty moved upon the face of the deep, darkness fled away, and light and gladness spread over the renovated scene. The blue ethereal firmament came next into existence, at his awakening call, in whose boundless fields, numberless worlds, various and vast in their magnitudes, revolve; but which, notwithstanding all our curiosity, and all our ambition, to penetrate their analogies and histories, will, in all probability, never be otherwise known to living man, than that they do exist. The waters, again, are commanded to withdraw from the indiscriminate possession of the earth, and their channels are encompassed with bounds which they cannot pass. The grateful view of a rich and

diversified herbage, next clothes the surface of our globe, and every herb and tree yielded their fruit after their kind, whose seed was within them every one after its kind, so that their succession might never fail. At the omnipotent command of Jehovah, vast masses, both of luminous and dark matter, hasten to arrange themselves into systems; and, along with some which took their stations in the regions of unformed light, and others which disposed themselves within the enlivening influence of some primary star, God appointed, in our portion of the firmament, two lights, “the sun, to rule by day, and the moon, to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.” Next, there came into existence, at the creative voice of the Almighty, endless tribes of living creatures, with which, the air, and the earth, and the seas, were peopled. All around, and above, and below, teemed with fowl after their kind, and cattle after their kind, and creeping things after their kind;—all endowed with instincts, the most wisely suited to their natures, and surrounded with ingredients of life and happiness, the most abundant, and the most perfectly adapted to their capacities. Last of all, man appeared upon the surface of the globe, made after the similitude of God himself, and gifted by his inspiration with understanding, by which he might hold dominion over all the beasts of the field,

and the fowls of the air; and with the power of distinguishing right from wrong, by which he might choose what was good, and avoid what was evil, and continue to enjoy the favour and communion of his Creator.—“And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.”

Now, after all this marvellous and magnificent work is completed,—which, in condescension to the ideas and feelings of man, and in correspondence with the established divisions of time, is represented as having been finished in six days,—on the seventh, the Almighty blessed the day, and sanctified it; because, on it he had rested from all the works which he had created and made. “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”\* Here, then, is the first intimation of a Sabbath, which is to be found in any writings; and there are some circumstances connected with the account, which afford the strongest evidence of its very high antiquity, and give a very powerful sanction to its universal obligation.

We have the concurrent testimony of ancient

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\* Gen. ii. 1, 2, 5.

history, that the institution of that short period, called weeks, consisting each of seven days, was the first method which was resorted to, for measuring and dividing time. Now, we are naturally led to enquire, What event or circumstance could have suggested to the early inhabitants of the world, this division of time, in preference to any other? The history of every society of men, which ever existed on the earth, generally exhibits to us some causes sufficient to account for all the political customs, and domestic rites, and conventional practices, which prevailed among them; and, if we are unable, at any time, to discover the causes of these rites and customs, the failure must be ascribed entirely to our ignorance of the circumstances in which they originated; or, what is the same thing, to our want of access to the records or legends by which they are explained. Fortunately for our general argument, we have access, in the present case, to the most satisfactory information. The computation by days, is so obvious, that it would, unquestionably, be the first method which men in the very first stage of society would employ; and, as soon as they had begun to observe the phænomena of the heavens, the division of time into years would readily be suggested to their minds. The division of months, also, would be alike early and naturally adopted: for, if the

apparent circuit of the sun round the earth, gave rise to the distinction of years, the latter period of time would equally originate in the successive revolutions of the moon round the same centre. But the institution of weeks was antecedent to any of these last two divisions of time; and its immemorial use among the nations of antiquity, without any variation in its form or length, clearly points to a date prior to the discoveries of science, or the improvements of art. The length of the year, besides, was different among different people, in the early ages of the world; and so also was that of months. But the week, embracing a period of seven days, never varied. It could not, therefore, as some have supposed, be a subdivision of one of the periods now mentioned; otherwise, it must have shared the variations, to which, at different times, and in different countries, they were subjected. This, however, was not the case; and Assyrians and Egyptians—Arabians, Israelites, and Indians—have, in all ages, employed, as a measure of time, a week, consisting of seven days. Among the ancient Romans, Gauls, Britons, and Germans—as well as among the nations of the North, and of America—the same custom prevailed; and we must, therefore, seek its origin in some cause which was common to all, but unconnected with the peculiarities of any.



The tradition, concerning the space of time employed in the creation of the world,—the ordinance of heaven, respecting the sanctification of the seventh day, published immediately after that event,—can alone account for the universality and antiquity of the above custom.\* That this tradition was derived from the Books of Moses, is impossible: because, it existed long before their publication; and because we know, that there was nearly an equal reluctance among the Jews and the Heathens to give, or receive knowledge from each other, as well as nearly an equal abhorrence of each other's customs. Among the Gentile nations, particularly, there existed a deep-rooted contempt for every thing Jewish; and, as we have the most satisfactory evidence, that the distinction of weeks, and the observance of a seventh day, dedicated to the worship of the Supreme Deity, constituted a universal custom among all the nations destitute of divine revelation, we must go back to the land of Shinar, and the days “when the whole earth was of one language and of one speech,” to find the origin of the tradition in question, and to account

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\* Neque est ulla civitas Græcorum aut Barbarorum, neque ulla gens, ad quam, septimi diei, in quo vacamus, consuetudo minime pervenerit.

for the institution of weeks.\* On the sixth day, God created man, and gave him dominion over all the inferior creation. “On the seventh day, God ended his work which he had made. And he blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which he had created and made.” In conformity, then, to the example and command of the Almighty, (for the above account of the institution of the Sabbath, has been viewed as an express order for its observance,†) Adam would consecrate every seventh day to the holy exercises of devotion; and the recurrence of such days would furnish him with the mode of reckoning the time which passed over him, by weeks, before he could have any experimental knowledge of its division into months and years,—and before he could, by any circumstances whatever, be led to adopt such a division.

The knowledge, moreover, of the divine appointment of the Sabbath, and of the institution of weeks, would be easily transmitted from Adam to Noah; and as Noah was distinguished as a preacher of righteousness, we may be assured, that he would not fail to instruct his posterity in the divine ordinances and laws which he had learned from his

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\* See Note A.

† See Note B.

forefathers. From them, the same knowledge would be directly, and without perversion, conveyed to Abraham and the other Patriarchs; and from Ham and Japheth, it would likewise, without doubt, be communicated to all the other nations of mankind, which soon spread over the face of the earth.\*

In confirmation of this statement, I may here more particularly observe, that we have as full evidence as the nature of the case will admit, that the practice of computing time by weeks, did prevail among the Patriarchs; and there can be no reasonable doubt, that it was a practice coeval with the history of man, and observed by him, in honour of the creation. It is recorded, that when the Almighty called Noah into the ark, he suspended the execution of his judgment, for the space of seven days.† When the waters began to subside, Noah, at intervals of the same duration,

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\* It is worthy of notice, that Adam lived 508 years after the birth of Enoch, 245 after that of Methuselah, 66 after that of Lamech, the father of Noah, and he was dead only 126 years at the birth of the last mentioned Patriarch. The wisdom of this arrangement is obvious. Knowledge could not, in all probability, have been transmitted entire, or without perversion, orally or by tradition, through so many hundred years, (nearly eleven hundred, from the creation of Adam, till the birth of Noah,) if the age of man had been as limited as it is now. As it was, however, the risk of loss or corruption was of no amount whatever.

† Gen. vii. 4.

sent out a dove, three different times, to ascertain if any part of the land was left dry.\* Jacob, when serving for Rachel, was commanded by her father Laban, to “fulfil her week;” and it appears from Judges xiv. 12, that by this, was meant, the custom of entertaining her relations for seven days before he received her in marriage.†

Seven was the number of perfection among the Jews;—and, accordingly, we find, in their sacred books, a great many mysterious events and circumstances represented by it; as well as some cases, in which it is obviously applied as symbolical of the character of the true God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth. When Job was visited with his heavy calamities and afflictions, he sat on the ground for seven days and seven nights, before he gave utterance to his grief.‡ Balaam, in several instances, erected seven altars to the Lord; and offered, on every altar, a bullock and a ram. || The friends of Job were commanded to offer the same number of bullocks and rams, as a burnt-offering to the Lord, before they were accepted by him; § and other proofs of the universality of the custom, might be plentifully adduced from

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\* Gen. viii. 8—13.      † Gen. xxix. 27.      ‡ Job ii. 13.

|| Num. xxiii. 1, to the end.      § Job xlii. 8.

various parts of the sacred writings.—See 1 Chron. xv. 26. 2 Chron. xxiv. 21. and Ezek. xlv. 23.

Now, if it be allowed, (as we think, in fair criticism, it ought,) that the work of creation was symbolically alluded to, by the custom to which we have just referred,—and that, moreover, the work of creation was commemorated in the patriarchal, or pastoral ages, by the division of time into weeks,—we arrive, by a just and clear induction, at this inference, that the seventh day must have been regularly computed and remembered from the beginning. And, such being the case, there can be no doubt, that the worshippers of the living and true God, had all along honoured that day, by such a cessation from servile labour as their circumstances would permit.

On the whole, then, we regard the fact, of the very ancient and universal division of time into weeks, as a direct and powerful argument for the very ancient institution of the Sabbath, and the very universal knowledge of the moral obligation of its observance. Because that knowledge was afterwards corrupted and lost, militates nothing against our position; and hence, we consider ourselves warranted to conclude, that, as the division of time by weeks, was the earliest mode of computation adopted by mankind, so the institution of the Sabbath, which was the cause of that division,

must have been the earliest public religious appointment with which they were acquainted.

I am perfectly aware, however, that all which has now been advanced, may be assented to by men, who still deny the moral obligation of observing and sanctifying the Sabbath. I know that there are persons, who, with an inconsistency and an obstinacy, surely not very creditable to their judgment or piety, admit the truth of all that is related in the Book of Genesis, respecting the creation of the world, and the space of time which is there represented as being occupied in the stupendous work,—and yet deny that the observance of the day of rest, there described as sanctified and set apart for the worship of God, was meant to be morally binding on us. But, as the ground of their objection involves some points different from that we have been considering above, we shall make it the subject of examination in a separate Section.

## SECTION III.

*The Observance of the Sabbath unconnected with the Performance of Ceremonial Rites.*

AN opinion has been openly avowed, and stoutly defended, by some expounders of moral duty, who have manifested an indiscreet zeal for simplifying and reducing the external forms of religion, that the observance of days and seasons, is, under the Christian dispensation, or in the writings of the New Testament, enjoined by no positive authority; and that, therefore, their neglect interferes with no moral obligation, and is subject to no moral penalty. From an apparent eagerness, moreover, to get quit of the observance of the Sabbath, as a duty binding on the hearts and consciences of all men,—they contend, that it was only a day of ceremonial appointment,—that it was only one of those institutions, which were designed to distinguish the peculiar character and religion of the Jews,—and that its obligations were, of consequence, abrogated, when our Saviour triumphed over principalities and powers—and blotted out

the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us; and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. I shall not stop, at present, to inquire, what may be the particular meaning of the Apostle in the words just quoted; for this we shall have an opportunity of doing more amply, as we proceed; but, for the purpose of setting the question before us, in a clear point of view, I make the following remarks:—

That which is in itself purely ceremonial, has no natural or essential connection with moral or religious feeling. All ceremonial appointments and acts are purely arbitrary in their nature, and secondary in their influence on the mind; and cannot possess the same value or force as those commandments which reach a controlling authority to the counsels and purposes of the understanding, and to the public and private transactions of the life. Who, for instance, would compare the abstinence from eating blood, or any legally unclean animal, with abstinence from falsehood and fraud, or intemperance and extortion? Or who would say, that the act of making the sign of the cross on any part of the body; or of performing an ablution, was alike important with that of working in upon the mind a mortification of evil and impure passions? Or, that the act of travelling to the ancient seat of the tabernacle, to discharge



a vow, was alike acceptable in the sight of God, with that of continually going about visiting the widows and the fatherless in their afflictions, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the corruptions and iniquities of the world? Ceremonial acts and appointments, moreover, are only temporary and local in their sanctions; and, except so far as their observance is enjoined by a positive rule, or commandment, they may, or may not, be performed, without any moral praise, or reproach being associated with our conduct. In themselves, they are matters of indifference—and it is only because they are the means ordained for the expression of our dependence upon God, and our veneration of his power; it is only because they are the sign of our desire to purify our hearts from iniquity, and to advance in the cultivation and practice of holiness and truth, that there is any obligation or responsibility attached to them. Besides, the peculiarity of their being only temporary in their obligations, they were only local in their influence, and could not, in the very nature of things, apply to the condition of every people. Such were almost all the ritual services prescribed by the Mosaic law; binding the whole Jewish nation to the performance of sacrifices, which could only be offered within the precincts of that country; and to the observance of ablutions and penances, and

to distinctions of food and dress, which were chiefly designed to cure or counteract their tendencies to adopt the rites, and practise the abominations of idolatry, and to preserve them on the earth as a peculiar people, dedicated to the worship of the one living and true God.

This, we conceive, was the great end of the ritual services, prescribed to the descendants of Abraham; and they were continued among them, as a test of their patience and sincerity in submitting to the authority, in adoring the majesty, and obeying the commandments of that Almighty Being, who, with an outstretched arm, and great terribleness, delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, and gave them a victorious settlement in the land of Canaan. They formed a set of auxiliary rules, excellently suited to an infant church, whose members were unable to comprehend fully the more spiritual doctrines of religion; and who were in perpetual danger of being drawn on to make shipwreck of their faith, by the vices and corruptions of their heathen neighbours. They served as landmarks, to show them all that was externally due, of homage and reverence, to the Almighty Creator of the heaven and the earth. They were well calculated, at all times, to keep before their view the great doctrine of the unity of the Godhead; to preserve within their minds a lively sense

of the sinfulness of idolatry, and to inspire them with a hatred of the practices, and a dread of the consequences to which it led.

Important, however, and necessary as they were, for aiding the worshipper in his adoration of the divine attributes, they were only adapted to the condition of an infant people—they were only the symbolical representations of an original that was yet to be revealed—they were only the types and shadows of a more simple and spiritual dispensation that was yet to come; and, hence, we are informed, that when He, to whom they all pointed, appeared in the world, as the author of a new and everlasting righteousness—he blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that stood against us, in the legal ceremonies of the ancient dispensation, and directed us to a purer, and more spiritual manner of worshipping the Father, through himself, as the way, the truth, and the life. But the institution of the Sabbath, as we have already shown, was long prior to the introduction or establishment of the ceremonial rites of the Jewish worship; and it cannot, by any fair rule of criticism, be regarded as possessing the same character, or as being destined for the same end. The fate of the one, cannot, by any fair construction, be considered as involved in the fate of the other. The hand-writing of legal

ordinances that stood against us, embraces all those ritual prescriptions, and sacrificial offerings, which formed the middle-wall of partition, that prevented the Gentiles from having access to the knowledge, the worship, and the favour of the one living and true God; and which Jesus Christ our peace-maker, broke down, that he might reconcile both Jew and Gentile unto God, in one body by the cross. But the institution of the Sabbath, was primarily and preeminently intended to unite all mankind in the bonds of brotherly unity and religious homage, to their common Parent and Benefactor, and could not, therefore, be included under the "law of commandments," contained in ordinances which the Saviour abolished, that he might make to himself of twain, one new man, and preach peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

A ritual, or ceremonial act, has a reference only to the externals of religious worship; and experience has proved to us, that it may be performed, in numberless instances, without one affection of the heart being awakened to fervour of devotion towards the Most High. A moral, or spiritual act, (for I take the term moral in its highest and most extended sense, embracing the operation of our power of distinguishing right from wrong, our consciousness of duty and of crime, and our capacity of enjoy-

ment and suffering,) a moral act has a reference to the very essentials of religion, and is directly calculated to quicken and increase our love and reverence of our Creator, and, through him, our love and obedience of all the virtues of a holy and pious life. It is true, that the same authority which commanded the Hebrews to consecrate to the Lord, the firstlings of their flocks, commanded them also to remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy; but no one, I presume, would hold these acts to be intrinsically of equal value, any more than he would account the offering of thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, to be equally binding on the human conscience, and equally calculated to advance human virtue and happiness, with the exalted, though unostentatious dedication of our hearts and our souls, “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.” The sanctification of the Sabbath, embraces our instruction and advancement in the knowledge and performance of those last mentioned duties; and it must, therefore, be an institution preeminently superior, in its sanctions and its tendencies, in its obligations and its uses, to all ritual or ceremonial appointments whatever. Wherefore, let it be particularly remembered, that if, by the ceremonial law and worship of God, be meant those only which were

delivered to the descendants of Abraham, to the heirs of the promised land, (and this, we believe, is generally admitted,) then, the appointment alluded to, in the second chapter of Genesis, cannot be included under that character. When the Almighty rested from his labour, and blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, he had intimated no intention of selecting any particular people to be the depositories of his ordinances, and the preservers of the knowledge of his will and worship, among men. It was immediately after the creation of the world—it was immediately after he had planted man upon the earth, to hold dominion over every living thing that moveth upon it—to preserve upon it some resemblance to the glory and perfection of heaven, and to spread the image and the worship of Himself over its yet unpolluted, and smiling, and luxuriant surface—it was after this, that God rested on the seventh day, and blessed and sanctified it. We ask, then, Was this an act which referred solely to the exercise of the infinite attributes of the divinity? Was this an act unconnected with the future condition and felicity of man? Or, was it not meant to be an institution in society, commemorative of the creating power, wisdom, and goodness of the Most High? A Being of infinite power, could not possibly grow

faint or weary in the accomplishment of any undertaking, the most stupendous, nay, far more stupendous than any of which our minds can conceive: and, when we are informed that He rested from his labour, the language must be regarded as applied to the Creator, in reference to the weakness and imperfection of our understanding; and must have been intended to secure a compliance with the practice, on the ground of imitating the most exalted and most perfect example. “Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work—But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it, thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, &c. For, in six days, the Lord made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested the seventh day: wherefore, the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.”

At this point of our discussion, however, I am bound to observe, that a distinction, which has been long made, and very generally adopted, respecting the nature of some of the divine commandments, has had a very extensive, and, I hesitate not to say, a very pernicious effect, in lessening the opinion of men, concerning the obligations they are under to obey that one, in which the duties of the Sabbath are enjoined; and although there be

considerable difficulties attached to the subject, I shall endeavour to make it appear, that too much has been built upon the distinction in question; and that it is not, to the extent which has been alleged, founded on the nature and philosophical relations of the human mind. But its importance, as it affects our general argument, renders it necessary that we examine the grounds on which it rests, under a separate Section.



## SECTION IV.

*Examination of the grounds on which the distinction between moral and positive duties is founded; so far as that distinction affects the moral obligation of observing the Sabbath.*

THE distinction above alluded to, as the title of this Section indicates, is that which has been instituted between what are called moral and positive laws, precepts, or institutions. A moral precept, or commandment, relates to the conduct of intelligent and accountable creatures; and is such, we are told, as, independent of divine revelation, is recognized by human reason to be a fit rule of action, obligatory, in its enactments, on all mankind. A positive commandment, again, it is said, is such as unaided reason could never discover; and, however equitable it may appear, when published, as it has no natural connection with the ordinary conceptions of the understanding, or the ordinary dictates of conscience, all its importance and obligation must be derived from the will of the Being who publishes it. Now, of this

latter kind, is the commandment respecting the Sabbath accounted; and it is worthy of notice, that it is the only commandment of the Decalogue which is held to possess that character. There are nine besides it, and we have never heard it denied, that they are morally binding on all men, or that their reasonableness, their obligations, and their use, were discoverable without the light of divine revelation. The fourth commandment stands alone as an exception; and it is argued, that, without the express declaration of the will of God, we could never have become acquainted with the restraints and requirements, which, on every seventh day, it imposes on us. We have no hesitation to say, that we believe this last statement to be perfectly correct; while, at the same time, we maintain, that what are called the moral precepts, or institutions of the law, have been assigned their high rank and value, at the expense of that one, which is held to possess only a positive character. We admit, that there is nothing in the appropriation of one day out of seven, to the worship and glory of God, which suggests itself to the human mind more naturally than one out of seventeen, or any other number. We cannot perceive any natural reason, why one day should be esteemed more sacred than another; neither do we think, that there is any natural fitness in one day above

another for the discharge of particular duties. The human mind, unaided and unenlightened by divine truth, cannot, we say, perceive this. But we are strongly inclined to believe, that the fact is much the same respecting the greater number of those precepts which are generally accounted moral; and the reasons which thus incline us to believe, we shall endeavour, plainly, but shortly, to detail.

Notwithstanding all that has been said and written about the *eternal fitness of things, sympathy, a moral sense, and public utility*, as criteria, or tests of virtue, we cannot give up the conviction, that the safest, the broadest, and the most universal standard of duty, is the will of God.\* It is true, that the will of God, as it is contained in the revelation of his counsels of mercy, respecting our present and eternal welfare, is but imperfectly known in the world, and cannot, therefore, according to the present state of religious knowledge, be universally applied as the gauge of human conduct. It is true also, that the Apostle Paul has said, that “the Gentiles who have not the law, do, by nature, the things contained in the law: these, having not

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\* C'est à la seule idée d'un Dieu, qu'il est facile d'unir toute la législation morale, et le système entier de nos devoirs.

M. Necker.

the law, are a law unto themselves—which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile, accusing, or else excusing one another.” But, are we sure that these words apply to the Heathen generally, and not exclusively to those who lived before the publication of the Mosaic law, and who were believers and worshippers of the one living and true God? Such, at least, is the opinion of several respectable commentators. Are we sure, that not the idolatrous Heathen, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for ever—are here meant; but those, who, understanding by the things that are made, the eternal power and Godhead of the Father, glorified him by giving him the honour and fear due to his great name?

Felix trembled when Paul preached before him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and this, we are told, is a proof of the natural fitness of the human mind to distinguish right from wrong, and to suffer reproach and punishment for the violation of virtue and the indulgence in vice. But, would Felix have trembled, if Paul had not preached? Would he have experienced the upbraidings of an angry conscience, if Paul had not reasoned of righteous-

ness, and forced him to become his own accuser, by demonstrating to him, that his conduct was as disgraceful and destructive to himself, as it was unjust and cruel to others? It is one thing to acknowledge and feel the obligations of a moral law, when it is expounded to us in all the length and breadth of its character and consequences—and quite another to discover the law and the obligations, and to act upon them, without any external revelation or aid whatever;—and we believe, that, if Paul had not preached, Felix had not trembled; and that he would have gone on in extortion and profligacy, heedless of his guilt, unconscious of his danger, and unawed by any of the judgments which shall hereafter be revealed as the portion of the ungodly. The mind is very capable of understanding the truth of many doctrines, and of assenting to the obligations of many duties, which, of itself, it could never have known, felt, or obeyed; and this remark, we humbly think, strictly applies to the question before us.

We must add, however, in justice to ourselves, and to prevent a false interpretation of our views, that we know well the power of conscience over the moral actions of man, and the valuable account to which it may be turned, by a judicious appeal to its own decisions, on all matters respecting simple right or wrong; and, assuredly, we would be the

last to advance any thing which might tend to derogate from the one, or diminish the other. But, on a question concerning the general principles of duty, or the moral character and divine authority of particular commandments, we must not allow preconceived, or unexamined opinions, to influence or determine our judgment. The power of conscience, we hold to be identical with the faculty of reason, applied to moral objects; or to the determination of the right and wrong, the merit and demerit of human conduct. And of this, I presume, it is needless to produce any farther proof than this, that, in different individuals, and different societies, it varies in its decisions, according to the previous knowledge and habits of the parties; so that, what in one country, is set down and reprobated as a crime, in another, is sanctioned and applauded as a virtue. If it were a faculty of the mind, distinct from the power of understanding, or reason—if it were not dependent for information on the usual channels of communication—if it did not receive all its impressions of the character of other men's actions, through the ordinary medium of observation, and did not form its decisions respecting all that passes within itself, by the ordinary intellectual process of consciousness, and by a comparison of the conduct in question, with a standard of duty, which experience had taught it

to establish;—we might surely expect to find the judgments which it forms, respecting the moral character of certain actions, more uniform and consistent. If it were a faculty of mind implanted within us, exclusively for taking cognizance of the right and wrong of human conduct, and possessed, within itself, the means of intuitively deciding what was moral duty, and what was not—if it were the peculiar province of this faculty to judge of what was virtuous, and what was vicious, in the actions of men; and the spectacle of the one, uniformly gave rise to feelings of disapprobation, while that of the former, uniformly produced sentiments of applause and delight—if, in fine, it were the sole office of this faculty to condemn whatever was opposed to the desires and the dictates of moral purity, justice, and truth, and the human mind were so constituted, that it must unavoidably suffer pain on the perpetration of any act that was contrary to any of the principles of virtue;—then, we should undoubtedly meet with an universal (or nearly universal) agreement among men of all descriptions, and in all situations of life, respecting the morality, or immorality of human conduct. But nothing is more contrary to fact than this: and there are acts of various kinds, the commission of which, will create much bitter compunction and agony in the breast of one man, while, in that of another, it

will not give birth to a single uneasy or repentant feeling.

The conscience, unenlightened and unaided by the word and the Spirit of God, is a most unsafe and fallacious guide on the great principles of duty which we owe towards God, and even towards man; and the history of every people who have been destitute of the knowledge of divine revelation, and the history of those, too, who have possessed the written record of the rule of our faith and manners, equally proclaim to us, that, like the power of reason applied to the ordinary business of life, it is often doubtful, false, and capricious in its decisions. The violation of some of the most obligatory principles of duty, on which the peace and well-being of society depend, but which are unproductive of personal inconvenience or injury, will be unsparingly indulged by some men, without any remorse, or suffering, whatever,—while the commission of an act which brings on bodily debility and disease, will awaken the most pungent self-reproach and wretchedness. The profane swearer is a monstrous rebel against the King of heaven, who contaminates, by the execrations which he heaps on himself and others, the society in which he lives; and yet, we may witness him, every day, going on in his wickedness, without a single apprehension arising in his breast respecting



the doom which he has so awfully imprecated on himself. When the slaves of sensual pleasure, (and they are numerous and daring as the former,) suffer shame or sorrow for their unhallowed deeds, is their repentance the fruit of a conviction of their having sinned against God, or of their having wasted their health and their fortune, and exposed themselves to public disgrace and misery? Has it not been entirely owing to the purity of sentiment which the Christian religion has produced, that fornication is now generally considered as a breach of moral duty? It is true, it was prohibited by the Jewish law, but under conditions and penalties of such a nature, as could easily be evaded or answered by a licentious people. Among the more gross and sensual of the Heathens it was encouraged, under the sanction of the example of their false deities; and even where their ideas of morality were considered to be very refined, it was never taxed as a crime, except when the marriage-bed was contaminated, or a virgin's honour violated.

But I go on with my illustration of the case before us, by asking,—Are not covetousness and avarice expressly condemned by the divine law; and yet, are they not indulged by thousands, without the least apprehension of the divine displeasure, and without the least apparent consciousness of doing wrong?—are not backbiting, lying,

drunkenness, and uncleanness, distinctly enumerated among the causes which exclude from the kingdom of heaven; and yet, how many, most wantonly and perversely, continue in their indulgence, without any other uneasy sensation or fear, than what their consequences, in this world, may produce? Murder, it is said, is recognized, in all situations, by the human mind, as a criminal and punishable act: and surely the shedding of human blood is a startling and appalling spectacle—but there are despotic countries, where the officers of power claim, and exercise the right of unceremoniously beheading those who offend them—there are licentious and depraved countries, where men make a trade of assassination—and there are barbarous countries, where it is reckoned a public duty and virtue to expose the aged and the infirm, the young and the helpless, to perish by the slow and cruel agency of famine and cold.—There are some nations where theft, if it is dextrously committed, is held to be rather a virtue than a vice—and societies have been discovered, where chastity seemed to be unknown, and licentiousness openly encouraged. Is not polygamy fraught with the most immoral and pernicious consequences, both of a domestic, and social nature?—does it not directly tend to extinguish some of the best affections of the human heart, and to engender and

chafe some of the most malignant and deadly passions, and, in general, to degrade and brutalize the species? Yet, can we say that it is recognized by unaided and unenlightened reason, as sinful and hurtful, while we have such clear testimony of its prevalence among nations destitute of divine revelation; and while the Scriptures, themselves, furnish us with so many sad examples of its practice among the patriarchs and the monarchs of Israel? It is said, that the idea of property is one of the earliest that is formed by the human mind; and, hence, it is argued, that there is a natural ground for the distinction of the rights of individuals recognized, and that the law which prohibits their encroachment on each other's possessions, is felt, in all circumstances, to be binding on the conscience of man. But, if men had lived without society, the idea of property had never been formed; neither had the principle of justice ever been recognized or acted on; and hence, it must be allowed, that that principle is the offspring of the social combinations and conventional transactions in which they engage; or that it originated in some direct revelation of the law of God, for the regulation of their dealings with one another.

I am carrying this detail of illustration too far, however, and perhaps it may now be asked,—what is the point which it is meant to establish? I

answer, without hesitation—to show, that too much has been built upon the distinction which has been framed, between what are called the moral and positive institutions of religion; and that, so far as the subject of this Treatise is concerned, it is founded on error, and pregnant with mischief. We do not believe that the human mind is, of itself, capable of discovering and feeling all the obligations of moral duty; that is, we do not believe that the bare perception of what is good in any action, constitutes, in the estimation of man, the obligation to its performance; or, that the perception of what is bad, constitutes the obligation to avoid, or resist it. There is no quality or principle, belonging to the human understanding, or the human conscience, which warrants us to say, that it is fitted to be a measure of virtue, or a standard of duty; otherwise, we should find, among the rude and the civilized, the learned and the unlearned tribes of mankind, a constant conformity of sentiment and action on the leading points of morality. Now, it is because the distinction we are considering, takes for granted the existence of this quality or principle, that we say it is founded on error, and fraught with mischief. Moral obligation must arise from a higher source than the reason or the conscience of man; otherwise, we would witness an endless variety of standards to determine the

character of the same actions, and an endless conflict of opinions respecting the most essential questions of moral right and wrong. Moral obligation, moreover, necessarily implies the idea of accountability, but it would be absurd to speak of a man being accountable to himself, and yet maintain, that the proper distinctions between virtue and vice could be preserved, and that the just and necessary rewards and punishments would be impartially dispensed. The selfishness, the deceitfulness of the human mind, and its uniform tendency to interpret its own decisions, and what arises out of this, its own actions, favourably to itself, directly contradict such an opinion. Our accountability for our actions, directly points to an authority superior to our own; and the rewards and penalties which that authority has associated with particular conduct, constitute the moral obligation, or the motives which should prompt us to its performance, or withhold us from it.

The doctrine of the eternal fitness of things, as it is generally understood, and of the immutable distinctions of right and wrong, discovered and established by human reason, as a rule of duty, is calculated, at once, we think, to exalt natural religion above revealed, and to render man independent of the knowledge of the will of God. We believe, then, that although we admit, and this we

most readily do, that there is an eternal fitness of things, and an essential and incommutable distinction between right and wrong, mankind are not, in all situations, or in all cases, able to perceive them, or to feel the obligations to their observance. It is, undoubtedly, the express appointment of the Almighty, which has given to virtue and holiness all that loveliness and charm which never fail to awaken delight in the heart of possessors and spectators; and it is the same cause which has arrayed iniquity, of every kind, in the most odious forms, to all who are not in thralldom to its power, and rendered it the parent of penury and wretchedness to some, and of moral debasement and degradation to all. The love of God, and the love of man, are the foundations of all religious and moral duty, and, when they are described or illustrated to us, we, at once, perceive and acknowledge, that there is an inherent excellence, or an eternal fitness, belonging to them; but, surely, if this excellence or fitness had been discoverable by human reason, idolatry or polytheism would not have become the universal religion of mankind—or the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, have been confined to one small district of the earth—or rapine, war, and murder, have been the universal trade of heathen nations. The history of the world has proved to us, that where men were ignorant of the

one living and true God, they were incapable, by their own inquiries or discoveries, of rising to the knowledge of his glorious and incommunicable attributes; and wherever they were ignorant of this fundamental doctrine of all true religion and morality, they indulged, without restraint or remorse, in the most selfish, licentious, profane, and cruel actions. *A divine revelation, therefore, was necessary* to instruct men in the knowledge of the true character of the Creator, of the just distinctions of moral right and wrong, and of the indispensable obligations they were under to avoid the one, and practise the other. Public utility could not point out these obligations, because this, as a standard, varies with the varying wants and desires of different nations and kindreds of men: reason, or conscience, could not confirm them, because this, as a judge, also varies in its decisions, according to the previous habits and knowledge of the individual. A positive ordinance, or appointment of heaven, could alone give efficacy to the natural distinctions of virtue and vice, and establish their obligations and observance on broad and indisputable grounds. The will of God, revealed as the rule of our faith and practice, can alone give a beneficial direction to the fears and the hopes of the human mind, and bind us to the performance of the great duties of holiness and justice, benevolence and integrity, and

restrain us from their violation, by the consideration of a future and eternal retribution.

In this sense, then, all the moral duties of religion are positive: that is, their obligations rest upon an express statute of heaven; and their wilful and unnecessary neglect, must, in all circumstances, be regarded as criminal and punishable, by the All-wise and Almighty Legislator who has ordained them.

Nor do we think that this doctrine tends, in the least, to destroy the distinction which exists between duties or virtues of different characters and degrees, or that it places all crimes on an equality, in point of guilt. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind,”—this, said our Saviour, is the first and great commandment; and the second, he added, is *like unto it*; but it is not said, *equal to it*,—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Religion enlightens and instructs human reason, but it does not outrage or contradict it. The shedding of man’s blood, is a crime of a deeper complexion than the purloining of his property, and the law of God has marked and admitted the distinction. The giving to the Lord the reverence and worship due to him, for the great and manifold benefits conferred on us, is an act of primary obligation and importance;



but, even admitting that all our duty rests solely upon the positive enactments of heaven, the unnecessary or wilful absence from the assemblies of the faithful, on the first day of the week, cannot be ranked as a crime of the same guilt, or worthy of the same punishment, with that of fraud, theft, or murder. The Sabbath may be sanctified in private, as well as in public: for, though the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob; yet, he is nigh to all that be of a broken heart, and he saveth them that are of a contrite spirit. There are many circumstances connected with the most sacred and important duties of life, which may prevent an individual from waiting on the Lord, according to his own appointment, in the house of prayer; and, as the highest authority has informed us, that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; the very acts of justice, of compassion, of mercy, and charity, which its observance is intended to recommend and encourage, may, in many cases, interfere with the public celebration of the external solemnities of religion, and imperatively claim a preference in the distribution or discharge of our moral duties. In all circumstances, we believe the end is better than the means; and, as there is an essential difference between the act of publicly acknowledging our love and gratitude to the Most

High, and living habitually under the fear of offending him, and cherishing habitually the desire of glorifying him, by doing justly, and loving mercy, and walking humbly before him; so is there an equally essential difference between publicly appearing in the assemblies, where prayers and praises are offered up to him,—and the act of consecrating our affections to the holy exercises of devotion, and adjusting all our thoughts, words, and deeds, to the conditions and requirements of the divine commandments. There is a moral and positive obligation attached to all these commandments; that obligation is derived from the will and decree of God, and no one who values his present, but especially his eternal welfare, will voluntarily or unnecessarily neglect it.

There is no inherent excellence in ritual or ceremonial appointments; nor can we, by any acquaintance with the relations or fitness of things, discover any motives which naturally prompt us to their observance. The human mind cannot, for instance, perceive any reason for the prohibition which was laid on our first parents, in the garden of Eden, except what is derived from divine authority; and the rite of circumcision, enjoined on all the descendants of Abraham, and the order for them to dwell in booths, during the feast of tabernacles, with many of the ceremonial services

of the Jews, rest entirely upon the same foundation. Nor are we disposed, in the remotest manner, to represent this as a reason which is not strictly binding on the understanding and conscience of all to whom it is addressed. But, when there is added to this, a reason for the duty, or the service arising out of the very nature of things, or out of the relations which subsist between the act we are called to perform, and our perception of what is excellent and praise-worthy; then, there is a very strong additional obligation laid upon us for its faithful and diligent observance. And here, we would expressly maintain, that, for the discharge of the requirements of all the commandments of the Decalogue,—of the fourth, as well as of the fifth—of the first, as well as of the sixth,—there is this additional obligation laid upon us. All of them have a moral sanction attached to them. We are able, by the exercise of our understanding, to appreciate the inherent excellence and the beneficial tendency which belong to them; and we feel and acknowledge the responsibility under which we lie, for their faithful and conscientious performance.

The dedication of one day in seven, to the public worship of God—to the commemoration of his creating power and wisdom, and redeeming goodness and love,—is not an act which reason, of itself, could have discovered to be obligatory on

man; but, when it is revealed to him as a divine ordinance, its wisdom and utility at once recommend it, and we are constrained to acknowledge, that it ranks among the highest duties imposed upon us. If what we have already stated, however, be correct, the very same character belongs to all the other commandments of the Decalogue; and thus the distinction which has been made between the fourth and the other nine, is founded on error, calculated to mislead men in their notions of moral obligation, and productive of very baneful consequences to the general interests of religion.

## SECTION V.

*Moral obligation of the Sabbath, proved from the primary end of its institution.*

By referring to the period of the world at which the Sabbath was instituted, we have the most satisfactory evidence, that its observance was enjoined for the purpose of preserving the history of a most important and interesting event, and of inspiring into the minds of men, the love and reverence of that Almighty Being, who endowed them with so many exalted capacities of knowing and serving him. It was afterwards revealed, that this season of holy rest should be celebrated as the earnest of an uninterrupted and blissful rest, which awaits the righteous in heaven; and, in search of which, this mortal life has, in all ages, been reckoned but a pilgrimage, by the pious and patient worshippers of Jehovah. But, even without recurring to the period of the world at which its observance was first promulgated—taking up the commandment, in which it is enjoined, in a general point of view, so far from being inferior in its obligations to any

other of the moral laws, it seems to us superior both in its sanctions and advantages. And our reasons for entertaining this opinion may be thus briefly stated.

The sanctification of the Sabbath, is the first religious duty enjoined by the Almighty on man; for we regard the account of its institution, given in the second chapter of Genesis, as tantamount to a positive command to devote it in a peculiar manner to his worship and service.\* Now, the worship of God, embracing our adoration of his power and wisdom, our reverence for his justice and holiness, our gratitude for his goodness and mercy, and our meek submission to the dispensations of his providence, constitute, in the highest sense of the word, the religious duties of man. His moral duties, or those which relate to the government of his own affections and passions, and to the integrity and honour of his transactions with others, rest upon these, as their natural and proper foundation, and derive from them all their value and excellence. The acknowledgment of a belief in the existence of one God, and of his supreme and absolute right to our homage and obedience, is essential to an acknowledgment of the obligation of the duties which

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\* See Note B.

bind us to the observance of personal purity and holiness, and to the practice of fidelity and justice, benevolence and mercy, in our dealings with one another. If it be not so, then, notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary, moral duty can have no other sanction than what convenience or expediency may give it, and it will depend altogether on the fleeting circumstances in which man is placed, whether its requirements and enactments be complied with, or not. Whatever, therefore, tends to keep us in remembrance of our dependence upon our Creator, and to inspire us with gratitude for his goodness, and to confirm our reverence for his authority, and to impress us with the fear of his displeasure—must directly quicken our sense of moral obligation, and lead us to the faithful discharge of all the duties of the moral law. But it is the sole end of the institution of the Sabbath, to preserve and cherish the feelings above enumerated; it is the exclusive design of its public and private exercises, to commemorate the creating and redeeming power of Jehovah, to remind us of the imperfections and sinfulness of our nature, and to unite us in a sacred fellowship with the Father and the Son, by abstracting us from the vanities and iniquities of the world, and awakening and increasing our desires after holiness, righteousness, and new obedience. Wherefore, the

sanctification of that day, must be of supreme importance in subduing our sinful propensities; in quickening within us a love of moral excellence; and working in us a conformity to all God's righteous commandments.

But, returning to the period of the world, at which the institution was first published to man, we have already shown, that it was totally unconnected with any of the peculiar revelations of heaven, by which particular laws and ceremonies were originally confined to particular districts of the earth, and intended only for the benefit of particular sets of people. The Sabbath was designed to preserve, among "all the families and kindreds of the earth," the knowledge and worship of God. It was the commemoration of the visible exercise of his attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness; and the natural and direct effects of its observance should be, to draw forth our spontaneous reverence for all that was sublime and awful, our wonder for all that was admirable and unsearchable, and our gratitude for all that was amiable and endearing in these perfections.

Now, will any individual say, that there is no moral sanction accompanying an appointment, such as we have just been reviewing? Will any one say, that what was made known to our first parent, as our representative, is not binding on us?



Or, that the same causes of devotion to God, which existed in the early ages of the world, do not operate now? Are the testimonies of creative goodness less visible, or less copious now, than when the earth was only fresh from the hand of its Maker, and but a scanty portion of its surface had been trodden by the foot of man? Shall we be told, that man is less dependent upon the favour and mercy of God now, than when, being made upright, he had not yet become acquainted with the inventions of iniquity, nor been estranged from the purity of feeling and ardour of enjoyment, which frequent communications with heaven inspired? Is it not the bounden duty of every man, to acknowledge the goodness by which he is preserved, and the bounty by which he is fed? And if it can be proved, that any particular enactment was given to him for that purpose, is not that enactment binding upon all who are sharers of the same wants and the same benefits? Is not a moral sanction, which accompanies any establishment, be it what it may, which is ordained by God, obligatory upon all men who are invited to the observance of the duties, and a participation of the blessings which are attached to it; and will not the neglect of those duties, in all situations, and under all characters, involve men in guilt, and most justly subject them to the righteous displeasure of the

Most High? We maintain, that this is the legitimate deduction from the neglect of the Sabbath, with even the scanty information we have of the state of the world, at the period to which we have been alluding: and we go on to state and illustrate this argument more fully, because, on its clear and irrefragable validity, depend, in a high degree, the perpetuity and universality of the moral obligation of remembering the seventh day, to keep it holy.

We have already seen, that the institution and sanctions of the Sabbath, are recorded, by the historian of the early ages of the world, as a divine appointment, immediately after the heavens, and the earth, and all the host of them, were created. "For God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because in it, he rested from all the work, which he created and made." We shall have occasion to notice, more particularly, hereafter, that every example of moral duty bequeathed to us in the Bible, and every act of religious service, except what is merely ceremonial, performed by one possessing the character of a lawgiver, are equally binding on us, as if they were enjoined by a positive precept, and enforced by the most solemn conditions.

But, waving the particular consideration of this point at present, we hold it to be altogether absurd to suppose, that such an allotment of the

seventh part of the week, as that which we have just quoted, would have been made by the Almighty, if it had not been intended as a rule for the public devotional exercises of man. It is altogether impossible, that it would have found a place in the register of the very earliest transactions of the world, if it had not been meant to apply to the condition of every people, and to be continued as an everlasting memorial of the power, the wisdom, and benevolence of the Creator. There was no appropriation of favours, yet made or promised, to any particular class of men; there was no distinction of claims, yet recognised, to the protection and blessing of God; there were no influences yet shed upon them, which were to be limited to certain times and certain places; nor were any duties yet prescribed, which were destined to separate them into independent tribes, and to distinguish them by peculiar rites and laws. The human race, as yet, consisted of only one family; placed on a fruitful portion of the earth, and surrounded with every thing that was lovely in contemplation, and delightful in enjoyment. The Almighty dwelt among them by sensible manifestations of his presence; and reverence for his supreme authority, and gratitude for his boundless goodness, must have been inspired by all that they daily saw and experienced. His protecting arm was ever around them; the splen-

dour of his attributes was imprinted on all the works they beheld; his condescension and love beamed through all the communications he made to them of his will; and their feelings of devotion and thanksgiving, must have been kept ever ardent and active, by the continual pledges of his care, to administer to their hopes and their happiness. The wants of the infant society would be but few, and they would be easily supplied. The rich variety of all that was agreeable to their senses and their taste, would leave no wish or desire ungratified: and, as their blessings came directly from the hand of the Creator, their songs of gratitude and praise, would rise as directly to the place where the glory of the Godhead dwelt.

This would be the constant effect of what they were constantly experiencing; and, as there was yet no interruption to their innocence and happiness, there would be none to the exercise of their piety and love. But they formed the embryo population of the world. From them were to spring all the tribes, and kindreds, and tongues, which were to cover and diversify the wide spread surface of the earth. Distance from the scene of primeval innocence and holiness, would be followed with an indifference about their duties, and when, in consequence of the curse pronounced against

their first transgression,\* they were subjected to the toilsome task of collecting, from diminished sources, the means of supplying increasing wants, they would speedily lose the delicate but fervent sentiments of devotion, which bound their fathers in fellowship with heaven. Depravity of feeling would spread with degeneracy of conduct; and, where every one was engrossed with his own wants, all would become indifferent about each other's condition. When no sense of dependence upon God was experienced, no sensations of gratitude for his goodness could be awakened; and when his name and his attributes were not revered and worshipped, all desire of his favour, and dread of his displeasure, would perish from the heart and the life of man. He would lose the hope of future happiness, with the image of his original purity; he would forfeit the dignity of his nature, by the degradation of his moral pursuits; and those holy inspirations which breathed the sweetness and the serenity of his early blessedness, would be swallowed up by a host of coarse and contending desires after pleasures, which might nourish, but which would never gratify his passions.

To counteract these disastrous effects, however,

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\* Gen. iii. 17.

we find the observance of the Sabbath early and solemnly enjoined, as an appointment of universal and perpetual obligation. It was, doubtlessly, foreseen, that the knowledge and worship of the true God would be lost or forgotten, as men receded from their original settlements, and became forgetful of their original habits and laws. The relative duties of society, upon which all moral security and comfort rested, would lose all their sanctions, when the authority of God was not recognised and venerated: and, hence, it was provided, by a particular statute, that the public worship of the Creator, should be regularly performed at periodical intervals, and that thus the affections of men, being enlisted on the side of devotion to their common Parent, that devotion should give birth to mutual esteem and kindness, forbearance and love.

The dedication of the seventh day to holy retirement and rest; its consecration to the duties of piety, and praise, and thanksgiving, were the acts of the Almighty Creator and Preserver of men,—and they were intended to inspire them with reverence for his Glorious Majesty, to cherish within them a sense of their continual dependence upon his bounty, and to quicken and increase the feeling of obligation they were at all times under, to respect and obey his laws. Now, from this, we conceive, that there was something in the very

nature of the institution, which was well calculated to engage and interest the moral affections of mankind in favour of its observance. It was designed to recal to their minds the goodness and wisdom of God, displayed in the creation of the mighty fabric they inhabited; and to give excitement and strength to their gratitude, by affording them frequent opportunities of acknowledging the benefits he bestowed upon them. It was admirably fitted to promote and increase brotherly kindness, by reminding them of their common origin, and to banish from their hearts all unsocial and cruel passions, by uniting them in the bonds of piety and allegiance to their common Benefactor and Father. These considerations, of themselves, therefore, were sufficient to recommend the observance of the Sabbath, as an appointment of the highest utility and pleasure; and when we reflect, that the employments and the labours of men, would be daily multiplied with the multiplication of their wants, and the diminution of the means of supplying them; we shall readily find another reason for the consecration of a regularly fixed portion of their time, to the purpose of moral and religious meditation. When we reflect farther, on the tendency of human nature, to become unmindful of all that is pure and spiritual; to sink into an indifference about all that is distant and

unseen; to overlook the importance of those things that are eternal, in the greedy pursuit after things that are temporal; when we consider, moreover, that, in the first ages of the world, the positive laws of Heaven were few, and only traditionally known, we shall see an additional reason for concluding, that some great moral appointment was necessary, to collect their affections from the wayward courses into which they were prone to stray, and to lead them to the cultivation of their highest moral excellence, by leading them to the study and performance of those duties, in which their highest hopes and ultimate happiness centered.

Now, with the limited means of moral knowledge and improvement, which were vouchsafed to the first generation of man, we have no hesitation to say, that we believe the institution of the Sabbath, to have been intended to supply the want of minute information, and to furnish the great land-marks of duty, which would preserve within them a habitual reverence for their common Creator, and a habitual esteem for each other's virtues, and sympathy for each other's frailties. It was made known to the first family of the human race, as an enactment of divine authority, sanctioned and recommended by divine example. There were no ceremonial accompaniments, which marked it as only intended for certain ages and countries. It was



communicated to the father and the representative of mankind, free of all restrictions, suitable to all conditions, and binding upon all generations. It was the earliest statute in the code of religious legislation, and *there is not one circumstance connected with its nature, or its end, which marks it as having yet become, or as ever to become, obsolete, or inefficient in its provisions.* The wants of men are the same as they were ever; the supplies of divine goodness are not diminished, either in their extent or their value; neither are the claims on our gratitude changed in their number or their force. The tendencies to forget the Author of our being and our happiness, lurk as deeply in our hearts as ever; and it requires, even now, the operation of all the means which piety and devotion can suggest, to prevent mankind from sinking into a deplorable condition of moral darkness and degeneracy.

All this, however, we believe, will be readily granted by men, who provokingly deny the force of our general argument, without furnishing us with any thing like a refutation of it. We contend, that it is an appointment, which has altogether a moral, and not a ceremonial character; and that, from the very nature of its duties, from the very ordinance of heaven by which it is enjoined, it has a universal and perpetual authority over the heart

and the life of man; and, after noticing and answering an objection, which has been very generally, and, in some cases, vauntingly advanced against this view of the subject, we shall endeavour to adduce some proofs of it from the writings of the Old Testament, posterior to the publication of the Mosaic law.

## SECTION VI.

*Review of the objections urged against the Antiquity and moral obligation of the Sabbath.*

THERE is a fine observation of a late dignitary of the Church of England,\* bearing so closely upon the very point we have been attempting to defend and illustrate, that we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of placing it at the head of this Section.—

“An institution of this antiquity,” (such as we have shown above, belongs to the Sabbath,) “could derive no part of its sanction from the Mosaic law; and the abrogation of that law no more releases the worshippers of God from a rational observance of a Sabbath, than it cancels the injunction of filial piety, or the prohibition of theft and murder, adultery, calumny, and avarice. The worship of the Christian church, is, properly, to be considered as a restoration of the patriarchal, in its primitive simplicity and purity; and, of the patriarchal worship, the Sabbath was the noblest, and, perhaps, the simplest rite.” It is thus, we

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\* Bishop Horsley.

argue, that the duty of publicly solemnizing and sanctifying the Sabbath, is a duty, as binding upon Christians, as any other duty which is prescribed by the Most High, and, in its consequences, too, equally serious and lasting. But, proceeding entirely on the idea, that it is purely arbitrary and ceremonial, it is argued against us, that no moral consequences can attend its observance, or its neglect, because no moral conditions attended its first establishment—because its positive enforcement was confined to one nation, and to one period of the world—and because, under the more wide, liberal, and equitable dispensation of the Gospel, all ceremonial rites have ceased, and all distinctions in the external modes of worship have perished with the circumstances which gave them birth. We are not able to suppress our wonder, when we hear men, who profess a reverence for the authority of God, and a belief in the doctrines of Christianity, arguing in defence of a cause which is directly subversive of both. In charity, we may ascribe their errors to a mistaken zeal to free our religion from the tedious prescriptions, and complicated forms, with which its duties have sometimes been encumbered; but, in justice to the cause we defend, we must lament, that their zeal was not corrected by their imprudence, when they saw, by its effects, that, instead of strengthening

the pillars of our faith, they were undermining the very foundations upon which they were built.

But, let us hear how they have endeavoured to support the position, which, in our opinion, they have very rashly and unadvisedly assumed. They are aware—if it can be proved that the Sabbath was instituted immediately after the creation of the world—that it was made known to our first parent, as the head and representative of the human race—and was unconnected with any of the ceremonial appointments, which, in later ages, applied only to particular times and places;—then, the argument for its universal and perpetual obligation is unanswerable. They have attempted, therefore, to get rid of this difficulty in a way, which seems to us to correspond exactly to that which schoolmen call, begging the question. They contend, that the first notice of its establishment, (which is found in the second chapter of Genesis,) was inadvertently introduced there, by the author of the Pentateuch, or by some transcriber of it, when he was giving an account of the division of time into weeks; and this opinion they hold, because there is no evidence from the subsequent details of the above document, that the Sabbath was regarded as a day of rest, or of religious worship, until its observance was enjoined, with that of the other commandments, on Mount Sinai. They have searched the patriar-

chal ages for traces of its existence; and because they have discovered no record of its celebration, they have considered themselves warranted to conclude, that the statement, or notice, above-mentioned, is ante-dated, or, what is the same thing, was the anticipation of a law, which was hereafter to be published; and, that there is no authority for its observance,—that there is, indeed, no proof of its being recognised as a duty, till it was solemnly promulgated to the Hebrews, as they journeyed through the wilderness.

In assuming this ground, their avowed object is, to prove that the Sabbath is an institution which was strictly confined to the Jews; and that the obligations to its observance, existed only as long as the dispensation under which they lived, had the sanction and approbation of heaven. To say the least of it, there is something not very fair, or honourable, in a critical point of view, in this way of maintaining an argument; for, if we were at liberty to conclude, that any passage of Scripture, which it was troublesome to explain, or which it was difficult to reconcile with some favourite theory which we wished to establish; if we were at liberty, I say, to conclude that this was an interpolation,—that is, was introduced into the work by some other hand than that of the inspired author, or found its way into the particular position it now

occupies, by the ignorance of some careless transcriber,—then, there is an end to all precision in the interpretation of the sacred oracles; and men may superinduce upon the plain and unambiguous doctrines of inspiration, any explanations whatever, which may suit their unbridled, and, perhaps, impure fancy. It is not, we think, a very safe, or a very commendable mode of procedure, to attempt to weaken, in any circumstances, the divine authority of any appointment on which the moral security and happiness of society depend, and we ought, certainly, to calculate, very seriously, the expediency of our undertaking, as well as the motives by which we are influenced, before we rashly engage in a work, which, at the best, can only throw a stumbling-block in the way of the weak, and increase the effrontery and the impiety of the prophane. But, the argument we are now combating, if it proves any thing, proves too much.

It is true, that, from the first promulgation of the Sabbath, at the creation, a long period of nearly three thousand years intervenes, during which, we hear nothing of its observance, or its sanctions. We read of men having multiplied greatly upon the earth—of having spread extensively over its surface—of having divided themselves into different tribes, and espoused different

interests—of having increased in iniquity, as well as knowledge—and of having forgotten, except in one small district, all reverence for the authority, and all gratitude for the goodness of their Creator—but in no condition of their social improvement or debasement, do we read of their remembering the seventh day, to keep it holy. We accompany the patriarchs in their various migrations and pursuits, and amidst all their veneration of God, and the consecration of their lives to his service, we hear not once of the duties of the Sabbath forming any part of their devotional enjoyments and exercises. In all the variety of fortune, which characterized the human race, before and after the deluge—in all the details of piety which distinguished the families of the few among whom the knowledge and reverence of the true God were preserved and cherished—we never read of their meeting to devote the seventh portion of the week to a respite from their ordinary labours, and to spend it in the study and adoration of his attributes, and the fear and obedience of his laws. But, all this may be easily accounted for, without recurring to the solution which our opponents have adopted, and, thereby, rejecting a belief in the early institution, and universal sanction of the Sabbath.

The records of the transactions of the first, or patriarchal ages of the world, are exceedingly



brief and scanty in their details. They are confined to a few families, and a few districts of the earth, and serve only as an introduction to the history of the Jewish people, among whom, the Almighty was pleased to place the symbols of his tutelary presence and glory; and whom he honoured to be the preservers of his knowledge and worship, amidst the wide spread idolatry which characterized the other nations of mankind. In these records, we find no enumeration of the duties which are enforced in the moral law, and which are universally acknowledged to have been, in all ages, binding upon men; and as well, therefore, might we contend, that, to the crimes of murder and robbery—to the guilt of violated faith and chastity—no moral penalties were attached, because no specific enactments against them exist; as to argue, that no moral obligation belonged to the sanctification of the Sabbath, because no special law is found confirmatory of its first establishment. The silence of history respecting any fact or event, is, by no means, a proof of the non-existence, or non-occurrence of that event; and because we are not told that the early inhabitants of the world held the seventh day sacred to the duties of devotion and meditation, we have no reason to conclude, that the obligations to do so, were either not felt, or not obeyed. In the eager-

ness of some men to establish their favourite opinion, they have stoutly contended, that this day never had any divine sanction given for its observance, till it received it amidst the thunders of Mount Sinai. But, we beg to ask them, how they will explain to us the fact of the solemn injunction which was given to the Israelites for its devout celebration, when they were encamped between Elim and the wilderness of Sin, a considerable time prior to their having reached the hill of Sinai, where the law was promulgated? This solitary fact, is, in our opinion, a strong voucher for the regular observance of the seventh day, as a day of rest, antecedent to the date at which the moral law was communicated to the Hebrews; and refers us back to the period of its appointment, as narrated in the Book of Genesis. But, it seems, this very fact is employed by our opponents as an argument against the perpetuity of the moral obligation of this day; and, on this account, it is necessary that we briefly examine the passage in which it is recorded.

When all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from Elim to the wilderness, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, “Would to God, we had died by the hand of the Lord, in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots; and did eat bread to the full: for ye

have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”\* Thus, soon did they forget the manifold and marvellous manifestations of divine power and goodness, exhibited in their redemption from the cruel oppression of Pharaoh; and thus early were extinguished in their hearts, all the sentiments of love, gratitude, devotion, and resignation, which these manifestations were calculated to excite and perpetuate. Yet, many a time did the Lord turn away his anger, and forgive their iniquity; and, in the present instance, he furnished a table in the wilderness, and rained down manna for them to eat. From the unusual appearance of this food, the people knew not what it was, and while they seemed to have been perplexed about its use, Moses put an end to their doubts, saying, “This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat—gather of it, every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons. Let no man leave of it till the morning.”† The order was, however, in some instances disobeyed; and we are told, that the surplus quantity, which remained on the morrow, became putrid and unfit for use. Immediately after this, it is added by the sacred historian, “It

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\* Exod. xvi. 2, 5.

† Ibid. xvi. 15. 19.

came to pass, that on the sixth day, they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man." This deviation from the injunction so lately given, excited the notice of the rulers of the congregation, and they came, and told Moses. But Moses said unto them,—“ This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that which ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade; and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord; to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.”\*

This passage, it is argued, contains the first account of the institution of the Sabbath, as a day of public religious duty; and hence it is attempted, to assign it a rank exclusively among the laws of the Jews, and to confine the obligation of its observance exclusively to that people. A fair and impartial interpretation of the passage, does not, we think, by any means, support such a view. The language does not at all bear out the idea,

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\* Exod. xvi. 23, 24, 25, 26.

that a new and unheard-of institution was referred to. It points directly to some ordinance which was familiar to the people who were addressed, and with the sanctions and duties of which they were well acquainted. "This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." There is here an obvious allusion to some antecedent revelation of the will of God; and, in the conduct of the people who were addressed, we plainly perceive the compliance with some well-known and long-established custom. At the fifth verse of the chapter from which we have already quoted, it is said, in relation to the mode of gathering the manna, "It shall come to pass, that on the sixth day, they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." Now this is the injunction, of which we see the observance in the twenty-second verse, but of which the rulers being apparently ignorant or unmindful, and conceiving that it was a violation of the general order contained in the sixteenth verse, in the execution of their official duty; they lay a report of the transaction before Moses. The answer we have already heard. "This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath."

The multitude testified, by their ready obedience of the command issued in the fifth verse, that they

were well acquainted with the duty of observing the seventh day; and regarded that duty as possessing a superior authority to the special prohibition, about which the rulers seem to have experienced some perplexity,—that they were familiar with the mode of reckoning by weeks, a mode of calculation, which, we have formerly shown, must have originated in the consecration of that day, to a cessation from wordly labour, and to the exalted exercises of devotion, of which we consider the passage before us as affording a direct proof—“On the sixth day, they gathered, every man, a double quantity, because the morrow was the rest of the holy Sabbath.” The plain and natural interpretation of these words, fully authorizes us to say, that this was an institution with which they were all previously acquainted, and the obligations to the observance of which, they all fully acknowledged. If it were not so, we must have heard, or have been informed of something, on the part of the people, or of the elders, expressive of surprise, or hesitation, or inquiry, respecting so novel, and so important an institution; otherwise, the individuals concerned, must have been destitute of ordinary discernment, and of the ordinary desire of knowledge. Grant, however, that it was, as we contend it was, an old institution, which they were enjoined to observe—and their ready acquiescence with the

command, and the absence of all doubt and inquiry respecting its propriety and its obligations, are perfectly natural, and most easily explained.

But we are not allowed to rest here. The sacred writings inform us, that, notwithstanding the admonition of Moses, "It came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments, and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye, every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."\* Now, strangely indeed, and most erroneously, as it seems to us, has it been argued, that the words just quoted—"the Lord hath given you the Sabbath," refer to a new and positive institution, formerly unknown. It is maintained, that the phraseology applies emphatically and exclusively to the Hebrews, and that, taken in connection with the twenty-third verse—"This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord," they furnish a decisive proof of the original appointment of the sanctification of the seventh day. This, we consider the

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\* Exod. xvi. 27, 28, 29.

last resource of a weak and desperate cause; and we are only astonished, that men of acknowledged talent and piety should ever have been found resorting to it. The argument, however, carries its own refutation along with it; for, either the words, “how long refuse ye to keep my commandments, and my laws?” which immediately precede the clause, “for the Lord hath given you the Sabbath,” relate to an old, well-known, and common practice—to the neglect and violation of some long-established institution—or, they have absolutely no point or meaning. But we cannot waste time in offering a more serious or lengthened answer to an objection so frivolous and evanescent; and if what we have very recently advanced, respecting the statement in the twenty-third verse, be correct, then, the words now under consideration, cannot be understood as the original announcement of the institution of the Sabbath, but must be taken as a repetition of an old ordinance, enjoining its sanctification.

When men, who have a weak, or a bad cause to defend, are driven from one fastness, they generally fly to another; and, rather than honourably relinquish a position which has been proved to be untenable, they strengthen themselves in fool-hardiness and obstinacy, and engage in a desperate resistance, which only exposes them to



defeat and derision. Accordingly, we find it alleged by our opponents, that although it is not mentioned in the history, yet, the observance of the Sabbath might be introduced and enjoined after the passage of the Red Sea, or, as above, at the gathering of the manna. But this assumption is altogether gratuitous, and cannot, for a moment, be adhered to by any who give the sacred records a careful and candid perusal.

It is quite absurd to suppose, that a new institution, of so much importance as that of the Sabbath, which was accompanied with the solemn benediction of the Almighty himself, should be introduced and announced to the people, with all its claims of moral obligation, and yet be wholly excluded from its natural and proper place in the regular history. Those who assume this to be the fact, maintain a position, which every event and incident detailed in the sacred writings, combine to overthrow. Circumcision and the passover, are institutions confessedly inferior in importance to that of the Sabbath; and yet, their first establishment is found narrated at the exact period of time, and along with the exact circumstances in which they originated. Now, if we allow that the institution of the Sabbath was unknown, or had no existence till the time of Moses, then, both circumcision and the passover, as prior in their appointment,

might justly be regarded as superior in their moral sanctions and obligations: and, in that case, we would ask our opponents, how they will dispose of our Saviour's argument with the Jews, on this point—"Moses gave unto you circumcision, (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers,) and ye on the Sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day?" \*

It is manifest, from the reasoning here employed, that our Saviour regarded the Sabbath as an institution of superior importance, and of stronger moral obligation, than the other two; and it is also manifest, that the Jews entertained the same opinion. Had they believed it to be an institution of no higher antiquity than the time of Moses, it could never have been a subject of doubt or surprise, that it should yield to the prior rite of circumcision; nor would our Saviour's argument, in that case, have possessed any force or any application to the point at issue.

We have farther to observe, however, that, if the general argument of our opponents proved any thing, it would prove too much—too much, at

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\* John's Gospel, vii. 22, 23.

least, for the safety of the doctrine they defend. We have already seen, that it is chiefly on account of the silence, which has been remarked in the writings of Moses, respecting the observance of the Sabbath, that they contend it never had any divine authority as a commandment, until it received it amidst the thunders of Mount Sinai; and by this means, they imagine, they are able to take away the general sanction, which belongs to it as a moral appointment. Now, it is unfortunate for their hypothesis, that the evidence for its truth, is altogether of a negative character; and that, so far from amounting, in any case, to a proof, it carries not, in our estimation, the air of probability. But let us see a little more particularly how the matter stands, even according to their own statement. The observance of the Sabbath, we are told, is not mentioned in the history of the world, before the call of Abraham; and because the neglect of it is not ascribed to the inhabitants of the old world, as a crime, it is concluded, that its institution must have been unknown. We have already replied, in general terms, to this objection; and we shall only add, that, if the reasoning on which it is founded, be allowed to be correct, we may argue for the non-observance of the Sabbath, and the non-criminality of its neglect, during the long period of seven hundred and thirty years,

after the events recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus; or, during the still longer period of nine hundred years from the same date: for then only do we find the first direct censure of the Jewish people, and the first judgments denounced against them, for the profanation of that holy day. See Isaiah, chapter first, but particularly the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel.

But, farther, it is objected, that the second chapter of Genesis, does not contain an account of the original institution of the Sabbath, because there is no record of its observance, or of its neglect, during the stay of the children of Israel in Egypt, or during any other public emergency of that people. It is answered, that, at a much later period of their history, *viz.* that of their captivity in Chaldea, we have no record of any permission for them to dispense with the obligation of the Sabbath; neither have we any account of their observance of it. The sacred writings are altogether as silent respecting it, in this case, as in that above referred to. Yet, as Nehemiah, and his pious coadjutors in the work of re-establishing the worship of God, and of reforming the morals of the people, solemnly enjoined and enforced its observance, and recommended, by their own example, the duty of sanctifying it; it is impossible to doubt, that the public celebration of the day, was a well-known, though

neglected, ordinance of the Most High, during the above period.\* I shall only mention, as a parallel circumstance in the cases just mentioned, that, as it was shortly after the return of the Jews from their captivity in Chaldea, that Nehemiah commanded them to rest, on the Sabbath, from their secular pursuits, and to sanctify it—so was it, shortly after their release from the bondage of Egypt, that its observance was enjoined by Moses, on the occasion of their gathering the manna: and thus, by a parity of reasoning, we may conclude, that the institution was equally known to that people during their residence in Egypt, as during their captivity in Chaldea.

The brief and summary details contained in the sacred writings, sufficiently account for the infrequent mention of the observance or non-observance of the Sabbath; and ought to operate as a restraint on the disputatious tempers of those, whose zeal, in the cause of reducing the moral obligations of that holy day, by shaking men's faith in the antiquity of its establishment, may lessen, but can never strengthen their attachment to an institution, which is undeniably the most venerable, wise, and beneficial, that the Almighty ever ordained for the use of man. It is worthy of

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\* See Nehemiah, *passim*.

consideration, moreover, that this institution is not mentioned in more than five or six passages of Scripture, relating to different events, during one thousand years, embracing the whole period from the time of Moses till the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. The first is found during the reign of Saul, (1 Chron. ix. 32,) nearly five hundred years after the giving of the law. The second occurs at the time Jehoram reigned over Israel, and Jehoshaphat over Judah, (2 Kings iv. 23,) about six hundred years after the above event.\* The third passage may be seen, (2 Kings xvi. 18,) relating to a sacrilegious act of the wicked Ahaz, at the distance of seven hundred and fifty years from the fore-mentioned date. The other passages, in which any notices of the Sabbath are recorded, previous to the above epoch, may be found in chapters lvi. lviii. and lxvi. of the prophecies of Isaiah; and these were written nearly eight hundred years after the death of Moses. No other trace or record of it can be discovered in the sacred writings, till after the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon.

If, then, during so long a period as one thousand years, when the history of the Jewish nation was increasing in clearness and fulness of detail, such

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\* See also 2 Kings xi. 5, *et seq.*

are the only passages, in which we have any notice of the institution now under consideration, can it be matter of surprise, that, during the antedeluvian and patriarchal ages, when its details are so brief and imperfect, we have no notice of it at all? We have seen, that, from the time of Moses, until the time of Saul, comprising a period of nearly five hundred years; there is not to be found in the historical registers of the Jews, any traces of its observance, or any rehearsal of its duties, or any enforcement of their obligation. Now, if the silence of the Scriptures, in the first instance, were any proof that the sanctification of the Sabbath was not recognised as a duty, so assuredly would it be in the second instance; but as the most violent opponents of the moral obligations of this day, do not deny that its observance was a duty, and its neglect a crime, after the giving of the moral law, although the Scriptures have said nothing about it, during five hundred years after that event—so we maintain, that its observance was a duty, and its neglect a crime, prior to the giving of that law, although the Scriptures are silent respecting it for nearly three thousand years.\*

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\* See Note C.

## SECTION VII.

*The Writings of the Old Testament furnish the clearest and most satisfactory proof, that the observance of the Sabbath had a moral, and not a ceremonial obligation.*

I SHALL not recur, under this Section, to any of the arguments already deduced from the early period of the world, at which the ordinance of Heaven was first published for the observance of the Sabbath, and which so clearly and forcibly establish its universal and perpetual obligation;—but, confining myself to those parts of the sacred writings which relate to the history of the Jews, after their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, I shall endeavour to support the same conclusion, from all the notices which these writings exhibit of the nature and end of this institution.

It is generally allowed by theologians, that the moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, which were published to the Hebrews, amidst the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai; and we believe, that all writers on



morality, have admitted the same fact. At least, they all admit, that the great leading points of duty which we owe to our Creator, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves, are embraced in these commandments, and that subsequent revelations of the will of God, and increased experience and knowledge, on the part of man, have filled up all the intermediate and minute cases, which his wants, or desires, or claims, in any of the above capacities, might suggest. Now, the moral law is held to be obligatory, in the most universal sense of the word, on men of every age and every country: for, although it was originally delivered to the Hebrews only, there is not the slightest ground for believing, that it was not expressly designed by the Almighty, that it should, ultimately, be of general application, and that men of every nation should be bound by its conditions. The sanctification of the Sabbath, is enjoined in one of the most solemn of all the commandments which constitute that law; and if the same reasoning which would be held good in every other case, be held good here, that which is due to one, must be due to all; and all mankind must be under the same immutable obligations to observe and obey the injunction contained in the fourth, as they are to obey that contained in the third. Nor do we think it is of little consequence, to mark the manner in which

these laws were promulgated for the instruction and the government of man. Never were any of the communications of heaven accompanied with such awful and glorious manifestations of the divine majesty and power. The mountain, we are told, was “altogether on a smoke, and quaked greatly, because the Lord descended on it in fire.” There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud encircling it; and, when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice, saying,—“ I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me. And showing mercy to thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.” Such is the form in which the Almighty condescended to introduce, to his erring and sinful creatures, the revelation of those great moral precepts, which were intended to constitute the perpetual rule of their conduct; and it is impossible to conceive any circumstances more powerfully calculated to make a deep and solemn impression on the mind of man.

But, farther, we are informed, that when Moses was called up into the mountain of Sinai, the glory of the Lord abode upon it, and a cloud covered it six days. “And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire, on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel.” For forty days and forty nights, Moses enjoyed the singular and exalted honour of holding personal communication with the Most High; during which time, he received explicit and minute directions respecting the materials and the form of the ark, and the tabernacle—the mercy-seat, and the cherubim of glory with which it was to be surmounted—the table—the candlestick—the lamp of pure gold—and all the other vessels requisite for the public services of religion. And it is certainly remarkable, that, after every necessary instruction had been published regarding the dress of the priests who were to officiate—the sacrifices they were to offer—and the ceremonies they were to perform,—this marvellous and splendid manifestation of God’s condescension and kindness to man, should terminate with a most solemn republication of the law of the Sabbath. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily, my Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you, throughout your generations, that ye may know

that I am the Lord, that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it, shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work thereon, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for, in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day, he rested and was refreshed." \*

It cannot fail to attract the notice of every pious and reflecting reader, that there is a peculiar solicitude displayed throughout the whole of the passage I have now quoted, for securing the devout and solemn observance of this holy day: and the reasons which are assigned for the act, or the motives by which it is enforced, are of the most exalted moral and spiritual character. "Six days may work be done; but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy unto the Lord. Wherefore, the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath to observe it, throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant: for, in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh he rested."† The cause which is here assigned for the institution, is altogether independent of any of the local pecu-

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\* Exod. xxxi, 12—18.

† Ibid. xxxi. 15, 16, 17.

liarities or ceremonial appointments of the Jews. It equally affects and concerns men of every age, and of every climate, who believe in the existence of God, and acknowledge the homage of reverence and gratitude due unto him: and though the law, in which the observance of that institution was so minutely and circumstantially enjoined, was first delivered to that people only, it bears upon all its conditions and requirements, this undeniable character, that, like the other nine, with which it is incorporated, it was intended to be of general and perpetual obligation, under every dispensation of providence, and in every age of the world. But this is a view of the subject, which I have detailed very fully above; and I shall only here add, by way of supplement, that, if I were disposed to argue minutely in defence of the position I have assumed, or to combine in its support every circumstance or fact, furnished by the sacred writings, I might state at great length, that the two tables of stone, on which were written, by the immortal finger of God, the words of the covenant—the ten commandments, were expressly designed to serve as a symbol of the perpetuity of their obligation on the consciences of all men, to whom their conditions and requirements apply.

But we have no need to resort to extraneous, minute, or doubtful sources of reasoning, to up-

hold and establish our cause. It rests upon broad and stable grounds of its own, which no inquiries, or discoveries, or sophistry of men, shall ever be able to subvert or confute. An examination of the terms, and conditions of the laws of the Decalogue, will, at once, satisfy every man possessed of just religious sentiments, or of common moral discrimination, that they apply to the circumstances of every reasonable and accountable being, to whom they are made known; and, therefore, must every reasonable and accountable being, to whom they are made known, be held answerable for his observance, or non-observance, of their requirements. Unlike the local ceremonies, and temporary institutions of the Hebrews, the written prescriptions of which were placed *beside the ark*, the record of the ten commandments, the two tables of stone, were deposited *within the ark*; and as the ark was a symbol of the divine presence, this very circumstance, may, without any straining of metaphor, or any unnatural interpretation, be regarded as a testimony of their paramount authority, their everlasting importance, and indissoluble obligation.

But, there are some circumstances, connected with the institution and observance of the Sabbath among the Jews, which decidedly mark it as being independent of, if not unconnected with, the Mosaic

ritual; as being, in fact, universal and perpetual in its obligations; and to these we shall very briefly advert. The fourth commandment runs in these words: "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, *nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.*" This last clause, we contend, furnishes a strong indirect argument, for the universality of the law to which it is appended. The strangers who resided in the land of Judea, were divided into two classes; and distinguished by the names of Proselytes of the covenant, and Proselytes of the gate. The former submitted to the rite of circumcision, and were bound to observe the whole of the Jewish laws and ceremonies. The latter did not submit to the initiatory rite of the Abrahamic covenant, neither did they embrace the peculiar tenets and rules which the Jews, as a nation, observed. They simply renounced idolatry, professed their faith in the one living and true God, and promised obedience to the patriarchal institutions and laws. Now, it is to this class, that the fourth commandment alludes, by the "*stranger within thy gates.*" He was bound to keep holy the Sabbath; but he was not

permitted to eat of the passover, or to offer incense, or to join in many of the ritual services of the law. What, then, can be the cause of this distinction? Is there, in the history of the case, any grounds for it? Can we point out a reason for it, derived from the very nature of the institution, and applicable to the character of the persons in question? Yes. The passover, and all the other ordinances and rites, to which the proselyte of the covenant was admitted, were *national institutions*, and purely Jewish in their obligations. The Sabbath, which the stranger, or the proselyte of the gate, who had not adopted the peculiarities of the Jewish religion, was bound to observe and keep holy, was not *national*, but *universal* in its obligations. It was not restricted to those who embraced all the peculiar tenets of the Mosaic economy; but extended to every descendant of Adam—to every rational and accountable creature, dependent upon God for life and preservation; and bound, therefore, by every consideration of love and gratitude, to give him the homage of thanksgiving and praise.

Prophecy is a prospective detail of events which are hereafter to be unfolded; and if we can show, that there are, in the sacred writings, any prophetic declarations bearing upon the future observance and sanctification of the Sabbath; we may, with the strictest propriety, plead, that they afford a



powerful argument in favour of the universality of its obligations, under every dispensation of God's will and mercy to man. This, then, I shall endeavour to do, as briefly as the importance of the case will permit.

In Psalm cxviii., it is thus written, "The stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it." It is universally allowed, that these verses are a prediction of the rejection, the persecution, and death of the Messiah, by his infidel countrymen: and of his miraculous and triumphant resurrection from the grave. The day on which he rose victorious over the spirits of darkness, and spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, is, by way of eminence, called, "the day of the Lord;" and, in the enthusiasm of his feelings, awakened by the glorious event, the Psalmist exclaims, "On it we will rejoice and be glad. Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord." The day here prophetically alluded to, is the day on which the Lord Jesus became our shield and our salvation, on which prayers were ever after to be offered up, and praises sung to the Most High; and on which the righteous were to receive

blessings out of the house of the Lord. This is the day on which Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and became the head-stone of the corner. It is the day of holy rest, devoted to the commemoration of the marvellous doings of the Lord, and to the anticipation of the eternal joy and blessedness, which await the righteous, in the land beyond death and the grave.

In chapter lvi. of Isaiah, we meet with this striking and beautiful prediction, which, beyond all doubt, relates to the days of gospel light and purity; when the privileges and benefits enjoyed by the faithful, should be universally extended and confirmed.\* “Let not the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord, Unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbath, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them, will I give in mine house and within my walls, a place, and a name, better than that of sons and of daughters: and I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also, the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name

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\* Isaiah lvi. 5—9,

of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called *an house of prayer for all people*. The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him."

It requires no ingenuity or labour to prove, that this passage of scripture is strictly descriptive of the days of the Son of man: when it was no longer they, who worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem or the mountain of Samaria, but all in every climate and country, who worshipped God with a pure heart fervently, that should be accepted by him. An enlarged knowledge of the revelation of mercy and grace to men; an universal diffusion of the light of truth and salvation, are clearly implied: and the period alluded to, can be no other than that, when the middle wall of partition which divided the Jew from the Gentile, was broken down, and the vail of the temple rent asunder, and the tidings of peace and reconciliation preached unto them who were afar off, and to them who were near; when the law of ceremonial commandments, was abrogated and abo-

lished by the death and the resurrection of Christ ; and of twain, one new man made for ever unto himself. The public ordinances of religion were then to be held sacred by every people; the divine sanctions of the Sabbath were to receive a glorious illustration, when the salvation and the righteousness of the Lord were revealed, and the outcasts of Israel and the sons of the stranger were gathered unto Christ; when all, indeed, without distinction of age, or of nation, who kept the Sabbath from polluting it, and took hold of the covenant of God, should be accepted and blessed, and made joyful in his house of prayer.

Now, the above is a prediction, which the Spirit of truth would never have penned, unless it had been true; and it cannot be true, unless, at the period of its accomplishment, the Sabbath continued to be a divine appointment, and men were accepted and blessed, in observing and sanctifying it. Under the dispensation of the Gospel, but never before that, this prediction has received an exact and glorious fulfilment. The outcasts of Israel and others, have been gathered unto Christ. The sons of the stranger have come from afar, and joined themselves unto the Lord to serve him. They have loved his name, and kept his Sabbath from polluting it. They have been brought into his holy mountain, and made joyful in his house

of prayer. Their sacrifices and burnt-offerings, the incense of their hearts, and the pure aspirations of their faith, have been accepted upon his altar; and thus, in the fullest and only true sense of the terms, has his house become "a house of prayer for all people." The ceremonial law has been abolished, but the moral law has remained. The distinction between Jew and Gentile, and bond and free, is for ever broken down; new heavens and a new earth have been created; former things have passed away, and all things have become new.\* The work of redeeming, and of sanctifying the souls of men, has made the spiritual Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy: and during eighteen hundred years, have the blessings, foretold by the most sublime and evangelical of all the prophets, been possessed and enjoyed by all who have kept the Sabbath from polluting it, and taken hold of the covenant of the Lord; for they have been brought into his holy mountain, and made joyful in his house of prayer.

If it were necessary for the support of our argument, other passages than these now referred to, might be adduced from the Old Testament, to give additional force to the views we have been illustrating. But we do not consider the case to

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\* Isaiah lxxv. 17, 18.

stand in need of such assistance, and we forbear to load our pages with long and tedious quotations. The Sabbath was instituted, to be a commemoration of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, displayed in the creation of the universe; and of this we are fully informed by the very commandment which enjoins its observance. Though the fourth commandment, therefore, was originally delivered to the Jews only, it possesses the same claim to universality of application, as all the other commandments of the law: by the same moral conditions, then, are all men bound to its observance, and by the same rule of moral justice, will all be judged for the transgression of it, as for the transgression of any of the others, the moral character and obligations of which are not disputed. The end of its institution, moreover, was to furnish to man an opportunity of advancing in the knowledge and practice of holiness; and of this we have the most satisfactory proof, from almost every notice which is given of it in the writings of the Old Testament. To all men, therefore, of every kindred and climate, its enactments and requirements are alike interesting and obligatory: and to all of them, also, their neglect and violation must be alike criminal and punishable. The very nature of the commandment, indeed, points out its universality: its universality

clearly establishes its morality: and this again leaves not a shadow of a doubt of our responsibility. "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." \*

After this full, and, we trust, satisfactory, detail of those passages of Scripture, by which the argument placed at the head of this Section, is supported, we might, with safety, leave it to the candour of the reader to decide, respecting its force or validity: but we are unwilling to bring our illustration to an end, without adverting to two or three general facts, which, we cannot help thinking, give much additional weight to the views we are defending.

In these late, and enlightened ages, as they are called, it never enters into the mind of any man to dispute the moral obligations of the commandments which prohibit idolatry, or the worship of false gods—the profanation of the glorious and fearful titles of the one living and true God—the crimes of murder, of adultery, of

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\* Isaiah lxvi. 22, 23.

theft—of bearing false witness against our neighbour—and of coveting from our neighbour what we are afraid openly to plunder. No one thinks of denying, that we are under moral obligation to reverence and worship the Lord God Almighty, the maker and preserver of all things; and to honour and obey our parents, as the natural guardians and instructors of our life; that, according to the promise annexed, our days may be long and prosperous upon the earth. Now, in the very body of these commandments, is found that one in which the duties of the Sabbath are enumerated, and the same sanctions that belong to all the others, belong to it. The same blessings and the same punishments, as are attached to the observance or violation of the other commandments, are attached to the fourth: and the whole history of the Jews, abundantly proves the punctuality and rigour with which they were dispensed and inflicted. “Six days shall work be done, but, on the seventh, there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord. Whosoever doth work therein, shall be put to death.” \*

If it be objected, as we know it has been by some, that the threatenings and penalties, associated by the prophets with a violation of the duties

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\* Exod. xxxv. 2.



of the Sabbath, are merely of a temporal nature; and if they expect, by this subterfuge, to shake off the obligation to its public observance, we can answer, that, upon the same grounds, and with as good reason, they may throw away the obligation of every commandment of the moral law. It was a peculiar feature of the Jewish dispensation, that temporal blessings only were originally annexed to the preservation of its forms, and the obedience of its requirements: and temporal penalties only denounced against the disregard and transgression of its laws. "Honour thy father and thy mother," says the fifth commandment, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." "If thou call the Sabbath a delight," saith the prophet Isaiah,\* "the Holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

To the crime of murder, death was annexed by the law of Moses: and, upon one who early ventured wantonly to profane the Sabbath, the same penalty was inflicted by the same authority.†

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\* Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.

† Exod. xv. 32—37.

The same national calamities, as are denounced against the indulgence in idolatry, and against the violation of the general statutes, which were promulgated from Mount Sinai, are threatened against the transgression of the Sabbath, with a minuteness and a severity, which almost induce us to attach an importance to its sanctification, superior to the observance of the other laws of the Decalogue. “Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary. But, if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments, I will bring your land into desolation, and your enemies which dwell therein, shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the Heathen: and I will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies’ land: because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.” \*

Now, if there should be the least scruple in the mind of any of our readers, to admit this quotation as conclusive of our opinion, from an idea that it may relate only to the Sabbatical year, we refer them to the book of Nehemiah, where they will find ample proof, that the neglect of the duty of

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\* Levit. xxvi. 2. 32—35.

sanctifying the weekly Sabbath, brought upon the idolatrous Jews all the judgments denounced in the above passage. It was after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, that this pious and persevering reformer of the sins of his countrymen presided over them: and it is known to every reader of the Bible, how dissolute and profligate their manners had become. During a short visit, which he was obliged to make to the court of Persia, the people, whom he had lately persuaded to renounce the idolatrous worship of the Heathen deities, and to renew their covenant with the living and true God, and to swear allegiance to his laws; and to vow a solemn and reverent observance of the Sabbath: during this short visit, they forgot the vows which were upon them—they violated all the moral and religious restraints by which they were bound—they profaned the Sabbath by the most open and detestable traffic, in the meanest and filthiest wares—they withheld from the Levites the rightful dues which belonged to their office—they forced them to desert the service of the temple—and thus, by the abolishment of the public institutions and ordinances of religion, they gained the means of revelling undisturbed in the commission of the most flagrant and odious iniquities. Partly by expostulation, and partly by the exercise of judicial authority, Nehemiah restrained them in

their career of profaneness and impiety; and averted from them the degradation and punishment which their sins were rapidly preparing for them. "In these days," \* says he, "saw I in Judah, some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day: and I testified against them in the day, wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, who brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath-day, unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city;" (that is, the desolation of the one, and the captivity of the other;) "and yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath?"

Happily for the honour and interest of his country, his zealous and dauntless exertions succeeded in driving away from the city, the odious spectacle of a mercenary mob of traders, who brought forward all manner of victuals and ware, to minister to the depraved appetites of its inha-

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\* Nehemiah xiii. 15—23.

bitants. “ And he commanded the Levites, that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates of the city, and sanctify the Sabbath-day.” But, even after he had repressed the outrage which had been publicly offered to the ordinances of the Most High, he seems scarcely satisfied that the evil was removed or extinguished: and apprehensive, lest, on a point of duty which he conceived to be of the deepest importance, and of the most obligatory nature, he himself might not have exerted all the requisite diligence, or not have obeyed all the requisite forms, he thus fervently implores the divine forgiveness and favour; “ Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me, according to the greatness of thy power.” From all this, then, we contend, that the observance of the Sabbath is morally obligatory as to its duties and its penalties. Its duties are the most important and interesting that can be propounded to man; *viz.* the consecration of his thoughts, words, and deeds, to the public worship and glory of God. Its blessings are the richest and most enlivening that can be addressed to his hopes, and his desire of happiness; and its penalties are the most fearful and paralysing that can affect our feelings of future and irremediable wretchedness. “ If ye keep my Sabbaths, and walk in my statutes to do them,

then will I give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase. And I will set my tabernacle among you; and I will walk among you: and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all my commandments, I will appoint over you terror and consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of the heart: and ye shall sow your seed, and your enemies shall eat it: and ye shall be slain before your enemies. And they that hate you, shall reign over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth.” \*

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\* Levit. xxvi.

## SECTION VIII.

*Moral obligation of the Sabbath, under the Christian Dispensation.*

IT is somewhat singular, that, although the wisdom and utility of the institution of the Sabbath, be universally admitted, by all who are not utterly destitute of the true principles of religion, and utterly regardless of the political prosperity and the moral happiness of man, yet there lurks within the breast of the majority of our race, a most perverse reluctance to admit its divine authority, and its sacred and indissoluble obligations: and, hence, its observance and its sanctification are contemplated as points of duty, with which it is entirely optional for them to comply: and the neglect too of which, they flatter themselves, involves no consequences of a serious or lasting nature. Were we to examine strictly, the feelings and views which lead to the transgression of any of the other commandments of the moral law, I am persuaded, we should find them to be similar to those which are the cause of the conduct now complained of. The

blasphemer, the drunkard, the covetous, and the licentious, dismiss from their minds the awe and dread, with which a sense of the divine displeasure, should, at all times, be accompanied; and which a sense of the divine obligation of the laws they transgress, is calculated, at all times, to awaken. Like the transgressors of old, they seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord, and their works in the dark, saying, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Because sentence against their wicked deeds, is not speedily executed, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil.

But there is something more in the case of the transgressor of the Sabbath; and we believe, that, in very many situations of life, he fortifies himself in the neglect and disregard of its duties, under the opinion of those who have argued against their moral obligations and penalties. It is a melancholy fact, that man is exceedingly prone, at all times, to seize upon the most trivial grounds of excuse, for the omission or violation of any duty; and a serious responsibility surely must attach to all who wilfully or heedlessly lend their aid, to relax, in public estimation, the sanctions which belong to any of the ordinances or institutions of religion. We, therefore, regard, as a serious injury to the cause of morality, the efforts of those writers who have attempted to subvert men's belief in the



divine authority of the Sabbath; and, of consequence, to render them indifferent about its duties, by representing it as a mere Jewish appointment, having no sanction and no recommendation from the author of the Christian dispensation. The boldness of the assertion made by these writers, has supplied the want of proof; and as, in all cases, we readily believe that which we wish to be true;—so, the statement before us, has found a very ready and general admission among all classes of professing Christians. The arguments, however, which are employed in its support, rest entirely on presumption; and were it not that we know their influence to be very general, and their effects very pernicious to the moral interests of society, we should not occupy much time in their examination. What we have already advanced, might be regarded as a sufficient answer; but the importance which the question at issue has assumed, from the consequences with which it has been attended, render it necessary that we give it a more full and serious consideration.

We readily grant, that there is not to be found in our Saviour's discourses, any direct and positive rule for the public observance of the Sabbath; nor have any of the writers of the New Testament left us any formal enumeration of commandments on that subject:—but, neither have they given us any

particular rehearsal of the other enactments of the moral law, or any detail of the sanctions belonging to their conditions, and of the consequences attendant upon their neglect: and if silence argued any want of approval in the one case, so would it in the other. No man, however, has ever been so daringly profane, as to charge the author of our religion with a design to abrogate the sanctions of the moral law; and we think, the opinion, that the observance of the Sabbath has lost its divine authority and obligation under the Gospel, has been very rashly and erroneously formed. Whenever an opportunity occurred, we find the crimes of idolatry, of swearing, of covetousness, profligacy, and hypocrisy, all pointedly reprobated and condemned; and singleness of heart, in worshipping the one living and true God—in revering his name and his attributes—in walking before him in holiness and fear—and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the vices and corruptions of the world, frequently and solemnly enjoined. We read often of the abuses which were introduced into the public solemnities of religion—we meet with many reproofs of the superstitious ceremonies with which the devotional worship of the Most High was deformed—but we nowhere meet with any precept or practice which will authorize us to conclude, that our Saviour meant to give the slightest relaxa-

tion to the moral act of dedicating the seventh day to the duties of piety, and benevolence, and prayer. In the most pointed and severe terms, He censured and condemned the traditionary legends—the ostentatious forms—the superstitious and unmeaning rites which his countrymen intermingled with the worship of God; because these were held as substitutes for the substantial and sacred duties of religion, and because their scrupulous observance was accounted to confer an exclusive right to the favour and acceptance of the Most High. From such an opinion, the most mischievous effects must necessarily have flowed; and, accordingly, we are informed, that, when the Son of man appeared on the earth, righteousness and true godliness were nearly banished from it. It was against the rigour of popular superstition, therefore, that he testified—it was against the substitution of the sign for the thing signified, that he complained—and loudly and emphatically did he proclaim to the Scribes and Pharisees of his day, that, though they outwardly appeared righteous unto men, within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity.—“Ye blind guides, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel! Ye tythe mint, and rue, and all manner of herbs; and pass over judgment and the love of God. These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the

other undone.”\* But never did he lift his voice against an institution of his country, that was connected with the cause of virtue and piety; or give the slightest countenance, by his example, to a custom or a practice which was hostile to the celebration of any of the public ordinances of religion. Such an idea, it is monstrous to entertain; and, assuredly, we should not have adverted to it, were there not men among us, at the present day, who unblushingly maintain, that, by directly and pointedly censuring the ceremonial and superstitious observance of the Sabbath among the Jews, he virtually removed the obligations belonging to it as a positive commandment. How far this opinion is agreeable to fact, an examination of his own sentiments and actions, as they are exhibited to us in the New Testament, will best enable us to determine.

The events of the life which he led on this earth, great and marvellous as they often were, and benignant and gracious as they always were, are recorded by his historians with remarkable simplicity and artlessness. He went about continually doing good; and the humane and benevolent acts which he is represented to have performed, arose most naturally out of the circumstances in which

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\* Luke xi. 42.

he was placed. Whenever an opportunity presented itself, he gave a direct and unequivocal sanction to the observance of the Sabbath, by personally joining in the services of the sanctuary, and instructing the assembled multitudes in the knowledge of the spiritual doctrines he had come down from heaven to reveal. "As his custom was," says St. Luke, "he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up to read." And in another place, we are informed, that "he went down to Capernaum, and taught on the Sabbath-days: and the people were astonished, for his word came unto them with power."\* From the limited nature of the details of his life, there must have been many of his actions and his sayings left unrecorded; but, it is gratifying to know, and it ought to satisfy the most scrupulous inquirer, that enough of both is preserved to serve as a rule to us in all matters of faith and practice. There are general principles which we cannot mistake; and there are particular doctrines, respecting which we cannot be deceived, unless we bring to their examination a very perverted and darkened understanding. "If any man," said the Saviour himself to his unbelieving countrymen, "will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine,

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\* Luke iv. 31, 32.

whether it be of God, or whether I speak it of myself." And if, like new-born babes, we desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby—if, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we strive to walk as Christ also walked, we shall find, in the rules of duty which he has prescribed, and the promises of grace which he has vouchsafed for its performance, all that is necessary and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be made perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. In whatever condition, or at whatever time, he is represented to us, he is uniformly expounding or illustrating doctrines and duties of the most essential and important character; and, in the fifth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, we meet with a declaration of the purposes which he had come into the world to accomplish, as far, at least, as regarded the duties which the moral law made obligatory on all men; which we consider as affording an unanswerable refutation of the objection of our opponents.

After he had been inculcating a series of the most amiable and beneficent virtues, and holding out to the practice of these virtues, a variety both of temporal and spiritual rewards—after he had been informing his followers of the important character which they held in the world, and the

moral benefit which they might diffuse, by maintaining a conduct corresponding to their profession—he subjoins, for the general regulation of their opinions and practices, and for removing all doubt of the extent of the duties which they were required to perform, “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For, verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”\* That is, (for this is the obvious interpretation of these words,) Think not, because I enjoin upon you a more spiritual worship than is prevalent among your countrymen—or, because I promulgate to you purer and more exalted doctrines than were published on Mount Sinai—that, therefore, I mean to abrogate the sanctions of the one, or to render null the observance of the other. Think not that I intend to diminish in the minds of men, the motives to the obedience of all that is contained in the moral law—or to absolve them from the obligations of all that is commanded in the writings of the prophets—or to take from “ their predictions ” the force and point of their application. No: the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of my claims to be regarded as the

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\* Matth. v. 17, 18.

Messiah promised to your fathers: and I have now appeared among you, to attest, by my life and character, that it is to me all the prophets gave witness. I have appeared among you, to give a body and reality to all the types and shadows of the ancient ritual, which prefigured a better and more spiritual dispensation, and to bring in a more perfect, even an everlasting righteousness, which the law and the prophets could not reach. I have appeared, not to weaken, but to strengthen all the moral obligations which unite men in the discharge of the duties which relate to this life, and to that which is to come. In fine, it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable, that I have come to reveal the righteousness of God. It is to give additional sanctions to its conditions, and additional rewards to its obedience, that I declare unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall, in no case, enter into the kingdom of God. "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of the least commandments of that law, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:" *i. e.* he shall be reckoned among the most unworthy of all who profess themselves to be my disciples: "but whosoever shall do them, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven:" *i. e.* he shall be reckoned



among the foremost of the advocates of my cause; for he shall give ornament and efficacy to all the doctrines and duties of my Gospel. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law, for Christ Jesus is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

The above declaration of our Saviour, then, we regard as a conclusive authority for us to decide respecting the moral and indissoluble obligations of observing and sanctifying the Sabbath; and we deem it quite unnecessary to load our pages with any additional quotations in support of the position we have assumed. His apostles, who best understood the spirit of their Master’s doctrines, and most faithfully illustrated them by their own conversation and practice, followed the rules which he himself observed; “and on the Sabbath-day they came to hear the word of God; and they rested on it also, according to the commandment.”\* Here, again, we must recur to a remark which we formerly made, and which, it is of importance for us to bear in mind, *viz.* that every example of duty, and every form of public or private devotion, which are recorded in the life of our Saviour, are equally binding on us, as if they were enjoined by a parti-

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\* Luke xxiii. 56. Acts xiii. 42—44. xvii. 2. xviii. 4.

cular precept, and enforced by the most solemn sanctions. The authority of Christ Jesus, as a moral legislator, was supreme. He appeared, not to destroy the law which was given from Mount Sinai, but to fulfil it; and, in the whole of his conduct, he illustrated the divinity of his mission, by the spotless rectitude of his life, and the undeniable power and purity of his doctrine. Invested, therefore, with these attributes, all he did, and all he said; *i. e.* all the moral virtues he taught and performed—all the religious solemnities he observed—and all the public appointments and usages he sanctioned, either by precept or by practice, are alike obligatory on us, and on all men, as if they had been announced to us, and impressed upon us, by the most express and authoritative accompaniments of the power and majesty of God. We have already said, and we shall have occasion to show it more fully hereafter, that the example of our Lord's apostles, on this, and all similar points of public duty, carries with it, also, the recommendation and sanction of a general precept. Admitting, then, all that our opponents contend for—that there is no express written law in the New Testament for the observance of the Sabbath—we maintain, that we have what is equivalent to it,—a confirmation of the original statute which enjoins it—by the uniform example

of our Lord and his apostles. That example was adopted by the first converts to Christianity—it was followed by all who subsequently embraced its faith; and no doctrine of the New Testament has been more universally believed—none held to be more efficacious for the growth of holiness, and the diffusion of all the virtues of the Gospel, than the observance, the punctual observance, of that commandment which enjoins us to “remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.”

We are aware, however, that another difficulty has been started by the opponents of the views we defend; and as we apprehend that it has considerable weight with many professing Christians, we shall attempt briefly to obviate and explain it. Granting, they say, that a moral obligation belonged to the Sabbath at its first promulgation; and that this obligation continued to belong to it, during the whole dispensation of the Mosaic economy; was there not an essential change induced upon the performance of its duties, when the whole institution was violently transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week? If a moral efficacy was communicated to the duties of the seventh day, from the peculiarity of the circumstances which gave it a paramount claim to be regarded as “holy to the Lord”—if the sanctions of religion bound us to dedicate and consecrate it

to the service of God, as a memorial of the stupendous display of his creating power, in calling into existence the heavens and the earth, and all the goodly stores of happiness with which they are replenished,—are not these religious sanctions, and that moral efficacy, annulled by the change which has been made upon the appointment, and by the arbitrary violation of the day, which was originally held sacred to the commemoration of the divine goodness and power? We answer, No. But the full exposition of the grounds upon which we maintain this opinion, must be reserved for another Section.

## SECTION IX.

*Reason of the change of the Sabbath from the Seventh to the First Day of the Week.*

THE difficulties which are conceived to belong to this part of the subject, arise out of too limited views of the nature and end of the institution: and we flatter ourselves, that, if the general principle on which it is founded, were better understood, and its beneficial tendency better attended to, the difficulties in question, would soon cease to give uneasiness or perplexity to any. It is contended, for instance, that, if the Sabbath was not designed to serve a merely local and temporary purpose; if the obligations to its observance apply equally to men in every age, and every condition of society, these obligations must be held immutable as to the day which was ordained under the Jewish dispensation; and, consequently, the change of the day under the Christian dispensation, amounts to a repeal of the original statute, and virtually exempts us from the penalties of its non-observance. He, it is added, who instituted the day, alone

possesses the power or authority to alter or abrogate it; and, therefore, we are bound to reverence and sanctify it, according as it is made known to us in the Scriptures, and not according to any notions which we may form of its wisdom, its expediency, or propriety. Now, this is the very ground on which we wish to try the question; and we are confident, that a fair and candid examination of it, will leave no doubt of the justness and force of our general argument.

The injunction respecting the observance of the Sabbath, contained in the fourth commandment, is accompanied with the history and the reason of the institution; and these are exactly the same as are given in the second chapter of Genesis, the original document, containing the order for the sanctification of the day. The words run thus; “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because, that in it, He rested from all his work, which God created and made.”\* “Remember † the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it, thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, &c. For, in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is,

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\* Gen. ii 5.

† Exod. xx. 8—11.

and rested the seventh day: wherefore, the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." The import of the words, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it," as we have shown in a preceding Section, is evidently this. God separated and distinguished it from the other six, by appropriating it to religious exercises on the part of man: and by engaging, on his own part, to accept the homage and worship, which, on that day, man should offer unto him. The promise of a special blessing is annexed to the discharge of a duty—that duty is the public acknowledgment of our love, our gratitude, and our obedience to our Creator; and, independent of age, rank, or kindred, it is morally binding on the whole human race.

But, it is of importance to observe, that, as the institution is recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, it clearly consists of two parts, *viz. the Sabbath*,\* or holy rest; and the day on which it was to be observed. These two points, it is humbly submitted, are held out as distinct objects of consideration, in the words "the Lord rested the seventh day; and blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it." (Exod. xx. 11.) The Sabbath is the institution—the seventh day is the period of its

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\* The word *Sabbath*, in the Hebrew language, signifies *rest*.

observance. The Sabbath, therefore, may be immutable in its moral obligations as a duty, without at all being immutable, as to the day of its solemnization. The portion of time to be appropriated to the performance of its duties, is fixed; but it does not follow from this, that the particular period of appropriation is fixed. The Sabbath, as an institution, is perfectly distinct from the day on which it is to be observed; and while we can conceive that the moral sanctions of the institution itself, are unchangeable, we can easily conceive, that the blessings promised to its observance, might be attached to any one of the other seven days of the week. One day in seven, must be held sacred to the Lord: but the day may be changed without the institution being in the least degree affected—the original appointment may remain in full force, while successive alterations may be induced on the specific time of its observance. There is no necessary connection between the institution and the day; and the Sabbath may continue the same, in full force as a moral duty, eternal in its sanctions and its penalties, whatever be the day of its celebration: because, the observance of a day is a thing altogether dependent on circumstances, and possesses no other importance, than that which circumstances assign to it.

Still, however, while we thus contend for the



institution, as an appointment substantively distinct from the day allotted for its observance, we are perfectly satisfied, that no change can warrantably be made on the day, except by the express authority of Him by whom it was ordained. The two are so linked together, that any unnecessary, arbitrary, or wanton liberty taken with the latter, might prove fatal to the former. We ought to remember, that the same authority which instituted the Sabbath, or season of holy rest to man, instituted also the day, on which it was to be held; and that no other authority is competent to introduce any change on either. If, then, we cannot find, in the sacred writings, any proof of the abrogation of the original day, any evidence of the substitution of a new day, or any reasons for it—the original one must remain in full force, and its observance must be obligatory on all mankind.

Without dwelling long on the early period of the institution, I have simply to observe, that, from the scanty historical details which we have of the first ages of the world, it is by no means certain, whether or not the Jewish Sabbath was the seventh day, in regular succession, from the creation of the world: and therefore, it is impossible to determine, whether it was the precise day which God blessed and sanctified, when he rested from his works. Now, it must be obvious, to every per

son of ordinary understanding, that this point must be clearly established, before any opinion respecting the immutability of the day, can be allowed to possess any weight or influence, over the judgment or conscience of man. But this point, it is impossible to establish on satisfactory or indisputable grounds, and, consequently, the objections of those, who, on this account, deny the obligations of the Christian Sabbath, lose all their validity and force of application.

It has been supposed, with much plausibility, that a change was introduced by Moses in the wilderness; and that the day which was kept as a Sabbath, in the patriarchal ages, and which corresponded to that which God had originally hallowed, and set apart for religious exercises, was transferred to the day on which the Israelites left Egypt; thus providing for the future commemoration of one of the most remarkable and glorious events in their history. This, however, although very probable, is entirely matter of conjecture. The Scriptures furnish no evidence of its reality, and, therefore, it would be unwise and unsafe to build any opinion or argument upon it. We have already said, that the original law of the Sabbath provides for the consecration of one day in seven to the worship and service of God; and the power, wisdom, and goodness, displayed in the creation,

were the subjects of men's thanksgiving and praise. In subsequent ages, the Jews commemorated, along with the wonders of creating power, their political incorporation as a nation, out of the family of Abraham, and their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. While, in common with the Jews, Christians commemorate the common blessings of creation, they have also to celebrate the great and eternal blessings of redemption: whereby they are begotten to the hope of an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and of which, the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour from the grave on the first day of the week, is an earnest and pledge.

There is, therefore, in the very nature of the subject, ground to suppose, that the day of holy rest, under the Christian dispensation, might be different from that which was originally appointed. And there are many circumstances and facts detailed in the sacred writings, which give, not merely a high probability, but absolute certainty to this opinion. The work of man's redemption is expressly styled, a *new creation*; and, as it is a work which gave a new, and more glorious illustration of the divine attributes than the first creation displayed, and furnishes more copious matter of love, gratitude, and praise to men; surely it is worthy of being commemorated by them

with the highest reverence and respect. St. Paul expressly assigns to the Son, the agency in the work of the first creation, by applying to him the Psalmist's ascription of eternal existence, and infinite power, and glory. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."\* The second creation also, is preeminently the work of the same divine person. "For unto me," says the same apostle, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God; who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent, that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God."†

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\* Heb. i. 8—12.

† Eph. iii. 8—11.

The end of a thing is always more excellent than the means; for, as it generally unfolds to us the reasons for the undertaking, whatever it be, it must, consequently, possess, to all who come within its influence, a character of the highest interest and importance. The end of the first creation was to reveal to us the glorious attributes and providence of God. But of all the revelations of his attributes, and of all the works of his providence, the new creation, or the redemption of man, is unspeakably the most marvellous and most important, and, unless the Scriptures were meant to deceive us, it is that, towards the completion of which, all the others are directed. The display of the wisdom of God in the work of redemption, as may be seen by our last quotation, was the "intent," or end, for which all things were created by Christ Jesus. The commemoration, therefore, of this event, must be allowed to possess a paramount claim on the heart and the conscience of man; and of this, we presume, a direct proof is afforded by the following prophetic declaration of Isaiah—"He who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth. For, behold, saith the Lord, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice

for ever, in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.”\* This passage of Scripture, beyond all controversy, relates to the time of the Gospel dispensation, and contains two points worthy of our notice. First, it expressly represents the new creation; that is, the regeneration or renovation of the moral world, by the redemption of man, as possessing a higher character, in the divine estimation, than the first creation. Secondly, it assigns, as a reason why the former creation should not be remembered, or why the new creation should be commemorated, in preference to it,—the work of saving and sanctifying the souls of men, by which they become a rejoicing to the Most High, and a joy to one another. According, then, to the plain and established method of interpreting prophecy, this passage of Scripture announces this important truth—that a particular and solemn commemoration of the work of redemption, was a part of the good pleasure of God, and that, as surely as his wisdom is unerring, and his decrees irresistible, it was designed, in the course of his providence, that this event should be accomplished. Now, there neither is, nor ever was, any public celebration of the redemption of man, by the church, except

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\* Isaiah lxx. 16, 17, 18.

that which takes place on the first day of the week, or the day on which the Saviour completed the work, which the Father had given him to do, by his resurrection from the dead. If, then, the prophecy relates not to the solemnization of this day, and the celebration of this event, it is still unaccomplished. But, if it does relate to this event, and to its commemoration, (and surely this will not be controverted by any candid reader of the passage,) then, the manner of accomplishing it, exhibits, in a most pleasing form, the wisdom and the good pleasure of God, and is beautifully illustrative of the work by which he creates his people a joy and a rejoicing on the earth. “For, as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.”\*

Several other predictions and passages of the Old Testament Scriptures, might here be adduced in corroboration of the view we have endeavoured to support; but, as we maintain, that our general argument rests on broad and substantial grounds, we forbear to bring forward any further illustration

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\* Isaiah lxvi. 22, 25.

from a quarter, which might, in the estimation of a scrupulous inquirer, be reckoned doubtful.

One day in seven, we have already seen, must, according to the first ordinance of heaven, be set apart for the holy exercises of religion; but the particular day depends upon positive appointment, and may be any one which the wisdom of God may establish for that purpose. The fourth commandment, which enforces the duties of the Sabbath, as a matter of moral and indispensable obligation, had a prospective, as well as a retrospective character; and, according to the explanation we have given above, it bears as much on the sanctification of the Christian Sabbath, as on that of the Jewish. No fact is more clearly established in the New Testament than this, that, on our Lord's resurrection from the grave, the Sabbath, in commemoration of that great event, the only foundation of our faith, and of our hope of future glory, was transferred from the last to the first day of the week; and the reasons for this change are such, as should appear to every candid and pious reader the most weighty and obligatory.

He to whom all power in heaven and on earth was given, had power, assuredly, to loosen or to bind; and, as we believe that there is no inherent holiness in times, any more than in places; so we believe, that the Son of man, who came, not to



destroy the law, but to fulfil it, had a sovereign and indisputable right to appropriate the day of his own resurrection—the day on which he finished the work of redemption he had come to achieve, and triumphed over all the hosts of darkness and of sin—to the pious meditation on the riches of his grace, to the public exposition of the doctrines of his Gospel, and the public performance of his laws. If it be true, that we are bound to follow his example, as a rule of conduct, surely that which he bequeathed to us after his resurrection, is not less valuable, or less binding, than that which he left us before it; and, if the practice of the apostles can give any recommendation to the public dedication of the first day of the week, to the services of the sanctuary, we shall beware of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, (as the manner of too many is,) but, knowing that God loveth the gates of Zion more than the dwellings of Jacob, we shall celebrate this day as the holy of the Lord, and honourable, by going up to his house of prayer, that we may offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving—that He may teach us his ways—and that we may learn to walk in them.

But, confining ourselves, at present, to the history and the example of our Saviour, we shall find the most ample and satisfactory reasons for

the change in question. It is unequivocally stated to us, that the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath; and in virtue of this character, he had full power to remove from its obligations, the cumbersome and ceremonial observances, which ignorant or superstitious men had incorporated with its duties—he had power to dispense with the solemnities of public worship which belonged to its consecration—or he could transfer these solemnities to any other day more appropriate to the events of his own life, and better calculated to give effect to the doctrines he enjoined us to believe, and the hopes he has taught us to entertain. Moreover, as he was the end and the consummation of the law—as in him all the promises of God centered, and to him all the prophets of the old dispensation gave witness—as he was the author of a new and an everlasting righteousness, and had all power under the new covenant given into his hands,—so he had full and rightful authority to annex new and perpetual obligations to the celebration of any event, and the performance of any duty.

Now, we believe all this will scarcely be denied, even by those who are most inimical to the view we are supporting; but, still pertinaciously adhering to the old objection, that no positive law can be produced in favour of the appointment in question, they contend, that its continuance, under the

present dispensation, rests wholly upon human opinion and custom, and may be observed, or not, as convenience will allow, without any moral consequences at all attaching to our conduct.\* At least, they contend, that the neglect or violation of the Christian Sabbath, is only the neglect or violation of a human ordinance; and, granting that there is guilt or criminality in the disregard or contempt of human authority, its penalties or consequences, they assert, have only a secular or political character, and can only be partial in their nature, and transient in their duration. We confess, that we are not able to suppress our surprise at the avowal of such an opinion; because, we are persuaded, that, if it were extended, as we know it to be the wish of many in our own age

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\* It is certainly a very dangerous thing to make the necessity of God's worship, and the authority of the Lord's day, depend upon human orders and customs. "For," as Dr. Prideaux argues, in a book published long ago, "what would it affect men that were busied about farms, and merchandise, and domestic affairs, to tell them of a human institution? Would they not easily set at nought all that could be urged in such a way? Would not profane men easily dispense with their absenting themselves from prayer and preaching, and give themselves free leave of doing or neglecting any thing, were their not something found in scripture, which would bind the conscience more than any human appointment? To this, therefore, let us look, and consider what evidence we have of the first day in every week being appointed to be kept holy under the Gospel."

that it should be extended, to other branches of the law, to which we attach a divine sanction, it would prove destructive of all religious and moral principle, and engender the most undisguised profligacy and crime. But we shall state a very few considerations, which, we trust, will lay open the fallacy of the reasoning on which it is founded.

And we begin with observing, that, if we make the worship of God depend upon human authority, we may rest assured, if experience can at all be trusted as a guide, that it will not long maintain any pure or spiritual influence over the heart or the life of man. Does not, in many cases, his private interest render him regardless of public opinion; and, if no moral penalty is connected with his neglect or abuse, of whatever his neighbour may conceive to be very important, will he not regard it as a matter of choice whether he comply or not? There will be no control over his conscience, and there can be no reliance on his conduct. There will be no apprehension of future consequences, joined with his disregard of what he believes to have no permanent sanction; and we may be certain, that the duty, if a duty he may allow it to be, will be held to be one of purely arbitrary appointment, and, in all probability, it will be as often forgotten as performed.

But, let us here ask, are there not many cases,

in which actions acquire the nature and character of a precedent, and thus obtain all the force and validity of a regularly published law? Are there not customs existing in deliberative assemblies, and in courts of justice, and in all kinds of societies indeed, moral, political, and scientific, which are observed, and complied with, by men, as punctually and as rigidly as if they possessed the broad, but definite authority, of a written statute? Is not a signal from a commander, or a king, or any other who presides over the destinies of men, when it clearly reveals his will, held of equal authority, and enforced with the same obligations, as if it had been embodied in the form of a spoken order, and had been transmitted to us by personal communication? \* Now, these observations, it is presumed, will be found to apply most strictly to the question before us. There was no express commandment originally published for the institution of the Sabbath; but the signal of its dedication to a holy respite from the employments of ordinary life, and to the exercises of pious and peaceful meditation, was given by the Almighty himself; and possessed as much authority and obligation on the hearts of men, as could be impressed by the most specific

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\* " Actions certainly make a law, when they sufficiently publish the mind and will of the lawgiver, as well as words "

and definite rule. In the same way, there is no particular enactment in the New Testament, by which we are commanded, from one Sabbath to another, to come before the Lord, to worship him; but there are some signs and examples which carry all the sanction and obligation of a regularly published law. The most stupendous of all the miracles which our Saviour performed, (his own resurrection from the dead,) was wrought on the first day of the week; and thus was the fullest testimony given, that he was that Messiah who was to suffer for our offences, and to rise for our justification—who was to triumph over principalities and powers—and ascend to the right hand of the Majesty on high, to give repentance, and the forgiveness of sins, to every people. Here, then, was a new era opened up to the hopes of the human race, and a new day ordained, to be commemorated by us, as the earnest and the fore-taste of their realization. Here was the fulfilment of all that had been predicted by the ancient prophets, respecting the new creation; and the completion of all those things which he spoke, when he foretold how he should suffer, and how he should rise from the dead, as the first-fruits of them that slept. This was the consummation of all the work which the Father had given him to do; and by this, did he obtain the power to give

justification and eternal life to as many as believed upon him. Although, therefore, we had no further reason for the regular and solemn dedication of this day to the purposes of public religious worship, and to the study and performance of the duties of the Christian life, this single event would furnish us with the most abundant authority for the devout assembling of ourselves together, to commemorate the era of our deliverance from eternal death, and our admission to a participation of the hopes that are laid up for the righteous.

Should it be still asked, however, by any one, why, on a subject of so much importance and interest to society, our Saviour has left us no positive injunction?—we answer, that his own example, illustrative of his mind and will respecting the duty, has come down to us with all the force and obligation of a moral precept:—we answer, that there is no particular enumeration of the commandments of the moral law given by him in any one place; and that we are left to gather their sanctions from detached passages of his life and history. Yet, we never entertain the idea, that he came to repeal or relax any part of moral duty, which the law of conscience, or the law of Moses, made obligatory on man. “He came, not to destroy, but to fulfil the law;” and all that had a moral tendency upon the heart and the life of man, in the Mosaic dispensa-

tion, is left by him in full operation; nay, it is confirmed by him, with more comprehensive motives, and more spiritual rewards than were before attached to it. The institution of the Sabbath, undeniably possesses a high moral character, and is productive of the highest moral benefit to man; it must, of consequence, be of the number of those appointments and laws which he appeared in the world to confirm, and to the observance and performance of which he has annexed more exalted sanctions and more lasting rewards.

Did the Jews meet on the seventh day of the week, to meditate on the wonderful and visible exercise of the creative power of Jehovah? Did they meet on that day, to commemorate their creation as a nation out of the family of Abraham; to celebrate the redemption of their fathers from the bondage of Egypt; and their victorious settlement in the land of Palestine? Were their views and explanation of the "Rest," which is figuratively alluded to in the establishment of the Sabbath, confined to the temporal ease and enjoyment of the promised land?—We Christians, meet for the commemoration of higher and nobler events. We do not forget the wisdom and the goodness of creating power, which has spread around us such a rich and abundant variety of moral felicity. We do not forget the covenant made with faithful



Abraham, nor the strong hand which redeemed Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and gave them rest from their enemies in the promised land. — But we have a new creation to celebrate, and a new redemption to commemorate—and a more sublime interpretation of that holy rest, which is typified in the Sabbath, is given unto us, than the majority of the Jewish people seem to have known. This day, on which we meet to celebrate the praises and the mercies of God, remains with us, as a sign for ever, of a happy and glorious event, which awaits the faithful and the just, after the cares and toils of this fleeting life are past. The land of Canaan was only the pledge of the goodness of that God, who founded the laws and the state of Israel. The spiritual Israel did not look to it, as the end or the consummation of their hopes. They desired a more uninterrupted rest—they looked for a better country, even a heavenly—and, with all the patient and persevering disciples of the gospel, this changing, and, to many, anxious and weary life, is but a pilgrimage in search of that blessed and permanent abode.

But, who is he that has gone before us, to prepare mansions in that dwelling, from which all care and sorrow, and disease and death, are entirely and for ever excluded? It is he, who,

on the first day of the week, rose victorious from the grave, after having made a sacrifice of himself for the sins of the human race, and opened up a way of reconciliation between us and the Father. It is he, who has entered into the holy of holies, which was never entered by any earthly priest, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. Now, if the Jews observed with reverence and solemnity the seventh day, because on it Jehovah rested from the work of creation, much more ought we to devote, to the holy exercises of piety, thanksgiving, and praise, the first day of the week, because on it, he completed the benevolent and marvellous scheme, which, from the commencement of our depravity, he had framed for our redemption and recovery. On that day, Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. On that day, he rested from all his labours and sufferings, having triumphed over all his and our enemies. He is, therefore, most appropriately and correctly said, by an apostle, "to have entered into his rest:" and the commemoration of that event, is surely equally binding upon us, and equally interesting to our religious feelings, as that of the first instance of creating power. "For he that is entered into his rest: he hath also ceased

from his own works as God did from his." Thus is the parallel of the two cases most clearly established; and the keeping of a Sabbath, or a season of holy rest, confirmed to the people of God in every age.\*

But we have much more direct evidence, than what we have yet adduced, to substantiate the position we have assumed. We have very copious and satisfactory proof, that this day was honoured by our Saviour, as a day to be held sacred to the public duties of his religion—that his apostles and disciples directed it to the commemoration of his victory over the grave; that the infant church esteemed its observance of indispensable obligation; and, that it was intended to remain with us, as a sign for ever, of that inheritance of rest and blessedness, which is prepared for the people of God, after the trials and the tribulations of this life have come to an end. Twice, we are told—and these two instances may be regarded as specimens of the general practice, and, therefore, designed to serve as a general rule to us—twice did our Saviour brighten, with his special presence, the meetings of his chosen followers, on the first day of the week, and breathe on them the benediction of peace and friendship.

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\* Heb. iv. 9, 10.

In the twentieth chapter of John's Gospel, we find it stated, that, "on the same day," namely, the day of the resurrection, "at even, being the first day of the week, came Jesus and stood among them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you." And on the eighth day afterwards, when the disciples were assembled in the same place, and for the same purposes, and the doors were shut, Jesus came again among them, and pronounced over them the same benediction. Now, no unprejudiced reader of the New Testament, can doubt, or deny, that the disciples were assembled on this day, for the purpose of sanctifying it; by commemorating the event of their Saviour's resurrection, and by edifying one another in the doctrines and duties of his religion; and as little, do we think, can any one doubt, that the Saviour made his appearance among them, for the purpose of giving his sanction to the holy institution, and of encouraging his followers in its future and perpetual solemnization.

And to satisfy us the more fully of this opinion, we shall quote a few more passages of the New Testament, which clearly prove, that the interpretation we have given, was that which the Apostles adopted. The feast of Pentecost must have happened that year, on the first day of the week, because it was celebrated fifty days after the

passover ; and St. John informs us, that this latter festival was observed that season on the Jewish Sabbath. Now, in the beginning of the history of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke has recorded, that the disciples, to the number of a hundred and twenty, were, on this occasion, all, with one accord, in one place : and, in testimony of God's acceptance of their services, in honour of their Master's resurrection, they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.\* “Concerning the collection for the saints,” says St. Paul, in the sixteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, “as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia ; even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there may be no gathering when I come.”\* This passage opens up a rich variety of proof to our argument, and points directly to the general practice of the early Christians, who, in obedience to some unrecorded commandment of the Saviour, met, to read and expound the Scriptures, to celebrate the supper, and to commemorate their Lord's triumph over the grave.

In the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the

\* Acts ii. 1—4.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

Apostles, we are informed, that, when Paul arrived at Troas, on his way from Ephesus, he met many of the brethren, with whom he tarried seven days. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, he preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued to speak till midnight."\* Now, although we had no other testimony than this for the practice, which, we contend, existed among the primitive Christians, of keeping holy the Sabbath, we would be naturally led to inquire, why Paul did not meet his fellow disciples earlier, as he seems to have been under the necessity of leaving them on the morning after he addressed them? He had tarried seven days among them: and had it not been that he deferred his departure, till he should have an opportunity of seeing them all together, on the usual day of their meeting, we can discover no good reason, or no reason at all, why he might not have had his arrangements adjusted, more to his personal convenience, and have given them his farewell address, on any of the preceding days. Besides, we have not received the smallest information, from the sacred historians, of any solemn meeting which they had, except that on the first day of the week; and, hence, we consider ourselves

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\* Acts xx. 7.

justified in concluding, that this was the only day, on which it was the established custom of the primitive church, to assemble, for the performance of the duties of public devotion.

From all these facts, then, we are furnished with the most satisfactory testimony, that the Saviour marked the pious observance of the first day of the week, with special tokens of his approbation; and that his apostles, in honour of his resurrection, and in obedience to his example, and, most probably, to his precept, conceived themselves warranted to appropriate, or devote it, as a perpetual ordinance, in the Christian church, to a holy rest from worldly employment; and to the performance of the public duties and exercises of religion. It is declared by the Almighty to man, "that he shall not add to the words which he has given us, nor diminish aught from them; because, if any add to them, God shall add to them the plagues which are written in the Scriptures; and if any take away from them, God shall take away their part out of the book of life." Now, it is quite impossible that the apostles, who so clearly inculcated this doctrine, should themselves be the first to disregard or violate it. It is altogether inadmissible, that, guided, as they were, by the Holy Spirit, they should disobey the will of God, on a point of the highest importance to the moral

and spiritual interests of the church, by abolishing an institution undeniably of divine appointment, and substituting one of their own. "Nothing," says a very sensible writer,\* "is more evident to me, than that this example has all the weight which can be attached to any precept whatever. This will especially appear, if we remember, that Peter, with the eleven apostles, celebrated the first day of the week; and that Paul and his followers did the same. Paul received his Gospel immediately from Christ; and informs us in Galatians i. 2, that the *apostles of Jerusalem added nothing to him*. For three years, he never saw one of them; and had not the remotest correspondence with them. All the doctrines, therefore, which Paul acknowledged, he received directly from Christ; and was indebted for none of them to his companions in the apostleship. Yet, Peter and his followers observed the first day of the week as the religious day, (as the Sabbath,) and Paul and his followers observed the same. Whence, then, did these persons thus separated, derive this agreement in their observance of the first day of the week? The only answer that can be given to this question is, *From the inspiration which guided them both*. Had they been uninspired, their agreement, in a

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\* Dwight's Sermons on the Sabbath.



case of this nature, where they acted independently of each other, would have proved, that they derived the doctrine, and the practice grounded on it, from a common source. Their character, as inspired men and apostles, proves, beyond doubt, that the common source from which they thus harmoniously derived a religious institution, was God.

The latest writer of the New Testament, and the most highly favoured of all the apostles, distinguishes the Christian Sabbath by the name of the "Lord's day;" and it has been naturally supposed, that this appellation of the day of the resurrection, has been derived from the prophetic declaration of the Psalmist, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; on it, we will rejoice and be glad." "I was in the spirit," says St. John, "on the Lord's day;" that is, he was under the peculiar influences of the Spirit of God, and received by inspiration, those visions and communications which related to the history and destiny of the church in all subsequent ages; thus evidently implying, that there was a special appropriation of this day to the service of God; and, consequently, marking it out to future ages, as the fit and approved season of holy rest, when Christians should assemble together for the pious celebration of his praises—the devout meditation on his love—and the serious and practical exposition of the

laws and obligations they are bound to observe. The Lord's day, is a phrase of the same import with that of the Lord's supper; and as this latter ordinance is allowed to be universally binding on all who acknowledge their faith in the Gospel;—so, we presume, by a parity of reasoning, is the ordinance of the Sabbath—the sanctification of the first day of the week, as a day on which we are to turn away our feet from doing our own ways, from finding our own pleasures, and speaking our own words.

A number of miscellaneous passages might here be adduced from the New Testament, to support the views we have been illustrating; but I am unwilling to overload the subject with bare quotations, and I shall only subjoin one more. The tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, contains many seasonable admonitions and encouragements to the Jewish converts, to strengthen them in the profession and practice of the faith they had embraced, and to preserve them in an age of peril and persecution, from making shipwreck of the hope of salvation; and at the twenty-fifth verse of that chapter, there is a particular injunction, which directly applies to the public observance of the Sabbath. The apostle is expounding the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel dispensation; and, as the testimony of their belief in them, he recommends

and enjoins the cultivation of mutual benevolence, and the practice of virtuous and pious conduct. "Let us consider one another," is his mode of exhortation, "to provoke unto love and to good works." And as the best means of promoting these important ends, he adds, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."\* Now, in this passage, there is evidently a reference to a custom which was prevalent among the individuals to whom the epistle was addressed. That custom could not be the daily assembling of themselves together for devotional exercises, since it appears, from what we have stated above, that Paul seemed to sanction the manner of his brethren at Troas, by deferring his valedictory address till the usual day of their meeting. That day was the first day of the week; and the custom alluded to, in the verse we have just quoted, must, in fairness, be allowed to be the same as prevailed among the early disciples of Christianity. The ancient church adopted the words to which we have referred, as having this interpretation; and as there is the best reason to conclude, that those who lived at the era of the publication of the Gospel, must have best known the nature of its doctrines, and the particular

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\* Heb. x. 24, 25.

meaning to be attached to any, or all, of its public appointments; so we may consider their practice the practice of the apostles, and, in most cases, the best commentary we can follow on the ordinances and institutions of the New Testament.

At this point of our discussion, we might bring forward, as an auxiliary argument to what we have already advanced, a copious selection of facts from the writings of the early fathers of the church, to prove, that the first day of the week was universally observed as a day of holy rest, and of public religious duty. But I am perfectly aware, that if the evidence for the change in question—that is, for the transference of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week—rested wholly on their authority, its sanctions might be regarded as very doubtful in their nature; and its duties as entirely optional in their performance. It is certainly worthy of remark, however, that, amidst the many feuds which agitated the church, (and in the second and third centuries, there was a violent contest about the anniversary of the death of Christ,) there seems never to have been any doubt entertained, nor was there any controversy engaged in, respecting the divine institution of the Lord's day. History informs us of none who disputed the moral obligation of devoting it to public religious duty. It was the universal practice

of all classes of Christians, to abstain on it from secular pursuits and pleasures, and to meet together for the public worship of God. The universality and cordiality of the sentiments by which they were actuated, clearly testify, that they imbibed them from a common source—that is, from the authority of the apostles, and, with the impress of that same authority, have they transmitted them to us.

Still, however, we argue for the obligation of observing the Christian Sabbath, on scriptural grounds alone; and if any shall attempt to fritter down its duties to mere human or ceremonial appointments, which have derived all their reputation and efficacy from the authority of the church alone,\* we must hold, that they are either unable, or unwilling, to distinguish human tradition from divine revelation; that they discredit the cause of religion, by abrogating the sanctions of its more

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\* “ If after this, any will add the universal practice of the Christian church from the time of the apostles, as a proof of this settlement being made in their days, and by their express orders, I readily join in their argument. But, if the practice of the church be pleaded by any, so as to make the observation of the Lord’s day depend only upon the church’s authority, here, I apprehend, do they greatly injure this day, and discredit that law of God, by dishonouring and abrogating the fourth commandment; and they make no just distinction between human tradition and divine revelation.”

explicit laws; and that, if they were allowed to be legitimate expositors of the doctrines and duties of the Bible, we might as well part with the whole as being doubtful and fictitious, as retain the scanty number of either, which they warrant to possess a divine authority, obligatory on men in all conditions of life. But the ordinance for which we are contending, stands on a broad and stable foundation; and if, after all that has been already advanced, there are any who still deny the moral obligation of assembling themselves together to sanctify the day of the resurrection, their understandings must be very darkened, and their hearts very insensible towards all that is most bright, and animating, and endearing, in the public duties of the Gospel. The observance of the first day of the week, is as binding upon us, as that of the seventh day was upon the Jews; and we would warn those who disavow its sanctions, and who live regardless of its duties, to ponder seriously the ways which they take, and the accountability which belongs to the condition they fill. There are none of the causes now operating, which scared away the Hebrew converts from the meeting of the saints,\* and tempted them to abandon the distinctive character by which they were known, as

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\* Heb. x. towards the end.

the disciples of the Lord Jesus. There is now no peril or persecution to alarm us in the devotional outpouring of our hearts to the Lord, or to disturb the solemn assembling of ourselves together, to dedicate to his worship, a day, sacred to the memory of our redemption from the bondage of sin, and our attainment of the promise of glory, honour, and immortality. Our lines have fallen in pleasant places, and we have obtained a goodly heritage. As far as the act of worshipping the God of our fathers, after the dictates of our own conscience, is concerned, every man sits under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, and there is none to make us afraid. The prediction of former ages has been accomplished—that the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and the people shall flow into it.\* For many nations have assembled and said, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” From the word and the ordinances of God—from the influences of his Holy Spirit—from the presence of Christ, in his church—Christians have derived, on this day, (the Sabbath,) more than on all others,

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\* Micah iv. 1, 2.

the most delightful views of the divine character—clear apprehensions of their own duty—lively devotion to the service of God—strength to overcome temptations—and glorious anticipations of immortality. Take this day from the calendar of the Christian, and all that remains will be cloudy and cheerless. Religion will instantly decay—ignorance, error, and vice, “ will immediately triumph—the sense of duty vanish—morals fade away—the glad tidings of salvation cease to be sounded—and the communication between heaven and earth be cut off for ever.” \*

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\* Dwight's Sermons on the Sabbath.



## SECTION X.

*Manner in which the Sabbath is to be Sanctified.*

THIS is a part of our subject on which we enter with great hesitation and diffidence; both because we are aware, that great abuses have prevailed on the side of too rigid, and of too relaxed an observance of the external duties of the Sabbath; and because we feel ourselves very incompetent to point out exactly, the line of distinction necessary to be preserved. In cases where the Scriptures do not give us direct and particular information, much must be left to the discretion of the individual; and if he has conscientiously studied the general commandment in question, and is habitually impressed with the fear of offending God, and is sincerely desirous of knowing and doing his will, on all points connected with life and practice; his own understanding, thus enlightened and disciplined by the Spirit of truth, must be allowed to be his safest guide in the discharge of the duties which that commandment may embrace. Where no explicit rule is laid down in the sacred writings,

respecting any particular branch of public duty, we hold it to be generally unwise, and sometimes mischievous in man, to legislate very rigorously, or to presume to multiply prescriptions and forms which are to have an authoritative force over the conscience and the conduct of others. It is most perilous for a creature to attempt to be wiser than the Creator; and nothing can more strongly depict the weakness and folly of mankind, than the assumption of the right to publish laws for the regulation of his worship, in cases where He himself has chosen to be silent; and to punish their fellow-men for non-compliance with them, without the shadow of a proof of a divine warrant to substantiate the transgression, or inflict the penalty. There are general points of duty, on which the Scriptures speak very plainly; and there are minute points, which, although not expressly stated, experience and study enable us readily to deduce from them. But the hand of innovation, or improvement, should be very sparingly applied to any of the doctrines or institutions of religion. Error in opinion, is here, more than any where else, fraught with very pernicious effects in practice; and, under an ignorant and misguided zeal for the advancement of the glory of God, the cause of religion has been exposed to the ridicule of the profane;—and forms and solemnities introduced into its ordinances and

institutions, which its true genius and spirit utterly disown. For the purpose, therefore, of restraining our zeal within the limits which reason and truth have assigned for its exercise, we ought to remember, and seriously ponder, the injunction which God gave to his servants under the old dispensation: and which he has enforced with additional sanctions under the new. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you.”\* “I testify,” says the last and faithful witness, “unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book—if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”†

It was their disregard of these and similar injunctions, which, during the days of our Saviour’s continuance on the earth, led the Jews to attach a sanctity and obligation to the observance of external rites, which the revealed word of God

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\* Deut. iv. 2.

† Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

no where warranted or required. It was their impatience of the restraints of holiness and virtue—it was their desire to get rid of the obligations of purifying themselves from all iniquity of heart and of life, by doing justly, and loving mercy, and walking humbly in the fear of the Lord, which were the causes of their adding to the number of those ceremonial forms of worship, which God himself had established, and assigning, to the regular and punctual observance of traditionary prescriptions, all the sacredness which belonged to the highest and most solemn of the divine commandments.

The most exalted examples of magnanimity, of heroic piety, and personal virtue, which the world ever witnessed, were formed among that people, under the discipline of the divine law. But the corruptions of human nature, almost totally destroyed all regard to the natural restraints and obligations of that law: and, by the substitution of ceremonial observances, in place of its holy and spiritual requirements, true piety and virtue were nearly obliterated from among them—the rankest hypocrisy characterized all their devotional exercises; and their general conduct justified what has been severely but correctly said of them, that they were, at the same time, the most religious and the most profligate people upon the face of

the earth; the most religious, in all the observances and institutions, of a purely ritual and formal nature; and the most profligate, in all that concerned vital godliness and purity; the most regardless of those weighty and indispensable duties, which their own law taught them to be more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.\*

An act of bodily service is, at all times, more easily performed, than that of subduing the mind under the spiritual and humiliating power of the divine law, or of purifying it from all the secret sins to which it is so strongly prone, and which that law so severely condemns: and if the periodical attendance upon any established ordinance; if the observance of days, or mere ritual lustrations and ablutions, were stamped with the sacredness of essential duties of religion; there is little doubt but a faithful and scrupulous attention would be given to them by all mankind. There is a strong inherent propensity in the human mind, to substitute the sign for the thing signified: and it is a melancholy fact, that, in all ages, the bulk of professing Christians have been distinguished more by the form of godliness, than its spirit and its power. On this head, the Scriptures furnish us with many important admonitions and reproofs;

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\* Horsley.

and it would be well for the spiritual interests of every individual, if he carefully endeavoured to apply them to his observance of the duties of the institution now under consideration.

The periodical observance of the Sabbath, as a day of cessation from bodily labour, is only a means of promoting moral and religious duty; and so far as its external solemnization only is concerned, it may be regarded as merely ceremonial. Cessation from bodily labour, moreover, is altogether a negative act, in itself unconnected with moral conduct, undeserving of moral praise or disapprobation, and only worthy of our consideration, as it is the sign of our submission to a positive commandment of God. It has, therefore, been argued, that, as the symbol, or the sign, must always give place to the thing signified, so, means, which are confessedly, in all cases, of subordinate importance, may be dispensed with, when they interfere with the ends they were originally designed to advance. This, however, is a rule, which, although correct in its general principle, ought to be very cautiously applied: as experience has furnished us with very copious evidence of this truth,—that when men readily neglect the ordinary steps by which any object is usually acquired, they are in imminent danger of never attaining it. The regular and devotional

worship of God, the pious contemplation of his attributes of infinite power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and mercy—the periodical attendance upon his ordinances—the reading of his word, and the expounding of his law, are, surely, the most effectual means of preserving, among individuals, and in society in general, a sense of dependence upon his providence—a grateful remembrance of his forbearance and kindness—a holy, and not a slavish fear of offending him—and a sincere and fervent desire to prove, in all our dispositions and dealings, that this is his will concerning us,—even the sanctification of our soul, and spirit, and body.

But, while we say all this, we are abundantly convinced, that, wherever there is any thing ceremonial connected with any of the duties of religion, there is a perverse tendency in the human mind, to separate what is moral, from what is ceremonial; and to manifest a devoted regard to the symbol, when the original which it represented, is altogether forgotten. We know, that the punctilious observance of ritual forms, has often been resorted to, as a disguise to the most profligate intentions; and we believe, that there may be many instances detected, even in the present day, where the mere external duties of religion are very rigidly performed by individuals, in whose hearts the amiable and benevolent virtues of the Gospel never resided,

and whose general conduct is directly opposed to the most solemn enactments of its laws. We believe, that there are numberless cases in which external rites may be faithfully observed by men who are void of all regard to the principles of true religion, and we are ready also to admit, that the most sacred and important duties of morality, may be honourably performed by individuals who are far from being scrupulous about the ceremonials of worship, which particular societies, or sects of Christians, have established. The edict of an assembly, or of a court, enforced with the dread of political disabilities and penalties, may command a decent attention to a day of public fasting or thanksgiving; but there are thousands who meet in a decorous manner, on such occasions, in whose breasts no sentiments of humiliation, or piety, or Christian gratitude dwell. Nay, there is much reason to apprehend, that the weekly recurrence of the Sabbath itself, brings, to many individuals, no change of conduct, but an abstinence from public labour, or a formal compliance with the customs of the country in which they happen to reside. The sacred duties of piety and devotion never awaken their affections, nor lift them to a sympathy with the exalted doctrines and virtues, which are then expounded and enforced; and when they come in and sit down as the people of God, it is only to



listen to the instructions of wisdom, as they would to the “very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, for they hear the words, but they do them not.”

Religion has received its deepest wounds from the falsehood of its professors, and we know not a garb in which it was ever dressed, so odious and offensive as that of the hypocrite. The heaviest woes recorded in the New Testament, are those denounced by our Saviour against the Scribes and Pharisees of his day; and it is a matter of regret, that, in every age of the church, there have not been wanting men, who have rivalled them in all the grimace of affected solemnity—in all the suppleness of hypocrisy—and all the chicanery of imposture and fraud. There is a pharisaical spirit, very prevalent among professing Christians, in our own day; and we may see it exemplified in the arrogant claims which they advance to the character of superior sanctity, founded entirely on their superior attention to the ceremonial forms and outward duties of religion. There is a spirit of ignorance and delusion still more prevalent in our day; and we may witness its baneful effects in the conduct of those who imagine, that their personal appearance in the house of God, on the first day of the week, to hear the duties of religion illustrated and recommended, gives them a license, on

the other six succeeding days, to dispense with their study and observance, and to live independent of their restraints and obligations.

This charge, I am aware, may appear extravagant; and the case may be set down as preposterous. But experience has supplied us with ample testimony of its truth; and we are perfectly satisfied, that there are multitudes, in the present age, who delude themselves with the belief, that they are very respectable and praise-worthy Christians, if they are found at church on Sunday, though they should not, on a single following day of the week, be found in the spirit, or the practice of a single virtue, or grace of the Gospel. Self-deceit is a most powerful agent; and when a sense of duty is not quickened by a sense of its divine obligations and penalties, its influence on the conduct will be but feeble and ineffectual. With the bulk of mankind, the easiest way of doing a thing is the best; and, in the highest concerns of morality and religion, it is a melancholy fact, that outward professions, and penances, and temporary mortifications, are substitutes for the weighty and important matters of the law,—justice, mercy, and faith.

There is a strong disposition in the mind of man, to multiply the formalities of public worship; and, in doing this, he often overlooks the duties

of benevolence and piety which they were primarily intended to promote. In every age and condition of society, the majority of our race have been more influenced by show than by reality; and wherever it has been practicable, we find, that they have been abundantly satisfied with the observance of an outward routine of actions, which had no connection with the worship of God, but the form, or the name. It is not an uncommon thing in the world, to see a fast, or festival of human appointment, kept most rigidly by men who never think of keeping their hearts from sin and uncleanness. Ablutions of the body, are easier performed than ablutions of the soul; and distinctions of days and weeks, are easier made and easier remembered, than the distinction between self-righteousness and true godliness. A voluntary show of humility is often a disguise to the rankest pride, and it has been assumed by many professing Christians, who are utter strangers to that meekness and lowliness of disposition which renounce all dependence upon human worth and excellence, and follow after, if, haply, they may be apprehended and approved of him, who was the pattern and the perfection of all that was meek, and lowly, and excellent, and praise-worthy in life.

It is a much easier process to undergo a little

bodily mortification, than to crucify evil and impure affections, which indulgence has rendered dear, as a right hand, or a right eye; and innumerable instances have proved to us, that a rigorous self-denial, on some points of moral transgression, is regarded as giving an uncontrolled license to indulgence on others. Wherever a reverence for the authority of God, is placed on an equality with a respect for human institutions and laws—wherever traditionary prescriptions, and legendary customs, are exalted to a rank with the doctrines and ordinances of divine appointment—and men are taught that the obligations to the observance of both, are alike imperative on the human conscience—we may be sure, that there the worship of God will be stripped of all the holy solemnity and awe, which are its natural concomitants; and the sanctions of religious and moral duty be diminished, by diminishing the dread of responsibility, which an offence against the Infinite Spirit, should, at all times, inspire. Hence, it has happened, in many places, that the human mind has been altogether estranged from just and exalted views of the character of the Creator, and beguiled into a voluntary humility, and worshipping of forms, by following, for commandments, the traditions of men. The “rudiments of the world” have, in many cases, supplanted the revelations of heaven;

and the inventions of human ingenuity and artifice, —institutions of human device and appointment, have been recommended and enforced with obligations and penalties as impressive and rigorous as any that are attached to the undisputed commandments of God.

Now, we know from experience, that a reliance on the external forms of religion, as a ground of acceptance with the Most High, never fails to vitiate the feelings, and relax the principles of virtue. Superstition, also, is always busy in perverting, to the purposes of worldly ambition and strife, those rites, which were designed for the advancement of benevolence and peace; and thus it is, that fruitless controversies have been the result of institutions, which were originally intended to unite mankind in the bonds of harmony and love. Thus it is, moreover, that, in many places of the world, the observance of merely secular ordinances has been substituted for the laws and the practice of justice, mercy, and fidelity; and the idle fopperies of an unmeaning devotion have been made sacred, at the expense of true holiness. It was for causes like these, that our Saviour thus addressed his countrymen,—“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart

is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching, for doctrines, the commandments of men. For, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men; making the word of God of none effect, through your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such like things ye do.”\* Here, then, is the fullest authority for us to conclude, that whosoever exalts the ceremonial observance of the ordinances of religion above its moral duties, perverts the establishment of God, and throws a stumbling-block in the way of the weak. Here, too, we have the most ample warrant to say, that whosoever attempts to annul the sanctions which the Almighty has connected with any of the commandments given to us, as the rule either of our faith or manners: and dispenses with the means, whether they consist in the observance of forms, or the obedience of precepts, which are ordained for the maintenance of his worship, and the public ministration of his word—throws open the flood-gates of moral corruption upon society, and gives a license to the profane to blaspheme his name.

But the abuse of a thing is no argument against its utility: nor are any of the crimes, which have been perpetrated under the name of religion,

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\* Matth. xv. and Mark vii. 6—13.

chargeable upon its doctrines, or its Author. Ignorance may misinterpret, and folly and profligacy may pervert, the most sacred and fundamental laws of morality; but the majesty and the justice of God are immutable: and no subterfuge, or delusion, or falsehood, on our part, will obtain for us a repeal or relaxation of the penalties which he has denounced against the transgression of his holy and righteous commandments. The neglect of the external observance of the Sabbath, as a day of rest from the amusements and business of society, and of religious meditation and worship, we believe to be, in almost every case, the offspring of unbelief and profligacy: and we conceive it to be, neither an unfair nor harsh explanation of the motives of those, who openly contemn the duties, which a family or society of pious individuals perform on that day, to ascribe their conduct, to their love of the showy varieties of forbidden pleasures, and their habitual indulgence in them. They count it a hard thing to serve the Lord, at the expense of their worldly gratification; and they choose rather to forego the blessings of a peaceful and holy life, than be restrained from doing their own ways, finding their own pleasures, and speaking their own words. “ Because they walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths—because their priests have hid their eyes

from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them—therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them—I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath—and their own ways have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord.”

“Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail. Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment and do justice: for my salvation is near, and my righteousness is about to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on this, that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil upon it.” \*

No man, therefore, who entertains a just sense of the obligations of the divine law, or who is suitably impressed with a sense of the value of the benefits which he has received, and is daily receiving, from the bountiful hand of his Creator, can live regardless of that day of sacred rest, which God himself has sanctified and set apart for his service. The reason of the institution, is founded on the common benefits of the creation of the world, and the redemption of man; and, therefore, the obligations to its observance, apply to all, and ought to be obeyed by all. Its duties

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\* Books of Isaiah and Ezekiel.



are alike interesting, instructive, and edifying to all; and, therefore, no elevation, no meanness of rank, can exempt or exclude from them. The youngest and the oldest are equally qualified for their performance; and they whose hopes are just opening to the joyful scenes of this life, with those whose expectations are closing in disappointments, or whose enjoyments have just ended in sadness, may alike derive encouragement and consolation, from the holy exercises in which it should be spent. But, since all ages, and ranks, and sexes, are thus interested in the duties of the Sabbath, it seems evident, from the very nature of the case, that one of the most prominent distinctions of the day, should be a cessation from the ordinary engagements and business of the world; because, if all were occupied, as they ought to be, about the duties of devotion, and the concerns of an eternal world, none would have any leisure for secular employment or pleasure. Accordingly, the strictest prohibition was issued by the Mosaic law, against all servile labour and worldly amusement, and, as we have already noticed, capital punishment was actually inflicted, at an early period, on one who ventured to profane the ordinance, by gathering fire-wood in the wilderness.\*

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\* Num. xv. 32—37.

Rigour and severity characterized, in a high degree, the Jewish law; and although these seemed only suited to the rude manners of an uncivilized people, and were particularly well adapted to the refractory and turbulent spirit of the Jews, yet, in the days of our Saviour, the rigour of the law itself, was surpassed by the rigour of popular superstition and pharisaical hypocrisy; and the omission or neglect of a mere ceremonial rite, was accounted more criminal than the disregard or transgression of the most obligatory duties of moral justice and benevolence. We are not of opinion, that there is much danger of the present generation of men falling into an error of this sort; though, we are thoroughly convinced, that a pharisaical spirit, has, in a greater or less degree, distinguished professing Christians of every age. The Sabbaths of the Jewish church, are abolished under the Gospel; and its disciples are released from the frivolous and unprofitable rules of ceremonial rigour, which the superstitious zeal of the ancient Pharisees attempted to render obligatory. The Christian law is the law of liberty; and, in judging of the measure of obedience due to the fourth commandment, we are not to follow the letter of the Jewish ritual, nor the false interpretations and glosses which men of narrow and misguided understandings, have superinduced upon

it. We have the express authority and example of our Lord, to use a pious discretion as our guide, in the sanctification of this holy day; and it is on this account, we apprehend, that some writers have weakened, rather than strengthened, the obligations to its observance, by a minute and unauthorised detail of those domestic and personal duties, to the performance of which, it should be devoted. Every true believer, who “exercises himself, so as to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man,” will constantly keep in view the end of the institution, *viz.* the commemoration of the creating power and the redeeming grace of God, and the advancement of the cause of holiness, and the knowledge of salvation among men: but, perhaps, it is as difficult, and as unwise, for one man to lay down specific rules for the government of every part of another man’s conduct, on this subject, as it would be to prescribe the particular amount of alms, or of charity, which, in every instance, he is bound to contribute for the relief of the distresses and miseries of the poor.

We have said, that the rigour of the Jewish Sabbath, as it was observed by the Pharisees in the days of our Saviour, cannot be taken as our rule under the Christian dispensation; but we would, by no means, be understood to say, that

the rules prescribed to the ancient church, on this head, have no application to us. Even taking the Sabbath as a patriarchal institution, possessing a sanctity independent of the Levitical law, the first condition which it imposes on man, is, a suspension of the ordinary business of life. God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because on it he rested from all the works he had made. And, surely, under the sanction of such an example, such a cessation from secular employments and pleasures, should be enforced on all ranks of men, as may leave none under the necessity or temptation of neglecting, on this day, the public worship of God. And here I cannot help observing, that, if it were our province to point out the moral philosophy, or the political expediency of this institution, it might be easily shown, that its utility demonstrates its wisdom, and that its wisdom infallibly establishes its divine origin and authority. But I shall have occasion to notice these points more particularly hereafter, and I forbear, at present, enlarging upon them.

The worship of God, the highest exercise in which men can engage, is the principal duty it enjoins; but a most important, though a secondary object of its appointment, is, a relief to the toilsome condition of the great mass of mankind, by the intermission of their daily labours. "Thou

shalt rest on the seventh day," said the law, "that the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed;" and by this injunction, founded on the purest philanthropy, and, therefore, as surely binding on Christians as on Jews, provision is made for the bodily refreshment, and moral instruction, of the destitute and hard-wrought classes of the community. It was a principle, avowed and inculcated by heathen morality, that, in the exercise of our dominion over the lower animals, we are at liberty to follow our own profit and pleasure, without the least regard to the hardships or privations to which they may be exposed. Revelation has taught and enjoined a more humane principle, and one which finds a ready answer from the breast of every Christian. "On the seventh day," said the law, "thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest." "A righteous man," Solomon adds, "regardeth the life of his beast;" and as there can be no reason why the cattle of Judea should be treated with more tenderness than the kindred animals of other countries, wherever a just sense of the obligations of the Sabbath is entertained, we shall not find the inferior creatures subjected, on that day, for their master's convenience or pleasure, to the same severity of toil as is imposed on them during the days of ordinary labour.

But, confining our remarks more particularly to ourselves, I would briefly mention, that the suspension of our worldly business, is but a small portion of the duty, which must distinguish our observance of the Sabbath. An abstinence from worldly pursuits and pleasures, is strictly enjoined; and, without this, the duty of self-examination cannot be faithfully or profitably discharged. The heart is the seat of all transgression, and the end of the Sabbath cannot be better fulfilled, than by restraining and reforming its evil tendencies. All imaginations and thoughts, therefore, which are unsuitable to the holy exercises of devout meditation, thanksgiving, and praise, should, as far as human imperfection will permit, be excluded from our minds. Lukewarmness and indifference should be banished from our affections—an ardour of feeling, inspired by a sense of the greatness and glory of the divine attributes, should give excitement to our piety and our gratitude; and the remembrance of the wonderful work which God hath wrought for us—in creating around us so many comforts and joys—in preserving us from temporal evils, and redeeming us from eternal wrath—should teach us, habitually to esteem the Sabbath a delight, to hail it as the holy of the Lord, “honourable, and to honour him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasures,

nor speaking our own words." For, if worldly cares distract us, if sinful pleasures enslave us, or servile employments engross our time and attention, the offerings of a mind so beset, must be vain, and all its incense an abomination to the Most High.

But a suspension of secular employments, and a renunciation of sinful thoughts and pleasures, are not all that is required of us. The duties of the Sabbath, are not of a negative kind; and if our own conscience, or public opinion, on the commandments of God, restrain us from ordinary pursuits and amusements, they must also restrain us from an indulgence in sloth and idleness. The end of the institution may be frustrated, as well by petty, as by gross violations of its conditions; and it is surely a most unseemly sight to witness professing Christians devoting the day, sacred to its observance, to the animal enjoyments of the sluggard, who knows no higher happiness, than that of rising up to eat, and lying down to sleep. The Sabbath was ordained as the means of glorifying God, by promoting holiness in man, and training him to a meetness for the heavenly kingdom; but a sluggish indulgence in animal ease and indolence, sinks us to a level with the brute creation, and defeats the end of the wisest and the holiest of the divine institutions, by leading us

to disregard the glory and the honour of the Creator, and our own temporal welfare and eternal salvation. On this day, then, are we especially bound to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, "rejoicing in hope, and continuing instant in prayer;" considering one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; "drawing near unto God, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water." \*

It is almost needless to add, that a peculiar obligation lies upon us, to abjure, on this day, those sins, which, on other occasions, are most apt to beset and ensnare us. If we are bound to abstain from employments, and amusements, which are lawful on other days, much more are we bound to abstain from those which we know to be sinful. The very nature of the institution, the solemn consecration of the day by the Almighty, to his own service, with the advantages which it affords for the attainment of religious instruction, and for the performance of pious duties, furnish such a host of motives to the renunciation of all unrighteousness of heart and of life, as cannot be resisted, without the accumulation of very aggravated guilt. Every act of transgression, therefore,

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\* See Note D.



which we commit on this day, must be heightened in criminality by the fact, that we have sinned with fewer temptations to its commission, and more restraints from its indulgence, than are presented to us on other seasons; and if we have any regard to the majesty and justice of God, and any dread of our own future condition, as immortal and accountable creatures, this is a consideration, which will have a serious and profitable effect on our general sentiments and conduct. “Ye shall keep the Sabbath; for it is holy unto you. Whoever defileth it, or doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people.”

As a day of public worship, the duties of the Sabbath are universally known; and it would, therefore, be altogether superfluous, to expound or detail them here. In ancient times, the law and the prophets were read in the synagogue, and God was revered and praised in the assemblies of his saints. A day spent in his courts, was esteemed better than a thousand; and while they uttered abundantly the memory of his great goodness, and sung of his righteousness, they went on from strength to strength, every one in Zion appearing before God. In the times of the apostles, the Christian Sabbath was celebrated by the singing of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Our Lord himself, distinguished, by his gracious pre-

sence and blessing, the first weekly return of the day of his resurrection; and the feast of Pentecost, which happened to be the day of the commemoration of the same event, was peculiarly signalized by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and a large addition to the church, of those who should be saved. On these special manifestations of the divine power and goodness to the early disciples of the church, we mean to found no claims or hopes of similar transcendent blessings in the present day; but we have the promise of God himself, extending to believers in every age and climate, that, if we obey his voice, and keep his statutes, and his ordinances, we shall be a peculiar treasure unto him, above all people.

On every weekly return of the day of the resurrection, the disciples came together with one accord, to one place; and they commemorated the dying love of the Redeemer—they read and expounded the doctrines of salvation—they collected alms for the necessities of their poorer brethren, and gave a practical illustration of the benignant and charitable spirit of the Gospel, by sending them relief according to their ability. Now, what was their duty, assuredly is ours; and the holy exercises and services in which they spent the day, it is especially incumbent on us to observe, and perform in spirit and in truth. Their example

has reached us with all the authority and recommendation of a divine precept; and if they called the day of the Lord a delight, and honourable, and abstained on it from doing their own ways, and finding their own pleasures, we are thereby bound to join ourselves to the Lord, and to serve him, by keeping the Sabbath from polluting it, and withholding our hand from doing evil upon it. "For, his righteousness has been revealed, and his salvation has come unto us." "This, indeed, is the day which the Lord has made; in it we will be glad, and rejoice." And how can we more becomingly or dutifully express our gladness and joy, than by entering the gates of his house, with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise? The tidings of the Gospel, are tidings of great joy to every people. But how shall the great bulk of mankind believe in Him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? Faith, says the highest authority, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. How beautiful, then, upon the mountains, are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, that publish salvation, and say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth? \* The duties of the sanctuary must have a paramount obligation over the con-

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\* Isaiah lii. 7.

science and the conduct of all men; because, it is there the word of eternal life is, under the blessing of God, most effectually and successfully explained; and there also, is it most meekly and faithfully received.

On the Sabbath, we, as well as the Jews, are bound to hold a holy convocation, and to give to the Lord the glory due unto his name, by bringing into his courts an offering of thanksgiving and praise. On the Sabbath, we are bound, affectionately and kindly to consider the condition of one another, that we may provoke unto love and good works, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;" and to the regular and punctual discharge of this duty, we are excited and encouraged by this cheering and delightful promise, "Where two or three," (a definite put for an indefinite number,) "are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them."\* Oh, then, who would not renounce the business and the pleasures of this world, that he might join in the holy exercises, and taste the pure and peaceful joys of heaven? Who would not renounce the company of sinners, that he might join the company of saints; and banish from his thoughts, the cares, the toils, and the amusements

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\* Matth. xviii. 20.

of life, that he might hold fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, Jesus Christ? “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them!” Here is the union of heaven and earth, and the realization of all the promises and blessings foretold in ancient times, when the house of God was to become a house of prayer for all people, and their offerings were to be accepted, and all were to be made joyful in the hope and enjoyment of his favour and loving-kindness. Here is the most exalted and ennobling cause that can give excitement to the energies and the virtues of the human mind; which, at once, gives dignity and sublimity to all our moral and religious sentiments, and purifies the soul of the dross of earthly passion, and elevates it to those pure and permanent sources of delight which spotless and immortal intelligences partícipate.

Who, then, so callous to all that is connected with his present and everlasting felicity, as to live regardless of a duty, which, more than any other, spreads a sacred tranquillity over his feelings, and lifts him above the vexations and distractions of life? Who is there that believes he is a traveller to another country, whence sorrow and sickness, and disappointment and dread, are entirely, and for ever excluded—and who yet does not feel disposed to retire, occasionally, from the crowded

scenes of festivity and folly, which satiate, but do not satisfy, his wishes; and to devote the undisturbed affections of his soul to the anticipation of the exercises and the enjoyments of the blessed? Can we remember our origin, and not think of our destination? Can we reflect on the wearinesses and the miseries of our present condition, and not cast our views forward to that land of everlasting rest, into which there shall never enter any thing that can defile the purity, or interrupt the praises, of the redeemed; where they shall hunger no more, and faint no more; but where God, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters? Can we live amidst the changes and the perils of this world, alternately the dupes of its hopes, and the victims of its despair, and not seek to soften our anxieties, and to swallow up our fears, by meditating on those promises of undisturbed enjoyment, and holy serenity, which shall all be realized when we enter that city, which is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. The voice of joy and salvation is in the assembly of the righteous; and the incense of their offering, rises as a sweet memorial to the skies. Open to me,

then, the gates of righteousness, and I will go in. There will I praise the Lord. I will offer to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay my vows in the presence of all his people.”

Does, then, the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath, possess, in our estimation, the authority of a divine commandment? Do we testify, by our conduct, that the consecration of the first day of the week, is, to us, who have professed the name and the religion of Jesus, an act of indispensable moral obligation; and do we exemplify the devotional sentiments which its recurrence should inspire, by joining in the assemblies of those by whom the Lord is greatly feared, and uniting in the praises of the faithful, by whom he is constantly held in reverence? Does the hallowed morning beam upon us with a sanctifying influence, and do we inhale the serenity of bliss from the peaceful sweetness that overspreads the surrounding landscape? Do the songs of gratitude, which enliven the stillness of the adjoining scenery, awaken in our hearts the memory of the loving-kindness of God; and do our affections ascend, with our songs, to the regions of unfading and uninterrupted felicity? Do we imbibe a holy ardour and delight, when we rise, unencumbered by the cares and the toils of life—and does the sacredness of our sentiments, spring from the well-grounded hope of sal-

vation, which, like an anchor to the soul, stays and supports us under all the storms and disappointments of time; and carries us within the haven of eternal safety, whither our fore-runner is gone? Does the grave of our Saviour rise to our view, stripped of all the frowning horrors with which it was once invested; and do the life and immortality which his resurrection brought to light, dissipate all our doubts of the efficacy of the offering which he has made for our sins, and give confidence to all our expectations of the glory which his second coming shall reveal?

While the remembrance of his sufferings, fills us with an abhorrence of iniquity, does not the commemoration of his triumphs encourage and embolden us in the career of holiness and virtue? Have we considered, that it was not the sins of those alone, by whom he was persecuted, nor the sins of those, who, in former ages, had outraged the justice of God, and done despite to his forbearance and mercy, which agonized his Spirit under the hidings of his father's face, and made him sorrowful, even unto death? Is it possible we can believe, that his death had a prospective, as well as a retrospective effect—that he suffered for the expiation of sins, which we have committed, as well as for the expiation of those which had been perpetrated antecedent to his appearance on



the earth—and yet not experience bitterness and anguish arise within us, when we count over the times in which we have stained the purity of our own character, and crucified afresh the Saviour of our souls? Can we remember, that he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to life; can we consider, that the guilt of our unrighteous doings, (for which, we ourselves could never have offered an atonement,) overwhelmed and wrung his holy and immaculate Spirit, when the justice of heaven frowned upon him with all the sternness of unmitigated severity, and the powers of darkness leagued against him, and thickened around him, as the victim of their enmity and wrath—and yet feel no indignation at the causes by which we arrayed the God of mercy in all the insignia of judgment, and obstinately persevere in the perpetration of deeds, which will assuredly seal us in everlasting perdition? Does not this holy day recal to our minds the triumphs which the Saviour gained over the first death, and the deliverance which he secured to us from the second death, and can we allow its grateful recollections to pass from our memory, without bedewing our affections with the sanctifying influences of a devout and reverential celebration of his love?—In a word, does the meeting of the saints on this day, and the holy exercises in which they join, bring to our

minds no associations of that last meeting, and those everlasting exercises, which await the faithful in the land of uninterrupted and unfading rest? Do no feelings of gratitude and delight arise within us, when we hear the praises of the Redeemer chaunted in strains of simple, but not ungrateful melody? And do no emotions of gladness stir within our cold and unawakened breasts, when the sound of holy-bell admonishes and summons us to go up to the house of the Lord, to behold his beauty, and to inquire reverently in his temple?

We dare not say, that this is the generation of those, whose soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the living God—who rejoice when it is said, Let us go up to the house of the Lord, that we may give unto Him the glory due unto his name, and appear in his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him, with Psalms. There is a generation of men among us, who are wise in their own conceit; and yet, their hearts and their ways are not right with God. They neither remember the statutes that were given to Israel, nor observe the ordinances and the laws of the God of our salvation. They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, and will not listen to the voice of the charmer, charming ever so wisely. But the causes and the conse-

quences of the conduct of those who despise the ordinances, and profane the Sabbaths of the Lord, are of such magnitude, and so seriously affect the moral and political character of society in general, as to demand, in a treatise of this kind, a separate and particular examination. We shall, therefore, in the next Section, attempt, briefly, to review a few of the most flagrant cases of the neglect and profanation of the day of sacred rest, in the hope, that the delineation and exposure of a growing evil, may, by the blessing of God, have some effect in restraining and suppressing it.

## SECTION XI.

*Examination of some of the Causes and Consequences  
of the Profanation of the Sabbath.*

IF we were asked, to what cause we would ascribe the very general neglect, which is manifested throughout almost all Christian countries, for the Sabbath, as a day of holy rest, and of public religious duty, we would shortly answer—to the want of religious principle—to the total absence of a hallowed reverence for the authority of God, and a just sense of the sanctions and obligations of his laws—to the predominance, in a word, of profane and licentious dispositions and habits over the feelings and the exercises of piety, and the desires and the enjoyments of holiness. And, in this view, the causes of the transgression of the fourth commandment, are exactly the same with those which may be assigned for the transgression of all the others; with this additional aggravation, that the guilt of the transgression, in the last instance, may be traced, very generally, to the first; or, in other words, that the profanation of the Sabbath,

leads the way for the indulgence in many of those crimes which spread a demoralizing pestilence over society, and drown the guilty individuals in wretchedness and perdition. It is, on this account, necessary to examine the opinions and practices of those, who have thrown away the obligations to the observance of the holy institution in question, and opened up a high road to the perpetration of the most flagrant and destructive vices. Nor is it only among such as are openly profane, that we are to seek the causes of much of the crime which has overrun society, from the desecration of the holy Sabbath. There are many, who bear the name of Christians—who rank among the disciples of the Gospel, and who are, every day, sharing the political privileges and benefits to which its profession entitles them—who are yet among its most deadly enemies, and by whose pernicious principles, and still more pernicious example, the ignorant and the profligate are hardened and confirmed in their career of impenitence and crime.

Just as might be expected, in an age of easy virtue, and formal and temporizing manners, there are some professors of the Gospel to be met with, who are distinguished for nothing but lukewarmness in the belief and practice of all its peculiar doctrines and duties, and who regard all the public ordinances of religion, as merely ceremonial

in their nature, and unimportant in their obligations; while others, who have a name to live, though they are dead, hesitate not to say, that they are of very doubtful authority; and, consequently, quite optional in the observance. Now, among both of these classes of persons, it is easy to see, that the solemnities of religion will be but indifferently attended to; and it must be more from motives of convenience and pleasure, than from a sense of duty, that any traces of public devotion are preserved among them. The morning of the resurrection will awaken, in their breasts, no cheering anticipations of the glory which awaits the faithful when they join the general assembly and church of the first-born above. The summons to go up to the house of the Lord, that they may know his statutes, and walk in his ways, will bring, to them, no pleasing recollections of the happiness which fills and animates the minds of those who have revered and obeyed the commandment which enjoins them to “remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.” A sullen deadness and desolation pervade all the faculties and affections of their moral and immortal nature; and neither do the assemblies of the devout, who have withdrawn from the anxiety and the bustle of the world, that they may lift their souls to heaven, in adoration of the creating and preserving power of Jehovah, and

present unto him the holy offering of thanksgiving, for past mercies, and of supplication, for future protection—yield them any assurance or foretaste of those holy exercises in which the faithful shall hereafter join, when the trials and afflictions of this transient life are past; nor do the songs of gratitude and praise, which ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him who hath redeemed us to God, by his own blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, kindle up any desire after the blessedness of those who are begotten again to the hope of an inheritance, which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that shall never fade away.

We have only to look around the world to be satisfied, there is good reason to fear, that the cause of vital religion, is fast declining among all ranks of men. There are some who will not condescend to enter the house of God, on more than one portion of the Sabbath; and this they do, we suppose, from an idea, that it would not be fashionable or genteel, to be seen mingling in all the common exercises of religion: or because they wish to avoid the frightful charge of being methodistical; and to impress their neighbours with nothing more than an ordinary good opinion of their piety. There are others, who, without being able to give us a reason for it, regard the public

ministrations of religion, as matters of pure indifference, or of extremely subordinate interest; and who, accordingly, only join in them, when no personal or family inconvenience happens to encumber them, and when they are in what is called a good mood, to extract some entertainment from a sermon. There is a third set, and we wish we could say, that, in a political point of view, they were the most insignificant, as, in a spiritual point of view, they are assuredly the most worthless, who, at no time, are found to assemble together, to join in the praises of the Most High—or in the acknowledgment of the goodness by which they are preserved—or in the supplication of that mercy and grace, by which alone they can be saved. These are the men, whom vanity has placed alone in the midst of the earth, and who, with a deadness toward all that is pure and enlivening in devotion, and a disregard of all that is tender and soothing in the hopes and consolations of religion, ask, in the spirit of proud and insolent defiance, Who is the Lord, that we should obey him? These are the men, among whom the pride of human learning, or the rapacious desire of human wealth, or the greediness of sinful pleasures, has extinguished the graces of Christian humility and holiness; and who, by their depraved counsels, and profane lives, dissolve the bonds of kindred virtues,



which combine men in the social exercises of religion, and direct their exertions and their hopes to the attainment of an immortality of glory and blessedness. Wrapped up in the sordid pursuits of this world, and labouring only for the meat that perisheth, they shut their eyes and their ears against the sight and the service of the sanctuary; and, instead of consecrating their faculties to the blissful employment of thanksgiving and praise, they devote them to the selfish calculations of their secular gains, or the noisy enjoyments of sensual festivity and mirth! Behold, they have said, what a weariness is it?—and they have snuffed at the ordinances of the Lord of hosts? The signal which calls the pious and devout into the house of God, to lift their holy offerings to heaven, is to them, the signal to fly from the hearing of the voice of prayer; and to speed their way to some sequestered or distant scene of merriment, where they may indulge the riotings of their profligacy, undisturbed and unawed by the inspection or the censures of their more virtuous and pious friends.

But why should I talk of sequestered or distant scenes, to which the Sabbath-breaker resorts for the enjoyment of his unlawful pleasures? The violation of the law of the Sabbath, has reached an enormity and notoriety unknown in former times. “The temptation to the crime, among the

higher ranks, arising from a certain vanity of appearing great, by assuming a privilege of doing what was generally forbidden, no longer exists; but the reverence for the day among all orders, is extinguished, and the abuse goes on, from the mere habit of profaneness. In the country, the roads are crowded on the Sunday, as on any other day, with travellers of every sort. The devotion of the villages is interrupted by the noise of the carriages passing through, or stopping at the inns for refreshment. In the metropolis, instead of that solemn stillness of the vacant streets, which might suit, as in our fathers' days, with the sanctity of the day, and be a reproof to every one who should stir abroad, but upon the business of devotion, the mingled racket of worldly business and pleasure is going on with little abatement: and in the churches and chapels which adjoin the public streets, the sharp rattle of the whirling phaeton, and the graver rumble of the loaded waggon, mixed with the oaths and imprecations of the brawling drivers, disturb the congregation, and stun the voice of the preacher."\*

Such is the representation which an English Prelate has given, of the alarming height which the crime of Sabbath-breaking has attained in the

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\* Horsley's Sermon on Mark ii. 27.

South; and to the same height will it soon reach among ourselves, if some more effectual barrier is not opposed to it, than that which the insulated efforts of a few pious individuals can erect. Yet, we are not, from this, going to argue, that compulsory measures are necessary, to recal a backsliding population to a sense of the duties which they owe to the God of heaven and of earth; neither are we going to recommend their adoption, for the purpose of securing a more devout and reverential observance of this holy day, than the majority of men seem to consider themselves bound to bestow. We know that there is much delicacy necessary to be observed in the exercise of the power of the civil magistrate, in all matters of moral and religious belief. We have too much regard to the peculiar opinions and sentiments of individuals, to wish to see the strong arm of the civil judge interposed, to give efficacy to the arguments and the exhortations of the Christian orator: and we would much rather witness the spiritual weapons of the Gospel, succeed in bringing men's hearts into the obedience of its laws, than the sword of human authority employed to subdue them into an external observance of ordinances, with the sanctions of which, the general dispositions and affections of their minds might not comply. But, with humility and respect, we submit

it, that there are limits to this scale of toleration: and if there be any in our land, who are notoriously growing up in the practice and propagation of that wickedness, which is the disgrace and the ruin of a nation—patriotism, and policy, and piety, and every thing which binds us to the love of God, and the love of man, call upon us, by every means in our power, to check and subdue it.

Now, is it not notorious, that there is a class of persons, and that a very large class too, who habitually spend the Sabbath in the most open and unblushing neglect of its sacred duties—who are never seen to cross the threshold of a house of public worship, and whose tongues are never heard to pronounce the name or the ordinances of God, but in profaneness and blasphemy? We assert it, without the fear of contradiction, for the vouchers of its truth are too numerous—we assert it, with regret and sorrow, for, by means of it, the pillars of domestic virtue, and of social happiness, are alarmingly broken down and destroyed—that the profanation of the Sabbath is a growing evil, both among the highest and the lowest ranks of society. “The city has caught the manners of the court; and the vices of the high-born peer, have been faithfully copied in the life of the merchant and the tradesman.” Accordingly, among the lower classes of the people, the Sabbath is, in

many places, converted into a day of idleness, of dissipation, and riot. By some, the earnings of the week, which should be devoted to the frugal maintenance of their families, are spent in the worse than brutal indulgence of the lowest of their animal appetites; and those children, whom, by ties of parental affection, and the bonds of religious duty, they ought to nourish, to clothe, and to instruct, are left to poverty, to beggary, and profligacy. By others, the signal which calls us to the service of the sanctuary, is hailed as the signal for them to repair to the parks, the plantations, the rivers, and high roads of the neighbourhood, where, in the face of heaven, they alike bid defiance to the laws of God, and trespass on the possessions and property of man. Is there no way of reaching conviction to the conscience of such persons, and no means of restraining them in the barefaced commission of crime? Is it nothing, that the feelings of the pious should be wounded, as they are journeying to the house of God, by the insolent derision which they meet from these despisers of divine and human authority? Is it nothing, that their domestic retirements and devotional exercises should be disturbed by the noisy and guilty excesses of men, who are fast bringing degradation upon themselves, and disgrace upon the society to which they belong?

The end of all law is to protect the good against the bad; and the end of all coercion and punishment should be, the prevention of crime. Why, then, should not the servants of God be protected in the performance of the hallowed duties of this holy day, from the unseemly spectacle of men, who are grouped together in the work of profaneness and iniquity? Why should not their haunts of dissipation be shut? Why should not their resorts of impiety and lewdness be watched? Delicacy, and leniency, and forbearance, are lost upon men, who are devoid of moral and religious feeling, and who would violate *all* the commandments of the law, as unhesitatingly as they do the *fourth*, provided the chances of escape from punishment were the same. Hypocrisy has been called the homage which vice pays to virtue; and wherever mankind have not become altogether demoralized in principle and in practice, a regard to the judgment of the world, will constrain them to the observance of an external decency of manners, which even the judgments and the statutes of heaven will fail to procure. But, in the case of the individuals to whom we refer, even this, the last and precarious symptom of religious feeling, is not to be found.

A disregard of the public ordinances of Christianity, is the fruit of a disregard of its doctrines

and laws: and when once men have blotted out of their conscience, all reverence and dread for the authority of God, they will not long continue to respect and obey the authority of man. Is it to be believed, that they who openly condemn the periodical celebration of the rites of religion, will continue to be faithful in the observance of its moral duties? Will they who devote the whole of the Sabbath to idleness, profaneness, and profligacy, devote the rest of the week to industry and honesty, to holiness, temperance, and piety? Will they who never open their bibles on the first day of the week—nor lift their voices in prayer to God upon it—nor join in the meeting of the saints upon it—be found, on the days of their ordinary employment, perusing the records of their fall and their redemption, and consecrating their leisure hours to the peaceful exercises of holy meditation, and striving, in all things, to serve the God of their fathers with a perfect heart, and a willing mind, because he searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of our thoughts? It is altogether beyond the bounds of probability, to admit the truth of one of these suppositions. Whence, we would ask, is the knowledge of the attributes and providence, of the laws and requirements, of the one living and true God, to be obtained, but from the book which he has given

us by the Spirit of inspiration, as the rule of our faith and manners? Where are the duties, which relate to ourselves, to our fellow-men, and to our Maker, so fully or so forcibly explained, as in the houses which are consecrated to the services of praise, and prayer, and preaching? But what can be expected from men, who have deserted the one, and cast away the other? If they have placed themselves beyond the reach of hearing the promises and admonitions, the commandments and the penalties, of the divine law—if they have shut their eyes against that volume which instructs them in the nature of sin, and the way of salvation—are they not in the broad road to crime and wretchedness in this world, and, if divine mercy prevent not, to perdition and wretchedness in the next? Yes; we may be assured, that, wherever all regard to the public ordinances of religion, is obliterated from the minds of the lower classes of society—there we shall in vain seek for any traces of the fear and reverence of God's laws. With the bulk of mankind, infidelity in opinion, and profaneness in practice, are closely allied, and the registers of all our Newgates and Bridewells, inform us, that the most atrocious crimes against the laws of man, have originated in the disregard and denial of the word of God. The rejection of religious belief, is the forerunner or the follower



of the destruction of moral restraint; and if the fear of the wrath of God in the world to come, has lost all power over the minds of men, neither prisons, nor chains, nor scaffolds, will deter them from falsehood and perjury, from treason, rapine, and blood! Apostacy from God, will be followed with dishonesty and disloyalty to man: and he who cares not for the torments of that place, where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched, is not very likely to be shaken in his purposes of guilt and atrocity, by the fear of an earthly tribunal, or the axe of an earthly executioner.

In illustration of this statement, I might refer to events, which have not long since, occurred in our own country, and recall others, which may perhaps be forgotten.\* But I am unwilling to renew the horror, which the contemplation or the recital of transactions, that have added a fresh stain to the degeneracy of human nature, is calculated to inspire; and I am equally unwilling to travel to a distance for proofs of a statement, which the weekly and daily observation of every individual, may readily substantiate. If I could succeed in calling the attention of those who have the power to prescribe the remedy, to an evil of great notoriety, and of just and reasonable com-

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\* See Note E.

plaint among the best disposed part of the community, I would consider myself not to have written in vain: and if it should be found, that some have grown so old, and so obstinate, in the sin of profaning the ordinances and the name of God, as to be beyond the power of being reclaimed, I would press, the more closely, the necessity which lies upon us, to check and subdue the spirit of impiety and profligacy which is fast spreading among a young and rising generation.\* But I forbear to prolong my remarks on this subject; and I hasten briefly to examine the conduct of another class of persons, who, although not debased by the vices and profligacy of those whose characters we have just been reviewing, are yet chargeable with no small portion of the crimes, which the profanation of the Sabbath has engendered.

In the foregoing parts of this Treatise, I have endeavoured, (I trust, with some success,) to show, that the sanctification of this day is a duty, of as purely moral and obligatory a nature, as is the observance of any commandment of the law, or any precept of the Gospel; and I am satisfied, that, if the arguments which have often been employed on this subject, were brought to bear, simultaneously or separately, upon the understanding of

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\* See Note F.

any set of men, who are not altogether dead to moral and religious sentiment—and they were asked, whether the abstinence, on the Lord's day, from all works of worldly profit and pleasure, and the regular and conscientious attendance on the public ordinances of religion, were not duties of a very solemn and sacred nature, both as they relate to individuals, and to society—they would unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative. Let us see, then, how the matter of fact stands, with this point of concession.

In many parts of the country, it has long been an increasing symptom of the decline of vital religion among its inhabitants, that great numbers, both of the high and the low, are not to be found within the walls of a church, except at the approach of a particular period of the year, when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to be dispensed. By the express command of our Saviour himself, this ordinance was instituted among his followers, as a perpetual memorial of his body that was broken, and his blood that was shed for the remission of their sins. By the appointment of our church, this sacred festival, which it is at once the privilege of all true believers to enjoy, and their duty to observe, is celebrated, according to the circumstances of different congregations, at certain fixed intervals of time. We do not believe, that there

is any thing mystical or awful in the celebration of this ordinance; although we believe, that it certainly requires a very strict and solemn examination of our hearts and our ways, to prepare us for a worthy participation of it. It is by a pious and acceptable approach to the table of the Lord, that we discharge the vows, which our parents, on our behalf, took upon themselves, when they devoted us to God in baptism. It is by this, that we redeem the pledges which were then given, that we should be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and it is by this, that, in our own name, and on our own account, we renew our engagements, to walk honestly and blamelessly in all the ordinances and commandments of Him who redeemed us from all our iniquities, that he might purify us unto himself, to be a peculiar people, zealous in good works. Now, if this be any thing like a correct account of the nature of the Lord's Supper, what shall we think of the character and conduct of those, who scarcely ever enter a house of public worship, except at the approach of the period of its celebration? How have they been employed during the long interval that elapses between the seasons of its observance? In their estimation, is there no obligation attached to the public duties of any other Sabbath, than of that, on which the love, the sufferings, and the

death of the Saviour, are peculiarly commemorated; or to those of one or two which precede and follow it. Is it from an obedience to the commandment of God, and from a devout and grateful sense of all that he has done for their redemption from sin, and their restoration to the hope of eternal life, that they join in the solemn services of the sacrament of the supper? Or, is it from a regard to the opinion of men, and a desire to avoid the imputation of infidels and reprobates, who have never confirmed their baptismal vows by a personal dedication of themselves to the fear and the service of God? If it be from the first of these considerations, how does it happen, that the influence of the divine authority should never be exemplified in their conduct, but at one or two periods of the year?—or how should they be so deluded and infatuated, as to imagine, that their attendance upon the ordinances of God on one Sabbath, will serve as an atonement for the neglect and profanation of them on others? If it be from the latter consideration, how still more deluded are they, when they suppose, that by so thin a veil of hypocrisy, they are able to conceal their true character from the scrutiny and the reproach of their neighbour? It is impossible for them to deceive God; and, in this case, it is equally impossible for them to deceive men. Their unoccupied benches

testify against them; and when the period comes at which they choose to fill them, they are pointed at by the most careless, and, we are sorry to say, by the most profane in the congregation, as in the way of a sham qualification for a title to privileges, of which their foregoing conduct has declared them to be altogether unworthy.

What would the commander of an army think of any of his men who only appeared once or twice a year to pass muster, at the general inspection, with the foolish and presumptuous hope of being entitled to the same remuneration for duty, as those who had been faithful at their posts during the intervening months? What would any one think of the character of a servant, who came into his employment at one term, and, after a few days' labour in the affairs of the household, disappeared till the approach of the next term, when, by a few more days' assiduity and diligence in the service of the family, he vainly considered himself warranted unblushingly to ask the full fees of his office? These cases are exactly similar to the one I have been describing; and I leave it to the general reader to say, whether they whose Sabbaths are spent in idle discourse, in profane sports, in pleasure visits, or in unnecessary worldly business, are in the way of a right preparation for an acceptable approach to that holy ordinance, which

was instituted as a pledge of the Saviour's love— as a continual remembrance of his death—and as the source of spiritual and everlasting consolation to all his sincere and devout disciples.

But there is one or two more classes of hearers to whom I must allude; and, with a very few remarks on their character, and the consequences of their conduct, I shall conclude this part of the subject. The persons to whom we first refer, are such as have not yet advanced so far in a profanation of the Sabbath, as to absent themselves regularly from the house of public worship. If we can judge from their conduct, however, (and this is the only clue which we have to a knowledge of their principles,) they seem to regard the public ministrations of religion, as matters of very inferior interest and obligation, and only to be joined in, when no personal or other inconvenience happens to encumber them; or, when they are moved by (what we have heard they are not ashamed to avow) the profane curiosity of seeing the beauty and fashion of the parish; or the selfish and pitiful consideration of informing others, that they are the owners of some long uninhabited and desolate corner of the sanctuary.

There is still, however, another description of persons, for whom we have a little more respect; and, if we cannot set them right, we should be

glad to know their reasons for continuing wrong. With a punctuality which is praise-worthy, so far as it goes, they are pretty regular in their attendance on divine worship, on one part of the Sabbath; but, with a punctuality which is equally censurable, they are as regularly absent from it on the other part of the Sabbath. Now, we are at a loss to understand whence the ideas of such persons, respecting the sanctification of this day, have been formed, and how far they extend. Do they imagine, that, by going to the house of God in the morning, they gain a title to go where they please in the evening?—or, that an hour or two spent in formal devotion on one part of the day, will justify them in spending the rest of it in amusement and pleasure? Do they think that there is any virtue belonging to the services of the forenoon, which is not to be found in those of the afternoon?—or is it their belief, that the performance of one part of a duty, will be held by God as an equivalent for the whole? Is it from a full and serious examination of the commandment of God, or from a regard to the opinion of men, that they have adopted the practice of which we complain? We have heard it lamented, by persons who were themselves a melancholy example of the influence of the passion whose effects they deprecated—that the fear of ridicule prevented many from a punc-



tual attendance on divine ordinances, and a regular performance of religious duties! And while we have expressed our surprise at the contrariety of sentiment and practice which was thus evinced, we could discover no other cause than this, that the fashion of the world has associated something weak and feminine with the character of the man who faithfully and devoutly observes the public duties of the Sabbath. What a fearful perversion of human reason is this, and how ominous of the future perdition of those who indulge it! “What is a man advantaged,” said our Saviour, “if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be a cast-away! Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.” \*

But, the truth is, that the practice of which we complain, is not of native growth. It assorts not at all with the notions which our bibles and forefathers taught us, of the obligations of the duty which lies upon all of us, to sanctify our hearts upon the Sabbath, that we may keep it holy. It has been imported from abroad, and if we be not very watchful of its spread amongst us, it will

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\* Matth. viii. 38.

speedily bring with it, the long train of sinful and profane amusements, in which our more gay and more profligate neighbours indulge. By them, it seems to have been at first thought quite sufficient to attend the house of God on the morning of the Sabbath, to join in the formal confession of sin, and the lifeless supplication of a continuance of the divine blessing; and the rest of the day, and the rest of the week, they conceived themselves warranted to spend, according to the counsels and the pleasures of their own imagination. Remissness in any one department of duty, however, frequently leads to a general relaxation of moral feeling and principle; and, accordingly, it has become a very prevalent opinion among some professors of the Christian faith, that, as they are included in the prayers which are read by the officiating clergyman, in behalf of all men, their attendance, during the hours of divine service, is altogether an unnecessary and gratuitous act.

It is needless for me to describe what the consequences of this opinion, and of this doctrine, have been, after the detail which I have already given in the early part of this Section. The same doctrine, and the same consequences, we fear, are rapidly extending among ourselves; and if our feeble exertions shall have no effect in counteracting their spread, we shall, at least, have the satis-

faction of having pointed out their cure. Let every one apply the subject to himself, and let him bring to its examination, his own experience and observation. Measure the performance of duty by the standard of the divine law, and let the wisdom and the utility of every ordinance of religion be determined by its own requirements and effects. Select from among your acquaintance and your neighbours, those by whom the praises of Jehovah are never sung, and by whom his Sabbaths are never sanctified—and tell us, what are their characters and pursuits, and what the hopes and prospects with which they are cheered? Look around the world, and tell us, where do the virtues which most adorn human life, most eminently flourish; and where is the happiness that is most lasting, most fully enjoyed? Is it not by those whose hearts are most uniformly filled with the fear of the Lord, and whose lives are most uniformly spent in the observance of his ordinances, and the study and obedience of his laws? Where does iniquity spread its baneful influence most widely over the theatre of human action—and where does profligacy contaminate most deeply the sources of human virtue, and break down the landmarks of duty, and throw open the flood-gates of pollution? Is it not where the restraints of religion are avowedly despised—where its institu-

tions are openly profaned, and the name and the attributes of its author, are never worshipped or revered? Whom would you select as your most faithful friends, or whom would you trust as your most confidential servants? Those who neither obeyed the appointments of God, nor trembled at the denuncements of his wrath? or those who strove to walk blameless in his statutes, and whose fidelity in your service, and whose attachment to your interest, were the fruits of their veneration of the laws, and of their attendance upon the ordinances of that Almighty Being, who, in six days, made the heavens, and the earth, and all the host of them: and rested on the Sabbath, and blessed and hallowed it? Which is the more pleasing spectacle to behold,—a community of men whose hearts are subdued under a sense of their dependence upon the power and goodness of God, and expanded under the influence of a devotional regard to his institutions and his laws, and who assemble together, with a meek and grave deportment, to give utterance to the gratitude with which their affections glow, and to hear and obey the admonitions of those who tell them, that it is not a vain thing to wait upon the Lord, neither is it unprofitable to keep his ordinances,—or that of a community where the fear of God is never acknowledged, and his worship is never witnessed; where their

Sabbaths are the Sabbaths of oxen, and their solemn feasts the holidays of Satan, spent in the pleasures of brutes, and devoted to the revelry of sin? Whether is it more pleasing to behold men devoting the morning of the resurrection to the blissful employment of thanksgiving and praise, or to the sordid calculations of avarice, and the sluggish indulgence in debasing apathy—to see them preparing their hearts for solemnizing the rites of heaven, and taking sweet counsel together, as they walk to the house of God in company—or to see them snuffing at the ordinances of the Lord of Hosts, and posting away from the sight and the service of the sanctuary, and strengthening one another in the strong holds of impiety, and encouraging one another in the propagation of profligacy?—“ Away from us, O ye wicked, for we will keep the commandments of our God! This is the statute which we will observe; and these are the words of the law which we will obey: ‘ Whatsoever others do, as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord.’ To his voice will we listen, and his covenant will we keep. For, thus saith the Lord to them who choose the things that please him, and who take hold on his covenant to do it, Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it—that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it—and that restraineth

himself from doing any evil upon it. Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and there will I make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar, and their souls shall be satisfied with the goodness of my house, even of my holy temple.”

## SECTION XII.

*Advantages which the Sanctification of the Sabbath  
is calculated to produce.*

FROM the facts and arguments stated and detailed in the preceding Sections of this Dissertation, it has been proved, that the appointment of the Sabbath, as a day of cessation from ordinary labour, and of public religious duty, is one of the most ancient and venerable institutions in society. It now remains for us to show, a little more fully than we have hitherto done, that it is one of the wisest and most useful.

We believe that none, but such as have become dead to all sentiments of virtue and piety, by the debasing influence of infidel principles, or profligate habits, will deny, that the observance of the Sabbath—that the dedication of one day in seven, to a respite from secular labour, and to the attainment of religious instruction—the enlargement of moral enjoyment, and the contemplation of the great and momentous concerns that belong to our everlasting peace, is calculated, in the very highest

degree, to promote the spiritual and temporal happiness of all ranks and professions of men. Those who refuse to admit the truth of such a statement, must have discarded from their minds, all belief in the fundamental principles of religion, and have thrown away all regard to its most exalted and amiable duties, and have reconciled themselves to the cold and cheerless doctrine, that its hopes and its fears, its rewards and its punishments, are the invention of knaves, or the delusion of fools—and that mankind are unalterably destined to run the round of a few years of vanity and disappointment on this earth, with no higher hopes, and less real happiness, than are possessed by the mute irrational creation. But the number of such men must be limited, and it is only in the society of the depraved and the worthless, that they dare to avow their profane and licentious opinions. Wherever the existence of God is believed, the immortality of the human soul is admitted. The immortality of the human soul, is necessarily connected with the doctrine of a future state; and this, joined to man's accountability for the good or evil of his actions, implies the distribution of different allotments hereafter, according to the character by which he has been distinguished here. Now, here only, on the simple view of man's immortal and accountable character, the institu-



tion of the Sabbath, appears a most wise and beneficial measure. The Sabbath, emphatically, as well as literally, means a day of rest to the wearied and hard-toiled children of men; and it remains for ever an emblem or type of that holy and uninterrupted rest, which awaits the people of God, in another and a better world. It is a day sacred to the commemoration of the creating and redeeming power and goodness of the Most High; and the exercises and services in which it is now spent by the faithful, are an earnest and foretaste of the pure and spiritual services, with which the praises of God, and of the Lamb, will be celebrated throughout the ages of eternity.

Is it not, then, of the highest importance, that an institution, so exalted in its origin, so pure and hallowed in its end, should be reverentially and sacredly observed by man? Since it is its primary object, to preserve in his mind, the remembrance of the wisdom and benignity of God—to instruct him in the knowledge of the things that belong to his everlasting peace—and to animate and cheer him with the hope of glory, honour, and a blessed immortality, is it not a duty of the very highest obligation, that he call it, “ a delight—the holy of the Lord, honourable—and turn away his feet upon it, from doing his own ways, finding his own pleasures, and speaking his own words?”

Yes, if the bulk of mankind have not been predestinated to occupy the condition of mere beasts of burden—if we do not regard them as the heirs of perpetual slavery and ignorance—doomed to toil in hopeless pain and poverty, that they may yield to the few, who inherit the riches and the rule of this earth, the means of increased emolument and luxury, the observance of the Sabbath, on the ground of its advantage to man, in this world alone, is a most wise and reasonable institution. We are feeble and declining mortals, and, both in a moral and political point of view, we require occasional interruptions and varieties of our domestic and social employments. The constitution of man is unable to endure the hardship of long-continued exertion; and when it is considered what a large proportion of our race must always remain “hewers of wood, and drawers of water,” the appointment of the Sabbath, in reference merely to the relief which it affords to our toilsome condition, must excite in our minds sentiments of gratitude and praise.

But, connected with this beneficial effect of the observance of the Sabbath, as a day of rest, by which servants are protected from the oppression of rigorous and unfeeling task-masters, there is another, which, although apparently only of an humble character, has a very general influence on

the comfort of the lower classes of society. We mean the attention to decency of external appearance, and cleanliness of dress, which is inseparable from the devout observance of that day; and which, throughout all Christian countries, is more successfully recommended and enforced, by the weekly recurrence of its public duties, than by any other ordinance or arrangement whatever. Now, it is familiar to all who have attentively studied the human character, that its formation depends very often on extremely minute causes, and that circumstances, which at first sight seem too trivial to be taken into account, are afterwards found to have a mighty effect in deciding its excellence or deformity. We believe, that there is a very close association between the dress and manners of an individual; and, although it be as impossible to teach a rude man good breeding, by putting a good garment around him, as it would be to make an ignorant man learned, by merely putting a book of science in his hand; yet we think it undeniable, that a certain elevation of thought, and even dignity of demeanour, are inspired among the labouring classes, by their occasional appearance in a garb of superior fineness and elegance. The change thus produced, is equivalent to a distinction conferred on them. They feel raised above the level of their ordinary employments, and they

naturally endeavour to imbibe a portion of the sentiments and manners of the higher orders in society, to which, their outward habiliments indicate an approximation.\* This is an effect which may be observed, without any reference to particular circumstances; but if we connect with an improvement in the external appearance and dress of a man in ordinary life, an increased attention to the external decencies of society, and a devout observance of the public solemnities of religion, it must necessarily follow, that he will acquire a softness of disposition, and a suavity of manners, to which he was formerly a stranger. Moreover, every thing relating to the duties of the Sabbath, is calculated to inspire feelings of humility and meekness, kindness and condescension. The place where we meet for their performance, bears, in our estimation, a sacred character. We are immediately in the presence of God, the searcher of the hearts, and the trier of the spirits of the children of men. There is an outward decorum, therefore,

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\* “ Il me semble qu’il se glisse dans le cœur des gens du peuple, quelques pensées propres a relever un peu leur sentimens abattus; lorsqu’ un jour par semaine, ils se revêtent d’un habit qui les rapproche exterieurement des autres citoyens:—lorsque, ce jour, ils sont maîtres absolus de leur temps, et peuvent se dire ainsi quelquefois: Et moi aussi je suis Libre.”

*M. Necker De l’importance des opinions religieuses.*

indispensably requisite in all our movements and gestures. We are engaged in the worship and service of the Most High; and the act of confessing our sins, and imploring forgiveness, and seeking, through the intercession of the Redeemer, reconciliation and favour, must strongly awaken within us, a sense of our guilt, our frailty, and insufficiency; and thus, effectually banish from our minds every feeling of pride, hardheartedness, and insolence. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, is, in the sight of God, of great price; and no man can make an acceptable approach to his altar, or engage aright in his service, who has not experienced the influence of holy desires extinguishing the power of impure passions, and felt a spirituality of temper, and a sweetness and gentleness of disposition, uniting him in sympathy with the wants and the wishes of all around him.

Haughtiness and self-conceit, in many cases, characterize the possessors of learning and wealth, and these dispositions are generally manifested in a supercilious contempt for all who are less favourably gifted. The qualities on which haughtiness of demeanour is founded, are, for the most part, entirely fictitious; and, as society is now constituted, one very considerable cause of suffering to the lowly and undistinguished, arises from the insolence which the pride of rank, or of riches,

compels them to endure. But there is one place, and only one, where the distinctions of birth and of rank—the insolence of office—the pride of wealth—and the self-sufficiency of science, are annihilated; and all classes and denominations of men, appear, “without respect of persons, as nothing and vanity.” There is one place, where the dazzling illusions of the world have lost their power to deceive, and the measure of truth and rectitude is impartially applied to the conscience and the conduct of all. In the house of God, and in the worship of God, all men appear, even in their own estimation, equally “wretched and poor, blind and naked,”—distinguished in no way from one another, except by the sincerity of their contrition—the strength of their faith—and the fervour of their desires to purify themselves from all iniquity of heart and of life, even as the author of their faith is pure. It is here, in the sanctification of the Sabbath, and the performance of its solemn public duties, that the rich and the poor truly meet together, and the Lord appears as the Maker and the Father of them all. Here “the mighty are put down from their seats, and they of low degree are exalted.” All the distinctions of honour, and power, and wealth, are abolished; and the glorious distinction of having “full assurance of the faith, and hearts sprinkled

from an evil conscience, and purged from dead works, to serve the living God," is alone recognized. The poor man is released from the depressing influence of an untoward fortune; and he gains a holy confidence, and an unyielding fortitude against the evils of his lot, from the assurance of the loving-kindness and favour of the Most High. The rich man gives his earthly treasure to the wind, and, prostrating himself at the footstool of the divine throne, he is only raised from the depths of his self-abasement, and released from his fears of utter rejection, by the cheering declaration, that although not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, "of a truth, God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." The worship of God, then, according to the ceremonial and spirit of the Gospel, is the grandest moral spectacle the world ever witnessed. It is here, alone, that all men are equalized in the presence of the Creator, and combined by their common imperfections and wants, in mutual benevolence and esteem. It is here, alone, the rich and poor meet together, as children of the same Father, and heirs of the same inheritance—as suppliants of the same mercy, and partakers of the same hopes. The same desires and aspirations are here poured

forth from a thousand hearts, and consolations and comforts, which are neither few nor small, are showered down on all, according as their varied circumstances require. It is only in the house set apart for the worship of the one living and true God, that mankind are publicly taught, that the same purposes are destined to be fulfilled, by all the vicissitudes of condition and enjoyment which they experience here, and that the disappointments and afflictions which fall to their lot now, will, hereafter, issue in the full and everlasting happiness of all who are suitably exercised under them. “O Israel, trust thou, therefore, in the Lord, for the Lord God is a sun and shield. Keep ye judgment, and do justice, for his salvation is near to come, and his righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it—that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it—and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.”

But this leads me to state, that, in a detail of the benefits resulting from the observance of the Sabbath, as a day of holy rest and meditation, the facilities it affords for instructing men in the knowledge of religious and moral duty, must be assigned a high and important station. The direct tendency of natural and moral science to soften and civilize mankind, and to qualify them



for discharging, most successfully and beneficially, all the duties of social and domestic life, has been questioned, we believe, by none who have not been decidedly hostile to the moral and political interests of our race. Wherever learning is patronised and encouraged, it unfolds, in a pre-eminent degree, the highest faculties of the human mind, and gives exercise and energy to feelings and affections which would otherwise have lain for ever dormant. It multiplies the means of human subsistence and enjoyment; and unlocks the richest intellectual treasures that dignify and adorn our nature. It ennobles the mind of man, more than all the arbitrary honours and distinctions which princes or courts can confer; and places, at all times, within the reach of those who possess it, a rich banquet of moral felicity, which the world can neither give, nor take away.

Do we admit, then, that all men have a right to personal enjoyment—and, (except in a country where the most debasing despotism has extinguished all sentiments of virtue,) this, we should think, will not be denied—if we admit, that all men have certain duties to perform, as rational and accountable beings—as beings who are not sent into the world to run the round of a few years of care and penury, and afterwards to perish in ignorance and misery, but who are placed here in

a state of trial and preparation for another, and an endless world, and who, according to their present character and conduct, shall hereafter be declared the heirs of glory and honour, or of tribulation and wrath,—then it must be of the highest importance for their moral improvement and happiness, that there should be regular intervals of rest, devoted to the cultivation of moral and religious truth. Now, are not these intervals most wisely provided by the weekly recurrence of the Sabbath; and does it not furnish more efficaciously than was ever done by any other moral or religious institution, the means of growing in the knowledge of holiness and righteousness, and of all the duties that belong to the life that now is, and of that which is to come? And what knowledge can be more practical, more useful, more fitted to enlarge and exalt the mind, than that which relates to the present and future condition of man? Or where can it be acquired so expeditiously or so perfectly, as in the house where the oracles of divine truth are expounded, and the duties of devotion and charity, of meekness, patience, and perseverance, are inculcated, with the powerful aid of sympathy to enforce them, and all the charm of a pious example to win us to their love and practice?

The heathen world may be searched in vain for

an institution that can vie in utility with that of the Sabbath, and in no Christian country can we point to any other periodical festival, or any other human appointment that can be compared to it, as the means of communicating the greatest portion of important instruction to the greatest mass of mankind. It is in the sanctuary of God's house alone, that we behold the pleasing spectacle of a mingled multitude, composed of the high and the low, the rich and the poor, assembled on the first day of the week, having their hearts warmed by the same gratitude—animated by the same hopes—and united in the same bonds of benevolence and peace. It is there only that they appear possessed of the same substantial and glorious privileges, in virtue of which, they can draw near to the throne of grace with confidence, as children to a father who is able and willing to help them in every time of need. Religious knowledge is, in the highest sense of the word, the knowledge of our duty; and this, it is the exclusive end of the Sabbath to teach and recommend. Plainness and simplicity, in general, characterize the instructions which are delivered from the word of God in the house set apart for his worship; and there have all ranks of men an opportunity, which they can find no where else, of hearing the doctrines of salvation, and the sanctions and obligations of

moral duty, explained and enjoined with unrivalled solemnity and force.

If there is not a melancholy preponderance of worldly and sinful thoughts in the mind, the impressions which are received in the sanctuary, must be carried into the world, and there give a character to all our transactions, in every department of life. With the lively influence of the important truths which he heard expounded on the Sabbath, pervading his mind during the week, with the consideration of his future accountability at the tribunal of God, always before his eyes, a man must ever feel restrained in the pursuit of secular profit or pleasure; for we can conceive no doctrine more powerful in training him to circumspection and purity of conduct, than the assurance, that a Being of perfect holiness—with whom evil cannot dwell, neither can the workers of iniquity stand in his sight—is the constant witness of all his thoughts, words, and deeds. The public services of the Sabbath, therefore, furnish the mass of mankind with information respecting their duty, and motives to the performance of it, more plain and intelligible, more copious and forcible, than they could derive from the observance of any other ordinance, or the celebration of any other act of religious worship. They aid private devotion, by inspiring additional degrees of moral

fervour, and render all our duties of praise and thanksgiving, of confession and supplication, more impressive and profitable, than they can be when performed in solitude. They preserve and promote, moreover, the peace and good order of society, by removing, from the mind of the worshippers, all rancorous and turbulent passions; and exhibit, in the mingled throng who have met to serve the Lord, with one heart, and in one way, the most perfect example of social union and happiness, which the annals of the world can display. They diffuse, among all who assemble to worship under the same roof, and in the same spirit, gentleness and meekness, mutual forbearance and friendship. They inspire the lowly and self-abased with sentiments of manly boldness and independence, and render them careful, even from a regard to their own respectability and comfort, to observe an outward propriety and decorum in all their demeanour in the world. They bring together, and strip of their short-lived distinctions, the prince and the peasant, the magistrate and the subject, the master and the servant, and unite them all in a common sympathy, by uniting them in a common end.

But, to sum up this detail of moral benefits, we maintain, that there is no appointment of Providence, and no ordinance of religion, which can be

compared to the Sabbath, as the instrument of preserving in the world, the knowledge and worship of the one living and true God. Take mankind in general, and examine their dispositions and habits. Trace them in their progress through life, and carefully compare the relative influence which temporal and spiritual objects, or, what is the same thing, which the concerns of time and of eternity maintain over their minds. Do not the things which are seen and temporal, in many cases, swallow up all regard for the things that are not seen and eternal? In every country, do not we find the largest proportion of mankind so engrossed with the care of what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed, that they have no time and no reflection to bestow on the momentous interests of a future and eternal world? Does not the love of present ease, or the desire of future gain, or the pursuit of vain and visionary honours, obliterate from the hearts of a large portion of our race, all concern about the obligations of the divine law, and, consequently, all concern about the awful realities of eternity? If men were left unacquainted with the public institutions and ordinances of religion, would they not soon become strangers to the sanctions and obligations of its private duties? Certainly they would—for, if there was no regular

period of time devoted by them to the acquirement of the knowledge of the doctrines and duties of salvation, they would speedily become ignorant of their own immortal nature—lose all reverence for the attributes and the laws of God, and sink into a melancholy condition of moral insensibility and sin. The devout observance of the Sabbath, then, we contend, is the main pillar on which vital godliness and true holiness rest. Without the public acknowledgment of the existence and the providence of God, there can be no excitement to duty higher than what the transient considerations of time can create. Without the observance of the public institutions of religion, we cannot well conceive the existence of any concern about the discharge of its private virtues. If the divine authority of the commandment to sanctify the Sabbath, is denied, and the public ordinances of the Gospel are disregarded, it is not at all probable that any reverence for the name and the attributes of God, will remain; or that the desire of obtaining his favour, and the fear of incurring his displeasure, will so influence the minds of men, as to preserve them in the constant love and practice of all that he has revealed, as “honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.”

No.—It is by the regular observance of the

Sabbath, that the knowledge of the character and the laws of God, is most extensively communicated to the majority of men. It is by this, that they are most perfectly instructed in the duties which belong to the stations they occupy in this life, and most fervently animated with the desire of attaining the realization of all the glorious hopes and promises which belong to that which is to come. We may lay it down, therefore, as a general rule, that where the public ordinances of religion are not respected, its private duties will be very little known or practised. When men forsake the assembling of themselves together, to worship God, they forsake the way of holiness and happiness; and meanly proffer, at the shrine of personal ease and sensual enjoyment, the highest privileges and the brightest endowments of an immortal and accountable creature. Experience has fully demonstrated, that, when they turn away their feet from the sanctuary, they turn away from righteousness; and when they have begun to walk through life, without the fear and reverence of God, they have begun to walk after the "lust of the flesh—the lust of the eye—and the pride of life." With the largest portion of mankind, the neglect of the Sabbath, in particular, is a proof of the neglect of religion in general;—wherever the influences of religion



are not felt, the fear of God cannot be experienced; and where the fear of God is not experienced, the corrupt passions of the heart must be the only guides of human conduct, and under their oppressive and demoralizing rule, men must become the slaves of sin, and, according to their various propensities and habits, sell themselves to work all manner of evil, with greediness. How dismal is the picture which such a state of society exhibits! No prayers are there heard ascending to heaven, and no voice of mercy comes from it, to cheer the humble penitent with the promise of the remission of sins, and the assurance of salvation through faith in the righteousness of Christ Jesus. They desire not the Lord, or the knowledge of his ways; and in righteous judgment, they have been given up to the delusion of a reprobate mind. There is no petition offered up for the grace of repentance, and on none are its blessed influences shed. The gates of righteousness are never entered, and the door of life is never open. Darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. The broad road, that leads to destruction, is crowded with a perverse and backsliding generation, who have rejected all counsel, and despised all reproof; and that they may eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices, the fearful sentence of Ephraim has been pronounced

against them—"They are joined to their idols, let them alone." \*

But while we deplore the general prevalence of profaneness and profligacy—while we deprecate the operation of those causes by which the Sabbath is polluted, and the ordinances of religion neglected and despised, it is gratifying to know, (and we state the fact as matter of joy and triumph to every good man,) that there are none to be met with who are influenced, we will not say by the principles of Christianity, but by the feelings of benevolence and patriotism, who do not readily acknowledge the general benefit which society derives from the recurrence of this sacred day. However much men may differ about the mode of sanctifying it—or however much their practice may be opposed to their opinions—what may be called the political advantages of its observance, are uncontroverted. The Sabbath is ordained for a day of spiri-

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\* "Wherever the Sabbath is not, there is no worship, no religion. Man forgets God; and God forsakes man. The moral world becomes a desert, where life never springs, and beauty never smiles. Putrid with sin, and shrunk with ignorance, the soul of man loses its rational character, and prostrates itself before devils, men, beasts, and reptiles, stocks and stones. To these, man offers his prayers, his praises, and his victims—to these, he sacrifices his children, and immolates the purity and honour of his wife.—A brutal worshipper of a brutal god, he hopes for protection and blessing from the assumption of every folly, and the perpetration of every crime."

tual refreshment, and not of mortified restraint—for a day of public worship, and public deliverance from servile labour and confinement; and if there be any to whom, in the highest sense of the word, it doth not shine a holiday, the cause, we are certain, will be found in the iniquity and oppression of their masters, or in their own debasing attachment to sensual enjoyments, or the greedy and grovelling pursuit of earthly and perishing treasures. There are none of our race whose bodily frame can endure unceasing toil, or whose minds will not sink into debility and remissness, by long-continued, close, and thoughtful employment. There are none to whom the alternations of rest and labour are not grateful, and whose minds do not feel refreshed and invigorated by the holy exercises which link them in communion with the exercises and the enjoyments of another and an eternal world. How pleasing, then, and beneficial, must the interruption of our worldly pursuits be, while we devote ourselves on the Sabbath, to the peaceful, but sublime contemplation of the wonders of redeeming love, and join in the solemn assemblies of the devout, who lift their souls and their songs to heaven, in adoration of the attributes and works of the Almighty.

How delightful is it to contemplate the humble and hard-wrought peasant, whose daily labours leave no room for more than the grateful vicissitude

of his nightly slumbers, rising, with the Sabbath sun, to survey the smiling beauties with which a benignant Providence has adorned his adjacent neighbourhood; and to prepare his heart for ascending, in sympathy with all the tribes of animated nature, in celebration of the wisdom and goodness of God! How delightful is it to contemplate the emotions of his gratitude poured out, for even the scanty portion of comfort which has been assigned to him; and to see how his soul swells with praises, when he enumerates the visitations which have hitherto supported and begladdened him on his way through life!—Is there no moral sentiment, think you, animates his heart, when he reflects on the wisdom and power which planned and created all the goodly fabric of nature, whose endless and magnificent varieties fill his senses and imagination with wonder and delight? Is there no moral sentiment animates him, when he traces, in all that is around him, and above him, the impressions of omnipotence and majesty, which he cannot comprehend: and, when lifting his views to the heaven of heavens, he beholds, through the medium of his Bible, the fulness of the Godhead enthroned in light that is inaccessible, and full of glory? Is there no moral sentiment mingles with his speculations, when he is lost in the contemplation of the stupendous machinery

of the world, which he sees revolving with uninterrupted serenity and silence; and, when overcome by the magnitude and splendour of the scene, he sinks under his own insignificance, and piously exclaims, “ Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?” Do no virtuous emotions mingle with his experience, when he calmly surveys the beauties of vegetable nature, which are every where strewn around him; when he beholds how the wisdom and goodness of the Godhead, are imprinted on every herb and every flower that administer to his comfort or pleasure? Do no pious aspirations arise in his breast, when he admires the lilies of the field, how they grow; and while he wonders what may be the secret laws, by which they toil not, neither do they spin, yet he remembers, that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them?\*

But, more than all this: Who would deny, that the most exquisite moral feeling animates his heart, when, summoning his healthful and smiling

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\* “ Blessed surely is the man who remembereth the Sabbath to keep it holy, who calleth it a delight, the holy of the Lord; honourable, and honours him, not doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasures, nor speaking his own words—for he shall be made to delight himself in the Lord, and be fed with the heritage of Israel.”

offspring around him, he trains their yet unpolluted tongues to join with him in the praises of that Being, by whom all the wonders and beauties he surveys, are created and preserved? Who would deny, that the purest and holiest feelings kindle in their souls, when he reads to them, out of the sacred volume, of the love and goodness, which form the brightest attributes of the Godhead:—when he tells them, how man was created in innocence, and how he fell into guilt and misery:—how he had sunk himself into debasement and ruin, and how he was raised to the hope of immortality and glory? Are there no sentiments of piety and devotion excited in their hearts, when they read of the great love, wherewith God loved this world, in that, when there was no eye to pity us, and no hand to help us, his own eye took compassion, and his right hand wrought our redemption?

Is that only a ceremonial act, which instils into the minds of an infant generation, a pious dependence upon God,—a devoted resolution of walking in all his ways—of keeping his commandments—of cleaving unto him, and serving him, with all their heart, and with all their soul? It is a periodical, but not a ceremonial act, which they perform, when, at the summon of the Sabbath bell, they meet in the assembly of the saints, where the

Lord is greatly feared; and unite in prayer with them, of whom he is constantly held in reverence. It is a periodical, but not a ceremonial act, which they perform, when, in obedience to the Apostle's injunction, "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of too many is," they meet on the first day of the week, that they may be exhorted and edified in the faith, and provoked to the cultivation of love and good works.—The mere walking in and out of the house of God, may, if you please, be called a ceremonial act; but, will any one contend, that there is no moral benefit attached to the expositions which are there given of the doctrines and duties upon which our faith and manners are, or ought to be, built? Will any one contend, that there is no moral responsibility attached to the zeal or remissness, with which we obey the duties which are there inculcated, and the candour and honesty with which we examine the doctrines which are there expounded? "Take ye heed how ye hear: for to him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have."

But we have a right to assume the point of moral obligation as already settled; and I leave it to all who have attended to what was advanced

under the preceding Sections of this Treatise, to say, whether an ample mass of testimony has not been produced to satisfy every unprejudiced inquirer on this head.

We turn again, therefore, to the moral advantages, which the devout observance of the Sabbath spreads over society; and we ask our readers, if they have never, at any period of their life, been charmed with the spectacle of happiness, which the solemnization of the rites of religion presented? Has it never fallen to your lot, in some not lonely, but peaceful hamlet, to have your ears delighted, and your piety awakened, as you wandered through its lanes, and heard the morning of the Sabbath consecrated by the praises of its inmates? In the dwellings of the righteous, is heard the voice of rejoicing and salvation: for the Lord of Hosts is their strength and their song. Have not your souls, then, felt a holy influence pervade their affections, when you listened to the untutored notes of melody, which carried the sacrifice of a devout heart to the source of perfection and power; and have you not experienced all your sensibilities expand with the pious aspiration, that the emotions of your gratitude and praise might ascend, along with their offering, to the sanctuary of purity and bliss? Have you never marked, as you travelled along some distant, and, perhaps,



dreary region of your own country, where all its rugged and frowning scenery held you in a listless admiration of some visionary or undefined power—have you never marked, how the sullen features of the overhanging mountain seemed to be softened into mildness and placidity, by the smiling prospect of some plain, but picturesque mansion, which the piety of your forefathers had there planted as a temple to the Lord; and to which now the simple peasantry of the surrounding hills were hastening, to present the thanksgiving which the past week had inspired, and to dedicate to Him the virtues which the present might require? Did you not perceive, how the devotion of their hearts diffused serenity over their countenances; and, while you gazed at the surrounding group, did you not fancy that you heard in their language, or saw in their gait, something of the heavenliness which the instructions of their Pastor breathed upon them? Did you not mingle with their conversations; and were you not satisfied, that the lessons of divine wisdom, which they carried from the house of God, formed the rule of their actions in society: and that their steadfastness in duty; their consolation under affliction; their resistance to temptation; their submission to their superiors; their deference and respect for their equals; their compassion for the distressed; and their benevolence

to the destitute—were chiefly, if not altogether, derived from the impressive, and persuasive, and fatherly admonitions of him who taught them, that it was “no vain thing to wait upon the Lord, neither was it unprofitable to keep his ordinances.”

Yes; we are certain that we can appeal with confidence to the history of society, for a confirmation of this assertion—that wherever the appointments and ordinances of God, have been most sacredly observed, there have the institutions and the laws of man been most punctually maintained: wherever the worship of God has been most faithfully preserved and performed, there have the person and property of man been most universally respected and protected. What is it that has shed a glory around our own country? What is it that has given it, among neighbouring nations, the reputation of learning and virtue? What, but the religious institutions which our ancestors founded; and the benefits of which we now enjoy, on the express condition, that we imitate their example, by walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord? What is it that restrains men from crime, in those districts where police and municipal laws are least known, but the influence of those pious instructions, which, on every first day of the week, are delivered out of that book, which

commands “all the people to be gathered together—men, women, and children, and the stranger that is within the gates—that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord, and observe and do all the words of his law?”—Public confidence and honour have always flourished most vigorously, where the principles of religion have been most purely taught. Integrity and truth have always most adorned the transactions of that society which cultivated most extensively the worship of God. Public tranquillity and happiness have always prevailed, with least interruption, in those quarters where the ordinances and maxims of the Gospel have been most universally observed.

“Behold, then, the commandment is not hidden from us, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that we should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that we should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it? But the word is very nigh unto us, it is even in our mouth, and in our heart, that we may do it.”\* Our fathers instructed us in it, and the blessings which they received as the fruits of its observance,

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\* Deut. xxx. 11—14.

they have bequeathed as a rich inheritance to us. Their respect for the ordinances, and their obedience of the laws of God, shed a glory and a defence around their character and their dwellings; and we inherit the rewards of their piety and zeal, on the express condition, that we walk in the ways that the Lord hath commanded us. "I command you, therefore, this day," said their great law-giver; "to love the Lord your God, and to keep his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply. But if you turn away your heart, so that you will not hear, I denounce unto you this day, that you shall surely perish. I call heaven and earth to witness, that I have set before you, life and death, good and evil; choose, therefore, the good, that you and your seed may live." \*

Look around the nations of the earth—examine their manners and their institutions, and say, which are those that are most distinguished for political tranquillity and happiness? Where is public prosperity most strikingly conjoined with individual enjoyment? Where is the science of government best understood—and where are its principles and its laws most clearly defined, and most prudently and mercifully administered?

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\* Deut. *passim*.

Where does crime meet its most prompt and just award—and where do virtue and truth flourish and spread most vigorous and prosperous, through all the gradations of life? It is a proud and an undeniable tribute to the excellence of the Christian religion, that, wherever its doctrines and its precepts have been best understood, and most extensively practised, there have public and private happiness most universally prevailed. The mild genius of the Gospel has softened the horror and the cruelty of the legislative enactments of many countries; and, with the exception of a few cases, where artful and wicked men have prostituted its influence to the gratification of their secular ambition, it has spread gladness and joy over the moral aspect of human nature.

It is upon the cultivation of individual virtue, that public morality is founded; and, therefore, all of us are accountable for the purity, or the profligacy of the land we inhabit. It is on the basis of religious principle alone, that true political security and peace can be built; and it is in the power of every man to add to public prosperity and confidence, by adding the example of personal holiness to the recommendation of public integrity? But, how will you preserve the practice of virtue among a people who have put away all fear of God from before their eyes? Will that family entertain

any regard for the duties of private devotion, which has openly contemned all reverence for the public ordinances of religion? Or, how will you save a country from moral debasement and ruin, if its inhabitants are a race of evil doers, who have forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger? Experience has proved to us, that a nation must be virtuous, before it can be happy—its citizens must be good, before they can be loyal—and its government must be just, before it can be strong. What avail the wisest and most equitable laws, if the people are ignorant and depraved? What avail the best framed statutes, and the most judicious enactments of political wisdom, if the dispensers of the law are tyrants and the people slaves? What avail the most just decisions of moral and political right, when profligacy reigns predominant throughout society, and all respect for the laws of man has been destroyed by the extinction of all regard for the glory of God?

If you break down the public ordinances of religion, you will instantly break down the bulwarks of public virtue; and if you obliterate from society the public worship of God, you will speedily destroy, in the minds of its members—you will quickly efface, from the conscience of man, all regard for the laws and the appointments of humanity. If you destroy the sanctions of religion,

or if you neglect and despise them in the court and in the palace, you will annul the efficacy of its enactments in the cottage—and if you take away the influence of its restraints and denouncements from the minds of the mass of mankind; you have annihilated, in their estimation, the influence of political authority and power. Let the experiment be made once, and we are sure it will never be repeated. Infidelity will occupy the seats of justice and of mercy. The courts of legislation will be filled with a wild group of disorderly and chimerical visions. The dreams of a vain philosophy will take the place of the dictates of moral and religious truth. Improvement and refinement will be held out in prospect, while degeneracy and degradation are experienced in fact. A new era of regeneration and blessedness will be preached up by the disciples of falsehood, while the ministers of truth are announcing the approach of debasement and misery. The relaxation of public principle will speedily spread its baneful effects over the lowest condition of private life. The abolition of the public establishments of religion, will be followed with the subversion of public tranquillity and happiness. Vile men will be exalted, and the wicked will walk on every side. The demoralizing contagion of profaneness and profligacy, will extend through all ranks in the

community; the immorality of the court, will soon reach the hamlet; and all the parade of laws and proclamations, will not be able to preserve the boundaries of personal honour and fidelity entire, or inviolate.\*

A conflict of opposing interests and schemes will arise—all deference and respect for each other's opinions and property will be neglected—a selfish and sordid spirit be engendered among men—benevolence will forsake the human heart—a savage and ferocious temper will take possession of it, and justice, morality, and truth, will be sacrificed, by turns, to its capricious and ever-changing mandates. The visions of philosophy will vanish before the rude assaults of malignant and incensed passions—the illusions of moral amelioration, which spring from the imaginary perfection of the human character, will fade before the sable train which follows in the march of tumult and crime—and over the fair picture of ideal felicity and peace, the shades of wretchedness and horror will spread. “O that thou wouldst know, in this the day of thy merciful visitation, the things which belong unto thy peace, before they be for ever hid from thine eyes! Wherefore, be instructed, O Jerusalem! lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.” †

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\* See Note G.

† Jerem. vi. 8.



This is not an imaginary picture which we are holding up to view, nor are we endeavouring to give excitement to the feelings of piety, at the expense of the most cautious dictate of the understanding. We are not conjuring up a fictitious detail of national immoralities. Nor are we pleading the cause of the public ordinances of the Gospel, to the prejudice of one tittle of the truth. We have not advanced a single figure of description, which has not been realized in society; and it is because there has been manifested, among certain classes of our population, a growing spirit of infidelity and profaneness, unprecedented in the annals of our hitherto peaceful and happy country, that we have so pointedly detailed the consequences of national apostacy and profligacy. Righteousness alone is the true glory of a nation; but sin is the reproach and disgrace of every people. We trust, therefore, that those scenes which are the forerunners of anarchy and tumult, will never be witnessed within our borders; and that we, who have long possessed, and long deserved, the character of a moral and religious people, will continue to maintain our claim to it, by the conscientious discharge of the duties on which its existence depends. But the beginning of evil, is like the letting out of water; and we cannot too carefully guard against its first encroachments.

That which at first seems an inconsiderable stream, soon becomes a mighty torrent. If the flood-gates of corruption are thrown open in the high places of the earth, the strongest barriers will soon be broken down by the impetuosity of its current. The highest banks will be undermined by its whirlpools, or swept away by the fury of its course; and the fairest and the richest scenery that adorns the adjacent plain, will be for ever blighted and obliterated by its desolating force.

But, all metaphor apart, we have lived at a period of the world in which we have seen the moral and political evils we have just described, exemplified; and the nations of Europe are not yet fully recovered from the consternation and dread which they spread among them. The time is not long past, since a nation attempted to change its God for those who were no gods. We have lived in an age, when the institutions and the rites of religion were publicly broken down and insulted; and the upstart authorities of the country openly encouraged the people in the commission of crime, that they might encourage them to destroy the emblems and the worship of the cross. The very name, and symbols, and allusions of Christianity, were blotted out of their calendars and records; and every means employed which could impress, upon the mind of man, the monstrous belief, that his

existence and his hopes perished in the same grave! All restraint from iniquity was attempted to be removed from his apprehension, by the attempt to remove all dread of futurity: and the most loathsome excesses of profligacy, recommended and sanctioned by the functionaries of power, that his moral character and accountability might be effaced from his mind! But we know, that “though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. For the righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way; but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.” And, in the history of the people referred to, we have seen an awful illustration of the truth of these sayings. The gloom and despair of death, appeared to settle on their perverted understandings—the odiousness and debasement of vice, spread over all their devices and actions—and the ceaseless turbulence, in which their passions and profaneness held them, marked them out as a people ripening in iniquity, upon whom the vials of wrath and destruction were speedily to be poured. “Be astonished at this, O ye heavens! and thou earth, be horribly afraid!” For this people committed two great evils—they renounced the God of their fathers, and that which should have been their glory, they turned into their shame. But their own wickedness has corrected them; and their backslidings have

reproved them; and we, and all who have seen it, have been taught, that it is indeed an “evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord, and to put away the fear of his laws and his ordinances from before our eyes.”

“HEAR YE, THEN, THE WORD OF THE LORD, AND GIVE HEED UNTO HIS COUNSEL. STAND YE IN THE WAYS AND SEE. ASK FOR THE OLD PATH, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK THEREIN, AND YE SHALL FIND REST TO YOUR SOULS. IF YE WILL OBEY MY VOICE, AND KEEP MY COVENANT, THEN YE SHALL BE A PECULIAR TREASURE UNTO ME, ABOVE ALL PEOPLE. WHEN THE POOR AND THE NEEDY SEEK FOR FOOD, AND THERE IS NONE—AND WHEN THEIR TONGUE FAILETH FOR THIRST,—I THE LORD WILL HEAR THEM—I THE GOD OF ISRAEL WILL NOT FORSAKE THEM;—THAT THEY MAY SEE, AND KNOW, AND UNDERSTAND, AND CONSIDER, THAT THE HAND OF THE LORD HATH DONE THIS—THAT HE IS FOUND OF ALL WHO SEEK HIM—BUT THAT ALL WHO DEPART FROM HIM, HE WILL CAST OFF FOR EVER.”

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## NOTES.

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### NOTE A.—*Page 22.*

The evidence which might be adduced from ancient writers, in support of the views we have advanced, is very copious and convincing; and did it not give some appearance of a parade of learning to the Work, we might have detailed it at some length in the Section to which this Note refers. As such a detail, however, might interrupt the plain reader in following out the general train of the argument employed, we have deemed it more advisable, because more useful, to give a few additional remarks under this form.

Just as the universal belief of mankind in a supreme intelligent Cause, to account for all the beautiful effects of wisdom, power, and goodness, which we behold in the external world, is assumed as an argument in support of the existence of God—so may we employ the universal custom, which prevailed among all ancient nations, of computing time by weeks, as a testimony of the early universal knowledge of the Sabbath. It is not denied, by any writer, profane or sacred, that this mode of reckoning time was practised by every people, of whose history we know any thing. Seven days were the invariable complement, and

every day was consecrated to some heathen deity, whose name it bore. The planets were the chief objects of their religious veneration. The sun held the highest rank among the idols of their worship, and the day which was honoured with its name, was distinguished by peculiar solemnities and rites. Nor was this the practice of one nation, or of neighbouring nations only, but it obtained among remote tribes of men, quite unconnected by any species of traffic, and totally unknown to one another. The ancient Saxons, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, and other nations, as we shall show in a little, followed the method of computing by weeks, of seven days each; and every day was denominated after some object of their idolatry.

Now, it is not at all explicable, how this custom could have obtained so universally, unless we go back to its origin under the monarchs of Assyria—before men had migrated far from the plains of Shinar—when the idolatry of the heavenly host was universal; and the days of the week were distinguished by the names of the stars, which they had clothed with the attributes of divinity. Astronomy was one of the earliest branches of science to which the attention of mankind was directed; and out of its study, we know there sprung the wildest and most general adoration of the heavenly bodies. Nimrod is characterized by Moses, as “a mighty hunter before the Lord;” and other historians represent him to have lorded his power very tyrannically over his brethren in the plains of Shinar, and to have laid the foundation of the mighty Assyrian monarchy, under which, the idolatry we have mentioned was so widely spread. Nimrod was only the third from Noah—mankind in his time, could not have removed far from the

place where the ark rested, after the waters of the flood had subsided—the customs of one party would be known to all—and the idolatry which characterized different nations in later ages, must have its origin explained by the practice of the immediate descendants of Noah.

Moreover, throughout the lands of Assyria and Chaldea, astrology was long cultivated as the most honourable department of human learning, and the most certain recommendation to offices of distinction and power. It was the general belief, that the rise and fall of nations, and the good and evil fortune of individuals, were under the influence of the heavenly bodies, because these were conceived to be the sole governors of the universe; and, hence, the knowledge of their revolutions, and imaginary occult powers, became the object of study and attainment by all who aspired to a share in the councils of the nation. The magi of Assyria, the sophi of Persia, and the priests of Egypt, possessed all the learning of the age, and were consulted in every case of political emergency, or state necessity, for directions to conciliate the favour, or avert the vengeance of the gods, whose anger had involved them in perplexity and danger. \*

We know it is the very nature of all idolatry or superstition, to engender itself, or to increase the objects of veneration—to multiply the rites of worship—and to chain the human mind in servitude to the most depraved and degrading opinions and passions. Degeneracy in practice, never fails to lead to debasement of principle. Ignorance and depravity are closely

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\* Bœmus de Assyria.

allied, and when men lose those high intellectual and moral distinctions, which lift them to a fellowship with the Author of their being, they necessarily sink into the grossest degradation of moral character and conduct. Accordingly, we find, that, as they wandered from their original settlements, they wandered from the first objects of their religious veneration—lost those notions of divine power and majesty which they originally entertained—and worshipped and served the creatures of their own darkened and bewildered imaginations.

At the time Abraham migrated from Chaldea to Egypt, the inhabitants of the latter country knew very little of the science of astronomy; and we are informed, that he was richly rewarded by the king for instructing the priests in the knowledge of that science.\* It was about 600 years before the incarnation of our Saviour, that the Greeks were instructed in the revolutions and influences of the planets, when Thales, Anaximander his disciple, and Pythagoras, taught them the knowledge they had acquired from the priests of Egypt and the magi of Chaldea. In later times, we find the Romans still farther removed from this knowledge than the Greeks; and, in general, history bears us out in saying, that the greater their distance was from the plains of Shinar, the more remote were they from the knowledge and customs of the early worshippers of heaven.

Yet, it is worthy of remark, that all nations, then accounted civilized, under one form or another, acknowledged the existence of a God, although

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\* Jos. de Antiq. Jud. lib. I. c. 16.



unassisted reason could not instruct them in the true nature of his attributes, or direct them to the most suitable and becoming mode of offering him adoration and praise. Plato himself, so highly honoured among schoolmen, for the sublimity and extent of his philosophical knowledge, could rise on this subject, very little above the most ignorant of his countrymen.—“*Dicere quid, (Deus,) sit, non ausus est: hoc solum de eo sciens, quod sciri quale sit ab homine non possit—solum vero ei simillimum de visibilibus Solem reperit.*” \* There was no created being, which awakened in the minds of men such exalted ideas of glory and power as the sun, whose going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the end of it again; and, therefore, there was no object which presented to them a more perfect idea of the excellence of God.—“*Apud priscas Gentilitatis nationes, nil prorsus inter creata cuncta, quod mortalium mentes in sui venerationem alliceret, pertraheretque magis quam ipse Sol, ob nimium splendorem eminentiamque sui, comperiebatur?*” †

The Chaldeans were the first who instituted the worship of this planet, as the supreme divinity; and it soon found its way among the Persians, where it continued till a late period. (Bœmus et Sozomen Hist. Ecc. I. 8.) The Egyptians of old, offered worship to the same being; (Euseb. de præp. Evangel.) for, when they investigated the fabric of the world, and were lost in admiration of the nature of things, they concluded, that the sun and moon

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\* Macrob. in somn. Scip. lib. I. c. 2.

† Glos. Mag. in Gen. cap. 1.

were everlasting gods, and governors of the universe. The Phœnicians venerated the sun as God; and the idol which they set up as his image, they denominated Heliogabalus. The Trojans and Greeks had many divinities; but it is manifest, from various sources, that the sun originally held the highest rank among the objects of their veneration. As Belus was the tutelary deity of Babylon, so was Pallas of Troy. Her image, the Palladium, said to have descended from the sun, was placed in the temple of Phœbus, just as the images of the planets, with the Egyptians, were kept in the house of the sun. \* At Athens, the court of judgment was without any covering, in full view of the sun, because it was considered impossible that the judge would give an unjust decision, in the sight of a being who sees and hears all things, and has an avenging eye. † Under various names and forms, the Romans paid divine honours to the same object, as may be learned from an author already quoted. ‡ The Ethiopians and Tartars, though widely separated in geographical position, closely agreed in the worship of the same heavenly body; and the Messagetæ, a Scythian people, acknowledged and worshipped no other divinity; “*Deum quendam, sed non deos agnoscunt. Ex diis unum solem venerantur, cui equos immolant, &c.*” ||

These authorities, we trust, will be deemed sufficient to establish the opinion, that, as astrology was one of the earliest branches of knowledge cultivated by men, so the sun was the imaginary divinity to

\* Jer. xliii. 15.

† Hom. Il. lib. 5.—Plato de legibus.

‡ Macrob. Saturn. l. I. c. 17 and 23.

|| Bœmus de Scythia,

which they ascribed the highest attributes, and paid the highest honours. The periodical revolution of seven days, was also one of the earliest modes of computing the lapse of time known among them; and every one of these days was supposed to be under the government of one of the deities whom they had discovered in the firmament. As the attributes of divinity were ascribed to these created and inanimate beings, so divine honours were universally paid to them. But, as their blinded worshippers assigned to them a diversity of power and influence, so, of consequence, did they institute a distinction in the solemnities with which they observed the days sacred to their name and service. The sun was invested with the most transcendent perfections; and the day of the week which bore its name, was held as a religious festival, and accounted to possess a sanctity above all the others.

We are aware, that, in order to invalidate the views we have hitherto supported, and to refute the argument for the moral obligation of sanctifying the Sabbath, derived from the antiquity of the institution, and the universality of its observance, it has been asserted, that the seventh day, sacred to the sun, among the heathen, was the seventh day of the month, and not the seventh day of the week. In answer to this assertion, (which we regard as quite gratuitous,) we observe,

I. That Eusebius and Clemens Alexandrinus have fully proved, from the ancient poets, Homer, Hesiod, Callimachus, and Linus, that it was the seventh day of the week, and not the seventh day of the month, which was accounted sacred. The language they employ, clearly points to the creation, and the festival they

celebrate, must have been that which was instituted in commemoration of that event.

“It was the seventh day on which all things were finished.” *Homer.*

“The seventh day came, on which all things were framed.”—*Callimachus.*

And the language of Linus is still more descriptive of the Sabbath—“The seventh day is an auspicious day, for it is the birth-day of all things. The seventh holds the foremost rank among the days, for it is a perfect day.”

II. If the day sacred to the sun, had been the seventh day of the month, and not of the week, undoubtedly we should have found some testimony of this in the ancient Greek calendars. For, although it was impossible for that people to set down constantly the seventh day of the week, on account of their having to note so many intercalary days, just as it would be impossible for us to mark the moveable feasts, except in an annual almanack, before the year was adjusted by Julius Cæsar—yet, there is no calendar to be found, in which the principal fixed festivals or sacred days are omitted. Now, there is an ancient Attic calendar, preserved in *Scaliger, de emendatione Temp.*, in which events of very trifling consequence are noted, but in which this seventh day of each month, sacred to the sun, is not mentioned. The silence respecting it, therefore, may be regarded as a proof of its non-existence.

III. We have the testimony of many most learned and credible writers, that the seventh day of the week, was accounted sacred among all nations; but after what I have stated above, it cannot be necessary to enlarge quotations on the subject. Chrysostome, in his Tenth

Homily on Genesis, says, “*Jam hinc ab initio doctrinam hanc nobis insinuat Deus, erudiens in circulo hebdomadæ diem unum integrum segregandum et reponendum, ad spiritualem operationem.*” Steuchius, on Gen. ii., affirms it to have been “*in omne aetate, inter omnes gentes, venerabilis et sacer.*” Philo Judæus, in his *Life of Moses*, makes this bold challenge — “*Quis sacrum illum diem, per singulas hebdomadas recurrentem, non honorat?*”

IV. The day which the heathen held sacred to the sun, was the same day of the week which we call the Lord's Day.

A very copious detail of authorities, might be adduced in proof of this position; but we shall confine ourselves to one or two. Very satisfactory testimony of its truth, may be had, by referring to Dr. Heylin's *History of the Sabbath*, Part Second.

Sozomen, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Book I. chap. 8., tells us, that Constantine commanded “*diem Dominicum, quem Ebræi primum Sabbati appellant, et Græci Soli deputant, &c. a cunctis celebrari.*” And Bonaventure, in *Tres Destinc*, 37., informs us how the day was stripped of its idolatrous worship, and consecrated to the commemoration of the resurrection. “*Secundum Gentiles, dies Dominicus primus est: cum principio illius diei incipit dominari principalis planeta Sol; propter quod vocabant eundem diem Solis, et exhibebant ei venerationem. Ut ergo error ille excluderetur, et reverentia cultûs Solis Deo exhiberetur, præfixa fuit Dominica dies, quâ populus Christianus vacaret cultui divino.*”

With one more quotation, we shall close this enumeration of ancient testimonies in favour of our general argument. “*Nos, jure optimo, diem quem*

Mathematici Solis vocant, Domino ascripsimus dicavimusque, et illius cultui totum mancipavimus.”\*

The statements we have now made, are decisive of the antiquity of the Sabbath, and the universality of its knowledge and observance among all nations and kindreds of men; and, if nations which worshipped the host of heaven, and the creatures of their own imaginations, did preserve among them a custom derived from the earliest age of our race, shall not we, who enjoy the full revelation of the truth, as it is in Jesus, and the clear knowledge of the attributes and providence of the one living and true God, do honour to the Lord of heaven and earth, and consult our own moral dignity and eternal felicity, by remembering the Sabbath, to keep it holy? “By keeping a Sabbath, we acknowledge a God, and declare that we are not athiests—by keeping one day in seven, we protest against idolatry, and acknowledge that God, who, in the beginning, made the heavens and the earth—and, by keeping our Sabbath on the first day of the week, we protest against Judaism, and acknowledge that God, who, having made the world, sent his only begotten Son to redeem mankind. The observance, therefore, of the Sunday, in the Christian church, is a public weekly assertion of the first two articles in our creed—the belief in God, the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth—and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord.” †

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\* Cael. Rhodigin. Antiq. l. xiii. c. 22.

† Horsley.

NOTE B.—*Page 22.*

The import of the phrase, ‘God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,’ is generally thus explained. God set this day apart from the rest, and distinguished it in a peculiar manner, by appropriating it to religious exercises on the part of man: and condescending to engage, on his own part, to accept the worship and homage, which should, on that day, be offered to him. A duty is understood to be enjoined, and the promise of a special blessing is annexed to the regular discharge of it. This is the view which is generally taken of the subject, and which gives a very solemn and universal obligation to the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath: but it does not so definitely convey the authoritative, or imperative effect, as that which Dr. Kennicott assigns to it. The Hebrew verb, which, in the above quotation, is translated by the term ‘blessed,’ carries with it a double idea: first, of blessing; secondly, of worshipping—and that in the particular manner of worshipping on the knees. These two senses, Dr. Kennicott adds, may be united, when spoken of man; but the first only can be understood, when confined to God.

When a Hebrew verb is in the conjugation *Pihel*, it simply expresses action, or the accomplishment of any effect: but, when it is in the conjugation *Hiphel*, it denotes causation, or the operation of the power by which any effect is produced. According to the first of these modes of conjugation, the term above alluded to, may be translated, “God blessed the

seventh day, and honoured it with peculiar marks of his favour. According to the second, it will signify, God ordered to bless and worship by adoration.

But, farther, the particle  $\kappa\tau$ , in the verse where the sanctification of the Sabbath is mentioned, is rendered, by the authority of Noldius, 'upon;' and, hence, the whole clause assumes this form: "And God ordered, or caused, man to bless and worship *on* the seventh day." The other verb, which is translated in our version of the Bible, 'sanctified,' may be understood also as in the conjugation Hiphel, and its translation will then be, "and ordered to sanctify, or set apart, for sacred uses." Taking the whole sentence together, therefore, it will, according to this view of it, run thus; "And God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made: and God caused man to bless and worship on the seventh day, and ordered him to sanctify it."

"This interpretation," Dr. Kennicott adds, "as it seems conformable to grammar, and expresses the sense best, (though the other amounts to the same, but with less clearness,) I humbly offer to the judgment of the learned."—*Dissertations on the Oblations of Cain and Abel.*

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NOTE C.—Page 91.

In the foregoing chapter, we have purposely avoided entering very minutely on a refutation of all the objections which are urged against the perpetual moral obligation of the Sabbath, because we con-



ceived, that, if we fairly disproved those of a general character, the inferior ones, depending upon them, must be given up as a matter of course. When the arguments that are employed to subvert any institution, or doctrine, are rather of a specious than substantial nature—when they are founded on partial, distorted, or garbled views of the subject to which they refer—it is injudicious to enter on a lengthened or serious examination of them, because we thus give them an importance and consequence, in the estimation of the ignorant and the misinformed, which they would not otherwise possess. We have learned, however, with regret, that the name and authority of a distinguished advocate of Christianity, have been employed to an alarming extent, in many conditions of life, as a sanction to the neglect, and even the profanation of the Sabbath; and on this account, we deem it necessary, for the benefit of such as have any taste for biblical criticism, to examine, a little more particularly, the grounds on which the individual in question rests his arguments.

“In my opinion, the transaction in the wilderness above recited,\* was the first actual institution of the Sabbath. For, if the Sabbath had been instituted at the time of the creation, as the words in Genesis may seem at first sight to import, and if it had been observed all along, from that time to the departure of the Jews out of Egypt, a period of about two thousand five hundred years, it appears unaccountable, that no mention of it, no occasion of even the obscurest allusion to it, should occur, either in the general

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\* Exod. xvi.

history of the world before the call of Abraham, which contains, we admit, only a few memoirs of its early ages, and these extremely abridged; or, which is more to be wondered at, in that of the lives of the three first Jewish patriarchs, which, in many parts of the account, is sufficiently circumstantial and domestic. Nor is there, in the passage above quoted from the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, any intimation, that the Sabbath, when appointed to be observed, was only the revival of an ancient institution, which had been neglected, forgotten, or suspended; nor is any such neglect imputed either to the inhabitants of the old world, or to any part of the family of Noah; nor, lastly, is any permission recorded to dispense with the institution, during the captivity of the Jews, or on any other public emergency.\*

This passage contains the most serious of Dr. Paley's objections to the antiquity and universal obligation of the Sabbath; and we cannot help thinking, that an impartial examination of it, will satisfy our readers, that there is nothing very formidable in it.

It will readily be allowed, we presume, that he pushes his argument too far, when he asserts, that, in the preceding history, comprising a period of 2500 years, there is no mention, nor any occasion of the obscurest allusion to the institution of the Sabbath, if we consider that frequent mention is made of the division of time into weeks, and that the most natural, and indeed the only probable reason, that can be assigned for this mode of computation, is, that it was

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\* Moral and Political Philosophy, by William Paley, D. D. Book V. Chap. 7.

commemorative of the work of creation. We have already shown, that, such being the case, we are led, by a just and clear deduction, to this conclusion, that the seventh day must have been regularly computed from the beginning, and that the worshippers of the true God, had uniformly honoured it by such a cessation of servile labour, as their circumstances would permit.

We readily allow, that, when the vicissitudes of a shepherd's life are taken into account, the cessation of servile labour on the seventh day, could only be occasional; and, therefore, we must again charge Dr. Paley with giving his objection an unnatural force, when he says, "that the early institution of the Sabbath at the creation, implies that it was observed all along from that time till the departure of the Jews from Egypt." Dr. Paley, surely, would not have denied, that the law of marriage, or monogamy, was ordained at the creation: neither do we think, he would have argued, that the polygamy so generally practised by the Patriarchs and their descendants, was a proof of the non-enactment of that law? Yet, this is a case exactly parallel to that on which he founds his objection to the law of the Sabbath. The neglect of any institution, or the silence of history respecting its observance, furnishes no argument in favour of the non-existence or abrogation of its moral sanctions.

It is admitted by Dr. Paley, that the history before the time of Abraham, contains only a few memoirs, and these greatly abridged: and we cannot help expressing our surprise, that a writer of such general and enlightened views, as he confessedly was, should have built his hypothesis respecting the Sabbath, out

of such scanty materials. If we except the account given of the death of Abel, of the deluge, and the new covenant made with Noah, the whole religious history of man, from the fall till the call of Abraham, including a period of more than 2000 years, is contained in a few short sentences. From the call of Abraham, till the death of Jacob, embraces a period of 250 years; and although this portion of the history, compared with that which precedes it, may be called circumstantial, it is still extremely brief and limited in its details. But, as bearing upon the question at issue, let us compare these parts of the sacred history with that which follows, and which is comprehended in the books of Joshua and Judges, including Ruth, the two books of Samuel, and the books of Kings. These different books contain a consecutive narrative of events; for the two books of Chronicles may be regarded as a separate history, relating chiefly to the affairs of Judah. Now, in the whole of this unbroken narrative, there is no mention of the Sabbath, "no occasion even of the obscurest allusion to it," till the time of the prophet Elisha, and then, it is only incidentally introduced.\* I have shown, in the Section to which this Note refers, that the institution is only alluded to, on three other occasions, referring to different events, until we reach the period of the captivity: a circumstance which clearly proves, what we know, in many other cases, to be true, that, when once any particular custom or law is established among a people, and incorporated with their manners, few occasions may occur of particu-

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\* 2 Kings iv. 23.

larizing it in a general history: and this fact may, we think, fully remove the ground of wonder mentioned by Dr. Paley in the above quotation.

Again, it is argued, by our author, against the early institution of the Sabbath, that no permission is recorded to dispense with its observance, during the residence of the Hebrews in Egypt, or any other public emergency. We have already replied to this objection, and we here add, by way of supplement, that neither is there any permission recorded to dispense with the ordinance of sacrifice, although, it is perfectly evident, that they considered it to be an obligatory duty. "Let us go, we pray thee," said they to Pharaoh, "three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with the pestilence, or with the sword."\* It is plainly implied by these words, that the use of sacrifice had been suspended, on the ground of necessity; and might they not, on the same ground, consider themselves warranted to suspend, to a certain extent, the observance of the Sabbath, which, although an ordinance of great importance, might be incompatible with the circumstances in which they were placed; and the celebration of which, might have exposed them to torture and death?

But, after all, it is begging the question to say, that the Israelites did not, or could not, observe the Sabbath in Egypt. We know that the Egyptians, as well as other nations of antiquity, had a certain veneration for one day in seven, the day sacred to the Sun; and, rigorous as they might have been in their

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\* Exod. v. 3.

treatment of the Hebrews, it is not quite probable, that they prohibited them the exercise of all religious worship, or that they granted them no relaxation of labour whatever. They were distinguished rather for superstition than impiety; and, although they would not tolerate animal sacrifice, because they regarded it as an insult to their own religious creed, it does not follow that they restrained the Israelites from every other act of religious homage. But, even taking the extreme case, that the full task was exacted from them on the Sabbath, might they not be led, by this very circumstance, to observe the day more conscientiously in their own families? for, it is evident, they were not in the situation of domestic slaves. And as such an observance might reasonably be viewed as a compliance with the *spirit* of the institution, so the transition was easy to a more strict observance of its *letter*, when they were travelling through the wilderness, and were incorporated in the land of promise as a nation *sui juris*.

A slight review of the case will satisfy us, that very little weight ought to be attached to the objection to the moral obligation of the Sabbath, derived from the circumstance of its being denominated, "a sign" between the Almighty and the Hebrews.

It ought to be kept in mind, that, at the time this people were delivered from Egyptian bondage, the whole world was sunk in the grossest idolatry; and that they themselves were exceedingly prone to practise the abominations to which it led. The whole of the moral law, therefore, was intended to distinguish them from their heathen neighbours, and mark them out as the worshippers of the one living and true God. The nations which were destitute of divine revelation,

had assigned each day of the week to the tutelary care of one of those imaginary beings, whom they had clothed with the attributes of divinity: and we have shown in a preceding Note (A), that the seventh day was universally dedicated to the worship of the Sun. During their residence in Egypt, the Hebrews had become deeply tainted with the superstitions and idolatry which prevailed in that country, and we have no doubt, that, among other means employed to withdraw them from the worship of false gods, the republication of the law of the Sabbath, was designed to hold a conspicuous place. The seventh day was devoted by the Heathen to the worship of the Sun, but the Hebrews were solemnly enjoined to dedicate the day of their leaving the land of idolatry, to the worship of the one living and true God, by a suspension of all secular business and pleasure; and the commemoration of the marvellous display of his attributes, in framing all things that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; and that in the space of six days, and resting on the seventh day, and hallowing it. “Six days shalt thou do all thy work, and on the seventh thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed.” And it is worthy of notice, that it is immediately added, “in all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect, and make no mention of the *name of other gods*, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.”\*

Here is a direct proof of the correctness of what

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\* Exod. xxiii. 12, 13.

we have advanced. The observance of the Sabbath is connected with the renunciation of idolatry, and stands as a testimony against it; and, in this sense, the institution served as a "sign" between the Almighty and his true and faithful worshippers on earth. But, are we to argue from this, that the Sabbath was a purely Jewish institution, and to be regarded as possessing the same character with circumcision, or any other subordinate rite? If so, then we may regard the whole moral law delivered to that people, as having only a local and temporary sanction. Let us hear, however, the terms in which the enunciation is made—"Verily, my Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you, throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord, that doth sanctify you." \* The cause of the enactment is here stated, and it is such as applies to every part of the divine law, and is binding on every people to whom that law is made known. It is a sign between the Most High, and those to whom he has communicated the knowledge of his will, because its direct tendency is to produce a moral character essentially different from that of idolatrous nations. But this is exactly the province of the whole moral law, and this is the effect which it is calculated to produce. "Now, these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God has taught you; therefore, shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul; and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your children,

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\* Exod. xxxi. 13.



speaking of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way—when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” \*

It is certainly worthy of remark, that the character here given to the whole of the divine statutes and ordinances, is exactly the same which we find respecting the celebration of the day on which the Hebrews were brought out of the land of Egypt. “Moses said unto the people—Remember this day, in which ye came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread; and in the seventh shall be a feast to the Lord. And thou shalt show this to thy son in that day, saying, This is done, because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes; that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth; for, with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt.” †

These quotations, we trust, will satisfy every attentive reader of the Sacred Scriptures, that the sanctions belonging to the institution of the Sabbath, are identical, in form and character, with those which are attached to the whole of the statutes, and judgments, and laws, dispensed by the Almighty to the Hebrews; and that the objection which has been urged against the universal moral obligation of that institution, from the words above cited, is founded on misinterpretation and error.

It is further objected, by Dr. Paley, however,

\* Deut. chapters iv. vi. and xi.

† Compare Exod. xiii. with Levit. xxiii.

that the observance of the Sabbath is not obligatory on Christians, because it is not one of the articles enjoined by the apostles, in the fifteenth chapter of "The Acts," on those, who, from among the Gentiles, were turned unto God. We may shortly answer, that this objection is founded upon the palpable mistake, of considering the Sabbath to be a mere Jewish institution, which had derived all its obligation from the Mosaic law. The apostolical council, held as above, was summoned, exclusively, to consider the doctrine taught by those of Judea—that, except the Gentiles were circumcised, and kept the Levitical law, they could not be saved. Now, as it was only to determine whether the Gentile converts were bound to observe any part of the Jewish ritual, that the council met; it was quite foreign to the purpose of their meeting, to take into consideration any point not essentially connected with that ritual. And the particular mention of fornication, in this special decree, can only be accounted for on this ground,—that, among the Heathens, abstinence on that point, was considered a peculiarity of Judaism; and, had it not been specified in the above decree, it is not probable, that the Gentiles who embraced Christianity, would have discovered that its indulgence was prohibited as a crime, by the seventh commandment.

Nor do we think the objection derived from Paul's injunction to the Colossians, rests on more tenable grounds. "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." \*

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\* Col. ii. 16, 17.

It certainly was incumbent on Dr. Paley, for establishing his view of the subject, to have adduced some proof that this passage was tantamount to an abrogation of the sanctions of the weekly Sabbath; and, by passing from the subject with a simple assertion, he has left room to doubt, if he considered it possible to have done so. For the satisfaction of those who have any scruples about this passage, we shall make a few observations.

It cannot fail to be noticed, that, in the chapter from which the above quotation is made, the apostle is particularly warning the Colossians against the errors and superstitions which artful and corrupt men endeavoured to intermingle with the pure and simple precepts of the Gospel. Teachers from the schools of heathen philosophy, and advocates for the showy, but abrogated ceremonies of the Jewish law, had appeared among them; and there is reason to believe, that the self-sufficient righteousness, which was inculcated with the ritual services of the one party, and the boastful pretensions to knowledge and wisdom, which were insinuated with the philosophical instructions of the other, had alienated their minds from the spiritual principles of Christianity, and subverted, in their estimation, the sanctions of its requirements and laws. "Beware, therefore," says the apostle, in reference to the latter, "lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." And, in reference to the former, he adds, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days."

Now, we know that the term Sabbath is used, in

some parts of the Scriptures, for all the Jewish festivals indiscriminately—the Passover—the feast of Tabernacles—the year of Release, &c.—and of this, our readers may fully satisfy themselves, by turning to the book of Leviticus, xix. 3. and 30. xxiii. 23. to the end, and Ezek. xx. 12—20. We have already shown, that the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, was not included under the hand-writing of ordinances, which Christ, the mediator of a better covenant, took out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and, therefore, we might justly conclude, that the passage before us, cannot be understood as containing an abrogation of the sanctions of that holy day, under the Christian dispensation. But, even granting all that our opponents contend for—that it does relate to the weekly Sabbath, the same inference may be fairly deduced from an impartial consideration of all the circumstances of the case.

At the time the apostle wrote, the Jewish Sabbath was virtually abolished, and the day of the resurrection of the Saviour from the grave, substituted in its stead. It was no longer the seventh, but the first day of the week, which the converts to Christianity were enjoined to remember to keep holy. In passing, however, from the observance of one day to that of another, very considerable doubts and difficulties might exist in the minds of many of the disciples of the Gospel; and of these, we are fully persuaded, the enemies of the truth, as it is in Jesus, took every advantage. The prejudices of the Jewish converts, in favour of their ancient legal forms and ceremonies, were exceedingly deep-rooted and strong; and, in some cases, it seems to have been nearly impossible to withdraw them from the observance of particular days, and the celebration

of certain rites, which they conceived to possess a peculiar sanctity, and to which they had attached a great many weighty and sacred obligations. The same prejudices seem to have been imbibed by many of the Gentiles; and, on this account, we find the apostle, in condescension to the weakness of their faith, and the scrupulosity of their judgment, recommending to the church, forbearance and silence respecting the external forms and ceremonies of religion. “Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations,” &c. See Romans xiv. 1—7.

The Christian community was still in an infant state. The Gospel was not acknowledged or embraced by any of the rulers of this world; neither was there any legal provision for the observance of its ordinances in any nation. The commemoration of the day of the resurrection, the sanctification of the Lord’s Day, was thus left to the private judgment of individuals; and their conviction of the reasonableness of the institution, and of the divine sanctions belonging to its duties, furnished a sufficient guarantee for its observance. But there were many situations in which these sanctions were not felt. A spirit of Judaism was widely spread among the disciples of the Gospel, and serious attempts were made to revive the observance of its abrogated rites and prescriptions. To avoid, therefore, all unseemly and hurtful controversy, and for the purpose of promoting unanimity and harmony of opinion, between such as regarded the solemnization of external rites as a matter of conscience, and believed that they possessed the obligation of divine precepts, and those, who, farther advanced in the knowledge of the doctrines and duties of the

Gospel, conceived themselves warranted to dispense with their observance;—Paul reasons thus,—One man esteemeth one day above another—another esteemeth every day alike. On this point, however, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; *i. e.* let every man have a clear and distinct conviction, that he is acting conscientiously in these matters, as in the sight, and under the fear of God. The Christian law is the law of liberty, and, in the discharge of all its duties, and the observance of all its ordinances, we are not to take the measure of our obedience from the letter of the Jewish law, or from the rigour of Jewish superstition. Our holy days are to be observed in worshipping God, by offering to him the bloodless sacrifices of our supplications and prayers. Our new moons are to be held, by proclaiming his goodness and mercy, not with the blowing of trumpets, but with the praises of the heart and the understanding. Our Sabbaths, in a word, are the pledges of that rest which awaits the faithful, when the toils and miseries of this fleeting life are passed; and, having our faces, like the spiritual Israel, heavenward, we should now be attuning the affections of our souls, to celebrate the sufferings and the triumphs of Him who died for us and rose again. As, therefore, we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so let us walk in him.



NOTE D.—Page 188.

“ If lawful work and labour must not be followed on this day, as on the six days of the week, there is

much more reason for all sports and bodily diversions to be laid aside. Because, the design of God's separating this day from others, is more perverted and contradicted, and more hurt is done to religion, by such a loose and sensual way of spending time, than by regular labour. The more men give up themselves to bodily pleasures and recreations, the less relish will the soul have for spiritual and eternal things. Diversions make the spirit trifling and unfixed, and give the flesh advantage, to profane and pollute the mind; and they set the heart against that reverence and seriousness which become a creature doing homage to its Maker, and seeking the most important blessings from him.

“ That saying of the prophet Isaiah, must, therefore, be applied to the day of God's rest in general, and not merely to the Jewish way of keeping their Sabbaths, when he says, ‘ Not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.’ The plain reason of the thing makes this injunction perpetually binding. Hence it is, that such as would make our observation of a Sabbath, as Christians, to be only a human appointment and constitution, yet have declared against all plays, and sports, and vain feasting, and drinking, and loose wanton conversation on this day. Since it is a day intended to prepare men for their heavenly rest, it must appear, to common reason, exceedingly inconsistent and disagreeable for any to give up themselves to sensual frolics and entertainments. ‘ Such is the reverence,’ says one, ‘ due to the public exercises of devotion, that they require, not only a ceasing from other works and thoughts, for the time of the performance, but also a decent preparation beforehand, that

so our thoughts and affections, which are naturally bent upon the world, and not easily withdrawn from it, may be raised to a disposition befitting such sacred employments.' And the same may be said for men's retirement, and recollection of things afterwards. I find a remarkable passage quoted by another writer, from Bishop Andrews, on this head. 'To keep the Sabbath in an idle manner,' he says, 'is the Sabbath of oxen and asses: to keep the Sabbath in a jocular manner, to see plays and sights, or be taken up in vain discourses and conversations, is the Sabbath of the golden calf: but, to keep the Sabbath in surfeiting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, this is the Sabbath of Satan, the devil's holiday.' "

*Book of Universal Prayer.*

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NOTE E.—Page 213.

The frightful aspect, which the political events of our country bore in 1819—20, are here more immediately referred to, and they must still be fresh in the memory of all our readers.

In the manufacturing districts particularly, great privations and suffering were endured, from the general stagnation of trade, and the consequent low rate of wages. It is matter of notoriety, that the labouring classes of men, in every country, are exceedingly prone to ascribe all public distress to the ignorance, oppression, or injustice of their rulers; and they are thus very easily led to believe, that a change of government will bring about a change in their



circumstances, and relieve them from all their evils. Factious and designing men, who are ever watchful to take advantage of national calamities, have here the most dangerous materials prepared for their use; and at the above period, they succeeded, to an alarming extent, in engendering a deep, and, in many cases, malignant spirit of disaffection toward the legal and established authorities of the country. Poverty was extensively spread among the whole of the mercantile population; and, instead of alleviating its pressure by the consolations of religion, and striving to remove it by the reformation of those habits of profusion and licentiousness, which had unhappily become very general among them, they madly inveighed against the profligacy and tyranny of their rulers, and unprofitably spent their time in cabals and plots for their overthrow.

We mean not to say, that this character applied to the whole of our suffering population at the above period; but, certainly, very large numbers, in different districts, were so deeply tainted with disloyal and demoralizing principles, that His Majesty's ministers considered themselves justified in adopting such measures of security, as had formerly been deemed necessary only when a foreign enemy threatened to co-operate with the disaffected at home. It was remarked and deplored, as a fatal symptom in the character of the discontented, that infidelity in religion was the concomitant, or rather the forerunner of disloyalty of political principle; and that all regard for the authority of God, appeared to be renounced at the time they began to conspire against the authority of man. The Sabbath was profaned by many

who had formerly found their chief happiness to consist in observing it, “to keep it holy.” The church, as a matter of course, was deserted—the ministers of religion were despised or insulted—and the hours which had lately been consecrated to the duties of public devotion and prayer, were devoted to secret disorderly meetings, the leading object of which was, to encourage one another in profaneness and crime. Even in some of the quiet and sequestered districts of Scotland, this fearful sign of the times, was noticed to exist in an alarming degree; and in some of the populous manufacturing towns, it created most uneasy apprehensions in the minds of the religious and orderly part of the community.

In England, it was observed to wear a still more malignant aspect; and, assuredly, the savage and monstrous designs of the Cato-Street conspirators, could only have originated in an utter rejection of all religious principle, and an utter contempt of all authority, divine and human. It was said, that the machinations of this gang, had abettors in various parts of the country: but, as the authority on which the assertion rested, was doubtful, we hope, for the honour of the national character, that they were strictly confined to the wretches who were seized and suffered. The object of the conspirators, was the extirpation of the whole of the Cabinet Ministers, whom they expected to find met at a cabinet dinner; and nothing can mark more strongly the depraved and impious state of mind to which they had sunk, than the exclamation of one of them, on receiving the tidings that the meeting was fixed: “I’ll be hanged, if I don’t believe now that there is a God.

I have often prayed, that these thieves might be brought together, in order that they might be destroyed together: and now God has answered my prayer." The ruffians, with one exception, were all of the lowest grade in society, ignorant and brutal in their habits, and total strangers to the fear of God, and the knowledge and obedience of his laws.

Other instances of gross profaneness and depravity, might be easily adduced to substantiate the statement we made above, "that apostacy from God is generally followed with dishonesty and disloyalty to man, and that he who cares not for the torments of that place, where the worm never dies, is not very likely to be shaken in his purposes of guilt and atrocity, by the fear of an earthly tribunal, or the axe of an earthly executioner:" but such must be familiar to the minds of our readers, and they are unfortunately too frequent to require illustration.

"How amazingly has the contempt of the Sabbath perverted the thoughts and tempers of men, and corrupted their manners? Many are, by this very thing, led to Deism, and to dispute against all revealed religion, that they may set aside the obligations of this day."—"Others fall into a solitariness and sullenness of spirit, by forsaking the assemblies of this day: and are fit for no society, nor for any useful parts of life."—"Factious meetings, and assignations, and intrigues, that disorder states and families, often arise from the neglect of the religion of this day. For, the better good men are employed, the worse, generally, are the impious and vicious men employing themselves."

"Frequent are the acknowledgments of condemned malefactors, that their profanation of the Lord's Day,

led them to those courses, which brought them to an untimely and infamous death.”\*

Now, does not all this most clearly show, that, without sound religious principle actuating all classes of society, there cannot be any solid hope, that its transactions will go on steadily for the advancement of the general good? All ranks are imperatively called on, devoutly to imbibe and practise it, as what alone can infuse moral energy and purity into the actions of man, even though contemplated only as an inhabitant of this earth. It restrains him from tumult, disorder, and crime: but it does not teach him to submit to oppression, injustice, or cruelty. It renders him meek, without being dastardly; and humble, without being abject.

To the needy and the destitute, to whom it was first preached, the Gospel, with all its ordinances and doctrines, and duties, comes with a peculiarly happy effect—sweetening the bitter cup of disappointment, which they are often made to drink—alleviating their sorrows, and giving excitement to their hopes and their exertions, by teaching them, that “the light afflictions of this life last but for a moment, while, to all who are properly exercised under them, they work out a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.”

A poor man, who is at the same time profane—who has no stay in heaven or in earth—who is oppressed with worldly sufferings, and is only breathing impiety over them, is one of the most melancholy and monstrous spectacles which the human mind can contemplate.

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\* Anon.

NOTE F.—*Page 214.*

It has been observed with much alarm, by every friend to the religious and moral interests of his country, that instances of youthful depravity and vice, have increased frightfully of late years, both in number and character: and this, we are happy in being able to state, has given increased activity and ardour, to the plans adopted for rescuing the rising generation from the ignorance in which their crimes originated. The history of many juvenile delinquents, has abundantly proved, that the profanation of the Lord's Day, was the first step which they took in the ways of iniquity. And they themselves have often confessed, that on it, they concerted and executed the most heinous of those criminal acts, which conducted them to public infamy and death.

The negligence and the vices of parents, are undoubtedly the principal cause to which the crimes of the young are to be ascribed; and, in proof of this, we shall select one out of a thousand examples, that might be quoted. The father of a boy, (about eleven years of age,) charged with housebreaking and theft, was called to one of the public offices, and asked by the magistrate, "If ever he had sent his son to school? He answered—he never had. Had he ever taken him to church? No. Ever read the Bible to him? No. Ever taught him the principles of morality? No."—It has frequently appeared from evidence, given in courts of justice, that the youthful criminals have not merely been left ignorant, by their natural guardians, of their duty to God and man; but

instructed and trained by them, in the most expert ways of violating the laws of both.

Now, in times of comparative prosperity, there may not be great or serious evil apprehended from the machinations of such persons: but, if we should ever be visited with poverty and public distress, these are the turbulent spirits—the future ruffians, who are to take the lead in the march of tumult; and to plunder the possessions, and shed the blood of the best of our citizens, and to spread anarchy and desolation through all the borders of the land.

“ Were I to collect, into one picture, all the baneful and lamentable effects, which the immoral or perverted education of the young, has spread over the character both of individuals and of society, I might startle you with the most frightful images of human depravity; and harrow up the stoutest feelings of your heart, with an unvarnished tale of human wretchedness and suffering. Were I to lead you to some of the numerous haunts of ignorance and profligacy, which are, unfortunately, to be found in every town, and exhibit to you, a group of youthful servants of iniquity, inhaling, from the spirits and the sentiments of their guardians, the feelings, the language, and the habits of impiety; I might awaken your horror, and perhaps overwhelm your sensibility, but I would not be overrating the amount of human transgression, or exaggerating the causes of its extension and growth.

“ Consult the records of the condemned, and you will find, that, in a majority of cases, their ignorance of religious duty, was the foundation of their immoralities, and that their profanation of the ordinances of Heaven, prepared them for the violation of the laws of men. Look into the history of a youthful profligate,

and you will soon be convinced, that his licentiousness has been the offspring of his unrestrained passions, and that his entrance on that career which is leading him to disgrace and perdition, may be dated from the time that he renounced the authority of God, and conquered the fears which the revelation of his wrath inspires. Nay, examine the crowds of youthful criminals, who infest the streets and alleys of our towns, and who are every day growing riper in depravity and impenitence; and you will find, that, for the most part, their hardihood in sin, is equalled only by their ignorance of its guilt; and that, even in the most melancholy stages of their wickedness, they are the victims of the circumstances in which they are reared and educated," &c. &c. &c.—*Vide 'Sermon on the Obligations of training up the Young in the way they should go,' by the Author.*

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NOTE G.—Page 260.

At the accession of his present Majesty to the throne, there was ordered to be read, from all the pulpits of the Established Church, a Royal Proclamation, the injunctions and requirements of which, gave every good man the highest pleasure; because, the effects of their publication were expected to prove, in the highest degree, beneficial. The pleasure, however, which was thus excited, was but of short continuance, for the expectations on which it rested, were soon totally overthrown. The document in question, completely failed in forwarding the objects

recommended; and no small anxiety has been expressed to ascertain the cause.

Why, we have heard it asked, have the pious wishes of our Sovereign not been attended to, at the commencement of his auspicious reign? Why have his exertions to suppress all vice, profaneness, debauchery, and immorality, which are so highly displeasing to God, and so great a reproach to religion and good government, not been seconded by all classes of his subjects; and his commands, that they manifest "a religious observance of God's holy laws," not been enforced by all the officers of state, and magistrates throughout the country? In the accomplishment of so laudable a design, as that of "preserving and advancing the service of Almighty God, and of discouraging and suppressing all vice and profaneness," we might well expect to have found all ranks in the land, zealously co-operating, that they might promote the happiness of the monarch, by securing for his person and government, the protection and blessing of the Most High.

But let us hear the terms of the Proclamation itself, that we may be able rightly to estimate the culpability of its neglect—"To the intent, that Religion, Piety, and Good Manners, may, (according to Our most hearty desire,) flourish and increase under Our Administration and Government, We have thought fit, by the advice of Our Privy Council, to issue this Our Royal Proclamation; and do hereby declare Our Royal Purpose and Resolution, to discountenance and punish all manner of vice, profaneness, and immorality, in all Persons, of whatsoever Degree or Quality, within this Our Realm, and particularly in such as are employed near our Royal Person: and that, for the



Encouragement of Religion and Morality, We will, upon all occasions, distinguish Persons of Piety and Virtue, by marks of our Royal Favour.....  
 .....And We do hereby strictly enjoin and prohibit all Our loving subjects, of what Degree or Quality soever, from playing, on the Lord's Day, at Dice, Cards, or any other Game whatsoever, either in Public or Private Houses, or other Place or Places, whatsoever;—And We do hereby require and command them, and every of them, decently and reverently to attend the Worship of God, on every Lord's Day, on pain of Our highest Displeasure, and of being proceeded against with the utmost Rigour that may be by Law. And, for the more effectual reforming all such persons, who, by reason of their Dissolute lives and conversations, are a Scandal to Our Kingdom,—Our further Pleasure is, and We do hereby strictly charge and command all Our Judges, Mayors, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and all other our Officers and Ministers, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, and all other Our Subjects, whom it may concern, to be very vigilant and strict in the discovery, and effectual Prosecution and Punishment of all Persons who shall be guilty of excessive Drinking, Blasphemy, Profane Swearing and Cursing, Lewdness, and Profanation of the Lord's Day.....And that they take care to put in Execution the Statute, made in the Twenty-ninth year of the Reign of King Charles the Second, intituled *An Act for the better observation of the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday*; and also, so much of an Act of Parliament made in the Ninth year of the Reign of King William the Third, intituled *An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness*, as is now in force; and all other

Laws, now in force, for the punishing and suppressing any of the vices aforesaid.....And for the more effectual proceeding herein—We do hereby direct and command all Our Judges of Assize, and Justices of the Peace, to give strict Charges, at their respective Assizes and Sessions, for the due Prosecution and Punishment of all Persons that shall presume to offend in any of the kinds aforesaid:—And that they do, at their respective Assizes and Quarter Sessions of the Peace, cause this Our Royal Proclamation to be publicly read in open Court, immediately before the Charge is given. And We do hereby further charge and command every Minister, in his respective Church or Chapel, to read, or cause to be read, this Our Royal Proclamation, *at least four times every year*, immediately after Divine Service, and to incite and stir up their respective Auditories to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, and the avoiding of all Immorality and Profaneness.”

Now, we are persuaded, there is not an individual in the country, who is not satisfied, that all, or nearly all, the injunctions and prohibitions of this important document, have been grossly neglected and despised. Has any minister, we would ask, in either end of the island, been careful to read, or cause it to be read, in his respective church or chapel, at least four times every year, immediately after divine service; and thereby taken an opportunity to awaken his audience to an abhorrence of all iniquity, and to stir them up to the love and practice of piety and virtue? The moral and spiritual good, that might be produced, by a judicious representation of the temporal, as well as eternal punishments which await transgressors of the divine law, is incalculable. The virtuous would be

encouraged in the way of holiness, and the wicked would be restrained in the career of iniquity, by considerations which immediately, as well as remotely, affected their highest interests. But the opportunities of doing good, thus opened up, have been allowed to pass unnoticed—the command, to perform a pious and patriotic duty, has been disregarded—the gracious intentions of the Sovereign have been overlooked—and after being once, and only once, read throughout the churches and chapels of the country, the proclamation in question was thrown aside as waste paper.

That there must be a cause for this apparently strange conduct, is unquestionable; what that cause is, the sequel of this Note may explain.

The matter, however, does not rest here. In another, and an equally important quarter, the salutary and pious designs of the Sovereign, were defeated by the negligence of those to whom the care of carrying them into execution was entrusted. “For the more effectual proceeding herein,” *i. e.* for the suppressing all vice and profanation of the Lord’s Day—the Proclamation runs thus—“We do hereby direct and command all our Judges of Assize, and Justices of the Peace, at their respective Assizes and Quarter Sessions of the Peace, to cause this Our Royal Proclamation to be publicly read in open Court, immediately before the Charge is given.”

Now, where can we point to any auxiliary arrangement more wisely adapted than this, to further the ends of justice, and prevent the growth of crime? The authority and dignity of the presiding judges—the solemnity of the proceedings—and the character of the audience, all conspire to give effect to the encouragements of virtue, and the prohibitions and

penalties of vice, on the human mind. The deliberations and trials which are there carried on, relate to the preservation of the peace and good order of society, and the suppression of those offences and crimes which infringe the moral and political interests of men. The culprits are generally overawed by the insignia of justice which surround them, and softened into contrition by the public proofs of their guilt, or the secret upbraidings of their own conscience. Spectators are prepared to applaud the triumphs of virtue, and to concur in the punishment of vice. The laws of God and of man, appear to have attained nearly an undivided rule in the hearts of all present. The era of the reign of truth and justice, and of the downfall of error and crime, seems to have arrived! What a propitious season, then, for inculcating the wholesome admonitions and commands of a virtuous and pious Prince! and what a glorious opportunity for a judge, skilled in the workings of the human passions, to bring home, with resistless energy, to men's business and bosoms, the fatal tendency of the corruption of manners, and the profanation of sacred things; and to recommend and enforce, with all the charms of royal solicitude and tenderness, the motives and obligations to the observance of all God's holy laws!

Yet, in utter disregard of the express command of the Monarch, all this has been neglected, and the Proclamation in question, is a dead letter in every Court of Assize and Quarter Sessions of our country. Will it be argued, that the publication of such an edict is a mere form, and that the reading of it would only waste the time of the court, without promoting the ends of public justice and morality? We might

briefly answer, that there are many forms and ceremonies, more exceptionable than this, observed, by which the administration of the laws is encumbered, and the time of public business wasted. But is the document regarded, by those who should see its conditions obeyed, as an empty and useless form? Whence have they come to such a conclusion? Is it because its injunctions and prohibitions are inefficient, or because the enforcement of them is impracticable? “In times like these, must nothing but the damps of oblivion, from the brow of a Judge or a Bishop, be shed on provincial dulness? Little is to be expected, at a time like the present, from the *beauty*, without the vigour and the spirit of holiness. We have reason not only to apprehend the violation and invasion of our public sacred establishments, by our avowed enemies, but we must guard against negligence and desertion, in the very posts where watchfulness and vigour are more than ever required. We should assemble in the temple, with all our princes, and lords, and potentates, and venerable orders, and high officers of state, in all their gradations and dignities, that the disciples of infidelity and profaneness may be made to “feel the nature of the pillars whereupon their house standeth.” In the licentiousness of the age, the lowest public functionary has much to discharge. But we must see high exertions of the mind in high and hallowed places. The priests and ministers of the Lord, must stand between the porch and the altar, and exert themselves, “before their eyes begin to wax dim, that they may not see; and ere the lamp of God goeth out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.” \*

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\* 1 Sam. iii. 5.

Such were the fervent terms in which a zealous friend,\* of the public, civil, and religious establishments of his country, wrote, when he conceived they were in danger of being overturned by the violence of open enemies on the one hand, and the supineness of their natural guardians on the other; and there is reason to believe, that they are not inapplicable to the state of affairs at the time we write.

It is long since it has been justly observed, that a government which relaxes, is not easily recalled to the vigour of its ancient principles. Have we reason to apprehend, then, that, on the great points of religious and moral duty, there has been a relaxation of the law of the land? The document which forms the subject of this Note, furnishes a melancholy proof of the fact. The laws are sufficiently explicit for the enforcement of all the points to which that document refers, but they are not put in execution. A specific number of acts are there declared to be offences against the authority of God and man; and the means are distinctly described, by which they may be restrained and suppressed. But these means are disregarded—the offences, of course, are multiplied, instead of being diminished—the law loses its terrors—its officers their respect—and the guilty are hardened in their career of iniquity, by the very relaxation of the principles and practice of those who should sit in judgment on them.

Nothing, we are persuaded, can be more injurious to the moral character of any people, than to frame laws for their government, which it is impossible to

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\* Author of the "Pursuits of Literature."

carry into operation, or to issue edicts and ordinances which it is never intended to enforce. In such circumstances, they can feel no obligation to obey. On the contrary, they lose all reverence for the authority which commands their compliance. They transfer the opinion which they have formed of the impracticable, and, as they imagine, oppressive statutes, which bear upon their own conduct, to the whole code of legislation; and thus, the very foundations of their deference and respect for the institutions and laws of their country are undermined, by the discovery of the absurdity, and inefficiency of certain conditions and terms, which it was never intended to enforce.

“ We do hereby,” are the terms of the Proclamation, “ strictly enjoin and prohibit all Our loving subjects, of what Degree or Quality soever, from playing on the Lord’s Day, at Dice, Cards, or any other Game whatsoever, either in Public or in Private houses, or other Place, or Places whatsoever: And we do hereby require and command them, and every of them, decently and reverently to attend the Worship of God *on every Lord’s Day*, on Pain of Our highest displeasure, and of being proceeded against with the utmost rigour that may be by Law...  
 .....Our further pleasure is, and We do hereby strictly charge and command all Our Judges, Mayors, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and all other Our Officers and Ministers, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, that they take care to put in Execution so much of an Act of Parliament, made in the Ninth Year of the Reign of William the Third, intituled *An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness*, as is now in force: and also to suppress and prevent all Gaming whatsoever, in Public or Private

houses, on the Lord's Day: and likewise, that they take effectual care to prevent all Persons keeping Taverns, Chocolate-Houses, Coffee-Houses, or other Public Houses, whatsoever, from selling Wine, Chocolate, Coffee, Ale, Beer, or other Liquors, or receiving or permitting Guests to be, or remain, in such their Houses, in the Time of Divine Service, on the Lord's Day, as they will answer it to Almighty God, and upon pain of Our highest displeasure."

All this is very explicit and excellent, and, we should think, there could be no difficulty in understanding or enforcing it. But let us examine the manners of the inhabitants of the metropolis, or those of the inhabitants of any considerable provincial town. Let us only review the customs and fashions of the wealthy and privileged orders of the country, and how shall we find them stand, in reference to the points here enjoined and prohibited? Are taverns, ale-houses, and coffee-houses, shut during the hours of divine service, or are guests refused to be admitted? Is it not matter of notoriety, that they are more frequented on Sundays than any other days, and that the Bacchanalian roar of their inmates, often assails, with most unwelcome sounds, the ears of those who are quietly journeying to the house of God? Are not the shops of bakers, cooks, confectioners, fruiterers, &c. kept open, and all the wares in which they traffic, publicly exposed to sale? Is gaming suppressed or discouraged in private houses, and do those, who, from their rank and wealth, are best qualified to guide public opinion and fashion, exert their influence to prevent the desecration of the Lord's Day, by prohibiting, within their families, the indulgence in profane sports and amusements? Do all



“Persons of Honour, or in Places of Authority,” give good example, by their own virtue and piety, and to the utmost, contribute to the discountenancing persons of dissolute lives, that they may bring them to shame and contempt, for their loose and evil actions? *Do they decently and reverently attend the Worship of God, on every Lord’s Day?* Is the highest displeasure of royalty manifested towards them for the neglect of it,—or are they proceeded against with the utmost rigour that may be by law? \*

It is a notorious fact, and it is a subject of ridicule to the profane, that the laws regarding the observance of the Sabbath, have become a dead letter. The injunctions, and prohibitions, and penalties of the royal proclamation, were never enforced; and the pompous parade of an inert and inefficient authority, has only given boldness to transgressors in the commission of the very offences it was meant to suppress and punish. Those who should have taken the lead in the reformation of the evils complained of, have unfortunately given all the weight of their influence and example to their encouragement and growth.

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\* “On last Sunday afternoon, among the fields that lie between Strawberry-Lane and Upper-Heeley, was to be seen as much variety of sport, as if it had been some common holiday. Here, might be witnessed, some groups gambling at Pinch—there, a party indulging in the exercise of Shooting—while others might be seen playing at Cricket—all pursuing their profane pleasures, with apparent consciousness of security. It is devoutly to be wished, that more active measures might be taken to put down, at least, the open and flagrant violation of the sanctity of this day.”

*Sheffield Iris, Oct. 1822.*

The Sabbath was first made a day of travelling and festivity by the nobility and gentry of the land; and, as riches and luxury sprung up in the lower ranks of life, the wealthy tradesman and merchant have closely followed the titled orders in disrespect for the ordinances of religion, and the appropriation of the day of holy rest, to the purposes of business, of pleasure, and of profligacy.

It is now, unhappily, become rather a rare spectacle, to behold the peerage of the country, seated in the house of God, on the day set apart for his worship, and joining with their humbler brethren in the acknowledgment of their dependence on his providence, in the adoration of his power, and wisdom, and the earnest supplication for his mercy to pardon their sins, and his grace to help them in every time of need. We believe, that, among certain classes of society, it is deemed vulgar or methodistical, to be regular or punctual in the observance of religious ordinances. The charge of puritanism, therefore, must be repelled by the renunciation of all the ordinary forms, and duties, of a devout and pious life. Worldly pleasures must fill up the hours, which the divine commandment enjoins us to dedicate to the public worship of God. The duties of private devotion, must be supplanted by the relaxing amusements of private gaming; a ride or a drive round some fashionable place of resort, must precede the entertainments of the evening: and this, again, must be devoted to sensual festivity and unholy mirth, for the purpose of banishing all unwelcome reflections about the obligations of the divine law, and the fearful looking-for of judgment, revealed against all who profane and pollute the Sabbath, by doing their own

ways, finding their own pleasures, and speaking their own words.

In matters of religion, as well as in matters of business and pleasure, mankind are very much the creatures of circumstances and habit: and fashions and customs, which were, at first, quite foreign to their taste and their principles, afterwards become as closely incorporated with their dispositions and desires, as if they were essential to their existence and happiness. The society in which we are educated, has a mighty effect in deciding the moral and intellectual character of man: and although we are all endowed with the faculty of judging for ourselves, respecting good and evil, and right and wrong, our understanding receives, imperceptibly, from early associations and customs, a bias in favour of particular views and doctrines. And, even granting that we may have been early and faithfully taught to revere the ordinances and the laws of God; even granting that our general notions of duty may originally have been very correct and just, we unfortunately know from experience, that principles, which would revolt at the idea of any sudden change, are melted down by the gradual relaxation of feeling produced by continued contact. Complacency in the soothing enjoyment, as it has been well observed by a distinguished female writer,\* creeps on by almost imperceptible degrees. The revolution is not the less certain, because it is not acknowledged. A false shame or pernicious deference to the opinions and fashions of the world, overcomes our religious scruples, and, in some cases, undermines

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\* Hannah More.

the principles of our virtue, before we have apprehended any danger to its practice. “ *The conscience is quieted by the geographical anodyne.*” Distance from the place where we imbibed the principles of virtue, and practised the duties of devotion and piety, is followed with an alienation from both. “ *I would not do in England, what I would think it no harm to do in Paris,*” is the soothing opiate that lulls to silence the remonstrances and upbraidings of conscience; and we believe that the same deceitful quietus is resorted to by many of our northern countrymen who visit the southern metropolis.

“ A practical appeal may safely be made to the different state of the feelings of many of our travellers, on witnessing the open violation of the sanctity of the *first* Sunday, and the *twentieth* repetition of the same abuse.” Who can affirm, that familiarity has not gradually diminished the alarm, and, in a great measure, suppressed the indignation, naturally inspired by an act so revolting to the mind of a person who has been taught to fear and reverence the Lord, by walking in his ordinances, and keeping his statutes to do them? Who would venture to assert, that a succession of desecrated Sabbaths, produces no alteration in the state of their feelings, except that of conciliating and continuing them in the practice? Does not a neglect of the performance of one duty, lead to that of another; and, if we offend habitually on one great and comprehensive point of the law, is there not the highest probability, that we shall become regardless of many of the minor points, attention to which is necessary to constitute the Christian character?

We have shown, that the public observance of the

Sabbath, is the most effectual means of preserving, among all classes of the community, the knowledge of the perfections and excellencies of the Most High; the love and obedience of his laws; and the dread of his displeasure and wrath: and we have also shown, that the profanation of it, is the certain precursor of national and individual profligacy and crime. Now, we appeal to any man who has visited any of the principal towns on the Continent, whether, in consequence of the public and flagitious violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath, vice and sensuality, of all descriptions, are not seen stalking abroad with more shameless effrontery on that day, than on any other? If there is a cessation of secular labour, it is not for the purpose of devoting the time to religious exercises, but to profane sports and licentious revelry. Nay, we shall stop nearer home, and ask any man who is acquainted with the habits and customs of the inhabitants of the metropolis, whether the day of sacred rest, is not unhappily devoted, by a great proportion of them, to luxurious feasting, to pleasure jaunts, family visits, private amusements, and all manner of sinful and sensual indulgence. The very opposite of the divine injunction is there exemplified, for every one seems greedily following his own ways, and finding his own pleasures. The churches, comparatively speaking, are deserted. The river is covered with parties of pleasure. The parks and tea-gardens are crowded; and the spectacle which they exhibit, has become a grievous nuisance to every pious and considerate passenger.

What, then, has become of the *Statute of King Charles the Second, for the better observance of the Lord's Day*: or of the *Act of King William the Third,*

*for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness:* or of the Proclamation of our gracious king, George the Fourth, for the encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for the preventing and punishing all Vice and Immorality? Their injunctions and penalties apply indiscriminately to all ranks and descriptions of persons: and we apprehend, that, as it would be impossible to enforce their conditions, without subjecting the higher classes to public reproach and punishment, it has been found convenient, for the safety of all parties, to allow the enactments in question, to sink into desuetude, and to wink at the evils they were intended to check and repress.

Encouragement is given, by the example of many persons of rank and fashion, to desecrate the Sabbath, by the indulgence in secular business and pleasure; and nothing is more common, than to hear an apology offered for the Sunday's amusements of the middle ranks in London, by representing them as necessary for the enjoyment of health and comfort. On every Lord's Day, it pours forth its hundreds and thousands of its busy population, in quest of amusement and pleasure from the adjoining country; and, except the chime of distant bells, which summon, almost unheeded, the surrounding neighbourhood to the house of God, there is scarcely any other index to be observed, that Sunday is the day of holy and religious rest. Complacency in the soothing enjoyment, has rapidly spread among the tradesmen and shopmen of London; and as health is the first of temporal blessings, they have armed themselves with an argument for deserting the duties of the Sabbath, under the pretext of supplying the waste, which the labours of the past week have produced. It is thus, the watering-places,

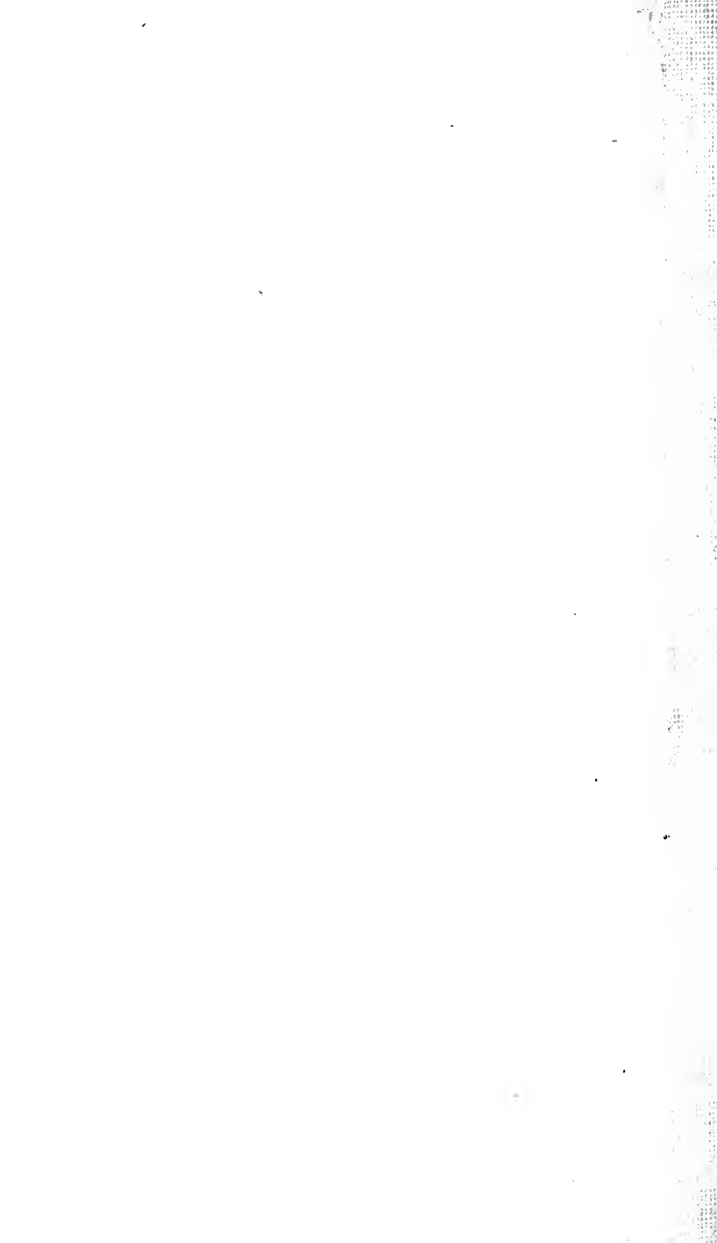
tea-gardens, &c. have been called the safety-valves of London; and a Sunday's excursion thither, represented as a necessary restorative to the exhausted frame of a London citizen.

We shall leave it to those, who have witnessed the scenes on board a Margate or any other steam-packet, on a Sunday; or the riotous pleasure parties, which meet in the vicinity of the metropolis; or the profuse and licentious recreations of the tea-gardens, &c.; to say, whether even the bodily health of the violators of the sanctity of the Sabbath, is not more injured by the sensual indulgencies of that day, than by all the ordinary labours of the preceding week: and, as to their spiritual health—as to the interests of their immortal souls—it is fearful to contemplate the blackness of darkness which the righteous judgments of God have revealed as their everlasting portion. But the evil, we hope, is reaching a crisis, and will soon meet with redress. The mischiefs to which irreligion has led, in some neighbouring nations, should awaken the great and powerful in our own country, to a sense of the importance of religious ordinances for the preservation of national and individual happiness; for “until the duties of religion shall be recommended by the general example of the superior ranks, then, and not till then, will the bridle of legal restraint act with effect on vulgar profligacy.”



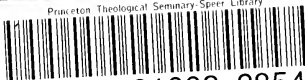








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