

SEVEN
SERMONS
ON
THE LORD'S DAY

WILSON

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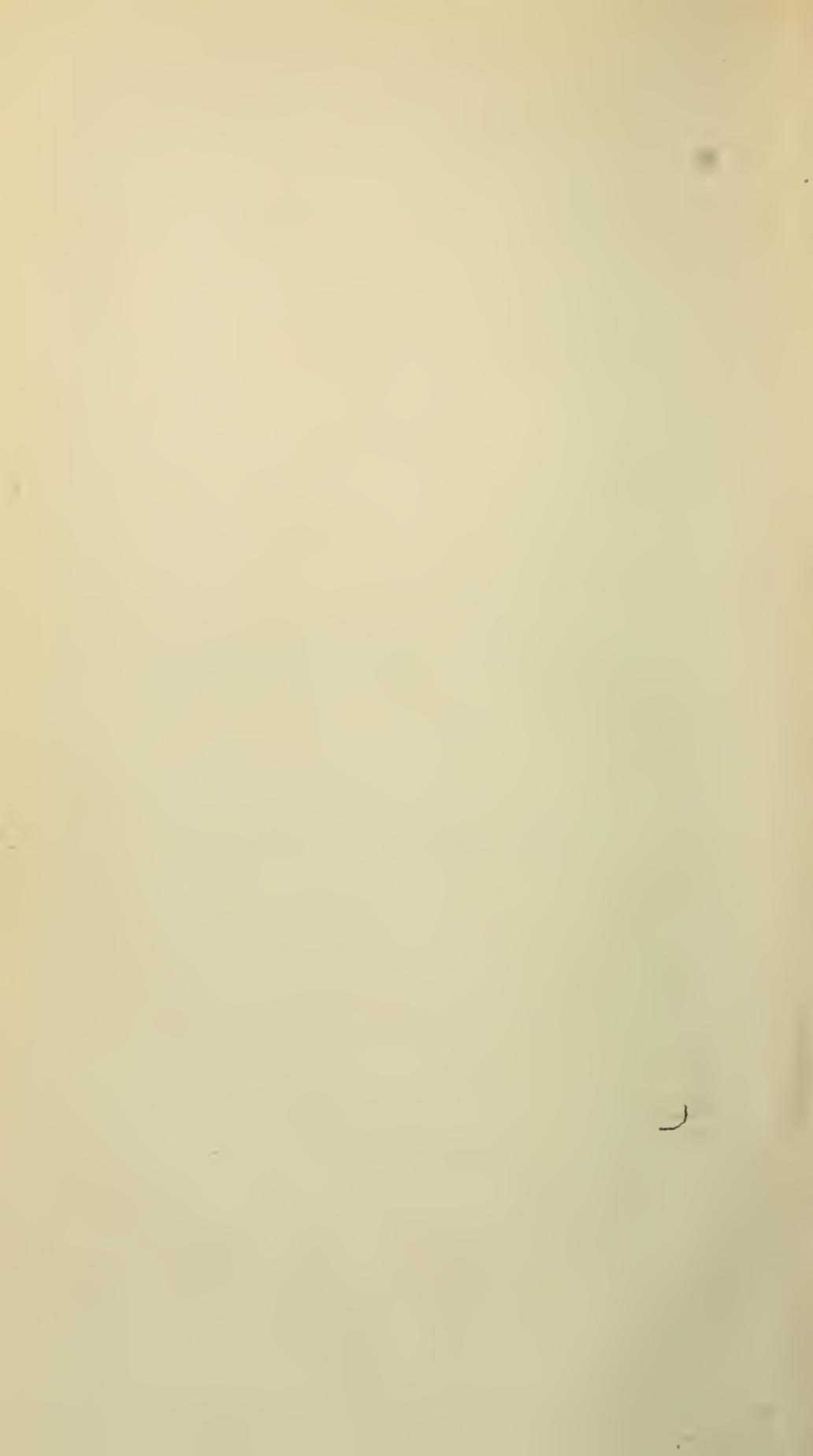
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SEVEN SERMONS

ON

THE LORD'S DAY.



THE
DIVINE AUTHORITY AND PERPETUAL OBLIGATION
OF THE
LORD'S DAY,

ASSERTED IN
SEVEN SERMONS,

DELIVERED AT THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY,
ISLINGTON,

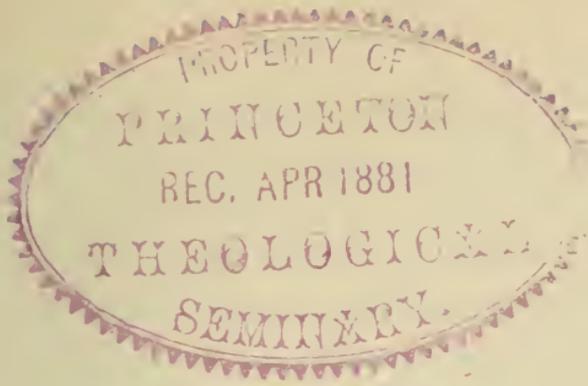
IN THE YEAR 1830.

BY
DANIEL WILSON, D.D.
BISHOP OF CALCUTTA.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE

S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

THE substance of the following Sermons was delivered in the autumn of 1827. They were then three in number ; but though requested to print them, I was compelled to decline the invitation from the pressure of other duties. A new and more favourable occasion of treating the question occurred in the spring of 1830. The Bishop of London addressed a most able and impressive letter on the neglect of the Lord's day, to the clergy and inhabitants of the diocese. Public attention was awakened. I was induced to examine the whole subject anew and more thoroughly than I had previously done. It grew upon my mind. I discerned more and more its immense importance, if we would honour God, preserve religion in the world, or save our own souls, and those of our family and neighbourhood. I discovered also, as I thought, the sources of the more current objec-

tions ; and at the same time their fallacy, when once the whole bearing of the argument from Scripture was understood. Thus I was led on to treat the question in detail, and delivered seven discourses, which I committed to the press in the last winter. I have consulted our chief writers ; weighed again and again the difficulties which are alleged : and I hope have succeeded in showing that, from the creation of man through all succeeding periods, one day in seven was appointed by Almighty God as the season of special religious repose, and of public and private worship. I hope I have succeeded in showing that this appointment was essentially MORAL and immutable in its obligation, though, from the nature of the case, the determination of the exact proportion of time may be considered as a POSITIVE institution, that is, as resting on the mere revelation of the will of God concerning it. I hope I have succeeded in showing, that our Lord never relaxed, nor meant to relax, the law of creation or of the fourth commandment, but only to vindicate them from the false comments of the Jewish doctors, and then leave them in their original dignity and force. I hope I have succeeded in showing, that the day of the observation of the Sabbath, under the gospel, was authoritatively changed by our Lord and his apostles, to honour the resurrection ; and was in entire consistence with the original bearing of the institution, and the subsequent manifestation of the divine will concerning it.)

I was for some time doubtful, whether the argumentative air of the first four sermons, in which these points are established, was likely to be generally useful. I thought that perhaps the devout inculcation of the practical duties of the Lord's day was the safer course. And indeed, in general, this is our best wisdom : not one in a thousand

of our population ever heard of any objections. Creation—the fourth commandment—the exhortation of the prophets—the conduct and doctrine of our Saviour and his apostles—the practice of the whole Christian church—a sense of gratitude for the spiritual blessings conveyed by it—the obvious state and wants of man—the pledge and hope of an eternal Sabbath in heaven,—are plain, common-sense arguments to every pious mind, involving MATTERS OF FACT, which no plausible theories can overthrow.

But, on further reflection, I conceived that a discussion of the main objections might not be unimportant in a day like the present. We live in a reading age. The temper of the times inclines rather to intellectual pride, than to the sober exercise of the understanding in the obedience of faith. Men catch at any thing, to escape from the sacred obligations of a day devoted to spiritual religion, and the care of the soul. The name of Paley, and his just reputation in matters of his own province, is seized with avidity. Some late publications have detailed his statements, with unwonted levity, and yet confidence of manner. The deplorable ignorance of theology manifest in these publications, to all who are versed in the inspired Scriptures, and who submit really to their authority, forms no hindrance to the diffusion of the poison amongst the young and uninformed. Open infidelity, semi-scepticism, profaneness, worldly-mindedness, unconcern for the soul, and a readiness to follow what is new and daring, all lean the same way. It seemed to me, therefore, to be the duty of those who adhere to the doctrine of the Bible, and the universal faith of the church, to come forward and enter their protest against the gigantic evil. This I have endea-

voured to do. I have interwoven, however, with the argumentative sermons, practical exhortations; and have treated, in the last three discourses, the specific duties of the Christian Sabbath at length.

With regard to the authors to whom I have been indebted for aid, most of them are referred to, as I have had occasion to cite their authority. But the fact is, that the whole church of Christ, in the proper sense of that term, has maintained this fundamental point in every age. Subordinate matters have, indeed, been disputed; but the great truth that a day of religious exercise and holy rest, after six days' work, is of divine authority and perpetual obligation upon man, has been acknowledged through all the periods of the Christian church, and in all the subdivisions of it.

The best single sermons I have met with, in a practical point of view, are those of Dean Milner, Archdeacon Pott, and Dr. Chalmers—the last is in the most powerful and awakening manner of its author, and of itself settles the question. Some essays of the late Mr. Hey of Leeds seem to me the clearest upon the controversy—he confutes Paley in a masterly and conclusive style. The most elaborate work on the whole argument, as handled in his day, is, perhaps, the *Exercitations* of Dr. John Owen. The change from the last to the first day of the week is thoroughly defended, in his lucid and convincing way, by J. Edwards—to whom J. Mede's sermon should, by all means, be adjoined. Bishop Andrews on the Fourth Commandment is an admirable work—full of learning, the soundest judgment, and rich knowledge of the materials of his argument. Mr. Holden has, in his recent volume, arranged most of the reasonings and conclusions of pre-

ceding writers : he gives a list of nearly one hundred and fifty, and has furnished a valuable compendium. The chief authors of any popularity, that have fallen in my way, who impugn the divine authority of the Lord's day, are Bishop J. Taylor—whose mistakes are not confined to this topic, mighty and various as were his powers, and sound in many views his theology—Dr. Ogden and Dr. Paley, whose names will not weigh greatly with those who are acquainted with many other of their opinions. The primary error of supposing the narrative in Genesis to be by prolepsis or anticipation, is maintained by Archbishop Bramhall—who, in part, redeems the fault, by a bold and masterly defence of the divine authority of the Christian Sabbath. Baxter confines himself to the argument from the example of our Lord and the inspired authority of the apostles, which he enforces in one of his very best treatises—omitting, but in no way questioning, the proofs from the Old Testament. The judicious Hooker, Bishop Hall, Archbishops Usher and Sharpe, Bishops Stillingfleet and Pearson, Archbishop Secker and others, defend the generally received doctrine, in their own profound and impressive manner, though some of them treat it only incidentally. The learned Bishop Horsley has three noble sermons on the subject, in which he powerfully maintains the same doctrine. I think he errs in considering the Sabbath an appointment more of a positive than moral character. Indeed, if I am not deceived in my judgment, this error pervades almost all our writers, to the treatises of J. Edwards and Hey. They too much concede that the fourth commandment is of a positive nature—not resting on the moral nature

of man and the fitness of things, but reposing merely, as other external or ceremonial observances, on the will of God. That there is, as I have said, something positive in it, may be granted—from the nature of the case it could not well do otherwise; but the positive part is as little as possible—so little, that the grand duty of devoting some portion of time to the immediate service of God is its main purport—the commandment is moral *per se*—arises from the fitness of things, and rests, like the other precepts, on the primary relation in which man stands to his Creator. The opinion of the reformers is uniformly in favour of the divine obligation of the Lord's day—Cranmer, Latimer, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Beza, maintain it with one voice, though sometimes, especially at the early period of the Reformation, they support certain festival days in common with it.

To refer to the authors where references to the question, or brief discussions occur, would be endless. Lightfoot, Watts, Doddridge, Walker of Truro, Scott, and most practical writers, have something valuable. I have found interesting papers in the 8th volume of the British Review, in the Encyclopædia Britannica, and the Eclectic Review of the last year. The Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr. Mant, has also recently published an excellent pamphlet on the subject, chiefly in refutation of the idea of an anticipated narrative, which he has treated with more force of argument than Hey or Dr. Dwight. This last name deserves especial notice—Dr. Dwight, as well as his illustrious countryman, Edwards, has honoured the American School of Theology—rapidly increasing in importance—with a most convincing and able discussion of the question in all its branches, both theoretical and practical: this perhaps forms the best

of our modern treatises ; though it would be unjust to Dr. Humphrey, of Amherst College, to withhold a tribute of applause from his excellent Essays. But I will not proceed. I have said so much, to show that I have not been inattentive to the opinions of others—and likewise to suggest a course of reading to any who may have time for such an inquiry.

The points upon which I hope I may have cast some new light, are—The reasons for believing the Mosaic narrative of the institution of the Sabbath in Paradise to be real—The direct moral character of the fourth commandment—The importance and dignity given to the Sabbath even during the vigour of the Mosaic economy—The real bearing of our Lord's conduct and doctrine—And the way in which the change of the day was introduced by Christ and his apostles.

And this leads me to notice THE AUTHORITY OF REVEALED TRUTH as connected with this subject, and forming its only true support. For it is on this footing I place the doctrine of the Lord's day—it is a part of God's merciful revelation of his will to man. I make no compromise in the course of these Sermons. I trust I am cautious on topics not essential to the great truth itself: but on the main duty I dare not, cannot, do not hesitate to speak my mind. I know it is the opinion of many excellent persons, that whilst we yield not the question of the divine obligation in point of argument, we may yet better urge its practical duties on the ground of expediency. My own opinion is, that we can have no hope of success, unless we place the duty on its only firm footing, the EXPRESS COMMAND OF ALMIGHTY GOD. Expediency may obtain a decent compliance with custom, but will never warm the heart.

Expediency may carry a man once to church, but it will not carry him there twice ; it will not regulate his family duties ; it will not suppress the Sunday recreations, the Sunday Newspapers, the Sunday parties, the Sunday dinners, the Sunday journeys, the general Sunday secularities. Expediency may conceal or control some outward enormities, but it cannot implant principles of religion, it cannot inspire love to God, it cannot check weariness and inattention, it cannot animate to prayer, it cannot change the human heart.

To do this we must invoke the power of the supreme Potentate, and all those aids and operations of grace which he has promised as the accompaniments of his own truth. That is, we must ascend from human to divine agency. We must admit duly THE AUTHORITY OF REVEALED TRUTH in respect of this duty, as well as every other, in order to have any influence of grace upon the soul of man, or even any permanent authority over his conscience.

I rejoice to observe that during the eight months which have elapsed since the publication of the first edition, considerable attention has been awakened on the subject. Several publications have appeared both in America and England. And, what is more important, Societies have been formed for promoting the better observance of the Lord's day. That in London proceeds boldly on the Divine authority of the Institution, and promises a series of measures which, with the Divine blessing, may have the most important results.¹

I am more and more convinced that the Lord's day

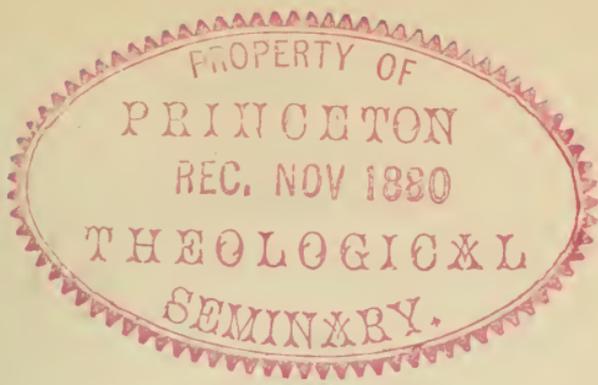
¹ Its office is Exeter Hall, London—its title, "London Society for Promoting a due Observance of the Lord's day."

is one of the grandest practical topics which we are now called to treat. It is the platform, and, as it were, the machinery for the whole application of Christianity. The Holy Sabbath—coëval with man—the example of the Almighty proposing it to him—creation so distributed as to lay a foundation for it—the powers and faculties of rational and irrational creatures formed upon the supposition of it—the proportion of one day's rest to six of labour infixed in the order of this beautiful world by the Almighty Artificer—the institution goes along with redemption, marks the season with religious worship, affords the leisure, sets to rest the ministrations, collects all the materials for the diffusion of the gospel and the celebration of the praises of its Author—maintains the front and bearing of religion in the world—is the visible representation of Christianity, and the pledge of its heavenly reward.

The opposition made to every attempt for recovering its honour should create no surprise. The conflict between good and evil may probably be censured very much here. There seems a tremendous shock approaching. Infidelity, indifference, worldliness, pride, contempt of religion on the one hand, are drawn up in array against the comparatively small number of pious, devoted, holy servants of God on the other. But let us not fear. Let us be firm in the faith of our blessed Lord and Master. He is able to defend his own cause, and us also, so far as we humbly aim at promoting it. Only let the purity and simplicity of truth remain with us—only let our spirit and conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ—only let us keep on broad and acknowledged ground—only let us discountenance novelties and over-statements, and disproportion-

tionate zeal for doubtful and subordinate points—and God will help us—he will arm us against all our spiritual foes, and will, perhaps, grant us to see a revival of sound, evangelical, practical religion, in a degree of which we have little conception.

Islington, Sept. 9,
1831.



CONTENTS.

PREFACE *Page v.—xiii.*

SERMON I.

Genesis ii. 1—3.—*Page 1.*

THE INSTITUTION OF THE WEEKLY SABBATH IN PARADISE, AND ITS CONTINUED AUTHORITY, UNTIL THE DELIVERY OF THE MORAL LAW.

The importance of the subject	1
The plan of the work announced	4
The DIRECT REASONS for believing the Sabbath to have been instituted at the time when the sacred narrative begins	7
The JUST INFERENCES to be drawn from them	11
TRACES of the observation of a weekly rest, during the PATRIARCHAL AGES	13
The MANNER in which the Sabbath was revived before the commencement of the MOSAICAL ECONOMY	19
The EXTREME VIOLENCE done to the Christian faith, by the attempt to explain away the institution of the Sabbath in Paradise	21
The duty of adoring the ALMIGHTY FATHER OF ALL, for the DISTINCT GLORIES shed upon the day of religious repose	22

SERMON II.

Exodus xx. 8—11.—*Page 25.*THE AUTHORITY AND DIGNITY OF THE SABBATH
UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES.

The INSERTION OF THE LAW OF THE SABBATH into the DECA- LOGUE	26
The SABBATH appeared HIGH AND DISTINCT above all the CEREMONIAL USAGES during the Mosaic Economy	32
The SABBATH was insisted upon by THE PROPHETS, AS OF ES- SENTIAL MORAL OBLIGATION, and as DESTINED TO FORM A PART OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION	37
The duty of giving to the holy day of rest that PROMINENCY IN OUR ESTEEM, which Moses was instructed to give it in his dispensation	48
Of imbibing the SPIRIT OF LOVE AND DELIGHT in the worship of God, which the psalms and prophets display	48
The AWFUL INDIGNATION of Almighty God against the con- tempt of his name and his day	49
Let us IMITATE THE HEROIC ZEAL of Ezra and Nehemiah, in vindicating the sanctity of the Sabbath	50
Let us dread the FALSE VIEW of the character of God, and of the nature of Christianity, which is associated with the vio- lation of the Lord's day	51

SERMON III.

Mark ii. 27, 28.—*Page 53.*THE SABBATH VINDICATED, UNDER THE GOSPEL,
FROM PHARISAICAL AUSTERITIES, AND SET
FORTH IN MORE THAN ITS ORIGINAL DIGNITY
AND GLORY.

The RECOGNITION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, and of the FOURTH amongst the number, which our Lord and his apostles make	56
---	----

OUR LORD HONOURED THE SABBATH on all occasions, and never violated its sanctity	60
NOTHING IS ABROGATED UNDER THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION, WITH RESPECT TO THE SABBATH, but those temporary and figurative enactments which constituted the peculiarities of the Jewish age	70
THE DISTINGUISHING PROMISE of the New Testament has for its object, to RENDER THE DUTIES OF THE SABBATH more delightful, and thus increases tenfold their obligation	74
Let every one YIELD to these accumulated proofs	78
Let every one SHUN THE INGRATITUDE of making use of the compassion of our Saviour to the tacit disparagement of the Sabbath itself	80
We plead for the CHRISTIAN SABBATH, for which the Holy Spirit is especially given	81

SERMON IV.

Revelation i. 10.—*Page 83.*

THE SABBATH TRANSFERRED BY DIVINE AUTHORITY FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, OR LORD'S DAY.

The PREPARATORY CIRCUMSTANCES which lay a probable ground for the change of the day	84
1. The prominence given to the proportion of time, both at the first institution in Paradise, and in the wording of the fourth commandment	84
2. The probability that the computation of time was lost in the bondage of Egypt	86
3. The freedom and universality of the gospel dispensation	88
4. The intimations of prophecy	90
5. The complete revolution which actually took place in the whole state of the church	91
6. The claims which Christ advanced during his ministry, of legislating for the Sabbath, as its Sovereign and Lord	95

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHANGES OF THE SABBATH FROM THE LAST to the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, was gradually introduced by the DIVINE AUTHORITY of our LORD and his apostles	97
1. Our Saviour, after his passion, began to introduce the actual change tacitly and gently, by his own divine conduct on his resurrection	99
2. The first day is marked by the gift of the great promise of the whole dispensation	101
3. The doctrine and conduct of the apostles bring in more decidedly the new day of the Sabbath	102
4. The events of God's wonderful providence completed the change	105
5. Ecclesiastical historians bear witness to the observation of the first day	08
6. A perpetual blessing has attended, and now attends, the Christian Sabbath	111

RECAPITULATION OF THE EVIDENCE that all the obligations that can combine to enforce a moral command upon man unite in the case of the Christian Sabbath	112
ADORE THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS of God in providing for man's religious repose in his first creation	113
The CHANGES in the circumstances of the law of the Sabbath have sprung up from NEW BENEFITS conferred on man	114
In proportion as the benefits of the gospel are more exalted, should our hearts receive the INTIMATIONS OF THE DIVINE WILL WITH MORE ALACRITY, and fulfil them WITH WARMER DELIGHT	116

SERMON V.

Ezekiel xx. 12.—*Page* 118.

THE PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

Keep ever in view the GREAT END of the institution	121
--	-----

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DUTIES of the Sabbath	126
We must carry the TRUE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPEN- SATION into these duties	133
Caution as to TENDERNESS to children and servants in en- forcing these duties	137
We must glorify God for those MIGHTY BLESSINGS WHICH ARE APPOINTED TO BE COMMEMORATED ON THE LORD'S DAY	138
TOPICS OF HUMILIATION arising from the discussion	141
THE CONVICTION which such a discussion should fix in the minds of the RELIGIOUS AND UNCONVERTED	142

SERMON VI.

Isaiah lviii. 1, 2.—*Page 145.*

THE UNSPEAKABLE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIGHT OBSERVATION OF THE SABBATH, WITH THE EVILS OF THE OPPOSITE ABUSE.

The observation of the Christian Sabbath is a MOST SACRED COMPACT, and the abuse of it the VIOLATION of that com- pact	147
The observation of the Sabbath bears upon man's TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WELFARE AS A FALLEN BUT ACCOUNTABLE CREATURE	149
It includes, in fact, ALL THE APPLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND ITS PRESERVATION IN THE WORLD	153
The Lord's day connects and holds together ALL THE LINKS AND OBLIGATIONS OF HUMAN SOCIETY, which the violation of it tends to destroy	159
The observation of the Sabbath HONOURS ALMIGHTY GOD, AND BRINGS HIS FAVOUR AND BLESSINGS upon a people; whilst the profanation of it provokes his highest displeasure	162
The EXCUSES which men allege in extenuation of a neglect of the day of God	164
Let us ENTER FULLY AND DETERMINATELY on the religious duty of honouring God	167

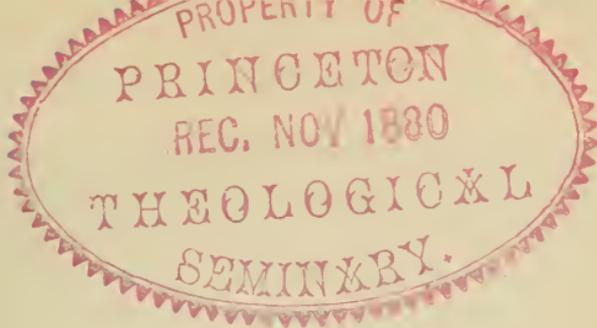
SERMON VII.—*Page* 169.

Nehemiah xiii. 17, 18.

THE GUILT WHICH IS CONTRACTED BY CHRISTIAN NATIONS IN PROPORTION AS THE LORD'S DAY IS OPENLY PROFANED.

The CHARGE OF GUILT against the BRITISH NATION SUBSTANTIATED	170
The NATIONAL JUDGMENT which we may too certainly dread	178
The PRACTICAL MEASURES which each one may adopt to promote a national repentance and return to God	82

We have pleaded for the Sabbath because it is A MEANS TO CERTAIN ENDS	188
Because of the UNSPEAKABLE VALUE OF THE SOUL OF MAN	189
Because it appeals to THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE	190
Because it is an INDISPENSABLE PREPARATION for THE HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS	191



S E R M O N S.

SERMON I

THE INSTITUTION OF A WEEKLY SABBATH IN
PARADISE, AND ITS CONTINUED AUTHORITY
UNTIL THE DELIVERY OF THE MORAL LAW.

GENESIS ii. 1—3.

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 he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

THE glory of God is peculiarly concerned in the due observance of the Sabbath. It is the day which he is pleased to call his own, and with which he has connected most of the practical blessings of salvation. The Lord's day is one main distinction of the gospel dispensation, as the Jewish Sabbath was of the Mosaical, and the Patriarchal Sabbath of the first revelation of the divine will to Adam. The profanation of this day tends

to annihilate the blessings of revelation, to leave the world without any visible token of the authority of Christianity, and to strip the church of the means of openly testifying its faith and obedience. As to the mass of mankind, if the Sabbath be taken away from them, no time is left for religious duties, for the worship of Almighty God, domestic piety, the instruction of children, the visiting the sick and needy, the reading and hearing of the gospel, the celebration of the sacraments, the preparation for that rest of heaven of which it is the pledge and foretaste. And the remaining classes of society would never allot a time for those duties, which, if there were no Sabbath, would be left open ; nor could they sustain the honour of religion in their families or the world.

Christianity is indeed represented and set forth in the weekly return of the day, when its most solemn services are performed. As real piety declines in any country, this symbol of it is forgotten or contemned ; as Christianity revives, men awake again to the value of those means of grace, of which the Sabbath is the first in importance and dignity.

The divine authority of a weekly religious rest has ever been one of those primary truths in which the universal church has agreed. Its institution in paradise, and its insertion in the moral law, have given it an authority on the consciences of men which nothing has shaken. Christian states have hitherto recognised it, and protected their subjects in the peaceable enjoyment of its repose. The disputes of controversialists have chiefly affected subordinate questions, and have left the divine authority undisturbed as an article of the general faith of Christendom. The neglect of its practical duties has, indeed, from the corruption of man, been but too common in every age ; but open assaults upon the origin and continued obligation of the day itself have been rare till of late years.

Now, however, the spirit of covert scepticism or lukewarm Christianity has not spared this most ancient of institutions. Not content with impugning the separate doctrines and mysteries of Revelation, it makes bold to

call in question that sacred season when all those doctrines and mysteries are publicly recognised and inculcated. The platform and arena of religion is taken from under our feet — the great external distinction of the Christian faith is annihilated — and man, erring sinful man, is deprived of his day of repose and recollection, and turned adrift to learn Christianity and celebrate its rites, as chance may dictate and expediency persuade. And though most of the opponents of the divine authority of the Sabbath are ready at present to allow its importance, and are loud in their admiration of those public services which custom and the laws of Christian nations enjoin, yet the tendency of their writings is to sap the principle on which all this rests, to take men off from the firm footing of conscience and the command of God, and transfer them to the sandy ground of human recommendation and casual example.

The duty of the minister of the gospel, under such circumstances, is plain. He is bound to instruct the young, with more care than usual, in the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures on this great question. He is bound to examine the more popular and mischievous objections. He is bound to state what real difficulties rest on the subordinate points of the inquiry. He is bound to assure the poor and simple in his flock, that they may rely on the grounds of their former faith. He is bound to recall the intelligent and elevated classes from the fatal course on which they are in danger of entering.

And in honestly attempting this, he may look for the blessing of Almighty God, who only permits his truth to be assailed in different ages, by different classes of error, in order to prove and try our faithfulness,—in order to carry on, in fact, that system of moral probation and discipline which he has been pleased to establish in this world, and which is apparent, not in this question only, but in every other connected with the evidences, the doctrines, and the precepts of Christianity. God has indeed left things so in the Bible, that his will is plain to the humble inquirer, but obscure and

difficult to the proud—that there is darkness enough on secondary matters and points not connected with our immediate duty, to be the occasion of excuse to the unwilling; whilst there is sufficient light to guide the sincere and docile.¹

For it is to practice that the doctrine of revelation on this subject, as well as every other, tends. The day of rest, not in its theory, or even its divine obligation, but in its holy duties and in its peculiar blessings, is the object which it has in view. And to this we shall direct all our attention, so soon as we have cleared our way through those arguments which are necessary as an introduction to practical exhortation. In this respect it is that the theory and doctrine of the Sabbath, its divine authority and perpetual obligation, are so important. They are wanted as a ground-work. When this is firmly laid, we raise our superstructure with safety.

The whole subject, then, divides itself into two parts—THE DIVINE AUTHORITY of a day of weekly religious rest—and THE MANNER in which that day should be observed under the Christian dispensation. The former question will occupy the first four sermons; the latter, the last three of the present series.

In the first division,² we shall have to examine the foundation on which the duty rests, that is, the grounds we have for believing that a seventh portion of our time, now termed the Lord's Day and formerly the Sabbath, is required by Almighty God to be dedicated to his immediate service; and the nature of the objections raised by our opponents. In the second division³ we shall point out the practical duties of the Christian Sabbath, the unspeakable importance of observing them, the evils of the opposite neglect, and the necessity of personal and national repentance, if we would avert the Divine displeasure.

We enter, then, now on the first general branch of the

¹ Butler's Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion.

² Sermons I. II. III. IV.

³ Sermons V. VI. VII.

whole question. Here the points which decidedly establish the divine authority and perpetual force of a weekly day of rest, are ; 1. The institution of it in Paradise ; 2. Its solemn insertion in the decalogue ; 3. The position it holds under the Mosaic law ; 4. the energy with which the prophets insist upon it as one of the primary and universal obligations of religion ; 5. The transfer of it to the Lord's Day by the apostles, who were divinely directed to found the Christian faith, and its observances as such, by all the primitive Christian churches which were immediately instructed by them.

The chief difficulties which our adversaries oppose to these arguments, are ; 1. That there are no vestiges, as they assert, of the observance of a Sabbath in the patriarchal ages—that therefore the narrative of its institution in the book of Genesis is by anticipation ; 2. That it was not established, in fact, till the time of the ceremonial law, and then merely formed a part of that preparatory economy ; 3. That we have no express command for the observation of it, or of any day in lieu of it, in the New Testament ; 4. That our Lord repealed it by his doctrine and conduct, of which the change of the time of its celebration is, as they maintain, a sufficient proof ; and that, finally, 5. The example of the apostles and the primitive Christians gives it only the force of a moral expediency, subject to the regulations of the Christian church, in each following age.

Such is the state of the question. 1. Our opponents proceed on the silence of Scripture during the patriarchal ages : this we shall show to be an unsound argument ; and shall prove that the Sabbath was instituted in Paradise, and revived and re-established in the wilderness.¹ 2. Our opponents insist that it is a ceremonial appointment appended to the Mosaic dispensation : we shall show that it was inserted in the immutable law of the ten commandments before that dispensation began ; that it was exalted during the course of the Mosaic economy above all merely typical institutions, and was en-

¹ Serm. I.

forced by the prophets as of universal obligation.¹ 3. Our adversaries say there is no express command for it under the New Testament, whilst the doctrine and conduct of our Lord virtually repealed it; we shall show that no new statute was to have been expected; and that our Saviour honoured it on all occasions, only vindicating it from uncommanded austerities.² 4. Our opponents consider the change of the day as a proof of its abrogation: we shall maintain, that this was in itself a subordinate point; and took place upon the authority of the Lord of the Sabbath. 5. Finally, the example of the apostles is reduced by our adversaries to a mere commendation of the observance: we shall show it to have a divine obligation derived from the inspiration under which they acted.³

These topics will occupy four sermons.

We shall in the present discourse confine ourselves to
 THE ORIGINAL INSTITUTION OF A WEEKLY SABBATH IN
 PARADISE, AND ITS CONTINUED AUTHORITY TILL THE
 DELIVERY OF THE MORAL LAW.

Our text contains the history of "the first Sabbath."⁴ No sooner were the heavens and the earth finished, and Adam placed in the garden of Eden, than God blessed and set apart, as our text asserts, one day in seven for his own immediate service. He "who knew what was in man," and who had a right to all his obedience and love, was pleased to appoint that six portions of his time should be allowed him for his ordinary labour, and the seventh exclusively devoted to religious repose, and the exalted duties of communion with his Maker.

Every circumstance connected with this first institution is calculated to give us the highest idea of its essential and moral character. The whole controversy hinges here; for the universal obligation of the Sabbath is not disputed, if it be proved that it had its origin in paradise. And how men of gravity could ever persuade themselves

¹ Sermon II.

² Sermon III.

³ Sermon IV.

⁴ The opinion of the venerable translators of the English Bible is manifest, by the above title being given in the contents of the second chapter of Genesis.

that so express a narrative was merely inserted in the chapter in which it is found, by a figure of speech, whilst the Sabbath was never in fact heard of till two thousand five hundred years afterwards ; is one of those unaccountable perversions for which the corruption of man's fallen nature can alone account. The notion of an anticipated history seems first to have been broached by some Jewish doctors, in their zeal to magnify the Mosaical ritual.¹ Their followers in modern times² have only repeated the Jewish quibbles.

It will be proper, however, to proceed in order. Let us show,—I. The direct reasons for believing the Sabbath to have been instituted at the time when the sacred narrative declares. II. That these are not weakened by the silence of scripture during the patriarchal ages. III. And are fully confirmed by the manner in which the Sabbath was revived in the wilderness.

I. The DIRECT REASONS are these. The history of the creation is chronological, unbroken, complete. The transactions of the seventh day immediately follow those of the sixth, precisely as those of the sixth follow the fifth. Each day's work comes in order. This is the plain reason for believing the Sabbath was instituted in paradise. As on the first day the chaotic mass and the light were called into being ; and on the second the firmament was created ; and on the third dry land was made to appear ; and on the fourth the sun and moon were ordained to shine ; and on the fifth the fishes and winged fowl filled their several elements ; and on the sixth the terrestrial animals, and man, the lord of the lower creation, were made : so on the seventh God "ended his work"—"rested from all his work"—and "blessed and sanctified the seventh day, because on it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." These were the transactions of the seventh day, which come as directly in succession after the preceding, as those of any

¹ Dr. John Owen, Exercitations on the Sabbath.

² Archbishop Bramhall was the chief supporter of this notion in the century before last, and Dr. Paley in later times.

of the other days. It is a monstrous presumption, then, to transfer an event thus recorded in a regular series of transactions, to a period two thousand five hundred years after, merely because we think subsequent notices of its observation ought to occur in the history of the patriarchs. We might as well break asunder the links of the history, at any other period, as at this. We might as well suppose that the heavens and the earth were not created, on the days which the sacred history records. We might as well imagine that the sun and moon did not begin to shine as soon as they were made. If the Sabbath was not granted to man at the time which is assigned to it, all is thrown into uncertainty. The whole foundation of faith is overturned by such a process.

If in a plain historical narrative, and especially of a series of successive actions, we are not to believe that the events really occurred as they were affirmed to have occurred, the Bible is no longer a clear and safe guide, but an enigma and a riddle. The plain literal common-sense interpretation of the history of the Scripture is indispensable to faith.

But in the present case we have yet further reasons. The distribution of the work of creation into its parts would be deprived of its object and end, if the institution of the Sabbath is expunged. For why this distribution, but to mark to man the proportion of time allotted him for his usual labour, and the proportion to be assigned to religious exercises? As the narrative stands in the Scripture, all is consistent. The six days' creation, the seventh day's rest, have their relative place. They teach man a great moral and religious lesson. Take away the first Sabbath, and all is left incomplete and detruncated—the object in which it terminates is wanting.

Again, where is the example in Scripture of any instituted commemoration not beginning from the time of its appointment? Did the passover wait two thousand years before it was celebrated, after the deliverance which it was designed to commemorate? Did circumcision under the Old Testament, or baptism and the Lord's Supper under the New, remain in abeyance

for centuries before they were acted upon? And shall the commemoration of the glories of creation be thought to be suspended for more than two thousand years after the occasion on which it was appointed had taken place? And especially as the reason for the celebration existed from the beginning, related to the whole race of mankind as well as to the Jews, and became more and more cogent in the following ages, as sin marred the Almighty's work, and idolatry prevailed in the world.

One is ashamed to urge more arguments in such a case. But I must call your attention to the quotation of this history of the institution of the Sabbath, in the fourth commandment, where the fact is referred to as well known, and is made the reason of the whole statute. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"—"FOR in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it"—where it is to be noted, that the words are not, "the Lord blesses and hallows;" or, "will bless and hallow;" but, "wherefore the Lord BLESSED the Sabbath day, and HALLOWED it," that is, at the time that "he rested" from his work of creation. The whole narrative is repeated, as if to remove all reasonable doubt. Add to this the language of the apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, where he takes for granted that the original rest of the Sabbath began when "the works were finished from the creation of the world."¹ Thus we have the strongest moral certainty that the narrative of the institution of the Sabbath in paradise² is and must be literally interpreted.

¹ Heb. iv. iii.

² The opinion of the Reformers on this subject is uniform. Luther says, "If Adam had continued in innocency, yet he would have had a sacred seventh day." Calvin, "God therefore first rested and then blessed this rest, that it might be sacred in all ages amongst men; he dedicated every seventh day to rest, that his own example might be a perpetual rule.—When we are told that Christ abolishes the Sabbath, a distinction must be made between the figures of the old law and that which re-

But it is further objected, that, ‘allowing this account to be in its natural place, it contains no enactment of a Sabbath—it states merely that God blessed and hallowed the seventh day, but for what purposes it does not affirm.’

But we ask in reply, what is the meaning of the word sanctify, when applied to a portion of our time—for whose use did the Almighty bless and hallow the seventh day—what is the meaning of God’s saying that he “rested and was refreshed after the six days’ work”—what instruction do we derive from the division of creation into six portions, followed by a seventh of repose? Were not all these done for the sake of man, the reasonable, intelligent creature of the great Artificer? Did the Almighty rest for his own sake, or bless and hallow the seventh day, that he within himself might observe it? Unreasonable, if not impious, are such suppositions. God’s working six days and resting the seventh, were clearly designed to be of general and universal use in determining the proportion of time to be severally devoted to human and divine duties—by them the conduct of mankind was to be regulated—by them God intended to teach man that he should, after his Maker’s example, work six days, and then rest and hallow the next following—that he should sanctify every seventh day—that the space between rest and rest, between one hallowed time and another, among his creatures here upon earth, should be six days.¹ And indeed there is no other sense in which the word “sanctified” is used in the Old Testament, when employed with respect to inanimate things, or to persons fulfilling an office or function. Thus the priests, the taberna-

lates to the perpetual regulation of our lives.—What refers to the command given to man from the beginning to consecrate the day to the worship of God, continues in force to the end of the world.” Beza says, that “the day of the Sabbath continued from the creation of the world to the resurrection of our Lord, when it was at length changed by the apostles into the Lord’s day.” I need not go on.

¹ J. Edwards.

cle, the furniture, the days of fasting and penitence, &c. were declared to be sanctified, when they were separated from common employments, and set apart for the especial service of God. This is the uniform import of the term. When it is said, therefore, that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, it means that he set it apart and consecrated it for religious rest, and annexed the promise of his special blessing to the discharge of its duties. It can mean nothing else; common sense requires it.

And this meaning is rendered certain by the exposition of our text in the fourth commandment, where the minute injunctions with regard to the Sabbath expressly repose upon the words before us, which it cites and explains. The fourth commandment is nothing more than the terms of the first institution enlarged.

The objections to the received faith of the church on the institution of the Sabbath in paradise, you see, are weak and nugatory. They have not even a shadow of proof. Not one person in a million of those who read the sacred narrative, would ever dream that it was an anticipated history, or that it did not imply a most decisive command to keep holy the day of rest.

Here, then, we fix our foot. Now let us pause, and draw from these facts some of THE JUST INFERENCES which arise from them as to the glory and dignity of the Sabbath.

We learn from them, first, its ESSENTIAL NECESSITY to man as man. Though Adam was in a state of innocence, his all-wise Creator saw it necessary to call him off from even the moderate and gentle labour of dressing and keeping the garden, to the immediate contemplations and exercises of religion. Adam loved God "with all his heart and soul and mind and strength"—he required no season of repose to withdraw his mind from the eagerness of worldly pursuits, in the sense in which we require it, nor to recreate his body from excessive toil—and yet the Sabbath was necessary for him. Judge from this of its essential moral character. Judge from this how indispensable it is to fallen man,

with that propensity to earthly things which now weighs down his soul, and that aversion and enmity to communion with a holy God which sin has superinduced.

Consider, further, that it was the FIRST COMMAND given by God to Adam, as soon as ever the work of creation was finished. Man never was without a Sabbath. The moment there was a creature formed capable of knowing and serving God, a special time was assigned for that end. The Sabbath is coeval with the human race. It takes precedence of the prohibition of the tree of knowledge. It rests on the essential relation of a creature with his glorious Creator.

Observe, further, that this command was not merely made known to man, in some of those ways in which his Maker afterwards communicated his will; but it WAS PLACED, AS IT WERE, ON THE FOOTING OF CREATION ITSELF. By the Almighty hand all nature might have been called into being in an instant. The distribution of the work over six days, followed by the repose on the seventh, was to infix this grand principle in the mind of every human being, that after six days' labour, one day of religious rest should follow. God worked in a certain order, that man might work in the same; God rested at a certain time, that man might rest likewise. In this glorious manner is the law of the Sabbath graphically set forth; this is the distinction which crowns the Queen of days. We have already noticed the proof this furnishes of the Sabbath having been instituted at the time assigned in the sacred story; but we now deduce from it the importance and dignity of the appointment itself. It is an appointment not written merely by inspired men, not merely graven on tables of stone, not indented in "lead on the rock for ever," not uttered in the first instance from the summit of the mount by the voice of the Almighty and amidst the thunders and terrors of Sinai—but infixed in the creative order of the universe, inscribed on the heavens and earth, exhibited in the radiant character of the six days' work, associated with every commemoration of the wisdom and glory of God,

promulgated with the majesty of the example of the great Lord of all—and therefore REQUIRING NO SUBSEQUENT ENACTMENTS, except to incorporate it with the various dispensations of religion, and revive it when forgotten, that it may go on and accompany man so long as he continues upon earth.

We learn also, from this order of creation, that man was made, not for constant and unrelieved employment, or for earthly pursuits chiefly, but FOR LABOUR WITH INTERVALS OF REPOSE, and IN SUBORDINATION TO THE GLORY OF HIS GOD: man was formed not for seven days' toil, but for six—man was formed not for secular and terrestrial pursuits merely, but for the high purpose of honouring God, meditating on his works, and preparing for the enjoyment of him for ever. The essential nature of the institution obviously lies in the proportion of time fixed by his beneficent and all-wise Creator—for his body six days' labour, for his soul one day of religious rest: and this corresponds with his compound nature—his intellectual and moral part calling him up to the exalted and delightful offices of religion, and his bodily and animal part requiring recreation and repose. The Sabbath is the spiritual badge and charter of man.

What a dignity, then—what an importance—what an obligation attaches to this sacred day! Well may it be admitted by our chief opponent, that if the divine command was actually delivered at the creation, it was “no doubt addressed to the whole human species alike, and continues, unless repealed by some subsequent revelation, binding upon all who come to the knowledge of it.”³

II. Let us next show, that these arguments are NOT WEAKENED BY THE SILENCE of Scripture during the patriarchal ages. For it is upon this assumption that the idea of an anticipated narrative is founded. “There are no vestiges, not a single allusion,” say our opponents, “of the knowledge of a sabbatical rest, till the Mosaical

¹ Paley.

law ; and therefore the account in the book of Genesis is by prolepsis.”

We allow that there are no express notices of a weekly Sabbath as observed by the patriarchs. We allow that the details given us of the lives of Abraham and Jacob are without any direct declaration on the subject. That there are allusions and vestiges we shall presently show. But we admit the difficulty so far as the objection is founded. But what does this amount to, even supposing it be conceded in all its extent ? Would the loss of the original law of the Sabbath for two thousand five hundred years, amidst the corruption of mankind after the fall, prove that no such law had been enacted at the creation ? The original law of marriage was lost during a much longer period, but was it the less re-asserted by our Saviour, as the primary and binding appointment of the Almighty ? But we admit not that the observation of the Sabbath was wholly forgotten during this period. The objection can at most only rest on the SILENCE of Scripture. Now to argue from that silence, after an express institution, is most unfair and most injurious to the interests of revelation. An objection derived from things not being expressly mentioned so often as we might please to expect, is wholly inconclusive. No mention is made of sacrifices from the time of Abel till the deluge, a period of fifteen hundred years, nor from the arrival of Jacob at Beersheba¹ till the deliverance from Egypt, a space of two or three hundred more ; but does this prove that sacrifices were not offered ? We read nothing about circumcision from the death of Moses to the days of Jeremiah, an interval of eight centuries ; but does any one imagine that circumcision was not performed ? No mention of the Sabbath occurs in the histories of the books of Joshua, Ruth, first and second Samuel, and first of Kings, which are so much more detailed than those of Genesis ; and yet this was during the Mosaical law, when the institution was confessedly in its fullest vigour. The ordinance of the red heifer, again, is

¹ Gen. xlv. 1.

never once noticed from the period of the Pentateuch till the close of the Old Testament; but the apostle refers to it, and argues from it in the New, as a rite well known, and in constant use. Even in the book of Psalms and in the Prophets, the Sabbath is seldom expressly mentioned, except when the neglect of it provoked the indignation of the Almighty.

So little force is there in the objection, even allowing it all it demands. It is not for us to prescribe to the Almighty how often, or under what circumstances, any of his commands should be repeated. It is enough for us to know, with regard to the Sabbath, that it was instituted in the most solemn manner. From this we may justly infer, that the observation of it was never wholly lost amongst the descendants of Seth, and in the line of Abraham, and the other patriarchs; though the celebration of it is not expressly recorded. It is thus we deduce from the continual offering of sacrifices, that that institution was divinely appointed, though we have no express mention of that appointment. The cases, indeed, of sacrifice and of the Sabbath are in one respect similar. The record is not complete: but we infer what is wanting from what is expressly stated. Of sacrifice, the celebration by the patriarchs after the deluge is perpetually recorded, though we have no direct account of its institution. Of the Sabbath, the original law is distinctly given, though the continued observance by the patriarchs is not expressly mentioned. If objections are urged on the ground of these omissions, it is surely permitted to us to reply, that from the celebration of sacrifices by Abel and the patriarchs, we justly infer its divine appointment: and from the glorious and singular institution of the Sabbath, its subsequent observance by the holy seed.¹

But we are proceeding too long upon the concession that there are no traces in Scripture of a weekly rest, from the creation to the time of Moses. For in truth there are traces, faint, perhaps, if taken by themselves and separated from the first record of the institution in

¹ Owen.

paradise, but sufficiently discernible in that connexion, for the purpose of rebutting a mere objection.

The very first act of divine worship after the fall affords some indication of a day of religion. Cain and Abel brought their offerings "in process of time," as the common reading¹ has it, but literally, and as it is in the margin, "at the end of the days." Read the whole account in the sacred narrative. There you have the priest, altar, matter of sacrifice, motive, atonement made and accepted, and appointed time—indications these entirely consistent with the supposition of a previous sabbatical institution, and indeed proceeding upon it, if that is the meaning of the expression, "at the end of the days." And as only one division of days had been mentioned, that of the days of the week, the Sabbath being the last or seventh of them—the end of them—we may reasonably suppose that holy season to be here termed "the end of the days."

We come to the flood. Sixteen centuries have elapsed since the institution of the weekly rest. And now we find the reckoning by weeks familiarly referred to as the ordinary division of time. The Lord said unto Noah, "Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth." And again, "it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." These passages occur in the seventh chapter. Then in the next, when the flood is decreasing, Noah sent out a dove, which returned; he then stayed "yet other seven days," and again sent it forth. And again in the same terms, "And he stayed yet other seven days," and "sent forth the dove out of the ark for the third time, which returned not again to him any more."² Surely here are vestiges by no means doubtful, not only that days were reckoned by portions of seven, but that the use of that method of calculation was familiar in the line of the patriarchs. Nothing can be more certain than that the return of seven days brought something peculiar with it; and

¹ English translation.

² Gen. vii. 4, 10; viii. 10, 12.

we judge it probable, from the institution of the Sabbath, that the peculiarity was the day of sacred rest.

Accordingly after the flood, the tradition of that division of time spread over all the eastern world—Assyrians, Egyptians, Indians, Arabians, Persians, unite with the Israelites in retaining vestiges of it. In the earliest remains of the heathen writers, Hesiod, Homer, Callimachus—the sanctity of the seventh day is referred to as a matter of notoriety. Philo, the Jew, declares that there was no nation under heaven where the opinion had not reached. The days of festival solemnities among the heathen had in all probability this source. Indeed, as the obscure notices of the original state of man, of the fall, of sacrifices, of the deluge, were scattered amongst the remotest nations, so also faint traces of a weekly religious rest are discernible. The very number seven, in Hebrew and the kindred languages, is expressed by a word which primarily signifies fulness, completion, sufficiency; and was probably applied to a week, because that was the space occupied in fully completing the work of creation.

But we come to the history of Abraham. Here it is deserving notice, that the rite of circumcision was to be performed after the lapse of seven days from the birth. But again, the commendation of Abraham, “That he would command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment,” implies that there was a way prescribed by the Almighty, and certain observances in which consisted justice and judgment. The Sabbath was probably amongst them. But in the more full declaration afterwards made concerning him to Isaac; “That Abraham obeyed his voice, and kept his charge, his commandments, his statutes, and his laws;” the terms employed are so various, as to be by no means naturally interpreted of the ordinance of circumcision,¹ but to include, with the highest probability, the “charge and law” of the Sabbath.

¹ Gen. xvii. 12; xviii. 19; xxvi. 5.

In the history of Jacob, few, I think, can doubt, that when he uttered the devout exclamation, "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven;" and then vowed that the "stone should be God's house"—he alluded to the worship of God in a stated place, and on a stated time; without which "a house of God" would be a term of little meaning; but with which it would indeed be the pledge and anticipation of heaven. Even Laban seems to have had the notion of a weekly division of time; "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also."¹ But I will not dwell on more particulars. The numerous, the almost perpetual notices of places, of altars, of sacrifices, of the worship of God, of solemn titles given to particular spots, all confirm the supposition, which is the only reasonable one, that the sabbatical institution was not unknown to the patriarchs. We may notice the case of holy Job as confirming this, who, remote as was the place of his abode, more than once reminds us of "a day, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord."²

So utterly gratuitous is the assumption that the observation of a day of religious worship was unknown to the patriarchs. Probably the very notoriety of the institution might be one cause why the sacred historian judged it unnecessary to dwell on particular recurrences of its observance. At all events, the mere silence of Scripture afterwards, can never be fairly alleged against the previous institution of the Sabbath in paradise, when even the admission that the patriarchs had actually lost the traces, or neglected the celebration of it, would have had no such consequence.

Doubtless, as time rolled on, and particularly during centuries of bondage in Egypt, the memory of this primeval ordinance became faint, and the observation of it by the enslaved people almost impracticable. But it does not appear to have been even then wholly forgotten. For we observe, that,

¹ Gen. xxix. 27.

² Job i. 10; ii. 11.

III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH WAS REVIVED AND RE-ESTABLISHED BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MOSAICAL ECONOMY, proves that it was a previous institution, which had never been entirely lost; and therefore confirms all we stated of its origin in paradise, and its continuance during the patriarchal ages. An interval of two thousand five hundred years had elapsed since the fall, eight or nine hundred years had passed since the flood, and more than four hundred since the call of Abraham. Two centuries of captivity in Egypt had also reduced the religious knowledge of the people of Israel to the lowest ebb. If, therefore, the authority of the Sabbath survived this last stage of bondage, we may fairly conclude that it had not perished in any of the preceding periods. Mark the history. The manna is announced; a double portion is promised on a certain day. But in what terms? "It shall come to pass that on the next day they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."¹ Here is no express mention of the Sabbath, nor any reason assigned why they should find a double portion on the sixth day. But the reason was known—the reference was intelligible. The language is not that of one delivering a new precept, but restoring an old and well-known, though neglected one. Accordingly, Moses, in explaining the fact, speaks of the Sabbath as not effaced from the memory of the people. "This is that which the Lord had said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord your God." What had the Lord said?—nothing directly about the Sabbath; but the allusion to the division of time into six working days was enough—the Sabbath was known to follow them. If similar terms were employed in any modern act of parliament, every one would understand that it referred to some previously existing statute or custom, of which the knowledge was not altogether lost.

And thus the restoration of the Sabbath before the Mosaical law seems designed to link the Patriarchal

¹ Exodus xvi.

with the Jewish day of rest; it proves that the first had not been altogether obliterated, and it shows that the second was founded on a law of primeval and universal obligation; whilst the miracle of the manna on each Sabbath clearly points out the importance attached by Almighty God to the institution.

On what particular day of the seven this renewed rest was first celebrated, we cannot, perhaps, determine. The stress of the commandment lies on the proportion of time in the order of creation. The exact computation of weeks from the first institution had in all probability been lost; and the new calculation, we may conjecture, dated from the day of the deliverance from Egypt, as the commencement of the year undoubtedly did. Thus the redemption of Israel may have fixed the particular day for reckoning the series of Sabbaths then; as a greater redemption did at the introduction of a more glorious era.

But we pause. Our inquiries have hitherto been successful. All is consistent. The grandeur of creation gave an impulse and projection to the law of the Sabbath, which human corruption was unable to efface, even before Moses arose to recall men to the purity of religion, and the hope of future redemption. In the line of the patriarchs faint traces of it are discernible. The intervening re-enactment, before the ceremonial economy, unites the patriarchal and Jewish day of rest; and, by the very reference, confirms us in the faith of the positive fact of a previous institution.

I. Let us then, first, in applying this part of our subject, observe THE EXTREME VIOLENCE WHICH IS DONE TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, when any important fact in the Scriptures, such as the institution of the Sabbath in paradise, is attempted to be explained away by the fancy of man. The authors of such novelties think little of the consequences of what they are about. The thought is suggested by some rash person or other. It is strange, it is new, attractive—this commends it. The men are ingenious—they can write—they can defend

the monstrous supposition. The great body of the church, at first, despise the perversion ; but the young are injured. In an inquisitive age, half-knowledge prevails. The human heart is too much disinclined to spiritual religion, not to catch at any plea for neglecting the day of divine worship. Thus the evil spreads. The original author was not deeply penetrated with that reverence for revelation as the communication of the will of God, which forbids rash innovation—was not, perhaps, conscious that the foundation of all faith is overturned, if the plain, straight-forward interpretation of historical passages is exchanged for conjecture, hypothesis, inventions of an anticipated narrative. But what can be so mischievous ? Such daring criticism, like a magic wand, can make every truth and every fact of the Bible change their places and import. Indeed, this same kind of ingenuity denies the fact of the fall of man, calls in question the existence of evil spirits, doubts the temptation of our Lord, and goes on to question the truth of the Mosaic or Christian miracles. Thus all faith soon disappears ; for it is but another step in the same process to deny the corruption of our nature by the fall, the divinity and atonement of Christ, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the truth of our regeneration by that blessed Spirit, and of spiritual religion altogether. Thus the peculiar revelation of the Bible is gone—and yet we call ourselves Christians.

We must resist this fatal poison. To say that the narrative of the institution of the Sabbath in paradise is put out of its place, is a violence to faith. This is enough. When the difficulty is first started, the mind of the Christian may perhaps tremble at it—he may suppose that he cannot easily demonstrate that the assertion is groundless. But he can demonstrate it. TO CHANGE THE ORDER OF A SERIES OF EVENTS IN A SCRIPTURAL NARRATIVE, WITHOUT EXPRESS AUTHORITY, IS A VIOLENCE TO THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF ALL BELIEF IN REVELATION. This is a moral demonstration : no mere hypothesis ought to stand for a moment against it.

And more especially should we speak with this decision in respect to so fundamental a fact as the entire scheme and glory of creation, the whole design and proportion of divine wisdom in the order of the six days' work, the primary distribution of time into its proportions for the use of man;—that first prodigious act, on which the subsequent parts of revelation hang for their consistency and force. And this disposed of by a mere assumption!—the fact transposed from the period of creation, to a distance of two or three thousand years, without an intimation in the narrative itself, against all the laws of interpretation, and to supply a necessity which, after all, is found not to exist! Such a conduct is portentous.

Let us cleave, then, to the foundation of all faith in the various other facts of revelation, by adhering to this; and let us cultivate more and more that humility, that submission of heart to God, that restraint of human curiosity and presumption, in which the essence of faith so much consists. It is the wrong state of heart which is the hot-bed where these pernicious notions are generated. Let the heart delight in the divine worship; let the heart meditate on the divine perfections in Christ Jesus with holy complacency; let the heart rejoice in God as its happiness, and such errors will not readily find entertainment. I vindicate the first Sabbath, that I may lead you to celebrate with more devotion every other. I resist with indignation the attempt to sap the institution of it in paradise, that I may lead you to a due contemplation of the glories of creation, as often as the day returns.

II. Yes, come with me, before we close this discourse, and LET US ADORE AND PRAISE THE ALMIGHTY FATHER OF ALL FOR THE DISTINCT GLORIES SHED UPON the day of religious repose. Come and praise him for condescending to imprint its first enactment, and the reasons on which it is grounded, on the six days' creative wonders. I am persuaded, that the first Sabbath is not enough magnified. We are familiar with the

tenor of the simple and sublime narrative from our infancy. Our hearts are cold to devotion; objections poison our first feelings. Enter more into the dignity of that day, for the institution of which all days were formed. Imbibe the exalted spirit of that portion of time, to encircle and ennoble which all other portions took their place, as courtiers around the queen and mistress of days. No other command of God has the peculiarity of this; no other institution, no other service, no other ordinance of religion, has, or can have, the majesty blazing around it, which illuminates the day of God. Come, glorify your God and Father. He bids you rest, but it is after his own example. He bids you labour, but it is after his pattern. Imitate the supreme Architect. Work in the order in which he worked, cease when he was pleased to cease. Let the day of religion, after each six days' toil, be to you a blessed and a sanctified season. Plead the promise attached to the Sabbath: it is blessed of God, it is sanctified of God, it is hallowed of God. Implore forgiveness of your past neglect. Let no Sabbath henceforth pass over you, without your having sought the blessings it promises, and performed the duties to which it is dedicated. Let your devout meditation on the glories of creation swell the choir of your Maker's praise. Join "the sons of God" in their joys and songs at the birth of the universe.¹ Adore the kindness and benevolence of the Almighty, in interposing one day's repose after every six, between the toil, and confusion, and passions, and secularity of this world's duties. Bless your Redeemer and Saviour for preserving some traces of this most ancient of institutions amidst the patriarchal ages, to remind us of our greater privileges, (as we shall see in the subsequent discourses,) now that we have the ten commandments again promulgating its divine obligation; the prophets enforcing its observance; the blessed Jesus vindicating its gracious simplicity; the Apostles and the universal church handing down to us its sacred obligations. Yes, let the brighter

¹ Job xxxviii. 17; Prov. viii. 23—31.

day of the gospel guide our feet to that sacred season, which was first consecrated in paradise; which was then surrounded, for a time, with the garb of figurative observances; which was afterwards restored to its simple and original design by our Saviour; and which stands the pledge and foretaste of the heavenly state. Yes, the Sabbath stretches through all ages; affects all men in every period of time; distinguishes the true servants of God from the wicked, more than any other ordinance; upholds the visible profession of religion before the eyes of mankind; keeps up the face and aspect of Christianity in the world; is the most direct honour that a man can pay to the name and will of the ever-blessed God; and will never cease in its authority here, till our Sabbaths on earth give place to that eternal Sabbath of which they are the pledge, the preparation, the end.

SERMON II.

THE AUTHORITY AND DIGNITY OF THE SABBATH UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES.

EXODUS xx. 8—11.

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: 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 Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

WE have proved that the Sabbath was instituted in paradise, by adhering simply to the inspired record. We have also silenced the objection raised on the supposed absence of any vestiges of its observance till the time of Moses. We come now to consider the position which it held under the ceremonial dispensation. And here the objection to its divine authority and obligation rests on its being merely a ceremonial and temporary appointment, which lost its force with the economy which gave it birth. This difficulty has already been virtually removed. For if the narration in the book of Genesis is correctly given; if the patriarchs cannot be proved to

have neglected the divine command; and if at the deliverance from Egypt, Moses clearly referred to it as not effaced from the memory of the people; then the Sabbath did not owe its birth to the ceremonial law, and cannot have ceased by the abrogation of it. But this is little. As we not only answered the objection advanced against the patriarchal Sabbath, but triumphantly established its essential dignity and perpetuity from the glory cast upon it by the order of creation; so we hope, not merely to refute the present objection, but to draw from the law of Moses copious materials for confirming all our preceding arguments, and for placing in a yet stronger light the immutable obligation of the day of weekly rest.

We assert, then, I. that from the very commencement of the Mosaical economy, the fourth command was incorporated in the moral law; II. that when the ceremonial usages were in their greatest vigour, the Sabbath appeared high and distinct above them; and III. that in the latter ages of the Jewish church, it was insisted on by the prophets as of essential moral obligation, and as about to form a part of the gospel dispensation.

I. The insertion of the law of the Sabbath into the decalogue confirms all we have already advanced, and affords the most decisive proof of its perpetual force. If there were nothing else in the whole Bible, this would be enough to satisfy the humble Christian. The fourth commandment is just as binding as any of the remaining nine. There it is, a part of the moral law of God! If the attempt to feign an anticipated history was proved to be an invasion on the first principles of faith; the endeavour to displace the fourth commandment is AN OPEN INVASION OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES BOTH OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE. For everything conspires to cast an importance around the ten commandments peculiar to themselves.

Consider the BROAD LINE OF DEMARCATION between them and the ceremonial usages. The decalogue is a summary of all those dictates of the love of God

and man, which were written upon the heart of Adam before the fall. These commands were kept, in substance, by the patriarchs before they were reduced to a code. They are the eternal rules of right and wrong, resting on the authoritative will of God, and arising from the essential relations in which man stands to his Creator, and his fellow-creatures. They are the standard of human obedience, the transcript of the divine holiness. The unchanging authority of these precepts is the foundation of all religion, the rule of domestic life, the bond of civil government, the grand tie and security of human society. Between these and the ceremonial usages there is a vast interval. The judicial and ceremonial law was temporary, of positive enactment, for a time and for certain purposes only; had no existence before its express appointment; derived all its force from something substantial and glorious, of which it was the shadow; and was swept away and abrogated when the more perfect dispensation appeared. All its enactments therefore were WITHOUT the boundary of the moral law, not WITHIN it; within that boundary nothing was abolished when Christ came; without it, everything. Within it all was eternal and immutable; without it, all was temporary and changeable. No confusion is made by any considerate Christian on this subject. The conscience of man, when duly informed, responds to every one of the moral commands. The additional motives appended to some of them, arising from the circumstances of the Jews, affect not their universal authority. The particular redemption from Egypt, the length of days attached to filial obedience, the punishment of idolatry visited on the third and fourth generation, and the mercies to thousands promised to the keepers of the divine law,¹ in no respect change the main, grand, distinctive foundations of moral obligation on which the commandments themselves repose. These constitute a code or

¹ Even these are, in their comprehensive and typical import, of perpetual force—in the redemption of Christ, the spiritual blessing on filial obedience, &c.

book of laws which stands distinct and separate from all others, which is divided into two tables, and has been known in all ages as the "Ten Commandments," or "The Decalogue;" just as the books of Scripture are distinguished from other books by the name of "The Bible."

Now, of these ten commands **THE LAW OF THE SABBATH IS ONE.** Whatever authority any have, that authority is possessed by this. Whatever obligation the first, the second, the third, or any others carry with them, the same obligation carries with it the fourth. If men are bound in every age and under all dispensations to acknowledge only one God,² to worship him, not with graven images, but in spirit and in truth,³ to reverence the divine name,⁴ to obey their parents,⁵ to abstain from murder,⁶ adultery,⁷ theft,⁸ false witness,⁹ concupiscence,¹⁰ they are equally bound to consecrate a Sabbath to their Maker's service, after six days of ordinary labour and toil.¹¹ This proportion of time had been made known to man in paradise, and exhibited in the very order of creation. The natural and essential duty, therefore, of devoting some time to the worship of God, being thus expounded by a revelation of what that time should be, the whole stands a moral and unchanging rule of man's obedience. As the first command fixes **THE OBJECT** of worship, and the second the **MEANS**, and the third **THE REVERENTIAL MANNER**, so the fourth determines **THE TIME.** And as the preceding commands are founded in the real relations of things, and made clear to us by the authoritative will of God, so the fourth is founded on the real relation of things, and made clear to us by the authoritative will of God. The only difference is, that the other commands, requiring no limitation of time, were more obvious in all their parts to the consciences of men, whilst this depended, from the very nature of the case,

² 1st commandment.³ 2nd.⁴ 3rd.⁵ 5th.⁶ 6th.⁷ 7th.⁸ 8th.⁹ 9th.¹⁰ 10th.¹¹ 4th.

upon the revelation of God's will as to the exact proportion of time to be consecrated to his service. The authority of that appointment, however, when once made known, is as inviolable as any of the others. The fourth commandment is an integral part of the moral law.

And now let us advert to THE TENOR of this fourth precept. It is unlike the rest; it is more detailed, more explicit; it extends to more classes of persons, and is sustained by more reasons. Its introduction also is different. Instead of a mere injunction or prohibition, it refers to a preceding enactment "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" as if on purpose to connect the law of the Sabbath in paradise with its republication at the solemn establishment of the Mosaical dispensation—a design which is made yet more apparent at the close of the commandment, by the citation of the reason given, and of the blessing and sanctification attached to the institution of the Almighty when he first granted a day of rest to man at his creation.

Nor is THE PLACE which this fourth precept occupies in the decalogue to be overlooked. It is the last of the first table of the law, and prepares for the second. It is the keeper and guardian of the preceding commands, and the preparation for the following. It makes the three first precepts practicable. For after faith in one God, worship to him, and reverence for his name, it prescribes the time in which this pure worship of the only true God is to be celebrated, the persons who are to unite in it, and the interruption to all ordinary labours without which it cannot be performed. So that as the tenth commandment shuts up the second table, and reduces, as it were, its injunctions to practice, by forbidding that concupiscence which would infallibly lead to their violation; so the fourth accomplishes the first table by assigning the time and season when its injunctions may be fulfilled.

We must not pass unnoticed, also, that the whole moral law, held together, as it were, by the fourth of its precepts, WAS PUBLISHED BEFORE THE CEREMONIAL

ENACTMENTS of Moses. It stands, not in the midst of the ceremonies, but distinct and separate from them. The Mosaical law did not, properly speaking, begin till after these primary rules of obedience, which man had almost lost through the corruption of his nature and the lapse of time, were restored by a solemn republication.

Nor can it be said with truth, that the law of the Sabbath is merely of a ceremonial nature because **THE STRICTNESS OF ITS OBSERVATION WAS RELAXED UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT.** For even allowing the case to be so ; a change in the tone and spirit of observing some branches of a commandment, springing from a more benignant dispensation, affects not its fundamental moral authority. The tone and spirit of filial obedience is changed under the Gospel, but the fifth commandment remains. So as to the second commandment. But we deny the fact, in the sense in which it is affirmed, as to the law of the Sabbath. The ceremonial and judicial enactments which were afterwards connected with it, form no part of the fourth commandment, the tenor of which was always intended to be interpreted according to the merciful construction which our Saviour put upon it, against the uncommanded comments of the Jewish doctors. The prohibition of doing any work never included, nor was intended to include, acts of real necessity and mercy. The whole moral bearing of this command is just as entire now, as the whole moral bearing of any other of the divine code. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," was an axiom of the Mosaic as well as the Christian economy, as will be seen in our next discourse.

It is painful to have occasion to say so much on so plain a case ; and nothing but the great importance of the subject would warrant such detail. The fourth command, then, is not displaced from its station, nor weakened in its authority by the objection we have been considering. On the contrary, every aspect in which it is viewed, heightens our conception of the dignity which it derives, equally with the rest, from the broad line of demarcation which separates it from the merely ceremonial observances.

And now we must go on to consider **THE SOLEMNI-**

TIES WHICH ATTENDED THE PROMULGATION OF THE MORAL LAW, of which the fourth command is so distinguished a part. These differed from the majesty which accompanied the first institution of the day of rest in Eden. Then it was enregistered in the bold and legible characters of the six days' order of creation; whilst the written record was brief and general. Now it is surrounded, in common with the remaining elementary branches of duty, with those traits of visible glory, that awful voice of words, that detailed record, that reference to a preceding enactment, those reasons of universal application, which, after a lapse of two thousand five hundred years, were best adapted to explain its import, and ensure human obedience in all future periods of time. The moral law stands singular and alone, amidst the revelations made to Moses. The other communications were by more ordinary and usual means; the ten commandments by the immediate voice of God. The other parts of the Jewish economy were conveyed by calm impressions; this by thunderings and lightnings, and attendant angels, and the trembling mount, and the darkness, and all the terrors at which Moses "exceedingly feared and quaked." Recall to mind the solemn scene, that you may imbibe the full dignity of all the precepts of the moral law, and of the sabbatical amongst the number. Hear; the trumpet sounds, and the voice of words is uttered. See; no one but the holy prophet may approach—"if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it is stoned, or thrust through with a dart." Behold; two tables of stone are prepared by the Almighty himself. Upon these the finger of God inscribes "The Ten Commandments," and ADD-ETH NO MORE. The tables are broken by Moses as he descends from the mount—and, lo, the law is rewritten on second tables with the same hand; and is finally deposited, not with the rest of the Mosaic statutes, but separate and alone, within the ark of the covenant. Can any circumstances impress us with a more awful sense of the singular importance of every precept? Can anything more distinguish and elevate the moral and perpetual, above the temporary and ceremonial

law—and separate and single out the decalogue, in point of dignity and prominence, from all other enactments? The whole Bible contains nothing so peculiar and majestic, as this introduction to this new dispensation. Where is the man that would venture to lessen the number of the commandments? Where is the man that, from ten, will presume to reduce them to nine? Where is the professed Christian that will expunge the command that happens most to militate against the corrupt practices of mankind? Where is the man that will obliterate the very precept, which so immediately respects the honour of God and the glory offered to his name?—which, standing in the very heart of the code, binds its injunctions together, and gives strength and consistence to the whole?

I conceive it is impossible for simple-minded Christians to consider these things, and not to see at once the marked distinction between the shadow and types of a particular dispensation, and the eternal rules of right and wrong. Their prayer, I am persuaded, will continue to be, as to each particular commandment, and as to the fourth no less than the others, “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law;” and as to the entire series, without exception or difference, “Lord, write all these thy laws on our hearts, we beseech thee.”¹

II. But we proceed to show, that even when the CEREMONIAL USAGES WERE IN THEIR GREATEST VIGOUR, THE SABBATH APPEARED HIGH AND DISTINCT ABOVE THEM.

For the law of the weekly rest passes through the Mosaic dispensation. It will be important, then, to show its position during this part of its course. It entered this economy, or rather preceded it, by the promulgation of the moral law, of whose majesty and perpetuity it partakes. It now, however, receives additional rules and appendages, which attend it during the continuance of the Mosaic dispensation. But it is remarkable that these ceremonial enactments are no part of the

¹ Liturgy of the Church of England.

essential law of the Sabbath as inserted in the decalogue; and that even during the greatest vigour and first observance of them, the moral obligation of the day of weekly rest lifts up its head high and distinct above them. These are the points which we have here to prove.

For the Sabbath is now a part of that preparatory dispensation, and is attired, as it were, with robes of state and ceremony during that period. Two lambs are offered on its weekly return, beside the usual burnt-offering; the shew-bread is renewed on the golden table; the ministers of the temple enter on their courses; other times of holy solemnity are instituted, and included under the general name of Sabbaths; its external rest is enforced with temporal sanctions; the presumptuous violator of it is subjected to the punishment of death; it is constituted a sign of the national covenant, and is enjoined as a public protest against idolatry; finally, the spirit of bondage and condemnation lowers over this part, as over every other, of the introductory economy of Moses.

Here, then, for the first time, we perceive and recognise the features of a ceremonial Sabbath. Many commandments of the decalogue, and the fourth amongst the number, are now invested with temporary statutes, as "shadows of good things to come," or parts of the peculiar theocracy of the Jews.

But the essential moral character of each precept of the decalogue loses none of its force by these additional ceremonies and judicial statutes. The sin of worshipping any but the one true God, remains just as great, after all the numerous enactments peculiar to the Jews. The sin of making graven images, of taking God's name in vain, of disobeying parents, of committing murder, adultery, theft, of bearing false witness, of coveting the goods of our neighbour, are precisely the same violations of the immutable rules of right and wrong, as before the temporary enactments which affected the chosen people. In like manner, the fourth commandment is unaltered in its essential injunction of a periodical religious rest for the

service of God, though it is associated with many temporary and figurative appendages. Nothing can be clearer than this. The principle is admitted with regard to nine of the commandments, and can never be fairly refused as to the tenth.

And accordingly not one of these ceremonial and civil statutes is incorporated in the ten commandments themselves—not one is written with the finger of God—not one is found on the consecrated tables—not one is deposited within the ark of the covenant. They are all delivered afterwards, in another form, with other views, and to occupy another station.

But let us go on and follow the Sabbath as it passes through the ceremonial dispensation. It might, indeed, have pleased God, that it should have been entirely shrouded by this dispensation during its continuance. It would then have lost none of its original force, and we should merely have had to resume our consideration of it, after it had been disembarrassed from the emblematical ceremonies. But this is not the state of the case. The Sabbath lifts up its head high above all the ceremonial usages, even in the Pentateuch itself, and during the full vigour of the introductory economy.

For first, after the record of the promulgation of the decalogue, three chapters of judicial statutes follow ; but in the midst of these, the people are reminded of the essential importance of the Sabbath, in a manner quite distinct and peculiar. It is associated with the primary duty of worshipping the one true God, as being of equal obligation, and indeed necessary to it. “Six days shalt thou do thy work, and on the seventh thou shalt rest in all things that I have said unto thee, be circumspect, and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.”¹ This is sufficiently remarkable.

Again, after six chapters more concerning the tabernacle and its various services and sacrifices, the whole communication of the forty days’ abode on the mount is concluded with a re-inculcation of the Sabbath-rest,

¹ Exod. xxiii. 12, 13.

in a manner the most solemn and affecting. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, 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 DOTHT 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 and work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. 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."¹ Can anything give dignity to the sacred day as founded in the essential relation of man to his Maker and Redeemer, if this sublime language does not? Every idea of sanctification, every sense of importance from a sign of a covenant between God and man, every sanction derived from the awful punishment of death, unite to impress upon us the duty; whilst the proportion noted between the working days and the day of rest, and the reason drawn from the order of creation, extend the obligation to every human being.

In the following two chapters we have as many additional recapitulations, with fresh cautions. The book of Exodus closes. The enactments concerning sacrifices and purifications are, however, no sooner despatched in the following book, than we meet with a passage in which one commandment of the second table of the moral law, and two of the first, are united with the fourth commandment as of equal obligation, and this as a matter well known and requiring no explanation; "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father, and

¹ Exod. xxi. 12—17.

keep my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God. Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten images : I am the Lord your God.”¹

I will not dwell on other passages in this book. I hasten to fix your attention on the punishment of death inflicted on the Sabbath-breaker, as recorded in the text. Few persons consider how deeply this case is designed to impress us with the essential obligation of the fourth commandment, and of the immediate honour of God involved in a presumptuous violation of it. This last point is not to be overlooked. The man was not condemned merely for gathering sticks on the Sabbath ; but for doing this in the face of the divine prohibition. Accordingly he was put in ward, till the will of God should be distinctly known. The whole proceeding was marked with a calm solemnity which makes the warning more pointed and decisive. The “soul that doeth aught PRESUMPTUOUSLY, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same REPROACHETH THE LORD ; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people ; because he hath DESPISED the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him. And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day. And they that found him gathering sticks, brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death.”²

I add only the striking passage, in which, at the close of life, Moses re-inculcates, as a preacher, the commandments which he had delivered before as a legislator. In this recapitulation, the other nine precepts of the decalogue stand as they were first promulgated from Mount Sinai—at least the variations are extremely slight ; but the fourth is amplified and enforced with many additional motives, as if it claimed more regard than any other.

¹ Lev. xix. 1—4.

² Numb. xv. 30—35.

“Keep the Sabbath-day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God commanded thee : six days thou shalt 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, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates ; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm ; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.”¹ What a distinction does this amplitude of detail confer on the law of the Sabbath ! And how does this, and the passages before cited, take out this commandment from the mere ceremonial and positive institutions with which for a time it is mingled, and lift up its head in the midst of the temporary and fugitive elements of the Jewish polity ! How evidently does even the Pentateuch exhibit it as a moral precept, directed to the highest ends, beyond what was peculiar to the Mosaical dispensation, and losing nothing of its permanent and essential force from the combination !

III. But proceed we to show that, in the latter ages of the Jewish church, the weekly Sabbath was insisted upon BY THE PROPHETS AS OF ESSENTIAL MORAL OBLIGATION, AND AS DESTINED TO FORM A PART OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

Hitherto the objection raised against the perpetuity of the Sabbath on the ground of its being a merely ceremonial enactment, has not only been silenced, but refuted. It is a constituent part of the moral law : to call it a mere ceremony is to sap all the foundations of faith and obedience. During the vigour of the ceremonial usages, it lifts up its head above them, and is enforced as of moral obligation : to call it a mere ceremony, is to be ignorant of the very first facts of the case.

But we now go on to the prophets, the reformers of

¹ Deut. v. 12—15.

the degenerate people, the preachers of the divine will, the assertors of the moral and eternal rule of duty, the bold proclaimers of the law of conscience and the bonds of a covenant relation with God, the seers and predictors of the gospel age. If they are found to urge the spiritual observance of the day of rest, as designed to form a part of the evangelical economy; and if they do this at the very time that they cast contempt on the mere outward ceremonies of the Jewish law—if they are found to denounce the divine indignation on no transgression, except idolatry, with so much vehemence—and if they appear anxious to reform the manners of the people in this capital point more than in any other,—then our argument gains strength at every step, and the divine institution will stand at the margin of the christian dispensation, ready to enter it in common with the other branches of essential religion.

Consider then, in the first place, the language of the BOOK OF PSALMS, and observe how little allusion is made to the ceremonial rites connected with the Sabbath, and how completely the stress is laid on the permanent and spiritual duties of that holy season. The Jewish Sabbath was indeed now in force. But it is upon the praises of God generally—his glory, his majesty, his compassion, his providence, his redemption, that the Psalmist dwells. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. . . . 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 crieth out for the living God. . . . I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.”¹

These are detached passages. In the 92d Psalm we have an express hymn or song for the Sabbath-day, the topics of which are spiritual, and not ceremonial. First, the praises of God are enjoined, which are the proper

¹ Psalms xxvii. lxxxiv. cxxii.

business of the Sabbath;¹ then the wonders of God in creation—the very reason for the institution;² next, the dealings of the divine providence in the overthrow of the wicked;³ and lastly, the operations of grace in the fruitfulness, even to old age, of those who “are planted in the house of the Lord.”⁴

Contrast with this the language of the 50th Psalm, in which a marked disregard is shown for mere ceremonies: “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats, &c.?” In this denunciation, you will observe that nothing is included which belongs to the essential matters extolled in the former Psalms.

In like manner, with what holy indignation does the prophet Isaiah REJECT THE MERE OUTWARD OBSERVANCES of the Jewish law: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them.”⁵ In this vehement expostulation, the Sabbaths, including that of the weekly rest, when superstitiously relied on, are swept away with one common reprobation.

But with what earnestness, on the contrary, is THE DUE CELEBRATION OF THE SABBATH EXTOLLED in

¹ Psalm xcii. 1—3.

² ver. 4, 5.

³ ver. 6—11.

⁴ ver. 12—15.

⁵ Isaiah i. 11—14.

the subsequent chapter!—It is placed on a level with the PLAINEST MORAL PRECEPTS—the not polluting of it is made the principal thing that pleases God—and THE LARGEST PROMISES OF THE EVANGELICAL DISPENSATION are connected with the spiritual consecration of the holy day! “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.” Here the observation of the weekly day of rest is spoken of as a great part of holiness of life, and is placed among moral duties. The prophet proceeds, “Neither let 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 Sabbaths, and do 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 name better than of sons and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.” The prophet is here speaking of the gospel age, when the ceremonial law which prohibited eunuchs from coming into the congregations of the Lord should be abolished; yet the eunuchs, when thus at liberty from the law of ceremonies, are described as being still under an obligation to keep the Sabbath. Nay, they are directed to do this as one means of obtaining a share in the blessings of Messiah’s kingdom. And so with regard to the Gentiles generally, here called strangers; “Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;” where we notice again, that the sanctification of the Sabbath is put on the same footing with the laying hold of God’s covenant, the serving the Lord, the loving the name of the Lord, the being his servants—and is indeed described as the main proof of all those parts of essential piety. The prophet then adds this evangelical promise, which by our Lord’s own citation is predictive of the

gospel-state—"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." It appears then that the Gentiles who should be called in the times of the gospel, would be under the same duty of keeping the Sabbath; and should thus, and thus only, be made "joyful in that house of prayer" which is destined "for all people." All this falls in exactly with another prediction of the same inspired writer, the language being still in the terms of the dispensation then prevailing. "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;" which has been constantly fulfilled, and is now fulfilling in the Christian church; since ALL FLESH have worshipped before the Lord on that weekly day of religious rest into which the Jewish new moons and sabbatical periods have subsided. Add to this the description which the same inspired author gives of the duties of the Sabbath. They have so clearly a moral obligation and universal force, and involve a tone of devotion so elevated, that we may truly say, If the Sabbath be a ceremony, we have lost under the gospel one of the brightest glories of revelation. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, 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," &c. ¹

But we pass from this class of passages, to notice those DENUNCIATIONS AGAINST THE SIN OF VIOLATING THE SABBATH, which are only surpassed by the anger of the Almighty against idolatry itself, with which, indeed, it seems ever to have had a close affinity. We have already noticed the sentence executed early in the history of the sacred people on the presumptuous sabbath-

¹ Isaiah lviii. 10, 13.

breaker. But hear the prophet Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem: neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction. But if ye will not hearken unto me—then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched"¹ Here the entire prosperity of the nation, and all the favour of God, is suspended on this one branch of moral obedience. To judge of the force of this, contrast it with the same prophet's declaration concerning ceremonial observances: "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices. But this one thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people."²

Again, mark how the prophet Amos reproaches the degenerate people with an impatience of the holy services of the Sabbath and other festivals: "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying. When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the SABBATH, that we may set forth wheat?"³

The prophet Ezekiel follows. He lived later than Jeremiah and Amos. The Babylonish captivity had now begun; and the peculiar aggravation of the people's sins is represented to be their profanation of the Sabbath. "Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me; my Sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the

¹ Jer. xvii. 19—27.

² Jer. vii. 22, 23.

³ Amos viii. 4, 5.

wilderness, to consume them." The charge is repeated again and again in the course of the expostulation, and is connected with the sin of idolatry and of direct contempt of the majesty of the Lord: "They despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols."¹ Similar charges are reiterated in subsequent chapters of this and the other prophets, and like threatenings denounced.

And what was THE PARTICULAR REFORMATION which Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the prophets after the captivity, were most anxious to effect after the first return of the people from Babylon? We are now come to the last trace of prophetic revelation. The Old Testament canon is closing. What do the last inspired teachers and leaders testify? What was their chief care? What their main object? Was it not to restore the house of God's worship? to rebuild the temple? to recall the people to the sanctity of the Sabbath? I omit other points, to exhibit the noble conduct of Nehemiah when he found the men of Tyre bringing fish and selling it on the sacred day. Mark his warmth of reproach; observe his appeal to the past history of the nation; notice that the whole transaction rests, not on any ceremonial rite omitted or despised, but on the violation of the grand fundamental duty of the religious rest of God. "In those days 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, which brought fish and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath 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-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon

¹ Ezek. xx. 12, 13, 16.

us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath-day. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath-day.”¹

Thirty or forty years after this, THE PROPHET MALACHI utters the last predictions, and gives the last warnings, before the coming of Messiah. And on what does he so much insist, as on the contempt into which the ordinances of God were sunk, and on the indignation of the Almighty which was about to follow? They “offered polluted bread.” No one would “shut the temple-doors for nought.” They said, “The table of the Lord is contemptible.” They said, “Behold, what a weariness is it!” “And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts.” “Ye have said, It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?” “Therefore,” adds the prophet, “the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be as stubble.”²

Such is the estimate which we are to form of the essential moral character of the law of the Sabbath, from a review of every part of the Old Testament. More than three thousand six hundred years have now elapsed since the first Sabbath. The sacred institution stands on the margin of the New Testament dispensation. We naturally inquire, then, what will be its dignity, in the kingdom of Messiah, if we find nothing directly to the contrary? It derived not its authority from the Levitical law; it could lose, therefore, none of its sanctity by the abrogation of it. The same respect would be due to it

¹ Nehemiah xiii. 15, 21, 22.

² Mal. i. 6, 7, 13; iii. 14; iv. 1.

as before that intervening dispensation. Whatever the Sabbath was when it entered the Mosaic ritual, that would it be when it came out from under it. The cessation of the ceremonial law would no more release the worshipper of God from the observation of a weekly rest, than it would cancel the injunction of filial piety, or the prohibition of theft, murder, adultery, false witness, or concupiscence. The importance of what we have been considering is, in this view, very material. We have shown its divine institution in paradise, the traces of its observance during the patriarchal ages, its re-enactment in the wilderness before the Mosaic economy, at the miraculous fall of manna. We have also noticed its solemn incorporation in the ten commandments—the awful glories of that promulgation—its dignity above all the ceremonies of the Jewish religion—its essential and perpetual obligation as inculcated by the prophets, and destined to form a part of the gospel age. It comes forth, therefore, from the hand of Moses with all its pristine authority, which it had, in fact, never lost as to any portion of the human race, except as the corruption of man had perverted or forgotten the original institution.

Nay, it enters the gospel dispensation with more than its patriarchal majesty and obligation. It has been accumulating, not diminishing, its claims upon men, by all the testimonies to its essential importance which Moses and the prophets gave. It has acquired new force, new evidence, new illustration, by its position under an economy which, if it had been merely a ceremony, would have buried it amid a thousand surrounding rites.

We naturally conclude, therefore, that the gospel will secure to the original institution of the Sabbath more ample scope, higher reverence, a more elevated position, greater dignity and importance. The gospel is the last and most perfect dispensation—the completion of all the preceding, the time of enlarged privilege, and of superabundant grace! If, therefore, a weekly day of repose and religious worship was granted to the saints of the patriarchal dispensation—and if this blessing was con-

tinued, even under the law of bondage, to the Jew, much more will it be vouchsafed to the Christian,—much more will it accompany “the law of liberty.” We may be sure that the boon is not revoked; we may be sure that man is not doomed now to seven days’ labour instead of six; we may be sure that his time for worshipping God is not abridged, nor the pledge of the covenant of grace lessened and restrained.

But this is not all. The Sabbath had been increasing in its moral influence upon man from the time of its first institution. Every fresh motive to the love of God, every ray of glory from Mount Sinai, every prophecy of a future Saviour, had been augmenting proportionably man’s duty, by affording him more copious aids in fulfilling it. Christians, then, being favoured with a clearer knowledge of the divine will, having more motives to love and serve God, having a more abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit, than had been granted under any preceding period, we may be sure that their character will be superior, their delight in the worship of God more fervent, their celebration of God’s praises in creation and redemption proportionably more assiduous. Yet, if a sabbatical institution is not binding upon Christians, we must reverse the supposition. We must forget the devotion of the patriarchs, the spiritual fervour of the psalmist, the zeal for the Sabbath which animated Nehemiah and Ezra, the delight in its duties foretold by Isaiah as marking the gospel age; and the Christian must take his station below the Jew in spirituality and love. But this can never be the case. We may conclude, therefore, that if one day in seven was the measure under more imperfect dispensations, a less term cannot suffice under the perfect dispensation of the gospel, when so many motives and inducements to a higher degree of love in the worship of God,¹ influence the believer in Revelation.

We shall want, therefore, no enactment, no express command in the New Testament. Things will go on as they did before the Mosaic economy, except as a richer effusion of grace will render the Sabbath a more delight-

¹ Archd. Pott.

ful season of repose than in the preceding ages. The worship of the New Testament will be, we may conclude, a restoration of the patriarchal in its primitive simplicity and purity, dropping the encumbrances imposed during the time of the law, and acquiring all the new influence and obligations which the infinite benefits of the gospel confer.

And thus, as the patriarchal SACRIFICES passed on into the PASSOVER and numerous offerings of the law during the term of that intervening dispensation, and then emerged in the simple evangelical SUPPER of our Lord—as again the patriarchal CIRCUMCISION reserved its rites during the same economy, and then yielded to the sacrament of BAPTISM—and as the patriarchal institution of MARRIAGE, suspended on account of the hardness of the people's hearts during the Jewish age, was re-established and came to its full effect in the Christian law of marriage,—so the PATRIARCHAL DAY OF REST, with its worship of God, its celebration of the wonders of creation, and its provision for the religious repose of man, after having been annexed for a period to the national covenant of the Jews, was restored to its FIRST DESIGN IN THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

A re-enactment in the New Testament would be a denial, by implication, of its previous institution and authority. Nothing is enacted in the gospel without a necessity. The baptism of infants is not expressly enjoined; the law of circumcision having sufficiently provided for it. The moral law, the essential duties of religion, the relations of man to his Maker and Benefactor, the necessity of a season for divine worship, the proportion of time destined for it from the creation, all the precepts of the decalogue—remain unchanged. They are taken for granted under the gospel. They are not again formally promulgated. Creation and Mount Sinai suffice. They go on of course, and the Sabbath with them, if no express and formal abrogation intervene.

But we are anticipating our next discourse. Our object is merely to bring up the law of the sabbatical rest

to the threshold of the New Testament, and to leave it there, ready to enter.

Let us then turn from these discussions to some practical points which may affect our hearts.

1. Let us learn to give to the holy day of rest that PROMINENCY IN OUR ESTEEM which Moses was instructed to give it in his dispensation. Christian brethren, let the gospel be as influential upon us to observe the day of rest and holy worship, as the Law was of old. Let not the Sabbath be sunk amidst external observances, ordinary rites, an outward adherence to a national creed, the common decencies of religion. Let it be exalted and placed aloft as the Queen of days. Let the admiration of the Jew, blind as it often was, be a stimulus to the more enlightened devotion of the Christian. Let the mercies of God in the redemption from the Egyptian captivity, which bound with additional motives the Sabbath upon the ancient people, teach us how the mercies of a spiritual redemption from sin and death should bind on us the sanctification of that day when they are especially celebrated. Let the perpetual inculcation of this duty by Moses, on all occasions, in every connexion, by every species of motive, lead us to urge it upon our children and households on every fit opportunity. Let the solemn promulgation of it in "The Ten Commandments" be the summary of all our arguments, and the brief and conclusive proof to us of the perpetuity of the institution.

II. And to this end, let us IMBIBE THE SPIRIT OF LOVE AND DELIGHT in the worship of God, which the Psalms and Prophets display. We never can imitate the earnestness of Moses, nor place the Sabbath on the promineny where he exhibits it, unless we join to it the holy David's love to God, and the sublime Isaiah's spiritual joy in his service. O, how much are our Sabbaths, practically speaking, below those of the saints of old! How much is our repose of soul in God, our fainting of heart after his courts, our view of the happiness which religion communicates, inferior to the feelings which these holy men experienced! Let us pray, let us seek for such

a spiritual state of heart, for such a real choice and preference of God in Christ Jesus, and such a delight in the contemplation of his glory in creation, providence, and redemption, as may enlarge our hearts and “lift them up in the ways of the Lord;” as may render the Sabbath “a delight,” as may surround it with the honour and esteem which are its due, and make “one day in God’s courts better than a thousand.” Then, then should we indeed sanctify our Sabbaths. Then would disputes soon cease. Then should we abstain naturally and from choice, from “doing our own ways, finding our own pleasure, or speaking our own words.” And what, indeed, can the love of our Saviour Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit be said to have done for us, if they have not raised us out of the world, and united us with the spiritual church in religious adoration? This is the secret of true religion. It reigns by LOVE, it subdues by the sense of benefits, it calms and purifies the soul, it turns the current of the affections towards God, it pays cheerfully and with delight the tribute of one day in seven, as the Lord’s portion and share out of man’s time and efforts, and for the training and discipline of the soul for an eternity of worship in heaven,

III. But to add to these motives THE AWFUL INDIGNATION of Almighty God against the contempt of his name and his day. Judge from the terrors of Mount Sinai and the denunciation of the prophets, what is the anger of the Lord against those who violate and pollute His Sabbaths. I would urge upon my own conscience, and that of others, the guilt of that weariness in the service of God, that sort of contempt and neglect of its spiritual benefits, that inward disgust for acts of piety and praise, that conceit and self-reliance and self-satisfaction, which are the true causes of our dislike for divine worship and religious repose. I would urge the criminality, the peculiar criminality, under the spiritual dispensation of the New Testament, of those sins which Moses and the prophets condemned with so much vehemence under the less perfect economy of the law. The ease and

liberty of the gospel, and our freedom from the bond of ceremonies, only augment the guilt of that enmity against the holy nature and blessed will of God, from which contempt of his worship springs. We have now no multiplied festivals to observe, no difficult and expensive offerings to prepare, no perpetual oblations to provide, no sabbatical years to observe. The simple and noble worship and repose of one day in seven is what God commands, or rather grants as a boon—and only enjoins when we refuse thus to receive it as a benefit.

Awaken, then, Christian brethren, from the torpor and lukewarmness which too much mark the age in which we live. A philosophic conceit, the pride of intellect, indifference to truth, a selfish calculating love of ease and indulgence, a blindness to the magnitude and dignity of the claims of our invisible Benefactor—these are our sins—and these were the sins of the days of Ezekiel and Malachi, under the old dispensation. And from these sins, a readiness to listen to objections against the Sabbath springs. Who would ever have endured the fiction of an anticipation in the narrative of the glorious work of creation,¹ or of the Sabbath being a merely ceremonial rite, if an indifference and weariness for spiritual things had not predisposed the mind to seek an excuse for its worldliness and unconcern. But let us be aroused to real penitence. Let us view the guilt of contemning God in its true light. Let our hardness of heart, and pride of intellectual distinction, yield to the sweet influences of grace, and we shall honour God in the day which from the creation had been dedicated to him. The anomaly of a Christian loving God, and undervaluing the day of God, has never yet been known. But further,

IV. Let us IMITATE THE HEROIC ZEAL of Ezra and Nehemiah in vindicating the honour of the Sabbath. Surely the Christian cannot hesitate as to his duty, after

¹ No man ever thought of anticipation in this place, who was not first anticipated with manifest prejudice, says an old writer.

considering the conduct of these inspired men. Each should do what his talent and influence in society enjoin and permit. It is the principle upon which I insist. If we cannot absolutely shut the gates of our great cities to the entrance of merchandise, we may do something to lessen the evil. We may shut the door of our houses—we may prohibit the purchase or reception of articles of consumption by our servants and dependants—we may encourage those upon whom we have any influence, to observe the sacred day. Let only the zeal, the courage, the firmness, the disinterestedness of Ezra and Nehemiah be connected with their piety and love to the house of their God, and much would be done. How have national revivals of religion been brought about in other times? In the days of Samuel, or in those of Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat or Josiah? The magistrates and ministers of religion took the lead. Men like Ezra and Nehemiah rose up with holy determination and simplicity. Public conscience and sentiment were addressed. Gross infractions of the day of rest were discouraged. Prayer was offered up at the throne of mercy. God answered the petition, and truth and holiness were again established.

V. I add only one more thought; that as the guilt of Sabbath-breaking and of idolatry were united of old in the practice of the people, and in the threatenings of the holy prophets, we should especially dread that FALSE VIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD AND OF THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY which are generally associated with the violation of the Lord's day. To worship God aright, is to adore him in his perfections, in his manifestations of himself in his word, in his infinite right over man, in his holy law, in his eternal judgment, in the revelation of a way of salvation through the atonement of Christ and in the operations of the divine Spirit, in the communion with himself to which he admits the devout worshipper. All other worship is idolatry. It is the setting up, in fact, of idols in our heart. It is worshipping a God of our own imagina-

tion. Now mark the alliance of all this with the sin of neglecting and violating the holy Sabbath. We throw off the day of religion, because we throw off the God whom that religion regards. We set up the god of the infidel, or of the Socinian, or of the careless worldly professor, which is such an one as himself; and then we worship that idol, by vanity, by carnal indulgence, by the neglect of all the spiritual duties of the Christian Sabbath. Let the God of the Bible be enthroned in the heart, and the Sabbath which that God blessed and sanctified will be duly honoured. To love him, to glorify him, to worship him, to meditate on his works, to prepare for the enjoyment of him for ever, will fully occupy that sacred portion of time which he has appointed for those ends. Faith in the object of worship will produce the sanctification of the day of worship. And thus shall we join the instructions of the Old Testament on the subject of the Sabbath, with the grace and strength furnished in the New, and have the patriarchal and Christian day of rest united and fulfilled in all their blessings.

SERMON III.

THE SABBATH VINDICATED UNDER THE GOSPEL
FROM PHARISAICAL AUSTERITIES, AND ESTABLISHED BY OUR LORD IN MORE THAN ITS ORIGINAL DIGNITY AND GLORY.

MARK ii. 27, 28.

And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

WE now come to a most important part of the argument for the divine authority and perpetual obligation of a day of weekly rest. There has hitherto appeared but little of real weight, or even of plausibility, in the objections raised by our opponents. The fiction of an anticipated history is so groundless, and the attempt to evade the authority of the fourth commandment so violent, that we may almost wonder that any professed believer in Christianity should have advanced them. But the case is different, as it respects the gospel dispensation: our Lord undoubtedly introduced material changes in the observation of the Sabbath as prevalent at the time of his ministry. Undoubtedly he relieved it from many restrictions. On what authority, indeed, these restrictions had been introduced, is another question—but undoubtedly he relieved it. The apostles followed, and transferred the time of its celebration from the last to the first day of the week; and abrogated finally the ceremonies and rites of the Jewish law. All this is considered by many

as a repeal of the institution altogether—they view the Christian Sabbath as a new command resting on a new basis—and that basis the mere example of the apostles.

Let us then calmly consider this part of the subject. The authority of our Redeemer, as “Lord of the Sabbath,” to abrogate or dissolve any divine ordinance, is acknowledged on all hands.

Here it will be convenient to divide the question into two parts. The divine authority of the Sabbath itself under the Christian dispensation: and the ground on which the day of its observation was changed. In other words, we must answer two questions: HAVE WE A SABBATH OF DIVINE APPOINTMENT UNDER THE GOSPEL? and, IS THAT SABBATH THE LORD’S DAY? The first will occupy the present discourse; the second the following one.

Now if the statements we have made in our preceding arguments be at all valid, this first question will almost answer itself. For we left the Sabbath on the margin of the Old Testament, ready to step over into the Evangelical dispensation. We had brought up the proof of its continued obligation from its first enactment in paradise, to the very line of separation. The glories of the six days’ work, succeeded by a seventh day’s repose, as inscribed on the order of creation—the insertion of the law of the Sabbath into the ten commandments—its distinct and lofty position above the ceremonies of Moses in the very midst of that economy—its inculcation by the prophets as of essential moral force, and as about to form a part of the Messiah’s kingdom;—all this implies that Christ’s religion would not be deprived of its day of rest—that the most perfect dispensation would not be inferior in privilege to the less perfect—that where all is grace, and light, and universality, we should not be allowed a smaller portion of time for the immediate honour of our God and communion with him, than where bondage and fear prevailed.

And this we shall accordingly find to be the case. We shall see the ten commandments, and the Sabbath amongst the number, recognised by our Lord and his

apostles—we shall observe our Saviour honouring it on all occasions by his practice, and only vindicating it from unauthorised traditions injurious to its real design. We shall find that nothing is abrogated under the gospel with respect to it, but those temporary ceremonies and statutes which constituted the peculiarities of the Jewish age. We shall perceive that the special promise of the New Testament has for its object to render its duties more practicable and delightful, and thus to increase tenfold its obligation.

That is, we shall discover that the solemn axiom delivered by our Lord in the text, together with the caution and inference connected with it, establishes the true principle on which the Christian day of rest is to be enforced.

THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN; was originally bestowed on him as a boon—was granted him for his necessary repose from worldly toil and care—was made for man, as consisting of body and soul, as requiring rest and refreshment for the one, religious instruction for the other; as created for his Maker's glory, and destined for eternal happiness or misery—that the Sabbath, in short, was appointed and made, not for the Jews merely, but for man universally, FOR MAN AS MAN, in every age, and under all dispensations.

What a noble declaration of the perpetual design and authority of the institution! Of all our Saviour's axioms, few are more clear, definite, important, universal. It takes for granted that there would be a Sabbath under the gospel dispensation: and it defines its purposes—that it was for the advantage and benefit of man—for his highest welfare both as to his body and soul.

Nor is the caution which our Lord adds less appropriate, considering the austerities which the Jewish masters had imposed; NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH. Their error lay in overlooking the grand moral end of the institution. They taught that "man was made for the Sabbath." Our Lord recalls the institution to its first and true design; he teaches that it was not a rite ending in itself, and to which its moral purposes should yield; but that God would "have mercy and not sacrifice, and

that when the real spiritual and exalted interests of man, for which it was appointed, required a suspension of any of its outward observances, that suspension was lawful.

The axiom and caution explain all our Lord's conduct. The fundamental law of the Sabbath remains unchanged; as it began, so it will end only with the world itself. But the embarrassments and trammels of pharisaical impositions are dissolved, and its genuine simplicity is restored.

The inference follows of course; THEREFORE THE SON OF MAN IS LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH. For the institution having originally been made for the good of man; and "the Lord of the Sabbath" having become, by his incarnation, "the Son of man," for redeeming him from death, for introducing the last dispensation, and ordering all things in that dispensation for his best welfare, THEREFORE the Son of man "is Lord also of the Sabbath," to expound as legislator its injunctions, to annul with authority the impositions introduced contrary to its genuine spirit, to leave it as one of the distinctions and privileges of his universal and spiritual kingdom.

Proceed we, then, to consider the divine obligation of the weekly day of rest under the gospel, as apparent from several considerations.

I. THE RECOGNITION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, AND OF THE TENTH AMONGST THE NUMBER, which our Lord and his apostles make. This is decisive of the question as to the authority of the Sabbath under the gospel.

It will be recollected, that the moral law had from the time of Moses been perfectly well known as a code or body of moral statutes, under the distinct titles of "The Tables of the Law," "The Commandments," "The Law," and similar appropriate names; which, as we have already remarked, meant the same, with reference to other commands, as "The Bible" means with regard to other books. It need scarcely be noticed, also, that "The Commandments" were divided into two parts, the

first containing four precepts and no more, the second six; the whole being ten; and that the first series was summed up in the well-known command of the love of God, and the second of the love of our neighbour.

Now if our Lord and his apostles recognise the perpetual authority of the whole moral law as a matter taken for granted; if they refer to it as known by the collective name or names which we have noticed; if they divide it into the two great commanding precepts of the love of God and man; if they refer to some of them in a manner which proves that the order of the ten commands was the same as when promulgated from Mount Sinai; if they declare that the gospel abrogated none of the precepts, but enlarged their scope and enforced their authority; and if, finally, they denounced their displeasure against those who should teach any relaxation of the least of these enactments;—then the whole ten commandments, the fourth included, are of plenary force under the gospel.

And need I remind you that when one came to Christ and said, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” our Lord at once replied, as a matter perfectly familiar, “Thou knowest **THE COMMANDMENTS**”—“if thou wilt enter into life, keep **THE COMMANDMENTS**,”—and when the inquirer demanded which, Jesus recapitulated five; thus expressly recognising the whole code? ¹ Need I tell you that on another occasion he summed up the two tables, as Moses so frequently had done in the Pentateuch, into **THE LOVE OF GOD** and the **LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR**, adding, as if to strengthen his recognition of them—“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets?” ²

Need I tell you that at another time he reproached the Pharisees with having made the **COMMANDMENT** of God of none effect by their tradition?” ³ Need I remind you, above all, that he declared in one of his most solemn discourses—that on the Mount—that he “came

¹ Matt. xix. 16; Mark x. 17; Luke xviii. 18.

² Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 19; Matt. xxii. 36—40.

³ Matt. xv. 6.

not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil"—that "till heaven and earth should pass, one jot or one tittle should in no wise pass from THE LAW till all be fulfilled"—that "whosoever should break one of the least of these COMMANDMENTS, and should teach men so, should be called least in the kingdom of heaven"—and that "unless the righteousness of his disciples should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven?" Can anything be more express upon our argument than such declarations; especially as our Saviour leaves us in doubt of what he meant by the law, but proceeds to explain several of the TEN COMMANDMENTS? ¹

And why should I detain you with going over the same ground as to the apostles? Do they not everywhere acknowledge, without addition or diminution, the same decalogue? Does not St. Paul say, "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled THE LAW?" and then, after enumerating five commands, does he not add, "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?"² And though he quote not separately, any more than our Lord, the particular precepts of the first table, yet can any one suppose, that when he sums up the second table, as we have seen, in the love of our neighbour, he meant to exclude the first table, or any precept of it, any more than our Lord meant to exclude it, who actually quotes the Mosaic summary of that first table? But I need not dwell on so clear a point. I need not enumerate the passages where St. Paul and his brother apostles cite or refer to the moral law as of divine and perpetual authority under the gospel. What indeed is sin "but the transgression of THE LAW?"³ What is the Christian's whole state of duty, but "the being under THE LAW to Christ?"⁴ And how would the apostle have "known sin, except THE LAW had said,

¹ Matt. v. vi. vii.

² 1 John iii. 4.

³ Rom. xiii. 8.

⁴ 1 Cor. ix. 21.

thou shalt not covet?"¹ I add, therefore only, that St. Paul, when writing to the Ephesians, a Gentile church, assumes their acquaintance with the very order of the precepts of the decalogue, as well as their authority, when he states concerning filial obedience, that it is "the first commandment with promise;"—thus recognising the usual arrangement in the decalogue, and proving that no commandment had been changed or dispossessed of its place.

Now this carries the whole question. If Christ and his apostles came not to relax, or abrogate, or destroy the moral law, but to vindicate, explain, and enforce it, then the ten commandments in every one of their number—and the fourth equally with the rest—is established and recognised—the law of the Sabbath is as authoritative as the law against theft, murder, or adultery. The code is one entire, inseparable body of moral precepts. "Whosoever," says St. James, in language which implies all we are contending for, "shall keep **THE WHOLE LAW**, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all; for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of **THE LAW**."²

After the argument of the preceding discourses, it seems only trifling to object that our Lord has not expressly quoted the fourth commandment. The mere silence of Scripture will not surely be again alleged. And we are to remember that several other of the precepts of the decalogue are equally omitted—and that as the fault of the Jews with regard to the Sabbath, was not in defect, but excess—as they considered the fourth commandment as surpassing every other in dignity—as they boasted of a most minute and punctilious observance of it—and loaded it with innumerable traditions; our Lord had only to restore it to its original simplicity, and set it forth by his doctrine and example in its native loveliness. And this is precisely what he did. The neglect into which the original law had fallen before the

¹ Rom. vii. 7.

² James ii. 10, 11.

Mosaical dispensation, was supplied by exactly what was then required, an express promulgation—a strong, direct, detailed command inserted amongst the other moral precepts. The excess which had been generated by the superstition and formality of the Jews before the gospel economy, was corrected by exactly what was required, the gracious conduct of our Lord. For,

II. WE VENTURE TO ASSERT THAT CHRIST HONOURED THE SABBATH ON ALL OCCASIONS, AND NEVER VIOLATED ITS SANCTITY, according to the true import of the moral and ceremonial enactments of Moses; but merely brought it back to its genuine spirit and design, from the uncommanded austerities of the Jewish doctors—a conduct which the apostles also perfectly understood and imitated in their own practice. Here I beg a particular attention. This is the only point where any reasonable doubt can be entertained. The conduct of our Lord affords a plausible ground of objection—let us calmly consider it.

On eleven occasions is our Lord's doctrine and spirit with regard to the Sabbath recorded. These are distributed over his ministry. Between the first and second passover we have three: the sermon at Nazareth;¹ his teaching at Capernaum,² and his healing Peter's wife's mother.³ We have four between the second and third passover: the miracle at the pool of Bethesda;⁴ the plucking the ears of corn;⁵ his restoring the withered hand;⁶ and his second teaching at Nazareth.⁷ The remaining occasions occur between the third and fourth passover—the last of his ministry: his defence of the miracle at the pool of Bethesda;⁸ his healing of the man blind from his birth;⁹ of the woman eighteen years infirm¹⁰—and the man afflicted with the dropsy.¹¹

Now, if on calmly examining all these narratives, we should find, 1. That our Lord always honoured and kept

¹ Luke iv. 16—22.

² Luke iv. 31—37.

³ Luke iv. 38—41.

⁴ John v. 5, *ad fin.*

⁵ Luke vi. 1—5.

⁶ Matt. xii. 9—21.

⁷ Mark vi. 1—6.

⁸ John vii. 21, *ad fin.*

⁹ John ix. 1, *ad fin.*

¹⁰ Luke xiii. 10—17.

¹¹ Luke xiv. 1—6.

the Sabbath ; 2. That he performed miracles of healing upon it, only when important occasions arose, and in order to confirm his doctrine, and ensure faith in his messiahship ; 3. That these acts were never in violation, but entirely in accordance with the Mosaic law ; 4. That they were especially designed to relieve the institution from the oppressive traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees ; 5. That no objections were taken against them at first, and that the cavils afterwards raised were only pretences to cover their hatred to his divine mission ; 6. That our Lord's defences of himself and his disciples proceeded on what had ever been the real import of the fourth commandment, though misunderstood ; and assumed that the Sabbath itself was of perpetual obligation ; 7. That all this is confirmed by our Lord's caution concerning the flight of his disciples at the destruction of Jerusalem ; and 8. By the conduct and doctrines of his inspired apostles at the first promulgation of the gospel—then it will be admitted that our Saviour, so far from relaxing the fourth commandment, or abrogating the essential law of the Sabbath, vindicated it, established it, and left it in more than its original authority and glory.

We begin with the three incidents occurring before the second passover. On the very first of these we are told that our Lord “went, AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to “read.” This marks a habit—a habit acted upon in his own city, “where he had been brought up.”¹ The divine discourse cited from the prophet Isaiah followed ; and thus the highest honour is put upon his Father's institution. Capernaum is the next scene presented to us. “He taught the people on the Sabbath-days,”² is the record ; betokening again a custom, a course of instruction. But a demoniac is present, and crying out to the disturbance of the worshippers ; the devil is rebuked with a word, quits the possessed sufferer, bears unwilling testimony to our Saviour's mes-

¹ Luke iv. 16—22.

² Luke iv. 31—37.

siahship, and diffuses his fame ; so that the evangelist notes the fulfilment of the prophecy : “ The people which sat in darkness saw a great light.”¹ No idea of a breach of the fourth commandment enters a single mind, no clamour is raised, no accusation is brought against him. The Sabbath is exalted by our Lord’s conduct on it. On the same evening, retiring from the synagogue and entering Simon’s house, he heals his wife’s mother of a fever ; and afterwards, when the sun was set and the Sabbath past,² multitudes of sick were brought to him, and were healed—for on no occasion were crowds collected, even for this beneficent exertion of power, on the Sabbath : the miracles are separate acts, performed incidentally, on important occasions, and forming a part of our Lord’s doctrine and instructions as Messiah.³

Between the second and third passover, four similar deeds of mercy occur, and are now first seized on by the Pharisees and Scribes as pretences for displaying that hatred to his person and mission, which his miracles and doctrines had by this time inflamed.

First, at the pool of Bethesda, the impotent man, after lying “ thirty and eight years in that case,” is healed ; and is commanded, in testimony to the truth of the miracle, or rather AS A PART OF THE MIRACULOUS CURE, to carry away with him the miserable rug or covering on which he lay,—which it was the custom of the lower classes to take with them from place to place, and which, if left behind at the pool, might have been lost, though probably the poor creature’s only possession.⁴

¹ Matt. iv. 14—16 ; for it was on that occasion.

² The Jewish Sabbath ended, according to the Jewish reckoning of time, at sunset.

³ Luke iv. 18—41.

⁴ John v. 5, &c. The beds of the poor in the Holy Land were often mattresses, rugs, and coverings, used during the day for raiment—“ If thou take at all thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it to him by that the sun goeth down : for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin : wherein shall he sleep.”—Exod. xxii. 26, 27. Similar customs prevail in hot countries now. “ Mattresses, or something of that kind, are

Next, his disciples passing through the corn-fields, (most likely to or from the synagogue,) and having nothing with them to eat, and no opportunity of procuring victuals, pluck the ears of corn to satisfy the pressure of instant hunger.¹ In the third place, the man with the withered hand is restored, our Lord, who knew the secret thoughts of the Pharisees who were watching him, asking them, before he performed the cure, whether it was “lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil—to save life or to destroy it.” Their silence is the plainest admission that it was permitted to heal on the Sabbath-day.² Lastly, his second instructions at Nazareth are recorded, no instance of healing occurring; and the offence at his mission and character breaking out notwithstanding.³

Now in this second series of cases, can any one seriously maintain that there was any violation of the Sabbath, moral or ceremonial, by such conduct and doctrine in such a person as our Lord—a messenger from heaven, one who was executing the office of Messiah, one who sustained his divine message by these divine acts? Were they not, on the contrary, in the highest degree calculated to honour and distinguish the day of religious worship? Did they not tend to the immediate glory of his heavenly Father, and to promote all the highest ends of the Sabbath? Were not the attendant multitudes thus enabled to witness his mighty deeds; and did not even the false accusations of the Pharisees lead to a more close examination of the truth of the miracles performed?

But “to reap and gather in corn, and to bear and carry burdens, are violations of the rest of the Sabbath, and

used (in Palestine) for sleeping upon. They are rolled up, carried away, and placed in cupboards till they are wanted at night.” “In many parts of Spain the country people sleep upon mats of rushes or straw, which they roll up in the morning and take with them.”—*Harmer and Rocca in Burder.*

Accordingly our Lord said to the paralytic, almost as a matter of course, if his cure were wrought, and as a part of that cure, “Arise, take up thy bed and walk.”—Matt. ix. 6.

¹ Luke vi. 1—5.

² Matt. xii. 9—11.

³ Mark vi. 1—6.

breaches of the ceremonial law," say our opponents! We answer, Yes; and of THE MORAL also. But then we assert that the plucking a few ears of corn, when passing through a field and pressed with hunger, is not reaping—and to carry to one's house a mat-bed as a part of a miraculous cure, from a pool, is not bearing burdens. Between the reaper gathering corn in his field, and the disciples' conduct, there was as great a difference as between "the men of Tyre bringing fish and all manner of ware to Jerusalem,"¹ and the impotent man bearing off his bed to his house, in proof of a miraculous restoration to health. Neither the moral nor ceremonial law of the Sabbath, properly understood, was violated. Nothing was violated but the tradition of the Pharisees.

We pass to the third series of our Lord's conduct and works on the Sabbath—those immediately preceding his passion. On the first of these occasions he vindicates the cure of the impotent man which had been wrought a year, or a year and a half, previously, at the pool."² The restoration of the man blind from his birth, whom he met as he was passing by, forms the second.³ The next is the loosing from her infirmity the woman who had been bowed together for eighteen years by Satan, and who, though she in no wise could lift up herself, had yet come to the worship of the synagogue.⁴ The last was the cure of the man that had the dropsy, who was present in the house where our Saviour was eating bread—the Pharisees watching him—and Jesus pausing to ask them, before he relieved the sufferer, "If it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" Upon which, "holding their peace," as they must needs do, as they knew that it was no violation of their law, he "took him, and healed him, and let him go."⁵

Such are the separate narratives, which sufficiently vindicate themselves, considering the high mission which our Lord was fulfilling, and the habitual observation of the worship and law of the Sabbath which he maintained.

¹ Neh. xiii. 16.

³ John ix. 11, *ad fin.*

⁵ Luke xiv. 1—6.

² John vii. 21, *ad fin.*

⁴ Luke xiii. 10—17.

But, mark the GENERAL GROUNDS ON WHICH HE DEFENDS his conduct, and that of his disciples, in the second series of his works¹—for the first cures excited nothing but admiration. Mark how he appeals to their own law, their own usages, as recorded in the sacred books—the example of David, the example of the priests preparing the sacrifices—the divine decision, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice;” concluding the defence with the words which form the text of this discourse—“The Sabbath was made for” the highest good of “man;” “not man for” the good of “the Sabbath—therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath,” to explain its true ritual, and bring it back to its true design.

Notice also another ground of our Lord’s vindication, the common necessities of our nature, which no law of God can be supposed to prohibit: “Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?”²—“What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?”³ Such language proves that it was the false and hypocritical interpretations of the Pharisees which our Lord meant to oppose. And, indeed, the effect of his remonstrances was so pointed, that on one occasion we are told, “his adversaries were ashamed, and could not answer him again to these things; whilst all the people rejoiced and glorified God.”⁴

¹ “Have ye not READ what David did when he was an hungered; and they that were with him, how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which it was not lawful to eat, neither to them that were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read IN THE LAW how that on the Sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless? But I say unto you, in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would NOT HAVE CONDEMNED THE GUILTLSS.”

² Luke xiii. 15.

³ Matt. xii. 11, 12.

⁴ Luke xiii. 17; xiv. 6.

That these actions and cures on the Sabbath were contrary to THE NOTIONS AND FALSE GLOSSES OF THE JEWISH DOCTORS, I admit. The hatred of the people, and especially of their rulers, to our Saviour's character and mission, was the real cause; but the uncommanded traditions of the Pharisees afforded them a pretext. And when we consider the extent to which this vexatious and hypocritical system had been carried, and the immense importance to an universal and benignant religion like Christianity, to have one of its chief glories, the day of rest, placed on its true footing, we cannot wonder at the course which our Saviour pursued. The law of the Sabbath had been loaded by the masters with unreasonable and minute observances. "You will see in their oral law," says Dr. Wotton, "an incredible minuteness in things seemingly the most trivial; but all subservient to one main end, which was to teach men how TO EVADE THE LAW, when they seemed most solicitous to observe it."¹ Take as an example the absurd reason assigned for the institution itself by Philo the Jew: "Now, why God chose the seventh day, and established it by law for the day of rest, you need not ask at all of me, since both physicians and philosophers have so often declared, of what great power and virtue that number is, as in all other things, so specially on the nature and state of man. And thus you have the reason of the seventh-day-Sabbath."²

Now the exact points which our Lord determined to be agreeable to the Mosaical law, are those which the Jewish lawyers had prohibited. They excused themselves, for instance, from offices of piety and charity to their neighbour on the Sabbath, though they allowed the law its fair import when their own ox or ass was to be fed or rescued from danger—that is, they took advantage by their traditional law of the Sabbath to veil their own selfishness. They held again, that no ointment should be applied to a wound on the Sabbath, and that in chronic diseases the persons afflicted should endure them a

¹ Wotton's Mishna.

² Heylin in Ecl. Rev. 1830.

day longer, rather than attempt a cure on that sacred rest: but they allowed circumcision to be performed on the same day, in order to uphold their exclusive boast as the favoured people of God. Do we wonder, then, that our blessed Lord healed on the Sabbath-day—do we wonder that he selected chronical complaints as the object of his compassion—do we wonder that he bid the impotent man to take home his humble bed—do we wonder that he made clay and anointed the eyes of the blind? These actions were designed to sweep away the very traditions which perverted the true design, and encumbered the real duties of the Sabbath.

In all this our Lord made NO ALTERATION IN THE MOSAIC LAW, he relaxed no part of the divine commandment, he repealed no particle of the ceremonial usages, (this belonged to the apostolic day,) it was not the Christian but the Jewish Sabbath which he vindicated, and brought back to its original design, by showing that works of necessity and charity were entirely consistent with the letter as well as spirit of the fourth commandment, as well as with the ceremonial and judicial statutes of Moses.

Indeed all our Lord's REASONINGS SUPPOSE THE CONTINUANCE OF THE DAY OF REST IN ITS ESSENTIAL MORAL OBLIGATION UPON MAN. The idea of a worshipper of God without a Sabbath, never entered the mind of a Jew or Christian in any age—much less that of our Saviour. Why regulate, why amend, why modify the false usages, if all was about to be abrogated? Why contend so warmly against the inventions of the traditional masters? Why lay down distinctions between what is lawful and what is unlawful to be done? ¹ Why determine that works of mercy and charity are allowable, thus implicitly prohibiting all other works? Why not silence the Pharisees by declaring that the Sabbath was a merely temporary observance, about to vanish

¹ Mark the expression, "Wherefore it is LAWFUL to do well (to heal the sick and similar acts) on the Sabbath-day."—Matt. xii. 12.

before the permanent law of the gospel? When our Lord, therefore, instead of all this, defends himself and his disciples by a mode of argument in which the permanence of the Sabbath is assumed, we conclude that he meant to teach that the moral obligation of it remained, and would remain under the gospel age.

It is thus he EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED OTHER COMMANDS, taking for granted the validity of the commands themselves, and adding his authoritative expositions. Who ever thought that his extension and new application of several precepts of the moral law, in the sermon on the Mount, was intended to weaken the force of the original commands? Who ever imagined that when the traditions concerning the fifth precept were exposed, and the pretence of "Corban" swept away, that one iota of the law itself was removed?

And all this receives confirmation from our Lord's SUPPOSING THE CONTINUANCE OF THE SABBATH, at a period when all real obligation to a Jewish institution would long have ceased. In foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and directing the flight of his disciples (not the Jews generally—but his disciples—Christians—and this in a private and confidential conference, and applying to a calamity nearly forty years distant, when the ceremonial and civil law of the Jews would long have been publicly abrogated by the mission of his apostles) he bids them to pray, "That their flight be not in the winter, NOR ON THE SABBATH-DAY;" as these two impediments, the one from the nature of the season, the other from the obligation of the fourth commandment, would obstruct their escape. The observation cannot be expounded by any superstitious fears of violating a ceremonial or Mosaical precept, or even the tradition of the elders; because flight under eminent peril was allowed by the Pharisaic traditions. The argument, therefore, is unanswerable.

But how did THE INSPIRED APOSTLES UNDERSTAND their Master's doctrine? What was their conduct immediately upon the descent of the Spirit, and in the interval between the abrogation of the ceremonial law, and

the change of the day of rest from the seventh to the first of the week? Did they, or did they not, honour the Sabbath? A very few words will suffice on this point: because no one ventures to deny that their devout observation of the Jewish rest extended even beyond the time when the Christian Sabbath (as we shall prove in our next discourse) superseded it. They were so far from neglecting the Sabbath, that they kept for a period, in order to conciliate the Jews, both the Mosaical and Christian. I speak not of the holy women, who, imbued with their Lord's doctrine, and guided by his conduct, hesitated not a moment to "rest the Sabbath-day ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT;"¹ eager as they were to provide spices and ointments for his body. I dwell not upon the notice of the sacred day, which occurs naturally and without effort, in the Acts of the Apostles, even where the Jews are not concerned: "And the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached unto them the next Sabbath. And the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God."² Nor will I do more than refer to the apostle's habit, copied from that of his divine Lord, of sanctifying this most ancient of institutions: "and Paul, AS HIS MANNER WAS, went in unto them, and three Sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." "And he reasoned in the synagogue EVERY SABBATH."

So contrary to the truth of the case is it, to suppose that our Lord and his apostles abrogated the law of the Sabbath—THEY DID NOT EVEN RELAX IT. It wanted no relaxation. Like every other, the fourth commandment was "holy, just, and good." It contained in itself all that principle of suspension in cases of real necessity, which the mercy of the Almighty from the first intended, and which the tenor of the precept was meant to include. Not even the ceremonial and temporary appendages of the Mosaical economy were violated by our Lord. All his conduct exalted and honoured the day of his heavenly Father, and vindicated it from the false

¹ Luke xxiii. ⁵⁶ §.

² Acts xiii. 42—45.

glosses of the masters, which, injurious as they were to the Jewish religion, would have “eaten as doth a cancer” into the Christian—and, in fact, would have been a fatal obstruction to its universal propagation.

To relax, indeed, any one of the moral and essential rules of human duty, would have been the very thing which OUR LORD MOST POINTEDLY CONDEMNED in his sermon on the Mount—it would have been a curse, not a blessing, to man. The moral law is in all its parts a transcript of the divine goodness, and the materials of human happiness. What man wants is, not an alteration of the moral law of his Maker, but pardon, grace, salvation—motive and strength to love God and to keep his commandments, and more particularly that which is rather a boon and gift than a precept—which was MADE FOR MAN; and which, when cleared by the Lord of the Sabbath from the austerities which perverted all its designs, is set forth in his kingdom in more than its original dignity and glory.

III. We proceed, then, to our next point, which is indeed implied in what we have already proved—That nothing is abrogated under the Christian dispensation with respect to the Sabbath, but THOSE TEMPORARY AND FIGURATIVE ENACTMENTS WHICH CONSTITUTED THE PECULIARITIES OF THE JEWISH AGE.

For that these are abrogated it is important for us to remember. We maintain not now the Jewish Sabbath, nor the Mosaic Sabbath, nor the ceremonial Sabbath. Here we request a particular attention. It is a misconception almost constantly made. The moment we defend the original institution of the Sabbath as enacted in paradise, or its perpetuity and authority as a part of the moral law, we are suspected of leaning towards the Jewish Sabbath. And when we go on to show that our Lord never violated the Mosaic enactments, but honoured them in his whole ministry, and left the Sabbath in its full force, we are condemned at once as bringing in again the abrogated ceremonies. We assert, then, just as strongly, that the Jewish Sabbath is abolished, as we

maintain that the primitive and patriarchal is restored and reanimated with the peculiar grace and motives of the Christian dispensation. The moral, essential law of the day of rest remains, nay is increased in obligation, like every other precept of the decalogue; the ceremonial and judicial superadditions have passed away with the temporary dispensation which gave them birth.

Our argument from the example and doctrine of our Lord went, indeed, to prove, not only that he recognised the moral law of the fourth commandment, but that he also honoured its Mosaical ceremonies, because he was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God." What we now assert is, that after the resurrection of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the gospel-day burst upon the world, and dissipated "the shadows" of the Jewish law—that the Mosaic covenant "decayed and waxed old, and vanished away," and that the evangelical covenant took its place—and that all that part of the sabbatical observances, which was temporary and figurative, and dependent on the Jewish theocracy, was carried away; and nothing left but the primary essential law of one day's religious rest, after six days' labour, as first promulgated in paradise, as re-established and reduced to a written precept in the moral law, and as explained and vindicated from Pharisaical impositions by our gracious Redeemer. We have now a better covenant, a nobler mediator, a more glorious high-priest, a more free and unembarrassed way of access, a richer sacrifice; other altar, temple, worship, and sacraments; and a new and simpler sanctification of the Sabbath, as the season allotted for all these duties. The introductory dispensation is taken out of the way, the scaffolding removed, the emblems abrogated; and the last dispensation, the spiritual building, and perfect atonement, are come.

The Jewish Sabbath is no more in force SINCE, than it was BEFORE, the Mosaical economy. The double sacrifices, and indeed all sacrifices, of animals; the shew-bread; the holy vestments; the Levitical priesthood itself; the civil and judicial statutes; the signs and badges of a national covenant; the ceremonial ablutions; the

spirit of bondage ; the whole manner and tone of worship as suited to that servile and imperfect state of things, are gone. These, if now insisted on, (and some of them have been in certain periods of the Christian Church,) may be justly denominated “carnal ordinances;” “weak and beggarly elements;” “a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.”¹ We are, in all these and similar respects, to stand fast in “the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage.”²

The converts, indeed, from the Jewish people were permitted to observe for a season the injunctions of the Mosaic institutes—and those connected with the Sabbath amongst the number—supposing they relied not upon them for justification. Thus St. Paul circumcised Timothy, fulfilled his vow as a Nazarite, kept the Jewish Sabbath after the Christian had commenced, walked unblamably in the ordinances; that is, “to the Jew he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; to them that were under the law, as under the law, that he might gain them that were under the law.”³

But the authority of all that was ceremonial was void, and the practice gradually ceased. The Gentile converts were strongly urged to resist all imposition of the antiquated yoke, and were taught the true spirituality of the Christian. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” Such is the apostolic declaration; to which succeeds the inference—“Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or the new-moon, or of the Sabbath-days; which are A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME; but the body is of Christ.”⁴

And yet more pungently to the self-justifying Galatians: “How turn ye again to THE WEAK AND BEGGARLY ELEMENTS, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage! Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I

¹ Gal. iv. 9; Acts xv. 10.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 20.

² Gal. v. 1.

⁴ Col. ii. 14—17.

am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain.”¹

So, with his wonted tenderness, where sincerity of faith appeared, to the unestablished Roman converts, “Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one man believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak, eateth herbs. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”²

How these passages could ever be supposed to be meant to abolish the moral and essential law of the Sabbath, (or THE LORD'S DAY, which was the name it assumed immediately upon the Resurrection's drawing it to the first day of the week,) it is difficult to conceive. No doubt, if the anticipated history be received, and the assertion of the merely ceremonial nature of the Sabbath be admitted, this or any other consequence may be shown to follow. But having now a right to take for granted the actual institution of the day of rest in Paradise—its primary moral character and obligation, from its incorporation into the decalogue—its essential dignity and importance even when surrounded with the appendages of the intervening economy of Moses—its inherent authority as urged by the most evangelical of the prophets—and its entire authority and force when purified from the corruptions of the Pharisees by our Saviour;—having a right to take all this for granted, the passages just cited strongly confirm our general argument, by showing that nothing but the ceremonies and shadows connected with it are dispersed; the substance still remaining.

In fact, what took place with regard to the fourth commandment, happened, as we have already observed, to all the others. The moral law assumed, as it entered the Mosaic dispensation, her robes of emblematic and civil ceremony. Each commandment was adorned with appendages. When that dispensation ceased, she put off her robes, and re-assumed her original simplicity of

¹ Gal. iv. 7—11.

² Rom. xiv. 1, 5.

attire. And now the Queen of days approaches us with that native majesty and authority which was veiled, but not lost, during the figurative age;—a majesty and authority, which was derived from her first coronation in Paradise, which was augmented by the public proclamation of her rights on Mount Sinai, and which she retains with increased privileges and prerogatives under the New Testament.

IV. For this is the last point which establishes the dignity and glory of the weekly day of religious rest under the Christian dispensation, THAT THE DISTINGUISHING PROMISE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HAS FOR ITS OBJECT TO RENDER THE DUTIES OF THE SABBATH MORE DELIGHTFUL, AND THUS INCREASES TENFOLD THEIR OBLIGATION.

For what is the distinguishing promise of the New Testament? What is the characteristic of the gospel? Is it not the larger grace of the Holy Spirit? Is it not that it is “the ministration of the Spirit?” And what is the most important office of the divine Spirit? Is it not to write this very law, these very ten commandments and none other, this very decalogue which was effaced from the heart of man by the fall, and which was republished with so much solemnity on Mount Sinai, and written on tables of stone with the finger of God, and deposited in the ark—is it not TO WRITE THIS LAW UPON THE HEART OF MAN? And would our Lord have promised the Holy Spirit for this purpose, if he had himself relaxed any part of this law? And does not this promised aid increase the obligations of this law upon man, and exhibit its importance with a tenfold force?

Read the apostle’s comment in the 8th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, where he describes the new covenant, and contrasts it with the old; “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because

they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put MY LAWS (the very decalogue of which we speak) into their mind, and write them in their hearts."¹

And accordingly is not the first commandment, to worship one God, thus written upon the heart? Is not the second, to worship him not with graven images? Is not the third, not to take his awful name in vain? And so of all the others. And is the fourth then omitted? Is there a gap, a failure in the divine code? Was the fourth precept inserted in the decalogue by a mistake? Are there ten commandments in the law, and only nine written on the heart? Is the institution of the Sabbath engraven and exhibited in the very order of the first creation, and not engraven in the order of the new creation?² Is the soul of man formed to this heavenly temper in all other respects, and has he no taste for devoting the seventh portion of his time for the immediate service of his God? No, my brethren; we have no abrogation of the immutable law of God under the New Testament. On the contrary, the office of the Holy Spirit is to infix it deeply in all its parts on the inmost soul of man. This confirms all our preceding arguments; and especially that from the conduct and doctrine of our Lord, by whom the Spirit was sent for the comfort and guidance of the church.

The apostle yet more distinctly teaches us this, when he says, that the Christian is an epistle of Christ, and refers to the two tables of the law as transcribed on the human heart, and to the Holy Spirit as the divine Author of the transcription. Mark, I entreat you, his language: "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not IN TABLES OF STONE, but IN FLESHLY TABLES OF THE HEART."³ Here then are the two tables of stone, the

¹ Heb. viii. 3—10.

² "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" or, NEW CREATION.—2 Cor. v. 17.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 3.

two tables of the law—the first and second—the one containing the precepts of the love of God; the other, those of the love of man. Here is a precise transfer of this law, a removal from mere tablets of stone, to the fleshly tablets of the heart. In this transfer, do any of the commandments fall away? In the Christian's heart, the two tablets are re-impressed, the two tablets as they came from the hand of God. And has the fourth commandment disappeared in the passage, through which all the rest have found their way from the tablets of a literal inscription, to those of the Christian's heart? No, my brethren; if “there were a window in the Christian's bosom, you would see the fourth commandment filling as large a space of that epistle which is written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, as it does in the decalogue of Moses.”¹ You will find the Christian saying, “I delight” in this, as well as every other part of “the law of God, after the inner man;”² you will find him acknowledging with St. John, “HIS COMMANDMENTS are not grievous;”³ you will find him saying with the Psalmist, “Therefore hold I straight ALL THY COMMANDMENTS, and all false ways I utterly abhor.”⁴

Now just in proportion as the Holy Spirit is the grand peculiarity of the Christian dispensation, is the obligation of all the commandments, and therefore of the fourth, increased. We stated in a former place, that the new motives which the advancing privileges and light of the church continually afforded, were so many additional claims of the day of rest upon man. But how much more are these claims strengthened by the aid now vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit—this aid being the distinguishing object of all his operations—producing a transfer of the law of the Sabbath from stony to fleshy tables; and thus ending in a far lighter burden indeed as to external service, but a far weightier obligation in respect of love and gratitude?

But it is time to close the discussion, which has been

¹ Chalmers.

² Rom. vii. 22.

³ 1 John v. 3.

⁴ Psalm cxix. 128.

necessarily long. A case has been made out which commends itself, I trust, to every attentive hearer, and which strengthens the proofs of our preceding discourses, and carries on the argument to a moral demonstration. I have dwelt at length on the conduct and doctrine of our Lord, because it is the only point of apparent difficulty. The first blush of the other objections condemns them. But the objection raised from this has its plausibility ; it demanded and has rewarded our examination. I feel confident that in the main, the view now presented is the true one. If any doubt is suffered to rest on the question, whether our Saviour violated the ceremonial law of the Sabbath, it is a subordinate point. Supposing he did violate the letter of this law, it was as “ the Lord of the Sabbath,” in the discharge of the highest of all commissions—that of the Saviour of mankind. The topics which would remain would still be conclusive—that our Lord honoured and revered the institution itself—based his defence of what he did and said with regard to it on the Old Testament, and the admitted usages of the Mosaic dispensation—only opposed the false commandment of the traditionary doctors—and left the moral and substantial duty untouched. These points would be admitted. Add then, to these, the express recognition of the ten commandments by Christ and his apostles—the conduct of the apostles in honouring the Sabbath after his example—and the special office of the Holy Ghost under the gospel, augmenting the obligation, whilst it facilitates the discharge of its duties—and we have an accumulation of evidence which requires no aid from the question of our Lord’s exact conformity to the ceremonial law.

Let any one apply the argument as thus deduced from the reasonings and conduct of Christ concerning the moral law of the Sabbath, to any statute of human legislation which had been loaded with unauthorized usages, and let him ask himself, what would be the necessary effect of such reasoning and such conduct upon the authority of the original provisions of the statute ; and he

would instantly say, the establishment of that authority in its real and paramount force.¹

I conceive that the duty of dedicating one day in seven to the worship of Almighty God was so wrought into the consciences of all his true servants in every age, after its re-promulgation in the moral law had revived the memory of its glory as infixed in the order of creation—and that the observance of it was so reasonable in itself, so necessary to man, as man, and so delightful also to the devout mind—that the thought would never have occurred to any creature, that our Lord abrogated the fourth commandment. **THE JEWS ACCUSED HIM OF BREAKING IT, BUT NEVER OF DENYING ITS OBLIGATION OR SAPPING ITS CLAIMS.** The Jews at the time of Christ were indignant even at the violation of their oral precepts concerning the Sabbath, and they carried their prejudices with them into the Christian church. The Gentile converts had many of them been accustomed to religious festivals and days of repose—the corruptions and faint vestiges of the original Sabbath. All therefore were prepared for keeping the fourth, as well as every other of **THE COMMANDMENTS.** There was no one to deny its divine authority; and when the gracious interpretation of its true import by our Lord, and the change of the day to the commemoration of his Resurrection, (as we shall see in the next discourse,) were acquiesced in, the ends of the institution were fulfilled in the celebration of the divine praises in creation, in redemption, in grace, and in the anticipations of the heavenly repose.

I. **YIELD,** then, Christian brethren, to these accumulated proofs. Open your hearts to the gracious Saviour, that he may re-establish there the authority of the day of his heavenly Father. Consider the many additional motives to its observance which flow from the compassion of your Redeemer; mark his tenderness in asserting the

¹ For example, the question of pauperism in England—the original law for the care of the aged and infirm, cleared from the abuses afterwards superinduced.

day of rest for its proper spiritual purposes ; observe his permission of those works of real necessity and mercy which render an attendance on them more practicable. You have not a Saviour who allows the Sabbath to be buried under the rubbish of human commandments. You have not a Saviour who, from indifference or cowardice, fears to put down the pharisaical imposers of austerities. No. Behold ! he enters the synagogue on the holy Sabbath—he teaches ; he applies to himself the divine prophecies concerning the Messiah ; he heals the sick in confirmation of his doctrine ; he rebukes devils, and they leave the possessed and proclaim his name and glory. It is on the Sabbath that he does this ; and it is in this way that, as the Messiah, he DISTINGUISHES AND HONOURS it. He vindicates his disciples plucking the ears of corn—he anoints the eyes of a blind man with clay—he bids the dropsy quit the frame of one patient, and bids another extend his withered arm—he commands the devout worshipper, bowed for eighteen years, and she raises herself to glorify God—he strengthens the impotent man, after thirty-eight years of hopeless dejection, to carry miraculously his couch, and in that act to prove his cure. Blessed Jesus ! in all this we see thee to be a “merciful and faithful high priest.” In all this we see thy pity in vindicating the day of rest to its proper purposes. In all this we see, not the lawgiver, not the prophet, not Moses, not Elias—but JESUS, the wise and merciful Saviour of mankind. Hadst thou not, O Saviour, thus cleared up the law of the Sabbath by this thine holy example and doctrine, how long might thy church have been perplexed with doubts—how much might superstition and tyranny over the conscience have prevailed ! How little might have been left to man of the real design and consolation of the day of rest ! But now thou hast vindicated the truth. Now thou hast taught, not only that THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN,” but that “MAN WAS NOT MADE FOR THE SABBATH.” Now we have nothing to do under thy new dispensation, but drop the temporary ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and return to the simplicity of the patriarchal worship,

inspired and elevated with the grace of thy all-bountiful Spirit. -

II. And here let us learn, Christian brethren, to shun the INGRATITUDE OF MAKING USE OF THE COMPASSION OF OUR SAVIOUR TO THE TACIT DISPARAGEMENT OF THE SABBATH ITSELF, which our Lord, as we have seen, has honoured by the very acts which were alleged as infringing its sanctity. If the intention of our Saviour was, as I am fully convinced every fair and unprejudiced hearer will admit, to magnify his heavenly Father's institution—if every denunciation against the hypocrisy and severity of the Pharisees was so much of real dignity and authority added to the Sabbath; then let us beware of the guilt of abusing all this to unrighteousness and irreligion. What avails that God allows works of necessity and mercy to be done on the Sabbath, if your practice desecrates the whole day by works of folly and sin? What avails it that God will “have mercy and not sacrifice,” when you give him neither?¹ Surely no abuse of the divine goodness can be more criminal than to take occasion, from a sympathy so exuberant, to rob God of his due, our souls of their best blessings, the poor of their season of repose, the church of the edification of our example. Surely this is a branch of that practical antinomianism which “turns the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into lasciviousness.” And be it well remembered, that if we once violate conscience in our search after truth, there is no telling whither we may wander. The calm examination of the question of the Sabbath is our bounden duty. I am endeavouring to assist you in the inquiry. At the points where mistakes may arise, I have put you on your guard. Time for settling the judgment I readily allow: differences on minor branches of the argument I cheerfully concede. But this I must remind you of; fear, reverence, faith, simple subjection of soul to the truth, are essential to all religious inquiries. Yield, then, to the call of grace. Abuse not the mercy of your Sa-

¹ Ogden.

viour. Rather implore that spiritual influence of the grand Comforter, which may render the duties of the Christian Sabbath a delight and joy.

III. And this is our last point of application. The Jewish Sabbath is no more. It is for the Christian we plead—THAT CHRISTIAN SABBATH FOR WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ESPECIALLY GIVEN. The yoke, not only of pharisaical impositions, but of ceremonial observances, is broken off your neck. The law of the Sabbath is now a law of love, a law of gratitude, a “LAW OF LIBERTY,” as the apostle James terms it, in common with the whole moral law. You must imbibe this filial and gracious spirit, in order to have the true conception of the importance of the institution, and the right feelings for rejoicing in it. The despite done to the Holy Spirit is one cause of the neglect of the sacred day. You seek not his influences to enlarge and purify the heart. You seek not his consolations to animate your devotion. You complain that the Sabbath is a heavy day, to be got over as well as you can. You have no taste for its spiritual duties, no joy at its return, no repose in its divine anticipations. What does this go to prove? That you are yet in the state of fallen nature—and that, as such, you “receive not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto you, neither can you know them, because they are spiritually discerned?”¹ What does this prove, but that you want the love of God, the spiritual life, the vital perceptions of a soul quickened by the Holy Spirit? Proceed then no further. Persist not in a course which only condemns your state of heart. Seek the illuminating and sanctifying influence of the Spirit. Almost the first truth you will discover, will be THE GLORY AND MAJESTY OF THE SABBATH; and the next, that the exercises of that day are the festival and nourishment and element of the renewed and holy heart. Yes, all the transport of the Psalmist, all his repose and joy in God, all his mourning when banished from his courts, all his longing, yea,

¹ Cor. ii. 14.

fainting after his house, all his perception of satisfaction, and relief, and holy pleasure in his service, will be experienced, in proportion as the vivifying Spirit quickens your soul. Men who are formal in religion, naturally betray an indifference to the HOLY DAY. As the means of grace have little practical influence upon them, a small matter induces them to dispense with the encumbrance. But the sincere Christian has his delight in the Sabbath, and in the public and private ordinances of religion; he is "planted in the house of the Lord;" HE IS AT HOME THERE; his best pleasures, his warmest hopes, his most tranquil repose, his plenary satisfaction of soul, his liveliest pledges and anticipations of a heavenly rest, are drawn from the sacred and most gracious institution, in the services of which he waits to be prepared and ripened for that upper temple, those heavenly mansions, where he "shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

SERMON IV.

THE SABBATH TRANSFERRED BY DIVINE AUTHORITY FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, OR LORD'S DAY.

REVELATION i. 10.

I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day.

WE have completed all that is essential in the first division of our general subject. We have proved the divine authority and perpetual obligation of a weekly religious rest. We have traced it from its institution in Paradise to the time of the Mosaical dispensation. We have considered its insertion in the ten commandments, and the dignity assigned to it by Moses and the prophets, as of essential moral obligation. We have also shown that it was vindicated by our Lord from the corruptions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and left in more than its primeval importance and authority. We might now pass on to the second or practical division of our subject, if we were not called on first to consider THE TRANSFER OF THE DAY on which the Sabbath under the gospel is kept, from the last to the first of the week. As the stress of the law has from the beginning been shown to lie on the proportion of time between the working days and the day of rest, the mere change of the particular period in the week

when we celebrate our Sabbath, cannot in itself be considered important. So long as one day is sanctified out of every seven, the purport of the institution is accomplished. Still it is necessary to explain the manner in which the alteration took place. For as the seventh day in order was fixed by the Almighty himself after the work of the creation, and as the Jew observed the same, or at least considered his six days' work to precedé, and not follow his Sabbath, it is important to show the authority which retarded its celebration under the gospel, and fixed it one day later than the Jewish usage. Any change in a divine command, though in a point of itself subordinate, requires a sufficient reason, or we shall be guilty of altering, of our own minds, an authoritative rule of Almighty God.

We shall show, then, in the present discourse, that our day of religious rest, under the gospel, is not the Jewish Sabbath, but the Lord's day. We shall show that the change from the seventh to the first day of the week, was made on the authority of Christ and his apostles. We shall show that the transfer took place naturally, and almost necessarily, from the events attending the accomplishment of redemption. These points will of necessity occupy time—perhaps more than any preceding topic. But they will deserve all our care; as the alteration in question, non-essential as it is in itself, has perhaps more disturbed the minds of uninformed Christians, and more aided the cause of those who oppose the divine authority of the Christian Sabbath, than all the other objections together.

To proceed, then, in order, we shall first direct your attention to several PREPARATORY CIRCUMSTANCES in the history of the law of the Sabbath, which lay a probable ground for the change of the day: and then, secondly, the manner in which THE CHANGE ITSELF WAS GRADUALLY INTRODUCED.

I. The preparatory circumstances are numerous.

For, first, the PROPORTION OF TIME, which we have more than once alluded to, is not only an obvious part of

the first institution in Paradise, but is so prominent in the wording of the fourth commandment, and in its different republications, as to lay a probable ground for the change of the day of celebration, if any paramount reasons should occur. If out of seven days, one be sanctified to holy rest, the spirit as well as the terms of the law are satisfied. In the general course of nature, indeed, labour precedes repose; and in the primitive institution, the day of the Sabbath fell, from the order of creation and the example of the Almighty, upon the seventh, or last of the week. But even here the proportion of time between the working days and the day of rest, is laid as a foundation for the whole. The distribution of the work of creation over six days, marks the reason why the seventh was given to repose: and shows that the essence of the institution would be preserved, if after six days of labour, one of rest should succeed. Accordingly, in the revival of the Sabbath at the period of the fall of manna, not one word is said of the last day or the first day. All you can collect is, that they were to gather manna six days, and make a Sabbath of the seventh.¹ Again, the fourth commandment, as we have said, is so worded as to admit of the change of the day of rest, without at all violating the institution. And this the divine lawgiver doubtless so arranged, with a view to the alteration which the gospel would introduce. The Jew could never have determined from this command on what day his first Sabbath was to be kept. It enjoins no more than that the interval of time between rest and rest should be six days. The proportion of the days is the essential point. The Christian Sabbath, in the sense of the fourth commandment, is as much the seventh day, as the Jewish Sabbath was the seventh day. It is kept after six days labour, as that was. It is the seventh day, reckoning from the beginning of our first working day, as well as their Sabbath was the seventh day, reckoning from the beginning of their first working day.² So, in all the recapitulations

¹ Exod. xvi. 22—31.

² “The fourth commandment does not determine which day of the week we should keep as a Sabbath; but only that we should

of the fourth commandment, the substance is the proportion of time which we dedicate to God—a seventh portion with respect to the six days' labour—and therefore the six days' labour are always noted when the seventh is spoken of. The day when we begin to compute is, abstractedly speaking, of very little consequence. Our Lord's day may be called the seventh in the relation to the six days' work, as it is called the first in reference to the Jewish Sabbath which preceded it. This single circumstance clears the whole question.

2. But there is, in the next place, the highest probability that the exact computation of time from the creation was LOST DURING THE BONDAGE OF EGYPT, and that the Jewish Sabbath was reckoned from some other day—the day of the Egyptian redemption, for example—and not from the day when the Almighty rested after the creation. If this be the case, we are thrown yet more completely upon the proportion of time. Two thousand five hundred years of an unwritten law, closed with centuries of oppression in the Egyptian captivity, had in all probability disturbed the exact reckoning of weeks. An irregular observation of the sacred day had crept in previously—the impossibility of generally celebrating it at all, was doubtless one consequence of their taskmasters' exactions;¹ and thus, though the institution was by no means effaced from their memory, the order of weeks was most likely interrupted. Nothing is more difficult than to preserve, in an early state of science and civilization, the accurate calculation of festivals, especially when recurring so frequently as every seventh

keep every seventh day, or one day after six. It says, ⁴‘Six days shalt thou labour, and the seventh thou shalt rest;’ which implies no more than that after six days of labour, we should upon the next to the sixth rest. The words no way determine where these six days should begin, nor where the rest of the Sabbath should fall: that is supposed to be determined elsewhere. The precept in the fourth commandment is to be taken generally of such a seventh day as God should appoint, or had appointed.”—*J. Edwards*,—and so Dean Milner.

¹ Cogitavi in Egypto ubi serviabas, etiam ipso sabbato per vim te esse coactum ad labores.—*Manasseh Ben Israel, on Deut. v. 15.*

day, and admitting of an insensible removal from their position, by changes in the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. The alteration is in such a case slight, and the relative order of things is kept up. Many learned men, therefore, agree in thinking that it is highly improbable, that the day observed as the first Sabbath after the deliverance from Egypt, was precisely the same as the day on which the Almighty rested after the creation of man. They think it more likely that the redemption from bondage was the period whence the new reckoning dated.¹ Certain it is that the ten commandments are prefaced with a reason drawn from this great benefit—"I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."² And, what is more important, at the recapitulation of the law forty years afterwards, the same preface to the decalogue is retained, but the motive enforcing the fourth commandment is no longer drawn from the work of creation, but from that of redemption, as if that were the reason and date of the particular day on which the celebration was renewed. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm; THEREFORE the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day."³ Not a word is here said about the creation, as when the institution in paradise was cited in the first promulgation on Mount Sinai; but the Sabbath is expressly appointed to commemorate the mighty deliverance from Egypt. It is probable, therefore, that this was the day whence the new computation started. Therefore when the Son of God appeared on earth, and wrought out an eternal redemption, it was natural, it was almost necessary, that the day should be changed from the commemoration of the type to the commemoration of the antitype. The Sabbath thus follows the mightiest benefit in each

¹ J. Mede, Grotius, Abp. Bramhall, J. Edwards, Dean Milner, Scott, all think the reckoning was lost, and was recommenced at the fall of manna, Exodus xvi. And most of them conceive the new computation began from the day of Egyptian redemption.

² Exod. xx. 11.

³ Deut. v. 15.

dispensation. In the patriarchal, CREATION; in the Mosaical, THE TEMPORAL DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT; in the Christian, THE SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION from sin and death by the death and resurrection of Messiah. The essential point, the proportion of time, is untouched throughout. But let us proceed to observe,

3. That these things being so, the VERY FREEDOM AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION would lead us to think that the same principle would be carried on, that is, that the precise day of the week on which the Sabbath should be kept, would be less insisted on, and that a rule would be laid down applicable to all nations, in all ages, and in all parts of the world. While men were few, and lived nearly in the same quarter, as before the dispersion of Babel and during the Mosaical economy, it would be easy to keep a pretty exact computation of the succession of time, as soon as the date from which the reckoning was to begin was given—or if the date was lost, as it probably was during the bondage of Egypt, as soon as the new era was once determined on. But consider how different is the nature of the case under the gospel. Here you have not a distinct line of patriarchs, or a favoured nation under a theocracy, but a dispensation designed for the whole race of mankind, whose disciples are multiplied in every quarter of the globe, and live under all meridians, and with every variety of civil government and scientific improvement. An appointed season dependent on a succession of days, and losing its validity, if the day be miscalculated, seems, therefore, not very likely to be established under such a dispensation. Of two navigators sailing round the world in opposite directions, one would lose and the other gain a day in his computation—there would be a variation of two days. Now, which would be the seventh day of the week to each of the navigators? When Pitcairn's Island in the South Seas was visited a few years since by an English ship, our voyagers, on the day when they arrived, which was Saturday, found the islanders observing Sunday; the English ship and the islanders having arrived at the

island by sailing from England in opposite directions. Under the gospel, then, we might expect that our duty would be fixed upon a plain and easy computation, that after six days of labour there should succeed one day of rest, without obliging men in all the different regions of the earth, and under all circumstances, with reckoning up the course of weeks or the order of days from the beginning, which it would be utterly impossible for them to settle, if it were material.

Now admirably the wisdom of God has provided for this in the arrangement and wording of the law of the Sabbath from the first, I need not observe. Nor is it necessary to remark how naturally the change of the Jewish day of observance, to the Christian, would fall in with this design, and expedite the practical execution of it.

I think one would allow these remarks to be almost enough for the point in hand. Suppose any should say, the day of celebrating the sacred rest of religion has been changed under the gospel to honour our Lord's accomplishment of redemption, and has been so kept, as nearly as possible, by the whole church of Christ from the very age of the apostles; the essential law of the Sabbath, the proportion of time, being always preserved inviolate—I should conceive such a statement would be satisfactory. Nor do I think anything would have been objected to such a statement, if the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath had not been assumed to be the same with the seventh-day Sabbath in paradise. This confuses the subject. It seems to make the seventh day a fundamental matter; whilst the real substance of the institution, the measure of working and resting days, is forgotten. Doubtless, also, those who had first feigned an anticipated history, and then banished the Sabbath from the moral law, and lastly, accused our Saviour of repealing that command, have been ready enough to seize on the merely non-essential circumstance of the change of the day of celebration, to prop up their falling cause. And thus it has happened that this subordinate, has in truth become a primary question, from the accidental importance attached to it. But we proceed.

4. THE WORD OF PHOPHECY, again, seems to afford such intimations as are quite consistent with a change of the day of the Sabbath. This is all we might expect during the prevalence of the Mosaical economy. The "old creation," says the Prophet—the state of things under the law, shall not be remembered, but the "new creation," the state of things under the gospel, shall;¹ that is, as we may probably deduce, the Christian church shall have her ministers, solemnities, sabbaths, and holy ordinances, all referring directly to the Messiah; a new dispensation shall be introduced, in which the alteration shall be so great and extensive as to be fitly compared to "new heavens and a new earth;" which shall efface the memory of the old. Such is the import of the whole passage: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come to mind." "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."²

But a passage predicting the change of the day of celebrating the Sabbath, or, at the least, giving an intimation of it, is found in the 118th Psalm. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."³ For the stone spoken of is Christ; the passage being six times applied to him in the New Testament. He was rejected of the builders when he was put to death; he was made the head of the corner, when he rose triumphant from the tomb. While Christ lay in the grave, he lay as a stone cast away by the builders; but when raised from the dead, he became the head of the corner.⁴ This was a great and marvellous act. Now the day when this was done, as we are next

¹ Probably included in the expression in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "The world to come," ii. 5.—So the best Commentators.

² Isa. lxy. 17; lxvi. 22, 23; and J. Edwards on them.

³ v. 22, 23.

⁴ Dr. Lightfoot and J. Edwards.

taught, is appointed to be the day of the rejoicing of the church. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."¹ To what day does the prophet here refer? On what day did Christ rise from the dead? Was it not on the first day of the week? Was not this the very day of triumph, the glorious day of Messiah's being made the head of the corner? Does the psalmist refer, then, to any other day? Or does he not rather refer to this most distinguished and peculiar one? To this, no doubt. And what does he say shall be the employment of it under the New Testament? "THIS IS THE DAY which the Lord hath made; we will REJOICE AND BE GLAD in it." The prediction is more probably thus interpreted, because the celebration of public worship is the topic which introduces it, "Open to us the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and will praise the Lord: this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter."² Here then is an intimation, to say the least, that the Christian day of joy shall fall on the day of the resurrection of Messiah—which the Lord's day hath done ever since the promulgation of the gospel. We dwell not, however, on this topic. It may or may not have weight. A further one has greater force.

5. In the next and most perfect dispensation of the divine grace—the gospel—such a COMPLETE REVOLUTION ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE IN THE WHOLE STATE OF THE CHURCH, that it seems not unnatural that so important a branch of religious observances as the Sabbath, should follow the new order of things. This remark gives colour to the intimations of the prophetic word which we have just noted, and falls in entirely with the previous topics, the preparatory circumstances in the terms and arrangements of the law, the probable change of reckoning in the wilderness, and the demands of an universal religion. The Sabbath, in the progress of ages, was continually acquiring new ends by new manifestations of the covenant of redemption; and those

¹ v. 24.² v. 19, 20.

new ends coming to their height in the gospel, justify a correspondent alteration in a subordinate point of the sabbatical institution. "The priesthood being changed," says the apostle, "there is made of necessity a change also in the law."¹ We have a new Mediator, a new covenant, new promises, a new way of access, a new spirit of holy confidence, a new High Priest; and therefore a new object in the computation of the weekly Sabbath, THE GLORY AND TRIUMPH of the Mediator in his resurrection. These form that "dispensation of the fulness of times when God gathers together all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things in earth."² Not one thing only is changed, but all. Accordingly, "the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind."³ The Sabbath, then, probably follows the new course. And this appears the more likely, from the circumstance of the new creation being described as leading to the rest of the Mediator after he had completed it, even as the old creation led to the rest of the Almighty after he had finished his work—a rest granted in each case as a boon to man, and pledging that eternal rest with God in heaven in which it terminates, and which is the ultimate felicity proposed in all the dispensations of grace. This is not the occasion for entering into the details of the apostle's argument on this subject.⁴ We observe only, that as at the first creation the

¹ Heb. vii. 12.² Eph. i. 10.³ Isa. lxxv. 17.

⁴ Let the whole passage be attentively read. I insert a few words of parenthesis, to convey the interpretation of the best commentators. "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest. So we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us," (by the gospel,) "of entering into his rest," (that of the Lord Christ,) "any of you should seem to come short of it. For we which have believed, do enter into rest," (the Christian Sabbath and rest, as a pledge and preparation of the heavenly.) "For he spake in a certain place," (Gen. ii. 2,) "of the seventh day in this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again," (Psalm xcvi. 11,) "If they shall enter into my rest. There remaineth therefore a rest," (a day of sabbatical rest in earth and heaven, and the one the pledge of the other,) "for the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest," (even Jesus our Lord, the author of all this new creation) "he also hath ceased from his own works"

Almighty was pleased to work six days, and then rested on the seventh, in order to exhibit an instructive lesson for man's imitation; and as his resting on the seventh day was a sufficient intimation of the precise day of Sabbath appointed for man: so in the second creation Christ wrought his work of restoration and redemption during his ministry, and then rested and was refreshed from that kind of work by which he laid the foundations of "the new heavens and the new earth; and thus he marked out precisely the new day of sabbatising under the gospel, the first of the week. Then "he ceased from his own works, as God did from his;" then he entered by his resurrection into his rest; then he rested and was refreshed, and saw of "the travail of his soul, and was satisfied;" then he left, in the new day of Sabbath, a new pledge of heavenly felicity to his church.

Thus to each dispensation of the divine covenant a peculiar rest was attached—to the patriarchal, to the Mosaical, to the evangelical. The patriarchal was founded in the FIRST CREATION, after which God ceased from his works, proposed to man a rest for himself in heaven, and appointed a Sabbath as a remembrance of the one and the pledge of the other. The Mosaical dispensation was founded in the REDEMPTION FROM EGYPT, when God again ceased from his mighty works of forming and creating a people;¹ proposed a rest with

(of redemption and new creation) "as God did from his," (of the old creation.) "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest," (of heaven, of which our Christian weekly Sabbath is a pledge and foretaste,) "lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Dr. J. Owen, J. Edwards, Dwight, Scott, Arch. Pott, &c., concur in the above interpretation; which is, as I think, the only one that can stand.

¹ "This people I have formed for myself."—Isaiah xliii. 2. And so in many other passages, the Mosaical covenant is termed a creation, the work of God's hands, &c. It is worth observing also, that the last glorious state of the church terminating in the rest of heaven, or perhaps the heavenly state itself, is described in the Apocalypse under the same image; "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth."—Rev. xxi. 1.—Owen, Edwards, &c.

himself to man, and gave him the pledge of it in the Jewish Sabbath. The gospel dispensation is founded in the NEW CREATION wrought by the Lord Christ, who redeems, renews, and writes his law upon the heart of man by his Spirit, and introduces a new and more spiritual state of religion. From this creating work Christ ceased at his resurrection; he was then refreshed in the view of his works, and proposed his own rest to be called after his name, as the sign of the new covenant and the pledge of the heavenly rest (the sabbatising, keeping of a Sabbath) which remains to his people. And as the day of repose followed certainly the precise order of working and of rest in the first dispensation, and was altered, as we probably conclude, in the Mosaical, to follow the day of redemption; so in the last and most perfect dispensation, it is again changed as to the precise time of its celebration, to dignify the day of spiritual redemption; and thus the patriarchal and Jewish Sabbath become the Lord's day.¹

We can suppose nothing more fitting, more necessary, so to speak, than so slight and yet significant a change! What! have we a new church, the gospel; new ordinances in that church, ceremonial worship taken down, and spiritual set up; new sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, for circumcision and the passover; a new Mediator, Christ instead of Moses; a new covenant, founded on the better promises of the gospel; a new command of that covenant, to love one another; a new object of divine worship and confidence, the Lord Jesus;—in a word, have we all things new; and have we not a new Sabbath fitted for all this new creation?² Yes, the Jewish rest is, under the gospel, THE LORD'S DAY.

But even on this we do not insist; we have merely noticed the prophetic intimations and the entire change in the state of the church under the gospel, to show that they are consistent with the alteration of the day of Sabbath rest—and perhaps were preparing for it.

¹ Owen.

² Lightfoot.

6. One more indication must be noticed, which binds together all the preceding. THE CLAIMS WHICH CHRIST ADVANCED DURING HIS MINISTRY, OF LEGISLATING FOR THE SABBATH, AS ITS SOVEREIGN AND LORD, lays a probable ground for the alteration of the day of its observance, and even intimates that some such change would take place. One of the most striking of these claims is in the passage which we formerly considered.¹ Jesus there asserts, first, the grand moral end of the Sabbath—then cautions us against the perverse traditions which would render man a slave to the external forms of that institution—and lastly, draws this emphatic and oracular conclusion, “THEREFORE THE SON OF MAN IS LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH,” exalted as that appointment confessedly is, most ancient in time, first in dignity, most universal as to extent, most durable and permanent in point of continuance—he is Lord even of the Sabbath, to claim it as his own, to change the day of its celebration, to fix on it his own name, to sweep away human traditions, and re-establish it in all its original simplicity and compassionate aspect upon man. Yes, Jesus is the “Lord of the Sabbath;”—“the heir of all things,” “the first-born from the dead,” the “head over all things to the church,” “the prince of life,” the “only begotten of the Father,” the “Lord of all.” He is not, like Moses, “a servant,” but has power “in his own house,” as a “Son,” to dispose of the affairs of that house as he may please.²

With this high claim accords another which he made on the very same occasion—the defence of his disciples when accused wrongfully of having violated the Sabbath. “BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, IN THIS PLACE IS ONE GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE,”³ glorious as it is, surrounded with tokens of the divine majesty, the seat of religious ordinances, and the place of the immediate manifestations of the Deity. “There is one greater than the temple,”—which is a figure merely of my human nature, and derives all its dignity from the indwell-

¹ Mark ii. 27, 28, Sermon III.

² Heb. iii. 5, 6.

³ Matt. xii. 6.

ing Deity. "There is one greater than the temple,"—and therefore one authorized to regulate the service of the temple, and fix the day of religious assemblies in his church.

Once more, when accused of the Jews, most probably before the Sanhedrim, on the very same subject—a supposed violation of the Sabbath—how sublime is his reply! "MY FATHER WORKETH HITHERTO, AND I WORK."¹ What a claim is implied in these words! The interruption, indeed, given by the Jews, upon his uttering this language of Deity, leaves us in some uncertainty as to the precise import of the argument; but if it be considered as only an assumption of divine operations generally, it is still conclusive as to his power over the Sabbath and the Jewish corruptions of the law of it. But if we refer it, with Dr. Lightfoot, to his working like his Father, who ever acts by his providence, even upon the Sabbath, though he rested from the works of creation on that day, and blessed and sanctified it; the argument of our Lord is more direct to his immediate purpose. It then imports, 'As my Father, though he hath ceased from the act of creation, worketh still in all succeeding time, the Sabbath not excepted, in sustaining man, rescuing him from danger, recovering him from sickness, sending him rain from heaven and fruitful showers, causing his sun to rise upon him; so I, the Son of God, work also in carrying on my providential acts continually, and even on the Sabbath; fulfilling my divine mission, healing diseases when occasions present themselves, proving the truth of my doctrine by enabling an impotent man to bear away his couch before my assembled adversaries, vindicating the Sabbath from unauthorised impositions, claiming it as my proper institution, and fixing the day of its observance after my own pleasure.'

Here, then, are laid grounds for the alteration of the day. What more appropriate than the LORD'S DAY, to mark the authority of "the Lord of the Sabbath?"

¹ Jehn v. 17.

“If one greater than the temple be here,” what more becoming than that the worship of the New Testament temple should follow his resurrection? If as “the Father worketh hitherto, so he works,” what more natural than that he should display his power in making the Sabbath his own, working on it his deeds of mercy and grace, and fixing it in his own kingdom as a trophy of his resurrection?

Yes; these indications are almost sufficient for the point in hand. We may even now venture to profess and say, “The first day is the Sabbath of the Lord our Redeemer; the Lord Jesus hath blessed the first day and hallowed it:” even as the ancient church professed and said, “The Lord hath blessed the seventh day and hallowed it—the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord our God.” In a word, the last declaration which our Saviour made in commissioning his apostles after his resurrection, includes an unlimited power over his church, and therefore the authority of changing the day of celebrating its weekly rest: “ALL POWER is given me in heaven and earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations—teaching them to observe all things, WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU.”¹

We proceed, then, to consider,

II. THE MANNER in which the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week, WAS GRADUALLY INTRODUCED BY THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF OUR LORD AND HIS APOSTLES.

After such preparatory indications of the transfer of the day of rest, and such arrangements, from the very beginning, to admit of it, much will not be necessary to show the divine authority of it, when actually introduced. For the change being in itself subordinate, and in no way touching the substance of the command, nay, being agreeable to the very wording of that command, we want nothing but sufficient intimations of the will of God, to warrant our compliance with the practice of the

¹ Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

universal church from the days of the apostles. When an objector says, he requires an express injunction, in precise and formal terms, for the observation of the Lord's day, he speaks without consideration. If he requires an express injunction in precise and formal terms for the religious dedication of one day in seven to God, we have it in the institution in Paradise, and in the words of the fourth commandment. But if he requires such an express and formal injunction for a subordinate change in the day of the week when that Sabbath should be kept, we reply, that the case does not require it. If God had so made our faculties, that we were not capable of receiving intimations of his will, even in matters not affecting the substance of a commandment, in any other way than by a new and express injunction, there would be some reason to require one. But God hath given us such understandings, that we are capable of ascertaining his will in such cases, in another manner. If God deals with us, then, agreeably to our nature, and in a way suitable to our capacities, it is enough: and he may expect our notice and observance, and does expect our notice and observance, in the same manner as if he had made known his will in express terms.¹ In a case, then, like the present, we want no direct precept. The perpetual moral obligation of giving one day to God, after every six days' labour, is confessed. The institution has been preserved on this footing through every dispensation. It is honoured and left in all its force by Christ and his apostles. There is no room then for a new precept, as for a duty unknown. On a point not in itself essential to the command, the tacit example of our Lord—the time of the fulfilment of the chief promise of the New Testament—the doctrine and conduct of the inspired apostles,—the events in providence which swept away the Jewish polity and Sabbath,—the universal practice of the Christian church in the primitive and all following ages,—and the uninterrupted blessing of God resting from their time to the present on the transferred day;—these constitute suf-

¹ J. Edwards.

ficient intimations of the will of God. We deduce the divine authority of the change of the weekly rest from the Jewish to the Lord's day, as certainly from such intimations, as we deduce the divine authority of the essential duty of a weekly rest itself, from the transactions in Paradise and the formal and express injunctions of the moral law.

1. Our Saviour, then, after his passion, **BEGAN TO INTRODUCE** the actual change tacitly and gently, by his rising from the dead on that day. **THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK IS THE DAY OF HIS RESURRECTION.** In the eternal councils of the Almighty was **THIS**, and no other, day fixed. The whole arrangement of the institution of the passover had from the first a respect to his great fulfilment of this typical sacrifice. Accordingly it is repeatedly and emphatically noted by the evangelists as the precise day of his conquest over the grave. He foretold it himself. The Jews were aware of the expected fact, and prepared, as they could, against it. His appearances after his resurrection, marked the day which was to become the Lord's. Having risen on that blessed morn, he manifested himself four times before its close, to his disciples; and thus celebrated, or rather constituted, **THE FIRST CHRISTIAN SABBATH**, on its new day of being observed, by his own presence. All the evangelists seem to delight in marking that it was on the first day of the week, and no other, that these transactions took place. St. Matthew tells us that at the very dawn of the **FIRST DAY,**" the two Marys had the early tidings of the resurrection of their Lord. St. Mark informs us, that "very early in the morning," that glorious event occurred. St. Luke relates the same, with the same notification of its being on the **FIRST DAY** of the week. St. John bears testimony, that "on the **FIRST DAY** of the week cometh Mary, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre," and there witnesseth the first manifestation of her risen Redeemer.¹ The second appearance, to the three women, was vouchsafed the same day.² The journey to Emmaus,

¹ John xx. 19.

² Matt. xxviii. 9—11.

and the being "known in the breaking of bread," was the third visit. And the fourth closed the first Christian Sabbath. It was made to the assembled disciples, who were already convened on that day, ready to begin, as it were, that joyful season, the moment their Lord should appear, to open its solemnities. Accordingly, "the same day, at evening, BEING THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord!"¹ Their joy in the resurrection of their Master now began the Lord's day; to mark out and separate which more distinctly, the intervening week is allowed to pass without any repetition of his visits. But lo, after six days' work, the day of rest returns, and the SECOND LORD'S DAY is honoured likewise with the presence of Christ; the evangelist especially noting the time of this manifestation, which is not done as to any other, by any of the evangelists. "And after eight days again,"² (the Jews including the portion of the days from which, and to which, they reckon) "his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst." "This second meeting on the same day of the week," says Paley, "has all the appearance of an appointment, a design to meet on that particular day."

Nothing is said as to the time on which the following manifestations were made; nor do we want them. They would have introduced the new day, not so gently and gradually, as we shall see it was our Saviour's intention to introduce it. It now, as it were, insinuates itself by the very circumstances in which the apostles were placed. The Lord of the Sabbath was lying in the grave on the precise day of the Jewish rest. It would have been impossible for the mourning disciples to have celebrated the praises of the great Creator, of the Redeemer from Egyptian bondage, of the God who had promised, and had given them, the Messiah and Saviour, whilst

¹ John xx. 19, 20.

² John xx. 26.

that Messiah and Saviour was in the tomb, and all the prospects of his kingdom were shrouded with the darkness of death. That last Jewish Sabbath was no Sabbath to them; but a day of sorrow, dejection, anguish, consternation. The spouse could not rejoice whilst the bridegroom lay buried in the grave. But when the Lord arose on the first day of the week, then, and not before, were "the disciples glad." THEN DID THEIR SABBATH BEGIN; the necessity of the case changed the day of peaceful happy rest in the worship and praise of God, from the Jewish Sabbath to the Lord's day. The celebration was not retarded, not forgotten. The old day was buried with Christ—the new arose with him. He had in the old creation rested (as being the author, one with the Father, of that six days' work) on the seventh day and sanctified it; but now, as the author of the new work of creation, being detained in the prison of the grave on the old seventh day, he takes another day to rest in, the following or first of the week, which thus becomes the Lord's day. Everything essential in the command goes on as it did; the non-essential point of the precise time is changed, or rather delayed, a single day, to wait for its rising Master, and assume a new dignity, and be a memorial of the manifestations of a new and greater creation.

2. The first day, thus begun to be introduced, is next marked by THE GIFT OF THE GREAT PROMISE OF THE DISPENSATION which it was to characterise. This will demand only a moment's notice. The day of Pentecost has been abundantly shown by learned men¹ to have fallen on the Lord's day. The disciples are assembled with one accord in one place—the usual place of prayer: "when suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost."² By this gift the gospel church is first erected, and its heralds endued with power from on high. Thus the great distinguishing benefit of

¹ Lightfoot, Dwight, &c.

² Acts ii. 2.

the New Testament being vouchsafed on the Lord's day, confirms the newly-instituted season, which is to be henceforth known as the Christian Sabbath. The Holy Ghost descended upon it. The author of the "new creation" had already arisen upon the same day. We join then these topics of joy to the original praises due for the glories of the first creation; and our Lord's day is dedicated to our triune God and Saviour as manifest in the tri-unity of persons—it is dedicated to God the Father, as the day on which the praises of the most noble creatures for their first production are offered—it is dedicated to God the Son, whose resurrection this day was the new creation of the world—it is dedicated to God the Holy Ghost, who on this day descended visibly upon the apostles, as if he would proclaim aloud that he hallowed it unto himself.¹ The gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, honours and marks out the Lord's day.

3. THE DOCTRINE AND CONDUCT OF THE APOSTLES will, in the next place, be found to bring in more decidedly, yet still tenderly and gradually, the new day of Sabbath.

They were endued with the Holy Spirit, granted at this very season, on purpose to found the gospel dispensation, and settle its order and worship. The conduct of these holy men, who were commissioned and delegated as ambassadors for Christ, has a divine authority. They teach indeed by their writings, they teach by their sermons and instructions; but they teach also by their conduct and example. They had the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit. They delivered nothing to be observed in the worship of God, but what has the same force as if delivered by Christ himself—it proceeds indeed from Christ himself. In a matter of subordinate regulation, when the substance of a command has been known from the creation of man, their intimations are abundantly sufficient; just as their devout and detailed instructions are indispensable on important and fundamental

¹ Archbishop Bramhall.

points of doctrine or practice. "If men will presume," says Baxter, "that apostles filled with the Spirit, appointed the Christian Sabbath without the Spirit, they may question any chapter or verse of the New Testament."

We have their testimony, then, for nearly sixty years recorded in the inspired pages; and this incidentally, and in a manner which supposes the change from the Jewish to the Christian Sabbath to be known and received in the churches. Thus, in two references made after an interval of nearly thirty years from the resurrection, the observance of the first day of the week was so far established even in the remotest places, that the sacred writers speak of it as a matter familiar and customary. "We came to Troas," saith St. Luke in the Acts, "where we abode seven days. And upon the FIRST DAY of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow."¹ Here on the first day of the week is a meeting, not of a few friends, but of the whole body of the disciples, as a Christian church, at a great distance from Jerusalem. It is spoken of as a practice already established and well known—it is an accustomed meeting, not upon an extraordinary summons. Paul preaches to them being thus assembled together. The zealous apostle doubtless taught privately on other days: but it was on the first day of the week, when the whole church was accustomed to meet, according to their duty, for the celebration of Christian ordinances, that he preached solemnly and publicly to them. It even seems that he waited the arrival of the day—for he was ready to depart, and did depart on the morrow of it—but he would not proceed on his journey till after the first day of the week, and the instruction and ordinances of that sacred season had taken place. We thus learn that already the same, or nearly the same, mode of celebrating the Sabbath was observed as in modern times—public assemblies—the preaching of God's holy word—the administration of the sacraments—with

¹ Acts xx. 6, 7.

public prayer and praise, and acts of charity to the poor, constituted the Christian worship.

At the same, or nearly the same period, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthian church, incidentally mentions the observation of the Lord's day as a matter of course, not to give directions about the day itself, but in order to enjoin certain additional duties which were to form an important part of the sanctification of it. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order 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 be no gatherings when I come."¹ It hence appears that the constant day of the church's assembling was fixed and well known—it was the first day. The apostle, therefore, merely directs the discharge of an especial duty upon it, in addition to the ordinary ones of prayer, breaking of bread, and preaching the gospel. He directs them to charitable contributions; and he directs this in a manner which implies that it should be done on the first day of the week and no other, as if no other time would do so well as that, or was so proper a season for such a work. He notices also, that he had given the same order to other churches, especially to the churches in Galatia, though divided by the sea, and lying at a great distance from Corinth. Thus the Lord's day was generally acknowledged. It was celebrated by Christians, we see, before the New Testament was written, and is referred to in the books of it as already established. Indeed, the obedience to the gospel, and to its ordinances, began first upon the authority which the apostles received from Christ, and the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus the churches were formed, and the doctrine and sacraments admitted. And thus also the Lord's day was sanctified, as appears from the casual references made in the history and epistles of their founders.

But we go on. At the close of the first century, and after an interval of thirty or forty years from the time

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

when the above passages were written, the words of our text were uttered by the beloved apostle—the sole survivor of the apostolic college, in his extreme old age, and when about to record the revelations made to him by the Spirit. This brings down the direct scriptural evidence to the close of the first century.¹ “I WAS IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD’S DAY,” is the brief and pregnant expression. He merely denotes in this way the time when the revelations of the Spirit were made to him, by the mention of a day, the appellation of which was well known throughout the Christian churches. It is no new appellation, or he would not thus incidentally have introduced it. A new name would have created surprise, not communicated information. By the Lord’s day was undoubtedly meant the first day of the week, for we find no footsteps of any distinction of days which could entitle any other to that appellation.² Now if this be so; if sixty or seventy years after the resurrection, and when the destruction of Jerusalem had made way for the full developement of the gospel, the first day of the week is called THE LORD’S DAY, even as St. Paul calls the Eucharist THE LORD’S SUPPER—if the one be the memorial of the Lord’s resurrection, as the other is of his death and passion,—then we have the most satisfactory evidence of the apostolic usage, and therefore of the divine authority of the change of the Jewish into the Christian Sabbath.

4. But the EVENTS OF GOD’S WONDERFUL PROVIDENCE, which swept away the Jewish polity and Sabbath, completed the change which had thus gradually been introduced, and had spread so widely. To avoid needlessly exasperating the prejudices of the Jewish converts, and the malice of the great body of that nation, the transfer of the day of the Sabbath was made for a long time silently and gradually. Our Lord lays the foundation of the change in his example, and in the choice of the day for conferring the great gift of the New

¹ About A. D. 96.

² Paley.

Testament. The apostles follow his example; and, as we have seen, the practice had become general within thirty years from the crucifixion. But we have no express prohibition of the Jewish, nor injunction of the Christian Sabbath. It was a matter subordinate, and was now to make its way by the force of circumstances and the tacit influence of the apostles' doctrine. On the question of the Jewish ceremonies indeed controversy arose—circumcision and keeping the law of Moses were made the occasion of supplanting the great doctrine of justification. But where no dispute arose—where all observed one day in seven for religious rest—where no yoke was attempted to be imposed on the Gentiles, the apostles were “gentle as a nurse cherisheth her own children.” The Jewish converts were allowed to observe the Mosaic Sabbath. The Gentiles, who had previously celebrated their pagan festivals, renounced these on their conversion, for the holy rest of the Lord's day. They spontaneously kept the Christian Sabbath as a natural duty, a branch of the moral law, an effect of that most general commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart”—and an injunction expressly given in the fourth commandment. The Jewish converts still observed their own Sabbath; but then they yielded without objection to the apostolic example and authority, in joining the Gentile converts in celebrating the day of their Lord's resurrection. They were circumcised; but they were also willingly baptized. They celebrated the passover; but they willingly added the Lord's Supper. They worshipped in the temples and the synagogues; but they assembled also in the Christian churches. So long as the Jewish services were neither attacked nor neglected, they made no objection to that of the Christian church. Thus the new ordinances grew into use, veneration, and habit. When the apostles declared in the Epistles to the Galatians and Hebrews, that the Jewish covenant was ready to vanish away, and that no reliance whatever upon its ceremonies was to interfere with a simple faith in Christ for justification, the minds

of the Jewish believers were prepared to submit. Thus things continued for nearly forty years after the resurrection.

The destruction of Jerusalem takes place. The Jewish polity is dissolved. The temple is left without one stone upon another. The Jewish priesthood, altars, sacrifices, covenant, Sabbath, all disappear. The Lord's day becomes the day of religious rest. No controversy arises. The seventh-day Sabbath dies without a struggle, by the force of circumstances directed by an unfailing providence. What wisdom and consideration, then, appears in the conduct of the apostles! As the whole church of Jewish and Christian converts agreed in one grand moral duty, the consecration of a day of rest to God, and as the stream of events was about to carry away the whole Jewish economy, the apostles left matters to work. They laid down the general truth of the non-obligation of the Mosaical law—they consecrated, by their example, the change of the day of the Sabbath; but they awakened no unnecessary prejudices. They cheerfully met the Jewish assemblies on the seventh day, for the purpose of preaching the gospel to them. They issued no public decree. A non-essential matter, they were assured, would find its level. How great would have been the consternation of the Jewish believers, if their Sabbath, their golden day, one of their chief commandments, the badge of their nation, the glory of their state as a church, had been openly impugned! Nor could the apostles have abolished it, so far as it was a political ordinance, and interwoven with the civil polity of the Jewish people. They waited therefore. They left the Jewish Sabbath gradually to expire, and the Christian to succeed, without any express command, or any attempt at a violent and sudden transfer.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the case became different. The time of concession was over. Moses had vanished away. The Jewish church was no longer the church of God. The dispersed Jews were under the judicial blindness which the rejection of their Messiah had brought upon them. Their hatred of Christianity

was infuriate. Christians then must now openly separate from the communion of a repudiated church. The Jewish Sabbath, the most visible character of their worship, must now openly give place to the Lord's day. The consecration of that day is now a necessary protest against Judaism, even as the Jewish Sabbath had been against idolatry. Christians unite the two. Their Lord's day is an open protest against atheism and idolatry on the one hand, and against Judaism and superstition on the other. By it they publicly profess their belief in the three grand articles of the creed—"In God the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth," who first instituted at the creation a weekly rest after six days' labour—"And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord," who rose on this day, and drew to it the season of sacred joy—and in "the Holy Ghost," who descended on the same day to found the church and qualify the apostles, and who is its abiding comforter and guide.

And thus the Lord's day is gradually but firmly and completely established, by exactly that kind of evidence which the nature of the case demanded, and the wisdom of God saw to be best. Its authority is divine, because the example of the Lord of the Sabbath, and of his apostles, inspired to found his church, is a divine authority for any change; especially for one immaterial in itself, and entirely consistent with the fundamental law of the institution.

5. But it may naturally be asked, what say ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORIANS—what the apostolic Fathers? Do they bear witness to the observation of the first day of the week? Do they ascribe to the command of Christ, and the inspired founders of their churches, the transfer of the day of rest from the last to the first of the week? To this we reply, that there is no one fact upon which all testimony more completely agrees than this. "I should hold it too long," says Bishop Andrews, "to cite them in particular; I avow it on my credit, that there is not an ecclesiastical writer in whom it is not to be found."¹

¹ Bishop Andrews on the Ten Commandments—a work of in-

Ignatius, a companion of the apostle St. John, says, "Let us no more sabbatize, but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our life arose."

Justin Martyr, at the close of the first, and the beginning of the second century, tells us, "On the day called Sunday is an assembly of all who live in the city or country, and the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read." And he adds, that "it was the day on which the creation of the world began, and on which Christ arose from the dead."

Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, who had been the disciple of St. John himself, says, "On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keeps the Sabbath, meditating on the law, and rejoicing in the works of God."

Tertullian, at the close of the second century, asserts it to be "the holy day of the Christian church assemblies, and holy worship"—that "every eighth day is the Christian's festival"—"kept as a day of rejoicing."

Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, in the time of Irenæus, says in his second letter to the church of Rome, "To-day we celebrate the Lord's day, when we read your epistle to us."

St. Ambrose observes, "The Lord's day was sacred or consecrated by the resurrection of Christ."

The council of Laodicea, about the year 363, forbade Christians to rest from labour on the seventh day, "for Christians ought not to rest on the Sabbath, that is, the seventh day, but preferring the Lord's day to rest as Christians, if indeed it is in their power."

St. Augustine tells us, that "the Lord's day was by the resurrection of Christ declared to Christians, and from that time it began to be celebrated as the Christian's festival."

Epiphanius, in his sermon upon the day of Christ's resurrection, has this expression, "This is the day which God blessed and sanctified, because in it he ceased from all his labours which he had perfectly accom-

comparable value—from which, and from Baxter and Dwight's most able treatises, I collect my testimonies.

plished, the salvation both of those on earth, and those under the earth."

Athanasius says, "The Lord transferred the Sabbath to the Lord's day." The Emperor Constantine, as soon as he embraced the Christian faith, made a law to exempt the Lord's day from being Juridical.

And finally, Leo (A.D. 469) thus expresses the sentiments of the whole Christian church: "We ordain, according to the true meaning of the Holy Ghost, and of the apostles thereby directed, that on the sacred day wherein our own integrity was restored, all do rest and cease from labour; that neither husbandmen nor others on that day, put their hand to forbidden work. For if the Jews did so much reverence their Sabbaths, which were but a shadow of ours, are not we which inhabit the light and truth of grace, bound to honour that day which the Lord himself hath honoured, and hath therein delivered us from dishonour and from death? Are we not bound to keep it singular and inviolable, well contenting ourselves with so liberal a grant of the rest, and not encroaching upon that one day which God hath chosen to his own honour? Were it not reckless neglect of religion to make that very day common, and to think we may do with it as with the rest?"¹

Thus decisive is the testimony to the fact, that the Lord's day was considered by the primitive church to be appointed by the divine authority of the apostles, the especial delegates and ambassadors of Christ, armed with his commission, and inspired with his spirit.

It deserves remark, that the brief description which Pliny, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, gives of the Christian worship, entirely accords with our general testimony: "They are accustomed to meet on a stated day before light, and to sing amongst themselves hymns to Christ, as to a God." Indeed, the celebration of the Lord's day was so notorious even to the Heathens themselves, that it was ever a question of theirs to the martyrs, "Dominicum servasti?" "Do you keep Sunday?"

¹ In Hooker.

And their answer was equally well known; they all aver it: "I am a Christian; I cannot omit it."

6. And why should I detain you longer? Why should I do more than notice THAT PERPETUAL BLESSING WHICH HAS ATTENDED THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH, and which attends it now?¹ Why should I call to your memory all the conversions which have crowned the Lord's day during eighteen centuries, in every part of the world? The whole church has been built up upon this divinely-transferred season—the whole church has been enlarged, comforted, sanctified on it. If the primitive Christians were mistaken in supposing the change from the seventh to the first day of the week to have been of apostolic authority, then God has permitted this mistake to be confirmed, and to take root, by his especial blessing, and the continued operations of his grace, during the whole period of the Christian church. But the idea is too absurd. For when we consider the comparative non-importance in itself, of the particular day in the week on which we keep the Sabbath, supposing the portion of time which the eternal rule of the fourth commandment requires, is preserved; and when we reflect on all the preparatory circumstances which laid a probable ground for the change; and when to these we add the gradual but decisive manner in which that change was introduced, sustained by the events of God's awful providence in the destruction of the Jewish polity and Sabbath, and testified by the united voice of all ecclesiastical antiquity; we have a mass of evidence to the divine authority of our Christian Sabbath, sufficient to satisfy every candid mind. The blessing of God, therefore, which has actually attended, and is actually attending, in such large and perpetual operations of grace, the Lord's-day, is in full accordance with every other species of proof, and crowns the whole argument.

The change, indeed, after all, amounts only to this. Under the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, the Sabbath was considered as following the other days. Under

¹ Dr. Dwight urges this consideration with great force.

the Christian it precedes. Under the former economies, creation and the redemption from Egypt were the greatest benefits conferred upon man. Under the Christian, the spiritual redemption—the resurrection of Christ—the new creation of the world. The Sabbath, therefore, waited a day for the triumph of its divine Lord, and then took the precedence, and led on the other days. In all these dispensations, the proportion of time dedicated to the immediate service of God, in which the substance of the command lay, remained the same, as well as the anticipation and pledge of that rest in heaven in which our Sabbaths are to terminate.

And thus all the obligations that can combine to enforce a moral command on man, have been found to unite in the case of the Christian Sabbath. The argument has gone on accumulating through each part of our progress. The objections have not only been overcome, but turned into additional confirmations. 1. We have seen that from the creation to the rest of eternity, a day of weekly repose and religious worship has been appointed for man. 2. We have seen the six days' work laid out, and the seventh day's refreshment enforced by the Almighty; first in his own example, and then by his command. 3. We have discovered the traces of this most ancient of institutions during the patriarchal ages. 4. After the redemption from Egypt we perceived its reenactment before the law of ceremonies; and its insertion in the moral law, in common with the other primary duties of a responsible creature. 5. It enters the Mosaic economy, not as belonging to it, but as springing, with many other ordinances, from the patriarchal church. As it preceded the existence of the ceremonial dispensation, so it survived its extinction. 6. Even during its passage through the parenthetical and temporary economy, we saw how it lifted up itself on high, above all mere figures and ceremonies. 7. The Saviour appears and reverences, honours, distinguishes the Sabbath by his doctrine and his miracles. The ten commandments he recognises without omission or alteration. As the

Jews had fallen into various superstitions contrary to the true import of the law of the Sabbath, he sweeps away these austerities, and leaves it in its genuine simplicity and grace—as being “made for man, and not man for it.” He intimates, also, a change to be made in its observance, and claims to be its ruler, sovereign, and lord. 8. The particular day not being of the essence of the law, it is silently introduced. The very nature of the gospel as an universal religion might seem to lead to it. 9. The Lord of the Sabbath, he that was greater than the temple, he that wrought in the works of the new creation as Almighty God had in those of the old, laid the grounds for the change before his passion. 10. After his resurrection he established the first day’s rest by his gracious appearance on that day, and his mission of the Holy Ghost. 11. The apostles follow their Master’s example—they declare in their epistles the Mosaical law abolished. They tolerate indeed, till the destruction of Jerusalem, those who from prejudices and misapprehensions kept the Jewish Sabbath, and they attend the synagogues in order to meet the Jews and proclaim the gospel, but they themselves honour the Christian Sabbath; and, after the abolition of the Mosaical polity and state, they leave it as the badge of our faith in Christ, as our protest against Judaism, as our season of paradisiacal and patriarchal repose transferred to the day of the gospel; as our pledge and anticipation of the rest and salvation of heaven: and they encourage the universal church to celebrate on that day, not only the glories of creation, the blessings of redemption, and the hopes of a heavenly felicity, but the triumph of the Redeemer, in which they centre, and by which they are secured.

Let us then, in conclusion—1. **ADORE**, in solemn acts of thanksgiving and praise, **THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF THAT GOD**, who, seeing the end from the beginning, thus laid out the bountiful provision for man’s religious repose in his first creation, carried it through all the dispensations of his mercy, and revived it with so many advantages in the Christian church! Yes; we

magnify thy counsels of grace, thou only wise God; we see something of that manifold and varied wisdom and prudence, with which thou hast abounded towards us. We glorify thy name, not only for the revelation of thy grace in Christ Jesus, and for all the dispensations of it since the world began, but for that attendant ordinance which gives us time to meditate upon them, and to repose in Thee our great and final end. We discern the footsteps of an infinite wisdom, in the magnitude and boldness of that record of the institution of a sabbath, which the six days' work exhibited; and which is large and clear enough to catch every eye, to penetrate every conscience, to decide every honest doubt. We adore Thee yet more, for that regard to human infirmity, which led thee to insert this command in the moral law, and thus bind it upon the hearts of the whole human race, in common with their other most indispensable duties. And in thy gospel, thy wisdom still strikes our view with brighter splendour, in the gracious explications of thy law, uttered by the lips of our Redeemer, and in the gradual and silent introduction of the change of the day of its observance made by thy apostles. O teach us to adore thee in this thy appointment! Let us believe, that every degree of evidence of the divine origin and permanent obligation of thy day, which is good for us in this imperfect state of trial, has been granted; that more evidence would probably have been unnecessary and injurious; and do thou cause us to acquiesce in thy mode of revealing this day of rest, in thy manner of transferring it to the day of the glorious resurrection of our Lord, and in the motives which thou hast accumulated, to urge us to sanctify it aright!

II. But let us notice as a further topic of grateful meditation, that the changes in the circumstances of the law of the Sabbath HAVE SPRUNG UP FROM NEW BENEFITS CONFERRED ON MAN, and should increase his sense of obligation and gratitude. Every change is a fresh blessing. Every new dispensation is a new grace. Every alteration is an advance in the developement of redemption on the one hand, and in the uses and importance of

the institution on the other. The various modes in which the Sabbath has been presented to man, have not been isolated, much less arbitrary enactments, but economies of mercy, divisions in the grand progress of man's salvation by Jesus Christ, new pledges of "the rest remaining for the people of God." Every re-enactment, then, has brought with it new bonds, new obligations, new attractions, towards the spiritual observation of the sacred season. 1. Creation poured its first benefits upon man, the offspring of his God, and bound upon him the day of rest, by all the ties of gratitude to an all-bountiful Lord. 2. The separation of a particular family, to be the repository of truth, and the confessors of the one living God, amidst surrounding idolatry, brought with it new calls to duty, new reasons of religious worship and praise. 3. The covenant with Abraham, the promise of "the seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed," the imputation of faith to him for righteousness, augmented the obligations of sacrifice, of circumcision, and especially of the Sabbath. 4. The establishment of the Mosaic dispensation, on the footing of the redemption from Egypt, and with the promise of the rest in Caanan, placed the Sabbath in yet a new and more inviting light, shed upon it richer grace, made it the commemoration of mightier blessings. 5. The promulgation of the moral law, preceding the dispensation of Moses, but connected with it and subservient to the promises of grace typified in that dispensation, was an inconceivable favour to a wandering and yet responsible creature, uncertain of his duties, surrounded with temptation, lost amidst the corruption and darkness of the world. 6. Every hymn of the royal Psalmist, every prediction of the inspired prophets, augmented the materials of sabbath-praise and meditation, and increased the duty of making such a return of gratitude to God. 7. At last, Messiah appears. Blessed Immanuel, we hail thy birth! Thou art the King, and Priest, and Prophet of an universal dispensation. Thy infinite benefits bind us to thyself. "Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we are to do everything to thy glory." All thy mercies flow together

in this THY DAY, which thou hast transferred to be the trophy of thy resurrection. This is the field where all thy blessings flourish; this the scene where all thy operations of grace are carried on; this the season when all thy praises are set forth.

Yes, my brethren, it is to this Saviour's love that we owe our Christian Sabbath; it is by this Saviour's death and passion, that its duties are bound upon us; it is by this Saviour's Spirit, that its consolations are poured into our hearts.

III. Lastly, mark, I entreat you, that in proportion as THE BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL ARE MORE EXALTED, so should our hearts catch the intimations of our Lord's will with more alacrity, and fulfil them with warmer delight. He re-enacts not in direct terms his day of rest, because all the previous publications of it will act with a thousandfold more force upon the mind of his true people. He leaves it to be inferred from his own example and doctrine, and that of his apostles; because under his gospel, the love of his person, name, worship, will be a spontaneous and overflowing principle, dictated by his Spirit, bursting forth from every heart which is touched with the benefits of redemption, and constituting the very badge and characteristic of his kingdom.

Here, then, we close the first division of our series of discourses—the Divine Authority and Obligation of a weekly day of rest in God, is under all dispensations the same; but under the gospel shines forth with the concentrated light of each preceding period, and is clothed with all the additional majesty which infinite grace and love throw around it. Everything illustrates the duty, and exalts the privilege of that institution, which before the fall was needful to man; but which, in his corrupted and sinful state, is the grand means of preserving religion in the world; the noblest rite of the Christian faith; the substratum and groundwork on which are erected all the means of grace, and all the hopes of glory.

And let it be remembered, that the objections raised against the several branches of our great argument, having been satisfactorily answered, they should no longer be allowed to harass our minds, or weaken our faith, or contract our obedience. THE FULL AUTHORITY OF THE DIVINE INSTITUTION should be admitted; and our efforts turned to those practical questions, which will be the subject of the remaining division of our Discourses.

SERMON V.

THE PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

EZEKIEL xx. 12.

Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.

THE divine authority and perpetual obligation of a day of holy rest and religious worship, have been abundantly proved. Everything conspires to impress us with its supreme importance to man in all ages, and under all dispensations. Such is its antiquity, that it was instituted in Paradise; such its essential moral nature, that it was inserted in the Ten Commandments. Its dignity is so great, that it lifts its head high above the ceremonies of Moses, whilst under that economy. Such is its spirituality, that the holy prophets insist upon it, as a point of fundamental duty, and as about to form a part of the gospel kingdom. Its perpetual force and native majesty are so distinguished, that our Lord, after explaining what the comments of the Jewish doctors had obscured, leaves it in more than its original glory; transfers the day of its celebration to that of his resurrection, and erects it into a trophy of his victory. Such, in a word, is its paramount authority upon the human conscience, that the Christian church in every age, including the Apostolical, has confessed its claims, and made it the occasion of their delight and joy.

It is, in truth, "a sign of the covenant" between God and man; a badge of our Christian profession; the acknowledgment we publicly make of the God who created, and the Saviour who redeemed us; a chief means of that dedication and sanctification of man to his Almighty Lord, which creation and redemption are designed to produce.

And this leads us to the second, and practical division of our whole subject. What is the sanctification of this holy day which is enjoined under the gospel? What is the importance of so observing it? What the evils of the opposite neglect?¹ Lastly, What is the necessity of personal and national repentance for our violation of it?²—Grave questions these, and demanding all our attention. For why the accumulated proofs of the institution, stretching from the creation of man to the rest of heaven, but to enforce its practical duties? And what is the true source of almost all the objections to its divine authority, but the dislike which fallen man has to its spiritual worship, and holy demands? If the rest of the Sabbath be admitted to be external and civil merely—if the public duties of the worship of God be confined to a brief and cursory service—if the private hours of the day be spent in worldly, or intellectual, or festive indulgences—all objections to its authority would cease. Such a Sabbath would be allowed. But if we maintain, that the great end of the appointment is to be a sign of God's covenant, and a means of sanctification—if we maintain the duties of it to extend to all classes of persons, and during the whole of the sacred day—if we maintain that the spirit in which these are to be performed is the filial temper of joy and delight in God—if we maintain that the mighty blessings which are to be especially commemorated are no other than creation, redemption, heaven—if, in a word, we show that the Sabbath, practically considered, is Christianity embodied—revelation set forth visibly in its simple and majestic features—the sign and representation of the covenant of

¹ Sermon VI.

² Sermon VII.

grace,—the means of sanctification exhibited and set before our eyes—then the corrupt reason and perverted affections of man will invent objections to its authority, that they may escape its unwelcome bonds.

These, then, are the very points which in the present discourse we shall endeavour to illustrate: the GREAT END of the institution—its PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DUTIES—the SPIRIT AND TEMPER WHICH it cherishes—the ESPECIAL BLESSINGS which it commemorates.

And here let two remarks be premised. We enforce not the duties of the Jewish, but of the Christian Sabbath. The ceremonial and civil appendages of the Mosaic law, the spirit of bondage, the terrors of Mount Sinai, are passed. It is the gospel in all its grace and loveliness which we maintain—that mild and merciful institution, cleared from the traditionary yoke of the Jewish masters, which our Lord confirmed as the boon and gift originally granted to man. Everything in the Christian Sabbath is tender and considerate on the one hand, everything is spiritual and elevated on the other; and is, in both views, adapted and suited to the real state and exigencies of our nature, under the last and most perfect dispensation of religion.

But then the determination of what is really spiritual, of what is really for the welfare of man, of what are the real duties and employments of the day, must be taken from the Scriptures themselves, and not from the opinions, much less from the inclinations and fashions, of a corrupt world. We must rise to the standard of the Sabbath as set forth in the Bible, not sink the Bible to the level of our wayward passions. This is the second remark. The doctrine of the institution, like the counsel of a skilful physician, is designed to produce a cure of our moral maladies by wholesome medicines, and to foment the disease by cordials, or hide its worst symptoms by opiates and palliatives.

And do Thou, Almighty God and Father, who madest the Sabbath for man, assist us to rise up to its true demands! May the Spirit teach us what thy revelation really imports, and what the day which Thou callest

thine own, is designed to become ! That, knowing our own misery, and receiving with humble faith the redemption of thy Son, we may delight in the services of that season, which is one chief means of communicating the blessings procured by it to our souls !

In considering, then, the practical duties of the Lord's day, we must,

I. Keep ever in view THE GREAT END OF THE INSTITUTION—which is to be a visible sign of the covenant between God and us, and a principal means of that sanctification which it is one object of that covenant to produce.

For it is not merely in the words of the text that this express end is assigned to it ; almost a thousand years before, the Lord had declared by Moses, “ 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.”¹ Thus we learn that this is an essential design of the institution. It received, indeed, especial sanctions, and was connected with particular observances, during the continuance of the national covenant with the people of Israel. But, as in SANCTIFICATION the whole human race are interested, the Sabbath becomes a SIGN to every nation in every age, where Revelation with its weekly rest reaches. It is accordingly immediately connected in the passage above cited with the original appointment in paradise : “ Six days may work be done ; but on the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord—for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”² And so Moses, after receiving the decalogue, and the two commands which form the summary of it, pronounced in another place, “ Thou shalt bind them for a SIGN upon thine hand.”³

The holy day of rest is, then, to be regarded as the sign, badge, or profession of the God whom we serve, and of the covenant of his grace, of which we profess to

¹ Exodus xxxi. 13.

² ver. 15 and 17.

³ Deut. vi. 8.

be members. We testify our allegiance to the Lord who rose again from the dead "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." The Sabbath, interrupting our secular pursuits, and calling us off to the spiritual duties of religion, is a symbol whereby we declare what God it is we worship, acknowledge that the Lord revealed in the Bible is our God and no other; and proclaim ourselves the vassals and servants of that only God who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested the seventh, and commanded us to observe this suitable distribution of time as a badge and livery that we worship him alone.¹ And we keep it under the gospel on the Lord's day, to avow our belief that on the morning of that day, the first of the week, redemption, like a second creation, was accomplished, mortality was swallowed up of life, our Lord rose from the dead, and ceased from his work, and rested and was refreshed; and that we are the servants and worshippers of that adorable Saviour. Thus the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus is set forth in our Christian celebration of this festival. We are not Jews but Christians, and wherever the religion of Christ is established, the symbol and cognizance of the Resurrection comes with it.

And this not for the mere avowal of our allegiance, or the manifestation of the attributes and glory of our Creator and Redeemer, but also for the purpose of promoting that **SANCTIFICATION** which is the end of the covenant to produce. The expression of the text and of the similar passage just cited, is most remarkable: "Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that **SANCTIFY** them." What an exalted end and design of the institution! Sanctification is the work of God's Holy Spirit by his secret but effectual influences upon the heart, separating man from the love and service of sin, and turning him to God and holiness. The idea is that of setting apart, separating, consecrating for certain holy purposes. Thus, when applied to sacred persons,

¹ J. Mede.

times, services, garments, buildings, it imports the separation of them from profane uses, and the dedication of them to the honour of God. So the Sabbath was in paradise sanctioned by the Almighty, that is, separated from ordinary employments, and set apart for the service and worship of God. And how important is the thought, that the design of the Almighty in sanctifying and hallowing a day of Sabbath, was, that man, his moral and accountable creature, might be sanctified and dedicated by means of it—that the external consecration of the season ends in the internal consecration of the heart of man to his Creator and Redeemer !

All the designs of the institution terminate here. The Sabbath was made, granted, vouchsafed to man, as the principal season when all the means of sanctification should have their effect—when man's immortal nature should be restored to its true elevation—when his spiritual and accountable powers should be especially exercised—when his relation to God, his dependence upon him, his obligations, his gratitude and love, his offerings of praise, his prayers and aspirations for future blessings, should be declared and presented.

To rise up to the dignity of the Sabbath, and perform any of its duties aright, we must understand what sanctification is, who the great God is, to whose service we are to be devoted, what that Creator and Redeemer claims of us who on this day rose from the dead, what are the terms of that covenant of which he is the Mediator and Lord.

Even before the fall, man in paradise, as we have seen, needed a Sabbath, a day of religion ; and for the like ends—to be a sign between God and him—to be a means of exercising and carrying on that sanctification, the principles and habits of which he already possessed. He was permitted to cease, he was commanded to cease, one day in seven from the gentle toil of dressing the garden of Eden, that he might devote the time more immediately to his Almighty Creator—to his glory—to the meditation on his perfections and works—to the duties of holy worship and praise—that thus the sanctifi-

cation of all his powers to his service might be confirmed and heightened.

How much more, then, must man since the fall need this holy day, both as a sign of the covenant and a means of sanctification ! He has now not merely to carry on and strengthen habits of holiness, like his first parent, but to acquire them. The covenant, as it respects him, is not a covenant of creation, but of restoration ; not of works, but of grace ; not to show his obedience by observing a law to which his will is already conformed, but to obtain redemption by believing in the divine Mediator of a new and better covenant. Sanctification as to man since the fall, is the recovery of the soul to the lost image of God, the illumination of a darkened understanding, the giving a right direction to the will, the changing of the whole bias and course of his affections and conduct, the bringing him back to God, his great end, and the preparing him for the enjoyment of God, his ultimate felicity.

And this answers the objection which is sometimes absurdly or ignorantly made, “ that under the gospel every day is a Sabbath—all we do is to be done to the glory of God—a spiritual and perfect dispensation claims all we have and are.” And yet in paradise, where man walked before God in his original uprightness, he was called on to keep a Sabbath. How idle then is the plea, now that man is fallen ! Those who urge it, know little of the nature of true sanctification, and of the difficulties under which it is attained in this world of conflict. Even if entire holiness could be reached in this imperfect state, a day of rest would be indispensable for the honour of God’s name, for the more immediate duties of public and private devotion, and for the carrying out into full exercise the principles of holiness. But it is folly, it is presumption to talk thus, whilst man in his best attainments is full of defects and errors, full of corrupt tendencies—needs a day of sanctification to remind him of his dangers, to bring him out from the snares of life, to lift his heart more entirely towards heaven. Those who talk of every day being a Sabbath, mean in fact

that no day should be such. Besides, the expression "keeping holy," as it applies to the ordinary days of the week, and as it fixes itself on the day of God, has a different force and application. To keep holy the six days of the week, means only that we intermingle family and private devotions with our lawful labour and work on those days—that we direct our secular calling to God's glory—that we implore his blessing upon all our occupations. But "to keep holy" the seventh day is to suspend those occupations, to forbear all our ordinary works, to renounce all our secular business, and to devote all the hours of the day to the immediate care of our souls, and the immediate worship of God. We are as much called to work the six days, as we are to rest on the seventh.

This is, then, the first practical duty of the Lord's day, to keep ever in view its great end. The sanctification of it begins, as to us, when our dedication to God begins. We hallow the Sabbath when we ourselves are hallowed to God. We awake to the true importance of the institution, when we feel our fallen and sinful state, when we receive the covenant of grace as proposed in the gospel, when we seek to be sanctified, body, soul, and spirit, to be the Lord's. A divine life infused into the soul of man—a perception of the nature and excellency of spiritual things—a view of the glory and majesty of the great Redeemer—a reliance upon his death and resurrection—a dependence upon the influence of his Holy Spirit,—these bring the Sabbath and the human heart together. The Sabbath is born to man when he is born to God. Then it recalls, revives, strengthens, all the principles of sanctification. Then it not only gives him the time, and affords him the means, and calls him to the duties of sanctification; but it leads him to employ all these to their proper end. And thus the Lord is pleased to sanctify man; thus the day is a sign between him and us; thus the final ends of all religion are advanced.

And here lies the fundamental defect in so many of our cases—we do not feel the unspeakable importance of

holiness—we do not desire sanctification—we stop in the external and official parts of the sabbatical institution; we have lost the due sense of what consecration of heart to God means, and therefore of what we should aim at on the day with which it is connected.

Consider, then, I entreat you, my dear brethren, the only manner in which you can enter on the practical duties of the Lord's day aright. Examine your state before God. Have you any desire to be made holy, to be pardoned, to be separated from sin, to be dedicated to God? Do you wish really to know the demands which Christianity makes upon you? Do you seek earnestly the way of salvation?—Behold, then, what you want. There is the day when all this is to be learned. There is the covenant of which that day is a sign. There is the sanctification which all the ordinances and exercises of that day are calculated to produce. Implore, then, the grace of the Holy Spirit to affect your heart seriously with these truths, and thus will all the other directions we may offer fall into their due place. For sanctification being proposed as the great end of the Sabbath,

II. THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DUTIES OF IT will follow most naturally.

These will demand of us less time, because the main design being comprehended and felt, the details of particular rules will be easy; and yet we must not omit them. They relate to the public worship of the Almighty; the care of our family; our personal and private communion with God; a due attention to all dependent on us, extending even to our cattle; together with such necessary offices of charity as arise in the course of the sacred duties of the day.

I. THE PUBLIC EXERCISES OF GOD'S WORSHIP, and the fellowship of Christians with each other in common acts of prayer and praise, are the leading business of this holy season. The rest from temporal employments is in order to perform the solemn services of the sanctuary in the first place. A holy convocation was a

part of the sabbatical worship under the law. The psalmist, and the prophets after him, dwell much upon the public ordinances, the temple, the house of prayer, the courts of the Lord's house. The first mention of our Lord's conduct on the Sabbath is, that "his custom was" to attend the synagogue. He appeared to his disciples, also, more than once, on the first day of the week, after his resurrection, and changed the day of rest to honour this event. It was on the first day of the week, again, that the apostles met the Christian churches, and preached the gospel to them, and celebrated "the breaking of bread," as the Eucharist is sometimes called. The precept "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," completes the proof and devolves the duty upon us. Man, as a social creature, never glorifies God more, nor advances his own sanctification in a larger measure, than when he openly recognises the Christian religion, and honours the resurrection of its divine Founder in public assemblies. There the Holy Spirit loves to dwell—there the people unite in the confession of sin to the glory of God's righteousness—there they implore in common the gift of pardon, and receive its assurances—there they hear the word of God solemnly read—there the sacraments are administered—there they pour out their litanies at the throne of grace—there they hear the gospel preached and its truths applied to the hearts and consciences,—and there, finally, they sing the high praises of their Maker, Benefactor, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Such worship resembles that of the angelic choirs of heaven. The six days' work and toil and temptation are forgotten—Christ himself is present—it is "none other than the house of God, it is the gate of heaven." Heaven is the place of the public uninterrupted worship of God. Angels and glorified spirits unceasingly cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." And in nothing does the church on earth so nearly approach the church above, as in the harmonious and devout exercises of public worship.

An early attendance—a devout interest in all the parts

of the service—an application to our own case of the prayers, lessons, sermons—fervent gratitude in the offerings of praise—an edifying posture and demeanour—a candid and docile consideration of the doctrine delivered—audible and solemn responses,—these are the indications of the true worshipper; who confines not his public duties to one attendance, but rejoices twice to appear in those “courts” where the heart wishes to “dwell.”

2. THE CARE OF OUR FAMILIES must not, however, be neglected, whilst we first discharge our public duties. We must not leave our children and servants to do as they please, but we must stop all the secular work which might tempt them to violate the holy day, dispose of our concerns with the best management, so as to admit of our household devoting themselves to their religious offices, and encourage them to perform those offices, both public and private, by every suitable means. And therefore the fourth commandment is a FAMILY COMMANDMENT. The heads of families are made answerable for all who are under their roof. “Six days are we to labour, and do,” not the greatest part, but “*all* our work.” There is no exception for the idle, the busy, or the sick. But lest any should feign a plea, the commandment goes on and positively prohibits us from doing any work. “In it thou shalt not do *any* work,” And that a depraved heart, fertile in evasions, may not be able to suggest that children, servants, and cattle, are not included, each class is enumerated: “In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor the stranger that is within thy gates;” and the merciful reason is adjoined in the recapitulation of the law, “that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou.” The discharge of them from all ordinary and servile work is indispensable. If they serve us the six days, we are to take care that they serve God on the seventh. The boon and grant of one day’s rest extends to the whole human race; and we must see that in our household the gift is not lost. It is our business to complete on the Saturday, or postpone to the Monday, what would intrench on the

sabbath-rest. It is easy, it is delightful for the master of the family to do this. He will provide time for all his household to attend once, and if possible twice, the public worship. His domestic prayers will on that sacred day be extended. The more solemn reading and explaining of God's word, with prayers for a suitable state of mind for public services, will be the employ of the Sunday morning; and in the afternoon or evening, as the case may be, he will catechise the young, and give familiar and more detailed instruction to his servants. The head of every family has a charge of souls, as it were, committed to him; he is a priest in his own house. He has to promote the sanctification of all under his roof. His order, his piety, his appearance in public church and in his house, surrounded with his children and dependents, is an acknowledgment and badge of the God whom he worships. He must not, like Eli, yield, from cowardice and a false indulgence, to the bad habits and inclinations of those around him; but, like Abraham, "command his children and his household after him;" and, like Joshua, resolve, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

3. THE PRIVATE AND PERSONAL DUTIES must prepare for, and succeed, the public and domestic. For the Sabbath is for the sanctification of each individual. It is a barrier thrown in upon the current of worldly things, behind which, each one is to collect himself and stem the tide, and work himself back again to his God. More depends on the INTERVALS between the social public exercises of the Lord's day, than we may at first imagine. Fill them up with vain conversations, idle visits, worldly reading, carelessness, indolence, or sloth, and all the fruit of public and domestic worship is destroyed—the taste of them is lost—and the form of them will not be long persevered in. But let these interstices be duly occupied with earnest prayer, examination of the heart, communion with God, meditation, intercession for children, family, friends, and reflections on the public instruction we have received,—and all will assume another complexion. In these secret musings,

the heart is visited with grace, the sermons and lessons sink deep into the habit, the mind is calmed and tranquillized; some additional power of interior devotion is acquired. And it is for these private duties, as well as for the more public, that the rest of the Sabbath is given. They are the cement, as it were, which binds together the separate materials of the sacred festival, which, without it, fall to pieces, sink into decay, and lose all their plastic energy and force. How can we expect any breathings of grace, any communion with the Father of spirits, any quickening and elevation of the heart, if we draw nigh to God merely in the outward form, and mock him with a pretence of service, the affections being left behind? A heart unprepared by private duties, is not likely to be benefited by public; and, on the other hand, instructions and exercises in the house of God, not followed by secret meditation and prayer, are not likely to abide in the memory or influence the conduct.

4. But besides our immediate family, the duties of the Christian Sabbath extend to OUR DEPENDENTS—to “the stranger within our gates”—to all over whom we have any natural influence—and even to the irrational creatures who subserve our comfort, and whose repose is commanded both for their own sakes, and to render more completely practical the duties of religious rest enjoined upon man, their lord. These provisions breathe all the mercy of the divine law: the terms are remarkable—“That thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou”—“Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt.”—“Thou knowest the heart of a stranger.”

How lamentably the spirit of these injunctions is violated, is but too manifest. The shops and warehouses of too many witness against them. The counting-houses and offices, and counsel-rooms of too many are the destruction of souls. The negligence of masters as to the morals of the young, and their religious observance of the Sunday, merely on the plea that they are not domestics, will be no adequate defence at the tribunal of God. The workmen in manufactories are committed to

the care of the persons whom they serve. Contrivance, management, order, are required of them. Influence is a talent for which an account must be rendered another day. All nature is to be hushed into repose on the blessed, hallowed season of rest—all the confusion of the world to cease—all the pursuits of even lawful gain to be suspended—all the hurry of life to be calmed—not only the master and parent with his family, but the principals and conductors of professional or commercial concerns—the statesman in his cabinet—the magistrate on the bench—the merchant in his house of affairs—the traveller on his journey—the lawyer in his office—the scholar in his study—all must be interrupted and called aside, to honour the day which is the sign of the Christian covenant, and the means of Christian sanctification—man and beast are to recreate their wasted powers, the beast in the repose of which it is capable, man in the dignified and rational refreshment, for which God has peculiarly qualified him.

Works of real necessity and mercy may, indeed, be done on the sacred day, such as our Lord by his example authorised, and as the great moral ends of the institution persuade. We relieve the sick from present suffering, we satisfy the demands of hunger, we pluck an ox or an ass from a pit, we give food to our cattle, we use the gentle labour of our domestic animals,¹ so far as may be necessary for conveying us and our families to the public worship of God, when sickness or unavoidable distance compels. But we may not give a wider or more lax construction to the fourth commandment, than what the intention of the great Legislator imports, and our Lord has determined. Such explanation, in opposition to the decrees of the Jewish doctors, as he judged necessary, he gave; but in all other respects he left the

¹ The Shunammite, when her child died, begged of her husband to send her “one of the asses,” that she might go to the man of God. The reply seems to show, that the most devout Jews made use of these animals on the Sabbath, for the purpose of attending the worship of God. “Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? It is neither new moon nor sabbath?” 2 Kings iv. 22, 23.

law as he found it. Works of necessity and charity must not be multiplied without just cause; much less must works of vanity, sloth, carelessness, be performed under the cloke of them. No rule can be laid down for others. Conscience, and a sincere desire to glorify God, must determine. Let the main design of the day, our sanctification, and the practical duties of it, as it respects public and private, domestic and personal devotion, be performed in subserviency thereto, and WORKS OF NECESSARY CHARITY, (for such is the real bearing of the exception, as supported by our Lord's example,¹) will not be unduly undertaken.

And need I stop here to refute the mere evasion, which would allow the obligation of the Lord's day as to public worship, and deny it as to the remaining duties of the institution? What! is it enough merely to worship God for one meagre hour or two, and then resign ourselves to the world and its cares? What! can public worship be celebrated with any spirituality of mind, without preparatory and subsequent meditation and prayer? What! are the family devotions of other days to be discontinued on the day when they ought to be enlarged and multiplied? What! is it the Sabbath MORNING that we are to sanctify, or the Sabbath EVENING only, and not the SABBATH-DAY,—the whole period from the close of the last working day till the dawn of the next? Yes; the whole day is not too long for God, for Christ, for the soul: if the entire command is not complied with, none is.

Or need I stop to enumerate those various secular works, which are unlawful on this day of the Lord? Need I expose the miserable sophistry, which substitutes a mere change of worldly engagements for the holy duties of divine prayer and praise?—What, if I close my office or my shop, and open my drawer of accounts, and write letters of affairs, am I sanctifying the Sabbath? What, if I withdraw from the exchange, or the courts of law, into the chamber of consultation, or the secret room

¹ Dr. Humphrey's Essays, p 43.

of settlements and bargains; is this keeping the Lord's day? What! I employ not my labourers on Sunday, but I pay them their wages, and almost oblige them to make their purchases on that sacred day; and is this to keep it holy? Or, I quit the hurry of the city or town, for the mere sensual indulgence of the suburban retreat—I “eat, and drink, and am merry;” I collect around me friends as thoughtless as myself—I employ my servants in the unnecessary toil of preparing luxurious meals—I go from the church to the ride, the garden, the park, the pleasure-ground, the river. I walk over my farm or my lands, I arrange for the business of the following week, I plunge into literary or scientific reading, I lose my devotional feelings in the abominations of a Sunday newspaper—and this I call religion—this I designate as the sanctification of the Lord's day!

But indeed, Christian brethren, the duties of this holy season are so spiritual, so opposite to the carnal and earthly tendencies of human nature, so surrounded by temptations and suggestions on all hands, that there is not one of us but may discern much to be amended, improved, omitted, supplied. Our order of engagements is incomplete, our care of our family wanting in vigilance, our forethought drowsy and treacherous, our interruptions of religious exercises too frequent and too long. There is much that admits of alteration. Let us look well into our family rules, family habits, family hours, family religion, family attendance on the public worship of God, and we shall discern lamentable marks of decay and lukewarmness—we shall discern many things, which, if not dishonourable to the Sabbath, are at least not so honourable to it as they might be. But this leads me to consider,

III. That in order to keep holy the Lord's day, we must carry THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION INTO THESE DUTIES. We must not celebrate a Jewish, but a Christian festival. We must imbibe that spirit of rest and delight in God, that sense of refreshment and repose, in his more immediate ser-

vice, which the liberty of the gospel breathes, and without some degree of which we can never discharge these duties aright.

The general habit of mind cannot be better described than in the words of the psalmist! "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 crieth out for the living God—a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."¹ Or again, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple."² Or again, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."³

This is the language of delight, of repose of soul in the duties of religion. Join to this the particular discoveries of the New Testament, as to the way of access in the blood of Christ, and by the influences of the Spirit, and we have the complete description of the devotional temper.

In like manner, the holy prophets—"Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold of it—that chooseth the things that please me—that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord—even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer."⁴ Love, choice of God, joy in the house of prayer, stand in complete contrast with a yoke, a burden, a mere task, as too many represent the duties of religion to be.

But the most ample account of the spirit which should pervade the sabbatical duties, is in a passage which, in common with the preceding, we have formerly quoted for another purpose: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day;

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 10.

³ Ps. lxiii. 5.

² Ps. xxvii. 4.

⁴ Isaiah lvi. 2, 7.

and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, not finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.”¹ Here, the spirit of the right observance of the Lord’s day is expressed in a most striking phrase—“If thou call the Sabbath A DELIGHT, THE HOLY OF THE LORD, HONOURABLE, AND SHALT HONOUR HIM.” We are to esteem it honourable, above all other days; we are peculiarly to honour Him, whose bounty created us, whose long-suffering has preserved us, and whose unsearchable goodness has provided for us a way of eternal redemption. Then joy will fill our hearts. The glory of our divine Lord, his majesty, his sovereignty over us, his infinite excellency, his continued benefits, his omnipotent, never-failing providence, will possess our minds; and we shall feel, as the Sabbath morn returns, that we are going to the palace of the great King, that we are approaching the abode of a heavenly Father, that we are going up to God, to “God our exceeding joy.” From this temper will flow the appropriate dispositions which should govern the details of the day. The chief of these is, spiritual repose of heart in God, in opposition to earthly, sensual, intellectual pleasure—“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing THY PLEASURE, on my holy day.” Here is the main difficulty: so long as sensual repose, instead of spiritual; intellectual effort, instead of devotional; the pleasure of the mere appetites, instead of the pleasure of the soul in God, is the governing principle in our religion, the Sabbath will never be kept aright. A change in our taste and estimate of things must first touch the main springs of happiness. Then we shall cease from “doing our pleasure;” and shall willingly aim at doing the pleasure of God. Amusement, recreation, pastimes, indolent repose, satisfaction in worldly company, worldly society, worldly banquets, will cease; and new pleasures will be sought for in the pleasures of devotion, of faith, of hope, of communion with

¹ Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.

God. Then will the Sabbath be a “delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable;” and we shall HONOUR God in it. And thus will our pleasure, ways, words, works, be newly directed. Instead of “doing our own ways,” we shall choose the ways that God commands, and occupy the Sabbath with its appropriate duties. Instead of “finding our own pleasure,” we shall find God’s, or rather, shall perceive a new and more elevated pleasure in his service; instead of “speaking our own words,” we shall order our conversation to the glory of God, and the edification of our neighbour. Perhaps there are few sins more common, and more insidious than that to which these last words refer, “speaking our own words,” that is, secular conversation on the Sunday—news, inquiries, discussions on matters literary, political, philosophical. Thus all impression of spiritual things fades from the mind; the seed of the word is lost; the ordinary associations and habits of the six days’ labours are insensibly resumed, and the Holy Spirit is quenched and grieved.

I need not add here, that the reading of Sunday newspapers is directly in contradiction to the whole spirit which should be cultivated on that blessed day. It encourages the most flagrant violation of the Sabbath, in those who print, who sell, who circulate these monstrous productions—too commonly filled with matter of the most licentious and sceptical tendency; and more injurious and contaminating, from the day on which they are disseminated. They totally unfit the mind for the religious duties before it; or rather, they make those duties impracticable.

But how delightful is the Sabbath, when occupied as it should be! Can any picture be more inviting, than that of a family, a neighbourhood, a parish, honouring the day of God with cheerful and grateful hearts—meditating on that sanctification which is the great design of the day of rest—filling up its hours with the various and important exercises of public and private devotion—and imbuing every act of duty with the Christian temper—with the filial spirit—the spirit not “of bondage again to

fear, but the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father ?”¹ How quickly would difficulties be overcome, if once we found our pleasure in the exercises of religion ! See how men contrive, labour, surmount obstacles, for the enjoyment of what they love ! Observe how eagerly they hasten on the hour, when the pleasure returns. Mark how they endeavour to lengthen the period of its continuance—then contrast with this the weariness they feel in the duties of the Sabbath—how they abridge the heavy employ—how they encroach insensibly on its prescribed limits—how they contrive pleas of necessity for escaping from some of its services—how tame and formal they are in the discharge of them—how late in their arrival at the house of God ! What irreverence in their manner ! How insensible to the sympathies of devotion ! How awake to every slight inconvenience, every occasional prolongation of the prayers or sermon—every pressure of heat or cold—every defect in the manner or voice of the minister ! What does all this betray, but the inward dissatisfaction, the want of harmony of feeling in the services ? Let the spirit of the Christian dispensation imbue their minds, and all would change its appearance. Pleasure, delight, would beam in the countenance, and all would be in keeping with the designs of the Almighty, in the institution of the day.

One caution may here be offered. We ought to preserve the amiable spirit of our Saviour, and the gentle temper of his religion, in our domestic arrangements. Few things are more important than to make the Sunday agreeable, in a proper sense of the term, to young persons and servants. If anything morose and rigid is apparent in our manner towards those placed under our care, it will inevitably create disgust and aversion. And yet remissness, negligence, cowardice, must not creep in. The wise balancing of these things, then, will require much consideration and prayer. Variety may be thrown into the duties, so as to interest the young mind, without lessening in the least their general effect. The reading of

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

the Scripture—the writing or finding texts upon a given subject—the learning of hymns—catechising—the family devotions of the morning and evening—the public worship of God, afford sufficient diversity to excite attention and dissipate lassitude. Much wisdom must, however, be employed, kindness of manner, consideration of age, health, circumstances. There should ever be a due admixture of firmness with benignity—all supported by an uniform example, and accompanied with fervent prayer.

But we hasten to complete our review of the manner in which the Christian Sabbath should be observed, by suggesting, that, in addition to what we have noted, we must,

IV. Especially glorify God for THOSE MIGHTY BLESSINGS WHICH ARE APPOINTED TO BE COMMEMORATED ON THE LORD'S DAY—Creation, Redemption, Heaven.

These are the express topics in the divine praise, for which the Sabbath was constituted. We must join the commemoration of these to the other duties of sanctification, of public and private devotion, and of a temper of filial repose and joy in God. I conceive we are often lamentably deficient in those direct acts of adoration and gratitude, for the peculiar and stupendous blessings of providence and grace, which the Sabbath is designed to celebrate. We enter perhaps into the other branches of our duty with some feeling; but our minds are too exclusively occupied with ourselves, and our own immediate circle of trials and duties—we are selfish and contracted in our gratitude—we do not rise up to God in the magnificence of his benefits—we forget that songs ever new should be chanted to him who doeth such great things for us.

Call to mind how expressly CREATION is assigned as a reason for the appointment of the sacred day—"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are therein,"—not merely at the institution in paradise, but in the Mosaic law, in the various recapitulations of it, and even in the epistle to the He-

brews, where the subject is merely referred to. Yes, the Sabbath is the celebration of God's glory in nature. We confess ourselves the worshippers of "the one living and true God. We separate ourselves from atheists, unbelievers, sceptics, profane contemners of God, now ; just as the patriarchs and Israelites of old separated themselves from heathens, from idolaters, from the pagan worshippers of the nations around them. We should every Sabbath, when we rehearse our articles of faith in the temple of the Lord, or when the sacred histories, and psalms which relate to the creation, are read, as well as in our own private and domestic devotions, glorify expressly the great God of heaven and earth, adore the wonders of his hand, meditate on his wisdom, goodness, and power, and ascribe to him the praise of creation, preservation, continual deliverance. A Christian is the only true philosopher. He sees God in every thing. He acknowledges the traces of his matchless skill on every side. He discovers a father's love in all the order of the universe. He imitates the song by which the first Sabbath was celebrated at the creation of man, when God shouted for joy." The Sabbath is to him a sign, a badge, a cognizance of his allegiance to his glorious Creator, the "King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God"—He "in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways."

2. But REDEMPTION is a yet higher note in the choir of praise, which on the Sabbath surrounds our heavenly King. At the deliverance from Egypt this song was begun ; but at the great deliverance from the spiritual Egypt, it was amplified and exalted. This temporal redemption was prefixed to the promulgation of the whole decalogue, from the Mount of Sinai : "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage ;" and it was attached especially to the fourth commandment, in the last recapitulation of it by Moses : "And remember that thou wast a stranger in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out hence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched

out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day." And the spiritual redemption was the reason of that change of the day of celebration, which, from the temporal, transferred it to the eternal blessing. Yes; on the first day of the week we adore a triumphant Saviour, we meditate on his ceasing and resting and being refreshed from the work of the new creation; even as Almighty God ceased from his. No Sabbath should pass without the praises of our rising, ascending, interceding Redeemer being sounded in the church. It is his own day, the day of his glory, the day of his resting from his labours, the day of his "opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers." The song is already prepared to our hands: "Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."¹ We must add to the other especial duties of the Sabbath, this record of our faith in Christ. We must subjoin to the praises of God the Father who created us, the adoration of God the Son who redeemed us. We must make our public confession of Christ Jesus our Lord. The Lord's day is the badge of the covenant of grace. "He that offereth praise glorifieth me," saith the Lord by the psalmist, "and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God."²

3. Nor should the praise of the Holy Ghost be omitted amongst the especial blessings celebrated on the Sabbath. **THE REST OF HEAVEN** is, by his grace and the anticipations he vouchsafes, sealed to our hopes. This is that eternal repose in God which from the record of the first institution in paradise to the latest argument of St. Paul, has been presented as the final object of the day of rest. It typifies, sets forth, assures to every sincere believer the ultimate happiness at which he aims. "There remaineth a rest," this last refreshment and salvation "for the people of God." Let us look up towards it, dear brethren, in our meditations and hopes. Let every Sabbath

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 18.

² Psalm i. 23.

prepare us for its appropriate employment. Let the Holy Ghost, who on this day was vouchsafed to the church, to be the comforter, teacher, guide, sanctifier, and great Author of all grace under the New Testament, be adored and glorified. Let us implore of him the power to realise the promises of redemption, to view with gratitude the wonders of creation and providence, and to unite all with the prospects of the rest of heaven. St. Augustine considers the Sabbath as peculiarly the law of the Holy Ghost. The first two commandments he looks upon as relating to the honour of God the Father; the third, as especially referring to God the Son, the eternal word, whose name is not to be taken in vain, nor to be reduced to the rank of a mere creature; and the fourth, or sabbatical precept, he refers to the praise of the Holy Ghost, who, as the author of rest and peace in his church, is peculiarly honoured on the day which agrees so entirely with his own office.¹ We enter not into a defence critically of the sentiment of the holy Father. We seize the thought; and glorify God the Spirit on the day which is to raise us by his inspiration to the foretaste and pledge of our heavenly rest!

And now from these considerations on the practical duties of the Christian Sabbath, let us, in applying the discourse,

I. Discover TOPICS OF HUMILIATION from the discussion which has taken place. Which of us discharges the duties of the holy day of God as we should? In fact, the Sabbath is so closely connected with Christianity itself, that as our Christianity rises or falls, so will our observation of the sacred season be elevated, or decline. Nothing is more difficult, considering our corruption and the snares of Satan, than a holy, wise, and kind, and yet resolute government of ourselves and families on the Lord's day. All possible hindrances arise to oppose this duty.

Prayer, therefore, for larger measures of the Holy

¹ See British Review, viii. 483.

Spirit, is indispensable to the right discharge of these important duties. If we can do nothing aright without prayer, much less can we sustain a course of obedience, with love and delight, in the consecration of the Sabbath, without the continual supplies of grace and strength. But these supplies will not be refused to us. Our sins and defects will be forgiven us through the blood of Christ; our infirmities succoured by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus will our Sabbaths pour into our hearts the consolation of the promises; and at length terminate in God himself, who first instituted the day, and who is its highest consummation and end.

II. Remark THE CONVICTION WHICH SUCH A DISCOURSE SHOULD FIX IN THE MINDS OF THE IRRELIGIOUS AND UNCONVERTED. At what a distance are they from the true spirit and temper of the servants of God! They dispute against the divine authority of the Lord's day. They complain of the various duties we enjoin. They declare the impossibility of rising up to such a tone of piety. They invent excuses for absence and omission. But what do they in fact admit in all this, but their want of religious taste and feeling? What do they avow, but the want of spiritual judgment, pleasures, pursuits? The more they argue against the Sabbath, the more they condemn themselves. The further they recede from devotional habits and delights, the greater distance do they place between themselves and God.

Yes, let such be induced to consider their own ways and turn to the Lord. Let them weigh the authority, and remember the duties of God's blessed day; and let them seek that fundamental change of heart which will render the devotions of the day a pleasure, its duties a choice, its proper exercises the spontaneous overflowing of gratitude and love. Then would these Sabbaths be the *NUNDINÆ SPIRITUALES*, the "spiritual market-days" to their souls; then would they be as anxious to carry away *COMMEATUM ANIMÆ*, the provision for the mind, for reforming the will, for regulating the affec-

tions, for illuminating the understanding, as they are careful to carry away provision for the body from the markets whither they resort.¹

But what can we say as to the spiritual state of those multitudes, who still continue to have little or no conscience about hallowing God's blessed day? Where shall we place them? Under what class are they to be arranged? Where is the indolent and sensual Sabbath-keeper or rather Sabbath-violator to be placed, who rests only as his ox, or his ass, or his cattle? Where is the pleasure-taking Sabbath-breaker to be arranged? Where the gluttonous and wine-bibbing? Where the busy, mercantile, or professional Sabbath-breaker, who thinks that the hurries of his concerns excuse him from the worship of God? Where is the formalist's Sabbath, whose heart remains behind, when his person and his lips seem to approach his Maker and Redeemer? And what shall we say to the infidel's Sabbath, the scoffer's Sabbath, the debauchee's Sabbath? Alas! the heart turns sick at the fearful guilt of the numbers, who, with knowledge, and opportunities, and means of sanctifying the day of grace, abuse, neglect, despise, violate it.² Let such awake, ere it be too late, to their immense loss, as well as to their heavy criminality before Almighty God.

Shall God, my fellow sinner, have consecrated a day from the creation of man, and wilt thou stand out against his gracious command? Shall God have republished his will in the fourth commandment of the decalogue—shall he have enforced it by all the motives of his righteous authority—shall he have poured around it all the milder glories of the new covenant, as well as the tremendous judgments of the old, and wilt thou not give God his due? Wilt thou not yield him the just rent which he demands upon the gift of thy time, thy health, thy property, thy six days' labour? Wilt thou remain insen-

¹ Bishop Andrews.

² Bishop Andrews speaks wittily of the *Sabbatum asinorum*—*Sabbatum aurei vituli*—*Sabbatum Satanæ*—*Sabbatum Tyri*; the Sabbath of Asses—of the Golden Calf—of Satan—of the men of Tyre.

sible to thine eternal interest, thy present and future happiness, the preparation thou needest for death and judgment? O consider thy ways, seek thy Saviour's forgiveness, be ashamed and confounded for thy past neglect. Begin a new life. Enter upon a new course. Seek that holy taste and divine principle of life which will make the Christian Sabbath natural, interesting, pleasant, delightful, necessary.

Take at least the preparatory steps. If you cannot enter into all the enjoyments of the Sabbath, enter into some of them. By degrees new and better habits will be formed. By degrees the whole compass of Sabbatical duties will become easy. Only begin in the strength of God, and relying on the operations of his grace. Take a view first of the great end of the institution, the sanctification of the soul. Then follow out the different classes of duties which spring from it, as branches from the parent stock. Next seek for something of the spiritual taste which forms the Christian temper. And lastly, let the grand blessings of creation and redemption, and the hope of heaven, be in some degree the topics of your praise.

SERMON VI.

THE UNSPEAKABLE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIGHT
OBSERVATION OF THE SABBATH, WITH THE
EVILS OF THE OPPOSITE ABUSE.

ISAIAH lviii. 1, 2.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

DOCTRINE is not enough, precept is not enough, on such a subject as that which we have been treating. We must address the conscience; we must be bold in our appeals to the heart of man—we must assert all the authority and majesty of truth. The minister of religion must not shrink from his task on such a question; he must “cry aloud, and spare not; he must show” the people of God “their transgressions, and the house of Jacob,” the professed church of Christ, “their sins.” He must penetrate the thin disguises which a false religion assumes, and tear off the mask which a pretence of “seeking God and of delighting in his ways” may present: and must declare that the external advantages

and opportunities of religion only increase the guilt of the nation which tramples on that very day, when all these benefits would have their best effect.

We proceed, therefore, to set before you THE UNSPEAKABLE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT OBSERVATION OF THE LORD'S DAY, WITH THE EVILS OF THE OPPOSITE ABUSE—a subject difficult to treat from its very magnitude, from the multitude of topics which it embraces, and from the little perception men in general have of the sin of neglecting and dishonouring God's most ancient institution.

For this may be premised; that the corruption of man, which resists generally all the great doctrines and duties of Christianity, may be expected to press with peculiar violence against a barrier, which, like the Lord's day, is raised against the whole current of that corruption.

Nor is it unimportant to add, that an institution like this, which takes men off from their ordinary pursuits and gives them an interval for religious rest and public worship of Almighty God, must, if abused, become, from the very nature of the case, a source of unnumbered vices and disorders; must draw into itself torrents of those particular evils, which are ever ready to accumulate, as in a common receptacle, where space is given. There is no middle state here—the influence of the Sabbath for good or for evil, upon nations, churches, families, individuals, is incalculable. It is meant to be the best and holiest day in the week; but, if perverted, it becomes the worst and most destructive.

But how shall we impress you most deeply with this subject? 1. Shall we show you that a due regard to the institution by a Christian nation is of the nature of a sacred compact? 2. That it is essential to man's temporal and spiritual welfare, as a fallen but accountable creature? 3. That it includes all the application of the Christian religion, and, in fact, its preservation in the world? 4. That it binds together all the links and obligations of civil society? 5. That it immediately respects the authority and honour of Almighty God, and

his favour and blessing upon a people?—And that, of course, the opposite abuse overturns every one of these things, and brings on the contrary evils?

May God assist us by the influences of his Spirit; that, having no end in view but his glory, and depending for success on no power but his own; we may direct our inquiries with simplicity, and obey the dictates of truth with unreserved courage and joy!

I. For what, in fact, is the observation of the Christian Sabbath, but A MOST SACRED COMPACT; and what the abuse of it but the violation of that compact? It is obvious, that it can only be by the very general and almost universal agreement of a nation, that secular affairs can be suspended, business stopped, public recreation and amusements forbidden, offices and establishments closed, the ministers of religion furnished with protection in the discharge of their duties, the interruptions of open profligacy prevented, Christian assemblies authorized, churches erected for their use—in short, the whole frame-work of the public worship of God set up and continued. Laws are the expression of public opinion—and go a certain length, both negatively in the repression of open insults on Christianity, and positively in sustaining and supporting the ministers and worshippers of the sanctuary. But all the real operation and success of such a system rests upon the compact and covenant of a Christian people one with another, and with their condescending God and Saviour.

The scattered converts of the first Christian churches could only celebrate their Sabbaths in early darkness, or the unobserved hours of the night: persecution hung over their meetings—they were happy if they were not dragged to the idol's temple, and urged to join in the idol worship. This is one reason, probably, why the apostles less frequently dwell upon the express duties of the Lord's day in the New Testament; leaving it rather to the consciences of their converts and the universal conviction that a Sabbath was of perpetual moral obligation, to fill up the detail. The condition of domestic

slavery, in which most of the Gentile converts were, would tend to increase the apostles' tenderness on the point. Still the first Christians kept holy the Lord's day, the badge of their redemption, to the utmost of their power. When Christianity mildly triumphed over emperors and kings and statesmen and magistrates by the influence of the truth, things were changed. The holy day of weekly rest succeeded the festivals of the heathen worship. When England was converted in the course of the divine mercy, her Heathen rights, her Druidical orgies, her savage customs, her brutal and idolatrous sacrifices, were cast away—and the love of God, the preaching of the blessed gospel, the singing praises to Christ, the celebration of the mysteries of his death, and the observation of the hallowed day on which all these were to be performed, succeeded to them. Christian legislators in our own, as in other countries, arose to do what they could in guarding the new institutions. They continued thus to act. But still upon the consciences of individuals has ever rested, and must rest, the real and effectual obligation. The inhabitants of every nation who submit to the yoke of the gospel, assume their profession as Christians by the celebration of one day of religious joy. The covenant is signed and sealed, as it were, in this visible acknowledgment of the Christian faith; but the spirit and conduct of individuals and families fill up the conditions of it. Thus it is a compact. If devout care of children and servants, abstinence from ordinary duties, and cheerful attendance upon the public and private offices of religion, mark the households of our towns and cities, the compact is fulfilled. If carelessness, indifference, non-attendance creep in upon the general body, the compact is violated. It may remain, indeed, in its form—the external law may be unabrogated—the churches may stand as before—the ministers of religion may retain their office,—but the compact is made void. The Christian obligation is virtually abjured. If the evil goes on, every outward order and regulation will be by degrees weakened, evaded, contemned, and the Sabbath will be no more.

I ask, then, whether, in this view, the importance of the due observance of the Lord's day is not immense? It is the fulfilment of a compact. Every act of violation tends to undermine the whole frame-work. Every wilful breach has the guilt of breaking down the universal consent, of beginning a destructive habit, of infecting the entire community. The good example, the influence, the devout conduct of each family, each person, goes to sustain the general duty, to make the covenant valid, to enable others to consecrate the day.

The place, then, which each separate action fills, is like a stone in an arch, important, not only as to its isolated magnitude, but from its position, its coherence with the other parts, its necessity to the firmness and solidity of the whole structure.

Look in this view at all the separate acts of all the careless, the profane, the covetous, the unbelieving amongst our population—see their Sabbaths—estimate the evil done, not by the independent acts, but by the fearful influence, by the covenant broken, the stipulation trodden under foot, the engagements rendered difficult to others, and impossible to themselves. Let no one say, 'I am but an individual,'—for a nation is made up of individuals. Let no one say, 'A single act can be of small evil,'—for the observance of a national Sabbath is composed of multiplied single acts. Let no one pretend, 'The stream and current of religious duty cannot be stopped by my particular resistance,'—for the whole tide is constituted and impelled by the aggregation of minute elements; and every obstacle retards the flow.

II. But estimate, in the next place, if you can, the importance of the universal observation of the Christian Sabbath, from its bearings upon man's TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WELFARE, AS A FALLEN BUT ACCOUNTABLE CREATURE. For is man, or is he not, an immortal being? Has he, or has he not, a soul allied to God, capable of knowing, destined to serve him, and utterly void of real happiness, till it be found in him? Has he, or has he not, received a revelation from Almighty God,

according to which he will be judged at the last day? Then, what is man's truest interest, what his essential duty, what his first and noblest object? And what is the great hindrance to his real welfare—to his attention to his religious convictions? Is it not the pressure of earthly things, the undue magnitude and importance which, from their proximity, they assume? Is it not the want of leisure for reflection, the want of a realising apprehension of the truth of unseen objects? Then the Sabbath gives all this leisure, calls man off from all this turmoil, interposes a day of repose, of recollection, of distinct time for the care of his soul and the worship of God. The Sabbath raises the standard of his moral feelings, brings him to act upon his higher nature, his mind, his rational part, his responsibility to an eternal Judge. The necessities of the body chiefly occupy the six days; the immortal destiny of man, and his ultimate vocation by the gospel, claim the seventh. Nothing more tends to improve all the faculties, to quicken the practical judgment, to mature and invigorate the powers of the mind, to enlarge the sphere and multiply the sources of the purest intellectual pleasure, to open the widest avenues to happiness, to unite man with his true end, than the care of the soul and the celebration of the divine worship.

What a sight for angels is the assembly of all the inhabitants of a nation, in its various subdivisions, before the Almighty God—confessing their sins, acknowledging his goodness, celebrating his praises, hearing his word, partaking of his mysteries! Creation, redemption, heaven brought, after an interval of six days' toil and secularity, full before their view, and elevating and attracting the heart of a wayward, perverse, but noble race!

It is to be further borne in mind, that man is fallen, corrupted, propense to the external objects which surround him—that the Lord's day is not merely the day of religious duty and rest, but the restoring, the awakening day—the day of recovery and reformation. It tends to bring man back to recollection, to seriousness, to penitence, to prayer. If the Sabbath be desecrated, the ori-

ginal disease gains ground ; man's convalescence, only incipient and doubtful, is suspended, and his whole spiritual recovery and prosperity are endangered. It is not of Adam uncorrupted that we speak, but of Adam's race, sunk in selfishness and flesh, with only faint remains of moral feeling, and far from God and godliness. Nor is it of the devout and fervent part of the professed Christian world, or of the Protestant Christian world in any form, that we exclusively speak ; it is for the family of man scattered over the face of the earth, and lost in heathenism and infidelity, that we would reserve the Sabbath ; it is for Pagans and Mahometans, for the members of the Roman Catholic and Greek churches, that we plead. We would exhibit to them the holy Sabbath in the example of the purer Christian bodies, to draw their attention, to mark the reality of our religion, to provide them information upon its nature and duties. How is a wandering, fallen, and depraved world to be recalled to God, without that day which celebrates the works and word and grace of God—that day which recognises his authority over man—that day which proclaims man's intellectual and accountable nature, his future, his eternal hopes ? The Sabbath interposes a space between total irreligion and the conscience of man ; it puts in the claims of God upon the human heart.

Nor is the temporal welfare of mankind less concerned than their spiritual, in the observation of the Lord's day. Man was created for six days' work, not for seven : his faculties cannot bear an unremitted strain. Children, and servants, and the labouring classes of mankind, (by far the more numerous, and the most liable to be oppressed,) require, what this institution gives—a day of repose, of refreshment, of religious recollection and peace. The whole world rests and is still, that God may speak, that conscience may resume her sway, that the exhausted body and mind may recruit their powers, and be fitted for a more vigorous effort. The utmost productive labour of man is in the proportion of rest and exertion ordained by his merciful Creator. The best prevention of disease—the prolongation of human

life itself, depends on the like alternation of toil and repose. The springs of pleasure are thus augmented and purified. The satiety, the sameness, the weariness, the uniformity of human life is broken; and a blessed, hallowed period for religion is interposed. The interval between these seasons is neither so distant as to be ineffectual to its end, nor so near as to injure the real interests of our worldly callings—but, like every thing else in God's revelation, unites the prosperity of the soul with the highest welfare of the body and concerns of man.

How great, then, is the importance of every one's falling in with the designs of this institution! Can any one estimate adequately the soul, eternity, heaven and hell, God, Christ, salvation, pardon, hope, happiness—the whole intellectual, moral, and religious welfare of man, formed after his Creator's image, fallen from it by sin, called to the renovation of it by the blessings and duties of the Christian Sabbath!

Look at the evils of the contrary abuse. See man sunk from his real honours into the rank of the brute; see him lost in appetite, vice, lust, pride, carelessness, with nothing to redeem, nothing to call him back, nothing to restore; the Spirit of God departed from him; a reprobate sense possessing and weighing down his soul. The main difference between heathen and Christian nations is the recurrence and due observation of a Sabbath. The violation of this day in Christian countries is a brand upon the forehead of nominal religion. See the Sabbath-breaker opening his shop, writing his letters, preparing his accounts: see him entering his office; see him imposing upon his servants, his clerks, his dependents, the yoke of unpermitted and unholy labour. Observe him in languid carelessness, idling away the morning hours, and disgracing, by excess and worldly company, the evening. Notice the effect upon his own mind and habits. He boasts of his liberty, his freedom from superstitious fears, his superiority to ordinary prejudices. But he is the slave of covetousness, of pride, of appetite. The violation of the Sabbath

draws with it the neglect of all other religious duties—prayer, family religion, reading of the Scriptures. Misery follows in the train. In vain he blusters, and protests and affects independence: the moral judgments of the Almighty overtake him—the selfish, earthly creature, vegetating rather than living, is lost in shifting speculations; diffuses mischief all around; neglects and corrupts his children and servants; has no corrective to his jealous and irritated temper, no cordial to his drooping spirits, no prospects to enliven the future, no friend, no Saviour to relieve him as to the past. The Sunday journal, the Sunday festival, the Sunday amusements, fail to please. He sinks into lifeless despondency, or frets with infuriated malice—all his noble capacities perverted, because his God has been contemned, and the day of religion abused.

And mark his inhumanity and want of sympathy with the feelings and miseries of his dependants, the poor, the weak, the depressed. He robs the vast mass of the human family of one of the best boons of heaven; he compels them to work when God allowed them to repose; he chains down in vice and ignorance three-fourths of mankind; he raises a barrier against the entrance of light, purity, salvation; he tends by his example to abolish Christianity, to deny God, to erect the vain idol of an imaginary deity, and to sink at last into a practical Atheism.

III. But we proceed to show, that the due observation of the Lord's day includes ALL THE APPLICATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, and, in fact, its preservation in the world; whilst the violation of it goes to the exactly contrary effect. For what is the Christian religion, without its means of instruction and grace? What is Christianity without the Bible, without the ministry of God's word, without meditation and prayer, without the education of children, without the familiar communication of truth to the poor and ignorant? And when and how are these means to be put into effect, if the day appointed for that very purpose is desecrated, dishonoured,

lost? And what is the application of Christianity by all these methods, but the grand point, the main end of that divine revelation? It was given to be made known, to be applied to the conscience of every human being. It was given to be an universal religion. It was given, not to be a theory in the schools of philosophy, but to be a grand practical blessing to the hearts and lives of men. In this view, it stands distinct from the Levitical dispensation, and in contrast with all the idolatries of the heathen superstitions. It is not a limited design of separating a single family or nation; but it extends itself to the whole world—the partition-wall broken down—the distinctions of tongue, and clime, and people abolished—the ceremonial observances swept away—and all mankind the common objects of religious care.

Much less is it the confused and groundless theory of a superstitious idolatry, ignorant of all the principles of truth, wasting itself in interminable controversies, confined to the schools of learning as to its real tenets, and leaving the multitude in the gloom of a cruel and debasing bondage. No; Christianity flows from the Father of lights; it brings plain, interesting, all-important truth to man. It reveals a scheme of infinite love for the recovery of apostate, sinful creatures, in the death of the eternal Son of God. It promises the divine and effectual grace of the Holy Spirit. It erects a system of means, in which man is to wait upon God, and where God has promised to communicate himself to man. These means, simple, unostentatious, easy to be employed, are the great medium between the infinite God and his feeble creature. As the substratum of all these methods of instruction the HOLY SABBATH is constituted—this gives the time, the space, the monitory call, the privilege, the motive for the employment of them.

There stands Christianity—it speaks in the Bible, the inspired book of God, “able to make man wise unto salvation,” which every one is bound to read, to search, to meditate upon. But when? On the day of the Bible, the day which the very first history in its pages institutes and hallows. Blot out the Sabbath; you make the regu-

lar and deliberate study of the Scriptures impossible to the vast body of mankind.

Christianity stands forth—she designates an order of men to preach her blessed tidings—she institutes the ministry of the word—she bids the faithful pastor, evangelist, and ambassador of grace, go into all the world, preach the fall and recovery of man, take out truth from the written volume and apply it to the conscience, open it to the understanding, press it upon the heart of man. There stands the minister of Christ, as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” He vindicates truth, he clears it from the subterfuges of human folly, he sets forth its genuine importance. Then he convokes the assemblies of men, he calls them to repentance and faith, he forms them into churches; he meets them for the purposes of edification, exhortation, comfort. But when is all this to be done? Who is to form the agreement for the time and place of meeting? What is to oblige, invite, persuade men? Who is to suspend the ordinary business of life, and make it possible for the great body of mankind to assist at religious convocations? **THE HOLY CHRISTIAN SABBATH.** Without the Sabbath, all is confusion, distraction, defeat. You have no regular public ministry, no time for calm attention to the preaching of the word, no place for the grand instrument of awakening souls, and building up the Christian temple.

But public and private supplication, confession, giving of thanks, intercession, are essential to the application of Christianity. What is religion without prayer? Where is the profession of the faith of Christ, without holy supplication, in assembled bodies, to seek the divine favour, to honour the divine majesty, to avow our dependence on the divine grace? How are the blessings of revelation to be obtained, without the humble suit and united petition, to which God has been pleased to attach them? The Sabbath abolished, neglected, dishonoured; prayer is blotted out from the earth; Christianity is paralysed; the humility of heart which distinguishes the faith of the Bible from all other creeds, is no more. For it is the

day of rest which gives time for prayer, which calls to public and private and domestic devotion, which shuts out the world, and brings man before the presence of his God.

And when, again, are the blessed sacraments of Christ's religion to be administered, if the Christian Sabbath be obliterated, which is destined for the celebration of them, and without which they can never be decently and devoutly attended? These are the external symbols and pledges of the redeeming blood and sanctifying Spirit of our Lord. They are the peculiar channels and means of grace. They follow the Bible, the ministry of the word, and prayer. They are the bond of communion between Christians and their divine Head. They constitute a grand branch of the profession of the Christian religion. But they stand upon the platform of the Sabbath, and expire with its fall.

And what will become of the education of children, and the familiar communication of truth to the vast body of the poor and ignorant, without a time and space for those duties, banked in from the wild waste of worldly cares? Look at your Sunday schools, your infant schools, your adult schools, your catechetical lectures, your books and tracts for the young and the poorer classes. Look at the open spot left by the Sabbath for the erection of this spiritual machinery, and for its easy operation and blessed fruits. Abolish the Lord's day, and you abolish the education of the population, the inculcation of primary truth, the diffusion of religious knowledge, the amelioration and safe elevation in the scale of intellectual and moral being, of the very classes for whom the Saviour came, to whom he declared his gospel to be best adapted, and whose welfare, temporal and spiritual, he especially consulted.

Consider, then, the unspeakable obligation of the Sabbath. On the means enumerated no one will dispute that the application of Christianity depends—in and by these means God promises his blessing—in and by these means the Holy Spirit works. We do not speak too strongly when we assert, that the efficacy of our

divine religion--its holy influences—its transforming, renovating power, very much depend on this one single point, the sanctification of the Christian Sabbath. Every act of profanation of its holy duties, every argument levelled against its authority, every example of a careless, irreligious family neglecting its claims, goes to undo or prevent the healing virtues of Christianity—it goes to turn religion from a practical, holy, blessed principle, into a form, a name, a pretence.

And this it becomes, as the abuse of the day of God prevails. The ground on which we press the immense importance of the Sabbath, is from the evils which the violation of it occasions. Sabbath-breaking not only annuls the sacred compact of Christian nations, not only opposes the temporal and spiritual welfare of man, as a feeble but unaccountable being; but prevents all the application of Christianity in its blessings to the human heart. The separate instances of infringing the law of the Sabbath may appear of little moment. We see not the interior process of the evil—the outward garb of decent morals is not at once thrown off. But look at the sure result. What is the Sabbath-breaker about? Is he reading his Bible?—He never opens that book which condemns his sin. Does he attend the ministry of God's word?—He dislikes more and more its admonitions, its calls to repentance. As his violation of the Sabbath increases, his disposition to attend the public preaching of the gospel lessens, his resolutions of returning to it become weaker, his regard for Christianity itself gradually expires. Does he join in public or domestic prayer?—Alas! he has left off the devout practice since the Sabbath has been broken. When he began the occasional neglect, first of a part, and then of the whole of that sacred day, prayer was not altogether forgotten. Some private devotions lingered amongst his habits—education and conscience had not wholly lost their force. But the evil acquired strength. The Sunday was first wearisome, then disgusting, then perverted to occasional, and lastly to continued, indulgences of a secular kind—

and with this, prayer was renounced, forgotten. And what has the Sabbath-breaker to do with the sacrament, or with the religious education of the young, and the poor and ignorant? He may promote the pride of intellectual knowledge, he may diffuse a literature tinged with infidelity, he may nourish the daring spirit of inquiry which a false philosophy proclaims; but the solid, religious, useful education of the young and ignorant in their immortal destinies, in their accountableness to God, in their duties to their Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, he utterly neglects and opposes. In short, if the real want of religious character in the violator of God's holy day could be estimated, it would be found to be just in the proportion as that institution was forsaken.

Nor is it too much to say, startling as it may sound in some ears, that the existence of Christianity in the world depends upon the observation of the Sabbath. Let this visible pledge of allegiance be withdrawn, let this sacred time be filled up by the cares and follies of the world, let public prayer and sacraments, public preaching of God's word and instruction of the ignorant be neglected and virtually renounced—and where is Christianity, where its hold upon man, where its means of operation, where its healing influence, where its application to the heart? Yes; God has bound every thing together. In appointing a Sabbath, he has not instituted an useless, secondary, non-essential rite. **THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN**—for such a creature as he is—in such a system of means, and with such a revelation as Christianity proposes to him. The same God that knew what was in that Revelation, and what was also in man, ordained the holy Sabbath as the accompanying means of the whole scheme of redemption—as the field in which all its blessings might be sown—as the scaffolding, by the aid of which all the building might be erected. The institution is nothing, indeed, if left in theory, nothing if abused to wrong ends, nothing if relied on with pride, or frittered away by superstition; but every thing if used for its proper purposes, every

thing if practically employed, every thing if animated and blessed with the presence and power of God. But this is not all.

IV. So important is the Lord's day, that it connects and holds together ALL THE LINKS AND OBLIGATIONS OF HUMAN SOCIETY, which the violation of it tends to destroy. Government cannot subsist without religion. The institution which sustains Christianity, sustains those duties and habits, those virtues of the heart, that mildness and humanity, that regard to truth and the sanctity of an oath, that sense of conscience and prospect of the tribunal of Christ, which strengthens human authority, preserves the peace of communities and nations, and is the bond of human society. The Sabbath recalls all these great principles, impresses them anew when effaced, urges them when neglected, deepens them more and more, and preserves them in activity upon the heart. If the Sabbath be lost, man is selfish, proud, discontented, disloyal, turbulent. His conscience becomes hardened, his passions restless, his submission to human authority reluctant. If the Sabbath be duly observed, God governs the moral and intellectual being, the law of God sustains the just rule of man, the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ attract the weary sinner, the obligations of conscience are vigorous and effectual, peace reigns within the breast, and willing subjection to authority, as the ordinance of God, follows. Civil society is contained and held together by the Sabbath; which gives firmness and consistency to all the intercourse of man with man, to all the engagements which cement honourable commerce and the affairs of a peaceful agriculture, to all the current opinions and feelings which form the standard of morals.

The law of the Sabbath also unites all the classes of men one with another, by teaching them their common origin, their common guilt, their common mercies, their common duties. It places them before an Almighty Judge, and shrivels into insignificance the petty distinctions of rank and wealth, in the view of the eternal and all-

glorious Potentate. To meet in one common temple, before one common Saviour, to supplicate one and the same salvation, sheds a humanizing, softening influence, gives a common sympathy, excites the feelings of brotherhood and intercommunity.

The Sabbath tends to humble man, and thus dispose him to all the duties of social and public life. The obstacles it removes. The pride and self-sufficiency of man it abates. It lays the foundation of lowliness, suavity of temper, forgiveness of injuries. It promotes a courteous, obliging carriage. "The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all." The Sabbath annihilates human vanity, teaches that God is no respecter of persons, exalts those of low degree. The Sabbath humanizes man by the very neatness and cleanliness and frugality which it diffuses. Its good order, decency, and comfort, elevate the moral character. Its mildness and calmness of devotion engender self-respect, in a proper sense of the word. Its doctrines and duties and sacraments and prayers subdue the ruder feelings, awaken the humane and tender associations, expel the ruffian-passions, relieve the servant, the child, the dependant, from the oppression of the austere master, and compose and mollify the intercourse of the world.

Take the opposite abuses, and tell me what vices and outrages are not committed upon the Sabbath, when it is dishonoured and violated. Of those who are executed as victims to the infraction of the laws of their country, the greater part date their ruin from the flagrant breaches of this sacred day. Of the hideous and fearful sins of impurity and licentiousness, the Sabbath is the season. Of the degrading habits of drunkenness, the Sabbath is the period, the spot, the occasion. Schemes of rapine and dishonesty are almost all planned in the abused hours of the Lord's day. The first steps are perhaps not discernible. An occasional neglect of the ordinances of religion brings no instant profligacy of principle. Society is secure. But the tendency soon appears. The moral sense is loosened. The fear of God, like a barrier,

being removed, the torrent of passion and concupiscence pours out of itself. The danger is augmented from the concealed labyrinths of the process. Should a loose companion say to a sober, religious youth, on the morning of the Christian Sabbath, 'Go with me to-day, ruin your health, destroy your reputation, lose your money, kill your aged parents with grief, be a companion of prostitutes, rob your master, break the laws of your country, scorn God, be executed as a criminal, and plunge in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone'—certainly the undebauched youth would tremble and flee. But the tempter conceals all this; he only says, 'Do not go to church to-day, spend the day with me.' All the rest follows of course:—"the companion of fools shall be destroyed." The Sabbath-breaker is in truth prepared for every enormity, and every crime. He is a bold transgressor; he practically denies God's right to be worshipped, honoured, revered, obeyed. He says, God is not an object of admiration, fear, gratitude, love. He that thus condemns God, has no regard for man. Society is not safe with him. He may be restrained from crime by selfish motives; he is not restrained by conscience and religious ones.

Cast an eye on any one Lord's day in our great towns, and especially in our metropolis. Follow the Sabbath-breakers through the day. Class them. Tell me who they are. Count up their actions during the course of the sacred hours. Penetrate their secret chamber. See the influence of their doings on the subsequent week. Society totters under their crimes. Observe the families, the establishments for merchandise, the offices, the posts of public responsibility which they fill—and trace the crimes, the outrages, the neglects, the falsehoods, the subterfuges, the nefarious and dark designs which the profanation of the Lord's day has engendered or matured—Yes, you have VICE in all its forms and enormities, in the one sin of Sabbath-breaking.

But the consideration is too painful. I hasten to point out, in the last place,

V. That the observation of the Sabbath immediately HONOURS ALMIGHTY GOD, AND BRINGS HIS FAVOUR AND BLESSING upon a people ; whilst the profanation of it provokes his highest displeasure.

For the Sabbath is God's day ; it is the Lord's tribute ; it is the acknowledgment which he requires for all his blessings, temporal and spiritual ; it is the mark of regard and reverence which he demands from man. What, then, can so immediately touch his honour as the wilful profanation of this institution ? It precisely demonstrates man's contempt and ingratitude, his pride and secularity, his secret enmity against the government, and dislike of the worship of his God.

The easier the obedience of it is, the more grievous insult to the Majesty of heaven is its violation. The greater the benefit which it is calculated to confer upon man, both in body and soul, the more perverse and unreasonable is his disobedience.

The clearer, again, the light of that dispensation of the gospel under which he lives, the deeper becomes the moral criminality which the sin against so much light brings with it. The more free from false doctrines our creed, and the more favourable our position for a distinct view of our duty, the higher presumption is involved in our neglect of it.

It is not possible for the mind of man to measure the dimensions of that guilt, which the deliberate profanation of the Lord's day under the gospel dispensation, in a free Protestant country, involves.

To admit the truth of a divine revelation, and then reject the first and most remarkable features which distinguishes that religion from every other—the only institution which includes all the worship, all the adoration, all the prayer, all the spiritual duties of that religion—is an inconsistency in itself, as well as an affront put upon our Almighty Benefactor, which no words can adequately express. And this, when our country acknowledges a Sabbath, when the laws protect us in some measure in the observation of it, when the habits

and usages of commerce are suspended, when some ingenuity must be employed and some force done to our feelings, and some loss of reputation hazarded, in violating the command! A command which, were there no religious obligation, man would be glad enough to fulfil—which, if he could choose it for himself, and employ it to his own ends, and separate it from the authority of the Almighty, he would rejoice to celebrate—which his bodily powers demand, which his fatigue persuades, which his satiety with the uniformity of worldly pursuits invites,¹—but which, because God requires it, because religion fixes her eye upon it, because his highest spiritual duties concur with his temporal interest in enjoining it, he spurns and contemns; thus demonstrating the bitter root of enmity against God, from which his rebellion springs.

And yet men in Christian countries expect God to bless them; they affect to be his worshippers, they call themselves by his name, they profess a general reliance upon his providence, they allow that the affairs of empires, nations, families, individuals, only prosper by his favour and mercy. But how can they reasonably look for this favour and this mercy, if they profane the day, which is the seal and pledge of both? Can a people thus insulting God in the institution which most immediately affects his honour, really believe that he will bless and prosper them? No, my brethren; let us first reverence his name, let us first “turn away our foot” from trampling upon his holy day, let us first put away from us “the accursed thing,” which, like Achan, infects our camp; and then, and not before, may we hope for the abiding goodness of God to repose upon us, and for the Lord to delight himself in us.

But what are the excuses which men assign for the de-

¹ During the excesses of the French Revolution, at the close of the last century, Christianity and its Sabbath were abolished—but the mere necessities of man’s nature compelled that infidel and atheistical government to institute a day of rest of their own, what they called *A DECADE*, occurring every tenth day. A confession this of the reasonableness of the divine command!

secration of the Sabbath—a sin against which such mighty reasons lie, and the guilt of which is of so aggravated a hue? Let us, in conclusion, 1, strengthen our argument by exposing the weakness of the opposing excuses: let us then, 2, urge you without delay to the full performance of your duty; let us lastly notice, 3, the additional bonds we are under to consecrate the Sabbath, from the immense honour which God has put upon it by the blessings of his grace and providence in every age.

I. For what are THE EXCUSES which men allege in extenuation of a neglect of the day of God?

1. Do they say that ‘every day under the gospel is to be kept holy?’ They say truly; but each in its own manner. The working days are kept holy, as we have already shown, by performing diligently the duties of our callings, and interweaving religious feelings and exercises therein; the Sabbath, by celebrating devoutly the express worship of God. The six days, if given up to religious acts, would be idleness, superstition, and tempting of God; the seventh, if not dedicated to them, is impiety, pride, and contempt of the Almighty. Nor does he who pretends the universal sanctity to which the Christian is called, as a palliation of Sunday violations, ever serve God at all. If he knew anything of that delightful employment, all his affections would centre on that privileged day which God has given him for communion with himself, and for public and private acts of devotion.

2. But you charge the due observation of the Sabbath with pharisaical strictness; you say ‘the demand is enthusiastic, precise, puritanical, intolerable.’ But you forget then all the benignity of the blessed Saviour, which swept away the inventions of man, and recalled the institution from the austerities of the scribes to its primitive simplicity; and you feign a severity which does not exist, except you consider piety as a task, the love of your Saviour a yoke, the praises of redemption gloomy, the offices of prayer and supplication a weariness. And this is what you really mean—your thin disguises conceal not your dislike to religion and the name of Christ.

We understand you. You feel at home in the world of sin and folly; but religious repose is unwelcome. You are at ease in secular employments; spiritual are strange. You show, then, that all is to begin in the business of your salvation—enter heartily upon that, and the Sabbath will be honoured as it ought.

3. I make a similar reply to the plea of the EXCESSIVE HURRY OF AFFAIRS, of the ‘impossibility of finding time to give a whole day to religion: besides, you only violate the Sunday occasionally, and, as you affirm, reluctantly!’ The plain meaning of all which is, that worldly things are so important, and eternal so trivial, that six days are too few for the first, and one too long for the second. The more lawful business any Christian has, the more is the necessity of a thorough religious interval on the Sabbath increased. Every man must find time to die, and ought to find time for devoting to God that day which prepares for death. Nor does worldly business ever proceed so prosperously, as when subordinated to religion.

4. And why should I pause to refute the miserable excuse, ‘that you see not that persons who go so much to church are BETTER THAN OTHERS’—which is false in fact. Those who attend the house of God with any sincerity, are better than others; and those who do not, yet are acquiring habits of public reverence to the Almighty, and are kept out of a thousand temptations, which the breaking of the Sabbath would present. And if all attended the worship of God aright, all would become, not better than others would then be, but better than they now are—all would be true servants of God, and heirs of heaven.

5. You have still pleas in reserve—‘the immediate sacrifice of your temporal interests, the rivalry of neighbours, the general example of persons of your trade or profession, THE NECESSITY OF THE CASE,—unwilling as you are to violate the Sabbath, and ready to agree to close your shops, your counting-houses, your offices, if others would do the same—the inutility of one in a circle

acting without the concurrence of all'—excuses which would overturn all morals and religion, and make every man a judge of his measure of obedience to God. If on the ground of an alleged necessity, or of waiting for the concert of others, we may violate an express command of God, where are we to stop? what commandment will retain its force? Why not break the second as well as the fourth? Why not plead against the sixth or eighth in the same strain? The very foundation of Christian faith is to obey God rather than man. Six days' work with the divine blessing, is infinitely better than seven without. The excuse is cowardice, the fear of man, unbelief. Venture, and God will bless you. You shall be recompensed a hundred-fold in this life, and "in the world to come shall have life everlasting."

6. But I am interrupted by another class of objectors, persons of better education as they consider themselves, and higher advantages of station in society, who allege 'that public worship is for the poor and uninstructed—but that for themselves THEY HAVE LESS NEED OF IT—they have little to learn—it is enough that they venerate the Deity at home.' Vain and miserable pretexts! Who have so much need of the Sabbath as those, who from pride of intellect and luxurious indulgences and vicious example, are ordinarily further from God and practical religion than any other class? They have little to learn! when they prove, by the very excuse, that they "know nothing yet as they ought to know." And is not the Lord's day designed to honour God, to acknowledge his benefits, to celebrate his praises, to implore his grace, to enjoy communion of spirit with him, to prepare for meeting him at the throne of judgment? And are not these obligations strong in proportion to the divine benefits in providence, to our dangers and temptations, and the influence which our example might have upon others? Yes, the rich and great are most of all bound to the sanctification of the day of God.

II. Let us, then, cease from such wicked pleas,

which cannot deceive ourselves, much less others, and which strengthen the argument they in vain attempt to evade; and let us ENTER FULLY AND DETERMINATELY ON THE RELIGIOUS DUTY OF HONOURING GOD. Half measures never succeed in moral questions, and least of all on the Sabbath; where the casuist is a man's own passions, and temptation perverts the judge who has to decide. So long as half-measures are taken, Satan and the world push their victory—the will remains entangled—new pleas of interruption are framed—every Sunday the pressure of business or the solicitations of pleasure are strengthened—whilst the disposition to serve God is weakened. Make at once a bold stand, and the duty will become easy. The enemy will yield. Satan will be discomfited. Your worldly companions will cease to molest. You will begin to find a pleasure in religion. God will hear your prayers. Conscience will be at peace. The only happy man in this world is he that “follows God fully.”

III. Let the IMMENSE HONOUR WHICH GOD ON HIS PART HAS BEEN PLEASED TO PUT UPON the Sabbath, and the blessings of his grace and providence which he has vouchsafed on it, conclude the subject, and impress every heart with an additional conviction of the incalculable importance of a right observation of the Lord's day. We have alluded to this more than once. And well we may. For what an honour has God put upon this institution throughout the whole dispensation of the gospel! Who can trace out its history? Who can number the souls converted, the graces of Christians quickened, the sorrows of the afflicted consoled, the influence of the Holy Spirit granted, the assurances of the Saviour's presence vouchsafed, the sermons and prayers and sacraments rendered effectual? Figure to yourselves what has been transacted on all the Sabbaths throughout all the world, since the promulgation of the Christian faith. You find that almost all the glory of Christianity has shone upon the Sabbath. You find that God has

wrought most of his works of grace upon the Sabbath. You find that the blessed Saviour has been most glorified upon the Sabbath. You find that the Holy Spirit has exerted his agency most upon the Sabbath. What confessions of sins, what enlargements of heart, what consolations of prayer, what gifts of pardon, what tokens of acceptance, what anticipations of heaven! The testimony of God to his own day, on any one recurrence of it, confirms all our arguments for its inestimable value. Yes, blessed Sabbath! we will go forth to meet thee, as thou revisitest man;¹ we will hail thee as the court day of our Sovereign and Lord; we will rejoice in thy return as the open throne presented to us for approaching our heavenly Father; we will behold thee as testifying of our Redeemer's resurrection—honour thee as the peculiar province of the Holy Spirit, and as uniting all that can interest and bless man—creation with its natural benefits—redemption with its remedial grace—heaven with its consummating glories!

¹ The ancient wise men used to gather their scholars together, and to say, "Come, let us go meet king Sabbath."—*Lightfoot*, iii. 56.

SERMON VII.

THE GUILT WHICH IS CONTRACTED BY CHRISTIAN NATIONS, IN PROPORTION AS THE LORD'S DAY IS OPENLY PROFANED.

NEHEMIAH XIII. 17, 18.

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all the evil upon us and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.

THERE remains yet another branch of the subject. We must appeal to the nations of Christendom, and especially our own. We must prefer against them the charge of public connivance at the violation of the Sabbath. We must call on every inhabitant, by his faith as a Christian, by the reverence he feels for his Creator and Redeemer, by his love to his country, by his regard to the happiness of his neighbours and family, by his concern for his own eternal salvation, to do all in his power to awaken the public conscience, and arouse it to do its duty. We must declare the anger of the Lord for this great sin, and solemnly charge all classes of men to repent and turn unto the Lord.

It is true the evil is gigantic, it spreads through all orders of persons, it fixes itself firmly in the corruption of the human heart. It stands as the uncircumcised champion of old, and defies the armies of the living God.

But we must rely, like David, on another power than that of man. We must take the word of truth. We must go forth, as it were, with our sling and our stone, in the name of the Lord God of Israel; and must humbly believe that the enormous foe, as another Goliath, shall fall before us.

And may it please Thee, O Almighty God, to aid us and all thy servants, who at this time are pleading thy righteous cause! Do thou enable us so to imitate thy holy servant Nehemiah of old, that we may set forth thy truth in all simplicity and fervour, that we may not fear the face of man, and that, accompanied and aided by thine effectual grace, we may witness a revival of the observation of thy holy day, and of the religious blessings which attend it, in our own land and throughout all the parts of Christendom!

First, then, we must substantiate the charge, that the nations are guilty in conniving at the violation of the Lord's day.

We must next show the divine judgments that may be justly dreaded in consequence.

We must lastly point out the practical measures which each one may take towards a national repentance and return to God.

I. IN SUBSTANTIATING THE CHARGE ITSELF against the nations of Christendom and our own, we are aware of the caution necessary. Having now no inspired prophets or apostles to apply authoritatively the language of Scripture, we can only form a judgment, from its evident scope, and the similar bearing of our privileges on the one hand, and of our conduct on the other. We must avoid all presumption, haste, self-confidence, personality. We must proceed on the general and undoubted grounds of revealed truth, as applicable to nations and individuals; and only claim attention as we are evidently supported by the truth, and the plain facts of the case.

What, then, constitutes, in a scriptural sense, national guilt? Is it not the prevalence of any open, fla-

grant violation of the law of God, committed by large classes of men? Is it not the continued invention of new modes of committing it, and additions to the numbers amongst whom it spreads? Is it not the countenance which the example of the nobles and princes of the land gives to it? Is it not the connivance at those enormities by legislators, ministers of state, magistrates, clergy? Is it not the general coldness and indifference, and even scorn, with which measures of prevention or of remedy are received?

And does not the violation of the Christian Sabbath in the British nation, for with this I am most concerned, comprehend every one of these particulars?¹

1. Does it not prevail AMONGST LARGE CLASSES OF MEN? If the divine authority of that day be what we have shown; if the right manner of observing it be as we have described it; if the immense importance of a due sanctification of it be commensurate with Christianity itself; then what is the national guilt accumulated every day amongst us? Go through the different orders of society in our country, and, after making every allowance of the kindest charity, estimate the sins committed every Sabbath as it returns, by each class before the face of the Almighty.

Begin with the HUMBLE ORDERS—the artisans, the labourers, the agricultural workmen, the smaller tradespeople. How widely is Sabbath-breaking diffused! Accounts settled, shops open, markets frequented, workmen paid, business transacted,—calmly, systematically, almost avowedly.

Consider the numbers engaged in furnishing entertainment to the violators of the Lord's day, as well as the violators themselves. The hotels, the inns, the tea-gardens, the public-houses, the shops and stalls for fruit and confectionary, the domestics and waiters occupied, beyond any plea of necessity, or any permission of the law.

¹ In order to make this part of the sermon fully applicable to other countries, an occasional change of names and local circumstances may be necessary.

Look at the environs of London generally—the thousands poured out every Sunday into the fields and villages, for idleness, for pastimes, for intoxication, in open profanation of the Sabbath.¹ Enter the unnumbered abodes for retailing spirituous liquors; see the formerly decent ale-houses converted into spirit shops, with doors ever open to attract the careless youth.

I admit that these evils are not universal amongst the poor—I admit that very many are still under the influence of religion, and I bless God for it—but how few are there, compared with our increasing population! How vast the number who never regularly attend the worship of God! How lamentable the state of our crowded cities!

Next examine the MIDDLE CLASSES of our nation. How do multitudes of tradesmen, the merchants, the soldiers, the lawyers, the physicians and medical practitioners, the private gentlemen, the retired merchants and traders, spend the Lord's day? After a reluctant attendance in the house of God, where are they, and what are they engaged in, for the remainder of the Sabbath?—I mean, what are too many of them engaged in? I am speaking of large numbers in each class, not of every individual—there is still a goodly remnant that serve and fear God. But as to the great mass, is it not the day of indulgence, the day of banqueting, the day of pleasurable parties, as they are termed? What are the servants of the household occupied about? Is it not in preparing entertainments? Is not their labour tenfold that which the necessity of the Sabbath demands, or its repose allows?

You ascend to the GENTRY AND NOBILITY of our land. They have, alas! too generally “broken the yoke and burst the bonds.” The law of the Sabbath

¹ Two thousand five hundred persons were counted by a public officer, one Sunday evening last summer, in one tea-garden—the White Conduit House, Islington, near London—each having paid 6*d.* at entering, besides what he might expend afterwards. Consider the tax this is upon the poor.

is void to them. The day is the same as other days, after an attendance on morning service, except as increased festivity dishonours and abuses it—the same irreligion, the same pride, the same neglect of God. In too many cases, large festivals are given, crowded parties assembled, an open infraction of decency committed. How many are there in public stations, where example is most widely diffused, who have regularly Sunday dinners during a certain portion of the year! I ask if the aggregate of these enormities do not outstrip mere personal criminality, and form a distinct branch of national guilt?

2. Then consider the continual INVENTION OF NEW MODES OF SUNDAY VIOLATION, and of additional temptations extended to new classes of persons. This marks national guilt. The evil is on the increase. The SUNDAY NEWSPAPER is of late invention: a few years since it was almost unknown—now it enlarges its fatal snares every year. The number of copies circulated every Sabbath is incredible.¹ Not content with leaving it in the hands of the open infidel and enemy of civil and religious order, it has been seized by some of the avowed and clamorous friends of church and state, and made a channel of private calumny and public ridicule of all eminent virtue and piety. SUNDAY STAGES are a second invention of a novel kind. They were some years back uniformly suspended on the Lord's day, that "our cattle and our servants might rest as well as we;" now they openly violate the decencies of public worship—they pass our churches during divine service—they detain the innkeeper from the house of God—they tempt our people to venture on Sunday journeys. VESSELS OF PLEASURE, impelled by steam, have just been added to the invention of the Sabbath-breakers, and thousands are conveyed on the Lord's day, during the months of summer, to the various spots on our coast, where pleasure and dissipation may drown conscience and the remains of a pious education. Commercial spe-

¹ One of these journals boasts of a circulation each Sunday of 30,000!

culations for MORE EXPEDITIOUS TRAVELLING, by means of the same process, are also calculated upon the supposition of regularly and systematically profaning, and tempting others to profane, the Sabbath. Our HOUSES OF COMMERCE, again, have been deserted of late years on the Lord's day by their masters, and are left to the discretion of clerks and shopmen, to violate the Sabbath without restraint or control.

New classes of our people are thus pushed into the fatal vortex of Sunday dissipation. Each humbler order imitates the vices of the rank immediately above it. The example infects the very remotest classes. All are learning by degrees to encroach upon the sanctity of the holy day of God. "Hand joins in hand." One encourages another. Religious repose and rest in God, as a distinct duty of Christians, is more and more discredited; and the false notion that the Sabbath was ordained for what is termed innocent amusement, as well as for the worship of Almighty God, is more and more avowed.

3. Then inquire we next into THE COUNTENANCE which the nobles and princes of our land give to this Sunday violation. Much of the character of national sins arises from the conduct of the great, from the open avowal or disavowal of God, which they are found upon the whole to make. I ask, then,—with grief and shame I ask,—does not the prevalent example of the great go to encourage, to create, to render necessary, in large circles of dependents, the open breach of the day of God? Do not they often profess that public worship is chiefly needful to restrain the common people? Do not they avow that religion is little more than a state-engine? Does not their too general conduct authorize and embolden the neglect of the Lord's day, the omission of public worship, the frivolous engagements of the after division of the Sabbath, the enormous evils of Sunday dinners, Sunday visits, Sunday music-parties, Sunday diversions? Do we not read, on every Monday, the catalogue of the festivals, conversaziones, assemblies for music—sacred music, as it is profanely termed—which

desecrated the preceding day? And do not these evils begin with those of the highest rank—with nobles, ministers of state, princes? And does not the eye of God behold all this, and mark the aggravations of its guilt? Do not the gentry and nobility form a prominent and influential part of a nation in its collective capacity? Is not their example the standard by which thousands form their notions of morals and of Sunday obligation?

4. But may we not, ought we not, to go farther than this? It is not merely countenance afforded by the great, but it is A SINFUL CONNIVANCE on the part of legislators, ministers of state, magistrates, clergy, persons in authority, and with natural influence entrusted to them, which constitutes the real amount of national crime on this subject. If the gentry, clergy, and magistracy, have used such moral power as God and the laws and usages of their country have committed to them, for the honour of the Sabbath—and which power they are employing daily on a thousand trifling topics which interest them—then there is no national guilt incurred in this respect. But what is the fact? Let conscience speak. It is to the eternal God we appeal, who is the searcher of every heart. Have not legislators, and magistrates, both in their private and their collective capacity, connived, and do they not connive, at the violation of the holy law of the Sabbath? Do they not mock too often at its divine authority? Do they not shrink from avowing their reverence for religion as a spiritual subjection of man to the obedience of his Maker? Alas! it is too well known, that little of their attention can be obtained on these subjects—that occasions are perpetually lost for diminishing the evils of Sabbath-breaking—that the miserable limits of the three or four hours of public services are considered sufficient, in the framing of acts of parliament, for the Sabbath; and all the other hours are resigned without scruple to the world and folly—that the too frequent excuse of magistrates and individual members of either House is, that the temper of the times will not endure religious

measures to be brought forward. Thus the influence of persons in authority is on the whole decidedly unfavourable; they discountenance spiritual religion; they refuse to put into execution the laws actually in force, and they decline preparing new ones—they frown on active individuals who would call on them to maintain the honour of the day of God. How was the proposal of Sunday drilling, for instance, during the late war, welcomed and admitted for a course of years, though the voice of bold remonstrance afterwards prevailed for its repeal? How were the early petitions and remonstrances against Sunday newspapers rejected, and the later ones scorned and contemned? What attention has been paid to the denial of the Sunday to the colonial slave, and to the atrocious evils of the Sunday market? How, again, do individual ministers of state, and individual magistrates, receive the applications made for the suppression of Sabbath-breaking? What encouragement does the conscientious clergyman, or minister, or parochial officer, receive from the magistrates, in his attempts to check the evil? Where is the individual in either chamber of parliament, now ready to take up the question concerning the law of the Sabbath, reduce the existing statutes to a consistent code, and strengthen them with such new enactments as the change of circumstances, since the time of the second Charles, may require? ¹

5. And next allow me, as a minister of religion, to join in the confession of the share which I, together with my brethren, have borne in the guilt which we are now considering. THE CLERGY have not, as a body, sufficiently enforced the duty of the observation of the Sabbath: they have not expounded the doctrine—they have not urged the authority—they have not protested as they should against the violation—they have not sustained, by a firm example, the honour of this holy and most ancient of institutions—they have been cowardly, tame, silent, indifferent. Too many of us have connived sinfully at the enormous mischief—have shrunk from

¹ Ecler. Rev. 1830.

measures of energy and courage—have rather “followed the multitude to do evil,” than struggled manfully, and at all hazards, against the current.

The religious public also—who reverence and observe to a certain extent the Sabbath—have shared and are sharing the guilt. They listen to objections. They read the works which plausibly sap the divine obligations of the Lord's day. Their minds are poisoned. They lose that firm standing on which they formerly planted their feet. Their family habits are unfavourable. Their own example is in some things dubious. The estimate which their children and households form of the Sabbath is low. They do not contend boldly, in public and private, against the sin of dishonouring the day, as their fathers did. Compare the last generation of evangelical and pious Christian households with the present—the decay is manifest—that is, the national guilt is augmented.

6. For in truth it amounts to this—let God be judge—THERE IS A TOO GENERAL INDIFFERENCE, COLDNESS, AND EVEN SCORN, amongst large numbers, to the sanctification of the Lord's day, and to remedial measures for retaining its honourable observance—which stamps the broad mark of public connivance on the sin of Sabbath-breaking. Thank God, we are not so deeply sunk in this evil as many of the continental nations—thank God, much honour is still put upon the holy appointment—thank God, a remnant of devoted Christians in all ranks, not excepting the highest, continues to hallow it aright—thank God, “a pillar is raised, as it were, on the border of the land unto the Lord.” Thank God, our iniquities, as we trust, are not yet full; and a revival of deep concern for religion, and for the day of religion, is, as we hope, going on. But we must still look the facts full in the face. Our real repentance and reformation will depend on our conviction of our actual delinquency. Have we, then, or have we not, as a people, including the classes professing the peculiar grace of Christ, departed from the Lord, in conniving and sitting calmly by, when his name was polluted and the

Sabbath profaned? Is not a portion of the indifference and scorn poured upon this institution chargeable upon us—us the ministers of religion—us the people of God? Would the names of reproach cast upon the religious observation of the day, and upon those who sustain it, be so keen, so opprobrious, so extended, if the standard of general sentiment had been nearer that of the Scriptures?

Yes, brethren, as the various classes in the Jewish nation at the time of Nehemiah had departed from their God, and had joined in polluting the Sabbath; so have too many of all classes in our own country departed from their Saviour, and united, unconsciously in some cases and imperceptibly, in conniving at the violation of the Christian Sabbath.

It is time for us to return to the Lord. Steps have been lately taken by persons high in authority, which encourage hope of improvement. Let us, then, in order to this,

II. Consider THE NATIONAL JUDGMENTS which we may too certainly dread, if we repent not.

For nations rise and fall. A retributive justice is going through the world. No nation, however powerful, however wise, however free, however prosperous, can resist the divine arm. Where is the empire of the Babylonians, of the Medo-Persians, of the Grecians, of the Romans? Where is the grandeur of Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne? Look over the map of Europe during the last half century: what nations have not been overthrown, shaken to their centre, visited with the most frightful calamities? Except our favoured country, there was hardly another which escaped the actual sword of war. And in our own previous annals what scenes of bloodshed, what overthrows of royal houses, what civil contests, what changes, do not appear!

I open the Bible, and I see that this fall of empires is connected with the guilt of the different nations, and especially of those which were the most eminently privileged. “You only have I known of all the families of

the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquity.”¹ Such is the divine rule of proceeding. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”² There is the spot where judgments first alight. “But in the fourth generation they shall come again, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full;”³ the measure is rising—the augmented mass is noted by the divine eye—iniquity, according to the prophetic vision, is seated within the ephah; the vassel fills; it is accomplished; the talent of lead is sealed upon its mouth, and it is transported from its place to the scene of visitation.⁴

Do I want specific examples? I look to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”⁵ I behold the old world “filled with violence, and having corrupted its ways, till the flood came and destroyed them all.”⁶ I look on the nations of Canaan, “that are sinners before the Lord exceedingly, and the land cannot contain them.”⁷

But mark, above all, the history of the favoured people—the inheritance, the peculiar treasure of the Lord, the kingdom of priests. And what is that history? The Assyrian king is sent against them when hypocritical and degenerate—“he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so”—but he is “the axe” in the hand of the divine workman, to execute his holy will against the guilty people. And what was the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes, and what the seventy years’ bondage of the two in Babylon, but punishments for national guilt?

And why should England presume? Why should her capital, her commerce, her armies, her fleets, her power and influence, elate her with pride? What are all these but talents entrusted to her for certain ends? What is the weight of responsibility which presses upon her in consequence? What is the aggravation which all these blessings add to her sins against God? For

¹ Amos iii. 2.² 1 Pet. iv. 17.³ Gen. xv. 16.⁴ Zechariah v. 6—11.⁵ Jude 7.⁶ Gen. vi. 12.⁷ Numb. xxxv. 33.

wherefore has God given her these distinctions, but that she may diffuse the divine glory, exhibit the conduct of a righteous nation, uphold the honour of pure Christianity, vindicate the majesty of the Lord's day, educate her population in sound religion, and propagate the gospel at home and abroad? If she neglect all these high ends, and be filled with vanity and contempt of God, what judgment may she not expect? What is she more than Nineveh, Tyre, Babylon? Her naval power is perhaps not greater, in proportion to the existing state of the world, her commerce is not more extended, her riches are not more abundant, her prosperity is not more elevated, than the ships, and commerce, and glory, and prosperity of Tyre were in her day?

Consider, then, the judgment which England may reasonably dread, in proportion to the duty which she violates—in proportion to her knowledge of the Bible—in proportion to her pure form of Christianity—in proportion to the strength of the arguments on which the divine authority and perpetual obligation of the Lord's day repose—in proportion to her means of estimating these arguments, and detecting the contrary errors. Reflect how every such consideration should aggravate the fear which penetrates us, of the awful displeasure of God for our pollution of the Sabbath.¹

Then what, England, is thy guilt before thy God? A sin like this, against a command so authoritative, so easy of performance, so beneficial, marks thy temper as a nation as it respects God. The sins committed against thy fellow-creatures are of another character. The duties of property and life, the duties concerning common truth

¹ Let no one say he doubts the force of some of these grounds of authority. Be it so. Take away any one of these grounds, and the remainder binds the conscience of the inquirer. Nay, it is observable, that no one Divine has yet written or spoken, (except those who are really not, properly speaking, Christians,) that does not acknowledge the obligation of sanctifying the Lord's day. A few writers may place its authority on the New Testament examples only—I agree not with these writers—but their admission is all I now want—for they all consent in admitting the duty of a day of religious rest.

and honesty, are bound upon thee by thy immediate secular interests—society cannot hold together for a moment without them. But the duties of the Sabbath are a test of the real measure of thy faith and reverence towards Almighty God. They show how far thou carriest thy religion into practice. They prove whether or not thy admissions of the authority of God are sincere. Estimate, then, the guilt which all thy Sabbaths, England, have been heaping upon thine head.¹ Estimate the contempt, the neglect of God, the declension of heart from his fear, the hardy and obstinate resistance to his will, the slight put upon his immediate majesty and honour, which thy conduct involves. The closing denunciations against the apocalyptic churches will be applicable to thee, if thou continuest to imitate those declining bodies. Fear the removal of thy candlestick, the silencing of thy preachers, the dispersion of thy assemblies, the obscuring of thy peace, the loosening of the frame of society—counsels bewildered—commerce paralysed—union broken—disorder and contention sown—tumult and insurrection bursting forth—thy king, thy princes, thy nobles given up to infatuation—thy enemies made to triumph—thy name and place a proverb amongst the nations. Consider, these are but the beginning of sorrows. Where are Sardis, and Pergamos, and Thyatira, and Ephesus, and Laodicea? Swept with the besom of destruction—effaced from the memory of the church—exhibited as monuments of divine indignation. And why? “They left their first and fervent love; they did not their first works; they had a name to live, but were dead; they were neither cold nor hot; they defiled their garments.” And what art thou doing in thy levity, thy profanation of the Lord's day, thy contempt of religion, but imitating those very sins which brought down these exterminating judgments?

And how soon these chastisements may fall, God only knows. We dive not into his secret counsels; we venture not to penetrate his purposes. But thou hast every

¹ Every twenty years, more than a thousand Sundays pass.

reason to fear. Around the profanation and contempt of the Sabbath are gathered all the accompanying sins of neglect of the gospel, self-righteousness, cruelty and inhumanity to the colonial slave, an infidel and sceptical temper—the Bible contemned, Christianity dishonoured. The violation of God's day is the symptom, not the disease. It is an indication of the inward pride, impurity, vanity, self-confidence, provocations of the Almighty, which are filling up the measure of thine iniquities. Thou art again warned. The voice of mercy and of expostulation is lifted up. Listen, then, ere it be too late. Attend, ye princes, and nobles, and bishops, and clergy, and magistrates, and gentry. Listen, governors and legislators of the land. Receive the divine call. Repentance is not now too late. Punishments may be averted or mitigated. "The Lord's voice crieth in the city, and the man of wisdom will hear thy voice; know ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." ¹

And this brings us to point out,

III. THE PRACTICAL MEASURES, WHICH EACH ONE MAY ADOPT, TO PROMOTE A NATIONAL REPENTANCE AND RETURN TO GOD.

For this is the question after all. What is to be done? Whither are we to direct our steps? How can we fully return unto the Lord? — By inquiring, how other nations expressed their penitence; how the reformations took place in the time of Samuel, and Hezekiah, and Jehoshaphat; how the revivals were effected under Augustine in the fourth century, Claudius of Turin in the ninth, Peter Waldo in the twelfth, and Wickliffe in the fourteenth: how the glorious Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century was begun and established? — Each individual Christian reformed himself: fervent prayer was offered for the Holy Spirit; bold, decisive appeals were made to the consciences of the people; princes and magistrates were led to listen to the counsel of devoted and enlightened ministers; shame and persecution were cheerfully endured for the cause of Christ;

¹ Micah vi. 9.

an unflinching protest was entered against the sins which remained ; humiliation of soul under past transgressions, and hope in the divine mercy for future deliverance and ultimate triumph, were exercised. Let such, then, be our course now.

1. Let EACH ONE AMEND HIMSELF, HIS FAMILY, HIS OWN CIRCLE. This is the first step. Here we are sure our efforts will be successful ; we begin at home. The ministers of the sanctuary should lead the way. The holy Sabbath has much to complain of in us. Reverence it more, ye preachers and stewards of Christ, sanctify it more. Study its authority more. Watch against unfavourable habits more. Let your own conduct, and that of your families, give a more decided testimony to the Lord, and to his blessed day. Heads of families, begin each one of yourselves: the Almighty Redeemer demands it of you. Look on your present course ; correct, amend, what is amiss. Be not ashamed of confessing past error. Magistrates, propose a better example ; execute the laws of which you are the guardians. Awake to your first duties, the worshipping and glorifying of your God. Merchants, "buy the truth, and sell it not;" close your offices and counting-houses on the Sabbath ; refuse the unholy gain which Satan offers. Tradesmen, farmers, artisans, consecrate your labours to "the Lord of the whole earth." Servants, clerks, dependents, honour the Saviour on the days which he allows you as the period of rest, peace, composure. Too long have you obeyed the world, the flesh, and Satan ; now God calls you to repentance and consideration. Each individual reformation will go to form the national return to duty which we are pressing upon you. This is the first measure. Let every one into whose hands these pages may fall, examine and amend himself.

2. And let FERVENT PRAYER for the grace of the Holy Spirit be offered up. God alone can effectually do the work. All doctrine is vain without the operations of his Spirit. The fundamental truths of the gospel, the glorious perfections and excellencies of God,

the value of the soul, the inestimable worth of redemption, the necessity of a spiritual and heartfelt religion, of separation from the world, and communion with the Father of spirits, are unknown till the Spirit touch and quicken the heart. If we rely on our arguments and proofs merely, we shall never succeed. What are demonstrations of the authority and obligation of the Christian Sabbath to him who is dead in sin, careless upon the subject of his salvation, and wedded to his worldly lusts? The heart of man has reasons against all persuasions of theology; the reasons of evil inclination, previous choice, corrupt habit, perverted associations of thought. Prayer, then, for the mercy of God, is essential to success. Then Babel, so to speak, is deserted; then the walls of Jericho fall flat; then Dagon is overthrown before the ark; then Babylon opens her gates of brass: then the human heart yields to truth. And when the new and divine life begins in the soul, the Sabbath becomes the natural, the important privilege of the newborn Christian. He rejoices in the interval from the duties of this lower world: his food, his joy, his restoration, are in the ordinances of God. Let the gracious Spirit be granted to fervent united prayer, and things will soon revive—the desert will burst out with new bloom—the wills of men will be swayed—the Sabbath will re-appear in its mild dignity—the young will reverence, the old rejoice in, the day of God. The ministers of Christ will see unwonted audiences thronging around them—fresh and deeper-toned devotion will preside. National penitence for misused Sabbaths will appear in the very cry for mercy which will ascend to heaven—and from the sanctification of them in future, every temporal and spiritual blessing will germinate.

3. As this proceeds, and in order to advance it, **BOLD AND DECISIVE APPEALS** must be addressed to the consciences of the people. The adversary must not be allowed to sow tares unmolested. Plain and popular statements, adapted to the comprehension of the different classes of men, must be made—addresses from the pulpit, from the press—addresses in the form of argument, and

in the way of appeal and persuasion—short treatises must be widely diffused—the heart must be touched. Thus the circle of truth must be widened. The efforts of a false and spurious religion must be defeated, and God honoured amongst the people. A national feeling in favour of the Lord's day can only be expected from a revival, distinct and uncompromising, of the national conscience. Each one must use the talents entrusted to him by the great Householder. The artful sophistry which assails the divine authority of the Sabbath, must be detected; the false reasonings exposed. Truth must be manifested and sustained—not indeed with affected eloquence, not with artificial ornaments of speech, not with an overstrained or scrupulous pertinacity of debate; but in simplicity and openness of heart; neither relaxing the spiritual demands of the Sabbath, nor overrating the relative magnitude of this particular branch of the public guilt. Thus will God bless our nation; thus will the holy day be re-established in its authority and grace.

4. PRINCES AND MAGISTRATES will not be long before they listen to the voice of faithful and enlightened ministers. Legislators, and statesmen, and nobles, will hear the voice of truth. In the progress of a general revival, this has been God's method. He has raised up persons of authority, and guided their minds by the wisdom and counsels of well-informed and devoted ministers of Christ, in the affairs relating to the worship of God, and the souls of men. Instead of false teachers, corrupt ecclesiastics, proud and worldly-minded priests—men who have domineered, or fawned, as their interests and power permitted; and who have surrounded princes and magistrates, and flattered them to their ruin; God blesses his servants with pious and simple-hearted bishops and ministers, who understand the Scriptures, who know the value of the Sabbath, who distinguish the true welfare of government, who discern and admit the claims of God upon princes and rulers. With such aids, the secular magistrates will decree righteous statutes, the parliament will be swayed by sound religion, the measures needful for protecting the worship of God will be taken,

the oppression and insults of the profane will be redressed, the open and national violation of God's Sabbaths will be prohibited, the decent and devout order of a Christian land will be preserved. These aids from without, conspiring with the influence of grace within the church, will produce the desired result. The nation will return to the Lord. The Sabbath will be again "the sign of God's covenant, that he is the Lord that doth sanctify us;" and all other Christian virtues and habits will follow.

5. But this cannot be expected to be brought about, in a world like ours, without much of THAT PREVIOUS REPROACH AND CONTUMELY which have always attended the progress of a really spiritual reformation. Nothing disturbs and offends the world so much as the Lord's day strongly urged. The leaders must be content to receive the treatment which their Lord and Saviour received before them. And this deters the merely well-disposed part of mankind; they shrink from decisive steps, for fear of shame and names of contempt. The term Lollard at one period, of Wickliffite, Lutheran, Puritan, Methodist, Calvinist, at others, have been a successful instrument in Satan's hands of alarming the timid, and securing his hold of the worldly. Against such opposition (even if it were to rise to persecution) the Christian minister and hero must be ready to stand. He must disregard the honour of men, that he may obtain the favour of God: he must be proof against these assaults: he must be willing to risk his name, his character, his reputation, for his Saviour. The holy Sabbath must be dedicated, consecrated, revered, under whatever reproaches he may have to labour, who asserts its claims. As national reformation advances, these very men, once cast out and scorned, will become the objects of veneration, their counsels be prized, and their persons loved and esteemed.

6. Still, much will remain unredressed amidst the wrongs of the Sabbath—at least for a considerable period—many great evils may be expected to survive and struggle—the spiritual church, if it gain, by the mercy of

God, much, must reckon upon being discomfited in certain respects. She must, then, **PROTEST BOLDLY AND FEARLESSLY AGAINST THE SINS WHICH ARE PERSISTED IN.** Nothing honours God more than the confession of his truth, which his faithful servants make, when they are unable to succeed fully in their honest endeavours. A body of devoted followers of Christ, allowed to preach his truth in the world, and entering their open protest against flagrant evils, is a token for good in a country, of the most hopeful character. God never gives up a nation to his desolating judgments, when there is a considerable number of worshippers, thus avowing their allegiance, and crying out aloud against the dishonour done unto his name and Sabbaths.

7. Lastly, **HUMILIATION FOR PAST TRANSGRESSIONS, AND HOPE IN THE DIVINE MERCY FOR FUTURE DELIVERANCE AND ULTIMATE TRIUMPH,** are the dispositions of heart which we should most cultivate. After we have done all, we shall leave much, very much, to be humbled and abased for before our God; and our hope must be reposed, not in man, but in his power, mercy, and grace. The holy Sabbath, which, as a nation and as individuals, we have abused in times past, the dishonour we have done to it and to God thereby, the loss to our own souls which has followed, the injury to the spiritual welfare of others which has been occasioned, the slight put upon the blessed Spirit of grace, are topics of deep sorrow and penitential confession before God. To humble ourselves under his awful majesty, to deprecate his wrath, to accept the punishment of our iniquity—this is the way to obtain mercy; this will bring back our people, as the heart of one man, to the Lord; this will prepare us for all the holy duties of our Sundays, and all the communion with God which they bring with them.

Thus our hope will be placed in the unmerited grace of God for deliverance and triumph; we shall wait his holy will; we shall expect and look for his powerful succour; we shall despair of nothing under his mighty protection; we shall rejoice in the sanctification of his day, the conversion of souls, the consolation and edifica-

tion of his faithful servants, the pledge and anticipation of heaven.

Having now completed our original design in these seven sermons ; having established the divine obligation of a weekly Sabbath in the first four, and the practical duties arising from it in the last three ;

Let us, in conclusion of the whole series, remark,

I. That it is not for the Sabbath in itself that we have been pleading in the course of this work, but **THE SABBATH AS A MEANS TO CERTAIN ENDS**, as the channel and conveyance of the waters of life, as the standing institution for the declaration of God's glory, of the Saviour's resurrection, the rest of heaven ; as the moment of calm granted for rational and irrational creatures to breathe from toil, and recruit their exhausted powers ; as the needful interval of repose and cessation to a feeble creature like man ; as the appointed period for the instruction and salvation of souls ; as the most visible representation of our faith in our Maker and Benefactor, and the grand peculiarity of revealed religion.

Let, then, this thought ever be present with us. It is for no inferior matter we have pleaded ; it is for no external and formal point ; no ceremony ; no superstition—we teach not that “ man was made for the Sabbath ”—we should never be contented with any observation of it which was merely decorous, constrained, reluctant. We plead for the simplest and noblest institution of the religion of the Bible, which includes and embraces within its range every other. We plead for the most important means of grace and instruction, which is the platform upon which every other is erected. We plead for the highest testimony man can bear to the glory of God ; in which the praise of creation, of redemption, of eternal happiness, is united. We plead for the most merciful of all the divine appointments, which suspends the struggle of nature, and bids all creation repose, and refresh itself from its labour and toil.

Let us not, then, undervalue or misunderstand the subject we have been treating. We have not been dri-

velling about a questionable, an indifferent, a secondary duty. We have pleaded the cause of God, the interests of man, the peace of the world, the instruction of the poor, the knowledge of Christ, the doctrine of salvation, the hope of heaven. We have treated the greatest question in all the compass of practical theology, because it provides for every other duty, lies at the foundation of every other duty, gives space and time for every other duty, derives the divine blessing upon every other duty.

II. We have been pleading, in the next place, for these and other ends of the Christian Sabbath, because of THE UNSPEAKABLE VALUE OF THE SOUL OF MAN. For what is the gist of all we have argued?—that the soul of man is so noble, so precious, so inestimable in the eyes of God, so endless in its future state of happiness or misery, that a seventh portion of all man's time is taken out from ordinary employments to be dedicated to this his immortal part. Yes, the Sabbath proclaims the responsibility of man, the unfathomable and inexpressible value of his soul, the price put upon it by the Father of spirits, the dignity and capacities which it possesses. The Sabbath unites man with spiritual objects, connects him with his invisible Creator, Redeemer, Friend; teaches him what he is, and whither he is going. It is for the soul, then, that we have been pleading, that it may be blessed with the salutary knowledge of its fall and its recovery, of its sin and its remedy, of its guilt and condemnation in the first Adam, and its pardon and acceptance in the second.

Let the importance of our subject be measured by this standard. Let all the souls of all the race of men be brought before our view, and let all the unutterable happiness of each of those souls be weighed and balanced; and then let the value of that DAY be estimated, when the means of the repose, consolation, guidance, illumination, pardon, holiness, salvation, of all these immortal minds, are congregated and centered—when all the love of God our heavenly Father, all the grace of God the Son, and all the operations of God the Holy Ghost,

are poured forth and brought into effect. It is this sublime thought which elevates the topic we have been considering. The violation of the Sabbath sinks, degrades, materializes, destroys the soul of man; the observation of it raises, honours, spiritualizes, saves it. If the Lord's day be annihilated, religion fades away, secular pursuits bewilder man, the bodily appetites prevail, the knowledge of salvation is lost, the soul wanders wretched and ignorant, wayward and distressed, without a teacher, without a hope, without a refuge. The holy day sheds its gentle rays upon the lost traveller, sends religion to his succour, interrupts the din of false alarms, recalls him from the clamour of passion to the soft voice of conscience, gives him the knowledge of salvation, satisfies all his doubts, soothes his distresses, becomes his comforter and guide to a heavenly and eternal rest.

III. But we have pleaded, further, for the Christian Sabbath—thus valuable from its combination of means bearing upon the welfare of the soul of man—because it APPEALS PLAINLY AND FULLY TO THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE, and puts in its claim upon every reasonable and accountable being, on the footing of its own divine institution and authority.

Truth cannot be trifled with. Men may turn away from any statement of it. They may cavil. They may object to this or that particular argument. They may set up the sophisms of controversialists. But conscience cannot be thus silenced. The broad undeniable truth is, that a day of weekly rest has ever accompanied revealed religion under every dispensation of it. A Sabbath was celebrated even before the fall. A Sabbath forms a part of God's moral law. A Sabbath is insisted upon by the prophets. A Sabbath was observed by our Lord and his apostles. A Sabbath has been kept in every church, in every part of the world, in every age since. To cavil, then, at minute omissions in the history of it, or petty difficulties in the details of its progress, is worse than folly; it is dishonesty to truth. Nor can we escape the responsibility which attaches to knowledge proffered and

set before us. There stands the institution. Great efforts have been made to impress its obligation upon the public mind. Discussions, sermons, treatises, tracts, have been circulated. Public meetings have been convened, and resolutions passed to enforce the better observance of the day. The public conscience has been aroused. God has given us a call, a special call, to repent. If we refuse the call, "if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," if we "stop our ears," if "we harden our hearts," what can we expect but to be given up to a reprobate mind, and left to our own folly and presumption? With conscience, then, is the case left—to this inward vicegerent of the Almighty is our appeal. At its tribunal stands our cause to be adjudged. Let every one, then, yield to its sentence. Let every one bow to the voice and decree of this witness, judge, avenger. Let conscience stimulate us to hallow the Christian Sabbath, that coming within the sphere of the means of grace, we may actually learn the value of our souls, and the way of salvation for ourselves.

IV. But, lastly, we have pleaded for the Sabbath, because it is an indispensable preparation for THE HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS. Its appeal to the human conscience terminates here. Heaven or hell is at stake. We all profess to look for a heavenly rest. There are few who do not desire and expect to pass to a happy eternity when they die. Their ideas of its nature may be obscure, their preparations for it may be most defective. Still a vague hope of it, as opposed to eternal misery, and under the idea of a state of repose and felicity, occupies most minds. But let us consider the strict connexion which subsists between the employments and delights of the Sabbath upon earth, and those of that endless and beatific Sabbath which "remains for the people of God" at last. Do we recollect the descriptions given in the Bible, of the company, the praises, the spiritual and unceasing employments of that exalted place? Is it a carnal repose which it offers? Is it bodily indulgence? Is it mere cessation from toil and sorrow? No.

It is the eternal presence, the eternal enjoyment, the eternal praises of our God, and the Redeemer. Open the heavenly gates. You see the worshippers. You hear their hymns. What do they chant? The praises of "the Lamb that was slain:" the love of him who died for them; the majesty, and wisdom, and power, and glory, of their Father and Lord. And what is the temper of mind, what the habits, the notions of happiness, what the moral condition, which can derive felicity from such an employ? It is an employ of continual holiness, ceaseless adoration, perpetual activity in the service of God. The loose ideas formed of heaven, as an exemption from suffering merely, as standing only in opposition to fatigue and weariness, as being contrasted with misery and condemnation—are most delusive. It is holiness—it is the love of God—it is the worship of the Lamb that was slain—it is the resting not day nor night in the praises of the Almighty—it is felicity derived from the completion of the divine faculties and habits acquired in this world.

Observe, then, the connexion of the Sabbath duties here on earth with these ultimate and consummated duties of the eternal Sabbath above. The employments of the day here are holiness, the adoration of God in Christ, the praises of creating, redeeming love. The Sabbath is the day of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit: that is, it is the very same in essence with the heavenly Sabbath; has the same objects, the same joys, the same praises, the same gratitude, the same sources of happiness.

He that would prepare for heaven, must honour the Sabbath upon earth. He that would hope for the spiritual joys there, must acquire a taste and aptitude for them here.

All is connected in the divine plan. The Sabbath of the church militant is the pledge and foretaste of the Sabbath of the church triumphant. Were we in heaven without a new nature, a change of heart, a delight in the worship of God, an earnest longing after Christ, an acquiescence in holiness—we should never derive happiness from it, nor be capable of its employments. They

who argue against our feeble, preparatory Sabbaths; they who object, cavil, contemn; they who prefer every other employment to the worship of God; they who complain of weariness and satiety in the services of Christ—have an evidence in their own breasts of their unfitness for a heavenly world—they are condemned out of their own mouths. The louder they exclaim against our Lord's day and its duties, the more decidedly do they exclude themselves from the Christian character and the Christian hope.

Let us, then, awake to the truth of the case. The day of Sabbath, made and constituted for man, is essential to all his moral duties and hopes—it seals his evidence for a heavenly world—it prepares him for its joys and its employments—it forms its harbinger and foretaste.

The Sabbath will, therefore, never cease till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. As other figures and emblems terminated not till the substance of them came, so will not this grand type and foretaste of the ultimate repose of eternity be determined, till earth gives place to heaven.

Let it finally be again remembered that we disclaim everything harsh, uncommanded, ceremonial—we disclaim the Jewish, and much more the Pharisaical observances—we say with our Saviour, “not man for the Sabbath;” we follow also with delight the change of the day of celebration, authorised by “the Lord of the Sabbath.” But all this only leaves the grand, fundamental principle more strong and clear.—“The Sabbath was made for man,” to give him repose and religious peace, to give him time for the worship and adoration of God on earth; to be the solemn guarantee and type of his last rest; and to prepare and introduce him to the joy and ceaseless adorations of that glorious state. The Sabbath is man's privilege, interest, duty. The Sabbath is the glory of his religion, the highest exercise of his rational nature, the bond and link which connects him with all that is spiritual, all that is holy, all that is divine on earth; and which then transmits him to that exalted scene of eternal,

and perfect and uninterrupted spirituality, holiness, and blessedness in heaven, for which he was created—and to which may God be pleased to bring the writer and every reader of these pages, through his infinite mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord!

THE END.

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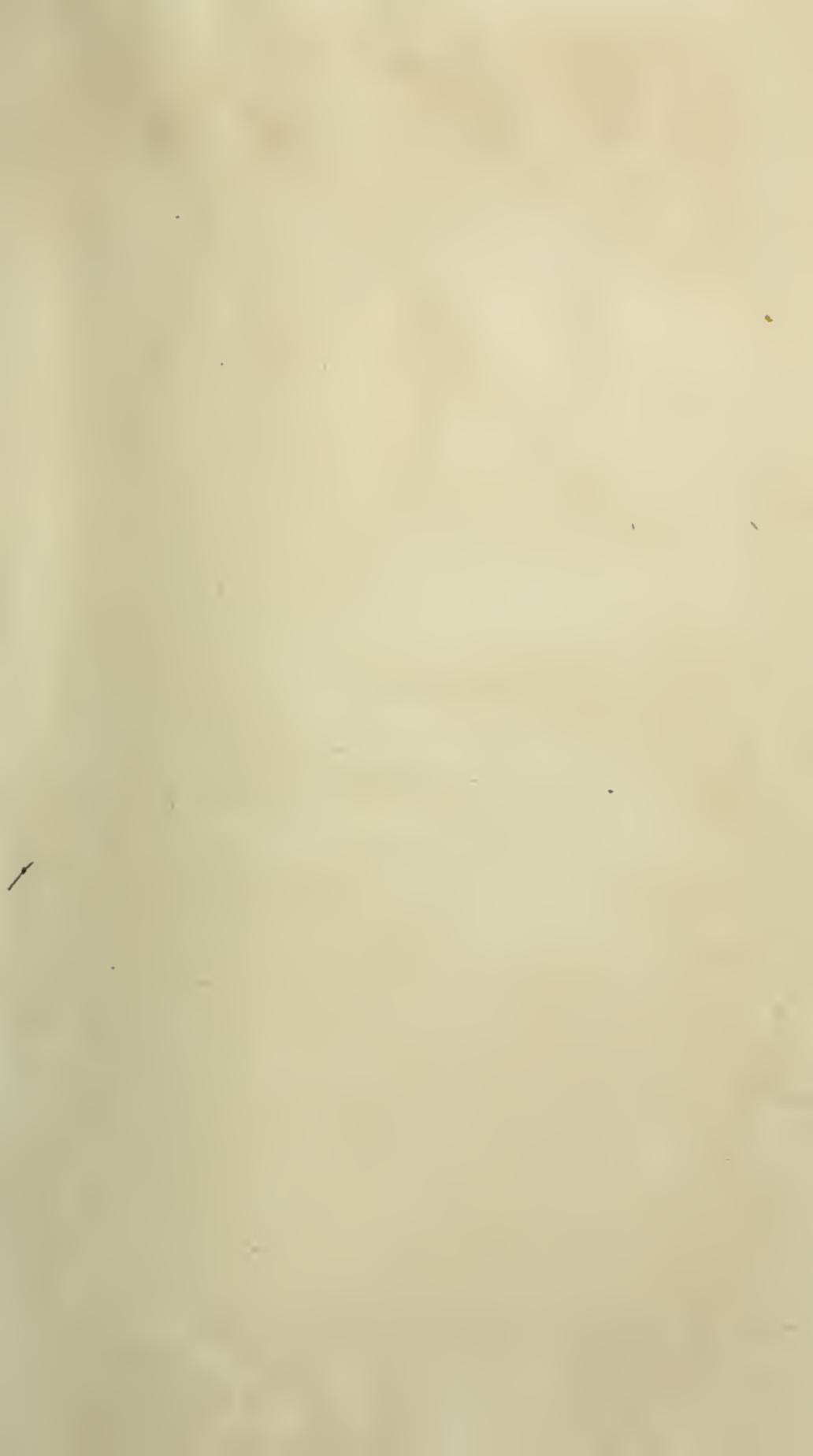
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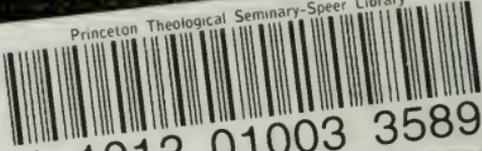
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