THE SABBATH.

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Five discourses on the mora
obligation and the

FIVE DISCOURSES

ON THE

MORAL OBLIGATION AND THE PARTICULAR DUTIES

OF

THE SABBATH.

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PREFACE.

The following Discourses were originally delivered to the church and society of which the author is pastor. They are presented to the public with only such alterations as a change of circumstances appeared to require.

It has occurred to the author that a MANUAL on the subject here treated of, — something that should exhibit in a plain and perspicuous manner, and in a form neither too condensed on the one hand, nor too diffuse on the other, the divine authority and the particular duties of the day of weekly rest, is what is greatly needed, especially in this portion of our country. And he has heard a similar sentiment repeatedly expressed by those whose judgment he is accustomed to respect. Whether these Discourses (commenced indeed without any view of the kind,) shall be thought to supply, in any measure, the place of such a work, must be left for others to determine. It is hoped that the discussion has been conducted in a spirit befitting one who attempts to explain the doctrines, and to enforce the requirements, of God's word, and that it may, especially when viewed in connexion with the points incidentally

alluded to, be rendered of some general service in promoting the cause of truth.

The author has readily availed himself of whatever helps he had at command, — though these have certainly been much fewer than he could have desired. He is particularly indebted to the treatise on the sabbath written by Bishop Wilson, and republished in this country in the year 1831. In the first three Discourses he has followed, to a considerable extent, Wilson's general arrangement ; (although this is indeed the only natural one;) he has also in several instances made use of his ideas, and in a few, of his language. In most cases of the kind, it is believed, a note of reference will be found in the margin. An occasional allusion to scripture facts or to authorities, may be made, where Wilson's work is not mentioned. In the preparation of the fourth and fifth Discourses the author has received valuable aid from Dwight's Sermons, from Nevins' Tract on the sabbath, and especially from the Panoplist for the year 1815.

Hardwick, Vt., July, 1842.

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DISCOURSE I.

THE MORAL AND PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH.

EXODUS 20: 8.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

THE word *sabbath* is a Hebrew term signifying *rest*. It is derived from a verb which signifies *to rest*, and which first occurs in Gen. 2 : 2, 3, in reference to God's *resting* from the work of creation. 'And on the seventh day God . . . *rested* (literally, *sabbatized*) from all his work which he had made.' In these two verses we have the origin and the proper signification of the term, as well as the establishing of the institution which the term itself designates. It occurs in the scriptures both with and without the word *day*. Sometimes it is used

by an obvious figure to denote *a week;* sometimes a period of *seven years.* Kindred to the word *sabbath* is the term *sabbaton,* the Greek form of which, *sabbatismos* (sabbatism) is used in Heb. 4: 9.

I propose to consider the subject of the sabbath somewhat in detail, — and the remarks which I have to offer will be presented in five Discourses. In the first two I shall endeavour to establish the moral and perpetual obligation of a day of weekly rest; in the third I shall treat of the transfer of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week; and in the fourth and fifth I shall speak of the manner in which the sabbath should be observed.

I shall first consider the divine authority of a day of weekly rest.

Most of you, my friends, are doubtless aware that the *moral obligation* of the christian sabbath has, especially within the past half century, been openly and somewhat extensively called in question. Not only have infidels attacked the institution in common with the other institutions of religion;

many professed christians have advanced views in regard to it, which, however well intended, appear to be subversive of the first principles of faith. It has been asserted, that there are no traces of a sabbath in the patriarchal ages; that therefore the account of its institution in the book of Genesis is by way of anticipation; that it was not established in fact till the time of the ceremonial law, and then merely formed a part of that preparatory dispensation; that we have no express command for the observance of it, or any day in the place of it, in the New Testament; that our Lord repealed it by his doctrine and conduct; and finally, that the example of the apostles and primitive christians gives it only the force of a moral expediency, subject to the regulations of each christian church, in each following age.* That these assertions are either utterly without foundation, or irrelative to the point at issue, will, I trust,

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* Wilson.

be made to appear in the course of the present discussion.

The argument for the divine authority of a day of weekly rest embraces several particulars.

I. Such a day was obviously appointed for our first parents in paradise; and the account of the original institution is such as to prove it to be of universal obligation. When the heavens and the earth were finished, and Adam placed in the garden of Eden, God blessed and set apart one day in seven for his own immediate service. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work. 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." To assert that this account is given by way of anticipation, while the sabbath was not known till twenty five hundred years after the creation, is to assert that which is directly op-

posed to the face of the narrative. It will be observed that the transactions of the seventh day immediately follow those of the sixth, precisely as those of the sixth follow the fifth; that is, in what is said of the six days and of the seventh we have a regular, unbroken history. As on the first day one thing was done, on the second another, on the third another, &c.; so on the seventh day God 'ended his work,' 'rested from all his work,' and 'blessed and sanctified the seventh day, because in it he had rested from all his work,' &c. Does not the writer manifestly say that the sabbath was set apart as soon as the work of creation was completed ?

When it is said that God *rested*, the meaning of course simply is, that he ceased to create. Very much of what si said in the scriptures respecting God, is, from the nature of the case, spoken after the manner of men. He "fainteth not, neither is weary." Should it be alleged that the *purpose* for which God blessed and sanctified the seventh day is not specified,

I would inquire, what *could* this purpose have been, except the benefit of the reasonable and accountable creature man? Surely it was not necessary for God to sanctify or set apart this day *for his own sake*. And if the day was set apart in reference to man, it must have been in reference to man as he existed from the very first; for the obligation in respect to religious worship, and of course the propriety of celebrating the glories of creation, is the same in all ages of the world.

I have said that the account of the original institution is such as to prove it to be of universal obligation. Let us look again at the *circumstances* of the case. What reason can be assigned for God's working six days, and resting (or ceasing to create) the seventh, unless it were to determine the proportion of time to be severally devoted to secular and sacred duties, — unless it were to show us that we should, after his example, work six days, and then rest and hallow the day following? Why was the work of creation distributed into several

parts, and why is the production of each of the six days so particularly specified, unless it were to teach mankind a great moral and religious lesson? Surely God could have created the universe as easily in a moment as in six days; and it seems to lie on the very face of the record, that his working in the manner he did, had reference mainly to the appointment of a day of weekly rest for the human family. I say mainly,—for a subordinate reason may possibly be supposed to refer to the fact, that a creation whose several parts should be progressively developed, might be better adapted to call forth the admiration of angels, than one that should be, throughout, instantaneous. On such a day God did one thing, on such a day another, and on the seventh day he rested, or ceased to create. The principle of resting one day in seven, would seem to be inscribed on the work of creation itself. 'God worked six days and then rested the seventh, for the reason that mankind might work and rest in the same order.'

The argument in respect to the moral

obligation of a day of weekly rest, appears to turn essentially on the original appointment as given to our first parents in paradise. If the sabbath was given to Adam, there can be no doubt in regard to the nature of the institution. The law respecting a day of weekly rest must have been a part of the moral law that was revealed to him by his all-wise and beneficent Creator. That the sabbath *was* appointed in paradise, will be further evident from the two following considerations: — *First*, There are traces of a weekly division of time in the patriarchal ages. *Secondly*, The existence of the sabbath is recognised before the Mosaic dispensation commenced.

1. There are traces of a weekly division of time in the patriarchal ages. We grant that the sabbath is not expressly mentioned from the time of Adam to that of Moses; but what then? Is it proper to infer from the silence of scripture in respect to any institution, that such institution did not exist? Nothing is said of sacrifices from the time of Abel down to that of the deluge, a period

of some fifteen hundred years; but are we therefore to infer that sacrifices were not offered? No mention is made of circumcision from the death of Moses to the time of Jeremiah, an interval of eight centuries; but are we therefore to conclude that circumcision was not performed? We have no account of the sabbath in Joshua, Ruth, first and second Samuel, and first of Kings; and yet these books were written after the giving of the Mosaic law, and at periods, confessedly, when the institution was celebrated with the greatest care.* So far as the silence of scripture is concerned, we might just as well infer that the sabbath was not observed in the time of Joshua and Samuel, as that its observance was not known in the days of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. In different parts of the book of Genesis, however, we find that which is equivalent to the express mention of the sabbath, that is, we find, as I have remarked, traces of a weekly division of time. One

*Wilson.

can hardly cite, in favour of such a division, the account of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel in chapter 4th. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord." Though the expression "in process of time," is literally, 'at the end of days,' yet no intimation is given as to the *number* of days intended. Some suppose that the allusion is to *the end of the year*, the time at which the feast of the ingathering was afterwards kept; but it may be doubted whether any definite time is referred to. In the 7th chapter, however, we find the reckoning by weeks alluded to as the ordinary division of time. "Yet seven days and I will cause it to rain upon the earth;" and again in verse 10, "And it came to pass, after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." It is said in chapter 8th, when the flood was decreasing, that 'Noah sent out a dove, which returned.' He then stayed "yet other seven days," and again sent it forth. In verse 12, "And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again," &c.

Should we not infer from this account, that the division of days into portions of seven was perfectly familiar to the antediluvians, and that one day of the seven was marked by some distinction?

After the deluge the tradition of a weekly division of time spread, manifestly through the sons of Noah, over all the eastern world. Assyrians, Egyptians, Indians, Persians and Arabians unite with the Israelites in retaining traces of it. In the earliest classics there are many indications that the Greeks and Romans observed such a division, and that the seventh day was regarded as especially sacred. To what cause except the tradition of the creation, are we to attribute the fact, that *seven* was employed by all the ancient nations as a sacred number?*

It will be remembered that the rite of circumcision was to be performed after the lapse of seven days from the birth of the child, Gen. 17: 12.

Even Laban the Syrian seems to have been

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*See Gesenius on the Heb. word.

acquainted with a weekly division of time. "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also," Gen. 29 : 29. The word here rendered 'week,' is the appropriate scripture expression for that term. It is said that Joseph devoted a week to the mourning for his father, Gen. 50 : 10.

2. The existence of the sabbath is recognised before theMosaic dispensation commenced. So utterly unfounded is the assertion that the sabbath was not known till the giving of the law on mount Sinai. The dispensation at Sinai commences in the 20th chapter of Exodus; in the 16th chapter, that is, four chapters before, the sabbath is not only spoken of, but it is spoken of in such a way as to show that it was an institution of which the Israelites were by no means ignorant. When the manna was announced, they were directed to gather twice as much on the sixth day as they did on the other days, Ex. 15: 6. In verse 23 the reason of this direction is given, and some further particulars in respect to the observance of the sabbath specified. "This is that which the Lord hath said, To-

morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath (literally, the sabbath of the holy sabbath,) unto the Lord. Bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning." It would seem to be sufficiently plain, from the general scope of the narrative, that Moses is here not establishing a new institution, but simply reviving one with which the Israelites were to some extent familiar. The manner in which the subject is introduced, and the conduct of the people show that something, at least, had been previously known in regard to a day of weekly rest. It is utterly incredible that so stiff-necked a people as the Jews, a people that had just been on the very verge of rebellion, should have so readily fallen in with an institution to which they were entire strangers.*

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* For a somewhat particular examination of the account respecting the Sabbath, in this chapter, the reader is referred to Dwight's Theology, Sermon one hundred and seventh. See also Rosenmueller's Scholia ad loc.

One cannot but observe, in passing, the importance which God attached to the sabbath, as seen in the falling and preservation of the manna. It will be recollected that the manna fell on six days, but not on the seventh ; that twice as much fell on the sixth day as on any of the preceding five; and that, while that which fell on the first five days invariably putrefied on the day following, that which fell on the sixth day remained sweet and wholesome over the seventh. Here was a three-fold weekly miracle to remind the people of the importance of a day of weekly rest.

I have said that the account in the chapter which has just been referred to, seems to show that the Israelites were not, previously to the events there recorded, wholly unacquainted with the sabbath. We should naturally suppose, however, that their knowledge of the institution must have been a good deal confused and indefinite. During their bondage in Egypt, a period of some two hundred years, it might have been impossible for them outwardly to

observe the sabbath at all;* and it is not improbable that, at the time they left the country, the exact computation of weeks from the first institution had been lost. Some have thought that the new calculation was dated from the day of deliverance from Egypt, the day on which the sacred year commenced; see Ex. 12: 2. A reason assigned for keeping the sabbath in Deut. 5: 15 is, that the Israelites had been servants in Egypt, and that the Lord had brought them out with a mighty hand.

I would not, in Ex. 20: 8, lay any great stress on the word translated *remember*, — for it may well be doubted whether that word means anything more than the word rendered *keep*, in Deut. 5: 15. Either of the expressions however, '*Remember the sabbath*,' or '*Keep the sabbath*,' would imply that the institution had been previously known.

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* Cogitavi in Egypto, ubi serviebas, etiam ipso sabbato per vim te esse coactum ad labores.—Manasseh Ben Israel.

Thus the position that the sabbath was set apart in paradise, and that of course, its observance is a matter of moral obligation, has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently confirmed. It has, I trust, been seen, that the record in Gen. 2, can fairly be interpreted in no other way; and that the institution both existed in the days of the patriarchs, and was not unknown during the bondage in Egypt.

II. The command in respect to the observance of a day of weekly rest, forms one of the precepts of the decalogue. "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." Here then,

we have the law in respect to the sabbath incorporated in the table of the ten commandments. Are not all these commandments of moral or perpetual obligation? Surely, no one is authorised to set aside the fourth, any more than he is any or all of the remaining nine. Whatever obligation the first, or the second, or the sixth, or any one of the remaining number carries along with it, the same obligation is involved in the fourth. "If men are bound in all ages to acknowledge one only God; to worship him not with graven images, but in spirit and in truth; to reverence the divine name; to obey their parents; to abstain from murder, adultery, theft, false witness, concupiscence, — they are equally bound to consecrate a sabbath to their Maker's service." *

I have, for the sake of clearness, referred to the insertion of the law of the sabbath in the decalogue, as a separate argument in favour of the divine authority of

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* Wilson.

the day. The fact alluded to is not, however, properly so much a separate argument, as it is an illustration of the first, viz. that the sabbath was appointed for man in paradise. The moral law was not a new thing. In all its essential elements it existed from the beginning. It was not indeed engraven on tables of stone, but it was engraven on the hearts of men. The decalogue was only a summary of those principles which were revealed to Adam, and which had regulated the conduct of the people of God from the time of the patriarchs down to that of Moses. Its precepts, as one justly remarks, "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." This will be admitted in regard to the commands generally, and it cannot be denied in respect to the fourth. If one is prepared to grant, that in the earliest times idolatry, murder, theft, &c. were known to be wrong, with what propriety does he assume

that the law in respect to the sabbath had no existence previous to the time of Moses? Is not a sabbath as *essential* to man in one age as it is in another? It is worthy of notice that the same reason is assigned for keeping the sabbath in the decalogue, that was assigned when the institution was established at the creation. "*For* in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, &c.; *wherefore*, the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

If the foregoing view be correct, the assertion that the law respecting the sabbath merely formed a part of the Mosaic economy, will already have been disproved. As has been remarked, the moral law is, from the nature of the case, of perpetual and universal obligation. The judicial and ceremonial law, or that which related to the Jews as a nation, was, on the other hand, of positive enactment and of temporary duration: it had no existence before its express appointment, and was abrogated at the introduction of the christian dispensation. Not only are the

moral law and the ceremonial totally diverse in their nature and design; they were delivered at different times, and under different circumstances. No part of the ceremonial law was given until the decalogue had been completed. In Deut. 5 : 22 it is said, "These words (that is, the ten commandments) the Lord spake, &c., and *he added no more.*" The ceremonial enactments were delivered, it would seem, 'by more ordinary and usual means; the precepts of the moral law were proclaimed by the immediate and audible voice of God.'

It is no objection to this view that in Deut. 5: 15 the observance of the sabbath is enjoined by a reference to the deliverance from Egypt, and that such observance was, in some respects, regulated by the temporary or ceremonial economy. The passage in Deuteronomy does not necessarily mean that the sabbath was *instituted* in commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt; it appears simply to teach, that the Israelites were to make that a day of *peculiar recognition* of the event referred to.

As God's chosen and redeemed people, a consideration in respect to the sabbath existed in regard to *them*, which did not exist in regard to others: the reason therefore, which was given for the observance of the day in their case, was merely additional to the reason which had been assigned before; that is, it was a secondary and subordinate reason. The one was of universal application; the other related to the Israelites as a people. The case might be illustrated in this manner: A king publishes a law, and assigns, at the time, a reason for its observance that applies to all his subjects: afterwards, in re-publishing the law, he assigns a subordinate reason, or one that relates to a certain class of his subjects in particular. The same principle obtains in respect to those passages which speak of the sabbath as a *sign* between God and his people. The passage in Neh. 9: 14, "And madest known to them thy holy sabbath, &c., by the hand of Moses thy servant," no more implies that the sabbath was unknown previous to the Mosaic dispensation, than it does that the

principles of the moral law *generally*, were unknown. What the passage manifestly teaches, is, "that God had *published* the law of the sabbath at Sinai, with renewed, awful, and peculiar sanctions."* The fact that with the law of the sabbath were associated certain ceremonial enactments, affects not the nature of the law itself. A law may be of universal obligation, and yet have certain appendages that relate to a particular period of time, or to a particular class of men. Thus, on the return of the sabbath, two lambs were to be offered beside the usual sacrifice; the shew-bread was to be renewed; the Levites were to enter upon their courses, &c. It would seem that individuals were not, on the sabbath, allowed to travel (for secular purposes) beyond a certain distance, — and the presumptuous violater of the day was to be put to death. Now, there were certain judicial and ceremonial enactments appended to the other precepts of the deca-

*Prof. Stuart in loc.

logue as well as the fourth; but does this circumstance prove them not to have been of a moral nature? Does it prove them not to have been still the eternal, the immutable rules of right and wrong? If the violation of the fourth commandment was punished with death, the same was true in regard to each of the remaining precepts of the decalogue, with the exception of the eighth and tenth. To the crime of idolatry, sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, bearing false witness, was annexed one and the same penalty. The violation of the eighth commandment was severely punished; and if a thief were detected in attempting to break open a house at night, he might be put to death with impunity. The violation of the tenth commandment could not, from the nature of the case, be punished by man at all, except indeed so far as this commandment was identified with the seventh and the eighth. If any one is prepared to take the ground, that because the fourth commandment had in it something of a positive or

judicial character, it was therefore binding only on the Jewish nation, he will be compelled to take the same ground in respect to all the other precepts of the decalogue—a fearful alternative indeed! Because the violation of the first commandment, or the sixth, or the seventh, was punished with temporal death, was the full penalty attached to these transgressions thereby exhausted? Was it *supposed* to be thereby exhausted, by enlightened and pious Jews? Did they not understand that, to incur the divine displeasure, meant vastly more than simply to suffer punishment in the present world? Let sound views of scripture truth answer the question.

Not only was the law of the sabbath unaffected, from the nature of the case, by its connexion with the ceremonial dispensation; it stood, in form, *high above* that dispensation during the subsequent period of the Jewish history. After the giving of the decalogue in Exodus 20, three chapters of judicial enactments follow. In the midst of these the sabbath is introduced, and in such

a manner as to show that its observance was intimately associated with the worshipping of the true God. Succeeding the chapters just mentioned are six which relate to the tabernacle, and its various services and sacrifices. These chapters, or rather the whole communication of the forty days on the mount, is concluded by a reinculcation of the law of the sabbath, and that in the most particular and impressive manner.* "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations: that ye may know *that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.* Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you. . . . . Six days may work be done, but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest. . . Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations;" see Ex. 31: 13—17.

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* Wilson.

Amid the recapitulations which follow in the next three chapters the sabbath is again introduced.

In Lev. 19: 3, 4, the law of the sabbath is introduced in connexion with the first, second, and fifth precepts of the decalogue. "Ye shall fear every man his mother and father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God." Could any thing show more clearly the high moral character of the sabbath, than the manner in which it is here referred to?

The account of the sabbath-breaker in Numb. 15, and the manner in which the law of the sabbath is repeated in Deut. 5, (the chapter already alluded to,) appear to illustrate the same sentiment. In the latter chapter the law of the sabbath not only retains its former place among the precepts of the decalogue ; it would seem to have a degree of prominence which it had not in the first instance. If one were to judge from the particularity of expression, he

would be led to think, that the fourth precept, instead of being of *less* importance than any of the others, was, if possible, of even *greater* importance. Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy near the close of life; and how entirely elevated above any ceremonial enactment the law of the sabbath is here left, no candid reader can fail to perceive. That it continued to be thus elevated, will be evident as we proceed.

DISCOURSE II.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

EXODUS 20: 8.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

In the former Discourse I considered the divine authority of a day of weekly rest, as proved from the fact, that such a day was set apart at the creation, and that its observance is expressly enjoined in the decalogue. I come now to my third and fourth arguments in relation to the same general subject, — although indeed these arguments will be scarcely more than an illustration of those that precede.

III. The prophets every where speak of the sabbath in such a manner as to prove

it to be of moral obligation. The ninety-second Psalm is said to be a hymn or song that was composed expressly for the sabbath. There is reason to believe indeed, that every sabbath had its appointed psalm or psalms; and a writer has cited a passage from a Jewish tract, in which these psalms are severally numbered.* The subjects that are introduced in Psalm 92nd are the very subjects that would be appropriate to a hymn composed expressly for the sabbath, viz., the works, the providence, and the grace of God. In Is. 56: 1—5, it is said, "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice, &c. 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. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold on my covenant; even unto them will I give in my house and with-

* See Rosenmueller's Scholia.

in my walls a place better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." It will be observed that keeping the sabbath is here put on a level with doing judgment and justice, and taking hold on God's covenant; that is, it is obedience in the highest and most essential sense of the word. It is obedience with which were associated all the blessings that pertain to the keeping of any part of the moral law. In verses 6th and 7th the language is, if possible, still stronger. Not only is the keeping of the sabbath here associated with serving the Lord, loving the name of the Lord &c., &c.; it is expressly predicted that the blessings connected with the observance of this day were to be extended also to the gentiles. Does the prophet anywhere speak of mere ceremonial observances in this manner? Does he not even condemn such observances, when put in the place of the weightier matters that are treated of in this chapter? "Bring no more vain oblations . . . the new moons,

and sabbaths, (that is, the merely having certain religious days,) the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with . . . wash you, make you clean . . . cease to do evil; learn to do well." So in chapter 58, where loosing the bands of wickedness, &c., and properly keeping the sabbath are put in contrast with the mere external observance of fasting, &c. How expressive is the language with which the latter chapter concludes !

It will occur in this connexion, that the prophets associate with the sin of violating the sabbath, the severest threatenings. Thus Jeremiah, chap. 17, "Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, &c. . . . But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, &c. . . . But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." The prophet

Ezekiel, in referring to the sins of the Israelites in the wilderness, represents the peculiar aggravation of those sins to be, their profanation of the sabbath ; see chap. 20, vs. 12, 13. "The house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes; they despised my judgments, and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them." In the course of the chapter the charge is again and again repeated, and in verse 16 the sin of sabbath breaking is associated with that of idolatry. "Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols." In chap 22 the prophet mentions the sin of sabbath breaking in connexion with disobedience to parents, idolatry, murder, adultery, extortion, &c., and he tells the people that it was on account of these sins that they were to be scattered among the heathen.

Of the reformation effected by Nehemiah

one of the most prominent parts consisted in recalling the people to the proper observance of the sabbath. See Neh. chap. 13. Does he speak of the sabbath as a mere ceremonial rite that had been neglected or despised; or does he speak of it as a matter that involved the highest moral obligation? Most obviously the latter. "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, &c. 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 us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath." The judgment here spoken of is that of the Babylonish captivity: of this judgment therefore the sin of sabbath breaking was one of the principal causes.

IV. Let us now consider the next argument in favour of the divine authority of the sabbath, viz., the argument that is founded on the precepts and example of the

Saviour and the apostles. It has been asserted that our Lord set aside or at least, greatly relaxed, the law in respect to a day of weekly rest. Of those who take this ground some affirm that the sabbath was a part of the ceremonial dispensation, which was to be done away of course ; others, that if the law of the sabbath was a part of the moral law, that was either abolished, or at least, greatly modified. A strange sentiment, one would think, for any professed christian to advance ! We have, it appears, fallen upon times when no assertion is too startling to be made, no error too great to be believed. That the sabbath was not a part of the ceremonial economy, has already been proved: it has been seen that throughout the whole of the Old Testament dispensation the law respecting its observance was regarded as much a part of the moral law, as any one of the precepts of the decalogue. It was instituted in paradise; it was observed by the patriarchs ; it was embodied by Moses among the eternal rules of right and wrong; it is

every where associated with worshipping the true God, obeying one's parents, abstaining from murder, adultery, &c. The question then comes to this: Did our Saviour either annul or modify the moral law? or, if he did not do away the moral law in general, did he abolish the fourth commandment in particular? To an inquiry of such a nature there would hardly seem to be any occasion to attempt a reply. The Saviour abolish the moral law, when this law is, from its very character, immutable; when it embodies those eternal principles of right and wrong that apply to men in every nation and every age? One would suppose that at least his own declaration, 'I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil,' ought to be sufficient to preclude any suggestion of this kind. 'But did not the Saviour intimate that it was the *spirit* rather than the *form* of the moral law that was to be observed?' I answer, Never. He did indeed teach, that the *substance* of the law is embraced in the broad principle of loving the Lord with all the heart, and our neighbour

as ourselves; but what then? Had not Moses taught the same thing before him? Was the force of *particular precepts* diminished, because Moses stated what was obviously the *substance of the whole*? Was not each of the precepts still enjoined upon the people? And was the force of the ten commandments *as such*, in any way lessened, because our Lord repeated the sentiment of Moses, that the foundation of all obedience is love? Did the Saviour *in fact* set aside any one of the precepts of the decalogue, or did he teach men so to do? Far otherwise. It is true that the *particular day* on which the sabbath was to be celebrated, was, by his authority, changed; but there is no evidence that the law of the sabbath itself was abolished. There is decisive evidence to the contrary.

1. Our Lord everywhere recognises the ten commandments *as such*, and of course, the fourth among the number, as of moral or perpetual obligation. When the young ruler came to him with the inquiry, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit

eternal life?" he replied, "Thou knowest *the commandments*—if thou wilt enter into life, keep *the commandments;*" and when the ruler inquired which, Jesus repeated five, thus expressly recognising the whole code.* It is mere trifling to say that our Lord does not here repeat the fourth commandment, for he omits the first table of the law altogether, and he does not cite all the precepts even of the second. So in the Sermon on the Mount, where at least two of the commandments are referred to, and their real nature explained.

I have alluded to the fact that the Saviour summed up the precepts of the decalogue into love to God and love to our neighbour. It is not enough to say that this circumstance does not diminish the force of any particular commandment: it is, in reality, the strongest possible recognition of the divine authority and perpetual obligation of the whole. It will be remembered, in this connexion, that our Lord reproached the Pharisees with

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*Wilson.

'making void' one of the commandments, viz., the fifth, 'through their tradition;' that he said 'heaven and earth should sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle of the law should fail, till all were fulfilled;' and that 'whosoever should break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, should be called least in the kingdom of heaven.'

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the apostles recognised the decalogue *as such*, in the same manner that their Master had done. In Romans 13 : 8 Paul enumerates five of the commandments, and then adds, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In relating his experience in chap. 7th he refers to the tenth commandment; and in writing to the Ephesians, a gentile church, he cites the fifth. "Whosoever," says James, "shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point," that is, 'whosoever shall keep the commandments generally, and yet transgress any one of

them,' — "he is guilty of all, for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill," &c.

2. The Saviour honoured the law of the sabbath by his own example. It is said repeatedly in the evangelists that 'he taught in the synagogue on the sabbath day;' see Mark 6 : 2; Luke 4 : 31 ; 6: 6; 13 : 10; 4: 16. In the passage last cited his teaching on the sabbath is spoken of as a *custom*. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up ; and *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." It was on this sabbath that he especially explained the nature of his mission, by quoting a passage from the book of Isaiah, and applying it to himself. 'But did not our Lord modify or somewhat relax the law of the sabbath ?' I answer, Not in the smallest particular. He did indeed sweep away the traditions with which the law in general had been encumbered ; he restored the law of the sabbath to its original and proper import, — but he never relaxed, in the least, the fourth

commandment itself. If he taught that 'it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day,' and that 'the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath,' he taught that which was evident as a first principle. If as occasions arose, he did on this day heal the sick, and if in one instance, he permitted his disciples to satisfy their hunger by plucking ears of corn, he did that which was not opposed either to the spirit or the letter of the Jewish ritual. Works of necessity and mercy were not forbidden under the ceremonial dispensation, any more than they are under the christian.

'But does not the Saviour's remark, "The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath," taken in connexion with his permitting the disciples to pluck the ears of corn, imply that he considered himself as having, on that occasion, somewhat infringed upon the *law* of the sabbath?' I answer, By no means; for he vindicated his conduct not only from the necessity of the case, the example of David, and the custom in the temple service, but also on the principle that

'the sabbath was made for man.' What the passage appears to teach, is, that he considered himself competent to decide what was proper to be done on the sabbath, and what was not proper, — and that he was authorised to set aside the traditions and matters of will-worship with which the Jewish teachers had associated the observance of the day. That the idea is also implied, that he had a right, if he chose so to do, to introduce any change in respect to the *circumstantials* of the institution, is probably true. Let it be repeated, that his conduct on the sabbath never contravened either the spirit or the letter of the Mosaic law. It did not in his healing the sick ; it did not in his permitting the disciples to pluck the ears of corn ; it did not in his directing the invalid at Bethesda to take up his bed and walk.

That our Lord's conduct on the sabbath was opposed to the traditions of the Pharisees,has already been intimated. By these traditions they had made void the law of the the sabbath, and in fact almost every pre-

cept of the decalogue. Thirty six different kinds of labour were reckoned up, as interdicted by the fourth commandment.* With the Pharisees however our Lord reasoned on their own ground. They would admit that it was proper to lead an animal to water, or to rescue it from danger on the sabbath ; why not admit the same principle in regard to a human being ? They would admit that the calls of nature were to be satisfied ; why then find fault with him because he allowed the disciples to pluck the ears of corn ? That was a cutting rebuke, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

It is deserving of notice that our Lord's reasonings with the Pharisees respecting the sabbath all take for granted the continuance of the institution. Why should he lay down rules as to what was proper to be done on the day of rest, if the sabbath was soon to be set aside altogether ? Let us

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*Jahn.

look at the high *moral ground* which he assumed. One might dwell upon the force of the expression, "Wherefore it is LAWFUL TO DO GOOD on the sabbath day;" and on that of the declaration above cited, "The sabbath was made for MAN." Aside from the point which the latter expression was especially intended to illustrate, it would seem to carry on the face of it the sentiment, that the sabbath was designed for the *race*, — for man in every country and age. This argument receives additional weight from the circumstance, that our Lord, when speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, an event which was then nearly forty years distant, directed the disciples to pray that their flight might not be in the winter, nor on the sabbath day; since their escape would be impeded in the one case, by the inclemency of the season, and in the other by considerations in respect to the fourth commandment. Whatever might be thought to be the *ground* of the scruples which the disciples would feel in regard to journeying on the sabbath for *any* reason,

the Saviour's direction at least supposes that the institution would, at the time of the event referred to, still be in existence.*

I need not remark that the apostles imitated their Master in observing a day of weekly rest. They were so far from disregarding the sabbath, that even after the day was changed, they appear to have kept for a time, for the sake of conciliating the Jews, both the Mosaic sabbath and the christian. Mark the following passages in the 13th, 17th, and 18th chapters of the Acts. "And the gentiles besought that these words might be preached unto them the next sabbath." "And the next sabbath day almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God." "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."

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* See Kuinoel's remarks on 'the sabbath day's journey,' in his notes on Matt. 24 : 20, and Acts 1 : 12.

Thus we see that the assertion, that our Lord and the apostles either abrogated or relaxed the law of the sabbath, is opposed to all the declarations and facts of the New Testament. From the nature of the case it was as impossible either to do away, or to lower down the fourth commandment, as it was any other part of the decalogue. The moral law, taken either as a whole, or in relation to each of its parts, always was, and always will be, "holy, and just, and good;" it is that immutable rule of rectitude that is to govern the conduct of men in all ages, and under all circumstances. That the sabbath was, after our Lord's resurrection, divested of its Jewish appendages, and that the particular day of its observance was changed, I shall proceed to show in another discourse.

Such are the arguments in favour of the divine authority of a day of weekly rest. The law of the sabbath was given to man in paradise; it was incorporated by Moses among the precepts of the dec-

alogue; it was regarded by the prophets as of moral and perpetual obligation; and finally, it was honoured both by the precepts and the example of our Lord and the apostles.

DISCOURSE III.

THE SAME GENERAL SUBJECT CONTINUED—THE TRANSFER OF THE SABBATH FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

EXODUS 20 : 8.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

I HAVE dwelt at some length on the perpetual obligation of a day of weekly rest. It has been seen that the law of the sabbath was given to man from the beginning; that it was embodied among the precepts of the decalogue; and that it was regarded by the prophets, by our Lord and the apostles as of equal authority with any part of the moral code. Some remarks are necessary in respect to the change that took place as to the external part of the institu-

tion, at the introduction of the christian economy.

On the occurrence of the latter event, everything in the Mosaic law that was judicial and ceremonial, every thing that related to the Jews as a people, was abrogated. The shadow gave place to the substance; the types to the thing typified. The Saviour, at his death, 'blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to his cross.' The judicial and ceremonial dispensation, however, *left* the moral law precisely as it *found* it; that is, the immutable rule of right and wrong. The scaffolding was removed, but the building itself remained as it had stood from the beginning. Idolatry, disobedience to parents, sabbath breaking, &c., were no longer to be punished with temporal death, but they were still as displeasing to God, were still as wrong in themselves, as they had been from the first. They were still *sin*, in the essential sense of the term, and such they will be till the end of time. The apostles, as we have seen, speak of the

moral law as the rule of duty, long after the ceremonial usages had been done away. If it be admitted that the moral law in general was not affected by its connexion with the ceremonial, (and it has appeared that it was not) the same must be admitted in respect to each of the commandments in particular.

At the abrogation of the ceremonial economy, the sabbath laid aside every thing that was merely *Jewish*, and appeared in the simplicity with which it was marked at the creation, and during the patriarchal ages. A change also took place in respect to the *particular day* on which the sabbath was to be celebrated. We do not now observe, and the church from apostolic times has not observed, the seventh day of the week, but the first, that is, the day on which the Saviour arose from the dead. The sabbath which we keep is, as was just intimated, the primitive or patriarchal sabbath ; but as the *day* has been changed, and as an additional consideration has been introduced in respect to its observance, it

is not improperly called the *christian* sabbath. As the change of the *day* of the sabbath has been a source of difficulty to some serious minds, and as it has been urged by the enemies of the truth as an argument against the institution itself, it may be proper to consider the subject somewhat in detail. I remark, then,—

1. The *particular day* of the observance of the sabbath may be regarded as a thing distinct from the sabbath itself. It belongs to the essence of the institution that one seventh part of our time, or one day in seven should be devoted to religious duties; *which* of the seven days shall be thus devoted, can be considered important only so far as the point may be supposed to have been determined by the will of God. It is evident that the original appointment as well as the fourth commandment, had reference mainly to the proportion of time to be observed between our days of business and the day of rest. It is true that in the order of nature, labour precedes rest, and that in the primitive institution the sabbath fell on the

seventh day of the week. Still, would not every thing essential to the institution be preserved, if the sabbath were supposed to fall on the *first* day of the week instead of the seventh ? Six days of labour would be followed by a day of rest in the one case as well as in the other. The day on which we begin to number, considered in itself, affects not the nature of the sabbath at all.

2. Many judicious men have supposed that, when the sabbath was revived in Ex. 16, it was, as was intimated in the first Discourse, dated not from what had once been called the seventh day of the week, but from some other day — the day perhaps on which the Israelites left Egypt. Compare Ex. 20: 2 with Deut. 5: 6, 15. One thing is plain ; " the fourth commandment does not determine which day of the week we should keep as a sabbath; but only that we should keep every seventh day, or one day after six. It says, '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."*

3. If *the proportion of time* was the thing mainly insisted upon in the original appointment of the sabbath, and in the giving of the fourth commandment, we should expect that the same principle would especially obtain in the christian dispensation, designed as it is for men not in one latitude and hemisphere merely, but in different parts of the globe. The supposition that the validity of the sabbath must necessarily depend upon *just such* a calculation in respect to days, would be attended with serious difficulties. "What should we say in regard to those who dwell in high northern latitudes, and who, instead of the diurnal distinctions which exist in lower latitudes, have, in every year, one day and one night, each of several weeks' dura-

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* J. Edwards as quoted by Wilson.

tion ?'' What should we say of those who live in opposite hemispheres ? If two navigators should sail round the world in opposite directions, one would lose and the other gain a day in his computation. When Pitcairn's Island in the South Seas was visited, a few years since, by an English vessel, the voyagers, on the day of their arrival, which was Saturday, found the islanders observing Sunday ; the English ship and the islanders having sailed from England in opposite directions.*

The *day* of keeping the sabbath, then, may be changed without at all affecting the institution itself. It can, however, be changed only by divine appointment. Unimportant in itself, it becomes highly important when God determines what day it shall be. We are bound not only to keep one day in seven, but to keep the *precise* day which he has appointed. If, at the introduction of the christian dispensation, God changed the day, we are bound to observe

*Wilson.

the day which he instituted, viz., the first day of the week. That the day of keeping the sabbath has been changed, is admitted by all: that it was changed by divine appointment, I shall now proceed to show.

1. That God should change the day, would be in itself altogether reasonable. The design of the primitive sabbath was, to celebrate the divine perfections as manifested in the work of creation. Now it would be altogether reasonable that God should appoint a day on which men might celebrate his perfections as exhibited in the work of redemption. Great and glorious as the former work was, the latter might be shown to be even greater and more glorious. The apostle teaches, that God created all things in order that his attributes, as manifested in the work of redemption, might be made known by the church, Eph. 3 : 10. In Is. 65 : 17, it is said, "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither shall it come into mind;" that is, the *new* creation or the work of redemption is

worthy to be remembered or commemorated rather than the *old* creation.

2. The Saviour, after his resurrection, began to introduce the change by his own conduct. Having risen on the first day of the week, he showed himself that day four times to his disciples. The first manifestation was made to Mary, John 20: 14; the second to the three women, Matt. 28 : 9; (comp. Luke 24 : 10;) the third on the journey to Emmaus and in the breaking of the bread, Luke 24 : 15, 31 ; the fourth, when the disciples were assembled at evening, John 20 : 19, 20. After the lapse of six days the Saviour again manifested himself on the first day of the week. "And after eight days again" (the writer including the portion of the day from which, and to which he reckons,) "his disciples were within, and Thomas with them : then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst," John 20 : 26. "This second meeting on the same day of the week has," as one well remarks, "all the appearance of an appointment, a design to meet on that

particular day." The question may be fairly proposed, Why are the Saviour's manifestations so particularly recorded as having been made on the first day of the week, (nothing being said as to the days on which other manifestations were made) and why did a week intervene between his first appearance and the second, unless it were to indicate that the first day of the week was to be marked by some peculiar distinction?

It is worthy of notice, that between the day on which the Saviour rose, and the following first day of the week there is no allusion to the Jewish sabbath. There is not the slightest intimation as to the disciples meeting on that day, or paying the least attention to it. The Saviour lay in the grave on Saturday or the Jewish sabbath, and it is manifest that they could not have observed *that* day as a sabbath. They could not have rejoiced while the Messiah was under the dominion of death, and their prospects were shrouded in midnight gloom. When they saw the Lord, *then*

"they were glad;" *then* their sabbath began.

3. That it was our Lord's design to appoint the first day of the week as the day of the sabbath, would seem to be further confirmed from the fact, that it was on this day that the promised gift of the Spirit was granted; the gift by which the gospel church was first erected, and its teachers endued with divine power. It has been abundantly shown that the day of pentecost fell on the first day of the week, that is, seven weeks from the day on which the Saviour arose. Was this day accidental? It was no more accidental than the other: *both* were fixed upon from the ages of eternity. The Holy Spirit descended on the first day of the week; the Saviour had arisen on the same day.

4. The apostles, by their doctrine and example, have decisively taught, that the day to be observed as the christian sabbath is the Lord's day, or the first day of the week. They kept this day themselves, instead of the Jewish sabbath, and they instructed the churches to do the same.

Now the conduct of these men, being as they were under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, is of divine authority; that is, what they did in respect to the sabbath, was virtually done by the Saviour himself. Whatever they delivered to be observed in matters of worship has the same force as if it came from God, — whether it were delivered in the form of regular exhortations and epistles, or by intimation and example. "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."

That the primitive churches observed the first day of the week, and not the Jewish sabbath, is evident from three passages in the apostolic writings. "We came to Troas," says Luke, "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," Acts 20: 6, 7. At an interval, then, of thirty years after our

Lord's resurrection the first day of the week was observed even in the remotest places. At Troas the disciples assembled on the first day of the week, to break bread and to hear the gospel; that is, they observed the sabbath much in the same manner in which it is observed at the present day. The apostle seems to have tarried there partly, at least, that he might have an opportunity of addressing the disciples on the Lord's day, — for it is said that he was "ready to depart on the morrow." In writing to the Corinthians about the same period, the apostle speaks of the first day of the week as a thing with which they were perfectly familiar. "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 Cor. 16: 1, 2. The reason why collections were to be taken up on the first day of the week, was manifestly this, that the church were

accustomed to assemble on that day for religious purposes. The apostle also had given the same direction to the churches in Galatia, distant from Corinth some hundreds of miles.

In Rev. 1: 10 the writer says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." By the Lord's day is undoubtedly meant the first day of the week or the christian sabbath. It will be observed that the day is here spoken of incidentally, and not in the way of communicating any new information respecting it. From this passage it appears that about the year 96, when the apocalypse was written, the first day of the week was universally known and observed as the Lord's day or the christian sabbath.*

* The writer calls that 'the Lord's day,' which is spoken of by Paul in 1 Cor. 16: 2, (comp. Acts 20 : 7,) as 'the first day of the week.' It appears that, even at this time, christians were accustomed to hold assemblies on this day; . . . from which we infer, that so far as the precept enjoining the sanctification of every seventh day related to the DAY and the LEGAL RITES of the sabbath, it was of a ceremonial character, — but that, so far as it relates to the worship of God, it belongs to the moral law, and is to be perpetually observed. — Beza.

'But did not the apostles, at least in some cases, observe the Jewish sabbath as well as the first day of the week ?' For a season they undoubtedly did. Before Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish polity swept away, they were obliged to accommodate themselves in some measure to the prejudices of their countrymen. Paul was in the practice of addressing assemblies on the Jewish sabbath ; though nothing more can necessarily be inferred from this, than that he desired to embrace every convenient opportunity of preaching the gospel. At first, the Jewish converts were allowed to observe the Mosaic sabbath; they however willingly united with the gentile disciples in celebrating the first day of the week. After the dissolution of the Jewish commonwealth, the time for concession was over.* It was then that decided ground was taken, (perhaps rather silently and by example,) and the universal observance of

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*Wilson.

the christian sabbath or the Lord's day enjoined.

The argument in respect to the change of the sabbath, as derived from the doctrine and conduct of the apostles, would seem to be entirely conclusive. As they acted in the name of Christ, and under the guidance of his Spirit, the change was made by divine authority, — it was in fact made by Christ himself. As evidence that the primitive churches not only observed the first day of the week, (which indeed, so far as the first century is concerned, has been already proved,) but that they regarded the day as established by divine authority, I present the following testimonies from the Fathers and other early writers; testimonies which I copy from Wilson and Dr. Dwight.

Ignatius, a companion of the apostles, says, "Let us no more sabbatize," that is, keep the Jewish sabbath; "but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose."

Justin Martyr, who lived at the close of the first and the beginning of the second century, says, "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 keep 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."

Dyonisius, 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."

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

Athanasius says, "The Lord transferred the sabbath to the Lord's day."

Pliny, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, says of the christians in his time, "They are accustomed to meet on a stated day before light, and to sing among themselves hymns to Christ, as to God."* It was a question which the heathen ever proposed to the martyrs, "Dominicum servasti? 'Do you keep Sunday ?' And their answer was equally well known : "I am a christian ; I cannot omit it."

To the foregoing testimonies I add the following extract from Mosheim, an historian than whom none is of higher authority. "The christians of this century [the first] assembled for the worship of God and for their advancement in piety, on the *first day*

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* See the letter at large in Milner, Vol. 1, pp. 134, 135.

of the week, the day on which Christ re-assumed his life; for that, this day was set apart for religious worship by the apostles themselves, and that, after the example of the church of Jerusalem, it was generally observed, we have unexceptionable testimony." (Ecc'l. Hist. vol. 1, p. 85, Murd. ed.) He proceeds to say, that the exercises of the public assemblies consisted in reading the scriptures, delivering exhortations, offering up prayer, singing hymns of praise, and celebrating the Lord's Supper.

5. That the transfer of the sabbath was made by divine authority, is evident also from the fact, that the blessing of God has, in a peculiar manner, been annexed to the Lord's day. Christ has honoured this day with special tokens of his presence, from its first appointment down to the present time. On this day multitudes of souls have been converted; on this day, more than on all others, christians have been enlightened, and edified, and blessed. Would God thus have annexed his blessing to the christian sabbath, if the day had been ap-

pointed not only without his authority, but even to the supplanting of the day, the observance of which he himself had commanded? If the primitive church were mistaken in respect to the proper day of the sabbath, would he have suffered the mistake to be confirmed, by the continued operations of his Spirit, for a period of eighteen hundred years? The supposition is too absurd, not to say too impious, to be for a moment entertained.

In view of what has been said, there can, I think, be little force in the remark, that there is not in the New Testament any *express precept* for the change of the day of the sabbath. No such recorded precept was necessary. It has been proved that the law of the sabbath is of perpetual obligation; and it is manifest that the change of the day is only a subordinate point. The sabbath is still a seventh portion of our time. We call our sabbath indeed the *first* day of the week, but it is the *seventh* in reference to the preceding six days of la-

bour.* The example of our Lord, the practice of men, who in matters of religion, never acted without divine direction, and the perpetual blessing which has attended the observance of the first day of the week, are sufficient to show that the christian sabbath was appointed by the same authority as the primitive or patriarchal. It will be remembered that the *nature of the sabbath itself* is essentially the same in the one case that it was in the other. The primitive sabbath was designed to commemorate the work of creation; the christian sabbath, while it embraces the same object, commemorates also the work of redemption. The one presents God especially as our Maker; the other exhibits him as our Maker, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Two or three passages have sometimes been adduced with the view to prove that the apostles intended to abolish the sabbath altogether. These will demand a moment's attention. In Gal. 4: 10, it is said, "Ye

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* Nevins.

observed days, and months, and times, and years;" and in Col. 2: 16, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days." The 'days,' 'months,' 'sabbaths,' &c. here refer to the Jewish festivals. The judaizing teachers had introduced into the churches at Galatia and Colosse the observances of the Mosaic ritual; and it is against these observances, viewed either as a ground of justification, or as matters that should interfere with the rights of conscience, that the apostle speaks. These were merely 'shadows of things to come.' If in the passage in Colossians we suppose the 'sabbath days' to refer not to festivals, but to the proper Jewish sabbath, the sentiment would be, 'Let no man trouble you in respect to the Jewish sabbath; it is to be superseded by the christian.' It will be remembered that the word sabbath in the New Testament never denotes the christian sabbath, or first day of the week.

In a similar manner, most obviously, is to be understood the passage in Rom. 14;

"One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The 'days' here spoken of refer, as before, to the Mosaic festivals. Some of the Roman christians regarded the law in respect to festivals, new moons, &c., as still in force; others were of the contrary opinion. The apostle's direction was, that both should be tolerated. 'One man observes the Jewish festivals, another does not. Let every one enjoy his own opinion in the matter; let him do what he thinks to be right.'* The same principle had been laid down in respect to meats, verses 2, 3. In each of the three passages above cited the apostle is manifestly speaking of ceremonial or Jewish days, and not of the christian sabbath. While christians differed in opinion in regard to meats, festivals, &c., they agreed in the observance of the first day of the week.

I have now finished the argument in re-

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* See Prof. Hodge in loc.

spect to the perpetual obligation of a day of weekly rest, and the divine authority of the christian sabbath. The whole subject, as discussed in the present and the two preceding Discourses, might suggest several important reflections. Only two or three of these will occupy your attention.

1. In matters of faith we should guard against a spirit of speculation, and should closely adhere to the word of God. To assume that the account of the sabbath in Genesis is merely by way of anticipation; to take the ground that the sabbath was simply a part of the ceremonial law, or that, if it were a part of the *moral* law, the latter was abrogated by the Saviour and the apostles, would be to contravene the most obvious rules of interpretation, and to do away every thing like certainty in respect to matters either of belief or practice. We might on the same principle call in question the account of the fall of man, the existence of evil spirits, the truth of the Mosaic or christian miracles, the doctrine of the atonement, the resurrection, and a future

state of rewards and punishments. We might reject every doctrine of the bible, and plunge at once, with a leap as daring as that ever made by German neologist, into all the depths of infidelity. To this speculating manner of treating the most solemn and important subjects men of the present age and even many professed christians are exceedingly prone. It has become quite common if not openly to discard, yet at least to modify, doctrines that have been previously received, and to advance theories that are new, and startling, and bold. We must resist this evil in all its diversified forms. It will not do for men to profess a regard for revelation, and yet deny fundamental truths ; to reason from infidel principles to matters of fact : they must be brought to the alternative either of receiving the scriptures in their plain and obvious import, or of rejecting them altogether. When shall we understand the stratagems of the enemy, and cease to be deceived by appearances ?

It is hardly possible for one error to exist

alone. He who is wrong on one important doctrine of the bible, will be found to be wrong or at least confused, in respect to others. If a person, for example, should call in question the doctrine of future punishment, it would be useless to reason with him merely or mainly on *that* point: his *apparent* error is only *one in a series* of errors; it is not a *cause* but an *effect*, — the real difficulty in his case lying far back of any considerations relating to the scripture account of retribution. So of the individual who is skeptical in regard to the law of the sabbath. Such a one would do well to inquire whether he has not (unconsciously perhaps to himself,) begun to waver on other points; whether the principles according to which he interprets the scriptures would not, if carried to their legitimate results, go to preclude the idea of a revelation altogether; whether the ground on which he stands is such as ought to satisfy a reflecting mind; in a word, whether, if he stop short of something like deism, or even of the error that lies one step in advance of

deism, it must not be done either by sacrificing consistency, or by returning to the truth as it is in Jesus.

2. It is exceedingly important that we take correct ground in respect to the reason for keeping the christian sabbath. To view the observance of the sabbath as a mere matter of expediency, is one thing; to regard such observance as of moral obligation, is another. If the keeping of the sabbath is made to depend upon expediency, we have no sabbath at all. We might as well abandon the institution at once. 'No considerations of utility, no civil or ecclesiastical decree will bind the consciences or regulate the actions of men.' "God must speak, or man will not hear; God must command, or man will not obey." But the sabbath is *not* a thing of expediency, — at least, it is not merely or mainly such; it is a matter of the most sacred moral obligation. It was established in paradise; it stands out with peculiar prominence in the decalogue; it was hallowed by prophets; it was honoured by our Lord

and the apostles, — and its observance has, in every period, been signally associated with the divine blessing. The sabbath was made for MAN; not for this or that man, but for man in all ages, in all countries, and under all possible circumstances. It was intended for THE HUMAN FAMILY. It was not made any more for the Jew in the time of Moses, than it was for the European or the American, the Sandwich Islander or the Hottentot in the nineteeth century. It began with the creation of the world, and is to terminate only with its dissolution. Even then it will not absolutely terminate; it will rather be consummated in that everlasting rest, that *sabbatismos* of which it stands as the perpetual and delightful pledge. Here we rest our argument, and we challenge confutation. We stoop not to expediency; we hold up exegetical fact. We take our stand on broad bible ground, and proclaim the universal obligation of a day of weekly rest. If in face of the fullest evidence in respect to the divine authority of the transfer of the day, any individ-

ual should refuse to hallow the christian sabbath, yet let him remember that he is solemnly bound to observe *some* day, — to devote *some* day to the special service of God. The command, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy," has the same force now that it had when first proclaimed from the sacred hill. There it stands, as a part of the law of God, and there it *will* stand, to arrest the conscience and influence the conduct of men, while time itself shall last. Let it be known, that the precept in regard to the sabbath comes to us clothed with all the authority which the Sovereign of the universe can give it, and that no one can refuse to obey this precept, except at the hazard of all that is dear to an immortal being.

3. Let us adore the wisdom and goodness of God, as seen in the appointment of a day of weekly rest. I have spoken of the keeping of the sabbath rather in the light of a *duty:* its observance is not, however, to be considered merely as a matter of obligation; it is to be regarded mainly as a

privilege. The sabbath was made for the *benefit* of man, — for the benefit both of his body and his soul. It may be viewed as a part of that best, that greatest gift ever bestowed upon fallen creatures, the gift of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin. From the very laws of our physical nature some resting day is absolutely necessary. It is capable of the fullest demonstration that uninterrupted labour tends to exhaust the system, and consequently to shorten life. "I consider," says an English physician of great eminence, "I consider that, in the beautiful provision of providence for the preservation of human life, the sabbatical appointment is to be numbered among the *natural duties*, if the preservation of life be admitted to be a duty, and the premature destruction of it a suicidal act." That the promotion and even the existence of piety in the world is made to depend essentially on the appointment of the sabbath, I have already intimated. Adam required a sabbath in paradise, holy and spiritually minded as he was: how greatly do *we* need it, who

are naturally alienated from our Maker, and indisposed to the duties of devotion! Take away the sabbath, and where would be the christian's advancement in holiness? where would be his seasons of elevated communion with God? where his ardent anticipations of the heavenly rest? I might even go farther and ask, Take away the sabbath, and where would piety be found at all? It would absolutely die. The influence of depravity and of earthly pursuits and cares would chill every feeling of devotion; God would be forgotten, and the soul undone. In the language of another, "how strongly would our world resemble the regions of final despair; where no sabbath dawns; where no prayers nor praises ascend; no sermons proclaim pardon and peace to sinners; the voice of mercy never sounds; and the smiles of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love never illume the dreary valley of the shadow of death."*

Thanks be to God for the day of weekly

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* Dwight

rest! May we learn clearly to read the record of its appointment as inscribed on the works of creation, and especially in the volume of revealed truth. What God has taught, that let us humbly and gratefully receive. Let us regard the perpetual obligation of the sabbath as satisfactorily exhibited in the scriptures as the doctrine of the atonement, the divinity of the Saviour, or any of those other great truths that are essential to the christian religion. Let us learn to prize more highly, and to improve more faithfully, an institution, which, while it is designed to bring glory to its Author, is fitted at the same time to confer the greatest benefits upon the race of mankind. Whenever the day that commemorates the goodness of God in creating, and his grace in redeeming, the world, returns, let our hearts rejoice and be glad; let us embrace in all their length and breadth the privileges connected with its observance, — so praying, praising, reading and hearing, that the Lord of the sabbath may be honoured, and our souls edified and refreshed.

Thus shall we fulfil the great end of our being; thus shall we be prepared, when earthly sabbaths shall have terminated, for ' the rest that remaineth to the people of God. '

DISCOURSE IV.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH SHOULD BE OBSERVED — THE THINGS TO BE ABSTAINED FROM.

EXODUS 20 : 8.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

HAVING in three previous Discourses considered the perpetual obligation of a day of weekly rest, and also the transfer of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week; I now proceed, according to the original proposal, to speak of the *manner* in which the sabbath ought to be observed. If the institution existed from the beginning; if it was designed for men of every nation and every age; if the law respecting it is embodied among the immutable principles of right and wrong; if this law

was honoured by prophets, apostles, and our Lord himself; if there is the most satisfactory evidence that the change from the seventh to the first day of the week was made by divine appointment; in a word, if a season of sacred rest is binding upon us as individuals; then surely it is of the utmost importance that we understand what is implied in the precept, 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.'

The discussion of this branch of our subject will suggest the following questions: *First*, What things are to be abstained from on the Lord's day? and *Secondly*, What duties are to be performed? The consideration of the former particular will occupy our attention in the present Discourse.

I. What things are to be abstained from on the christian sabbath?

First, We are to abstain from such thoughts and conversation as are not in accordance with the spirit and design of the day. As regards merely ourselves, we may violate the sabbath as easily and as

grossly by indulging thoughts unsuitable to the nature of the day, as by any other means whatever. If our minds are intent upon our ordinary pursuits, and the passing events of the times; if they are unduly occupied with such things as may be proper and necessary in themselves; if they settle down into a state of sluggishness and vacuity; if our affections are cold, and our attention to spiritual duties merely constrained and external; if this be the case, we fail of sanctifying the day of sacred rest. The most careful outward observance of the sabbath can never atone for secular and wandering thoughts; on the other hand, such a service must ever be a vain oblation, equally unacceptable to our Maker, and unprofitable to ourselves.

Very many, who so far respect the sabbath as to attend public worship, habitually violate the day in *conversation.* Worldly people are indeed often placed under a kind of *restraint* in this respect; but whenever the sense of restraint is withdrawn, and they come to mingle in companies by

themselves, they often converse as freely about secular affairs, as they do on any other day of the week. Even professed christians are exceedingly prone to 'find their own pleasure, and speak their own words' on the Lord's day. It is sometimes the case that they introduce worldly topics directly; as for example, when a stranger happens to be lodging with them, or when some member of the family has been for a season absent, and has just returned. In the latter instance inquiries are made and answered in respect to past occurrences,— and the affairs of the neighbourhood in which the individual has resided, including even the most minute, are more or less extensively discussed. More commonly however, professed christians are led into worldly conversation by degrees. They commence, perhaps, by referring to the state of the weather, and the apparent prospect in regard to the crops. They next, it may be, make remarks upon the public services, as having been well or ill performed, — noticing at the same time the general merits

or defects of the preacher, as compared with others with whom they have been acquainted. They then, perhaps, speak of the casualties that may recently have occurred whether by land or sea; then, of the general state of our own and other countries, and the prospect in regard to war or peace, &c. They next refer to public measures and men, — gradually advancing, from one step to another, until they enter the region of political discussion. If professed christians were aware of the great sin they commit, and of the immense evil they bring upon themselves and upon others by improper conversation on the sabbath, they would feel the importance of keeping their hearts and lips in this respect with all diligence. To a certain extent, it is indeed necessary to refer to secular affairs on the Lord's day; but anything beyond this; anything that implies an engaging in worldly conversation *as such*, is as properly a violation of the day as labour or travelling.

Secondly: We should, on the sabbath, abstain from our ordinary secular pursuits;

a remark which will of course embrace a variety of particulars. The precept is, "In it thou shalt not do any work." We may perform acts of necessity and mercy, for these are recognised in the scriptures. The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. We may perform *some* labour in the preparation of our food; we may give food and water to animals, and save their lives when in danger; we may go to, and return from, the house of public worship; we may visit the sick and the dying, and relieve the wants of the distressed.

We sometimes hear a sentiment like the following: Christians do not observe the sabbath with as great a degree of *strictness* as the Jews were required to observe it; and the inference is, that according to their own admission and practice, the *manner* of keeping the sabbath, if not the having of a sabbath at all, must be a matter very much of expediency. The alleged fact here alluded to, and the inference which is drawn from it, have already been virtually anticipated, but it may be well to look at the

point a little more in detail. I remark then, or rather repeat, that as the sabbath is of moral or perpetual obligation, (a thing which has been most abundantly proved,) no change in respect to the *circumstantials* of the institution can affect the existence of the institution itself. The command to abstain from our ordinary secular pursuits, on one day in seven, is just as binding now as it was in the time of Moses, or in the time of our first parents. I also remark, that the manner of keeping the sabbath is, and ought to be, essentially the same at the present day as it was under the former dispensation. From the nature of the case it *must* be essentially the same. Our Saviour, as we have seen, made no alteration in the institution during his personal ministry; and all that was done in this respect at his death, was, as was stated in a former Discourse, merely to separate what was moral from what was simply Jewish or ceremonial. Have we now no first commandment, or second, or third, or fifth, or seventh, because the violation of these commandments

is no longer to be punished with temporal death? Aside from the temple service, (which has merely been exchanged for one less cumbersome,) and aside from the putting to death of the presumptuous violator of the sabbath, there was exceedingly little in the institution as it existed in the time of Moses, which is not to be identified with it in every age of the world. It is proper in this place briefly to refer to two particulars.

In Exodus 35: 3, it is said, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day." There is no reason to suppose that these words are to be understood in an unqualified sense or according to their literal import. In the winter season at least, in Palestine, fires would have been absolutely necessary for the infirm and for children, and they could have been dispensed with by no class, without a very great sacrifice of personal comfort. There could have been no reason why the Jews should have been required to suffer, on the sabbath, from cold, since they were permitted to give food and water to their

cattle; and the supposition that the kindling of fires for *warming* themselves, was forbidden, would seem to involve the principle that man was made for the sabbath. Some understand the prohibition as referring to such fires as were used by smiths, plumbers, &c., in preparing the different appendages of the sanctuary. The sentiment would then be, 'No work shall be done on the sabbath, not even that which relates to the making of the tabernacle.' To this view the connexion is not altogether unfavourable. Some suppose that allusion is had to such fires as were used in preparing victuals. 'Ye shall kindle no fires for the purpose of preparing food.' Whether this interpretation is required in view of the directions respecting the manna, in Ex. 16, has been doubted by some very judicious commentators, especially by Dr. Scott, who remarks, 'No intimation is given that the Jews, in the time of Christ and his apostles, had no fires on the sabbath, or even that they prepared no victuals.' It should be noticed in this connexion, that the priests

killed and roasted the animals for sacrifice on the sabbath; that "the sacred festivals would sometimes happen on this day; and that the paschal lamb was roasted in the house where it was eaten." If however, we suppose that the Jews were forbidden to cook any kind of victuals on the sabbath, no serious difficulty will be presented; for we may either refer the prohibition to the judicial or ceremonial law, or we may take the broad ground, that the prohibition is, in *substance*, in force at the present day; in force, at least, so far as our circumstances are analogous to those of the Hebrews. It is obvious that, in cases of this kind, allowance should always be made for difference of climate, modes of living, &c., and that what would be perfectly adapted to a people in a partially cultivated state, might be exceedingly inconvenient to one whose state was of another character. However christians may differ in opinion in regard to the *precise amount* of labour that may properly be performed in preparing our food on the sabbath, they seem very generally to

agree in this, that *some* curtailment in this respect is fairly implied by the spirit of the fourth commandment. It becomes those professing godliness carefully to examine this point, and to endeavour to act in relation to it in the fear of the Lord.

The other particular relates to what is called 'the sabbath day's journey.' Some have supposed that the Jews were permitted to travel only a certain distance on the sabbath for *any* reason ; and the inference has been, as in the other case, that the manner of keeping the sabbath has been very greatly changed. To the 'sabbath day's journey,' there is no allusion in the Old Testament : from the manner however, in which the expression occurs in Acts 1: 12, it is manifest that it had a well known meaning, and that a restriction of some kind in respect to travelling on the day of rest, had obtained among the people. Josephus tells us that it was not lawful for the Jews to travel (or more properly to journey) on the sabbath day, or on a festival day.*

* Antiquities, B. 13, ch. 8.

He says that Jerusalem was distant from the mount of Olives some six furlongs, — a statement which is confirmed by the accounts of modern travellers ; so that a sabbath day's journey would be something short of a common English mile.* There

* The expression rendered 'a sabbath day's journey,' in Acts 1 : 12, is in the Talmud, 'the limit (or boundary) of the sabbath.' 'The distance of the mount of Olives from Jerusalem, which in the passage above cited is said to be a sabbath day's journey, is given by Josephus in one passage, at five, and in another at six stadia or furlongs.' —Rosenmueller. How the latter writer traces the origin of 'the sabbath' day's journey' to what is said in Exodus 16: 29, one would be at a loss to determine. He says that 'the Israelites were forbidden to go out of the camp on the seventh day, to gather manna ; and that from this circumstance was derived the law which rendered it improper to go out of a city or village on the sabbath any farther than the distance from the most remote part of the camp to the 'tabarnacle,' which was in the middle. — Alterthumskunde, Vol. 1, p. 164. But does not Moses in this passage speak of the tents of the people, and not of the camp as such ?

With the origin of 'the sabbath day's journey' we, must be satisfied to remain unacquainted. The statements of the Talmudists (in no case, it is true, of very high authority) are on this point not a little meager and confused. See the notes appended to the article 'Der Sabbathsweg,' in the German work referred to above, and comp. Beza Kuinoel. Heinrichs, and others.

is no intimation in the scriptures that the Jews could travel only a mile when going to the place of worship ; on the other hand, it is evident from various circumstances, that they must, on the sabbath, sometimes have travelled *several* miles for this purpose ; comp. 2 Kings 4: 23. The restriction therefore under which the Jews were placed in respect to travelling on the sabbath, whenever it may have taken its origin, referred mainly at least to business, and not to attendance at places of worship, although in respect to the latter there might have been something like limits established by common consent. If it was unlawful for the Jews to travel upon the sabbath on business, the same is also unlawful at the present day. It might have been expedient, especially during some periods of their history, to define the distance which it was proper to go, — and *so far* there was in the restriction something of the *positive* kind ; but the *spirit* of the restriction (if the latter were indeed of divine authority) cannot be shown to be inapplicable to men of every

country and age.* When therefore it is said that christians do not keep the sabbath as *strictly* as the Jews were required to observe it, we must distinguish terms, and look carefully at the circumstances of the case. Our situation, whether morally, physically, or socially is, in many respects, exceedingly diverse from theirs. There is however, in fact, very little difference even in regard to externals, between what was forbidden on the sabbath to the ancient Israelites, and what is forbidden to christians. The general principle that our ordinary business is to be abstained from, carries along with it almost every supposable, and certainly every important particular. The prohibition in respect to the making of fires cannot, as we have seen, be taken literally, and in view of any interpretation that may be proposed, it could relate only to that

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* Hoc spatium [scil. bis mille cubitorum] Judæis non quidem ex Mosis prescripto, sed ex magistorum ipsorum decretis, die sabbati emetiri licebat; vide Lightfootum in Horis Hebr. et Talmud., etc.—Kuinoel. To the same purpose the Koppian Commentary.

which was ceremonial and temporary. If the Jews were forbidden to travel upon the sabbath on business, so are christians. If christians think themselves authorised to travel a few miles on this day for the purpose of attending public worship, the Jews, as we have seen, were permitted to do the same. I must be allowed to remark in this connexion, that before objectors take the liberty of suggesting cavils, they should at least become acquainted with facts, and should learn to distinguish between an inference that is drawn from solid premises, and one whose premises exist only in prejudice or misapprehension.

I have said that we may, on the sabbath, perform works of necessity and mercy. Some have objected to the word *necessity*, on the ground that it is indefinite, and liable to serious abuses; and they have accordingly proposed to call all works that may be performed on the sabbath, works of *mercy*, or rather, necessary works of mercy. It is granted that the word 'necessity,' in connexion with the sabbath, is not a scrip-

ture expression ; it is also granted that the word has,in practice,been very greatly perverted ; still the term has this recommendation, that it has passed into general use, and that it appears to express a scripture *idea* as definitely perhaps as any word that can be found in the language. What term is *not* liable to be perverted, what term has not been perverted, by those who are wise to do evil ? In applying the word *necessity* to any given work on the sabbath, we should be guided by the general spirit of the fourth commandment, and by such *particulars* in relation to the subject as are recorded in the scriptures ; due allowance being made for the fact already alluded to, that our *circumstances* are in many respects diverse from those of the Jews. It is necessary, in the proper sense of that word, to receive our food on the sabbath ; it is necessary to feed and water cattle, and to save their lives if in danger ; it is necessary to prepare horses and carriages for our conveyance to the sanctuary : it is not necessary to plow land on the Lord's day, nor to

do many things of the kind that are frequently performed. It may be necessary, when a vessel is out at sea, to sail on the sabbath, but it is not necessary to leave port on that day. The only works of necessity which the scriptures recognise are those of *present* necessity.* I think this will hold good as a general rule. It was proper for the disciples to pluck the ears of corn, because they were *then* suffering from hunger. It is proper to eat on the sabbath, because we do it to satisfy the *present* cravings of nature. It is proper to raise an animal out of a pit, because we thereby relieve *present* distress, and because assistance might come too late if delayed till another day. It is proper on the sabbath to extinguish the flames of a burning house, because it must be done at the time, or not at all. Even what are called works of mercy are not in all cases allowable on the sabbath. Those and those only may be performed, which we had no opportunity of

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* See Panoplist 1815.

doing before, and which cannot, consistently with benevolence, be postponed to the end of the sacred rest. The man who visits the sick on the sabbath merely because he is too worldly to spend time for this duty on any other day, however he may endeavour to pacify his conscience, should remember that he sins greatly against the Lord.

The fourth commandment forbids *manual labour* on the sabbath except in such cases as have been specified. And yet, how often, under one pretext or another, is this commandment violated in this particular! An individual pleads that he may secure his hay or grain on the sabbath, because it may be injured if he does not secure it. "I have," he says, "a crop of grain on the securing of which the subsistence of my family depends. It is now cut and in the shock. It has rained for several days, and it *may* rain to-morrow. This sabbath is a fair day; the grain may be sufficiently dried to get into the barn, and I feel myself perfectly justifiable in getting it in." He

is *not* justifiable. The case is not *such* a case of necessity as is recognised in the scriptures. It is not, as he himself will admit, a case of *present* necessity ; it is not, in fact, a case of necessity at all. It is not like satisfying present hunger ; it is not like taking an animal from a pit ; it is not like extinguishing the flames of a house. An individual has no right in a case like this, to plead what *may* occur hereafter; he has no right to urge, as an excuse for labouring on the sabbath, that the morrow *may* be a stormy day. Is not the God of the bible the God also of providence ? Has he commanded anything in his *word*, the performance of which is rendered void by what he does in his *works* ? Shall we, in our haste and unbelief, oppose our wisdom, our plans to his ? Is our eye evil because he is good ? Suppose the 'morrow' of which the individual speaks, *should* be a stormy day ; cannot he who sees the end from the beginning, and in whose hand are the winds and the rain, still enable him to secure his crop ? Has he not every reason to expect the blessing that maketh rich,

when he is conscientious in the discharge of his duty? Or if we suppose — what we hardly *can* suppose, — that by forbearing to labour on the sabbath, his grain is materially injured; cannot God provide for his family, and even make up the loss in other things? "The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "I have been young" says the psalmist, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." What would barns full of grain be worth without the favour of the Almighty? and can *he* expect that favour, who disregards his authority and sets his commands at defiance?

I have said that the securing of hay or grain on the sabbath is not a work of necessity. It may be further remarked, that harvesting on the Lord's day is in the bible *expressly fordidden;* at least, it was forbidden to the Israelites, — and it cannot be shown that the prohibition has ever been repealed. In Exodus 34: 21 it is said,

"Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest; in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." The latter part of the precept, it will be seen, meets the case we have been considering, — one of the strongest, I apprehend, that could well be stated, — and all other cases of the kind. 'Ye shall do no work on the sabbath, not even that which relates to the securing of grain.' It was foreseen that the Jews might think it necessary to secure their crops on the sabbath ; it was foreseen that a case of supposed necessity might be made out, from the shortness of the harvesting season and the state of the weather ; and this point was therefore guarded with particular care. No exception could be made to the fourth commandment in the case of harvesting ; the shortness of the season, the appearance of the atmosphere could not justify the securing of crops on the Lord's day. The precept was explicit, " On the seventh day thou shalt rest ; in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." I do not say that cases may not possibly be conceiv-

ed of, in which it might be proper to secure hay or grain on the sabbath. I only say, that the getting in of crops cannot be justified in view of such reasons as are commonly urged.

The plea of *necessity* will apply as fairly to the *mowing* of hay, or the *reaping* of grain, on the sabbath, as it will to the getting of these articles into the barn. And such is in fact the view of most of those who profane the day which God has sanctified. They must *get in* their grain on the sabbath to prevent it from being injured ; for the same reason they must *reap* it. For the same or a similar reason they must plow their land, and sow their seed. Who does not see, that if this principle were admitted, there would be an end to all observance of the sabbath at once ? Who that violates the day of rest, may not urge, in justification of his course, the plea of necessity ? One man finds it necessary to reap and mow on the sabbath ; another to travel ; a third to write business letters ; a fourth to sell merchandise and to post books ; a fifth

to compare the prices current, to mark the advance upon stocks, and to send out vessels to sea. When will men cease to trifle with conscience and the word of God, — to put darkness for light, and light for darkness?

The fourth commandment forbids *secular travelling* on the sabbath. I need not say that travelling is a *work*, — as really a work as any that can be performed. Not only does this lie upon the face of the thing itself; there was, as we have seen, in the case of the Jews a precept defining the distance which it was proper to go. And yet how many there are, who, while they would be shocked at the idea of plowing, or mowing, or selling merchandise, or posting books on the Lord's day, make no scruple of commencing or prosecuting a journey!

One sets out from home on the sabbath because the markets are fluctuating, or because a debtor has failed, or because a vessel has arrived in port the cargo of which requires immediate inspection.* By defer-

* See Panoplist for 1815, to which I am indebted, in part, for the statement of some of these supposed cases.

ring his journey till Monday, he might as he pleads, sustain a very considerable loss. Is such an excuse valid ? Might not the farmer and the mechanic urge the same plea for performing, on the day of rest, any labour connected with *their* occupations ? If A may set out for New York or Boston on the sabbath, on the plea of saving or acquiring property, may not B and C, may not every person in the community do the same ? If a rich man may *travel* on the Lord's day for the sake of increasing his estate, may not a poor man *labour* for the sake of acquiring a subsistence ?

"But," says one, "I am ready to grant that travelling on the sabbath for gain, is wrong, utterly wrong. My case however is very different from this. My family are removing to new and distant settlements. We expect to be a long time upon the road, and our funds are so scanty that we shall, with the utmost care, hardly have the means, on arriving at the place of our destination, for making a beginning. I do not like travelling on the sabbath ; but in the

present instance it appears indispensable." And do you endeavour to pacify your conscience on such grounds as these? Why do you remove, except for the prospect of bettering your condition? Have you any right, in view of ameliorating your temporal circumstances, to project a course that shall involve a violation of one of God's commands? Or, supposing you did not *intend* to travel on the sabbath when you set out; the case is not essentially changed. Can you plead the scantiness of pecuniary means as an excuse for disobedience? Can you expect to prosper in doing wrong? It is *not* indispensable that you should travel; there is no necessity in the case.

Another individual leaves home with the intention of returning at the close of the week. In consequence, however, of the badness of the going, or of bodily indisposition, he has been detained upon the road. His money is so nearly exhausted, that he has enough to enable him to reach home only by travelling on the Lord's day. He therefore thinks himself justifiable in pursu-

ing his journey, without any regard to the season of rest. I would ask this individual, Why did you leave home without preparing for emergencies? Was there not a fault in this respect? and can you urge one fault as a ground for committing another? Could you not have taken funds with you sufficient to defray one or two days' extra expense at a public house? Could you not procure entertainment for a short season, upon credit? or at the most, could you not make known your case to christian friends in the neighbourhood? It may be *convenient* for you to travel in the circumstances to which I have alluded; but there is no such *necessity* for your travelling as the *word of God* will justify.

Another individual urges as a reason for travelling on the Lord's day, that he has been long from home, and that he is exceedingly anxious to see his family, who, he fears, may be sick. This plea is, like the others, utterly insufficient. Must he violate a command of God on account of natural affection? Can he not trust his family

to the care of providence one day longer?

Another individual has commenced a journey, and finds himself, on sabbath morning, at a public house. It occurs to him that he can spend the day more profitably upon the road, than amid the noise and bustle of an inn, and he therefore concludes to proceed on his way. But did he not expect to lodge in public houses at the time of his setting out? Besides; is it true, as a general fact, that inns are, on the sabbath, such places of confusion as is here supposed? Is it not hard to conceive of a case in which a traveller may not, at a public house, have an apartment to himself that shall be measurably quiet and retired? Can he not also, in almost any possible instance, attend at some place of public worship? Would not a truly conscientious person, under these circumstances, choose rather to submit to a little temporary inconvenience on the score of noise, than oppose *his feelings* to the authority of God? Would he not at least regard the *bad example* of sabbath travelling as enough to

counterbalance almost any other considerations in the present case, more than a thousand fold?

One travels upon the sabbath because he would otherwise miss the present stage-coach or steam-boat, and thereby be detained several days upon the way. Better be detained a whole month, than wound your conscience by the commission of sin. When shall we cease to hear these pleas of *interest* in a case where *duty* is concerned? Is not the will of God paramount to your convenience? Another, who would not travel on the Lord's day *habitually*, thinks he may at least do it *occasionally*. But where is your permission? Is *one* sabbath to be remembered, and not *every* sabbath?

A member of a family, residing in a neighbouring town, desires to visit his friends. He would think it wrong to go home on sabbath morning; he therefore performs the journey on the day previous. After visiting his relatives, and attending public worship, on the sabbath, he returns, at the close of divine service, to his place of res-

idence. He is engaged in pressing business, and must, as he pleads, be back earlier than he could be, by returning on Monday morning. Another individual, who is out upon a journey, attends public worship in the forenoon, and in the afternoon proceeds on his way, especially if he is only a few miles from home. Both of these individuals think they make expiation for their sin by attending public worship; or rather, they seem hardly to suppose that they *commit* any sin at all. But they *do* sin, and that very grievously. They rob their Maker of the time which he claims for his special service. They might just as well travel upon sabbath morning as upon sabbath afternoon. What would these persons think of the farmer who should plow and reap, or of the mechanic who should make tables and chairs, or of the merchant who should post his books on the morning or late in the afternoon, of the Lord's day? And yet, their own conduct involves essentially the same violation of the fourth commandment as that of the individuals referred

to. Are men required to observe sabbath morning, or sabbath forenoon, and not the *whole* of the day? Is not the Lord's day a full day of twenty-four hours, like any other day in the week?

If the man who journeys on the Lord's day violates the divine command, so far as *his own act* is concerned, his criminality is greatly enhanced in view of the fact, that he causes animals to labour that ought to be at rest, and (in the case at least of travelling by public conveyance) is the occasion of sin in respect to multitudes of his fellow men. What right has any person to employ beasts on the sabbath in cases where God requires them *not* to be employed? Do *they* not need rest as well as ourselves? Are *they* not specified in the precept as well as *we*? And then, to think of the vast numbers of men who are, by the sin of the sabbath traveller, not only deprived, on the Lord's day, of all the means of grace, but as it were compelled to engage in as active labour as upon any other day of the week! to think of the drivers and guards connect-

ed with our thousands of stage-coaches, and of the captains, and sailors, and engineers, and firemen, and cooks, and servants associated with our hundreds of steamboats and rail-road cars! Is it nothing to him, that he is the occasion of sin in regard to a very extensive portion of the community? Do not these persons require a sabbath? Have they not immortal souls? Are they not subjects of God's moral government? and have they any right to dishonour him by breaking his laws? Perhaps he pleads that he travels only *occasionally*, and that stage-coaches and steam-boats would run on the Lord's day whether *he* made use of them or not. The plea is mere trifling. One travels on *this* sabbath, another on the *next*, another on a *third*, and so on, and thus thousands are in this manner kept labouring on *every* sabbath in the year. He has *his share* in wresting from them all the privileges of which they are deprived, and in causing them to commit all the sins with which they stand charged in the view of heaven. And a most dread-

ful responsibility it is! Let every person in the community travel only *one* sabbath in the year, and our stage-coaches and steamboats would be full. It would be all the encouragement the proprietors of these conveyances would ask; it would be incomparably more than they now receive.* It is *occasional* sabbath travelling that keeps our public vehicles in motion; it is *individual* transgression that goes to form one of our most crying national sins.

Included under the prohibition we have been considering are, of course, *visiting*, and those *recreations* that might not be thought improper on other days of the week. How grossly people in general and even many professed christians violate the sabbath by *visiting*, is but too well known to all who have given the least attention to the subject. Those may labour on the farm or in the workshop who are supposed to be somewhat destitute of conscience; but others transgress in what they seem to regard

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*Nevins.

a less exceptionable way, that is, by travelling and visiting. As has already been intimated, it is sometimes the case that they connect their visiting with attending public worship; but it not unfrequently happens, that they spend the whole or a part of the Lord's day in the houses of their friends, without recognising even the *forms* of religion. Trifling family occurrences, the marriages, losses, &c., in the neighbourhood, and above all, the absorbing subject of politics, are made to fill up the hours that ought to be spent in converse with God, and the realities of judgment and eternity.

It may be observed, once more, that we should abstain, on the Lord's day, from idleness and sloth. Multitudes, who would not be seen labouring, or travelling, or perhaps visiting on the sabbath, appear to feel no misgivings at spending the day in utter inactivity, if not, as is often the case, in profound slumber. They lounge about their houses, or gardens, or farms, as though they hardly knew what to do with themselves, and unconcerned, apparently,

about every thing, except how they may banish thought, and kill time. Instead of *keeping* the sabbath, they merely *sleep* or perhaps half *dream* it away. What daring rebellion against the God of heaven! Do these persons ever remember that they have immortal souls, and that for all their indifference in respect to their spiritual interests, and all their profaning of their Maker's institutions they will soon be brought into judgment?

While we are required to abstain from secular employments on the sabbath ourselves, we are also required to use our authority and influence in preventing the day from being desecrated by our children, domestics, or any who may be lodging in our houses. Children and hired help should be carefully guarded in this particular; and if any who may be residing with us as labourers cannot be prevailed upon to honour the season which God has appointed, they should, after kind admonition and entreaty, be dismissed from our employment. Animals too, should rest, so far as is consis-

tent with our going to, and returning from, the house of public worship, and other acts that may be absolutely necessary. Let the precept be, as it were, engraven on the walls of every house, and let its spirit be carried out in the arrangements of every family, "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."

DISCOURSE V.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH SHOULD BE OBSERVED—THE DUTIES TO BE PERFORMED.

EXODUS 20: 8.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY

In the last Discourse I dwelt upon the prohibitory part of the fourth commandment, or *the things that should be abstained from* on the Lord's day. I now proceed to consider the positive part of the precept, or *the things which are required to be done.*

II. What duties are to be performed on the Lord's day? or, *how* is the christian sabbath to be observed?

In general, the day is to be specially devoted to the worship of God and the con-

cerns of the soul. 'Remember the sabbath day *to sanctify* it;' that is, 'to set it apart from secular to spiritual purposes.' Such is the force of the expression 'to keep holy' (in the original, *to sanctify*,) in the present instance, and of the similar expressions which so frequently occur in the scriptures. It is unnecessary to inquire whether any day or place is *inherently* more holy than any other,—for no one supposes that *inherent* holiness can be predicated of *mere things* at all. The expressions 'to sanctify,' 'to be holy,' &c. when applied to *things*, are employed in a *relative* sense, that is, in the sense of *consecrating;* and the same is frequently, perhaps generally the case, even when the expressions refer to individuals. The primary meaning of the word rendered *to sanctify*, is, *to consider* as holy, *to consecrate, to set apart to a sacred purpose.* The crown worn by the high priest, the ark, the tabernacle, the temple, &c., were *holy*, because they were set apart to the service of God. When it is said that the "unbelieving husband is *sanctified* by the wife,"

&c. the meaning is, that the unbelieving companion is, on account of the faith of the other, considered as separated from a state of heathenism. And even when the Saviour prays that the disciples might be *sanctified* through the truth, the primary idea is, perhaps, that of *consecration*.

It is evident that, in order properly to sanctify the sabbath, some preparation should be made beforehand. I shall not presume to decide in respect to the *precise time* when the sabbath may be said to commence; on this point persons may, as I conceive, differ in opinion, and yet maintain every thing that is essential in regard to a season of rest. Whatever view any one may take, he is certainly bound to be consistent with himself, and to devote a full day to the special service of God. It is manifestly suitable that we anticipate holy time in the arrangements of the preceding day and evening. If we duly *remember* the sabbath, we shall, even during the week, be sometimes carrying our thoughts forward to its sacred employments; and in-

stead of laying out more labour for Saturday than usual, we may think it expedient to lay out even less. We shall endeavour to avoid the sin of which many are guilty,—that of labouring so hard on this day as to induce extreme fatigue and drowsiness, and thus unfit ourselves for the duties of the next. If it is wrong, in ordinary cases, *to sleep* on the Lord's day, it is wrong so to overtax the physical energies on the day preceding, as to cause unusual languor and debility, and thus voluntarily expose ourselves to the temptation. Persons who act in this manner, however they may, as in other cases, urge the plea of *necessity*, do in fact rob God, and starve their own souls. The conscientious farmer, or mechanic, or tradesman will dismiss his workmen or his customers, and close his business at as early an hour on Saturday evening as may be, in order that others, as well as himself and family, may have time to withdraw their thoughts from secular, and direct them to spiritual concerns. Such is our worldliness, so strong are the associations of our

every day employments, and such at the best, is our comparative dulness in the duties of devotion, that we cannot spend the sabbath at all as we ought, without some previous preparation. We want time, on Saturday evening, for self examination, reading the scriptures, meditation and prayer. We want, as far as may be, to banish our ordinary cares, and to get our hearts in some measure attuned to higher and holier things. If the individual would be thought to act improperly who should enter a religious meeting without some previous consideration, can *he* be said to conduct in a becoming manner, who begins the Lord's day with a mind scarcely at all abstracted from the business of the preceding six? Will he be able, during the day, *to repair* the wrong he has committed? Will he be likely to be very spiritual in his duties?

I have said that the sabbath should be specially devoted to the worship of God and the concerns of the soul. It is a season of cessation from temporal, and of holy activ-

ity in spiritual duties. It is the day of days, the jubilee of the week, the striking emblem of the rest of the heavenly world. I do not mean that we are not to worship our Maker, and to attend to our immortal interests on other days of the week besides the sabbath: the person who is truly pious will set the Lord habitually before him, and will fill up the intervals of *every* day with acts of supplication and praise. Whether in the field, the workshop, or the office; whether at home or abroad, his desire will be unto him in whom he has his being. The piety recognised in the bible is not merely *sabbath* piety; it is *every day* piety. While however, spiritual duties are not to be neglected on *any* day of the week, they are to be specially performed on the day which God has set apart for himself. While on *other* days we should be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," on *this* we should make the worship of the Most High our *express employment.* Thus the sabbath was spent by prophets, apostles, and other holy men in primitive times. They meditated upon the

perfections, the works, and the word of God; they thought upon their own sinfulness and obligations; they prayed; they sung hymns of praise; they worshipped the Lord in the great congregation; they instructed their children and others in the way of righteousness and truth. Let us dwell for a few moments on the particular duties of the Lord's day.

1. It is obvious that a considerable part of the day should be spent in meditation and prayer. I here, of course, use the word meditation in a somewhat general sense. How various, how interesting are the subjects with which, especially on the season of holy rest, our minds and hearts should be occupied! The attributes of God; creation; the fall of man; the gift of a Saviour and the work of redemption; death; the judgment; heaven and hell, — what themes for contemplation are these! Prominent among these topics, I had almost said, indeed, embracing all the rest, is the work of redemption. It was especially to commemorate this work, that the christian sabbath

was instituted. The Jewish sabbath was designed to remind men of God's greatness, and power, and supremacy ; the christian sabbath, while of course it recognises these, brings also to view his love in offering up his Son as a sacrifice for sin. It is called, with peculiar emphasis, '*the Lord's day ;*' that is, the day on which Christ arose from the dead, and thus gave public proof that the object of his mission to our world had been accomplished. While on this day we should reflect, in a special manner, upon what God is in himself, and what he has done for mankind, we should also call to remembrance our obligations, and our guilt and danger as sinners. We should inquire how we have rendered unto the Lord in view of all the benefits we have received. We shall thus be led to examine our hearts and lives, and if we feel at all as we ought, to cast ourselves on Christ for pardon and acceptance with our Maker, with sincere 'endeavours after new obedience.' We shall be led to exercise repentance and faith, gratitude and love. While we are

musing, the fire will burn. The more we think of our depravity, and of the particular transgressions of which we have been guilty, the more shall we be disposed to dwell upon the mercy and grace of God, and upon the character and offices of the Saviour.

We should, on the Lord's day, meditate especially upon the doctrines and duties which have, at the time, whether by reading or hearing, been brought particularly before us ; endeavouring to get clear and lively apprehensions of truth, and to stir ourselves up to the exercise of every christian virtue and grace. I need not say, that if we have the spirit of true devotion, we shall be disposed also to dwell much upon the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, the glory of the latter day, and the blessedness especially of the saints when they shall come to the heavenly Zion.

As the meditation of which I have been speaking, involves not only the intellect but also the affections, it virtually includes prayer. It is indeed impossible to have

spiritual apprehensions of God and divine things, without having our hearts drawn out both in supplication and in praise. If however, it be necessary to refer to prayer as a separate duty, it may be said to be a duty that should precede and accompany every other ; a duty with which the sabbath should be commenced, and continued, and ended. This remark in respect to prayer applies, indeed, to a considerable extent, to every day in the week, — and the same is true of what has been said in regard to meditation ; and yet, as I have intimated, the privilege connected with these and kindred exercises is to be *specially* enjoyed on the season in which business and care are suspended. On the Lord's day, in an eminent degree, we should hold converse with the Father of spirits, — drawing near the mercy-seat in full assurance of faith, pleading the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the bible, and thus endeavouring to bring down upon ourselves and upon others, those blessings which have been purchased by the Saviour's death.

As on other days, so especially on this, we should remember Zion among ourselves and throughout the world ; we should pray for ministers of the gospel, for success to attend the various benevolent associations of the age, and for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon all flesh. To the duty of praise, which is of course connected with the foregoing, I shall refer more particularly hereafter.

2. A part of the Lord's day should be spent in reading the scriptures. It is by this means, and by hearing the gospel in the sanctuary, that matter is to be furnished for the exercises of which I have been speaking. Religious emotion can be excited only in view of the truth ; and the man who consults the lively oracles the most diligently, will, other things being equal, have the most suitable apprehensions of God and of himself, and will thus be best prepared to engage in those various acts of worship which become him as a creature and a sinner. We see much of God indeed in his *works*, but in his *word* we be-

hold him in all his glorious perfections. "The *law* of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." The truths of the bible should certainly receive our *daily* attention; but there is usually more time and better opportunity for examining those truths in detail on the Lord's day, than there is on other days of the week. We can frequently on the sabbath, read large portions in their connexion; *some* portions, especially those of a doctrinal and devotional character, should *always* be read. We should connect with the reading of the scriptures the perusal of such works as tend to illustrate and enforce their contents, — the commentaries with which we are so richly supplied, and the priceless practical treatises of such as Baxter and Flavel, Edwards and Doddridge. As food nourishes the body, so divine truth nourishes and invigorates the soul. If christians would spend only two hours every sabbath, and a proportional space of time on other days of the week, in carefully examining and inwardly digesting the word of God, how rapidly would they grow in

grace, and in the knowledge of heavenly things! How soon would they leave the state of immaturity and pupilage in which they frequently remain for so long a time, and advance to the stature of perfect persons in Christ Jesus! Such were many of the christians in England in the seventeenth century; such were many of the early believers in our own country, — men who diligently studied, and who cordially embraced, every part of revealed truth, and who exhibited a symmetry of character well fitted to commend the religion they professed. These are the persons who, both in intellect and in heart, both in theory and in practice, 'have respect unto *all* God's commandments.' To such may be applied the language of the psalmist, "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word. I opened my mouth and panted; for I longed for thy commandments. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation."

3. We should, on the sabbath, unite with

God's people in hearing the preaching of the gospel, and in performing those other acts of worship that are peculiar to the sanctuary. As I have observed, it is by reading and hearing that matter is to be furnished for other duties, — for meditation and prayer, thanksgiving and praise. We want *to read* God's word ; we want also *to hear* it. It pleases him by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe. We should meditate, and pray, and praise in our closets ; we should also engage in these exercises in the public assembly. While God is honoured by acts of private devotion ; while he " seeth in secret " the humble and contrite heart, he has still made it our duty to unite in his worship in the place where he has recorded his name. The law was appointed to be read in the synagogues every sabbath day. And manifestly, if it was the duty of ministers to read, it was the duty of the people to assemble and hear. An express command of God to the Israelites, was, " Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary."

The Hebrew christians were exhorted ‘ not to forsake the assembling of themselves together ; ’ that is for the worship of God on the sabbath, and at other appointed seasons. It has been shown that the apostles and other primitive christians assembled statedly for religious worship on the first day of the week ; the example of our Lord has also been alluded to, of whom it is said, that, ‘ as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and taught,’ Not only were the saints under both dispensations accustomed to meet for public worship on the sabbath ; they identified with the house of God their most interesting associations, their fondest hopes, their liveliest and most exalted joys. They ‘ were *glad* when it was said, Let us go into the house of the Lord.’ The response was a prompt and cheerful one, “ Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.” They esteemed ‘ a day in the sanctuary as better than a thousand ;’ for the courts of the Most High ‘ their souls longed, yea, even fainted.’ They ‘ feared him in the

assembly of his people;' they 'praised him for his mighty acts;' 'they uttered abundantly the memory of his great goodness;' they heard his messages of grace; 'they sung of his righteousness' and salvation. In these exercises their minds were enlightened, and their souls edified and refreshed. It was "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

It is painful to think how many there are in this favoured land who absent themselves from the sanctuary. Some are seldom or never seen within its walls at all; others are present only *occasionally*, perhaps once in six months or a year, and this, as they may happen to be called out by some funeral occasion, or by a curiosity to hear some distinguished preacher. What disregard of God's authority, what contempt of his holy word and day, what trifling with the concerns of the soul, what indifference to all that is sacred and dear does conduct

like this imply ! It is to be a heathen in a christian land. It is to set an example fitted to make heathen families and heathen neighbourhoods. It is to exert an influence that goes to blight all that is fair upon earth, and to spread desolation and death throughout the habitations of men. It is not merely to count *oneself* unworthy of the kingdom of heaven, but it is to be accessory to the moral darkness, the spiritual unconcern, the practical infidelity, and the everlasting ruin of multitudes of others. Would that the more decent portion of the community, and that many professed christians even, gave more evidence of reverencing the sanctuary than they frequently do. In view of what trivial causes do members of our churches often stay away from the house of God ! If they are only suffering a little fatigue or bodily indisposition, or if the weather is slightly inclement, or if the distance to the place of worship is such as to require some exertion on their part in order to get there, how readily do they endeavour to quiet their consciences, in neglect-

ing one of the most sacred appointments of heaven! That professed christian is too *unwell* to worship God with his people; but he would *not* be too unwell, if it were any other day of the week, to perform his customary labour. The sabbath is a *stormy* one; but you will see him on other days far more inclement, driving from one part of the town to the other. The *distance* is considerable; but propose to him on Saturday or Monday some plan that promises to advance his temporal interest, and distance, like the state of the weather, will at once be forgotten. Are these men really *serious* in their profession? Do they manifest the holy sincerity, the pious zeal that distinguished the saints in primitive times? Can *they* be said to worship the Lord in truth, who plead such reasons for *neglecting* his worship as they would not urge in connexion even with their secular affairs? Speak, consistency; speak, conscience; speak, oracles of God! I would be far from intimating that circumstances may not be such as to render a person justifiable in

being absent from public worship on the Lord's day. If an individual is confined to his room by a broken limb, or to his bed by a fever, it is manifestly not his duty to go out ; and the same is of course true if he is so seriously indisposed that he would be in danger of increasing or prolonging his distemper. It is evident also that drenching rains in summer, and drifting snows in winter may sometimes render it hazardous for persons in health, especially females, to leave their homes on the sabbath.* Wisdom is profitable to direct ; and it was never intended that one duty should interfere with another. The sabbath was made for man ; and the service of God is in all respects a "reasonable service." Still, it is not every slight complaint, it is not every threatening cloud, or fog, nor even every considerable fall of rain or snow, that can excuse us from waiting upon God in his house. If we should, without hesitation, expose ourselves as much on a week day,

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* Panoplist, Jan. 1815.

and for a worldly purpose, the excuse is vain.* O that men would be honest on points in regard to which, although they may indeed deceive themselves, they never can deceive their Maker. If they had that longing for the courts of the Lord of which we read in the scriptures, and which marked the character of many of the pilgrim fathers, they would not be detained at home by trifles; they would lose sight of not a few supposed difficulties, and overcome even many real ones, in order to be present in the sanctuary. The first settlers of this country exhibited an example in respect to attendance on public worship, which their descendants have been more disposed to admire, than fully to imitate. *They* were not afraid of the rain, or the snow, or the cold; they said little about trifling bodily complaints, or the length and badness of roads: whether the distance were longer or shorter, whether the sky were fair or inclement, you would have seen

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* Panoplist Jan. 1815.

them, like the Israelites of old, going up with one consent to the house of prayer and of praise. With souls thirsting for the blessings of salvation, the storm and the north wind were almost unheeded ; barren rocks scarcely appeared lonely ; steep and difficult hills seemed well nigh levelled to plains. 'Passing through the valley of Baca, they made it a well : the rain also filled the pools.' 'They went on from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appearing before God.'

4. A part of the sabbath may be profitably spent in religious conversation. Thero is no *reason* why people should employ the hours of holy time in discoursing about merely secular affairs : of other subjects, as we saw under the head of meditation, the number is not only sufficient, but even inexhaustible. How much more would God be honoured, and the interests of the soul advanced, if in the intervals of worship, such topics as but too frequently engage the attention, would give place to those that are appropriate to the day, to discussion for example,

in respect to particular points of doctrine and duty, and to the giving and receiving of information concerning the various departments of christian benevolence. A timely observation, when going to, or returning from the house of worship, may convey light to the understanding, and kindle up or increase the flame of devotion in the heart. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The sentiment of David lies at the foundation of the most endearing recollections of good men on earth, I had almost said, of the saints in glory; 'We went to the house of God in company; we took sweet counsel together.'

It is manifestly a duty, on the Lord's day, to converse with and instruct children and domestics. Our sabbath schools have indeed, within these few years, accomplished much in regard to the religious instruction of the rising generation, and even of the adult members of our congregations, — and the system ought to be carried into more effective and general operation than it is at

present. In societies where it is practicable, why should not *all* who attend public worship — I mean all whose health will permit — associate for the study of the scriptures? Is it not one object of their coming to the house of God, to receive instruction? and shall they be unwilling to avail themselves of all the means for securing this important end, which providence appears to place within their reach? Are any too well informed, are any too far advanced in years, to join in the exercise of which I have been speaking? But the point to which I wish especially to allude, under the present head, is the duty of sabbath instruction *in the family*. Parents should not think it sufficient that their children are taught on the Lord's day *by others;* they should remember that a most solemn responsibility in regard to this matter devolves upon *themselves*. They should have something like sabbath schools and bible classes in their own houses; at least, they should see to it, that they impress, on the day set apart for religious duties, divine

truth upon the hearts and consciences of their offspring. If they feel as they ought, they will not indeed neglect the spiritual interests of their children on other days of the week; to these interests they will call their attention 'when they sit in the house, and when they walk by the way, when they lie down, and when they rise up.' Still, it is peculiarly proper that parents should perform the duty to which I have referred, on the Lord's day; and perhaps the most suitable part of the day may generally be the afternoon or evening, not long after the close of the exercises of the sanctuary. Those are favourable moments, when the argument of the preacher is fresh in the mind, and the impression of the truth strong and vivid; when the judgment is convinced and the conscience awake; when the things of time have in some measure lost their hold upon the attention, and the soul is prepared to contemplate, with an unusual degree of steadiness, its spiritual and everlasting relations; those are favourable moments not only for explaining to one's household the

doctrines, but also for pressing home upon them the requirements of the bible, and leading them, by the aid of the Spirit, to Christ and to heaven. By all that is binding in parental responsibility, and all that is valuable in the welfare of an immortal being, let the opportunity be faithfully improved. Instead of making a few formal remarks, or confining themselves to mere generalities, let heads of families, at the season to which I refer, as well as at all other proper seasons, enter into the subject of religion with holy earnestness and zeal,—endeavouring to speak in such a manner, that they may realize the character, the hopes, and the reward of him of whom it is said, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord."

I have now finished the remarks which it seemed proper to make on the manner of observing the christian sabbath. Allow me to suggest a few thoughts by way of reflection.

It must be manifest that there is need of

a general reformation in respect to the duty which I have endeavoured to inculcate in these Discourses. Who of us, my friends, has remembered the sabbath as he ought ? What professed christian has not often violated the sanctity of the day, by indulging in vain and worldly thoughts and conversation ? Where is the member of our churches who has not, on the season of sacred rest, laboured more, or journeyed more, or visited more than conscience and the word of God would justify ? Where is the individual who has not greatly failed in regard to the positive part of the precept, — I mean, religious meditation and prayer, reading the scriptures, worshipping the Lord in the congregation, and instructing children and domestics ? What abundant occasion have ministers and churches to humble themselves before God, in view not merely of their violation of a precept which is equally binding with the other precepts of the moral law, but in view also of the fact, that in not properly sanctifying the sabbath, they have failed to appreciate

some of their most interesting and precious privileges! May we be led to see our wrong in this thing, and so far as we have indeed come short, to commence heartily and without delay, the work of repentance and reformation. Need I repeat what has already been intimated respecting the prevalence of sabbath breaking in the community and nation at large? Need I refer to the multitudes who spend holy time in pursuing the ordinary business of the farm, the workshop, the office, or the counting house? Need I speak of the tens of thousands who desecrate the Lord's day by wasting it in idleness and sloth, by travelling in stage-coaches and steam-boats, and by rushing with eagerness into every species of amusement and dissipation? Even in our more quiet and orderly country settlements, how often is one pained at hearing, on the sabbath, the sound of the axe or the hammer, or at seeing men and teams employed in transporting merchandise, or securing the products of the field. And to pass from these to some of our larger cities

and towns, — how notorious is it, that in the latter we frequently see more pleasure carriages in motion, more wharves and public squares crowded, more gaming houses and places of intemperance and sensuality visited, on the Lord's day, than upon any other day of the week. Is not the fact a moving one, that so large a proportion of our population — in some districts of our country fully one half, and in others nearly two-thirds, — are almost as utter strangers to the public worship of God, as those who live in countries where the gospel has never been preached ?* Is there nothing appalling in the profanation of the Lord's day by men high in office, and especially by those public bodies that frame the laws of the land ? Whether, as a nation, we

* It has been supposed that of the inhabitants of London, [estimated at a million and a half] from 500,000 to 800,000 live in utter disregard of all religious ceremonies or duties. See a Missionary Sermon, by Rev. John Harris. The proportion of those who do not attend public worship to those who do, can hardly be less in many of the principal cities in the United States. In some it is undoubtedly greater.

are more or less moral than some other nations, there is perhaps no occasion in this place to inquire : it may with truth be said, that while we are chargeable with many national sins, the sin of sabbath-breaking stands out among the number with a most fearful prominence.

There is, I repeat, need of a general reformation in respect to the observance of the Lord's day. How shall this reformation be effected ? It must commence, as has been intimated, with the church. 'Judgment must begin at the house of God.' It is common to speak of the *infidelity* of our country ; but is there not something *like* infidelity, — is there not at least much unbelief, especially in regard to the law of the sabbath, on the part of many who claim to be christians ? How desirable that the church should be brought more cordially to receive all that her Lord has revealed, — and in particular, that she should begin more deeply to feel the moral obligation, and more carefully and consistenly to practice the duties of the fourth commandment !

She must be aware, that the question is not merely or mainly whether the sabbath is a useful institution, but whether we *have* any sabbath at all ; she must be aware, that in so far as she compromises the nature, or acts remissly and unfaithfully in promoting the observance, of the day of weekly rest, in so far she practically denies the truth of revelation, and relinquishes the hopes and privileges of her birth-right. Would that she might, in all her branches, return to that simple reliance on scripture testimony for which she was distinguished in primitive times. She must come up to the standard of the bible. She must show by her example that she regards the law of the sabbath as sacred as any other law which her Head has appointed. Until she is prepared to act in this spirit and to pursue this course, she cannot surely, with consistency, complain of neglected ordinances, or of the increasing profligacy of the times.

Christians in this country were surprised when first made acquainted with the views that prevail in regard to the sabbath, in

such portions of Europe as Germany. There, unless I have been misinformed, some even of those religious teachers who are professedly far removed from neology, — men who call themselves and are called by others *evangelical*, are accustomed to speak of the institution very much as a thing of expediency. It would be well to inquire how many denominations there are in Great Britain and in the United States, that regard sabbath-breaking as an *offence*, and treat it accordingly. Is not the number exceedingly small? And yet, should not the violation of the fourth commandment be made as much a matter of church discipline, as the violation of the seventh or the eighth?

Let the *church* reform in her views and practice in regard to the keeping of holy time; let her learn to have respect unto *all* God's commandments; let her *really* believe what she almost *professes* to believe; let her example and her influence be what they ought to be, and we may then expect to see an amendment in the community at

large. The power that is to reclaim evil doers, must come out of Zion. Little reliance can be placed upon civil enactments for promoting the observance of the Lord's day : such enactments, even if they were made, could relate only to men's outward conduct, and they could never be put in force so long as public sentiment was wrong. It does no good to make laws, when men can break them with impunity ; and the history of sabbath legislation (to say nothing of legislation on kindred subjects) has sufficiently illustrated the sentiment, that Christ's kingdom has little to expect from this world, and that *moral* means are, of all others, the most appropriate for the accomplishment of moral ends.

Let these means be faithfully and perseveringly employed. Let the church take the ground not only that there *is* a sabbath, but that there is a sabbath BECAUSE GOD HAS APPOINTED ONE. Whatever arguments she may draw from other considerations, let her first and mainly press the observance of the institution on the broad princi-

ple of DIVINE AUTHORITY. And let her practice, as has been remarked, correspond with her precepts. Let professed christians, individually, correct whatever has been faulty in themselves in regard to this whole subject, and let them learn to honour the sabbath not only by conscientiously performing its duties, but also by realizing, in their full extent, its high and delightful privileges. Let those church members who violate the day, be made the subjects of prompt and faithful discipline. Let parents instruct their children in the duty of remembering the season of rest, with becoming fidelity and zeal; teaching them to view its desecration with the same abhorrence with which they would regard idolatry or theft, or any other crime referred to in the decalogue. Let ministers of the gospel bring the subject often and particularly before their congregations. Let men be addressed in relation to it from the pulpit and the press; "let them be addressed with sound argument, and with earnest and affectionate exhortation and entreaty; let

them be addressed as rational, and moral, and accountable beings, whose everlasting destiny will be fixed according as they profane the sabbath, or keep it holy. And let all who reverence the sabbath, lift up their fervent supplications to him who is the Lord of the sabbath, that he would graciously interpose, and bring men everywhere to remember and love the day of spiritual rest."*

Friends and brethren, you will suffer me to "use great plainness of speech." I would not, I am conscious, employ the language either of dictation or of invective. I plead not for the restoration of the *Jewish* sabbath ; that has gone by with the dispensation with which it was connected. I plead not for pharisaical austerities and mere external forms ; the worship of the bible is a *spiritual* worship. I plead for an unqualified obedience to all God's commands. I plead for a becoming observance of the day of weekly rest. I plead for a reviving, in

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* Dr. Woods, in American Ed. of Wilson.

its vitality and glory, of an institution that was designed to commemorate the creation and the redemption of the world ; an institution with which are identified the richest blessings of believers in the present life, and their fondest hopes in respect to the life to come.

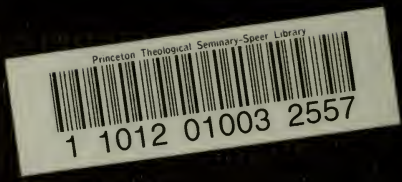
The sentiment has been alluded to, that the efficiency of the church must depend, essentially, upon a reformation in regard to the observance of the sabbath. How could she take firm and independent ground, so long as she should in any way hesitate as to the validity if not of her charter, yet at least of its seal ? What proper influence could she expect to exert upon unbelievers, while she sometimes appeared well nigh to doubt whether a part of the revealed rule of duty retains its original force ? What suitable progress could she hope to make in reclaiming men from sin, so long as an institution, ordained of her Head especially for this very purpose, was not appreciated as it ought to be ? What would a sabbath be worth, that should be secured merely

by the arm of secular power? It would be like a body without a soul; its energies would have been paralysed, its glory would have gone. Need it be remarked, that a reformation in respect to the sabbath is essential to the prosperity and even to the existence, of the nation? Such a view, I am aware, may appear to some to savour of bigotry, — but its correctness is confirmed both by the testimony of the bible, and by the history of nations in all ages of the world. If we continue a sabbath-breaking people, it will be at the peril of all we hold dear in our institutions, it will be at the expense of our liberties and our hopes. We shall weave our own shroud. We shall dig our own grave. The curse of the Most High will rest upon the nation that despises his day, and tramples upon his laws. Other nations have fallen, — and why? It was because they had no sabbath; it was because they knew not God. We may think to secure our perpetuity by calling in the aid of literature and science; but it will be like leaning upon a broken

reed, or like trusting in horses and chariots: either the Almighty must be acknowledged, or we must feel his withering frown. Our history will remove the last remaining doubt as to the connexion between infidelity and anarchy, between atheism and ruin. We shall stand forth before the world as another illustration of the sentiment, 'THE NATION AND KINGDOM THAT WILL NOT SERVE THE LORD, SHALL PERISH; YEA, THOSE NATIONS SHALL BE UTTERLY WASTED.'

But we hope better things. A redeeming spirit is already abroad in the community, and there seems to be, on the part of many, a disposition to seek after God, and to reverence his laws. The church may yet be blessed, and the nation spared. To *both* may be addressed, in the way of encouragement, those words of the prophet, — "IF THOU TURN AWAY THY FOOT FROM THE SABBATH, FROM DOING THY PLEASURE ON MY HOLY DAY; AND CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT, THE HOLY OF THE LORD, HONOURABLE; AND SHALT HONOUR HIM, NOT DOING THINE OWN WAYS, NOR FINDING THINE OWN

PLEASURE, NOR SPEAKING THINE OWN WORDS; THEN SHALT THOU DELIGHT THYSELF IN THE LORD; AND I WILL CAUSE THEE TO RIDE UPON THE HIGH PLACES OF THE EARTH, AND FEED THEE WITH THE HERITAGE OF JACOB THY FATHER: FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT."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