

# THE GOSPEL IN PARIS:

## *SERMONS*

BY THE

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*WITH PERSONAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR*

BY THE

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## IX.

### *THE SABBATH.*

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”—MARK ii. 27.

PHARISAISM never dies. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that it no longer presents itself under the same aspect as it did in the days of Jesus Christ. Nothing around us recalls the superstitious regard for the day of rest which characterised that epoch. When we read in the Gospel that Jesus or His disciples were blamed by the scribes for having cured a sick man or plucked ears of corn on that day, we look upon this as an impossibility and an absurdity. When we recollect the many and minute ceremonies which the Pharisees practised in connection with the Sabbath, and their strange maxims concerning the most insignificant actions performed on that day, we are tempted to smile. Not only are these superstitions foreign to us, but on this point we have rejected the formalism which prevails in certain Protestant countries; we dread the legal and judicial spirit in which the day of rest is observed in their midst. Let us frankly confess it: no one believes, to use the words of our Lord, that man was made for the Sabbath; it is not into this excess that we are in danger of falling. But are you sure that you as clearly understand the first part of our text: “The Sabbath was made for man?”

I do not hesitate to affirm that, on this matter, there is in our Christianity an indifference to whose fatal effects we are but too blind. That is why I am anxious to draw your attention to this subject. You will judge for yourselves if I exaggerate its importance. You will see if this is merely a secondary question, or if, on the contrary, it does not bear upon one of the essential conditions of the Christian life, of the worship of the Church, and of the progress of truth. We shall, first of all, inquire of the Holy Scriptures which, for us, are the only source of all religious instruction; secondly, we shall appeal to the experience of the world and of the Church, and I believe that this investigation, however rapid it needs must be, will nevertheless suffice to bring into evidence the vital importance of the subject before us.

When we consider the ideas which prevail in the Church on this point, we distinguish two currents of thought which are totally opposed one to the other. Some, placing themselves under the Sinaitic law, and founding their opinion on the eternal value of the Decalogue, would impose upon us the fourth commandment. Others, protesting in the name of Christian liberty, and affirming, with reason, that we are no longer under the law, but under grace, come to the conclusion that the observance of the Sabbath has ceased to be obligatory, and that we are to look upon this day simply as an institu-

tion of the Church, most useful and excellent in truth, but in nowise resting upon Divine authority.

It cannot be denied that this last opinion is that which predominates in our midst, and I am not surprised at this. It is certain that most of those who have exerted themselves to plead the cause of the sanctification of the Lord's Day have almost always done so without distinguishing between the Old and the New Covenant, and have thus brought us back under the yoke of legal obedience and formalism. But the reaction has taken place in the direction of Christian liberty, and, as it most often happens, it has led us too far. It were time, today, to ascertain whether the cause in question cannot be delivered from the false arguments which have so fatally injured it, and whether it will not again rise triumphant from the unpopularity into which it has fallen.

We are no longer under the Jewish law, and I am in no danger of bringing you back to it; in fact, this were needless, for the institution of a day of rest is anterior to the law of Sinai. I open the book of Genesis; I read the first pages of that simple and sublime record which modern unbelief is pleased to regard as a mere essay of Hebrew cosmogony; from one or two of its lines I see brightly gushing forth a light which had been unknown to the ancient world, and which illumines the profound darkness of man's destiny. There I learn that God is one, that He is a spirit, that He is free; I learn that creation is the result of His own free and unconstrained will, and not a fatal evolution of eternal substance. There I see that evil is not inherent to matter, and that liberty was the initial condition of man here below. After these grand doctrines, I find the double fact of the unity of the human species and of the institution of marriage—these granitic foundations of all Christian societies. Now, in the very midst of this narrative, of which every particular feature has its special value, we read that when God had completed the work of creation, He rested on the seventh day: "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."

I cannot, within the limits of this discourse, discuss the various questions raised by this division of the six days' work, and by this rest of God. I shall merely say that I am not in the least perplexed by this language which is so thoroughly Divine in its simplicity, for the gradation of the six days' work cannot fail to strike all serious minds, from the many and remarkable analogies which it presents with the most incontestable results of science; and, as regards the rest ascribed to God, I know what is the import of such an expression when employed by a writer who pictures the world as called forth out of nothingness by the mere effort of the Divine word, by a writer who has uttered these incomparable words: "Let there be light: and there was light!" I believe, therefore, that Moses has no need whatever to learn of

modern scepticism that God is above rest just as well as He is above fatigue. Let us set aside these commonplace objections and keep in mind that, immediately after the creation of man, God himself set apart a certain time for rest and meditation. Now, as it is obvious that God requires no rest, it follows that the object of this institution was necessarily man, or, in other words, that the Sabbath was made for man, as Jesus Christ declares. Such is the primordial fact of the institution of the day of rest. Let those who see in Genesis nothing more than the scientific essay of an ignorant genius say that Moses has introduced into heaven his own conception of the week, and that he has made it Divine in order to render it more respectable, this is easy to understand; but that a Christian, who takes this narrative as the real and authentic history of the origins of humanity, should deny that this verse consecrates the institution of a day of rest for man, is what appears to me most strange and inadmissible.

Some, however, dispute this conclusion. They tell us that we have no right to take this repose ascribed to God by the sacred historian as a proof of the institution of a day of rest for humanity. To this objection we answer that the passage is formal, and that, if the institution so clearly denoted by the words: "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it," does not concern humanity, it has neither sense nor value; besides, the best interpreter of this passage is the very nation by whom it has been preserved. Now, in the Sinaitic law, the rest of the Sabbath is closely allied with the rest of God, and with the sanctification of the seventh day mentioned in Genesis. It is because, from the very beginning, this day had been set apart and sanctified by Jehovah Himself that it is legally consecrated on Sinai.

We are then in presence of a Divine institution; the Sabbath has been made for man, at all times and in all places of the earth. I add: for man before the Fall. Now, if man in his state of innocence required such a day as this, how much more necessary will it not be for him in his fallen condition, now that he has become the slave of the flesh, of the visible world, of the hard law of labour, now that sin continually effaces from his heart the image of his God and the remembrance of his true vocation?

In the short narratives of the lives of the patriarchs, the Sabbath is not spoken of, but mention is made of the division of time into weeks, and this custom appears to me to be allied, by direct filiation, to the Divine week of the Creation. Hear on this point the testimony of a scholar whose judgment was wholly unbiased by his religious faith, since he boasted that God, for him, was a mere hypothesis:—"The week," says the illustrious Laplace, "from the most remote antiquity in which its origin is lost, exists uninterruptedly throughout all ages, and finds its place in the successive calendars of the various nations. It is worthy of remark that it is found identically the same on all points of the earth. It is perhaps the most ancient and incontest-

able monument of human science, and seems to point to one *common source* from which all knowledge has spread over the world.”<sup>1</sup> Weigh the value of this testimony: the week is a universal and everywhere identical fact, a fact which is to be traced back to an antiquity so remote that its origin cannot be positively determined; a fact, in a word, which indicates a common source of all human knowledge. Well, this source of which Laplace had but a vague notion, we Christians know it, and we call it Revelation. When, therefore, in the lives of the patriarchs or elsewhere, we meet with allusions to the week, we do not hesitate to believe that this institution has been preserved unimpaired from the very origin of humanity. Now it is evident that the patriarchs have handed it down to posterity under its primitive form, that is, with the day of rest as its crowning point.

The first mention which is made of the Sabbath in the book of Exodus is likewise anterior to the Jewish law; and the manner in which Moses recalls this institution to the Israelites, in connection with the manna which they were to gather on the eve of that day, denotes that he is not giving them a new commandment, but rather restoring an ancient custom which had perhaps sunk into oblivion, and which the independence of the people in the wilderness allowed of establishing once more in its full force. Finally, the very terms in which this fourth commandment is expressed are singularly suggestive:—“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” Men cannot be told to remember things which they do not already know. How then is it possible to trace back to the Jewish law an institution which this law itself acknowledges to have been established twenty-five centuries before, and which it borrows from the first traditions of humanity? It is evident that long before the promulgation of the Sinaitic law, the observance of a day of rest was known and practised, and that, even outside of the Jewish nation, it appears to us, in the views of the Creator, as a universal and permanent institution. Though age has succeeded age, this law has never been abrogated; it is still as necessary, as sacred for us in our busy life and boisterous civilisation as it was for the first believers who carried with them, beneath the desert tent, their faith in God, the primitive traditions of the world and the future of humanity.

Then comes the Jewish law, the law of Sinai, which is no longer binding upon us, because the Gospel has suppressed by transforming it. It gives to the Sabbath a political and juridical character, appropriated to the whole of the Hebrew theocracy. It enforces its observance by strict ordinances, by rigorous penalties, and death is the punishment which attends the violation of this sacred day. Let us congratulate ourselves on being freed from this yoke, but let this very severity teach us how necessary in the sight of God

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<sup>1</sup> *Système du Monde*, book i. ch. iii.

was this institution for the religious education of the nation whom He had chosen to be His own special people. If Paul has taught us that we are no longer the slaves of the law, it does not follow that we are to treat it lightly. How should we not be struck, for instance, with the fact that the institution of the Sabbath has found its place in the Decalogue instead of being lost amid the multiplied and minute prescriptions of the Mosaic code? I am not of those who think that the Decalogue, under its legal form, has an eternal value; I am no friend of those arbitrary distinctions by which some presume to separate it from the rest of the law, and to impose it upon mankind for ever. But, on the other hand, I cannot avoid being struck with the fact that the Decalogue is a most admirable summary of the whole of the moral law, and that each of the ordinances which it contains bears directly upon the religious life of all who in every age have aimed at serving God upon earth. Well, when I see the commandment of the day of rest occupying so important a place in it, when I see it enjoined in so formal a manner, I draw from this the conclusion that it affects the very conditions of religious life, and that it must have an eternal value.

But the enactment itself, however strict it appears to us, failed to satisfy the sanctimonious spirit of the Jews; the Pharisees added to it their minute prescriptions; they determined exactly what actions might be performed on that day, they calculated the number of steps men might be permitted to make, and they decided that, rather than take care of the sick during its sacred hours, it were better to leave them to die, that God might be glorified by a complete inactivity.

We all know that Jesus Christ has freed us from the bondage of Pharisaism. Likewise, as St. Paul declares, He has abolished the law of precepts and ordinances. We who are redeemed by grace are no longer under the law, we no longer obey the ceremonial prescriptions of Moses; no one has the right to lay them upon us, and to all attempts of this kind we would oppose the words of the Apostle, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." But if Christ has divested the Sabbath of its legal, outward, and formal character, does it necessarily follow that He has condemned the institution in itself? On the contrary, He restores it to its universal and permanent character by these memorable words, "The Sabbath was made for man." In this way He brings us back to its original institution; on various occasions He shows in what spirit this day is to be observed; when He allows His disciples to pluck ears of corn to satisfy their hunger, He authorises all labour which is necessary to life; when He cures, He orders works of mercy; when He bids one bear his burden, He shows that He is the Lord of the Sabbath, and that when His service is in question, we may be called, even on that day, to perform the most painful and the most unpleasant duties.

The Primitive Church inherited the spirit of her Master: she renounced the purely external Sabbath of the Jews and obeyed the injunctions of the Apostle who said to all whose conscience was likely to be disquieted by so much boldness: "Be not troubled in respect of the Sabbath days!" And, as if to indicate that she is no longer under the law, but that she has regained her spiritual liberty, the Church changes the day of rest. The day which hitherto had been consecrated to the Father is now unhesitatingly consecrated to the Son; the first day of the week is fixed upon and celebrated in memory of the resurrection of Jesus by whom all things are made new. In the Acts of the Apostles we see most clearly that this day was set apart for worship, and we may infer that this custom was immediately adopted in the Churches founded by St. Paul, from the fact that during his sojourn at Troas, the Apostle, though anxious to resume his travels, delays his departure until the following week in order to assemble the Church on the first day of the week. In the epistles we find numerous injunctions relative to works of charity which are likewise connected with that day. Finally, in the last book of the Scriptures, in the Apocalypse, we read that it was on a Sabbath day that John, then an exile in the island of Patmos, beheld the vision which he relates, and he calls this day by the name which henceforth it will never lose, the Lord's Day.

Such is the teaching of Scripture on the subject of the Sabbath. It points it out to us preserved from age to age in the midst of God's chosen people; and if, during the Mosaic dispensation, it bears a legal and juridical character, it nevertheless survives this judaical form and reappears in the New Testament as a Divine, universal, and permanent institution. Henceforth, if we had time to follow it throughout the early years of the Church, we would see with what profound respect it was at once regarded, and we might quote more than one testimony of the astonishment which the heathen nations experienced when they saw this day set apart amongst the Primitive Christians as a day in which all manner of labour was to cease, as a day which was to be completely consecrated to God.

This will be sufficient to convince us that the observance of the Lord's Day is not only a privilege, as many Christians imagine, but a duty based on a Divine order, and that, when we willingly break this command, we not only neglect a precious prerogative, but we violate a Divine institution. May this thought penetrate our conscience and be a serious warning for us!

Let us now add the testimony of experience to the declarations of Scripture. It will show us that God knew our frame when He gave us the Sabbath.

We all know that the human body requires frequent rest; but what is less generally admitted is the necessity of a regular return of this time of repose. To depend for rest on seasons when work will be scarce, and in the mean-

time to pursue unremittingly an exhausting labour, that is what takes place in France, and I do not hesitate to affirm that is a fearful mistake. See what is the condition of the manufacturing populations in that country; they are enfeebled and unnerved by these excesses of labour, which, as a natural consequence, are often followed by excesses of dissipation and the enjoyment of gross pleasures. We are often surprised when we compare the physical degeneracy of the workmen in the French centres of industry with the vigour of the English operatives. Do you not think that the observance of the Lord's Day may be one of the causes of this difference? Have you never heard how the brutal slave owners in America, who knew so well how to extort the greatest possible amount of labour from their unhappy victims, strictly enjoined the observance of the Sabbath by their slaves, not surely that they cared for their souls, for, in most cases, they did not believe that a soul could beat in a black man's breast, but because they had observed that labour without intermission enervated, enfeebled, and finally exhausted them.

Do you know what is bodily fatigue? And if you have but rarely felt it, can you picture to yourselves what its weight must be on a feeble constitution, when day after day brings its additional burden of weariness and exhaustion? Do you know that in Paris there are thousands of needlewomen who deem themselves happy when they can toil for fourteen or fifteen hours in the day, because for them that is the only way in which they can escape want? Do you know what it would say to them, that word rest which for you is so meaningless, because, alas? you know only the tediousness of too much leisure or the annoyance of having to find out means for killing time? Now, in busy seasons, in presence of the heaps of work which they are only too happy to receive, because it will enable them to lay something by for the evil day, in those times when at least eighteen out of the twenty-four hours are consecrated to labour, who thinks of procuring for those unhappy women the rest they so sadly need? The whole of the Sabbath is given to work, save perhaps one or two hours in which the unfortunate beings, bewildered by excess of fatigue, seek a stimulus in the excesses of pleasure. Oh? give them the Sabbath, the whole of the Sabbath, with its pure and smiling morn, with its peaceful awakening undisturbed by the ghastly phantom of forced labour, and in saving their body who can tell if you will not also save their soul?

But bodily repose is not the only benefit which the Lord's Day procures for man; above the physical nature there is the heart and the intellect, which must be developed at any cost, if we love our brethren, and if we are anxious to prevent the lower instincts from mining the very foundations of society. I boldly affirm that such a development is impossible in the present day without the Sabbath. There is a fact which can no longer be denied, the

fact that labour is becoming more and more absorbing. Society tends more and more to become like a vast mechanism in whose wheels the individual is completely entangled and despoiled of his liberty; in every career a high position must be attained, not a moment is to be lost, woe to him who is behind time? In the higher professions, the young man sees himself, from his childhood, surrounded by numerous competitors; he must go on acquiring and acquiring knowledge, loading his memory with the accumulated results of the labour of all the preceding generations. In humbler spheres, in manual vocations, it had seemed at first that when the brute forces of nature would have been brought under the subjection of man, he himself would have won a greater liberty; but behold, he has become, if I may so speak, the motive agent of the machines which he guides, and this matter, of which he had thought to make his slave, has become his master! Enter one of our large factories; amidst that bewildering noise, see those hundreds of men rising and bending at every second to follow the movements of the loom or of the roller which turns and turns from morning to night; think that day after day, hour after hour, that is their life, and picture to yourself what would become of their souls should this labour never cease! Now, if it be but irregularly interrupted from excess of fatigue, those hours of leisure will bring with them no true repose, no salutary relaxation. But let the Sabbath come, let those sounds cease, let silence reign, and those men will breathe freely; for a day they will remember that they are not mere living tools or machines, but that they are men; for a day they will remember that they have a soul. You will object, perhaps, that they will profane this rest. This will doubtless happen in many cases, for they will be free, free to make a wrong use of the most precious privilege; nevertheless I dare affirm that, after all, the full liberty left them on the Lord's Day will be their best safeguard against all gross pleasures. The Sabbaths of which the first half is consecrated to worldly gain, are those which most often close in dissipation and sin. If, on the contrary, from the first hours of the Sabbath morn, the workman or the man of business may peacefully remain with his family, if he may freely give his time to those he loves, think you not that he will draw from these purifying impressions his greatest strength against coarse temptations? Think you not that the ties between the mother and her children will grow stronger, and that the noble life of the heart and of all lawful affections will regain the place it is, alas! losing more and more? Destroy the Lord's Day, and at the same stroke you destroy home-life, you shake the very foundation-stone of all society.

But if the Sabbath is the day of the family, it is, for the same reason, the day of those who have no family, of the poor, of the sick, of the destitute. Here I do not speak of the fact that, on that day, the whole family of God upon earth assembles, and that in the midst of the Church no one who be-

lieves and prays can feel a complete stranger. What I mean to say is that on this day, when we have set aside our absorbing toil or the cares of business, our heart is better able to remember those who suffer. For instance, visit our hospitals and see with what eager impatience their inmates await the return of the Lord's Day. And why is it so? Is it not because they know that their friends will have time to visit them then; because they will feel the beneficial influence of sympathy; because to their sufferings will not be added the bitter feeling of their loneliness. And what takes place there likewise takes place wherever we meet with bodily or spiritual suffering. Yes, if the Sabbath has been made for man, it has been made especially for the poor and the sick; and were it but for this reason, we should bless the Lord who has given it to humanity.

But it is especially when we study this question from the religious point of view that we understand the full value of the Lord's Day. You are Christians! This is as much as to say that you wish to serve the God who has saved you, to proclaim Him upon earth, to win souls for Him, to prepare His reign. Well! is it necessary to demonstrate that, without Sabbath, there can be no efficacious preaching, no fruitful evangelisation, no Church life? When you are indifferent to the observance of the Lord's Day, you injure each of these causes.

"How shall they believe," says the Apostle, "if they have not heard?" And willingly I add: "How shall they believe if they can never hear the appeals of truth?" Now this is what occurs in the present day. Our working classes show an increasing and most sympathetic interest for the preaching of the Gospel. Our least efforts in that vast field have borne their fruits. God seems to call us to the accomplishment of a mission which may be immense. But, between these souls and ourselves, there is Sunday labour, and for the poor this labour is in many cases a bondage from which they cannot free themselves. I will give but one example of this. Each year brings to our public schools thousands of children belonging to the lower classes; we often detect in those youthful souls the best dispositions, a moral delicacy, religious sentiments, which cheer us and give us hope for the future. But each year also, the fatal age marked out for apprenticeship removes them from our care and solicitude. At that age when temptations assail them, when the passions awaken, at that age when the rest of the Sabbath would be more than ever required, it is almost always pitilessly denied them. It is the apprentice who, on that day, comes out of the shop or of the work-room the last. That is how all his Sabbaths are spent, and when the best part of the day has thus been taken from him, you ask what becomes of his soul. What do you think it can become? Thus we sow, and the seed is rapidly borne away; thus upon these young souls weighs an oppression which should wring from our own hearts a cry of agony and opposition.

Thus, under the influence of materialism and the selfish unconcern of those who should oppose it, the greatest of liberties, that of serving God, is withdrawn from thousands of our fellow-creatures; and when the world has stamped its fatal impress upon those childlike souls, they go on separating themselves more and more from the God whom they have scarce known, until the evil days come of which Scripture tells, the days when man, absorbed by the cares of life, says, in speaking of the religion of his childhood: "I have no pleasure in it."

How, in such circumstances, is it possible to evangelize successfully? Not only is the progress of truth rendered impossible, but religious life is necessarily endangered. Oh! I know that for the Christian all days are equally holy; I know that God is a spirit, and that man may serve Him everywhere and at any time; I know that in every spot the faithful soul may find a sanctuary and a few moments to consecrate to Him. But if the whole of the Christian's life must be a prayer, does it follow that he must renounce his regular hours for devotion? If his life as a whole must be reflective, does it follow that he needs no special moments for meditation? The inner and spiritual life also requires a day of rest; without it piety will soon shrink into a false spirituality; we want a day of rest in which, the din of earth having ceased around us, we may hear the voice of God. As Luther said: "Thou must cease thy work if thou wouldst have God continue His own in thee." No one will accuse us of inclining towards formalism. A miserable thing in our sight is a form without life; but there is something more dangerous still. It is the complete absence of life as well as form; for an empty form is the witness of an absent thing, it is a silent protest, a warning. Now, I fear that through contempt of form we often lose the most precious blessings which the Sabbath was destined to bring us.

Cannot what I say of the individual soul be applied with still greater force to the life of the Church, to worship in common? Why in our holy assemblies is there so little zeal and sympathy? Why those late arrivals, which betray such a want of eagerness and respect for the worship itself? Why that attention so easily diverted during prayer and the reading of the Word of God? It is because our piety is without discipline and without rule; because it is too much influenced by the fancies and irregularities of our tastes and transitory dispositions; because, to return to our subject, considering as we too often do the Sabbath as an ordinary day, we allow ourselves to be borne away by the usual current of our thoughts and favourite vanities, and then all we have left for God is a heart and mind utterly filled up, utterly absorbed, by the world.

We have consulted the world and the Church together; with Scripture, their experience has confirmed the truth of this saying of Jesus Christ: "The Sabbath was made for man." We have seen what it costs to trample under

foot a Divine institution, and what numberless blessings are thus dried up at their very source. It is time to examine ourselves and to see what practical conclusions we may draw from the principles we have stated.

As we have already said, two things are here implied: repose and consecration, liberty as regards labour and the sanctification of the soul. Now, on both these points, judge for yourselves if there is nothing to be reformed in your lives.

First of all, as regards rest. It is the necessary condition of sanctification. The tide of labour which overflows our soul must necessarily be arrested; the deafening sounds of life must be hushed. I do not insist on this point, for I believe none of my hearers could pursue on that day their usual course of business and labour without being troubled in their conscience, and it is to this inward monitor that I now refer them. But observe, in vain would our body rest if our soul continued to be engrossed by our habitual occupations. If our thoughts remain with our books, studies, affairs, and speculations, in the eyes of God we desecrate the holy day of rest.

Further, this repose which you claim for yourselves must be assured to your brethren, especially to those who, in this respect, are the slaves of their fellows, and you know how many they are.

You will perhaps tell me that this would call for a general reform in the state of society, and that the task is immense and impossible; I could, first of all, answer that there is no impossibility for the Christian, and that this argument cannot be accepted. I believe that when a cause is just, it imposes itself in the long run to public opinion. Now, the question is to insure the first and most sacred of all liberties, moral liberty, to thousands of defenceless beings, to thousands of children; by an inevitable consequence, it is their eternal future which is here at stake. Well, such a cause as this, taken up with enthusiasm, pleaded with perseverance, would awaken in the public conscience more sympathy than we suppose; even those who would not accept it from these higher motives would nevertheless lend it their support by reason of its marvellous utility. From the day when the poor will understand that their most precious interests are here at stake, the cause of the Sabbath will be victorious. I know that though you may obtain for them the rest of the Sabbath, you will not thereby have obtained its sanctification. I know that, even then, this day will be for thousands the day of the most riotous pleasure and dissipation. Alas! they will be free, free to lose their souls on that day; but upon them will rest that solemn responsibility. As for you, you will at least have the satisfaction of knowing that in God's sight you have done your utmost to leave them on that day a chance of salvation.

But without losing sight of this grand aim, let each of us set to work from this day forth in his own sphere; let each of us leave, as far as possible, the rest of the Sabbath to those whom God has placed under our influ-

ence, and who depend upon us for their daily bread. The Christian woman who deprives the poor dressmaker of her Sunday rest for the sake of coming to church better dressed, is responsible before God for that soul which had been entrusted to her care. What then will it be if, to shine in the world on that day, you rob your inferiors of the repose God meant them to enjoy? Here no self-exculpation; beware especially of saying that, even without this fancy of yours, their Sunday would have been taken up by labour; for then we would unhesitatingly answer you that the faults of others do not palliate your own, and that every man will bear his own burden.

So much for the repose of the Lord's Day. Now, as regards its sanctification. If we desire this day to be free from toil, it is in order that it may the more fully be consecrated to the Lord. You do not expect me to enter into the detail of the various occupations which are allowed or prohibited on that day. Moreover, it were impossible to establish this distinction. Let us leave this exact and minute casuistry to the Pharisees; I believe that, on this point, the only judge is conscience, and that each of us is to be taught of God. Christians, when you are supplied with the necessaries of life, remember, above all, that Sunday is the Lord's Day, the Lord's Day with its joys, which God forbid I should disparage! joys of home and cordial intimacy, in which the bonds which the solitude of individual labour had loosened during the week, are now cemented anew. Let the Word of God open this day, and sanctify its first hours in the midst of your family. Let public worship be for you a season of holy exercise; and instead of listening passively to the words of a man, bring your whole soul and spirit in your prayers and hymns, and remember that a fervent and serious assembly is the most solemn preaching that can be heard.

Then remember those who have need of you, those whom sickness leaves in solitude, those who are afflicted; the absent, to whom a letter would procure so much joy; remember the feeble and the lowly; this day is theirs also, for the poor, the sick, the sorrowing, are the representatives of the Lord here below. Try such a Sabbath, and you will see if time will hang heavily upon your hands; you will see if in your life it will not be what to the traveller in the sands of Africa is the oasis in the wilderness.

When we have obtained for all the repose to which they are entitled, then we shall have to make of the Sabbath a day of progress and conquest for all good works, for all that ennobles the soul, for all that softens and comforts it. Henceforth may each Sabbath find us at work, vindicating for the service of God the day of which the world robs Him, and thus raising with a firm and steady hand the rampart without which the rising tide of materialism threatens to invade and overflow the world!