

KEEP IT HOLY!

A Tract on the Sabbath Day.

BY THE

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“God hath given express charge to all men, that upon the Sabbath day, which is now our Sunday, they should cease from all weekly and work-day labour, to the intent that like as God himself wrought six days and rested the seventh, and blessed and sanctified it, and consecrated it to quietness and rest from labour, even so God’s obedient people should use the Sunday holily, and rest from their common and daily business, and also give themselves wholly to heavenly exercises of God’s true religion and service.”—CHURCH OF ENGLAND HOMILY ON THE PLACE AND TIME OF PRAYER.

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KEEP IT HOLY!

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” EXODUS xx. 8.

There is a subject in the present day which demands the serious attention of all professing Christians. That subject is the Christian Sabbath, or Lord’s Day.

It is a subject which is forced upon our notice whether we like it or not. The minds of Englishmen are agitated by questions arising out of it. “Is the observance of a Sabbath binding on Christians? Have we any right to tell a man that to do his business or seek his pleasure on a Sunday is a sin? Is it desirable to open places of public amusement on the Lord’s Day?” All these are questions which are continually asked. They are questions to which we ought to be able to give a decided answer.

The subject is one on which “divers and strange doctrines” abound. It is almost incredible what nonsense is talked about it. The grossest fallacies,—the strangest confusion of ideas,—the most glaring misstatements of the points at issue meet us on every side. If all this proceeded only from the ignorant and irreligious part of the world, the defenders of the Sabbath would have no reason to be surprised. But they may well wonder when they find educated and religious persons among their adversaries. It is a melancholy truth that in some quarters the Sabbath is wounded by those who ought to be its best friends.

The subject is one which is of immense importance. It is not too much to say that the prosperity or decay of English Christianity depends on the maintenance of the Christian Sabbath. Break down the fence which now surrounds the Sunday, and our Sunday Schools will soon come to an end. Let in the flood of worldliness and dissipation on the Lord’s Day without let or hindrance, and our congregations will soon dwindle away. There is not too much religion in the land now, God knows, and we ought to know too. Destroy the sanctity of the Sabbath, and there would soon be far less. Nothing in short, I believe, would so thoroughly advance the kingdom of Satan in England as to withdraw legal protection from the Lord’s Day. It would be a joy to the infidel. But it would be an insult and offence to God.

Reader, I ask your attention for a few minutes, while I say a few plain words on the subject of the Sabbath. I have no new argument to advance. I can say nothing that has not been said, and said better too, a hundred times before. But at a time like this it becomes every Christian writer to cast in his mite into the treasury of truth. As a minister of Christ, a father of a family, and a lover of my country, I feel bound to plead in behalf of the old English Sunday. My sentence is emphatically expressed in the words of Scripture,—

let us “keep it holy.” My advice to all Christians is to contend earnestly for the whole day against all enemies both without and within. It is worth a struggle. Let our united cry be, “We do not want the Sabbath law of England to be changed.”

There are four points in connection with the Sabbath which require examination. On each of these I wish to offer a few remarks.

- I. The authority on which the Sabbath stands.
- II. The purpose for which the Sabbath was appointed.
- III. The manner in which the Sabbath ought to be kept.
- IV. The ways in which the Sabbath may be profaned.

I. Let me, in the first place, consider *the authority on which the Sabbath stands*.

I hold it to be of primary importance to have this point clearly settled in our minds. Here is the very rock on which many of the enemies of the Sabbath make shipwreck. They tell us that the day is “a mere Jewish ordinance,” and that we are no more bound to keep it holy than to offer sacrifice. They proclaim to the world that the observance of the Lord’s Day rests upon nothing but church authority, and cannot be proved by the word of God.

Now I believe that those who say such things are entirely mistaken. Amiable and respectable as many of them are, I regard them in this matter as being thoroughly in error. Names go for nothing with me in such a case. It is not the assertion of a hundred divines, whether living or dead, that will make me believe black is white, or reject the evidence of plain texts of Scripture. I care little to be told what Jeremy Taylor, and Paley, and Arnold have thought. The grand question is, “were their thoughts worth credit?—Were they right or wrong?”

My own firm conviction is that the observance of a Sabbath day is *part of the eternal law of God*. It is not a mere temporary Jewish ordinance. It is not a man-made institution of priest-craft. It is not an unauthorised imposition of the Church. It is a part of the everlasting rule which God has revealed for the guidance of all mankind. It is a rule that many nations without the Bible have lost sight of, and buried, like other rules, under the rubbish of superstition and heathenism. But it was a rule intended to be binding on all the children of Adam.

What saith the Scripture? This is the grand point after all. What railway directors and newspaper writers think matters nothing. We are not going to stand at their bar when we die. He that judgeth us is the Lord God of the Bible. What saith the Lord?

I turn to *the history of creation*. I there read that “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” (Gen. ii. 3.) I find the Sabbath mentioned in the very

beginning of all things. There are five things which I observe given to the first father of the human race in the day that he is made. God gives him a dwelling place, a work to do, a command to observe, a help-meet to be his companion, and a Sabbath day to keep. I am utterly unable to believe that it was in the mind of God that there ever should be a time when Adam's children should keep no Sabbath.¹

I turn to *the giving of the law* on Mount Sinai. I there read one whole commandment out of ten devoted to the Sabbath day, and that the longest, fullest, and most minute of all. (Exod. xx. 8-11.) I see a broad, plain distinction between these ten commandments and any other part of the law of Moses. It was the only part spoken in the hearing of all the people. It was delivered under circumstances of singular solemnity, and accompanied by thunder, lightning, and an earthquake. It was the only part written on tables of stone by God himself. It was the only part put *inside* the ark. I find the law of the Sabbath side by side with the law about idolatry, murder, adultery, theft, and the like. I am utterly unable to believe that it was meant to be only of temporary obligation.²

I turn to *the writings of the Old Testament prophets*. I find them repeatedly speaking of the breach of the Sabbath side by side with the most heinous transgressions of the moral law. (Ezek. xx. 13, 16, 24; xxii. 8, 26.) I find them speaking of it as one of the great sins which brought judgments on Israel and carried the Jews into captivity. (Nehem. xiii. 18; Jerem. xvii. 19-27.) It seems clear to me that the Sabbath in their judgment is something far higher than the washings and cleansings of the ceremonial law. I am utterly unable to believe, when I read their language, that the fourth commandment was one of the things one day to pass away.

I turn to *the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ when he was upon earth*. I cannot discover that our Saviour ever let fall a word in discredit of any one of the ten commandments. On the contrary, I find him declaring at the outset of His ministry, "that he came not to destroy the law but to fulfil," and the context of the passage where He uses these words satisfies me that He was

¹ "The text, Genesis ii. 3, is so clear for the ancient institution of the Sabbath, that I see no reason on earth why any man should make doubt thereof; especially considering that the very Gentiles, both civil and barbarous, both ancient and of late days, as it were by a universal kind of tradition, retained the distinction of the seven days of the week."—Letter to Twiss by Archbishop Usher. 1650.

² The learned Bishop Andrews wisely remarks that it is a dangerous thing to make the fourth commandment ceremonial, and of mere temporary obligation: "The Papists will then have the second commandment also to be ceremonial; and there is no reason why there may not be as well three as two, and so four and five, and so all." "We hold that all ceremonies are ended and abrogated by Christ's death: but the Sabbath is not."—*Bishop Andrews on the Moral Law*. 1642.

not speaking of the ceremonial law, but the moral. (Matt. v. 17.) I find Him speaking of the ten commandments as a recognized standard of moral right and wrong: "Thou knowest the commandments." (Mark x. 19.) I find Him speaking eleven times on the subject of the Sabbath, but it is always to correct the superstitious additions which the Pharisees had made to the law of Moses about observing it, and never to deny the holiness of the day.³ He no more abolishes the Sabbath than a man destroys a house when he cleans off the moss or weeds from its roof. Above all I find our Saviour taking for granted the continuance of the Sabbath, when He foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. "Pray ye," he says to the disciples, "that your flight be not on the Sabbath day." (Mat. xxiv. 20.) I am utterly unable to believe, when I see all this, that our Lord did not mean the fourth commandment to be as binding on Christians as the other nine.

I turn to *the writings of the apostles*. I there find plain speaking about the temporary nature of the ceremonial law and its sacrifices and ordinances. I see them called "carnal" and "weak." I am told they are a "shadow of good things to come,"—a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," and "ordained till the time of reformation." But I cannot find a syllable in their writings which teaches that any one of the ten commandments is done away. On the contrary, I see St. Paul speaking of the moral law in the most respectful way, though he teaches strongly that it cannot justify us before God. (Rom. vii. 12; xiii. 8; Eph. vi. 2; 1 Tim. i. 8.) I see St. James and St. John recognizing the moral law, as a rule acknowledged and accredited among those to whom they wrote. (James ii. 10; 1 John iii. 4.) Again I say that I am utterly unable to believe that when the apostles spoke of the law they only meant nine commandments, and not ten.⁴

I turn to *the practice of the apostles*, when they were engaged in planting the church of Christ. I find distinct mention of their keeping one day of the week as a holy day. (Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2.) I find the day spoken of by one of them as "the Lord's day." (Rev. i. 10.) Undoubtedly the day was changed. It was made the first day of the week in memory of our Lord's resurrection, instead of the seventh. But I believe the apostles were divinely inspired to make that change, and at the same time wisely directed to make *no public decree* about it. The decree would only have raised a ferment in the Jewish mind, and caused needless offence. The change was one which it

³ See Bishop of Calcutta's seven Sermons on the Lord's Day. p. 60, 61.

⁴ It is only fair to mention that many great and learned divines have held that the text, Hebrews iv. 9, distinctly teaches the authority of the Christian Sabbath. The marginal reading is, "there remaineth the keeping of a Sabbath." I offer no opinion, on the point. I only remark that Owen, Edwards, Dwight, and Scott all held this opinion.

was better to effect gradually, and not to force on the consciences of weak brethren. The spirit of the fourth commandment was not interfered with by the change in the smallest degree. The Lord's day was just as much a day of rest after six days labour as the seventh day Sabbath had been. But why we are told so pointedly about the "first day of the week" and the "Lord's day" if the apostles kept no one day more holy than another, is to my mind wholly inexplicable.

I turn, in the last place, to *the pages of unfulfilled prophecy*. I find there a plain prediction that in the last days, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, there shall still be a Sabbath. "From one Sabbath to another shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." (Isaiah lxvi. 23.) The subject of this prophecy no doubt is deep. I do not pretend to say that I can fathom all its parts. But one thing is very certain to me, and that is that in the glorious days to come on the earth there is to be a Sabbath, and a Sabbath not for the Jews only, but for "all flesh." And when I see this I am utterly unable to believe that God meant the Sabbath to cease between the first coming of Christ and the second. I believe He meant it to be an everlasting ordinance in His church.

Reader, I place these arguments from Scripture before you, and ask your serious attention to them. To my own mind it appears very plain that wherever God has had a church, in Bible times, God has also had a Sabbath Day. My own firm conviction is, that a church without a Sabbath would not be a church on the model of Scripture.⁵

⁵ The following quotations from Baxter, Lightfoot, Horsley, and Wells, need no apology. They speak for themselves. In a day like the present, when we are so often told that learned divines deny the divine authority of the Lord's day, it may be well to show the reader that there are other divines, and some eminently learned, who take an entirely different view.

Let us hear what Baxter says. "It hath been the constant practice of all Christ's churches in the whole world, ever since the days of the apostles to this day, to assemble for public worship on the Lord's Day, as a day set apart thereto by the apostles. Yea, so universal was this judgment and practice, that there is no one church no one writer, or one heretic that I remember to have read of, that can be proved even to have dissented or gainsaid it till of late times."

"If any will presume to say that men properly endued with the Spirit, for the work of His commission, did notwithstanding do such a great thing as to appoint the Lord's Day for Christian worship, without the conduct of the Spirit, they may by the same way of proceeding, pretend it to be as uncertain of every particular book and chapter in the New Testament, whether or no they wrote it by the Spirit."—*Baxter on the Divine appointment of the Lord's Day*. 1680.

Let us next hear Lightfoot. "The first day of the week was everywhere celebrated for the Christian Sabbath, and which is not to be passed over without observing, as far as appears from Scripture there is nowhere any dispute about the matter. There was controversy con-

Let me close this part of the subject by offering to the reader two cautions, which I consider are eminently required by the temper of the times.

For one thing *let us all beware of undervaluing the Old Testament*. There has arisen of late years a most unhappy tendency to slight and despise any religious argument which is drawn from an Old Testament source, and to regard the man who uses it as a dark, benighted, and old fashioned person. We shall all do well to remember that the Old Testament is just as much inspired as the New, and that the religion of both Testaments is in the main, and at the root, one and the same. The Old Testament is the Gospel in the bud: the New Testament is the Gospel in full flower. The Old Testament is the Gospel in the blade: the New Testament is the Gospel in full ear. The Old Testament saints saw many things through a glass darkly. But they looked to the same Christ by faith, and were led by the same Spirit as ourselves. Let us therefore never listen to those who sneer at Old Testament arguments. Much infidelity begins with an ignorant contempt of the Old Testament.

cerning circumcision, and other points of the Jewish religion, whether they were to be retained or not, but nowhere do we read, concerning the changing of the Sabbath. There were indeed some Jews converted to the Gospel, who as in some other things they retained a smack of their old judaism, so they did in the observance of days, (Rom. xiv. 5 ; Gal. iv. 10), but yet not rejecting or neglecting the Lord's Day. They celebrated it and made no manner of scruple, it appears concerning it; but they would have their old festival days too: and they disputed not at all, whether the Lord's Day were to be celebrated but whether the Jewish Sabbath ought not to be celebrated also."—*Lightfoot's Works*, vol. xii. p. 566. 1670.

Let us next hear Bishop Horsley. "The Sabbath Days of which St. Paul speaks to the Colossians (Col. ii. 16,) were not the Sundays of the Christians, but the Saturdays and other Sabbaths of the Jewish calendar. The judaizing heretics, with whom St. Paul was all his life engaged, were strenuous advocates for the observation of the Jewish festivals in the Christian church, and St. Paul's admonition to the Colossians is that they should not be disturbed by the censure of those who reproached them for neglecting to observe the Jewish Sabbaths with Jewish ceremonies. It appears from the first Epistle to the Corinthians that the Sunday was observed in the church of Corinth with St. Paul's own approbation. It appears from the apocalypse that it was generally observed in the time when that book was written by St. John ; and it is mentioned by the earliest apologists of the Christian faith as a necessary part of Christian worship."—*Bishop Horsley's Sermons*.

Let us hear Wells. "Darkness and division there hath been enough in the church, to quarrel with institutions and appointments of former times. But the perpetual silence of the church on this particular infallibly shows the divine right of the Lord's Day. And the churches are so silent, because they dare not attempt such an enterprise as to raze the foundations of a divine institution."— *Wells' Practical Sabbatarian*, p. 587.

The whole subject of the change from the seventh day Sabbath to the Lord's Day is one which the reader will find admirably handled in the Bishop of Calcutta's Sermons on the Lord's Day. Those Sermons and "Willison on the Lord's Day," are by far the two best works on the Sabbath question.

For another thing *let us beware of despising the law of the ten Commandments*. I grieve to observe how exceedingly loose and unsound the opinions of many men are upon this subject. I have been astonished at the coolness with which even clergymen sometimes speak of them as a part of Judaism, which may be classed with sacrifices and circumcision. I have wondered in my own mind how such men can read them to their congregations every week! For my own part I believe that the coming of Christ's Gospel did not alter the position of the ten Commandments one hair's breadth. If anything, it rather exalted and raised their authority. I believe that in due place, and proportion, it is just as important to expound and enforce them as to preach Christ crucified. By them is the knowledge of sin. By them the Spirit teaches men their need of a Saviour. By them the Lord Jesus teaches his people how to walk and please God. I suspect it would be well for the Church if the ten Commandments were more frequently expounded in the pulpit than they are. At all events I fear that much of the present ignorance on the Sabbath question is attributable to erroneous views about the fourth Commandment.

II. The second point I propose to examine, is *the purpose for which the Sabbath was appointed*.

I feel it imperatively necessary to say something on this point. There is no part of the Sabbath question about which there are so many ridiculous misstatements put forward. Many are raising a cry in the present day, as if we were inflicting a positive injury on them in calling on them to keep the Sabbath holy. They talk as if the observance of the day were a heavy yoke like circumcision, and the washings and purifications of the ceremonial law. They rail at ministers of religion for defending the Sabbath, as if they only wanted it kept for their own selfish ends. They insinuate that our motives are not pure, and that we feel "our craft in danger." And all this sounds very plausible in the ears of ignorant persons.

Once for all, let us understand that all such statements are founded in entire misconception, and are rank delusions. The Sabbath is God's merciful appointment for *the common benefit of all mankind*. It was "made for man." It is given for the good of all classes, for the laity quite as much as for the clergy. It is not a yoke, but a blessing. It is not a burden, but a mercy. It is not a hard wearisome requirement, but a mighty public benefit. It is not an ordinance which man is bid to use in faith, without knowing why he uses it. It is one which carries with it its own reward. It is good for man's body and mind. It is good for nations. Above all, it is good for souls.

The Sabbath is *good for man's body*. We all need a day of rest. On this point at any rate all medical men are agreed. Curiously and wonderfully made as the human frame is, it will not stand incessant work without regular

intervals of repose. The gold-diggers of California soon found out that. Reckless and ungodly as most of them probably were,—urged on as they were no doubt by the mighty influence of the hope of gain,—they still found out that a seventh day’s rest was absolutely needful to keep themselves alive. Without it they discovered that in digging gold they were only digging their own graves. I firmly believe that one reason why the health of working clergymen so frequently fails, is the great difficulty they find in getting a day of rest. I am sure if the body could tell us its wants, it would cry loudly “remember the Sabbath Day.”⁶

The Sabbath is *good for man’s mind*. The mind needs rest quite as much as the body. It cannot bear an uninterrupted strain on its powers. It must have its intervals to unbend and recover its force. Without them it will either prematurely wear out, or fail suddenly like a broken bow. The testimony of Mr. Wilberforce on this point is very striking. He declared that he could only attribute his own power of endurance to his regular observance of the Sabbath Day. He remembered that he had observed some of the mightiest intellects among his contemporaries fail suddenly at last, and their possessors come to melancholy ends. And he was satisfied that in every such case of mental shipwreck the true cause was neglect of the fourth commandment.

The Sabbath is *good for nations*. It has an enormous effect both on the character and temporal prosperity of a people. I firmly believe that a people which regularly rests one day in seven will do more work, and better work, in a year, than a people which never rests at all. Their hands will be stronger. Their minds will be clearer. Their power of attention, application, and steady perseverance will be far greater. What two nations on earth are so prosperous at this day as Great Britain, and America? Where shall we find on the globe so much energy, so much steadiness, so much success, so much public confidence, so much morality, and so much good government as in those two countries? Let others account for all this as they please. I say without hesitation that the grand secret of it all has been the observance of the Sabbath. Great Britain and the United States, with all their sins, are the two most Sabbath-keeping nations on earth. They have given up seven years of good working days in the last fifty years to keeping the Lord’s Day holy. But have they

⁶ “During the excesses of the first French revolution, at the close of last century, Christianity and the Sabbath were abolished in France, but the mere necessities of man’s nature compelled the Atheistical government to institute a day of rest of their own, which they called a decade, occurring every tenth day. What a confession of the reasonableness of the divine command!”—*Bishop of Calcutta’s Sermons*, p. 163.

There is an admirable tract on this subject, by Professor Miller, of Edinburgh, entitled “Physiology in Harmony with the Bible.”

lost anything by it? No! indeed. The two Sabbath-keeping nations are the most prosperous nations in the world.

Last but not least the Sabbath is *an unmixed good for man's soul*. The soul has its wants just as much as the mind and body. It is in the midst of a hurrying, bustling world, in which its interests are constantly in danger of being jostled out of sight. To have those interests properly attended to there must be a special day set apart. There must be a regularly recurring time for examining the state of our souls. There must be a day to test and prove us, whether we are prepared for an eternal heaven. Take away a man's Sabbath, and his religion soon comes to nothing. As a general rule there is a regular flight of steps from "no Sabbath" to "no God."

I know well that many say that "*religion does not consist in keeping days and seasons.*" I agree with them. I am quite aware that it needs something more than Sabbath observance to save our souls. But I would like such persons to tell us plainly what kind of religion that is which teaches people to keep no days holy at all. It may be the religion of poor corrupt human nature, but I am sure it is not the religion of Revelation. It is not the religion which tells us that we "must be born again," and believe in Christ and live holy lives. Revealed religion teaches me that it is not quite so cheap and easy a thing to go to heaven, as many nowadays seem to fancy, and that it is essential to our soul's prosperity that in every week we give God a day.

I know well that there are some good people who contend that "*every day ought to be holy*" to a true Christian, and on this ground deprecate the special sanctification of the first day of the week. I respect the conscientious convictions of such people. I would go as far as any one in contending for an "every day religion," and protesting against a mere Sabbath Christianity. But I am satisfied that the theory is unsound and unscriptural. I am convinced that, taking human nature as it is, the attempt to regard every day as a Lord's Day would result in having no Lord's Day at all. None but a thorough fanatic, I presume, would say that it is wrong to have stated seasons for private prayer, on the ground that we ought to "pray always." And no man, I am persuaded, who looks at the world with the eyes of common sense, will fail to see, that to bring religion to bear on men with full effect, there must be one day in the week set apart for its business.

Reader, I ask you to consider well what I have just been saying. I believe I have advanced nothing that can be fairly gainsaid. I believe that if every church and chapel were pulled down, and every minister of religion banished from this kingdom, it would still be an unmixed benefit for the nation to preserve untouched the institution of the Sabbath, and an act of suicidal folly to part with it. Whether Englishmen know it or not, their Sabbath is one of their richest possessions and the grand secret of their position in the world. It is

good for their bodies, minds, and souls. Of it the famous words may be truly used, that “it is the cheap defence of a nation.”

III. I propose, in the third place, *to show the manner in which the Sabbath ought to be kept.*

This is a branch of the subject on which great difference of opinion exists. It is one on which even the friends of the Sabbath are not thoroughly agreed. Many, I believe, would contend as strongly as I do for a Sabbath, but not for the Sabbath for which I contend. But in a matter like this I can call no man master. My desire is simply to state what appears to be the mind of God as revealed in holy Scripture.

Once for all I must plainly say that I cannot entirely agree with those who tell us that they do not want a Jewish Sabbath, but a Christian one. I doubt whether such persons clearly know what they mean. If they object to a Pharisaic Sabbath, I agree with them. If they object to a Mosaic Sabbath, I would have them consider well what they say. I can find no clear evidence that the Old Testament Sabbath was intended by Moses to be more strictly kept than the Christian Sunday. The case of the man stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath is clearly not a case in point. It was a special offence committed under specially heinous aggravations, in the very face of Mount Horeb, and just after the giving of the law. It is no more a precedent than the striking dead of Ananias and Sapphira in the Acts, for lying, and there is no proof that such a punishment was ever after repeated. My own belief is that the explanations of the law of the Sabbath given by our Lord are the very explanations which Moses himself would have given. I have a strong suspicion, that allowing for the difference of the two dispensations, David, and Samuel, and Isaiah would not have kept their Sabbath very differently from St. John and St. Paul.

What then appears to be the will of God about the manner of observing the Sabbath Day? There are two general rules laid down for our guidance, and by them all questions must be decided.

One plain rule about the Sabbath is, that *it must be kept as a day a rest.* All work of every kind ought to cease as far as possible, both of body and mind. “Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.” Works of necessity and mercy may be done. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that, and teaches also that all such works were allowable in the Old Testament times. “Have ye not read,” He says “what David did?”—“Have ye not read that the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless?” (Matt. xii. 5.) Whatever in short is necessary to preserve and maintain life, whether of ourselves, or of the creatures, or to do good to the

souls of men, may be done on the Sabbath Day without sin.⁷

The other great rule about the Sabbath is, that *it must be kept holy*. Our rest is not to be the rest of a beast, like that of the ox and the ass, which have neither mind nor soul. It is not to be a carnal, sensual rest, like that of the worshippers of the golden calf, who “sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” It is to be emphatically a holy rest. It is to be a rest in which, as far as possible, the affairs of the soul may be attended to, the business of the world to come minded, and communion with God and Christ kept up. In short, it ought never to be forgotten that it is “the Sabbath of the Lord our God.” (Exod. xx. 10.)

Reader, I ask attention to these two general rules. I believe that by them all Sabbath questions may be safely tested. I believe that within the bounds of these rules every lawful and reasonable want of human nature is fully met, and that whatsoever transgresses these bounds is sin.

I am no pharisee. Let no hard-working man, who has been confined to a close room for six weary days suppose that I object to his taking any lawful relaxation for his body on the Sunday. I see no harm in a quiet walk on a Sunday, provided always that it does not take the place of going to public worship, and is really quiet, and like that of Isaac.⁸ (Gen. xxiv. 63.) I read of our Lord and His disciples walking through the corn-fields on the Sabbath Day. All I say is, beware that you do not turn liberty into license,—beware that you do not injure the souls of others in seeking relaxation for yourself,—and beware that you never forget you have a soul as well as a body.⁹

⁷ “Works needful for the comfortable passing of the Sabbath, as dressing of moderate food and the like, may be done on the Sabbath Day. For, seeing Christ allows us to lead an ox to water, and requireth not to fetch in water for him over night, he alloweth us to dress meats, and requireth not to dress it over night. For the order in the law of not kindling a fire pertained alone to the business of the tabernacle, and that order of dressing what they would dress on the sixth day pertained alone to the matter of manna.”—*LeiyKs Body of Divinity*. 1654.

“Not only those works which are of absolute necessity, hut those which are of great conveniency may lawfully be done on the Lord’s Day. Such are kindling of fire, preparing of meat, and many other particulars too numerous to be mentioned.—Only let us take this caution, that we neglect not the doing of those things till the Lord’s Day, which might be well done before, and then plead necessity or convenience for it.”—*Bishop Hopkins on the 4th Commandment*. 1690.

⁸ “If you walk abroad this day, choose to do it alone as much as possible, for people going in troops to the fields occasion idleness, vain talking, sporting, and misspending precious Sabbath-time.”—*Willison on the Lord’s Lay*, (An admirable book.)

⁹ I cannot see that the employment of horses to take us to church on the Sabbath is wrong, where it is a case of plain necessity, and without the use of them the Gospel cannot be heard. But in such cases people should use their own horses, if they have them.—The following quotation deserves notice. “When the Shunammite came to her husband for the ass, he saith

I am no enthusiast. I want no tired labourer to misunderstand my meaning when I bid him to keep the Sabbath holy. I do not tell any one that he ought to pray all day, or read his Bible all day, or go to church all day, or meditate all day, without let or cessation, on a Sunday. All I say is that the Sunday rest should be *a holy rest*. God ought to be kept in view. God's Word ought to be studied. God's house ought to be attended. The soul's business ought to be specially considered. And I say that everything which prevents the day being kept holy in this way, ought as far as possible to be avoided.

I am no admirer of a gloomy religion. Let no one suppose that I want Sunday to be a day of sadness, and unhappiness. I want every Christian to be a happy man. I wish him to have "joy and peace in believing," and to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." I want every one to regard Sunday as the brightest, cheerfullest day of all the seven. And I tell every one who finds such a Sunday as I advocate a wearisome day, that there is something sadly wrong in the state of his heart. I tell him plainly that if he cannot enjoy a "holy" Sunday the fault is not in the day, but in his own soul.

I can well believe that many will think that I am setting the standard of Sabbath observance far too high. The thoughtless and worldly, the lovers of money and lovers of pleasure will all exclaim that I am requiring what is impossible. It is easy to make such assertions. The only question for a Christian ought to be, "What does the Bible teach?" God's measure of what is right must surely not be brought down to the measure of man. Man's measure should rather be brought up to the measure of God.

I want no other standard of Sabbath observance than that which is laid down in the fourth commandment. I want neither more nor less. It is a rule which has been sanctioned by the Prayer Book of the Church of England, the writings of all the leading Puritans, and the Scotch confession of faith. No English churchman, no Scotch presbyterian, no nonconformist who walks in the steps of his forefathers, has any just right to find fault with it.

I maintain no other standard of Sabbath observance than that which all the best and holiest Christians of every church and nation have maintained almost without exception. It is extraordinary to mark the harmony there is among them on this point. They have differed widely on other subjects in religion. They have even disagreed as to the grounds on which they defend Sabbath sanctification. But as soon as you come to the practical question how

to her, why should you go to him today? it is neither Sabbath-day, nor new moon. The meaning is that the Shunammite was wont to go out to hear the prophet, and because she had not means would ride. Therefore when the means of sanctification are wanting, a man may take a Sabbath-day's journey. He may go where they are used to be gotten."—*Bishop Andrews on the Moral Law*. 1642.

the Lord's Day ought to be observed, the unity among them is truly surprising.

Last, but not least, I want no other standard of Sabbath observance than that to which a calm rational reflection on things yet to come will lead every sober-minded person. Are we really going to die one day and leave this world? Are we about to appear before God in another state of existence? Have we any hope that we are about to spend an endless eternity in God's immediate presence? Are these things so or are they not? Surely, if they are, it is not too much to ask men to give one day in seven to God. It is not too much to require them to test their own meetness for another world by spending the Sabbath in special preparation for it. Common sense, reason, conscience, will combine, I think, to say, that if we cannot spare God one day in a week we cannot be living as those ought to live who are going to die.

IV. The last thing I propose to do is to expose some of *the ways in which the Sabbath is profaned*.

This is a painful and melancholy part of the subject. But it is one that must not be avoided. The Sabbath no doubt is far better kept than it was a hundred years ago. Still, after all that has been done, there remains amongst us a vast amount of Sabbath profanation which is every week crying against England in the ears of God. The census of 1851 reveals the fearful fact that five millions of our fellow-countrymen go to no place of worship at all on a Sunday. It is a fact that should make our ears tingle. What an enormous quantity of weekly sin against God this single fact brings to light!

There are two kinds of Sabbath desecration which require to be noticed. One is that more *private* kind of which thousands are continually guilty, and which can only be checked by awakening men's consciences. The other is that more public kind, which can only be remedied by the pressure of public opinion, and the strong arm of the law.

When I speak of *private Sabbath desecration*, I mean that reckless, thoughtless, secular way of spending Sunday, which every one who looks round him must know is common. How many make the Lord's Day a day for visiting their friends and giving dinner parties,—a day for looking over their accounts and making up their books,—a day for going journies and quietly transacting worldly business,—a day for reading newspapers or new novels,—a day for writing letters or talking politics and idle gossip—a day in short for anything rather than the things of God.¹⁰

¹⁰ The Sunday post is one of the greatest injuries to the cause of Sabbath observance in the present day. It is astonishing how much harm is done by receiving letters and newspapers on a Sunday, by answering the one and reading the other. It distracts the minds of people, and prevents their receiving benefit from what they hear in Church. In my own parish we

Now all this sort of thing is wrong, emphatically wrong. Thousands, I firmly believe, never give the subject a thought. They sin from ignorance and inconsideration. They only do as others. They only spend Sunday as their fathers and grandfathers did before them. But this does not alter the case. It is utterly impossible to say, that to spend Sunday as I have described is to “*keep the day holy.*” It is a plain breach of the fourth commandment, both in the letter and in the spirit. It is impossible to plead necessity or mercy in one instance of a thousand. And small and trifling as these breaches of the Sabbath may seem to be, they are exactly the sort of things that prevent men communing with God and getting good from His day.

When I speak of *public desecration of the Sabbath*, I mean those many open, unblushing practices which meet the eye on Sundays in the neighbourhood of large towns. I refer to the practice of keeping shops open, and buying and selling on Sundays. I refer especially to Sunday trains on railways, Sunday steamboats on the rivers, and excursions to tea gardens and places of public amusement. And especially I refer to the daring efforts which many are making in the present day to throw open such places as the British Museum, the National Gallery, and the Crystal Palace on Sundays.

On all these points I feel not the smallest doubt in my own mind. These ways of spending the Sabbath are all wrong, emphatically wrong. So long as the Bible is the Bible, and the fourth commandment the fourth commandment, I dare not come to any other conclusion. They are all wrong.

These ways of spending Sunday are *none of them works of necessity or works of mercy*. There is not the slightest likeness between them and any of the things which the Lord Jesus explains to be lawful on the Sabbath Day. To heal a sick person, or pull an ox or an ass out of a pit is one thing. To travel in an excursion train, or visit picture galleries is quite another. The difference is as great as between light and darkness.

These ways of spending Sunday are *none of them of a holy tendency, or calculated to do any good to souls*. What soul was ever converted by tearing down to Brighton or dashing down to Gravesend? What heart was ever softened or brought to repentance by gazing at Titians and Vandykes? What sinner was ever led to Christ by gazing at the Nineveh Bull or the Pompeian Court? No! indeed! all experience teaches that it needs something more than the beauties of art and nature to teach man the way to heaven.

These ways of spending Sunday *have never yet conferred moral or spiritual good in any place where they have been tried*. They have been tried for hundreds of years in Italy, in Germany, and in France. The people of Paris

have long ceased to have a Sunday post. This was granted to us as a privilege, in consequence of a memorial to the Postmaster General.

have had their fountains, and statues at Versailles. The Italians and Germans have had their splendid works of art. But what benefit have they derived that we should wish to imitate them? What advantages have we to gain by making a London Sunday like a Sunday at Paris, or Vienna, or Rome? I say decidedly we have nothing to gain. It would be a change for the worse and not for the better.

Last but not least, these ways of spending Sunday *inflict a cruel injury on the souls of multitudes of people*. Railway trains and steamboats cannot be run on Sundays without employing hundreds of persons. Clerks, porters, ticket-takers, policemen, guards, engine drivers, stokers, omnibus drivers, must all work on the Sabbath Day, if people will make Sunday a day for travelling and excursions. Museums, exhibitions, and galleries of pictures cannot be opened on Sundays without servants and attendants to take care of them and wait on those who visit them. And have not all these unfortunate persons immortal souls? Beyond doubt they have. Do they not all need a day of rest as much as any one else? Beyond doubt they do. But Sunday is no Sunday to them so long as these public desecrations of the Sabbath are permitted. Their life becomes a long unbroken chain of work, work, unceasing work. In short, what is play to others becomes death to them. Away with the idea that a pleasure-seeking, exhibition-visiting, Continental Sabbath is mercy to any one! It is nothing less than an enormous fallacy to call it so. *Such a Sabbath is real mercy to nobody, and it is positive sacrifice to some.*

I write these things with sorrow. I know well to how many myriads of my fellow-countrymen they apply. I have spent many a Sunday in large towns. I have seen with my own eyes how the Day of the Lord is made by multitudes a day of worldliness, a day of ungodliness, a day of carnal mirth, and too often a day of sin. But the extent of the disease must not prevent us exposing it. The truth must be told.

There is one general conclusion to be drawn from the conduct of those who publicly desecrate the Sabbath in the ways I have described. They show plainly that they are at present “without God” in the world. They are like those of old who said “When will the Sabbath be gone?”—“What a weariness is it!” (Amos viii. 5. Mai. i. 13.) It is an awful conclusion, but it is impossible to avoid it. Scripture, history, and experience all combine to teach us, that delight in the Lord’s Word, the Lord’s service, the Lord’s people, and the Lord’s Day will always go together. Sunday railway excursionists, and Sunday pleasure-seekers are their own witnesses. They are every week practically declaring, “*We do not like God—we do not want Him to reign over us.*”

It is not the slightest argument in reply to what I have said, that many great

and learned men see no harm in travelling on Sundays and visiting exhibitions. It matters nothing in religious questions “who does a thing? “The only point to be ascertained is,” whether it be right.” Let God be true and every man a bar. We must never follow a multitude to do evil.

Reader, the public ways of profaning the Sabbath I have referred to are likely to be often thrust on your notice, if you live many years in England. Remember what I have told you. They are an open breach of God’s commandment. Have nothing to do with them yourself. Use every lawful means in your power, both publicly and privately, to prevent others having anything to do with them. Heed not the epithets of puritans, pharisees, methodists, bigotted, and narrow-minded. Be not moved by the ignorant clamour of newspaper writers and such would-be leaders of public opinion. Fall back on that old book which has stood the test of eighteen hundred years, and of which every word is true. Take your stand on the Bible and hold fast its teaching. Whatever others may think lawful, let your sentence ever be that one day in seven, and one whole day, ought to be kept holy to God.

And now in concluding this tract I wish to address a parting word to several classes of persons into whose hands it may fall. I write as a friend to men’s souls. I have no interest at heart but that of true religion. I ask for a fair and patient hearing.

1. I appeal first to *all readers of this tract who are in the habit of breaking the Sabbath*, Whether you break it in public or private, whether you break it in company or alone, I have somewhat to say to you. Do not refuse to read it.

I ask you to consider seriously how you will answer for your present conduct in the day of judgment. I put it solemnly to your conscience. I ask you to think quietly and calmly how utterly unfit you are to appear before God. You cannot live always. You must one day lie down and die. You cannot escape the great assize in the world to come. You must stand before the great white throne, and give account of all your works. You have before you but two alternatives,—an eternal heaven, or an eternal hell. These are great realities, and you know they are true. I repeat it deliberately. Unless you are prepared to take up some silly fable of man’s invention, and to be that poor credulous creature, a sceptic, you know these things are true.

Now where is your fitness for the solemn change which is yet before you? Where is your preparedness for meeting the God of the Bible, and reckoning with Him? Where is your readiness for an eternity in His company, and the society of saints and angels? Where is your meetness for a heaven, which is nothing but an eternal Sabbath, an everlasting Sunday, a Lord’s day without end? Yes! *I may well ask where?* You cannot give an answer. You cannot

give God one single day in seven! It wearies you to spend one seventh part of your time in attempting to know anything about Him before whose bar you are going one day to stand! His Bible wearies you! His ministers weary you! His house wearies you! His praises weary you! The excursion train is better! The newspaper is better! The merry dinner party is better! Anything in short, anything is better than God! Alas! what an awful state this is to be in. But, alas! how common!

Oh! Sabbath-breaker, unhappy Sabbath-breaker, consider your ways, and be wise. What harm has Sunday done the world, that you should hate it so much? What harm has God done you, that you should so obstinately turn your back on His laws? What injury has religion done to mankind, that you should be so afraid of having too much? Look at that body of yours, and think how soon it will be dust and ashes. Look at that earth on which you walk, and think how soon you will be six feet beneath its surface. Look on the heavens above you, and think of the mighty Being who is the eternal God. Look into your own heart, and think how much better it would be to be God's friend than God's enemy. As ever you would lie down on your dying-bed with comfort,—as ever you would leave this world with a good hope, break off from your Sabbath-desecration, and sin no more. Let the time past suffice you to have robbed God of his day. For the time to come give God his own.

Go the very next Sunday after you read this tract to the house of God, and hear the Gospel preached. Confess your past sin at the throne of grace, and ask pardon through that blood which “cleanses from all sin.” Arrange your time on Sunday so that you may have leisure for quiet, sober meditation on eternal things. Avoid the company that would lead you to talk only of this world. Take down your long-neglected Bible, and study its pages. Murder no man's soul by obliging him to work on Sunday in order that you may play. *Do it, do it, do it without a week's delay.* It may be hard at first, but it is worth a struggle. Do it, and it will be well for you both in time and eternity.

2. I appeal in the next place to *all readers of this tract who belong to the working classes.* Whether you work in town or country,—whether you labour on the land or in factories, I have something of importance to say to you. Give me a hearing.

I ask you then never to be taken in and deluded by those who want the sanctity of the Lord's Day to be more publicly invaded than it is, and yet tell you they are “your friends.” Believe me, however well-meaning and fair-spoken such persons may be, they are not your real friends. They are in reality *your worst enemies.* They are taking the surest course to add to your burdens. They do not mean it very likely, but in reality they are doing you a cruel injury.

Rest assured that if English Sundays are ever turned into a day of play and amusement, they will soon become a day of labour and work. It is vain to suppose that it can be avoided. It never has been in other countries. It never would be in our own land. Once establish the principle that galleries and museums and crystal palaces are to be thrown open on Sundays, and you let in the thin edge of the wedge. The enemy would have got inside the walls. The sacredness of the day of rest would be entirely gone. Shops would be opened. Farmers would insist on cultivating the land. Factories would go on working. Contractors would press forward their operations. You would have lost your Sabbath, and with it you would have lost your best friend.

Tell those who would fain make our Sundays more worldly, and more like week-days, that you want no change of the day of that description. Tell them that if they want to secure you a little more time for rest and relaxation, they should not try to take that time out of Sunday. Tell them to take a little piece out of one of the six working days, if possible, but not a bit out of the day of God. Tell them that as the world has got six days for its business, and God has only left Himself one for His, it is only fair and right that the world should give up some of its time, before we begin robbing God of His. Ask them, in a word, why they cannot give you a *Saturday half-holiday*, and insist on their giving an answer.

Working men into whose hands this tract may fall, I do entreat you not to be deceived about this Sabbath question. Of all people on earth you are the most interested in it. Resolve, I beseech you, that you will not part with your Sunday. Remember Esau's folly. Sell not your choicest privileges for a mess of pottage. Believe me, none have so much to lose in this matter as you, and none have so little to gain.

3. I appeal in the next place *to all readers of this tract who profess to reverence the Sabbath*, and have no wish to see its character changed. I have only one thing to say to you, but it deserves serious attention.

I ask you then to consider whether you may not be more strict in keeping the Sabbath Day holy than you have been hitherto. I am sadly afraid there is much laxity in many quarters on this point. I fear that many who have no thought of infringing the fourth commandment, are culpably inconsiderate and careless as to the way in which they obey its precepts. I fear that the world gets into the Sundays of many a respectable church-going family far more than it ought to do. I fear that many who keep the Lord's Day with much outward propriety when they are at home, are often grievous Sabbath-breakers when they go abroad. I fear that hundreds of English travellers do things on Sundays on the Continent, which they would never do in their own land.

This is a sore evil. It weakens the hands of all who defend the cause of the Sabbath to an enormous extent. It supplies the enemies of the Lord's Day with an argument which they know too well how to use. Let us all remember this. If we really love the Lord's Day, let us prove our love by our manner of using it. Wherever we are, whether at home or abroad,—whether in Protestant or Roman Catholic countries,—let our conduct on Sunday be such as becomes the day. Let us never forget that the eyes of the Lord are in every place, and that the fourth commandment is just as binding on us in Italy, Germany, or France, as it is in our own country.

4. I appeal in the last place *to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and are zealous in His cause*. I have one thing to say to you in connection with the Sabbath question, which I commend to your most serious attention.

I ask you then to consider whether it does not become the solemn duty of all true Christians to take far more effectual measures than we have done hitherto, to preserve the holiness of the Lord's Day. For my own part I am satisfied that it is our duty, and that we must go to work in a very different way from that hitherto adopted.

We all complain of Sabbath desecration in large towns. We sorrow over the crowds who every Sunday spend their time in places of sensual amusement, or crowd the steam-boats and railway trains. They are all evidently in a deplorable state of spiritual ignorance. They are a growing evil which threatens mischief. But are we taking the right means to remedy the evil? I say unhesitatingly that we are not.

We fill the House of Commons with petitions when the advocates of these Sabbath breaking crowds demand an extension of their present license to sin. But is that enough? No! it is not.

We form societies to defend the Lord's Day, and propose measure after measure in Parliament to stop Sunday trading. But is that enough? No! it is not.

The truth must be spoken. We must begin lower down. We cannot make people religious by acts of parliament alone. We must teach right as well as forbid wrong. We must try to prevent evil as well as repress it. We must strike at the root of the evils we deplore. We must endeavour to evangelize the masses of men and women who now break their Sabbaths every week. We must show them a better way. We must divert this fountain of Sabbath-breaking into different channels, and not content ourselves with damming up its waters when they overflow.

Are there not many parishes in our large towns, where you may now find 12 or 15,000 people under one clergyman, and with one church to go to?

Have we any right to wonder if a large proportion of this population regularly break the Sabbath every week? The bulk of the people in such a parish know nothing hardly about the way to “keep the Sunday holy.” They have no place of worship to go to if they have a mind to keep it. To expect such a population to keep the Sabbath holy is preposterous and absurd. They are quite as much to be pitied as to be blamed. We have surely little right to find fault with them for not honouring the Lord’s Day, while we leave them in utter ignorance of its meaning.

What then ought we to do? We ought to break up these large overgrown parishes into districts of a manageable size, containing not more than 3000 people at the very most. We ought at once to put a minister of the gospel and two lay-agents in every one of these districts, and give them the spiritual oversight of the people. We must not wait to build a fine church. We must send a man who is able to preach anywhere,—in a garret, a coach-house, an alley, or even in the street,—and give him abundant liberty to work, unfettered by precedent and routine. This is the best antidote for the evils over which we mourn. The preached Gospel applied to the conscience, and not pains and penalties,—the preached Gospel and not fines and imprisonment,—the preached Gospel carried home to every house in a parish,—this is the grand remedy for Sabbath-breaking.

I know well that all this sounds impracticable and utopian to many ears. Ecclesiastical laws,—rectorial rights,—the want of funds,—the want of men,—all these and twenty other like objections will at once be started.

Be it so. All I say is that until something of this kind is done we shall never stop the Sabbath-breaking of great towns. It will be a festering sore on the face of our country, which will every now and then break out and lead to enormous mischief.

For my own part I see nothing in the proposal I have made which might not easily be attained, if the subject was fairly grappled with. *Laws* are repealed easily enough when public opinion demands it, and if they are bad, the sooner they are repealed the better.—*Rectorial rights* must never stand in competition with the wants of immortal souls. They have succumbed already to the burial acts in many cases,—and why not again? They have had to give way, when it was needful to provide for dead bodies. We may surely require them to give way when we want to provide for dead souls.—*Men*, I believe, of the right sort are to be found, if the Bishops will only encourage them to come forward.—*Money*, I am convinced, will never be wanting for a good cause, if a case is really made out. And after all we had better sacrifice fifty canonries than leave our great town parishes in their present condition.

I commend these things to the attention of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and other

large towns, be thoroughly evangelized, and you will strike a deadly blow at the root of all Sabbath-breaking. Leave them alone, or go on at the rate we go at present, and my firm conviction is that we shall never be free from a Sabbath question agitation. It will return periodically, like an ague fit, until the sources which now supply it are dried up.

The plain truth is, that the Sabbath-breaking of the present day is one among many proofs of the low state of vital religion and the awful want of union among British Christians. We have wasted our time on petty internal quarrels, and neglected the mighty work of converting souls. We have wrangled and squabbled about matters of mint, anise, and cummin, and forgotten our Master's business. We have allowed vast populations to grow up in semi-heathen ignorance and are now reaping the fruit of our gross neglect in their Sabbath-breaking propensities. In short, while the doctors have been disputing, the disease has been spreading and the patient dying.

I pray God that we may all learn wisdom and amend our ways before it be too late. We want less party spirit and sectarianism, and more work for Christ. We want a return to the old paths of the apostles in every branch of the church. We want a generation of ministers who can do their work without a grand Gothic edifice costing £10,000, and whose first ambition is to go into every room in their parish, and tell the story of the cross of Christ.

I am not sanguine in my expectations. Routine and precedent seem to bind men now-a-days with iron chains. But I deliberately repeat once more that unless our large towns are more thoroughly evangelized, we shall never be long without a struggle **TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY.**