

THE

SABBATH AT HOME.

BY THE

REV. SILAS M. ANDREWS.

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## THE SABBATH AT HOME.

It is not proposed to dwell, in the following pages, upon the arguments that might be brought forward to prove that the Sabbath is a Divine institution, established and sanctified by the Creator on the seventh day, after all his works were finished, and renewed to Israel on the descent of the manna. Nor shall I attempt to show, from the Scriptures, that the Sabbath is a Christian institution, as well as a Jewish ordinance; or call your attention to the satisfactory reasons we have for observing, as holy time, the first day of the week, and not the seventh. No controversy will be maintained with any who object to the Sabbath as commonly acknowledged by Christians. He who sincerely seeks for instruction, has no need of such argument; he already believes the Sabbath is the Lord's, and that it is to be sanctified by a holy resting all the day.

The design of this Tract is to point out and illustrate the most profitable manner of spending that part of the Lord's day which is not employed in the public exercises of Divine worship.

That your family, in each of its members, may profitably spend *the Sabbath at home*,—

I. By Saturday evening have your worldly business arranged to keep the Sabbath.

Few families pursue their business or trade, the same on the Sabbath as on any other day. But there are many who do not keep it as a sacred rest. If they do not plough and sow; if the sound of the anvil and the saw is not heard in their shops; if they do not, with open doors, buy and sell, and get gain; there is another species of worldly business to which they do attend, which, though not so much noticed by others, properly belongs to the six days in which work may be done.

Such persons may be said to make arrangements, not to *keep*, but to *profane* the Sabbath. "This matter need not be attended to now, while other things press upon us—it may be postponed until Sunday. That journey must be performed—that plan laid with my neighbour—that errand accomplished *next Sabbath*, or it will interfere with the business of the week."

To persons who thus feel, and who can thus act, I do not propose to address myself; they do not desire information; they have no wish to be instructed how they may more profitably spend the Sabbath. They would like best to hear of some new plan of retaining the Christian name, while they drive on their own trades and find their own pleasures. No

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argument would be more pleasing to them than one which might go to prove that because the Sabbath was made for *man*, therefore man may use the Sabbath according to his own pleasure. But to you, my readers, who I trust are desirous of being taught your duty, and are willing to be exhorted that you may enter upon its performance, I would say, on Saturday arrange your worldly business to keep the Sabbath. It must not be forgotten, that this is much more easily done in some families than in others. It depends upon the number of the household,—upon the occupation of the different members,—whether they all think alike on the sanctification of the Sabbath, and are disposed to unite in bringing their worldly affairs to such an issue, that they may have *all* the following day for holy rest. With some, Saturday evening is a time of more leisure than any other of the week; while with not a few, it is a time of more hurry and pressure of business,—collecting debts, paying bills, fulfilling promises of the shop or store, than will again be encountered until Saturday returns. The cares of the week will press us, until steadfastly resisted. This resistance ought to be made with holy resolution, and sufficiently early to secure the Sabbath from being profaned.

The arrangements of the shop, the labours of the farm, and the business of the office or counting house, must be closed on Saturday evening, or in vain we wake early the next morning to enjoy the Sabbath. Did we look no further than to success in this world's affairs, a maxim of prudence and economy would be, to bring our plans, as far as possible, to a close once every week. It promotes order in the transaction of business. It gives efficiency to our labours. We *finish* more, which is the same as saying we *do* more, than if our business were suffered to run on without interruption the year round. We must also take into account the vigour of both body and mind, which an entire day of rest from care and labour imparts. And who that reads his Bible, will think it strange for me to say, that the blessing of the Lord is upon him who sacredly regards the Sabbath? "If thou turn thy foot away from the Sabbath, [that is, do not impiously trample upon it,] from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isa. lviii. 13, 14. What was the heritage of Jacob? The favour of God, with

the richest productions of the field, and an increase of every worldly possession.

We may appeal to observation. The influence of the Sabbath upon the *rich* is not so easily discerned. But among those, who, in a peculiar manner, receive day by day their daily bread, it may be seen. And unless I greatly err, it will be found, that those families who observe the Sabbath, and attend upon its public and private duties, with desire to be profited, have, in comparison with those who do not thus regard the day unto the Lord, more peace of mind, more family comforts, and are better prepared to meet the demands which every year brings against them. Can a man rob God and prosper? rob Him, who can withhold our common blessings, or, as he has threatened, can curse them after given! Mal. ii. 2. Then, from consideration of both temporal and spiritual interest, let the Sabbath be regarded as a day of holy rest from the morning to the evening. And that we may attain to this, let us previously arrange all that pertains to our respective occupations, that we may wait upon the Lord without distraction of mind.

Another matter that has an important bearing upon the sanctification of the Sabbath, you will permit me to mention. Though the institutions of Moses are not, as a system, binding upon Christians, yet from them we may often infer what is important in regard to the proper observance of that which is given us in their stead. Among other commands to Israel for the profitable keeping of the Sabbath, they were required to abstain, on the seventh day, from all work, except the preparation of their necessary food. How this command was to be understood we learn from Exod. xvi. 23. On the descent of manna, Moses said to the people, "To-morrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning." I am not about to say, that no family observes the Christian Sabbath, who does not fulfil the letter of this command. But may I not safely say, that the more nearly it is observed, the more profitably the day may be spent? If our tables are provided for on Saturday; if we bake that which we must bake, and seethe that we must seethe, and lay them up for the morning, will not those members of the family, who attend public worship, have more time to devote to the reading of the Scriptures, to meditation, and other duties of Sabbath morning?

What shall we say of those whose lot it may be to remain at home part of the day? Why, it is commonly answered, that as they have nothing else to do, they may as well prepare

dinner for those at church. But have they nothing to do? Have they no Bible to read? No Scripture lessons to prepare for Sabbath School? No Catechism, that may be most conveniently committed to memory by them when left alone? Is meditation, and is prayer the duty of those only who are privileged with attending public worship? Have persons who labour in our families for hire, no need of one day of rest in seven? If *fasting*, as all ages and good men of every country have acknowledged, is promotive of the devotion of the heart, denying the appetite in some small degree cannot be injurious. And why should it be thought unreasonable that persons in our employment, and our children, who early notice the character of our religion, might receive some good impression, as to the nature of the Sabbath, by seeing us deny ourselves what on other days is innocent and right? I am not pleading that the Sabbath be made a day for afflicting our souls, but that we should not permit our sensual desires to interfere with our spiritual delight. On days of unusual political interest, we count it no sacrifice to be *deprived* of a regular meal, or to take of that which comes to hand, because our delight is elsewhere. Let the same interest be felt in the Sabbath, and we shall be equally loth to permit that, which might be done on Saturday, to interfere with our enjoyment and spiritual profit. If each family would, on the preceding day, prepare, as far as practicable, for their table on the Sabbath, would not much time be redeemed for the appropriate duties of the Lord's day?

To mention every thing that might, with advantage, be attended to on Saturday, bearing upon the Sabbath, would be to recount the events of each family—they all influence our profiting, though, when viewed separately, they seem hardly worthy of notice.

I have known the men of more than one family to spend the best part of Sabbath morning, in making such alterations in their carriage and harness as were necessary, in order to attend meeting; which changes might much better have been made the evening before.

In other households you will find the apparel appropriate to the Sabbath, must be subjected to certain emendations and improvements, before the family can be prepared for public worship. By this time the morning is gone, but the Sabbath of holy rest has not yet begun. How much more profitable, that all which pertains to our persons, "from a thread to a shoe-latchet," should be set in order before the Sabbath arrives, that as we have but one holy day in seven, we may enjoy it all.

A full answer with many, is, "If I do nothing worse than these, I shall have little cause for alarm;"—to which I will only reply,—This is not the language of one seeking to be instructed, and desiring to honour God. It is not the spirit of the fourth commandment, which is, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do ALL thy work: but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do ANY work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." It is not according to the example and instruction of our pious fathers, who taught us that "the Sabbath is to be sanctified, by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."

II. That you may profitably spend the Sabbath, let all the members of your family, as far as practicable, be at home on Saturday evening, and there pass the following day.

This will promote peace of mind, of parents especially. If members of your household are from home, you know not to what dangers they are exposed, or into what temptations they may be led. But if they be with you, under the same roof, this anxiety is in a great degree prevented.

It conduces to the good order of a family, for all its members to be at home. If the parents are absent, there is danger of the house becoming a scene of noise and disorder, that does not well comport with the solemnity of the Sabbath. If there was nothing more to be said in favour of families never being deprived, on the Lord's day, of their presiding members, we might reasonably plead, that much evil would be prevented by the restraint of their presence. But there are not negative advantages only; there are positive ones also, which shall soon be mentioned.

In every well ordered family, where industry and economy are found, there are certain duties assigned, by custom or common consent, to each member of the household. These are attended to by the persons on whom they devolve, during the week, much to the facilitating of business, and the prevention of trouble or confusion. Now if such be found a measure of expediency during days of labour, we may safely presume upon its utility when applied to the Sabbath. If it is important to save moments of *six* days, it cannot be less desirable to secure the remnants of *one* day. But if part of

your family are from home on Sabbath morning, a double portion of necessary duties devolves upon those who remain ; and as the duties they are called to perform in the place of the absent members, are not their own regular share of domestic cares, much additional time and attention will be demanded properly to fulfil them. It requires scarcely a trial, to convince us that the *whole morning* may thus be lost, in performing what devolves upon others ; and that when the hour of public worship arrives, the mind is hardly composed sufficiently to determine whether you can attend meeting or not.

In addition to the quietness and good order secured by the presence of the parents or heads of the family on the Sabbath, it is important that they be at home all the day, that their household may not be left without family instruction. We all know that the best children need frequently to be reminded of their books, and encouraged and aided in their lessons. If the parents are from home, little will probably be done in the reading of the Scriptures, or learning the Catechism. Besides, there is great danger that the children will be suffered to pass without examination, or any systematic instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion, if the heads of the family are not at home all the day. For the reason just given, there will be no lessons for catechising : the parents may very probably be from home at the stated hour for family instruction : or, when they return, may feel too much wearied to attend to the duty ; so that there is no way of securing to the children that teaching which they must have, but for the parents to be at home on the Sabbath.

To secure the same desirable end, it is no less necessary that all the *children* spend the day in the bosom of the family. If they are not present, and put themselves in the way of instruction, they cannot be taught. For all the family to be at home on the Sabbath, is one of the best preservatives against temptation. Is it possible for young people of different households, to associate on the Lord's day, and not be led into the sin of light and vain conversation ? Can the world be shut out of such company, no matter how strict the injunctions of parents, and sincere the resolutions of those going from home ?

This leads us to speak of another matter, which ought not to be passed over, because it unavoidably, and to a degree of which many are not aware, interferes with the profitable sanctification of the Sabbath. I refer to *Sunday visiting* ;—not that which commonly passes under the name, when several



members of one family go and spend the day with their friends, as they would any afternoon in the week. Surely, none calling themselves Christians, and acknowledging that we have a Christian Sabbath at all, can approve of such a manner of spending the day. Nor is allusion made to visits to the sick, put off from day to day, that they may be paid without loss of time on the Sabbath, crowding the room of the patient, and instead of conferring a kindness, often inflicting an injury of many days' continuance.

The custom to which I refer is different in character from both of these, but perhaps not less hurtful. It is the *connecting of visits with an attendance upon public worship*. I should be exceedingly sorry to wound the feelings of any one, whose age, or distance from meeting, may render it difficult both to go and return home the same day, without rest or refreshment. The duty of such is to accept of the kindness of their friends, either on Saturday night or after sermon on the Sabbath. Religion requires us to afford such entertainment to those who labour under disadvantages that do not lie upon us. But is it not very common for Christian families to form their plan for visiting their friends, not during the week, but on Saturday evening, to accompany them to meeting in the morning; or to go with them from public worship and spend the afternoon in their family? How many such visits are made profitable? In whose family does not the conversation become worldly and of little worth? In what visiting circle are the nature of religion, and the experience of the heart, the subjects upon which all unite profitably to pass the time? The difficulty with us all, of answering such questions without confusion, ought to lead us to ask, Is there not something wrong in such visits? When we engage in them, we are from our families. But home is our place on the Sabbath. We put ourselves in the way of temptation, before which, repeated trials have shown that we must fall. The family that receives the visit is deprived of as much of the Sabbath as we spend with them; for a cold family dinner, such as best adorns the Sabbath, is altogether out of character when our friends become guests; and to spend much time in reading even the Bible, while visitants are sitting by, would be thought strange indeed. The various conversation, the communicating and receiving of neighbourhood intelligence, leaves the minds neither of those who pay, nor of those who receive the visit, in a state properly to spend the remaining part of the Sabbath. While, therefore, it is easy to make

what we esteem duty a burden, and we may hastily lay down rules which a few weeks will show us are no aid in religion, but a Pharisaical hinderance, yet, between this and the opposite extreme, of making the Sabbath a day of sociability and feasting, there is a wide field. The difficulty of determining upon duty, lies in this ;—Sunday visits are not wholly wrong ; some of them are right ; it would be sin *not* to visit the sick and dying. How then shall we determine when it is right, and when wrong, to visit on the Sabbath ? What rule can we lay down ? General rules are of little worth ; each case has something peculiar in it, so that the mere letter of a law may be set aside. But let an enlightened conscience, governed by the fear of God, direct us. We are not to ask, What is fashionable ? Do not many Christian families pay social visits on the Sabbath ? Will it be considered inconsistent with my profession of religion to spend a few hours from home, or only twenty minutes with my friends at the next door ?—Rather ask, Is it right ? Shall I gain spiritual strength by doing so ? Will my example be happy in its influence upon my children and others ? Is this the way, that, above all, I would recommend to persons seriously asking, How may I most profitably spend the Sabbath day ?

III. In order profitably to pass the Sabbath at home, we must imbibe and cherish the impression that it is a holy day.

It is in vain to form resolutions, until conscience be set about *her* work. Our promises will last only until some worldly enjoyment bribes us silently to set them aside. Public sentiment is of little weight in favour of the profitable observance of the Sabbath ; because it is of every possible shade. This holy day may be spent almost as we please ; the laws of the land, to save it from profanation, being, as in all times past, a dead letter ; prevailing custom allowing of almost every kind of recreation, if not of labour. Each denomination of those calling themselves Christians, having their own views and claiming the indulgence of their own practice. While some are more strict, others will hardly admit that the Sabbath is more sacred than any other day. Spend the time as you please, you will be in character : you will be sustained. You may search the Scriptures, and engage with your family in pious conversation, and no one has a right to murmur. You may spend the day in idleness and sleep, or in conversation about worldly business : the professional man may arrange the papers and books of his office, ready against Monday morning ; we may wander over the

fields, or visit our next door neighbours, or ride out in the afternoon, and who dare seriously complain ?

A store keeper may post his books ; another may load his wagon for market ; a printer may set his types ; young people may spend the day in reading novels ; I may go into my study and work problems in navigation, or for literary improvement, read Latin and Greek in heathen authors, and we shall none of us be disturbed ; we may quietly pursue our respective courses the year round. Spend the time as we may, we are still in character, and will be sustained by the popular voice. Besides, that influence which is derived from the regard we have for what others think or say of us, will not control us in the bosom of our own families. We are there withdrawn from public view. The more retired we are, the more independent we feel, of either the approbation or ridicule of others. Though a regard for the character of our families may influence us, in some considerable degree, to sanctify the Sabbath, while there is no inducement to the contrary ; yet when we most need it, such help fails us. Neither our own reputation, as respecters of religion, nor the influence we might exert for the honour and happiness of our families, will be sufficient to overcome strong temptation.

But let the mind once come under the control of the belief, that the Sabbath is the Lord's, and that it is to be observed in holy rest all the day, and we have advanced farther in the sanctification of the Sabbath, than if we had matured a score of rules, and solemnly bound ourselves to keep them every one.

Do we find it difficult to rise as early on that day as during the week, that with the morning we may commence our duties ? Let conscience speak, and we shall wake early. Let our love to God, and his service, only be as strong as our attachment to the things of the world, and no more of the Sabbath will be wasted in slumber, than of Monday morning. Men who labour through the week, contend for this indulgence ; that they are wearied and need rest : besides, that the Sabbath is given for rest. But, no reader of the Bible can say, that it is the rest of indolence and spiritual inactivity. The worship of God does not commonly demand the labours and exercise of the body ; the mind only is called into healthful action ; and this is also refreshing to the body. In answer to the plea, that being worn down with the cares of the week, and its toils, we may, consistently with duty, lie later on Sabbath morning than any other, it may be asked, Have we a right to expend our strength during the week, so as to unfit us for the duties of the Sabbath when they arrive ? If we found ourselves disinclined early to seek

the Lord, last Sabbath, are we not bound to guard against such languor, when this holy day shall again dawn? Is not duty plain, that we ought to relax our labours on Saturday, that we may not lose the most precious hours of the Lord's day? Were we *our own*, we might exercise our pleasure. But we are not. Man's chief end is, to glorify God, and enjoy him, in this world, as well as hereafter. Suppose you hire a man, to labour for you—you have a right to all his time; but you give him five days in the week for his own employment on condition that he will devote himself wholly to your work on the sixth. Has this man a right, so to arrange his business, and expend his strength, during the five days he labours for himself, that when the sixth day arrives, he cannot rise until late, nor commence his work until the morning be nearly past?

Again, there are many things about which we perhaps have no difficulty, as respects ourselves; we may perform them or not, on the Sabbath, without injury. But the influence we may exert upon others, is with every conscientious man a serious consideration. In cases of difficulty, how shall we determine what is right? Not by expediency, or custom, or inclination, or a spirit of independence. These cannot be safely trusted. Let us call to mind, that the Sabbath is the Lord's; and that we are bound to glorify him, both in our conduct and our influence; and we shall not probably find much difficulty in deciding at once, what it is our duty to do. The same rule will also apply to cases of doubt, in respect to ourselves. Our reputation, or interest, or feelings give us their counsel, while other considerations may be placed over against these. Neither the one nor the other affords us any certain aid in determining upon what is our duty. But if the fear of God rule in our hearts, and his holy day be very precious to us, and its honour dear, the question, before so perplexing, becomes a very plain one. What must I do, in the observance of the Sabbath, *to promote the glory of God?* If we will allow conscience to speak, her voice may be heard; if we attend to her admonitions, guided by the light of Scripture, we shall not commonly, we shall not often, be left in doubt what is duty. For example, you may feel much wearied with the exercises, public and private, of the morning; and the recreation of a walk for half an hour in the afternoon, would be very refreshing to your exhausted system. But there are considerations to be weighed against this. As to profit in the street, or upon the frequented road, that is out of the question. Equally vain would be the attempt to keep the thoughts from wandering upon all that tempts the eye

and ear. And then the effect that may result to others, must be taken into the account, and the light in which your conduct will be viewed, as connected with the sanctification of the Sabbath.

The question is now easily decided, because duty appears plain. A great advantage also, attending this manner of solving difficulties is, that the decision is final; there remains no cavilling, when the determination is once made, *in the fear of God*. If you wish to keep the Sabbath profitably, and with enjoyment to yourself and family, labour to attain to, and cultivate the impression, that it is the Lord's day, and, therefore, to be kept holy.

IV. Attendance, as far as practicable upon the public duties of religion, contributes much to the profitable observance of the Sabbath at home.

The language of Scripture would lead us to this. "Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, and holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings." Lev. xxiii. 3. The Sabbath at home is well united with the holy convocation of the people of God, in the public ordinances of religion. If we consult the history of the Church, we shall find this to have been the opinion of the pious in every age. The Jewish nation, Christians in the time of the apostles, and the professing people of God in all countries since their day, have weekly assembled themselves together.

Public worship promotes the observance of the Sabbath at home, by affording that instruction which is necessary to the proper performance of our duty. Though comparatively little time is spent on the Sabbath, in teaching publicly the doctrines of religion, and the duties that flow from them, yet there will be found a very great difference in the views of those who regularly hear the gospel, and of such as never enter a worshipping assembly. This does not wholly arise from the public instructions of the Sabbath,—those who hear the gospel are constrained to search for themselves, and to use other means to learn the duty which God requires of man. Among other things, they will soon learn that the Sabbath is to be sanctified, by a holy resting all the day, and that if they mean to do what is right, they must perform this duty also.

But we may come to a knowledge of our duty, and yet have no inclination to do what is required. We need to be exhorted and encouraged. This is enjoined upon those who preach the gospel. They are commanded, not only to reprove and rebuke, but also to exhort; to help such as are

discouraged, and to strengthen the feeble. And here, again, it will be found, that notwithstanding the multitude who hear the word preached, but observe not the Lord's day as a holy rest, they, who in any community sanctify it, are those who on that day attend public worship. I much question if a family, neglectful of public worship, can be found, that sanctifies the Sabbath at home.

Again, the assembling of ourselves together, regularly on the Sabbath, greatly contributes to preserve that holy day from the danger of being profaned. All persons feel the confinement of the Sabbath. Nature seems to demand some recreation, both of body and mind. This is afforded us in public worship. The preparing of ourselves to assemble,—the ride, or walk, if we live near;—the variety in the exercises of the sanctuary,—the reading, singing, prayers, and sermons, are exceedingly refreshing to such as have a heart to enjoy them. They send us home better prepared for spending profitably the remainder of the day, than if all the time had been passed in our own dwellings. The remark of one who was deprived of preaching an entire day, we have probably all found true in our own experience,—That a Sabbath without public worship, when we have all the time to spend in duties at home, is no gain to the reading of the Scriptures. For want of variety in our duties, we become languid, and profit but little.

Attendance upon public worship is favourable to a profitable spending of the Sabbath at home, because it promotes religion generally. It is in the house of God that we are taught what we must do to be saved, and how we are acceptably to serve our Creator. Parents and children are taught their relative duties, and are dismissed with pressing exhortation not to defer the paying of their vows. It is in the worshipping assembly, that the affections are moved, and interested for the glory of God. Here it is, that our consciences most closely press us with the important question, What must I do to work the works of God? In the ministry of reconciliation, dispensed to the assemblies of the Sabbath, sin is pointed out and reproved; negligence in duty reprimanded; the honour of religion defended; the sanctification of the Lord's day pleaded for; the feeble strengthened, and the wavering mind confirmed;—every Christian grace, in its order, becomes the subject of special consideration, and every duty, according to our station in life, is, with arguments to its immediate and constant performance, explained and pressed upon us.

Then, let every one, who would profitably observe the Sabbath *at home*, conscientiously and faithfully attend public worship. This will save him and his family from many temptations to profane the Lord's day, and will afford him instruction, strength, and encouragement for the performance of his duties.

V. Let the time not spent in public worship, be past at home in exercises becoming the sacredness of the Sabbath.

Parents will permit me here to remind them of the duties they owe their households. Not to suffer the day to pass without important instruction to their children. It may very properly, and indeed ought to be various in its character, to suit the youthful mind; but all bearing upon the spiritual welfare of both parents and children. After returning from meeting, make inquiry about the text; what subject was treated in the sermon; particularly if any thing was said to children or the younger members of the family: whether any thing sinful in them was pointed out, and any good thing recommended for them to do. How much better would be the influence, upon our families and ourselves, of this course, than what must arise from a critical spirit, which often, not only keeps possession of the heart while we hear, but dictates all that is said of the sermon after we have returned home.

Children ought to be taught their catechism on the Sabbath, and aided in their Sunday school lessons. The old Presbyterian method was, to devote Sabbath evening to instruction out of the Scriptures, and the reciting of the Shorter Catechism. A means of grace so important, ought not to be suffered by any family to fall into decay. It is of moment also, that not only in the conduct of the parents, the younger members may see the sacredness of the Lord's day, but that they should be instructed in the nature of the Sabbath; by whom it was appointed, and for what purposes; how it is to be sanctified; what we may do, and from what we must refrain. This would make children intelligent, and would stir up parents also to acquaint themselves more perfectly, through the aid of the excellent standards of our Church, and other sources of correct interpretation of the Scriptures, with what they may, from want of incentives to attention, but partially understand.

Children ought to receive, at times, that instruction which is exclusively *religious*; ought to be conversed with affectionately about their souls, and the truth prest home to their hearts. If this be attempted, in the hurry of business during the week, though the seed may prosper, yet it is not probable. The Sabbath is the most encouraging time. The mind of the

parent is then in a favourable state ; the solemnities of the day contribute much to success, and prepare the hearts of your children to receive some good impression. Those Sabbath evening exhortations, though without even apparent effect at first, will follow your children, when your anxiety can no more watch over them, and may lead them to salvation, after your souls have gone to enjoy it in glory.

*Reading* is an exercise that ought to be particularly attended to on the Sabbath. We would do well to converse intimately and constantly with pious men in their writings, when we are not called to other duties. The great variety of journals and semi-romances, with which the professedly religious presses teem, has, at least, a questionable effect upon intelligent and vital religion. If the Sabbath were more devoted to the study of such books as Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul*, Flavel on *Keeping the Heart*, Owen on the *Spirit*, and Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, we would *feel* in ourselves, and others would *see* in us an increase of grace, which it is to be feared we do not enjoy from the food prepared to our fastidious palates.

Above all, let the Bible be the book that is to be read on the Sabbath. The day is holy, the book is also holy. In the hurry of business through the week, we often feel that we are deprived of both enjoyment and profit in searching the Scriptures. But on the Lord's day we have leisure. All around us is quiet. The solemnities of the day give additional interest and sacredness to what we read. We can read much more at once than during the week, and profit by noticing the connexion of one passage with another. Many persons complain that they have little time to read, during the six days of labour. Such ought to devote, I was going to say, *all* the Sabbath, to the study of the Scriptures. This was very much the method of our fathers. As they had few books, the *Bible* claimed their attention on the Sabbath. And the nature of their religion, and their eminent piety, may well recommend to us their example.

Members of the same family ought, on the Sabbath, to converse together on the state of their souls. Much may be done for their comfort and the promotion of religion, by thus communing together. We may speak in public of experimental religion, make the exercises of others the subject of remark ; we may talk to Christians of other families about religion ; but if our children and members of our household never hear us speak of these things, when only our own little circle is around us, they will very readily infer that it is not a subject greatly interesting to us. That which pos-



esses our hearts we love to dwell upon in conversation with our own family.

*Meditation*, though a difficult duty, is essentially necessary to a healthful state of mind, and is suited to no day more than to the Sabbath. The cares of the world are then shut out, and every thing seems to constrain us to turn our thoughts within.

*Prayer* is the duty of the Christian, the duty of every one, at all times. Our Saviour said, men ought always to pray and not to faint; and Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing; praying always with all prayer. But there are certain times, when this duty can be performed with more profit, and in a manner more comforting to ourselves, than at others. Above all seasons, the Sabbath is appropriate for communion with God. And he who most frequently and devoutly converses with Jehovah on his mercy-seat, through Jesus Christ, on the Lord's day, will commune most with him during the week, will most profitably observe the Sabbath, and be most thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. He will not only enter into rest here on earth, but will daily become conformed to that better world, where there remaineth a Sabbath of rest to the people of God.

We must all admit that the sanctification of the Sabbath is an important part of practical religion. The cause of piety declines where the Sabbath is not remembered to be kept holy. But in what does the sanctification of the Lord's day chiefly consist? We have seen that it is in observing the day in our own dwellings. This secures the performance of all its public duties. In a pre-eminent sense, the Sabbath which God approves, is the *Sabbath at home*.

No separate argument is then called for to prove that it is the duty of all to promote the observance of the Lord's day. It is the common cause of every government, of good morals, and of religion. Let no one excuse himself from contributing his part to this good work. We may each aid much in the sanctification of the Sabbath. It is in the power of the humblest member of your family to do more to render the Lord's day profitable, than he can now believe. On the other hand, an entire household may be thrown into confusion, and compelled to waste the day, through the perversity or neglect only of a child. You have a servant in your employ, to whom certain duties are assigned, but he neglects on Saturday evening to perform them. Through his omission, the whole family may be thrown into confusion on Sabbath morning. One boy of five years old, who *will* play in the street, can disturb all the families of the neighbourhood. A

noisy child of three years can effectually prevent, either parent, brother, or sister, from profitably spending the Lord's day. A little girl was dressed for church,—she disobeyed her mother, and went out to play; her clothes were soon unfit to be seen in a worshipping assembly. The mother was fretted and distressed, and the child had to remain at home, while the parent went to meeting, not in a state of mind to be much profited by the exercises of the sanctuary. The sound of one axe, in cleaving as much wood as will make one fire, can annoy, throughout the fourth part of a village, all who wish to keep holy the Sabbath day, and to see it hallowed by others. What is more common, in cases of slight indisposition, or in the commencement of disease, to omit sending for the physician until Sabbath, thus compelling him to spend holy time, not in ministering to the relief of actual distress, but in sacrificing to sheer neglect, and contempt of the command of God, what ought to be *his* privilege, with all other men,—the undisturbed enjoyment, both public and private, of the Lord's day.

Thus we may in different ways, and various degrees, contribute to the sanctification of the Sabbath, or compel others, however reluctant, to spend the day without profit. This power is vested in no one exclusively, but in each member in particular. Each may contribute to the sanctification of the Sabbath; each may prevent the entire family from enjoying and profitably spending the day. Would we do good both to ourselves and others? Let us *every one* remember the Sabbath day *at home*, to keep it holy.

By this we may be aided in judging of our preparation for heaven. The Sabbath on earth is a type of the Sabbath above. If we find no delight in the holy duties of the day, as now enjoyed, and feel the sacrifice of sanctifying it to be too great, how can we hope to enjoy it in the purity and holiness of heaven? But if it is our delight, and its sacred retirement from worldly cares refreshes the soul, we can discern some degree of conformity to the inheritance of the saints in light. It is our duty and our privilege, then, to comfort ourselves with the expectation of yet enjoying an eternal Sabbath, where there are no temptations to profane it, no despisers of religion to interfere with its quiet sanctification—no ignorance, through which we may fall into sin, and thus impair our enjoyment,—no disinclination of mind to hold communion with God,—where no weariness in duty, or languor in devotion can make the season appear too long.

THE END.