

ing or reaping, than when he is committing to the dust the dead body of a loved friend. And as no amount of religious services could impart an element of sacredness to the former class of operations so as to make them lawful on the Lord's day, so no amount of praying and preaching in connexion with the burial of the dead can transform it into a sacred and Sabbath work. To bury the dead, therefore, on the Sabbath, except under the pressure of absolute necessity, is as plain and palpable a violation of *Sabbath law*, as the operations of the farmer in his fields, the chemist in his laboratory, or the mechanic in his workshop.

Such funerals are, furthermore, *in antagonism to the design of the Sabbath*. The Lord's day is a day sacred to religion, It is not merely a day of secular rest, but also an infinitely wise and gracious provision for the necessities of the soul. The primary design of its institution is the worship of Jehovah, together with the sanctification of the heart and life, and preparation for that everlasting Sabbath keeping which remains for the people of God. The Sabbath is a great religious institute, all the legitimate exercises of which are designed and adapted to subserve the higher interests of the soul and eternity. Such being the primary design of the Sabbath, the Westminster divines scripturally teach that, it "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." A testimony to the same effect is embodied in the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* adopted by a large portion of the Baptist churches. "We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labour and sinful recreations, by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public, and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God." Now it is just here that the great objection to funeral gatherings on the Sabbath, in ordinary circumstances, comes in. *They are in no sense religious meetings*. They are foreign to the design of the Sabbath as a great religious institute. In connexion with them there may be praying and preaching, but these can no more strip them of their secularity, and impart to them a *religious* character, than prayers in the harvest field could give a religious character to a gathering of reapers on the Lord's day. To all intents and purposes they are secular assemblages. Their primary object is in no degree of harmony with the design for which the Sabbath was instituted. The work is not Sabbath work; and although, in exceptional circumstances, it may take its place amongst works of necessity and mercy, yet, ordinarily, it is a profane encroachment on Sabbath time, and an interference with the Sabbath's proper work.

The plea that is usually offered in justification of such gatherings on the Lord's day—that derived from the *religious services* commonly engaged in—will not stand the test of either Scripture or reason. It is a delusion to think that, any amount of devotional exercises could give moral authority to any thing that involves a violation of a Divine law. If a farmer should attempt to vindicate his conduct in har-