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ARTICLE IV.

ON THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SABBATH.

The sanctification of the Sabbath is a subject of great importance. There is no duty of which mankind are more apt to come short or which they are more liable to neglect. A degree of indolence natural to man, or a want of spiritual mindedness, or the pernicious influence of bad example, is the reason why even members of the church become indifferent to the performance of this duty. The obligation to keep the Sabbath, and the manner of keeping it, should, therefore, be frequently inculcated.

I. Why ought the Sabbath to be kept? Because God has commanded it. All moral obligation resolves itself into the will of God. His will made known either in the fitness of things or by express revelation is the rule of duty; the standard of obedience or disobedience; the ground of approbation or condemnation and of reward and punishment. It has been shown that God's will is clearly intimated, respecting the Sabbath, in the Scriptures; the fourth commandment is so express that no cavil can be urged against it; it is the last precept of the first table, which contains our duty to God; and the place which it occupies shews that it is on an equal footing with all the precepts of the Decalogue in respect of moral obligation. Nor can any distinction be made between the obligation arising from a moral and from a positive precept; no Divine precept is exclusively *positive* and not *moral*; that part of the fourth commandment which fixes the *time* of the Sabbath may be considered positive, like the precepts of the ceremonial law; but this does not weaken the obligation to keep the Sabbath or render the violation of the day a smaller offence, than the breach of any other of the ten commandments; the right view is, that the will of God is never capricious but always the result of infinite wisdom, therefore a positive precept is also moral, and its obligation not inferior to that of any precept in the Decalogue.

The obligation to keep the Sabbath is permanent; it will last as long as the present constitution of society in this world continues; the obligation is also universal, extending to every age and every country, and to every man; whilst God's command is a sufficient reason for the observance of the Sabbath, there are other considerations which may be viewed both as reasons for the duty and as inducements to the performance of it.