

lar time which God has appointed for labor, and desecrates his holy day, by freely allowing a large part of it to be spent in sports and amusements, or in worldly occupations, as every individual may choose. It is notorious, that wherever other days than the Sabbath are religiously observed, there that holy day is less strictly observed than its nature demands—less strictly than it is generally observed by those who regard it as the only set time which God has commanded to be kept holy. It is also notorious, that holy days, as they are called, are times at which every species of vice and disorder is more flagrantly and more generally indulged in, than at any other time; so that these days are really and highly injurious to civil society, as well as an encroachment on the prerogative of God.

There is some difference of opinion among Christians, as to the part of the day at which holy time may most properly commence. This, however, is but a circumstance. The essence of the command is, that a seventh part of our time—or one whole day in seven—should be exclusively devoted to the extraordinary service of God. Still, it is a matter of some importance, that every circumstance, in regard to this important subject, should be ordered in the manner most accordant with reason and revelation. RIDGELY, has, I think, made a fair statement of this matter; and what I shall offer will be taken, with some abridgment and change of order, from what he says in his system. In answer to the argument that we ought to begin the Sabbath as the Jews did, in the evening, he observes, “that the beginning of sacred days is to be at the same time with that of civil; and this was governed by the custom of nations. The Jews’ civil day began at evening; and therefore it was ordained that from evening to evening, should be the measure of their sacred days. Our days have another beginning and ending, which difference is only circumstantial.” In regard to scriptural light and authority, he remarks—“We have some direction as to this matter, from the intimation given us, that Christ rose from the dead on the *first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was yet dark*. Therefore the Lord’s day begins in the morning, before sunrise; or according to our usual way of reckoning, we may conclude it begins immediately after midnight, and continues till midnight following; which is our common method of computing time; beginning it with the morning and ending it with the evening. Again, if the Sabbath begins in the evening, religious worship ought to be performed some time, at least, in the evening; and then, soon after it is begun, it will be interrupted by the succeeding night, and then it must be revived again the succeeding day: And as to the end of the Sabbath, it seems not so agreeable, that when we have been engaged in the worship of God through the day, we

should spend the evening in secular employments; which cannot be judged unlawful, if the Sabbath be then at an end. Therefore it is much more expedient, that the whole work of the day should be continued as long as our worldly employments are on other days; and our beginning and ending of religious duties, should, in some measure, be agreeable therewith. Another scripture brought to prove this argument is in John XX. 10. “This same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you.” It is called the evening of *the same day*; so that the worship which was performed that day was continued in the evening thereof: This is not called the evening of the next day, but of the same day in which Christ rose from the dead; which was the first Christian Sabbath.”

Although, therefore, I would guard you against being contentious on this subject, I cannot but think the considerations here stated, in favor of beginning and ending the day of sacred rest as we begin and end other days, are clearly decisive. I will, however, close the lecture with observing, that as far as practicable, it will be well for you, my young friends, to adopt what I know has been the practice of some devout Christians; that is, to spend the evening of Saturday, as much as you conveniently can, in retirement from the world. The children of dissipation often spend it in parties of mirth and levity, or at theatres, or other places of carnal amusement; and they often add to their other sins, by an actual trespass on holy time. Take for yourselves an exactly opposite course. Whenever you can, so order your affairs that your worldly occupations on the evening preceding the Lord’s day, may be of such a retired and peaceful kind, as to admit of serious meditation; avoid promiscuous company altogether; let your associations at this time, be with the pious, and your conversation be on religious topics; or better still, if you can, spend a part at least of the evening, in religious reading and devout meditation. I am well aware that many are so circumstanced that a stated compliance with this advice will not be practicable; and I offer it, not as pointing out a prescribed duty, but as a matter of Christian prudence, with those who are favored in providence to have their time in some good degree at their voluntary disposal. Even our ordinary devotions, on secular days, will not usually be performed to the greatest advantage, unless they are preceded by a short space of recollected and serious thought. And it is highly desirable, with a view to the most profitable spending of holy time, to prepare for it, by getting our minds into a devoted frame. It is delightful indeed to the practical Christian, when the evening which precedes the Lord’s