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THE LAW, OBLIGATIONS, AND PRIVILEGES OF THE SABBATH.

Let us attend to the purpose and duties of the Sabbath

The purpose of the Sabbath has respect both to God and man, and the duties of the Sabbath, accordingly, have the same twofold character: they have either God for their object, or the temporal or eternal well-being of man himself.

We may view the Sabbath, in the first place, as having God for its object. And viewed in this light, it is intimately associated with his glory. Look at it in this light, and say if it was not most natural and proper in God to require one whole day, at regular returning periods, to be devoted to his service, and to be especially connected with his honour? What could piety more naturally appoint for itself than a whole day at certain intervals, to remember God, and to be spent in his service? Viewed in relation to God, the Sabbath is a day especially set apart for his honour, on which we are to meditate upon his character and works, and offer to him our homage and worship. God accordingly challenges it for himself—To keep anything holy is to regard it as God's, and as dedicated to his use. And the commandment is: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" And "the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." In the words of Isaiah, it is: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him." The Sabbath, therefore, is a holy day: it is God's day: it is devoted to his service. If so, as a necessary consequence, we must rest from our

own employment on that day; for to engage in our own avocations on that day, would be to take it from God, and appropriate it to ourselves. It would be to make that our own which we have seen is God's. Accordingly, it is said: "not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." That this is necessary to the character of the day, and is enjoined by God, will be seen by a reference to many passages of Scripture. Look to the commandment itself. Exod. xx. 8, 9, 10, 11, Deut. v. 12, 13. We find the same thing proved by the conduct of Nehemiah, as recorded in the book of Nehemiah, xiii. 15, 22. Read also Jer. xvii. 21, 22. We are, then, on the Sabbath day, to abstain from our own employments, from such things as may be lawful on other days. Exceptions can be made only in cases of necessity and mercy. With respect to these God could never make a law which would exclude them on any day. To do so would be equivalent to his withdrawal of a right of grant to his creatures to life itself. If life is given to us to possess, then those things can never be remitted, which are necessary to its maintenance. If the inferior creatures are put under our dominion, and intended to be subservient to our use, then they as well as ourselves must have all necessary care and attention. It is here that the principle of our Lord comes in: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath was made for man's good equally as for God's glory: it was given him as a day which he might improve to the good of his soul; but to oblige him on that day to omit those offices or acts which necessity or mercy would dictate or require, would be to in-