

## Sanctifying the Sabbath.

BY REV. T. W. LISTER, GLASGOW.

Of all the boons secured to the people by the strong statesmanlike action of Nehemiah, (Neh. xiii. 15-22.) that of a quiet Sabbath was not the least important. It required very firm handling to repress the godless secularising of the holy day which had prevailed during the time of chaos before his arrival; but the reward in spiritual quickening, and even in physical well being was no doubt worth it all.

In the easy-going charity of present day temper, the sanctity of the Sabbath is being lost sight of, and the lax habits of Continental nations are gradually coming into vogue. It is impossible to set back the clock, and there are doubtless some features of our old Scottish Sabbath which are more Pharisaic than Christian, but there is a loud call to every friend of God and every well-wisher of his country to use his best endeavour to maintain the quiet and holy observation of the Sabbath.

Much harm is done by a loose application of such words of our Saviour as "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." When men quote these words as if they meant that a man is free to spend the Sabbath just as he likes, they strain the words far beyond their intention. A day of *holy* rest is what God planned for man when He promulgated the law of the Sabbath. To spend the day in lazy lounging, or in dashing physical pleasure is to thwart its high design. What our Lord deprecated was the Pharisaic refining of the commandment into a multitude of punctilious observances and restrictions which could only be burdensome to the conscience and cramping to the spiritual life.

Clearly the Sabbath law is one of the oldest laws in the world. The wording of the Fourth Commandment—"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"—shows plainly that the day was not being then hallowed for the first time. The Sabbath was given to the first father of the human race. Not to Abraham, the father of the Jews. If it had been, there would have been ground for the cry—the Sabbath is a mere Jewish institution. It was given to Adam, the father of us all. The first day he saw dawning was the Sabbath. It is the oldest sacred institution in the world, thousands of years older than the Decalogue, older than the Bible itself. Apart from the Bible, we have evidence, in ancient inscriptions, of the great antiquity of the institution of the Sabbath.

That man's physical nature demands periodic rest is undeniable, and that this rest should be one day in seven is borne out by experience. In the topsy-turvy of the French Revolution, an attempt was made to reduce time, as well as everything else, to decimals, and have one day of rest in ten; but it was found that nature demanded more, and the old seven-day week was resumed.

Where would our country be, spiritually, if the Sabbath were swept away or wholly secularised. Churches are far from perfect, but their ministry is of unspeakable value for the re-adjusting of conscience, for the reinforcing of the Divine sanctions of righteousness, for the tuning up of the music of life. But for the quiet of the Sabbath and its holy Christian worship, the toil and turmoil of the week would be apt to crush all soul out of us and make our life utterly worldly and carnal. "Believing in the authority of the Lord's day as a religious institution," said Mr. Gladstone, "I must, as a matter of course, desire the recognition of that authority by others. But over and above this, I

have myself, in the course of a laborious life, signally experienced both its moral and its physical benefits. I can hardly overstate its value in this view, and for the interest of the working-men of this country, alike in these and other yet higher respects, there is nothing I more anxiously desire than that they should more and more appreciate the Christian Day of Rest."

## Sun., May 24. Power and Prayer.

Acts, 1: 13, 14; 2: 1-4, 41.

### Science and Power.

Ever since the world began man has been trying to add to his power. He has found the secrets of the lever and the wheel, of steam and electricity. He has learned of the power that knowledge gives, that education and culture give.

Steam is simpler than hard-work, compressed air than steam, electricity than either. Science looks ahead, and declares that the power of the future will be taken direct from the sun or from water, and be greater and more inexhaustible than by any present method. There is power enough in the universe to do all things for man, if he can only connect directly with it.

Thus science points the way, in physical things, that religion long has pointed in spiritual things. Spiritual power is the simplest of all things. It has its exhaustless source in God. The soul that, through prayer opens to God, communes with him, makes itself a channel for his will, has found the sublimest secret of power.

### Power and Use.

A man once came to Christ, when he was speaking the words of life to a great multitude, and interrupted him to ask, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." That was all he cared to have the power of Christ do for him—to get an advantage for himself over his brother.

Spiritual power must be sought with spiritual motives, if it is to be gained. It is often through pride that we desire power from God. We wish to do something great, that shall impress men. We wish to influence many souls, and do a large and noticed work. But this is not spirituality; it is really selfishness. It is getting power from God to make honor for ourselves.

Great spiritual power has been given only to holy, humble, zealous souls—men like Paul and Luther and Muller and Moody, whose first thought was the kingdom of God and whose last thought was themselves. If we truly desire spiritual power, we must fit ourselves to use it for God, humbly and unselfishly. Then, and not until then, will we receive it in any measure.

### The Almighty Supply.

When God finds the right instrument of power, there is no possible stint in the supply. It amazes us as we read of the triumphs of Paton, or of Wesley and Whitefield, or of Livingstone; yet that which made these men so remarkable was, not their exceptional talents, but an absolute consecration of their talents to God. The twelve apostles were not remarkably endowed men, but they were men who most closely followed Christ. The divine supply of power is forever the same; men may not take hold on it, but when they

do, it flows as abundantly as ever through them to bless mankind.

### Points for Study.

- What prevailing prayer did Elijah make?
- What covenant of prayer did Nehemiah seal, and the people?
- What does James say about prayer?
- What promises did Christ make about prayer?

Editor of DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN:—Here are three passages of Holy scripture, all from the lips of Christ, upon which I have been thinking and praying a good deal of late:

1. Matt. xi. 28, Come unto Me, . . . . .  
2. John vi. 37, All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.

3. John vi. 44, No man can come to Me, except the Father, which hath sent Me, draw him.

There seems to be a contradiction in them, but with all my heart I believe there is not. However, would you or some correspondent earn our thanks by showing how they agree.

SUBSCRIBER.

May 2nd, 1903.

## The Debatable Age.

Why is a boy too old to go to Sunday school at the same time that he is too young to be a Christian? Why do laws have to be made to keep him from going to work in shop and factory before he is fourteen, while at the same time he is too young to do any work for God in the world? Boys will do well to think over these questions and get rid of some of the confessed folly in their own minds on these points.

We can scarcely pick up a paper nowadays without seeing something about the doings of boys. Boys receive medals for life saving, or win prizes in the high school, or march in parades—the world has a place for every lad. So, too, has the Church. Every bit of pluck, of sense, of ability, of nobility, a boy has can find a use in God's service. There is no debatable age in Christ's plan for a boy. His whole life is claimed by the Master, and not to recognize that claim is the worst mistake a lad can make.

## For Daily Reading.

Mon.,	May 18.—The promise of the Father.	Joel 2: 28-30
Tues.,	" 19.—Waiting on the Lord.	Ps. 27: 8-14
Wed.,	" 20.—Prevailing prayer.	Jas. 5: 13-16
Thurs.,	" 21.—Of one accord.	Gal. 5: 19-26
Fri.,	" 22.—The Spirit's mission.	John 15: 26, 27
Sat.,	" 23.—Coveting power.	Acts 8: 14-24
Sun.,	" 24.—Topic—Power and prayer.	Acts 1: 13, 14; 2: 1-4, 41.

Cheerfulness is one of the crowning graces of Christian character. A bright and happy disposition is one of God's best gifts, more precious than wealth or beauty. But with the person who would follow the Saviour, this cheerfulness should be a matter of principle, if not of temperament.