

wise," had become "fools,"—in utter disregard of the voice of reason, the testimony of tradition, the remonstrances of council, and the import of the Sabbath sign,—changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. But the faithful owned the sign; and, by keeping it holy, they avouched Jehovah to be their God, and testified their dissent from, and their abhorrence of, idolatry, which said there were many gods; and of atheism, which averred there was no God. (Act. xiv. 17; xvii. 21-27, Rom. i. 18-25, x. 18.)

By blessing the Sabbath and hallowing it, by resting upon it, and by challenging it for himself, God stamped it with his own "image and superscription," and hence its desecration was reckoned, among the Jews, as a sin of treason against his infinite Majesty. This suggests a satisfactory reason, why its profanation in the desert was punished with death. The people had but recently left Egypt, a land of idols; where the sabbatic mound was nearly, if not quite, obliterated: they were about to take possession of a country inhabited by nations who ascribed the creation and conservation of the world to false deities; and, as God intended them to be depositaries of his truth, and witnesses of his God-head, it was imperative that the violation of that day, which was so intimately connected with the preservation and purity of his worship, should be punished with the utmost rigour. The stoning of the man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath, is narrated Num. xv. 30-41: and from the context, it is apparent, that the offence was committed presumptuously; that is, in contempt of the law, and in defiance of the Lawgiver. The reasonable character of this sin also accounts for the fact, that while the inhabitants of other countries, resident in the promised land, were left to choose whether or not they would submit to the Jewish ceremonial, "the stranger within their gates" was as peremptorily required to keep the Sabbath-rest as strict as themselves. Thus, also, more than justifies the holy indignation with which Nehemiah contended with the Tyrians, and with the nobles of Israel who patronized them, in the sale of their wares in Jerusalem. (Neh. xiii. 15-22.)

2. It was intended to remind us, that God is our Sovereign Proprietor; that time is his gift; and that the chief end of our existence is to glorify and enjoy him.

By enjoining that we cease from the prosecution of our worldly avocations on each seventh day, for the purpose of holding fellowship with himself, God impressively reminds us, that this world is not our home; that its productions and possessions are insufficient to make us happy; that its service does not constitute our chief business; and that as he is our Author, so he is our chief end, our life, and the only satisfying portion of our souls. By commanding us to "keep holy the Sabbath," he teacheth us, that time is his, that it is ours only in trust, and that it is our duty to spend it according to his will; that is, to fulfil the duties of our station during "six days," and on "the seventh" to worship him in the beauty of holiness. Viewing the suspension of worldly toil as an act of worship, there is a glorious sublimity, and an emphatic meaning, in the stillness of a Sabbath-morning, in a Sabbath-keeping country. It is nature doing reverence to God, time paying homage to eternity, earth imitating heaven, mind triumphing over matter, and truth reigning over error; whilst piety gives expression to the whole, as she chants, "The Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; and bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: Fear before him all the earth."

"How still the morning of the hallow'd day!
Mute is the voice of re-labour,—hush!
The ploughboy's whistle, and the milkmaid's song.
The scythe he lights; ring in the dewy dews
Of tedder grass, mingled with falling showers.
That yester-morn' bloom'd waiting on the breeze,
Sounds the most plaint attract the ear,—the hum
Of early bee,—the stricking of the dew,
The distant bleating mid-way up the hill.
Calmness, seemed throng'd on you, enquiring cloud.
To him who wanders o'er the smiling lea,
The blackbird's note comes softer from the dale—
And sweeter, from the sky, the gladsome lark

Warble his heaven-toned song—the lulling brook
Murmurs more gently down the deep oak glen—
While from yon lonely roof, when evening smokes
Uplifts its smoke, its note is heard at intervals.
The voice of psalms the simple song of praise." (Graham.)

3. It was intended to prevent the poor from being oppressed, and beasts of burden from being over-wrought.

To teach man industry, God spent six days in making the world; though he could, with equal ease, have made it in a few hours, and to prevent industry from becoming a curse, and an occasion of consumption, he rested on the seventh day, and hallowed it. Foreseeing the cruel exactions which avarice and perverted power would inflict, he, as became a sovereign Benefactor, interposed the shield of his authority between the slave and his master, the labourer and his employer, the injured beast and his cruel proprietor; saying, "In the seventh day thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle." The industrious classes, of all countries, are prepared to testify, that the rest of the seventh day is essential to the preservation of health, and the enjoyment of life. Before slavery was extirpated in the West Indies, the Negro population was diminishing at an annual rate which, supposing no new importations to have taken place, would have extinguished the race in about eight years. Those workmen who labour on the Sabbath, in constructing railways, (melancholy instances of which have been enacted all over the country,) generally spend more than their extra wages in purchasing strong drink, to supply stimulus to their exhausted powers: and we have been assured, by an extensive and conscientious contractor, that the work these men execute in seven days, is generally less in amount, and worse in point of execution, than that which is done by others in six. Medical men, of the first respectability, have given it as their opinion, that to spend the Sabbath in devotional exercises, is much more healthful, than to lounge it away in idleness, or to devote it to the revelry of dissipation. Thus, the gracious Author of our existence made the Sabbath for the happiness of man; and while it is the interest of all to keep it holy, it is especially the interest of the poor.

As for beasts of burden, they are no more capable of sustaining incessant labour than man. Coach-proprietors, and others, who let horses out on hire, know, that, without a weekly rest, their strength is speedily wasted, and their lives are materially shortened. In this way God avenges the wrongs of these generous animals, on such of their owners as abuse them: and hence they have, for the most part, come to the conclusion, that it more profitable to allow their cattle to rest one day in seven, than to run them down by keeping them constantly on the road. Though the preservation of health and the prolongation of life, be but secondary designs of this institution, they illustrate the tender mercy of God, and the benignant character of revealed religion; and they place in a true light the hypocrisy of those infidel philosophers and mock-patriots, who, under pretence of emancipating the poor from priestly domination, and magisterial rule, deny the divine obligation of the Sabbath, and encourage them in its habitual desecration. In this, as in other particulars, the way of infidelity is not equal: for, while the general profanation of the Sabbath would give license to the few, it would enslave the many; while it would place worldly pleasures within the reach of those who could pay the extravagant price at which alone it can be purchased, it would doom an immense proportion of the poor to perpetual and grinding servitude. Each party of Sabbath-breakers, who either feast at home, or jaunt abroad, not only rob God of the time which he claims for his own worship, but they rob either the brute creation, or certain of their fellow-men, of that rest which God gave them, and of which no earthly power can innocently deprive them. Let the divine authority of the Sabbath, be given up, and the working-man's right to it is irretrievably sacrificed. It is then left to his employer's caprice, to decide whether he shall rest, or redouble his toil; and the essential selfishness of human nature justifies us in affirming, that the decision will be against rest, as often as avarice concludes that labour will be most profitable. Let the divine authority of the Sabbath be given up, and then all days are alike. The merciful arrangements of the humane will be neutralized by the exorbitant exactions of the cruel; the will of the righteous (in

righteousness could exist without a Sabbath) will be resisted by the wicked; the weak will be coerced by the strong; in a word, the Sabbath will be lost, the landmarks of morality will be swamped, and a flood of worldliness and oppression will sweep over the whole earth. Thus, while the appointment of the Sabbath proves the prescience of God, in his perfect acquaintance with the constitution, and the future circumstances, of our fallen race, it also illustrates his tender solicitude for the happiness of his creatures generally, and of man in particular.

"With dove-like wings, Peace o'er you thrills broad
The dizziness shall wheel round, the apoplexy
Hath ceased; all still around is quietude,
Less fear than this day, the trumpet have
Stops, and looks back, and stops, and looks on man,
Her deadliest foe. The well-worn horse, set free,
Unheeded of the pasture, roams at large.
And as his still, unworldly bulk he rolls,
His iron-bound hoofs gleam in the morning ray.
Not thirty man the day of rest enjoys
But Sabbath, there I hail the poor man's day.
To other days the man of toil is doom'd
To eat his joyless bread, lonely the ground
And wear and heat screened from the winter's cold
And summer's heat by neighboring hedge or tree—
But on this day, embosom'd in his house,
He shares the fragrant meal, and feels the love—
With those he loves he shares an heart-felt joy
Of giving thanks to God,—not in the form
A word and a grimace, but reverently,
With cover'd face and upward earnest eye." (Graham.)

4. It was designed, in connection with bodily rest, to secure to every man time for the public and private exercises of religion.

Whoso there is no Sabbath kept, there is no true religion enjoyed, neither any standard lifted up against abounding iniquity. There Satan reigns; and man, who was made in the image of God, either renounces his rational and worshipping powers, or, in the spirit of atheism, frames to himself a system of philosophy which transmutes the soul into matter, turns Providence into chance, and blots God out of the universe he has made, and on each particle of which he has stamped indelible traces of his wisdom, power, and goodness. In proportion as the Sabbath is desecrated, in countries where its divine authority is formally acknowledged, the sanctuary of God is forsaken, the fervour of piety is quenched, the ordinances of religion are neglected, the poor are oppressed, the righteous are persecuted, God is forgotten, and profligacy corrupts all classes. The history of every Popish country in Europe establishes the truth of these allegations; and, but for the partial preservation of the spirit and principles of the Reformation in this land, truth would, long ago, have been treated as a fiction, immortality would have been regarded as a dream, and the Sabbath would have been turned into a day of pastime,—on which, field-sports, theatrical amusements, card-playing, buying, selling, and promenading would have been practised by Priests and people, high and low, young and old.

The connexion which subsists between the observance of the Sabbath, and the maintenance of true religion, by nations, families and individuals, is not accidental, but natural; not partial, but universal; not occasional, but constant. It is a connexion founded in the nature of things, which harmonizes with the physical and spiritual constitution of man; and which is confirmed by the appointment, and sanctified by the blessing of God. Though the Sabbath was designed, in the first instance, to heighten the joys of innocence; it was also adapted, and prospectively intended, to restrain vice, preserve truth, and bring God and eternity to our remembrance. The most hardened Sabbath-breaker can witness, how difficult he found it, at the commencement of his career, to be wicked whilst others were worshipping, and to forget God, whilst the stillness of the country, the pealing of the church-going bells, the open doors of the sanctuary and the streaming multitude who went up to the house of the Lord,—all seemed to say, "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

As there is a time for everything under the sun, it was necessary there should be a stated day for the worship of God, that the universality of the custom might shame partial dissent, and check individual indifference; that one man's business might not interfere with another man's devotion; and that the regular return of the day might correct the treachery of the flesh, the worldliness of the affections, and the alienation of the mind. In the Sabbatic institu-

tion, God contemplated our happiness no less than his own glory. He made the day his, by a solemn appropriation, that he might convey it back to us, under guarantee of a divine charter, that none might deprive us of its rest, without incurring the guilt of robbing him of his right. To his command he added his example, that the proud might be shamed into imitation, or, at least, be deterred from disobedience, under the dread of a double crime; that the lowly might be encouraged to obey, under the hope of a great reward; and by the influence of a heavenly pattern; and that the rich and poor, bond and free, learned and illiterate, might have the same mighty motives to meet together,—at the same time, in the same place, on the same level,—uttering the same penitential confessions, supplicating the same blessings, and joining in the same ascriptions of praise to him who is above all, and through all, and in them all.

"Solomon the King from yonder ancient plea,
Fills all the air, repeating joyful words—
Stoily the throng moves o'er the tomb-paved ground—
The spirit man, the bowed-down, the blind,
Led by the thoughtless boy,—and he who breathes
With pain and eyes the now-washed grave, we'll please.
These, mingled with the young, the gay, the old,
The house of God, the seat of his throne,
A glow of gladness feel, with silent praise
They enter in, a placid attitude resign
That the man of God,—worthy the same—
Press the book, and reverently
The stated portion read." (Graham.)

5. To commemorate the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, and prefigure the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

That the Sabbath was not designed to be exclusively commemorative of the creation, is certain, for, in Deut. v. 15, the deliverance from Egyptian bondage is assigned as an additional reason why the Jews should rest themselves, and allow their servants to rest also. That deliverance was a type of the redemption effected by the death of the Lord Jesus; and if it was the will of God, that the shadow should be commemorated, how much more that the work itself should be held in everlasting remembrance! By the incarnation, death, and resurrection of our Lord, a new dispensation was introduced, new manifestations of love were vouchsafed, and matter for new and unending songs of praise was furnished: God then bestowed his richest gift, and completed his greatest work,—a work in which the glory of his perfections shone so illustriously, that all former displays were cast into the shade. There was, therefore, a necessity why his people, in their Sabbath-worship, should distinctly adore his love, and utter his praise, for having fulfilled his promise, and accomplished his predictions, in raising up "an horn of salvation for them in the house of David his servant." The Jewish Sabbath intimated that God was their Maker, and that it was he who had brought them out of the house of bondage; but ours proclaims the redemption of our whole race; and by keeping it we avow our belief in the love of the Father, in the Deity of the Son, in the vicarious character of his death, the triumphs of his resurrection, and the eternal "rest which remaineth for the people of God." Without forgetting undervaluing the stupendous work of creation, or the emancipation of Israel, the burden of our Sabbath songs should be "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Or, in the language of the Liturgy, which beautifully combines the adoration due to creating might, and redeeming love, "We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee; the Father everlasting. To thee all angels cry aloud; the heavens and all the powers therein. To thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy; Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory. The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee. The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee, the Father of an infinite majesty; thou honourable, true, and only Son; also the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Thou art the everliving Son of the Father. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

Respecting other branches of this great subject for future discussion, we trust the preceding remarks are sufficient to estab-