

The question is beginning to be seriously agitated by many Christians: Are funerals lawful on the Sabbath? The question is very important. Burying the dead is purely secular work. Conveying a dead body to the burying ground—depositing it in the grave, and covering it up, is as much secular work as sowing and reaping, and gathering the grain into the garner. Its lawfulness, then, in any particular case, is wholly a question of necessity. Could the burial not be attended to on the preceding day, or deferred till the day following, then it is lawful on the Sabbath. But if, on the other hand, there be no absolute necessity for it on the Lord's day,—if there be no insuperable difficulty to hinder the burial on some other day,—if it be appointed on that day simply as a matter of convenience, or in conformity to custom, or in anticipation of a larger gathering, then it is a violation of the holy Sabbath. The devotional exercises in connexion with the burial can no more give it a religious character and make it harmonize with the design of the Sabbath, than prayers and exhortations in the hay field could make it morally right for the farmer to mow and cure his grass on the Lord's day. A very valuable lesson, in regard to the respect that is to be shown to the Sabbath, may be learned from the example of the holy women who followed the Redeemer to the cross, and saw Him die. Although they had "prepared sweet spices that they might come and anoint Him," yet the Sabbath was too sacred a day for even such an operation as that. The sweet spices, though previously prepared, must remain unapplied; the dead body of their loved Saviour and Master must remain unanointed; that they might "rest the Sabbath day according to the commandment." If respect for "the day that the Lord hath made" constrained these pious women to leave their Saviour's body unanointed, till the Sabbath was past, is it not seemly that Christians now should leave their dead unburied, that they may rest the Sabbath day "according to the commandment."

The Sabbath requires, moreover, an *entire cessation from all worldly recreations and pleasures*, even such as are lawful on the other days of the week. It is true that the Sabbath is preeminently a day of pleasure. Commemorating the most joyful event that ever occurred in the history of the world, and typifying the rest that remains for the people of God, it is intended to be a joyful day to the saints. "This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice in it." Waiting upon God in the ordinances of His grace, their soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness and they "praise Him with joyful lips."

The Sabbath, however, is not a day for carnal enjoyment. It is not a day for recreation and merriment, any more than for secular business. "Finding thine own pleasure" is no more allowed than "doing thine own ways." Complimentary visiting of friends is wholly foreign to the design of the Sabbath. And yet, alas! to what a melancholly extent is "the holy day of the Lord" secularized in this way! How many regard it simply as a weekly holiday, and spend its sacred hours in worldly amusements, complimentary visiting of acquaintances, and excursions for carnal recreation! How many professing Christians spend one portion of the day in the formal devotions of the Sanctuary, and devote the remainder to the pursuit of worldly pleasure? Such persons violate the spirit, de-