

TRAVELLING ON THE SABBATH.

How few men act from principle! How few have any *rule*, by which they uniformly regulate their conduct! Fewer still act from *Christian principle*—regard a rule derived from revelation. It makes my very heart bleed to think how few, even of civilized and evangelized men, regard *divine authority*. And yet it is the disregard of this which constitutes the sinner and the rebel. Some disregard one expression of it, and some another. He who, whatever respect he may profess for God, *practically disregards any* expression of divine authority, is a revolter—a rebel; is up in heart, if not in arms, against God; is engaged in a controversy with Jehovah.

What has let me into this train of reflection, is the general disregard that I observe with respect to the sanctification of the Sabbath. He who made us, and who, by constantly preserving us, when otherwise we should relapse into non-existence, may be said to be continually renewing the creation, of us, and has beyond all question a right to control us, did long ago, from Sinai, distinctly express his will with regard to the manner in which the *seventh* portion of time should be spent, and how it should be distinguished from the other six portions. He reminded his creatures of it, and declared it to be his will that it should be kept holy; that six days we should labour, and therein do *all* our work, leaving *none* of it to be done on the seventh, because the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. It is His *rest*, and therefore it should be ours also. In it he has signified it to be his will that we should not do *any work*; neither we, nor those who are subject to us as children or as servants, nor even those transiently domesticated with us, the strangers within our gates. Nor should man alone rest, but the *beast* also. Then he condescends to give a reason for this enactment, in which all mankind, whenever and wherever they live, are equally interested—a reason which was valid from the creation of the world, and will hold good as long as the world lasts; “for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; *wherefore* the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

Now, God has never revoked this expression of his will. He has never repealed this law. If he has, *when* did he it, and where is the record of its repeal? He has not taken off the blessing which he laid on the Sabbath. He has not obliterated the distinction which he put on the seventh portion of time. He has not said, “You need no longer remember the Sabbath to keep it holy—seven days you may now labour—my example of six days of work, followed by one of cessation and rest, you may now cease to imitate.” He has not said any thing like it. The law is in force therefore even until now.

Well here is the law of God, with the reason of it. Now for the practice of men. How poorly they compare! There are indeed few who do not remember the Sabbath day, and in some manner distinguish it from the other days of the week. But the law is, that they should remember it to *keep it holy*; that they should distinguish it by hallowing it as a day of rest. This they do not. They keep it no more holy than any other day, though they do differently on that day from what

they do on others. They do not the same work on that day which they do on the other days, but they do *some work*. Such as *necessity requires*, and such as *mercy dictates*, they may do. The law of nature teaches that, and the example of the Lord of the Sabbath sanctions and confirms the lesson. But they do other work than such as these call them to. The Sabbath is with them as *secular* a day as any other, though the manner of their worldliness on that day may be unlike what it is on the other days. What is more purely secular than visiting and travelling, yet what more common on the day which the Lord has blessed and hallowed? These, I know, are not considered as falling under the denomination of *work*, but they do fall under it. They are as certainly included among the things forbidden to be done on the Sabbath, as are ploughing and sowing. The former are no more sacred—no less secular than are the latter.

I have been struck with the *indiscriminate* manner in which travellers use the seven days of the week. One would suppose that the law had made an exception in favour of travelling—forbidding every other species of secular employment on the day of *rest*, but allowing men to journey on it. They that would not do any other labour on the Sabbath, will nevertheless without compunction travel on that day. The farmer, who would not toil in his field; the merchant, who would not sell an article out of his store; the mechanic, who would not labour at his trade; and the mistress of the family, who scrupulously avoids certain household occupations on the Sabbath, will yet all of them, without any relentings, travel on the Sabbath, and that whether the object of their journey be business or pleasure. It makes no difference. They would not on the Sabbath do other work appropriate to the six days. That would shock them. But to commence, continue, or finish a journey on the Sabbath, offends not their consciences in the least. I am acquainted with many persons who would not for the world travel to a place on Saturday, accomplish their business, the object of their journey, on Sunday, and return on Monday; but these same persons will, for a very little of the world, and without any hesitation, go to the place on Friday, do their business on Saturday, and return on Sunday. Now I would do the one just as soon as I would do the other, and should consider that I desecrated the Sabbath by travelling to or from the place of business on it, just as much as by accomplishing the object of my journey on it.

I would ask the candid traveller if any thing can *secularize* the Sabbath more completely, if any thing can more effectually *nullify* it, than ordinary travelling? If a man may lawfully travel on the Sabbath, except in a case of stern necessity, such as would justify any species of work, I know not what he may not lawfully do on that day. What is more absurd than that it should be lawful and proper to *journey* on the day set apart and sanctified for *rest*? Surely journeying does not comport well with rest. But they say that travelling is not work, and therefore not included in the prohibition. I deny the fact. It is often hard and wearisome work. And what if it be not work to the passenger, is it not work to those who are employed in conveying him? If he does not labour, yet others must