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Professors of Religion and the Sabbath.

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Our Lord declared the doom of such as hear the Word but refuse to obey it, in the following solemn passage, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matt. vii: 22-23.

By attempting to serve God and mammon, by hearing the Word and doing it not thousands perish annually. In the midst of Gospel ordinances, in the full blaze of Gospel light, they sink into darkness. How? What led to their ruin? One sin fostered destroys the soul; theirs in many many instances began in profaning God's holy day.

1. *By giving place to secular thought.* During six days secular work and thought occupy the mind, but on the Sabbath only thoughts of God and His works of grace should be fostered. It is God's day to hear man, receive his worship and bless him in every way; it is man's day to adore his Redeemer and enjoy communion with Him. One worldly thought encouraged, even in the most solemn moments of God's day, will open the door to a legion. As one traitor opens the fort to the enemy, so one cherished evil opens the heart to Satan. The world coming like a flood possesses the heart and thus all worship is destroyed, God's message is unheard and His Holy Spirit is grieved. Secular meditation prevents worship, wears the soul and enthrones Satan in the heart on God's holy day.

2. *By secular reading.* How great is the temptation to pass the day thus! Sensational books, papers and magazines claim attention. There is no time during the week. Then the Sunday newspaper comes into the house freighted with items of interest. Do Christians who profess to follow Christ read secular books, sensational books, do they purchase newspapers on God's day, papers charged with the world's pleasures, lusts, crimes and temptations, do they read these in their homes before their children? Yes. Do they receive benefit in God's house after filling their minds with a worldly paper? No; in many instances they do not go to church but remain home for secular reading, making God's day like the other six, filling it with worldly care and pleasure, spiritual books, religious papers, and above all God's book are unread. Yet these claim to be followers of Christ and doers of His Word!

3. *By secular conversation.* Worldly thinking and reading ripen in conversation of a worldly character. At the door of God's house, on the street, in the home, at table how common is secular talk! How uncommon is heavenly conversation! One word opens the door for a thousand, sets in motion a train of worldly thoughts, bars out spiritual things, hinders the worshipper, secularizes the heart and mind and degrades God's holy day. Idle words are doubly sinful; small talk, scandal, gossip and foolish jesting are unworthy of those who name the name of Christ. Yet this very sin is colossal in its proportions destroying tens of thousands in the church.

4. *By secular work.* "My father worketh hitherto and I work;" seven out of forty-three recorded miracles of Christ were wrought on the Sabbath. All holy duties, such as visiting the sick, relieving the poor and distressed, helping the needy, should be performed on the Sabbath. Teaching, preaching and all works of mercy and love are pleasing to Christ on that day. But all work for gain, pleasure or secular purpose is wrong. Writing letters to friends; travelling to one's place of business to save time on Monday; working for gain in connection with railway trains, street cars, steamships, or public works of any kind is sinful. Christians who thus break the Sabbath grieve God's blessed Spirit, and bring a curse upon themselves. Luther truly said, "There is perhaps no surer sign of a living Christian than a growing neglect of Sabbath day ordinances, and an indolent and profane abuse of its sacred and priceless hours." How many thousands are working for gain every Lord's day, in many cases, where there is no need, but purely for gain!

5. *By secular travel.* What a commotion disturbs the quiet of God's day in many localities! Livery stables open, their teams running to and fro; street cars thundering along, rail-cars rushing into quiet towns disturbing worshippers, excursion parties by rail and steam going out of town for pleasure; friends going to visit friends; the holy day is converted into a holiday. All such is absolutely wrong. It is much more heinous in God's sight when the travellers are His own professed children. They do show contempt for their Redeemer and His ordinances of grace, and bring upon themselves the awful sentence, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

6. *By amusements.* All games, entertainments for pleasure, social visiting and excursions violate God's day. They divert the mind, occupy the time and unfit the mind for communion with God. There are those, says Hugh Miller "Who would fain send out our working people to the country on Sabbaths, to become happy and innocent in smelling primroses, and stringing daisies on grass stalks. An excellent scheme theirs, if they but knew it, for sinking a people into ignorance and brutality." "But sure I am, a crowded vehicle, whether by land or water, or a public inn, or a crowded garden, or a bustling highway, or a park parade, are not the places most fitting for repose and retirement; and they

who so spend the Sabbath, and call it keeping the commandment, do but lie unto the Lord and their own soul." (Edward Irving.)

7. *By their example they lead others to sin.* If the mother indulges in gossip and scandal on the Sabbath; if the father calls in a news-boy and reads the Sunday papers all the morning; what can be expected of their children. When the preacher and church officers travel on Sabbath, their people will do the same. Not only so, but every church member who in any way breaks God's day encourages weaker ones and worldly men to do the same. Thus he shuts himself out of heaven and prevents others who might come in from entering. Surely such merit the righteous sentence of their judge, "depart from me ye that work iniquity."

8. *The Sabbath is a delight to all true believers.* It communicates joy as it comes. On that day God opens to His children His treasures of spiritual good. Then He imparts strength to the weak, comfort to the sorrowful, food the hungry and life eternal to repenting sinners. Then the light of His glory shines around the believer, in the face of Jesus Christ; then special time for private devotion, for family nurture in the Lord, for soul winning in Sabbath school, in church and in the community presents itself to him; then he enters his arena of soul exercise—his spiritual gymnasium—and by co-working with Christ develops new life, new happiness and new power; then new and deeper joys possess the soul. The Sabbath a weariness? No; but as the sainted Vaughan so beautifully expresses it:

Bright shadows of true rest; some shoots of bliss;
Heaven once a week;
The next world's gladness prepossessed in this;
A day to seek
Eternity in time; time's bower;
Transplanted paradise; God's walking hour;
A gleam of glory after six day's showers.

The Evil of Instability.

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"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," were the mournful words spoken by Jacob concerning his first-born son. They throw a lurid light on the character of Reuben, revealing the instability which ruined his life, and debarred him from the eminence to which his birth entitled him. The creature of impulse, he was at the mercy of the mood of the moment. More weak than wicked, he was wholly governed by feeling, and so he lacked the steadiness of principle. "Unstable as water" the simile is very suggestive. Water has no cohesive shape of its own. It takes the form of the vessel into which you pour it, and changes quickly from one form to another. That is the evil of instability; it robs a man of power to stand on his own feet, and work out his own activity in the teeth of opposing forces.

The unstable life is like a rudderless ship, drifting on the ocean at the mercy of wind and tide. Life must be linked to some great purpose to give it stability. Purposeless lives are sure to be useless lives. Ralph Waldo Emerson says somewhere that the only great soul is the surrendered soul, the soul surrendered to a high ideal, which becomes the guiding star of all activity. Search out the successful men in literature, science, art and business, and whatever differences of character and talent you discover in them, you will find that they are one in their consecration to some purpose. Look around you for the men who have failed, and you will find in them a common instability which pulled them down into dismal depths of failure. Unstable as water, they could not excel.

The first thing a young man should do is to decide what for him should be the aim of life, for that aim must shape his toil. As water cannot rise above its level, no more can the service of a life rise above the ideal which governs it. We live what we love, as a great philosopher has been careful to point out. If you love money money is your life. If you love pleasure, pleasure is your life. If you love learning, learning is your life. If you love God with a supreme passion, then God is your life. The great question for young men who are buckling on their armor for the battle of life should be. What is my purpose? For what am I to fight? On the answer to that question will depend the greatness or littleness of your life.

The second thing a young man should do is to hook his life with the chains of duty and perseverance to the highest purpose of which he is capable. Many make good resolutions, but, alas! not so many carry them out. It is in lack of perseverance that the evil of instability reveals itself. Through heedlessness, through the joyous carelessness of youth, through aversion to serious endeavor, young men are apt to postpone effort to fulfil the dreams which come to them bathed in a light of golden glory, until they wake up some fine morning to find that the best years have been squandered away. Delay is dangerous.

Instability is the secret of much of the weakness of Christian living in our day. Many who began the race well and were making progress suddenly relax their energies and turn aside. In the matchless story of Pilgrim, John Bunyan has depicted the experience of many a soul easily impressed by the beauties of the Christian life and the joys of heaven, and as easily discouraged by the dangers and difficulties of the journey heavenward. Our Lord in one brief yet pregnant sentence shows us the fatal lack of such would-be Christians. They have no root in themselves.

Saintliness is not to be won sleeping. Success in the spiritual life comes along the line of concentrated energy. "This one thing I do" cried Paul, and his cry must be echoed by every soul that would see the beautiful vision and be clothed with the holiness of God.