

SILAS ANDREWS

THE SABBATH
AT HOME

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It is not proposed to dwell, in the following pages, upon the arguments that might be brought forward to prove that the Sabbath is a Divine institution, established and sanctified by the Creator on the seventh day, after all his works were finished, and renewed to Israel on the descent of the manna. Nor shall I attempt to show, from the Scriptures, that the Sabbath is a Christian institution, as well as a Jewish ordinance; or call your attention to the satisfactory reasons we have for observing, as holy time, the first day of the week, and not the seventh. No controversy will be maintained with any who object to the Sabbath as commonly acknowledged by Christians. He who sincerely seeks for instruction, has no need of such argument; he already believes the Sabbath is the Lord's, and that it is to be sanctified by a holy resting all the day.

The design of this Tract is to point out and illustrate the most profitable manner of spending that part of the Lord's day which is not employed in the public exercises of Divine worship.

That your family, in each of its members, may profitably spend *the Sabbath at home*, —

I. By Saturday evening have your worldly business arranged to keep the Sabbath.

Few families pursue their business or trade, the same on the Sabbath as on any other day. But there are many who do not keep it as a sacred rest. If they do not plough and sow; if the sound of the anvil and the saw is not heard in their shops; if they do not, with open doors, buy and sell, and get gain; there is another species of worldly business to which they do attend, which, though not so much noticed by others, properly belongs to the six days in which work may be done.

Such persons may be said to make arrangements, not to *keep*, but to *profane* the Sabbath. "This matter need not be attended to now, while other things press upon us — it may be postponed until Sunday. That journey must be performed — that plan laid with my neighbour — that errand accomplished *next Sabbath*, or it will interfere with the business of the week."

To persons who thus feel, and who can thus act, I do not propose to address myself; they do not desire information; they have no wish to be instructed how they may more profitably spend the Sabbath. They would like best to hear of some new plan of retaining the Christian name, while they drive on their own trades and find their own pleasures. No argument would be more pleasing to them than one which might go to prove that because the Sabbath was made for *man*, therefore man may use the Sabbath according to his own pleasure. But to you, my readers, who I trust are desirous of being taught your duty, and are willing to be exhorted that you may enter upon its performance, I would say, on Saturday arrange your worldly business to keep the Sabbath. It must not be forgotten, that this is much more easily done in some families than in others. It depends upon the number of the household, — upon the occupation of the different members, — whether they all think alike on the sanctification of the Sabbath, and are disposed to unite in bringing their worldly affairs to such an issue, that they may have *all* the following day for holy rest. With some, Saturday evening is a time of more leisure than any other of the week; while with not a few, it is a time of more hurry and pressure of business, — collecting debts, paying bills, fulfilling promises of the shop or store, than will again be encountered until Saturday returns. The cares of the week will press us, until steadfastly resisted. This resistance ought to be made with holy resolution, and sufficiently early to secure the Sabbath from being profaned.

The arrangements of the shop, the labours of the farm, and the business of the office or counting house, must be closed on Saturday evening, or in vain we wake early the next morning to enjoy the Sabbath. Did we look no further than to success in this world's affairs, a maxim of prudence and economy would be, to bring our plans, as far as possible, to a close once every week. It promotes order in the transaction of business. It gives efficiency to our labours. We *finish* more, which is the same as saying we *do* more, than if our business were suffered to run on without interruption the

year round. We must also take into account the vigour of both body and mind, which an entire day of rest from care and labour imparts. And who that reads his Bible, will think it strange for me to say, that the blessing of the Lord is upon him who sacredly regards the Sabbath? "If thou turn thy foot away from the Sabbath, [that is, do not impiously trample upon it,] from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words, then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isa. lviii. 13, 14. What was the heritage of Jacob? The favour of God, with the richest productions of the field, and an increase of every worldly possession.

We may appeal to observation. The influence of the Sabbath upon the *rich* is not so easily discerned. But among those, who, in a peculiar manner, receive day by day their daily bread, it may be seen. And unless I greatly err, it will be found, that those families who observe the Sabbath, and attend upon its public and private duties, with desire to be profited, have, in comparison with those who do not thus regard the day unto the Lord, more peace of mind, more family comforts, and are better prepared to meet the demands which every year brings against them. Can a man rob God and prosper? rob Him, who can withhold our common blessings, or, as he has threatened, can curse them after given! Mal. ii. 2. Then, from consideration of both temporal and spiritual interest, let the Sabbath be regarded as a day of holy rest from the morning to the evening. And that we may attain to this, let us previously arrange all that pertains to our respective occupations, that we may wait upon the Lord without distraction of mind.

Another matter that has an important bearing upon the sanctification of the Sabbath, you will permit me to mention. Though the institutions of Moses are not, as a system, binding upon Christians, yet from them we may often infer what is important in regard to the proper observance of that which is given us in their stead. Among other commands to Israel for the profitable keeping of the Sabbath, they were required to abstain, on the seventh day, from all work, except the preparation of their necessary food. How this command was to be understood we learn from Exod. xvi. 23. On the descent of manna, Moses said to the people, "To-morrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning." I am not about to say, that no family observes the Christian Sabbath, who does not fulfil the letter of this command. But may I not safely say, that the more nearly it is observed, the more profitably the day may be spent? If our tables are provided for on Saturday; if we bake that which we must bake, and seethe that we must seethe, and lay them up for the morrow, will not those members of the family, who attend public worship, have more time to devote to the reading of the Scriptures, to meditation, and other duties of Sabbath morning?

What shall we say of those whose lot it may be to remain at home part of the day? Why, it is commonly answered, that as they have nothing else to do, they may as well prepare dinner for those at church. But have they nothing to do? Have they no Bible to read? No Scripture lessons to prepare for Sabbath School? No Catechism, that may be most conveniently committed to memory by them when left alone? Is meditation, and is prayer the duty of those only who are privileged with attending public worship? Have persons who labour in our families for hire, no need of one day of rest in seven? If *fasting*, as all ages and good men of every country have acknowledged, is promotive of the devotion of the heart, denying the appetite in some small degree cannot be injurious. And why should it be thought unreasonable that persons in our employment, and our children, who early notice the character of our religion, might receive some good impression, as to the nature of the Sabbath, by seeing us deny ourselves what on other days is innocent and right? I am not pleading that the Sabbath be made a day for afflicting our souls, but that we should not permit our sensual desires to interfere with our spiritual delight. On days of unusual political interest, we count it no sacrifice to be *deprived* of a regular meal, or to take of that which comes to hand, because our delight is elsewhere.

Let the same interest be felt in the Sabbath, and we shall be equally loth to permit that, which might be done on Saturday, to interfere with our enjoyment and spiritual profit. If each family would, on the preceding day, prepare, as far as practicable, for their table on the Sabbath, would not much time be redeemed for the appropriate duties of the Lord's day?

To mention every thing that might, with advantage, be attended to on Saturday, bearing upon the Sabbath, would be to recount the events of each family – they all influence our profiting, though, when viewed separately, they seem hardly worthy of notice.

I have known the men of more than one family to spend the best part of Sabbath morning, in making such alterations in their carriage and harness as were necessary, in order to attend meeting; which changes might much better have been made the evening before.

In other households you will find the apparel appropriate to the Sabbath, must be subjected to certain emendations and improvements, before the family can be prepared for public worship. By this time the morning is gone, but the Sabbath of holy rest has not yet begun. How much more profitable, that all which pertains to our persons, "from a thread to a shoe-latchet," should be set in order before the Sabbath arrives, that as we have but one holy day in seven, we may enjoy it all.

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