

THE
CELEBRATION
OF
THE SABBATH,
A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS
OBLIGATION.

WARSAW,

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PART THE FIRST.

The word Sabbath signifies *rest*; it is as applicable to the first as to the last day of the week, or to whatever seventh portion of time may be set apart for religious purposes. It is used for other festivals among the Jews, as well as for the seventh day of the week.

God in his wisdom and benevolence planned and ordained every thing, best adapted to promote the comforts and happiness of mankind, — we have a beautiful instance of this, among many others, in the appointment of the Sabbath.

It would be, indeed, difficult to conceive an institution more suitable for man in his present state, or likely

to contribute more to his happiness. The great mass of every nation being compelled by the unalterable law of nature to labour, existence would not only cease to be a blessing, but become a burden, under which both body and mind must sink, where no cessation from toil allowed. Some respite is indispensable, which He who knows our frame has provided for in this sacred festival.

By this appointment all men gain a breathing time from their wonted occupations, and are refreshed.

The industrious poor hail the recurrence of the day with delight, the anticipation of which sweetens the six days of labour. It serves also as a stimulus to cleanliness, which is essential to the preservation of health. On the Sabbath-day they appear in their best attire, and their little dwellings

assume a cheerful air of comfort. They feel themselves raised in the order of being, a feeling, by no means to be suppressed when connected with religious principle, inasmuch as it is instrumental to moral and intellectual advancement.

Unceasing daily toil would be destructive, not only to the corporeal frame, but to the intellectual powers of the mind, of which all civilized nations from time immemorial have been so fully convinced, that they have set apart certain days for refreshment and amusement.

Such festivals were common, and very numerous among the ancient Greeks and Romans.

The Mohammedans have their weekly festival* on which they bestow great

*) The Mohammedans have selected the sixth day, Friday, as their Sabbath. Different reasons have

encomiums; they call it “the prince of days,” “the most excellent day on which the sun rises;” they believe it to be the day on which the work of creation was finished, and that it will be the day on which the last judgment is to be solemnized.

But a still greater benefit arising from the Sabbath, and that which renders it a real blessing is, its being destined to moral instruction and religious edification. Of all important matters, the most important, and of all needful concerns the most needful, is religion. Amid the diversified ranks of society, and through all the chequered scenes of life, from the monarch to the beggar, from the cradle to the grave, it is the principle of spiritual health and enjoy-

been assigned for their pitching upon this day, but the most probable one is, that it was to distinguish themselves from both Jews and Christians.

ment. Without the softening influences of religion, life itself would soon become a burden, and mankind like beasts of prey.

But to preserve a due sense of religion upon the mind, and to fasten its influence, which is liable to be subdued by the distractions of the world, some portion of time must be dedicated to sacred offices.

Were this omitted, the precepts, the admonitions and the promises of the word of God, there is too much reason to fear, would sound in vain amid the clamours of earthly occupations. Men would become wholly immersed in care and business, or giddy with the incessant round of pleasure.

Opportunity, then, must be afforded for religious instruction, and for the renewal of those holy impressions

which even in the sincerely pious would decay, in an uninterrupted intercourse with the world. In this our probationary state on earth, it is by no means easy to preserve an abiding sense of religion and to acquire a heavenly-mindedness. The world with its seductive allurements often proves too strong for us, so that the soul in its very aspirations to heaven, is often compelled to struggle against the intrusion of the senses. Every experienced Christian must have felt this, and hence it becomes more than probable, that were the weekly day appointed for the spiritual nourishment of the soul to be rendered common, scarcely any one would persevere in the prescribed course, and/ that the flame of piety, which under all advantages, is kept alive in the heart, but with great difficulty, would expire.

Happy is it then for the frail children of the dust, that a stated period is set apart for this solemn and beneficial purpose. It is a privilege, for which every one who duly feels its value, and his need of it, will, as often as it recurs, offer up his warmest thanks to God.

While travelling the journey of life, whether the path lie through a bleak and barren waste, or through verdure and flowers, mankind, unless frequently reminded of the end and the object of their pursuit, would faint under the difficulties to which they are exposed.

This holy rest offers the assistance which they need, they are called upon to devote its sacred hours, to objects which involve their happiness for time and eternity. The exercises of a pure

affections from earth, cherish the ardour of exalted piety; and while they animate the holy desires of the heart, impart a sacred impulse to the soul to mount to heaven.

PART THE SECOND.

The events recorded in the history of the Creation are chronological. The transactions of the seventh day of rest follow those of the six days of labour. Its simple, sublime narrative relates that the Sabbath was instituted in Paradise; the productions in order of time are as follow.

On the first day, the chaotick mass and the light were called into being; on the second, the firmament was created; on the third day, land was made to appear; on the fourth, the sun, the moon and the stars were made to shine; on the fifth, the fishes and the winged fowl filled their several elements; on the sixth, the terrestrial animals, and

man the lord of the lower creation were made; and then we read, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them; and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had created and made, and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that he had rested from all his work." (Gen. 2, 1—3.)

Thus we find that the creation was no sooner finished than the Sabbath was instituted; a day was set apart by Jehovah for sacred purposes, and which must be obligatory upon all the posterity of Adam, as it was communicated to him in Paradise, unless abrogated by a subsequent revelation, which it never was.

The next time we find the Sabbath mentioned is at the giving of manna in the wilderness, and it should be remarked, that it is not related here,

nor afterwards in the Decalogue, as an institution about to be established by Moses; for he refers to it as to a circumstance with which the people were already familiar,— and no doubt they were, although it might have been neglected and greatly fallen into decay during their bondage in Egypt. “And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said, to-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath of the Lord, bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that which ye will seethe, and that which remaineth lay up for you to be kept until the morning.” (Ex. 16, 22—23.) And again, — Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy &c. (Ex. 20, 8—11.)

Thus it is evident that Moses refers to the original institution of the Sabbath,—„When God ended his work and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.“

Among the services and duties required by the Law on the Sabbath day, none are so strongly marked as the rest enjoined. The command is: „In it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates“. And again—„Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath-day he shall surely be put to death.“

The frequency with which the rest of the Sabbath is enjoined in the Pentateuch shows the importance

attached to it by the divine Being; nor are its requirements at all mitigated by any subsequent statute or revelation.

In Ex. 35, 3. we read: "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day". — This passage, however, must doubtless be understood with some limitation, as fires were necessary for the sacrifices, yet it shows clearly with what solemnity the day was to be observed. The true meaning of it seems to be this — that no fire should be kindled on the Sabbath-day for the purpose of cooking food or any other servile work, which had been forbidden in the wilderness. For the preservation of health fires in the warm climate of Palestine were not necessary as is the case in more northern latitudes.

Again. "Six days thou shalt do thy work and on the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid and that the stranger may be refreshed." Such was the benevolent purpose of God towards both man and beast, that by a cessation from labour, they might be refreshed, and not doomed to unremitting toil, under which nature would soon sink.

"Abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. (Ex. 16, 29.) This statute was given in the wilderness, and the meaning seems to be, that the Israelites were not on that day to leave their tents for the purpose of gathering manna, or doing any servile work, but to remain within their encampment, and to devote the time to religious duties. (In Numb.. 15, 32—36.)

we read that a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day, whom the people brought unto Moses and Aaron, and all the congregation; and that after Moses had consulted the Lord, who commanded him to be put to death, the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died.

- We are not informed what motive the man had in doing what brought so heavy a judgment upon himself; but the most probable one seems to be, that he did it in defiance of the divine command; so that the act was, in the highest degree, presumptuous, and the punishment necessary lest others should presume.

But notwithstanding the strictness of the Sabbatical command, it would be wrong to suppose that it was designed to exclude works of necessity

and charity. It cannot be thought that the divine Being would ever consider his laws violated by actions proceeding from motives of pure benevolence, and calculated for lessening the distresses and sorrows of his creatures.

The numerous exhortations in the Old Testament, to the exercise of all the kindlier dispositions, and particularly of mercy to the poor, sufficiently prove how acceptable are actions of that description in the sight of God. The Jews, in our Lords time, were sharply rebuked of him for having put this misconstruction on the law.

We pass on now to the prophets, and we shall see the testimony *they* bear to the sanctity of the Sabbath.

In Jeremiah we read — “Thus saith the Lord, take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-

day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. — But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. But if ye will not hearken unto me; then I will kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched. (Jer. 17, 19—27.) Here, the entire prosperity of the nation, and all the favour of God is suspended on this one branch of moral obedience.

Again. Mark how the prophet Amos reproaches his countrymen with an impatience of the holy services of the Sabbath and other festivals: “Hear this O ye that swallow up the needy, even

to make the poor of the land to fail; saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat?" (Amos 8, 4, 5.)

The prophet Ezekiel follows: he lived later than Amos. The Babylonish captivity had now begun; and the peculiar aggravation of the people's sins is represented to be their profanation of the Sabbath. Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me; my Sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness to consume them." (Ez. 20, 12 13.) The charge is repeated again and again in the course of the expostulation, and is connected with the sin of

idolatry, and of direct contempt of the majesty of the Lord: "They despised my judgments and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols."

Similar charges are reiterated in subsequent chapters of this and the other prophets', and like threatenings denounced. And what was the noble conduct of Nehemiah after the return of his countrymen from the captivity in Babylon — and the building of the temple, when the people of Tyre brought fish and several articles of merchandise for sale into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day? Mark his warmth of reproof; observe his solemn appeal to the people on the past history of their nation. "In those days saw I in Judah, some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes

and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath-day unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not God bring all this evil upon this city. And ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath: and some of my

servants I set at the gates, that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath-day. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath-day." (Neh. 13, 15, 22).

Thus we have seen that the appointment of the Sabbath is coeval with man: that it was instituted in paradise; that it was solemnly incorporated into the ten commandments; that its essential and perpetual obligation is inculcated by the prophets, and that it is destined to remain in force under the Christian dispensation until the end of time, when it shall give place to a never ending Sabbath in heaven.

But from this statement assuming the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath, a question naturally arises, and it is one of no small importance; Why have

the Christians changed the day — particularly as Christ himself observed the Jewish Sabbath and left it as he found it, except enforcing its original purity and clearing it of the superfluous restrictions and superstitions, with which the Rabbins had encumbered it? The question, it is presumed, is not difficult to solve.

No change, it is readily granted, can be made in the Sabbatical appointment except by the same divine authority by which it was first instituted; it is therefore to be inquired, whether the exact day was originally specified by that infallible authority.

In referring to the original institution of the Sabbatical rest, we find it is stated in general terms, “God blessed and sanctified the seventh day,” but it is not said that it should be subsequently reckoned from

the first day. Neither here nor at the subsequent incorporation of the Sabbath into the Decalogue, is a syllable uttered concerning the specific day in the week which should be hallowed and devoted to holy rest—the stress in both places lies upon the *proportion of time*, so that if any one day after six days of labour be set apart as holy to the Lord, whether Saturday or Sunday or any other day, the command is substantially obeyed. In this as in all the dealings of God with mankind, his wisdom is manifest, for on account of the diurnal and annual rotation of the earth, the Sabbath cannot be observed at the same time only within a few degrees of latitude and longitude, much less in every part of the world—for when it is midday at one place, it is midnight at an other—at an other morning,

at an other evening &c. From these considerations it may be justly inferred that the Scriptural authority for keeping the seventh day holy, does not, in sanctioning the duty, absolutely determine the identical time; if, therefore one day in seven, as has just been intimated, be consecrated to religion, the command is complied with both in spirit and in substance

But though the law of God has not unalterably fixed the numerical day, several reasons evince a peculiar propriety in Christians preferring the first to any other day of the week.

The Jews, in their Sabbatical religious assemblies had to commemorate the creation of the world and their redemption from Egypt; we Christians have to commemorate, besides the common benefit of creation, the transcendent blessing of our redemption,

or new creation to the hope of everlasting life, of which Christ's resurrection to life on the first day of the week is the pledge. We have the example of the inspired apostles, who celebrated this day in memorial of the resurrection of their adored Master, and he himself appeared twice to them after his resurrection on this day, bestowed his peaceful benediction, instructed them in his doctrine, and by the symbolical action of breathing on them confirmed the promise that they should receive the Holy Ghost.

PART THE THIRD.

The divine authority and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath has already been proved. Every thing conspires to impress us with its supreme importance. Its antiquity and moral obligation are abundantly shown in the Pentateuch; its spirituality and importance attached to its observance, by the Prophets. Christ after explaining what the comments of the Jewish doctors had obscured, leaves it in its original purity and glory.

Six days are allowed to mankind for their temporal concerns, but the seventh is to be devoted to God. The ordinary labours and occupations of life, are therefore on the Sabbath

to be suspended; the business of the shop, the counting-house, and the manufactory is to cease; the labouring classes are to rest from their toil, the higher professions from their pursuits and the mind is to be kept as free as possible from secular concerns.

The law of God extends particularly its sacred rest to those in subordinate situations, to employ them, therefore, in their usual laborious occupations, is in direct opposition to the divine command. Many who refrain from secular pursuits themselves, engage others in such concerns and labours as are inconsistent with the sacred day. So much is frequently required of servants as leaves them but little leisure for devotional exercises, and not unfrequently scarcely an opportunity for attending public worship. But unjust as it is to deprive

them of this repose,—the boon of a merciful God, it is doing a still greater injury to their immortal souls.

The profanation of the Sabbath is, in general, among the working classes, the forerunner of every evil, — and great is the guilt of leading them, by any means, to disregard an ordinance the reverence of which is so important to the preservation of their religious principles. Awful will be the account which we shall have to render at the tribunal of heaven, if we have been instrumental in the eternal ruin of those whose virtue and piety it was our duty to promote.

Under the Law it is declared to be the object of the Sabbatical institution, that not only servants and labourers might rest from their toil and “be refreshed,” but even beasts of burden;

and it cannot be supposed to have a less beneficent intention under the Gospel. But though the refreshment of the body is one reason for the institution of a weekly rest, yet it must be such a rest from secular labours, as will minister to the nourishment of the soul. The day cannot be worthily consecrated, unless it be hallowed by exercises of piety and devotion.

Such recreations as are indispensable for the refreshment of the body and mind, are doubtless lawful — but they must be of a nature which correspond with the sacredness of the day,— such as have no tendency to indispose the mind for devotional duties.

It remains in closing these remarks only to show how the day may be devoted to religious edification.

From the primary and general design of the Sabbatical institution, arises the indispensable duty of public worship.

The divine command to keep the seventh day holy implies that it is to be devoted to holy purposes; and to holiness and heavenly mindedness, a public acknowledgement of God as our benefactor and the author of all our mercies, is essential. Because the Divine Being rested on this day from the work of creation, he sanctified it; from which it is evident that the exemption from worldly toil is to be instrumental to a spiritual and hallowed service. Rest is enjoined, but the end and object of it is the advancement of religion, and a cessation from employment is commanded to afford an opportunity of attendance to spiritu-

al things, an essential means for which is public worship.

A regular attendance upon the public ordinances of religion, is a duty repeatedly inculcated in the sacred scriptures, is enforced by our Lord himself, not only by a promise of his especial presence and blessing, where two or three are gathered together in his name, but by his own example.

The offices of piety must form the business of the day; a business equally important to all men, and from the obligation of which, none are exempt. It is a duty we owe to God, to the state under which we live, — to make a public and solemn confession of our faith, and to acknowledge our entire dependence on our common Almighty Father.

The high and spiritual delight arising from the discharge of the duty of public worship, might seem sufficient inducement to its regular performance. Joined with our fellow creatures in the same devout exercises, with bosoms inspired with the same hopes, and responding to the same exalted feelings, the heart as it bounds in rapturous communion with God, anticipates the purer joys of heaven. In the excitement thus given, the soul is purified from the pollutions of earth, and elevated almost to a level with those spotless intelligences who inhabit the brighter, eternal world.

Nor should the force of example be forgotten; for if we absent ourselves from the public ordinances of religion, without just cause, the thoughtless will thereby be confirmed in their levity, the profane in their impiety, and should

the example of such neglect become general, it would bring on, as its inevitable consequence, the decay of public worship and along with it of every thing that is sacred.

The visible expressions of devotion will ever be necessary while we remain encumbered with mortality, and any attempt to supercede them is the mere dream of folly.

The public ordinances of religion, on the Sabbath, when attended with seriousness, have a tendency to animate our minds, to spiritualize our affections and to impart a tone of piety to the heart during the remainder of the day and throughout the week.—Where we have the opportunity and do not embrace it, we are without excuse.

Many are not thus privileged, they have no place in the town or village

where they reside in which they can attend divine service in their mother tongue, (of course such are here meant as are residing in foreign lands); but when this is the case they should endeavour to remedy the evil, as far as may be, by meeting at each others dwellings, or any other place which may be deemed more convenient, for the purpose of mutual edification, reading the Scriptures, and occasionally other books of devotion, and prayer; — bearing the promise in mind, that “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

The *private* duties of the Sabbath may be described generally as all those devout exercises which contribute to the spiritual advancement of man, and

for which the weekly rest furnishes the opportunity.

Among the most improving of these is meditation, and that internal piety which without any outward demonstration of its power, occupies and elevates the soul unobserved by any eye but the eye of God. It is by such exercises under divine grace, that our faith is increased, and affections cherished and enlivened, and by which the soul is raised to a clearer perception of things, heavenly and eternal.

It cannot be fairly denied, but that the hallowed rest of the Sabbath has been of late years awfully and alarmingly desecrated by a large portion of almost every nation professing Christianity in Europe. By the higher and middling classes it has been converted into a day of travelling, plea-

sure and revelry, by the lower, into a day of drunkenness, profaneness and almost every species of debauchery. Such persons are as little good members of the state under which they live as they are good Christians, — for by such violations of the divine commands they provoke God to anger, and draw down the divine judgments upon themselves and their country.

In the prophet Isaiah we read, “Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it; and in Ezekiel Ch. 20, 19—21. we find Jehovah exhorting the Israelites by the mouth of his prophet in the following words; “I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them and hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Notwith-

standing the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments, to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my Sabbaths: then I said I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the wilderness."

And once more, listen to the prophet Nehemiah on this point — "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." 13. 17, 18.

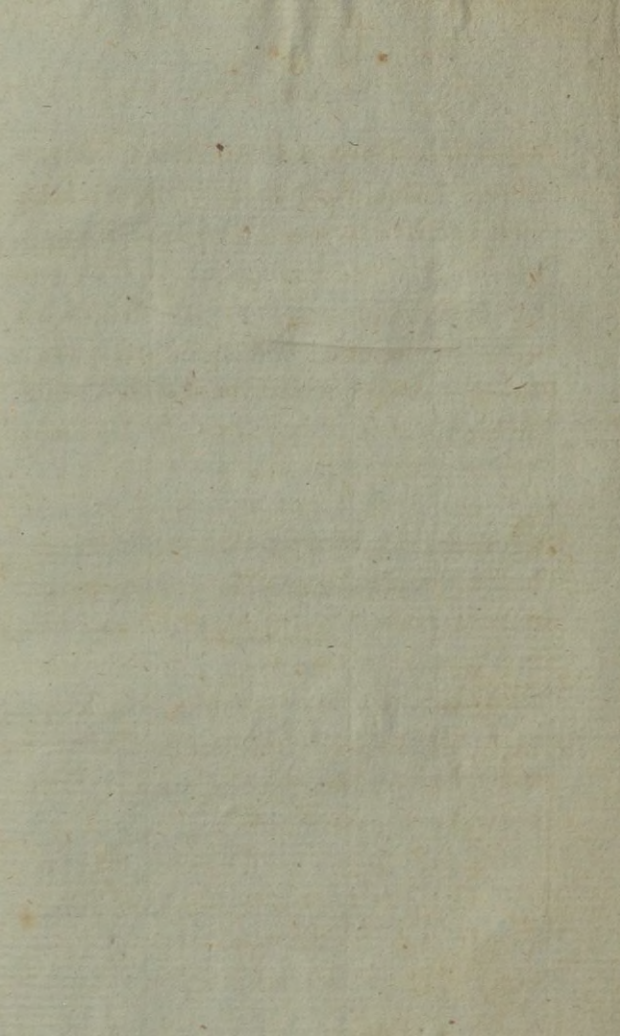
From these and a variety of other passages to the same effect, particularly Jeremiah 17, before quoted, where the prosperity of the nation and the

favour of God is evidently suspended upon this one branch of moral obedience, it is clear, that the violater of the Sabbath is an enemy to his country, or to the land wherever he may reside. It is by no means wished by these remarks that the Sabbath duties should be understood as comprising the whole of religion, but they are a part, and that a very *essential* one; a part without which the others *cannot* exist; they form the channel through which the sacred oil is conveyed which feeds the flame of devotion in the soul, and prepares it for heaven. In a word, they are the platform on which all other things in religion rest; remove this platform, and every thing sacred in religion falls. What an awful illustration of this fact have we had within these few years before our eyes in France.

It is now a well ascertained truth that the movers of the direful revolution in that country, were those infidels, who attempted to blot out the Sabbath from the number of days, and to destroy every feature of religion. The evils which followed these daring blasphemous attempts are too well known to need any comment,—they are written in blood; the train of miseries which they soon produced, have no parellel in history, but in that of the Jewish nation for their rejection of the Messiah. — Let us fear, and learn wisdom at their cost. Let us learn from the exhortation of the wise king of Israel to “Trust in the Lord with all our heart, and lean not unto our own understanding; but in all our ways to acknowledge him, and he shall direct our paths.” Then shall we hallow the Sabbath, because we

ourselves shall be hallowed to the Lord. Then will He condescend to be our guide, our protector, our support, during our pilgrimage on earth, and will eventually receive us to himself to enjoy a never ending Sabbath with angels, and all his redeemed Church in heaven.





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