No. 187.

On the mode of spending the Sabbath.
Mark 12, 27. "The Sabbath was made for man, & not man for the Sabbath."

From this declaration I propose to make some observations on the proper mode of passing the Sabbath. The disciples of our Saviour had plucked the ears of corn, as they passed through the corn field on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees, doubtless, were on the watch for some opportunity of accusation, considered this as a crime, & complained of it to Jesus. But, by way of exculpating this disciples, refers them to instances of similar or greater freedom on the Sabbath to be found in their own ancient history. He points to David, that monarch of whom every Jew was proud, whose name was connected with some of the best & brightest days of the same; & then of their nation. Even this great man, urged by hunger, went into the house of God, & eat of the consecrated bread, & it was not lawful for him to eat. If they were willing to overlook this daring act,
in king David. Why should they bring it as a hea
 accusation against the disciples that they had brack
 ed a few ears of corn to satisfy hunger? Such was the
 reasoning. To the Pharisees at least, unanswerable, it
 is immediately followed by the declaration that the
 Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

The meaning of this is very plain. Man was not made
 for the Sabbath, i.e., the Sabbath was never intended to in-
 pose a heavy and oppressive burden of rigid observances upon
 man, without any reference to his own good, it was not
designed to make him a slave or to make him unhappy.
But the Sabbath was made for man; i.e., it was intended for
the benefit of man, for a day of cheerful religious social
worship, to keep up the sense of God and serious things, to
bless mankind by refining, elevating, purifying and
religious sentiment. Such is the sentence which bar has
pronounced concerning the object of the Sabbath. In his
representation it is something better, than of long of pain-
ful and useless observances, a rigid and austere offering, doing
vi lence to the heart and the best feelings of man. Jesus looked up
it in a far nobler point of view. He regarded it as designed
for man, for his improvement of happiness, a day nor
the best of most cheerful feelings of the heart might be on
played in the best & noblest services. Thus did he rebuke the hypocrites, who came with their malicious accusations against the disciples, but who were themselves guilty of neglecting the weightiest matters of the law—judgment & mercy.

What our Saviour pronounced of the Jewish Sabbath may with equal justice be applied to the true Sabbath; it is to this subject, that I shall apply my remarks in the present discourse.

I begin, then, with observing that on this subject, as in others, there are extremes on both sides, into which we are liable to fall. It has been a mistake, rather to be one of former times than of the present, to observe the Sabbath with too much outward rigorous & ceremonial severity. The stem of almost savage features, which marked the religion of our forefathers, who in fact were the forebears of the times, were broadly deeply impressed on the manners in which they spent the Sabbath. This spirit was transmitted through several generations, & gave its own tone to the thoughts & views of people upon this subject. It was supposed, that the Sabbath must be marked with gloom, with sadness of countenance, with austerity of manners, with abstinence even from the most virtues
enjoyments, in spite with all those outward appearances, which serve for restraint, rather than for the discipline of the heart. There can be no doubt, that all this was very injudicious, that it injured, rather than promoted, the cause of real religion or rational piety. It gave too much weight to forms and observances, and cherished the persuasion, that he, who kept the Sabbath rigidly, did better, than he, who kept his heart rigidly. It seemed too much like finishing the business of religion in the services of one day, of leaving men to traffic to live in other days without their religion. Advent men was too apt to take the place of a devout spirit, dare-event department department to become the substitute for a reverent disposition. Doubtless many of those, who observed the Sabbath with so much anxious scrupulousness in little things, were very sincere—but even on such probably this careful minuteness had no good influence; it would probably in time leave even upon well-guarded minds an undue impression of the value of forms, merely as such: this is surely one of the most unhappy impressions, that can get possession of the heart. Besides this stern exactness in small ceremonials, has a tendency,
to narrow the soul, to make it severe, overbearing, exacting, severe, censorious. The milder and gentler virtues are apt to disappear under this rigid discipline, to a steady attach-ment to harsh particularities sometimes withers the cheerful graces of the true character. There was yet another effect of this system, still worse. In minds of a cheerful, a social cast, especially in the minds of the young, it associates the most repulsive of forbidding feelings with the sacred subject of religion. It seemed to take it for granted, that man's nature was changed on Sunday, that he no longer had the same dispositions of character as on other days, but passed at once from a cheerful, social being, to an austere, sorrowful, a demure being. It was the forced application of a system of constraint, of the nature which has given us, was continually struggling against it. It is easy to conceive what must have been the effects of such discipline as this. The young, naturally gay, happy, could not endure the chains and fetters without them on the Sabbath, without hating the constraint, or of course hating religion. As they deemed the cause of the constraint, of many of the daughters have known children, she looked forward to the Sunday of every week with dread, as the
day made them unhappy, broke up their engagements, imprisoned them in painful distance. Religion came to be with them only another name for sadness and restraint something, as they anticipated at its regular return. The effects of this, when children come to manhood, have been in many cases most unhappy. As soon as they are free from the parental authority which imposed the constraint, they rush to the opposite extreme, being emancipated from what they have so long hated, they laugh at its claims, take their revenge on despising what they ought to reverence. There is no sure way of making children centers the Sabbath, than to bring them up under a stern unnatural dread of the day. It is like destroying a fountain: the whole stream will be tinged. But it is not in the young alone, that such effects are produced. They are produced upon all, who have naturally a good flow of spirits, an innocent hilarity of disposition, who may beasons of the most sincere, pretty, devout feelings. There are in such minds connected with an observance of the Sabbath, sentiments of strictness, disgust, dulness, hypocrisy, w hose more than counterbal
Of whatever religious emotions might be produced. 

The errors of men in conducting the best institutions of 

servants sometimes paralyze and destroy the good effects, 

or they might have given birth... of this has some-
times been as remarkably exemplified in the observance 
of the Sabbath, as in any thing else...

But it must be remembered, that when we speak of 

these errors, we speak of errors that in this region at 

least have for the most part passed away. They are matters 
of history, rather than experience. No one, I believe, will 

say, that it is the error of the present day, amongst 

us, to observe the Sabbath with puritanical precision, or with 
painful minuteness of anxiety. This fault, I think, cer-
tainly cannot be charged on us... I do not mean to indulge 
in the common practice of finding fault with the pres-
ent times, merely because they are present. But it is 
certainly true, that we are much more in danger of falling 
into the opposite errors, that of neglecting or slighting the 
Sabbath, than into that, which I have just described. In 
some things, the human mind appears to swing from one 
extreme to another, as regularly, as does the pendulum 
of a clock... In order to avoid errors we rush into the oppo-

site errors, as if the quantity of truth we attain were to be measured by the distance to which we can get from all mistaken views... In former days, the Sab. was thought to have great virtue, merely as a form; but now too many of us have thrown off even the form... Our fathers were too strict, & we are too lax; they did too much, we not enough; they were expectations, we are indifferent... I am by no means an advocate for painful constraint & unnatural rigours in the Sabbath... I think, that our most pleasant thoughts should be connected with this day & with religious things... If there are any subjects, which excite our sober joy, & be to us sources of cheerfulness, they are the subjects connected with this day... It is of great importance especially to bring up children to love the Sab- bath; if this you cannot do, except by making the duties of the day a pleasure to them; they may be taught to refrain from their usual sports & amusements, without being blamed or disgusted by the sacrifice... All their innocent feelings of cheerfulness should be allowed an indulgence in this as well as in other days, & it should never be pointed to them in an austere or gloomy colour... And these principles may be applied to adults as well
as children... All this I am willing to grant, all in fact, that any reasonable person can ask. Still I must maintain, that there is a decency and respect due to the Sabbath, which I am sorry to say is sometimes shown to it among us. The day claims to be distinguished from other days, as it ought to be. A man is not required to put himself under constraint to make, but he surely may be quiet, sober, and respectful. He need not make himself unhappy, but surely he has no right to be indecent. Even if one regards the day, as having no divine authority to sanction it, it is a duty, as the owes to society good manners, to observe it in such a way, as not to disturb or offend others. Do you ask then, what is the mode of spending the Sabbath, as may rationally and fairly be required? I will in a few remarks endeavor to suggest some thoughts that may help towards a relief.

1. I would observe, the Sabbath should be spent in quiet, tranquility, and rest. By this I mean that freedom from all unnecessary cares or occupations, that gives the mind and heart to be composed, collected, and thoughtful. Peace, quiet, and distraction, as in other days, should not invade this. And it is perfectly easy to prevent it.
proper cares from disturbing the Sabbath, if we have but the disposition to do it. Men of the widest business, if they please, save one day in seven from the grasping the world. Experience has proved this abundantly. Some, who have uniformly observed the Sabbath with the utmost decorum & propriety, by abstaining from their common labours & pursuits, have been men of the most im- plicated, extensive concerns in business. It is able to "pre-tend," that we cannot find time to do all that we have to do, on other days. We can, if we will. I do not believe any man ever suffered in his worldly concerns by paying a decent & proper regard to the Sab- bath. It was originally designed to be a day of rest, & in this very design, a merciful regard was had even to the worldly interests of man. — Rest is absolutely neces- sary to beings like us, & he, who ceases from labour one day in seven, will be likely to labour the better on other days. All that can be done before the Sabbath comes on, should be done; & we should take as much pains as possible, to throw no employments into that day, & can be attended to before or after. I know that sometimes it is necessary & allowable to labour on Sunday; & such are only cases of extreme cases. A man's property.
may be in danger from various causes, there is no law of God forbids this saving it by exertions on the Sabbath; other cases of the like kind may occur. Indeed, Isa. himself teaches us that it is sometimes lawful to make exertions on the Sabbath day. But the danger is, that we shall make these occasions much more frequent than they ought to exist; we may persuade ourselves that a thousand things are necessary, whereas not so, except by our inordinate or unwillingness to cease even for one day from worldly gains and pursuits. Let us make it a matter of conscience to abstain from Sabbath from every secular occupation as we can, and we shall not often have need to disturb the repose of the sacred day. Let there be in the Sabbath that calmness, quiet, composed state of mind, which befits a day professedly devoted to the worship of God. It is to serious things. It is good for the community that it should be so. Nothing scarcely would the more degrading corrupting, than to have the Sabbath invaded by the bustle of the world, and thrown into the common mass of common days. It would be breaking down one of the mounds, or fence upguard the modesty of good order of society; it would be opening the
flow gates of incontinence. Among things, whose value
most highly would fall before the rushing stream.
Let me, then, exhort you to spend this day in cheerful
obriety, calmness, tranquility: so will you be best
prepared to be benefited by its sacred duties, its sacred
exercises.

2. Another appropriate and happy employment in this day
is to attend to the state of mind and heart in your children.
This is an important duty in the part of parents; but it is one
with the press of business, if the things of worldly concerns
are apt to crowd out of the mind. The stillness of the Sabbath
is present one of the best opportunities for this purpose. It is a
favorable moment, their thoughts
views on such subjects, as they can understand, to
point out to them what is right, what is wrong,
and instill in a judicious way good principles, like the
dew upon the tender grass. A parent, who knows how
to do this properly, may do a great deal of good by
this. Its effects in the minds of children cannot but
be happy. It will create an interest in the day, and
will supply all the want of amusement. Expect,
I am persuaded that were the habit will establish.
it would be attended with nothing like the diseases of pain... And this way passing a part of the Sabbath could be rendered pleasant by that interest, wha a present takes, or ought to take in his children... You can scarcely begin too soon to do something of this kind. Solons may be impressed, received in a thousand different ways, before you are aware. And surely if by giving portion of your time on the Sabb. to this delightful employment, you can fix even one good principle firmly in the mind of your child... if you can thus do any thing to save your offspring from the grasp of the destroyers... to sow the seeds of virtue, of destroying those fierce... to lay the foundation for their being better members of society... you surely will have employed yourself in a way, in which it all good angels must look down with approbation... And let not parents excuse themselves from this duty in the plea of it not being qualified for it; habit & practice will enable them to do much more & better than they imagine. Any little is necessary beside patient attention of continual observation. Repeated efforts must at last effect something, of the lesson which has perhaps been often turned away... Would at least find a moment when the heart is open.
will enter at abide there...  

B. Reading is another profitable mode of passing a part of the Sabbath. A large part of the community have little or no leisure for reading on other days; if the practice be not maintained on this day at least, the taste for reading with all the advantages accompanying it will soon be lost. These advantages it is surely unnecessary to specify. In books are have the choicest spirits of the best intellects of different ages treasured up... Being dead, they yet speak... We may be guided by their light, though the sources from which it emanated have long since left our world; we may be admonished by their counsel, directed by their advice, armed by their zeal, strengthened by their truth, upheld by their experience, made wise by their wisdom, more virtuous by their virtue... Let rather in the Sabbath, if at no other time long open our minds to these good influences; let us spend many hours in reading the Bible, other good books; books on text of our duties, our hopes, our trials, or our final destination... Surely he who thus devotes a part of Sunday to the great work of improving his mind and heart, playing in those of information means of moral advancement,
of fears we should cherish with regard to the world to come. — Be it then an important part of our Sabbath duty to attend on public worship: — let us not satisfy ourselves with slight excuses for neglecting it; — let us at least take some part of the same interest in it that we do in other things, and I believe we ourselves shall acknowledge to be not quite so important. "Let us worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness in this day; — let us enter his gates with thanksgiving of his heart, with praise."

My dear sir, of some of the ways in which we may spend the Sabbath profitably and properly. And I feel the more decisions that they should be attended to, because I believe that in general they are applicable to ourselves. I speak it with pain, but I speak it truly, because it is my duty: — there are many abuses of the Sabbath in this place. We have all been eye witnesses of them to a greater or less degree. Open and direct violations of the Sabbath are not uncommon. — On the contrary, in the streets some take the occasion of this day to do what they learnt to be peril, on offence against the rules of good behavior, no less than against the command of Scripture. I do not say it, I am no advocate for a puritanical rigorism, my observance of the Sabbath; — but I do think, if it be worth while to have the day observed at all, it should
be with decency, sobriety, quiet, and decorum... We might content ourselves for one day, to shut out the voices, the follies, the moviments, and the labours of other days. We should be willing ourselves to save a little remnant of our time for sober thought, devout worship... when we give all the rest to the gorgers and nonsense of the world... It grieves me that there is occasion for these remonstrances; but it would grieve me more to pass by abuses of the Sabbath without any remark. God grant, that you may consider well of these things... as the Sabbath was made for man, may we so improve it, as to lift up our souls, when they are bowed down, to purify them, when they are spilt and the world.

April, 1823.

I mean the attendance for half the day only, as if it were done merely to discharge the duty of nature, but for our improvement, dedication.

At home, April 18th, 1823 - forenoon.