

The **BOISI CENTER** *for*

RELIGION *and* AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

Graduate Symposium on Religion and Politics
2018-2019

VOCATION
IN THE
AMERICAN IMAGINATION

Reading Packet 1

Boisi Center 2018-2019 Graduate Symposium on Religion and Politics

VOCATION IN THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION

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A
CHRISTIAN DIRECTORY:

OR, A BODY OF

PRACTICAL DIVINITY,

AND

CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

BY THE
REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. But ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi ———. MAL. ii. 7, 8.

Every SCRIBE which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. MATT. xiii. 52.

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1825.

of it requireth, because I have already said so much, especially in three treatises, viz. "The vain Religion of the Formal Hypocrite:" that called "Now or Never:" and "A Saint or a Brute."

I conclude with these earnest requests to the godly: 1. Give men no occasion of scorn by your imprudence, scandal, selfishness, or passion, as you tender the honour of God and men's salvation. As Chrysostom saith, "As he that beareth the king's standard in fight had need to be well guarded, so he that carrieth the name and profession of God and godliness^p." 2. Be not discouraged by scorers: these are but easy in comparison of what Christ suffered for you, and what the scorers themselves must suffer.

CHAPTER X.

Directions for the Government of the Body.

PART I.

Directions about our Labour and Callings.

Tit. 1. Directions for the Right Choice of our Calling and ordinary Labour.

I HAVE already spoken of Christian works, and the duty of our callings, Chap. iii. Grand Direct. 10. ; and am now only to subjoin these few Directions, for the right choosing of your callings: for of the using of them I must speak more anon.

Direct. 1. 'Understand how necessary a life of labour is, and the reasons of the necessity.'

Quest. 1. 'Is labour necessary to all? Or to whom if not to all?' *Answ.* It is necessary (as a duty) to all that are able to perform it: but to the unable it is not necessary: as to infants, and sick persons, or distracted persons that cannot do it, or to prisoners, or any that are restrained or

^p Socrates cum fuisset à quodam calce percussus, admirantibus illius tolerantiam dixit; quid enim si me asinus calce impetisset, num illi diem dixissem? Diog. Laert. lib. ii. sect. 22. p. 92.

hindered unavoidably by others, or to people that are disabled by age, or by any thing that maketh it naturally impossible.

Quest. II. 'What labour is it that is necessary?' *Answ.* Some labour that shall employ the faculties of the soul and body, and be profitable, as far as may be, to others and ourselves. But the same kind of labour is not necessary for all.

In some labours, the mind is more employed than the body: as in the labours of a magistrate, a minister, a physician, a lawyer, &c.: though some in these may have much bodily labour also.

The labour of some is almost only of the mind: as, 1. Of students in divinity, philosophy, law, physic, &c., who are but preparing themselves for a calling. 2. Of some ministers, or other godly persons, who by the iniquity of the place or times where they live, may for a season be disabled from appearing among men, and labouring for any except by the mind: being imprisoned, or driven into solitude, or otherwise made incapable. 3. Of men that have some extraordinary necessity for a season, to converse with God and themselves alone: as, men that are near death, and have need to lay by all other labours to prepare themselves. Though, usually, even they that are near death should labour the good of others to the last; and in so doing they profit and prepare themselves.

The labour of some others is more of the body than the mind: as, most tradesmen and day-labourers.

And the labour of some is equally of the body and mind: as, some painful ministers, and physicians, scribes, and artificers of more ingenious professions, as watchmakers, printers, builders, &c.: some of these are fittest for one man, and some for another^a.

Quest. III. 'May not religion excuse men from all other labour, save prayer and contemplation^b?' *Answ.* Religion is our obligation to obey God. God bindeth us to do all the good we can to others. Some men that have ability, opportunity, and a call, may be excused by religion from worldly labours, as ministers; but not from such spiritual

^a See 1 Cor. ix. 6. 2 Cor. vi. 1. 1 Cor. xvi. 10. 2 Tim. ii. 15.

^b See before Chap. vi. Tit. 4. of this: and in my "Treatise of Divine Life," Part iii.

labours for others which they can perform. He that under pretence of religion, withdraweth from converse, and forbeareth to do good to others, and only liveth to himself and his own soul, doth make religion a pretence against charity and the works of charity, which are a great part of religion : for "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world^c." Even when sickness, imprisonment, or persecution disableth to do any more for others, we must pray for them. But while we can do more, we must.

Quest. iv. 'Will not riches excuse one from labouring in a calling?' *Ans.* No: but rather bind them to it the more: for he that hath most wages from God, should do him most work. Though they have no outward want to urge them, they have as great a necessity of obeying God, and doing good to others, as any other men have that are poor.

Quest. v. 'Why is labour thus necessary to all that are able?' *Ans.* 1. God hath strictly commanded it to all: and his command is reason enough to us. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread^d." "We beseech you brethren—that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and work with your hands as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly (or decently) towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing^e." "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground^f." And in the fourth Commandment; "Six days shalt thou labour." So Ephes. iv. 28. Prov. xxxi. 31. 33.

2. Naturally, action is the end of all our powers; and the power were vain, but in respect to the act. To be able to understand, to read, to write, to go, &c. were little worth, if it were not that we may do the things that we are enabled to.

^c James i. 27.

^e Ver. 6. 14. 1 Thess. iv. 11.

^d 2 Thess. iii. 10—12.

^f Gen. iii. 19.

3. It is for action that God maintaineth us and our abilities: work is the moral as well as the natural end of power. It is the act by the power that is commanded us.

4. It is action that God is most served and honoured by: not so much by our being able to do good, but by our doing it. Who will keep a servant that is able to work, and will not? Will his mere ability answer your expectation?

5. The public welfare, or the good of many, is to be valued above our own. Every man therefore is bound to do all the good he can to others, especially for the church and commonwealth. And this is not done by idleness, but by labour! As the bees labour to replenish their hive, so man being a sociable creature, must labour for the good of the society which he belongs to, in which his own is contained as a part.

6. Labour is necessary for the preservation of the faculties of the mind. (1.) The labour of the mind is necessary hereto, because unexercised abilities will decay; as iron not used will consume with rust. Idleness makes men fools and dullards, and spoileth that little ability which they have. (2.) And the exercise of the body is ordinarily necessary, because of the mind's dependance on the body, and acting according to its temperature and disposition: it is exceedingly helped or hindered by the body.

7. Labour is needful to our health and life: the body itself will quickly fall into mortal diseases without it: (except in some very few persons of extraordinary soundness^s.) Next to abstinence, labour is the chief preserver of health. It stirreth up the natural heat and spirits, which perform the chief offices for the life of man: it is the proper bellows for this vital fire: it helpeth all the concoctions of nature: it attenuateth that which is too gross: it purifieth that which beginneth to corrupt: it openeth obstructions: it keepeth the mass of blood and other nutritious humours in their proper temperament, fit for motion, circulation, and nutrition; it helpeth them all in the discharge of their natural offices: it helpeth the parts to attract each one its pro-

^s Socrates was mightily addicted to the exercise of his body, as necessary to the health of body and mind. Laert. Plutarch out of Plato saith, that soul and body should be equally exercised together, and driven on as two horses in a coach, and not either of them overgo the other. Prec. of Health.

per nutriment, and promoteth every fermentation and assimilation by which nature maintaineth the transitory, still-consuming oil and mass : it excelleth art in the preparation, alteration, and expulsion of all the excrementitious matter, which being retained would be the matter of manifold diseases ; and powerfully fighteth against all the enemies of health. In a word, it doth incomparably excel the help of the most skilful physicians and excellent medicines in the world, for the preventing of most diseases incident to man : (and consequently to the benefit of the soul itself, which cheerfully useth a cheerful and well-tempered body ; and useth a languishing, sickly body, as the rider useth a tired horse, or as we use a sick or lazy servant, or a blunted knife, or a clock or watch that is out of order.) I speak all this of bodily labour, which is necessary to the body, and consequently to the mind : for want of which abundance grow melancholy, and abundance grow sluggish and good for nothing, and abundance cherish filthy lusts, and millions yearly turn to earth before their time. For want of bodily labour a multitude of the idle gentry, and rich people, and young people that are slothful, do heap up in the secret receptacles of the body a dunghill of unconcocted, excrementitious filth, and vitiate all the mass of humours which should be the fuel and oil of life, and die by thousands of untimely deaths, (of fevers, palsies, convulsions, apoplexies, dropsies, consumptions, gout, &c.) more miserably than if thieves had murdered them by the highway, because it is their own doing, and by their sloth they kill themselves. For want of bodily exercise and labour interposed, abundance of students and sedentary persons fill themselves with diseases, and hasten their death, and causelessly blame their hard studies for that which was caused by their bodily sloth. The hardest studies will do little harm to most men, if they do but by convenient, interposed bodily labour, keep all the humours in their just temperament : when by a sluggish walk now and then, instead of labour and sweat, they defraud themselves. If the world knew but the benefit of Temperance and Labour to the maintaining of man's health and life, and the mischiefs of Excess of meat and drink, and Idleness, the love of health and life would do that with them, which God's authority will not do.

8. Labour and diligence do keep the mind upon a lawful employment, and therefore keep out many dangerous temptations, and keep the thoughts from vanity and sin: and also keepeth out vain words, and preserveth the soul from many sins, which a life of idleness and sloth doth cherish. It helpeth even unlearned persons more effectually to restrain their thoughts and words from sin, than the greatest knowledge and diligent watchfulness can do, in an idle kind of life.

9. Diligent labour mortifieth the flesh, and keepeth under its luxurious inclinations, and subdueth that pride, and lust, and brutish sensuality which is cherished by an idle life.

10. Lastly, It is God's appointed means for the getting of our daily bread: and as it is a more real honour to get our bread ourselves, than to receive it by the gift of our friends or parents, so is it more comfortable to a well-informed mind. We may best believe that we have our food and provisions in mercy, and that they shall be blest to us, when we have them in God's appointed way: who hath said, "If any man will not work, neither should he eat."

Direct. 11. 'As labour is thus necessary, so understand how needful a stated calling is, for the right performance of your labours.' A calling is a stated, ordinary course of labour. This is very needful for these reasons. 1. Out of a calling a man's labours are but occasional, or inconstant, and so more time is spent in idleness than in labour. 2. A man is best skilled in that which he is used to. 3. And he will be best provided for it, with instruments and necessities. 4. Therefore he doth it better than he could do another work, and so wrongeth not others, but attaineth more the ends of his labour. 5. And he doth it more easily; when a man unused, and unskilled, and unfurnished, toileth himself much in doing little. 6. And he will do his work more orderly, when another is in continual confusion, and his business knoweth not its time and place, but one part contradicts another. Therefore some certain calling or trade of life is best for every man.

Quest. 1. 'May not a man have a calling consisting of occasional, uncertain works?' *Answ.* He that can have no better, may do thus; so be it they are consistent works which he is able for: as a footman may go of various ex-

lands, and a day-labourer may do many sorts of works. But great variety will be a great inconvenience to him.

Quest. 11. 'May a man have divers trades or callings at once?' *Answ.* Yes, no doubt, if it be for the common good or for his own, and no injury to any other; nor so inconsistent, as that one shall make him unfaithful in the other: then God forbids it not.

The Question, 'Whether a man may change his calling?' I answered before, Chap. iii. Direct. 10.

Direct. 111. 'Think not that a calling can be lawful, when the work of it is sin; nor that you, or your labour, or your gain in an unlawful calling, shall be blest.' An unlawful act is bad enough: but an unlawful calling is a life of sin. To make sin a man's trade, and work, and living, is a most horrid, desperate course of life. As mercenary soldiers, that for their pay will fight against authority, right or innocency, and murder men for half a crown a day: and those that live by cheating, stealing, oppressing, whoring, or by resetting such; or upon the sin of such: or of drunkards, gamesters, or other sensual vices, which they knowingly and willingly maintain.

Direct. iv. 'Think not that because a work is lawful, that therefore it is lawful to make a calling of it.' It is lawful to jest in time and measure, but not lawful to be a jester as a trade of life. If in some cases it should prove lawful to act a comedy or tragedy, it will not follow, that therefore it is lawful to be by trade a stage-player: if a game at cards or dice may be in some cases lawful, it follows not, that it is lawful to be a gamester by trade. The like I may say of many others.

Direct. v. 'It is not enough that the work of your calling be lawful, nor that it be necessary, but you must take special care also that it be safe, and not very dangerous to your souls.' The calling of a vintner and ale-seller is lawful and needful: and yet it is so very dangerous that (unless it be in an extraordinary place or case,) a man that loveth his soul should be loath to meddle with it, if he can have a safer to get his bread by. They get so little by sober people, and their gain dependeth so much upon men's sin, that it is a constant temptation to them to be the maintainers of it. And frail man, that can so hardly stand on firm ground,

should be loath for a little money to walk still upon the ice, and to venture his soul in a life of such temptations; for it is twenty to one but they will prevail.

Direct. vi. 'The first and principal thing to be intended in the choice of a trade or calling for yourselves or children, is the service of God, and the public good: and therefore ('cæteris paribus') that calling which most conduceth to the public good is to be preferred.' The callings most useful to the public good are the magistrates, the pastors, and teachers of the church, schoolmasters, physicians, lawyers, &c., husbandmen (ploughmen, graziers, and shepherds): and next to them are mariners, clothiers, booksellers, tailors, and such other that are employed about things most necessary to mankind: and some callings are employed about matters of so little use, (as tobacco-sellers, lace-sellers, feather-makers, periwig-makers, and many more such,) that he that may choose better, should be loath to take up with one of these, though possibly in itself it may be lawful. It is a great satisfaction to an honest mind, to spend his life in doing the greatest good he can; and a prison and constant calamity to be tied to spend one's life in doing little good at all to others, though he should grow rich by it himself.

Direct. vii. 'When two callings equally conduce to the public good, and one of them hath the advantage of riches, and the other is more advantageous to your souls, the latter must be preferred: and next to the public good, the soul's advantage must guide your choice:' as suppose that a lawyer were as profitable to the public good as a divine, and it is the way to far more wealth and honour; yet the sacred calling is much more desirable for the benefit of your souls: because it is an exceeding great help, to be engaged by our callings to have the word and doctrine of Christ still before us, and in our minds and mouths; when others must be glad to be now and then exercised in it, when their hearts are cooled by the frequent and long diversions of their worldly business: so that our calling and work is to an honest heart a continual recreation, and preserving, and edifying help to grace. So a schoolmaster's calling is usually but poor and very painful, requiring much close attendance, but yet it is of so great use to the common good, and alloweth the mind so much leisure and advantage to improve itself in honest

studies, that it is fitter to be chosen and delighted in by a well-tempered mind, than richer and more honoured employments. It is sweet to be all day doing so much good.

Direct. VIII. 'If it be possible choose a calling which so exerciseth the body, as not to overwhelm you with cares and labour, and deprive you of all leisure for the holy and noble employments of the mind: and which so exerciseth your mind, as to allow you some exercise for the body also.'

1. That calling which so taketh up body and mind, as neither to allow you commixed thoughts of greater things, nor convenient intermissions for them, is a constant snare and prison to the soul: which is the case of many who plunge themselves into more and greater business than they can otherwise dispatch: and yet are contented to be thus continually alienated in their minds from God and heaven, to get more of the world. Many poor labourers (as clothiers, tailors, and other such) can work with their hands, and meditate or discourse of heavenly things without any hindrance of their work: when many men of richer callings have scarce room for a thought or word of God, or heaven all day. 2. On the contrary, if the body have not also its labour as well as the mind, it will ruin your health; and body and mind will both grow useless.

Direct. IX. 'It is lawful and meet to look at the commodity of your calling in the third place, (that is, after the public good, and after your personal good of soul and bodily health.)' Though it is said, "Labour not to be rich^a:" the meaning is, that you make not riches your chief end: riches for our fleshly ends must not ultimately be intended or sought. But in subordination to higher things they may: that is, you may labour in that manner as tendeth most to your success and lawful gain: you are bound to improve all your master's talents: but then your end must be, that you may be the better provided to do God service, and may do the more good with what you have. If God shew you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul, or to any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward, and to accept his gifts, and use them for him when

^a Prov. xxiii. 24.

he requireth it : you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin.]

Direct. x. 'It is not enough that you consider what calling and labour is most desirable, but you must also consider what you or your children are fittest for, both in mind and body.' For that calling may be one man's blessing, which would be another's misery and undoing. A weak body cannot undergo those labours that require strength : and a dull and heavy mind and wit, cannot do the works which require great judgment and ingenuity¹. It hath been the calamity of the church, and undoing of many ministers themselves, that well-meaning parents out of love to the sacred work of God, have set their children to be ministers that were unfit for it : and many self-conceited persons themselves are ready to thrust themselves into that holy office, when they have some inconsiderable smattering knowledge, and some poor measure of gifts, overvalued by themselves, that know not what is required to so great a work. Be sure that you first look to the natural ingenuity of your children (or yourselves) and then to their grace and piety : and see that none be devoted to the ministry that have not naturally a quickness of understanding, and a freedom of expression, unless you would have him live upon the ruin of souls, and wrong of the church and work of God ; and turn an enemy to the best of his flock, when he seeth that they value him but as he deserves : and let none be so unwise as to become a preacher of that faith, and love and holiness which he never had himself. And even to the calling of a physician none should be designed that have not a special ingenuity, and sagacity, and natural quickness of apprehension ; unless he should make a trade of killing men ; for it is a calling that requireth a quick and strong conjecturing ability, which no study will bring a man that hath not a natural acuteness and aptitude thereto. Thus also as to all other callings, you must consider, not only the will of the child or parents, but their natural fitness of body and mind.

Direct. xi. 'Choose no calling (especially if it be of

¹ Omnes qui sunt, quique erant, aut fuerunt, virtutibus aut doctrinis clarī, non possunt unum ingenium accendere, nisi aliquæ iutus in animo scintillæ sint, quæ præceptoris spiritu excitatæ et adjutæ, generosum disciplinæ fomitem arripiant. Petrar. Dial. xli. lib. ii.

public consequence) without the advice of some judicious, faithful persons of that calling.' For they are best able to judge in their own profession. Never resolve on the sacred ministry without the advice of able ministers : resolve not to be a physician, but by the counsel of physicians ; and so of the rest : for abundance of persons ignorantly conceit themselves sufficient, that are utterly insufficient ; and so live all their days, as wrongs and burdens unto others, and in sin and misery to themselves.

Direct. XII. 'If thou be called to the poorest laborious calling do not carnally murmur at it, because it is wearisome to the flesh, nor imagine that God accepteth the less of thy work and thee : but cheerfully follow it, and make it the matter of thy pleasure and joy that thou art still in thy heavenly Master's service, though it be about the lowest things : and that he who knoweth what is best for thee, hath chosen this for thy good, and trieth and valueth thy obedience to him the more, by how much the meaner work thou stoopest to at his command.' But see that thou do it all in obedience to God, and not merely for thy own necessity : thus every servant must serve the Lord in serving their masters, and from God expect their chief reward ^k.

Tit. 2. Directions against Idleness and Sloth.

Here I must shew you what idleness and sloth is, and what are the signs of it : and then give you directions how to conquer it. Sloth signifieth chiefly the indisposition of the mind and body ; and idleness signifieth the actual neglect or omission of our duties. Sloth is an averseness to labour, through a carnal love of ease, or indulgence to the flesh. This averseness to labour is sinful, when it is a voluntary backwardness to that labour which is our duty. Sloth sheweth itself, 1. In keeping us from our duty, and causing us to delay it, or omit it : and 2. In making us to do it slowly and by the halves : and both these effects are called idleness, which is the omission or negligent performance of our duties through a flesh-pleasing backwardness to labour.

By this you may see, 1. That it is not sloth or sinful

^k Col. iii. 22—24. Eph. vi. 6, 7.

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DISCOURSES 1749

on Various

5. 6. 23
Important Subjects,

Nearly concerning the great Affair of the Soul's

Eternal Salvation,

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- II. Pressing into the Kingdom of GOD.
- III. *Ruth's* Resolution.
- IV. The Justice of GOD in the Damnation of Sinners.
- V. The Excellency of JESUS CHRIST.

Delivered at *Northampton*, chiefly at the Time of the late wonderful pouring out of the Spirit of GOD there.

By *Jonathan Edwards, A.M.*

Pastor of the Church of CHRIST in *Northampton*.

Deut. iv. 8. — *Take heed to thy self, and keep thy Soul diligently, lest thou forget the Things which thine Eyes have seen; and lest they depart from thy Heart all the Days of thy Life.*

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1734–1738

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THE PRECIOUSNESS OF TIME

SOMETIME in 1722, probably after his appointment in August as supply minister to the small English Presbyterian church near Wall Street in New York, Edwards began a diary, now lost, of almost daily confessions of self-doubt and spiritual decay. On a sabbath evening in early January he recorded that he was "Much concerned about the improvement of precious time"; three nights later, on the 9th, he added, "I do not seem to be half so careful to improve time"; at noon on the 10th, he vowed "to make a resolution how to improve the day." And so he does. In the fifth of a series of seventy resolutions, designed to complement his diary and dedicated to do "whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God and my own good," Edwards resolved "never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it the most profitable way I possibly can."¹ Now, a dozen years later, perhaps remembering those days when he was a young man starting out, he tells his parishioners that "the time of youth is more precious upon many accounts than other time"; that they must not let "the precious days and years of youth slip without improvement"; that "the time of the strivings of God's spirit is more precious than other time," a time "when God is near," and "especially an accepted time and day of salvation." That was in December 1734; earlier, in February, he had suggested that young people might better spend their time in religious societies than in taverns, and in May that they embrace religion then rather than wait for an uncertain tomorrow. "And then it was, in the latter part of December," he was later to recall, "that the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in, and wonderfully to work among us. . . . The news of it seemed to be almost like a flash of lightning, upon the hearts of young people all over the town." And it ignited many of them into surprising conversions.²

Young people so force Edwards' thoughts on time that even his com-

1. See "Diary" and "Resolutions," *Works*, 16, 761-62 and 753. In a letter to his father, written from New Haven on July 24, 1719, JE assures him that "I am sensible of the preciousness of my time and am resolved it shall not be through any neglect of mine, if it slips without the greatest advantage" (*ibid.*, p. 32). A few weeks earlier (June 30, 1719), Rector Timothy Cutler of Yale congratulates Timothy Edwards on his son's "promising Abilities and Advances in Learning" (quoted in Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 60).

2. *Faithful Narrative*, *Works*, 4, 149.

ments on their elders, those who have "lost the best" of their time, are predicated on youth. "What have you done with the whole time of your youth," he asks, "you that are past your youth? What is become of all that precious season of life?" Satan himself makes such a division, goading the young to put off doing anything now because "there is time enough hereafter" and counseling the not-so-young that "the best of their time" to do anything is gone. Even so, the abstract nature of Edwards' subject shapes the text. In a brief explication of the briefest of scriptures, "Redeeming the time," he speculates on four possible meanings of *redeeming*, and then repairs to metaphor to anchor the Doctrine, "Time is a thing that is exceeding precious." Time is precious because eternity depends upon the improvement of it, much as gold and silver are precious only by "avoiding any sort of evil or procuring any good"; time is precious because it is short, as people set a high value on bread when it is scarce "because bread is what they must have or perish"; time is precious because it is indeterminate, just as laid up provisions may fail a man on a journey if he is not "more choice of his store"; time is precious, finally, because it is irrecoverable, unlike goods "bartered away or sold," which may be released from the bargain and returned.

The Improvement, at more than twice the length of the Doctrine, extends the metaphors of time, but here, of necessity, they engage the people as well as the idea. For example, Edwards reminds those congregants who have lost "that precious season of life, even the time of youth," that the "golden sands" of their glass are "more than half run," that their "sun is past the meridian, and perhaps just a-setting, or going into an everlasting eclipse." He compares profligates of time to those who throw away their money, "persons beside themselves," and likens idlers who spend their time viciously—in drinking, revelling, company-keeping, corrupting, backbiting—to those who "make a sword of this precious metal to stab themselves withal." He exhorts them all, God's servants, to be accountable to time as a servant is to a master, and to "wake out of sleep, thoroughly to rouse up" to work toward eternity, "though it be late in the day." As it turned out, many were to spend the "long winter evenings" of 1734 not in idle talk at their "neighbor's firesides" but in "prayer and meditation, and reading profitable books," just as Edwards had advised, and hoped.

* * *

Hardly a leaf of the eighteen that comprise this duodecimo manuscript escapes Edwards' editorial hand, almost a hundred emendations in dif-

ferent ink(s). He exchanges one word or phrase for another—"recover it" for "fetch it back," for example—and strikes whole sentences and successive paragraphs, often drawing a line down the center to mark the excision. Sometimes, to highlight passages, he draws a line down the left or right margins or brackets several passages (LL. 2v.-4r., 4v., 5r.-9r., 9v.-10r., 13r.-14v., 15r.-17r., and 17r.-17v.). By these means, he effectively reduces two preaching units to one. Notes to the first leaf may account for the extensive revisions, for in addition to "December 1734," the date of the original preaching at Northampton, the sermon was "preached a second time from John 9:4" (at an unspecified time and place), again in "January 1752," and three times in 1753: "at Windsor [in] May," "Pantoosuck [in] July," and to the "Stockbridge Indians" sometime that year. Few other surviving sermons were preached as often.³ What accounts for that may be the simplicity of the text, "Redeeming the time"—that and the vagrant hope that the work it signaled years before might be generated again.

3. Regardless, JE did not publish the MS, though his son did in *Sermons* (1788), pp. 282-96; repr. Dwight ed., 6, 486-97.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF TIME

EPHESIANS 5:16.

Redeeming the time.

REDEEMING has ever more a relation to something that is either lost, or some way gone out of our possession, or at least that is ready to be lost, or that is about to be taken from us.

The words here may be interpreted in various senses. The Apostle may have respect to others' misspending of time. He says, "Redeem the time, because the days are evil. The days being evil, ye see others lavish away precious time; but do you endeavor to redeem it?"

Or it may have respect to their past loss of time. The Apostle puts the Christian Ephesians in mind, how they in time past misspent their precious time. [The] eighth verse, "For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." He may advise 'em now to redeem [it].

Or he may have respect to the great danger of time's being lost, by reason of the days being so evil. It being so, there was abundant temptation to an ill improvement of time. If they had not a great care, time would slip out of their hands, and they would have no benefit by it. They had need therefore to "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," as 'tis found in the foregoing verse, that they might save their time.

Or, lastly, it may have respect to the redeeming the time from those awful calamities that God was about to bring upon the wicked. The apostles often were foretelling of terrible judgments that were coming. He perhaps advises Christians to [take] the greater care to live holily, and to labor to reclaim others from their bad courses, that so God might defer his anger; and so time might be redeemed and as it were saved from that terrible destruction that, when it came, would put an end to the time of God's patience. And it may be upon this account that this reason is added, "because the days are evil." The corruption of the times tends to hasten threatened judgments; but your holy and circumspect walk will tend to redeem time from the devouring jaws of these calamities.

But in which sense soever the expression be understood, this much is certainly held forth to us in the words, viz. that time is a thing that we should set an high value upon; that we should be so careful that it ben't lost, and are exhorted to such wisdom and circumspection to redeem it. That which is little worth, 'tis not worth our while to be at much pains or cost to redeem, when it is ready to be lost. Therefore the

DOCTRINE.

Time is a thing that is exceeding precious.

For the following reasons:

I. Because eternity depends on the improvement of time. Things are precious in proportion to the importance of them, or according to the degree wherein they concern our welfare. Men are wont to set the highest value on those things that they are sensible, and that they have their chief dependence upon. Other things they may easily part with, but they won't very easily part with such things. And this renders time so exceeding precious, because our welfare, and interest of it, depends upon the improvement of it.

Time is precious upon other accounts. It is precious, because our welfare in this world depends upon the improvement of it. It is precious, because, if we don't improve it, we shall be in danger of coming to poverty and disgrace. It is precious, because, by the good improvement of it, we may obtain those things that will be comfortable to us here. But it is above all things precious, as eternity depends upon it. The importance of the improvement of time upon other accounts is in subordination to this, and is little [or] nothing in comparison of this. According as we either improve or lose our time, so shall we be happy or miserable to all eternity: without the improvement of time, our eternity will be miserable; and with a good improvement of time, our eternity will be happy. Gold and silver are esteemed precious by men, but they are nothing worth to any man, but only as he thereby has an opportunity, either of avoiding or removing some evil, or possessing himself of some good: if a man has never so much silver or gold, if it gives him no opportunity, either of avoiding any sort of evil or procuring any good, it is nothing worth to him.

And the greater the evil is that any man has advantage to escape, or the good that he has opportunity to obtain, by anything that he has, by so much of the greater worth or value is that thing to him. Thus if a man, by

anything that he had, might save his life, he would look upon that thing, by which he had opportunity of escaping so great an evil or death, to be very precious. So if by anything he had, he had opportunity to obtain a kingdom, it would be of great value to him.

And hence it is that time is a thing so exceeding precious, because 'tis by that that we have opportunity of escaping everlasting misery and of obtaining eternal blessedness and glory. 'Tis upon the improvement of time that there depends an escape from an infinite evil and an obtaining an infinite good. And this puts an infinite value upon time.

Eternity depends upon it, for eternity is an infinite or endless duration. And to be miserable through eternity is an infinite evil; 'tis infinitely dreadful. And so to be happy through [eternity is an infinite good].

II. Time is very short, which is another thing that renders it very precious: the scarcity of any commodity occasions men to set an higher value upon it, especially if it be a thing that is necessary to be had and that they can't do without, or be that which their interest much depends upon.

Thus when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and a fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver" (II Kgs. 6:25).

When bread is very scarce, they that have bread have but a little of it. They will be more choice of it, and will set an higher value upon it, because bread is what they must have or perish.

So time is the more to be prized by men, because an whole eternity depends upon it; and yet we have but a little of it. When a few days are gone, then we must go where we shall not return (Job 16:22). Our "days are swifter than a post. They are passed away as the swift ships, and as the eagle that hasteth to the prey" (Job 9:25-26). Our life, what is it? "It is but a vapor, that continues a little while, and then vanishes away" (Jas. 4:14). 'Tis but a moment to eternity, and bears no proportion to it.

Time is so short, and the work is so great that we have to do in it, that we have none of it to spare. The work that we have to do to prepare for eternity must be done in time, or it never can be done; and 'tis found to be a work of great difficulty and labor.

We read of silver being so plenty in Solomon's time that it was as the stones of the street: it was nothing accounted of; they had more of it than they needed, or knew what to do with. But this is not the case with us with respect to time. And 'tis but a little time that God hath allotted to us, a short space that is soon all of it gone.

If a man loses any of that that he has but little of, and yet is absolutely

necessary to him, his loss is the greater. [It is] as if he has but a little food wherewith [to] support his life: if he loses some of it, his loss is greater than if had an abundance. So we ought to prize our time the more highly, and to be careful that we don't lose any of it, because it is so short, and yet what is so necessary to us.

III. Time ought to be looked upon as very precious by us upon this account also, that we are uncertain of the continuance of it. We know that 'tis very short, but we don't know how short: we don't know how little there is of it remaining, whether a year or several years, or only a month, or a week, or a day.

We don't know but that every day be not the last, or how little of the day we are to have. There is nothing that experience doth more verify than this.

This is another thing that makes time precious, and upon the account of which we ought to be the more careful not to lose the least part of it, seeing that our everlasting welfare depends on the improvement of time. If a man had provision laid up for a journey, and knew that he had but a little, and he knew not how little, and at the same time knew that if his provision failed, he must perish upon his journey; he would be the more choice of his store, for his not knowing what there was of it. He would be the more careful not to throw any of it away, not to lose any of it. This thought would make him the more careful that he did not know how much there was; and therefore if he parted with but little, it may be there would not be enough to support him through his journey.

How much more would many men prize their time, if they knew that they had but a few months, or a few days more in the world; and certainly a wise man would prize his time the more, because he does not know but that it is so. This is the case with multitudes now in the world that now are in health, and so [see] no signs of approaching death. Many without doubt are to die the next month, and many are to die the next week; many are to die tomorrow that now know nothing of it, and think nothing about it. And neither they nor their neighbors can say [they] are any more likely soon to be taken out of the world than others. How many have died out of this town at one time and another, when neither they nor their neighbors saw any signs of death a week beforehand. And probably there are various persons now here present, hearing what I now say, that are to die in a very little time, that have no apprehension of it.

This teaches us how we ought to prize our time, and be careful that we don't lose any of it.

IV. Time is very precious, because when it is past, it can't be recovered.

There are many things that men possess which, if they part with, they can obtain 'em again. If a man has parted with something he had, not knowing the worth of it, or the need he should have of it, he oftentimes can get it again, at least with pains and cost. If a man has been overseen in a bargain, and bartered away or sold something that he had, and afterwards repents of it, he may oftentimes get a release, and recover what he has parted with.

But it is not so with respect to time. When once that is gone, it is gone forever. No pains, no cost will fetch it back. If we repent never so much that we have let it go, and did not improve it while we had it, it will signify nothing.

Therefore we should be the more choice of it, while we have it; for that which is well improved is not lost; though the time itself be gone, yet the benefit of it abides with us.

It is so with our time, both in whole and in every particular part. When any part of time is lost, 'tis irrecoverably gone. The offer is never but once made us, whether we will improve it or no. Every part of our time is as it were successively offered to us, that we may choose whether we will make it our own or no; but there is no tarry⁴ to wait upon us, to see whether we will or not. But if we refuse, 'tis immediately taken away, and never offered more. As to that part of time that is gone, if we han't well improved it, 'tis out of our possession, and out of our reach. 'Tis only what is yet before us that we have any opportunity to make our own, whether that be less or more.

If we have lived fifty, or sixty, or seventy years, and han't improved them, it now can't be helped. 'Tis all eternally gone from us. All that we can do, is to improve the little that remains. Yea, if we have spent all our lives, but a few minutes was improved, all that is gone is lost; and 'tis only those few remaining minutes that 'tis possible should be made his own.

And if the whole of our time be gone and it be all lost, 'tis irrecoverable. Eternity depends on the improvement of time; but when once the time of life is gone, when once death is come, we have no more to do with time. There is no fetching of it back: there is no obtaining of a repetition of it, or another space to prepare for eternity in. For this reason we ought to set the higher value upon time, while we have it. If a man loses his money, oftentimes he can get more, and so make up his loss. If a man should lose the whole of his worldly substance, and becomes a bankrupt, 'tis possible that his loss may be made up; he may have another estate as good. But

4. Spending or loss of time; delay; procrastination (OED).

when the time of life is gone, it is impossible that we should ever obtain another such time. 'Tis utterly and everlastingly gone.

IMPROVEMENT.

Use I may be of *Self-Reflection*, to put persons upon reflections and inquiring what they have done with their time. You have heard now of the preciousness of time, and you are a person concerned. You are one to whom God has committed that precious talent. You have had a great deal of time. You have had a great deal [of] time that is past. And time is as much worth to you as to others whether you are so sensible of the worth of it or no. You are one that has an eternity before you. When God created you and gave you a reasonable soul, he made you for an eternity; and he gave you time here in order to a preparation for eternity. And your future eternity depends on the improvement of time.

Consider therefore what you have done with your past time. You are not now beginning of time; but a great deal of your time is past and gone, and all the wit and power of the universe can't recover it. How have you spent it? Let your own consciences make answer.

There are many of you that may well conclude that half your time is gone. If you should live to the ordinary age of man, your glass is more than half run, and perhaps there may be but few sands remaining: your sun is past the meridian, and perhaps just a-setting, or going into an everlasting eclipse. Consider therefore what account can you give of your improvement of your past time. How have you let the precious golden sands of your glass run?

Every day that you have had, has been precious; yea, your moments have been precious. But have you not wasted your precious moments and precious days, yea, and precious years? If you should go to reckon up how many days you have lived, what a sum would there be? And how precious has every one of those days been, and what have you done with them? What is become of 'em all? What can you show of any improvement, or good done, or benefit obtained, answerable to all this time that you have lived? When you look back and search, don't you find this past time of your life in a great measure empty, having not been filled up with any good improvement? And if God that has given you your time, should now call you to an account, what account could you give to him?

How much may be done in a year? How much good is there opportunity for doing in such a space of time? How much service may persons do for God, and how much for their own souls, if persons do their utmost to

improve it? [How much] may be done in a day? But what have you done in so many days and years that you have lived? What have you done with the whole time of your youth, you that are past your youth? What is become of all that precious season of life? What have you to show for it all? Has not all that precious season of life, even the time of youth, been in vain to you? Would it not have been as well or better for you, if you had been all that time asleep or in a state of nonexistence?

You have had a great deal of time of freedom from your worldly business. Consider what you have done with it. To what purpose have you spent it?⁵ What have you done with all the sabbath days that you have had? You han't only had ordinary time, but you have had a great deal of holy time. How have you spent it? Consider these things seriously, and let your own consciences make answer.⁶

Use II is of *Reproof*, to those who lose and misspend their time. How little is the preciousness of time considered, and how little of a sense do the greater part of men seem to have of it, and how lavish are they of it. To how little good purpose do many spend their time. There is nothing more precious, and yet nothing that men are more wasteful of.

Time is with many as silver was in the days of Solomon. 'Tis as the stones of the street, and nothing accounted of, but not because 'tis in great plenty, as silver then was.

Mankind act as if time was a thing that they had in greatest plenty, and as if they had a great deal more than they needed, and knew not what to do with it.

If men were as lavish of their money as they are of their time, and it was as common a thing for them to throw away their money as 'tis for men to throw away their time, we think [them] persons beside themselves. And yet time is a thousand times more precious than money, and is what can't be purchased for money. When it is gone, money won't redeem it. There are several sorts of persons that are reproved by this doctrine that I shall particularly mention.

First. Those that spend a great deal of their time in idleness or doing nothing: in following no business at all, neither of their general nor particular calling; doing nothing that shall turn to any account, either for the good of their souls or bodies; nothing either for their own benefit, nor of the benefit of their neighbors, nor of the family, nor of public society.

There are some persons that time seems to lie heavy upon their hands.

5. In revising for re preaching, JE deletes the first and third of the next three sentences, and then restores the first after the second.

6. Here ends the first preaching unit. At the head of second unit is "Eph. 5:16 doc."

Instead of its being their concern to improve it as it passes, and seeing to it that it shall not pass without their making of it their own, they act as if it was rather their care to contrive ways how to waste and consume it; as though time, instead of being precious, was rather a mere encumbrance to them, that it was their contrivance to get rid of.

Their hands refuse to labor; and rather than to put themselves to it, they will let their families suffer, and will suffer themselves. Prov. 19:15, "The idle soul shall suffer hunger." Prov. 23:21, "Slothfulness⁷ shall clothe a man with rags."

Some spend much of their time at the tavern over their cups, and in wandering about from house to house, wasting away their hours in idle and unprofitable talk, that will turn to no good account. Prov. 14:23, "In all labor there is profit: but the talk of the lips tends only to poverty."⁸

The direction of the Apostle is, as in Eph. 4:28, that "we shall labor, working with our hands the thing that is good, that we might have to give to him that needeth." But instead of giving anything to give to him that needs, they do but waste what they have. Prov. 18:9, "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster."

Second. They are reprov'd by the doctrine that spend their time in wicked works, who don't merely spend their time in doing nothing to any good purpose, but they spend it to ill purposes. They don't only lose their time that is so precious, but they [do] worse than lose: they do themselves and others hurt with it. That which is such a precious jewel, that is more worth than thousands of gold and silver, whereby they have opportunity of obtaining a crown and kingdom, and securing everlasting blessedness, they wound and kill themselves with it. That by which they have opportunity to obtain life, they improve to their own death. They make a sword of this precious metal to stab themselves withal.

Time is precious, as we have heard, because eternity depends upon it by the improvement of time. We have opportunity of escaping eternal misery, and obtaining eternal blessedness. But those that spend their time in wicked works, they not only neglect to improve their time to obtain eternal happiness, or to escape [eternal] damnation, but they spend it to a quite contrary purpose, viz. to increase their eternal misery, to render their damnation the more heavy and intolerable.

Many spend their time not only idly but viciously. [Some] spend a great deal of it in excessive drinking. Some have spent much time in revelling,

7. AV: "drowsiness."

8. AV: "penury."

and in unclean talk and practices, and vicious company-keeping, and [in] corrupting and ensnaring the minds of others, setting bad examples, and leading others into sin, undoing not only their own souls, but the souls of others. They have spent their time in corrupting and infecting the towns and places where they live. Some spend a great deal of their precious time in talking against others, in detraction and backbiting. Some spend much time in contention not only quarrelling themselves, but fomenting and stirring up strife and contention.

What doleful ways are these of spending time that is so precious, as we have heard. This is not only wasting time; 'tis a worse way of abusing time than mere wasting of it. 'Tis as making that which is itself most precious to become the most pernicious.

It would have been well for some men, and well for their neighbors, if they had done nothing at all; for then they would have done neither good nor hurt. But now they have done a great deal more hurt than they ever have good, or ever will do. Sometimes one ill-disposed person does more hurt than ten well-disposed persons can do good.

There are some persons that it would have better for the towns where they live to have been at the charge of maintaining them in doing nothing, if that would have prevented their doing anything. Such as these not only waste their own time, but consume others' time, in being an occasion of others' ill-spending of time.

Those that have spent much of their time in wickedness, if ever they should reform, and set about a contrary improvement of time, would find not only that they have wasted their past time that they spent in wickedness, but that they have made work for their remaining time. It will probably take up more time from them to seek repentance. They have contracted those ill habits that will take up time for them to mortify and subdue. Sin is a great devourer of time. If we look abroad in the world, and consider how men behave themselves, alas, how much time is spent in sin, how much of the life of men is spent in it, and how much the greater part of men spend all their time in it.

Time as it is spent is good for nothing to them. When they are done with it, and look back, how will they wish that they had had no time. The time that they have spent on earth will be worse to them than if they had spent so much time in hell; for an eternity of misery in hell will be the fruit of their time on earth, as they have improved it.

Third. Those are reproved by this doctrine, who spend their time only in worldly pursuits, neglecting their souls. Such as these do lose their time, let 'em be never so diligent in their worldly business, though they may be

careful not to let any of their time pass so, but that it may some way or other turn to their worldly profit.

And if they have never so much success, and their improvement of their time turns never so much to their worldly advantage, yet they lose their time, if they live in the neglect of their souls and their eternal welfare.

Time was given in order to eternity. It is designed for a space of probation for eternity; and thence it is that time is so precious, even because eternity depends upon it. And therefore if men don't improve their time to the purposes of eternity, they lose it; they frustrate the end for which time was given them. They that improve time only for their benefit, in time do lose it, because time was not given for itself, but it was given for that everlasting duration that succeeds it.

They therefore whose time is taken up only in caring for the world, in inquiring what they shall eat {and drink}, in contriving to lay up for themselves treasure on the earth—how to enrich themselves, or how to make themselves great, or how to live in comfortable and pleasant circumstances while here, and busy their minds and employ their strength only in these things, and have the stream of their desires and affections to those things—they lose their precious time. All that time is lost that men have spent only to such purposes, though they may thereby have made themselves fair estates, and have obtained never so much of the comforts, advantages, and honor of the world.

Let those therefore consider it that have been guilty of thus spending their time. You that have lived a considerable time in the world, and have spent your time after this manner, you have been moiling and toiling, and cooking and caring, but what has it been for, but for the dust of the earth. Amos 2:7, "That pant after the dust of the earth." You have spent [a] great part of your time, and [a] great part of your strength, in getting a little of the world. And how little good does it do you now you have got it? What happiness or satisfaction can you reap from it? Will it give peace of conscience, or any rational quietness or comfort? What is your poor, needy, perishing soul the better for it? And what better prospects have you of your approaching eternity for it? And what will all that you ever get avail you, when time is gone?

Use III is of *Exhortation*, to improve time to the utmost. Consider the preciousness of it: how much depends upon it, how short and uncertain it is, and how irrecoverable it will be when gone. Make these things much the object of your meditations.

If you have a right conception of these things, you will be more choice

of your time than of the most fine gold. Every hour and moment will seem precious to you.

But besides those considerations that have already been set before you in the doctrinal part, consider also the following things:

First. That you are accountable to God for your time. Time is a talent given us of God. He hath set us our day, and it is not for nothing our day was appointed for some work. And doubtless, therefore, he will call us to an account at the day's end: we must give him an account of our improvement of all our time. We are God's servants; and as a servant is accountable to his master, how he has spent his time when he has sent him forth to work, so are we accountable to God. Our time is God's much more than a servant's time is his master's. If men might consider this, and kept it in mind, would not they improve their time otherwise than they do?

Should not you behave otherwise, [if you] considered with yourself every morning that you must give an account to God, how you have spent that day; and if you considered with yourself at the beginning of every evening that you must give an account to God, how you have spent that evening? Christ has told us that for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account" (Matt. 12:36). How may we [not] conclude therefore that we must give an account for all our idle, misspent time?

Second. Consider how much time you have lost already. You have the greater need of diligently improving the remaining part of your time, for your having lost so much time: you ought to mourn and lament over your lost time. But that is not all that you must do; but you must apply yourself the more diligently to improve the remaining part of your time, that you may as it were redeem lost time.

You that are considerably advanced in the day of life, and have hitherto spent your time in vanities and worldly cares, and lived in a great measure negligent of the interest of your [soul], may well be terrified and amazed, when you think how much time you have lost, and squandered away to no purpose. You had the more need of diligence for your having lost so much time upon three accounts.

1. That your opportunity is so much the shorter. Your time at longest is very short, as has been shown already. But set aside all that you have lost already, and then how much shorter is it? As for that part of your time that you have lost already, it is not to be reckoned into your opportunity; for that is as it were nulled and destroyed. It never will be any more; and it is no better, but worse, to you than if it never had been. So that 'tis only the remaining part that you are to reckon your opportunity. And if your whole life be so short, how short is that?

2. You have the same work to do that you had at first, and that under greater difficulties. You have done nothing at all of your work hitherto. All remains to be done, and that with vastly greater disadvantages [and] difficulties than would have been, if you had set about it before. So that your time to do your work in han't only grown shorter, but your work is grown greater. As your time shortens, your work that you do in time grows greater. You han't only the same work to do, but you have more work; for while you have lost your time, you han't only shortened it, but you have been making work for yourself. How may this consideration well awaken you to a thorough care, not to let things run on at this rate any longer, but immediately to raise up yourself, and apply yourself to your work with all your might?

3. That is the best of your time that you have lost. The first of a man's time is the best of his time, i.e. the first after he comes to the exercise of reason, and to be capable of his work.

You that have lived in sin till past your youth, you have lost the best of your time. So that here are all these things to be considered together, viz. that your time on the whole is but short. There is none to spare, and [a] great part of [it] is gone, and so this became much shorter. And that that is gone is the best, and yet all your work remains; and not only so, but with greater difficulties than ever. And the shorter your time is, the more work you have to do.

What will make you sensible of the necessity of the diligent improvement of remaining time, if these things won't? Sometimes such considerations are ready to have another effect, viz. to discourage persons [and] make 'em think that, seeing they have lost so much time, 'tis not worth the while to pretend to [do] anything now.

The devil makes fools of 'em. For when they are young, he tells them there is time enough hereafter; there is no need of being in haste; it will be better seeking salvation afterwards. And then they believe him. And then afterwards, when their youth is past, he tells them that now they have lost so much time, and the best of their time, now 'tis not worth their while to pretend to do anything. And they believe him now, too. So that no time is a good time with them. The time of youth is not a good time, for that is most fit for pleasure and mirth, and there will be time enough afterwards. And the time that there is afterwards, when that comes, is not a good time. It won't do, because the best of their time is gone. Thus are men befooled and ruined.

But what madness is it for persons to give way to discouragement, so as to neglect their work because their time is short? What need had they

rather to wake out of sleep, thoroughly to rouse up themselves to be in good earnest; indeed to be violent, that, if possible, they may yet obtain eternity; if, peradventure, God may still give 'em respect to the acknowledgment of the truth that they may be saved, though it be late in the day.

Yet God calls upon you to rouse up yourself, and to apply yourself to your work. And will you not hearken to his counsel in this great affair, rather than to your mortal enemy {the devil}?

Third. Consider how those do sometimes value time that are come near to the end of time. What a sense sometimes have poor sinners, when they are upon their deathbeds, of the preciousness of time? Such have sometimes cried out, "O, a thousand worlds for an inch of time." Then time appeared precious to 'em indeed. An inch of time could do 'em no more good then than before, when they were in health, if they had had but a like disposition to improve it. Nor so much; for a man's time upon a deathbed is attended with far greater disadvantages for an improvement for the good of the soul, than when he is in health. But the near approach of death makes 'em sensible of the inestimable worth of time. They, it may be, while they were in health, were as insensible of the value of time as you are, and were, as negligent of it. But how have their thoughts been altered then. It was not because they were deceived that they thought time of such value, but because their eyes were opened. And 'tis because you are deceived and blind that you don't think as they did.

Fourth. Consider what a value we may conclude those that have lost their time so, do set upon time that are past the end of time. Those that mispent all their opportunities for obtaining eternal life, and are gone to hell, what thoughts do you think they have of the preciousness of time? Though they were very lavish of their time while they lived, and set no great value upon it, yet how have they changed their judgment? How would they value the opportunity that you have, if they might but have it granted to them? What would they not give for one day under means of grace?

So you will be convinced of the preciousness of time, first or last. But if you ben't concerned till you are convinced in the manner that they are, it would be too late. There are two sorts of means of making persons sensible of the preciousness of time. One is showing the persons the reasons of it, setting before them the reasons, why time must be precious, by telling them how much depends on it, how short and {uncertain it is}, and the like.

And the other is experience, when men are convinced of the preciousness of time, by finding by experience how much depended on the

improvement of time. The latter is the most effectual way; for that always convinces persons, if nothing else does. But if persons ben't convinced by the former means, the latter will do them no good: if the former be ineffectual, the latter, though it be certain, yet is always too late. Experience never fails to open men's eyes, if they were never opened before; but if they are first opened by that, it is no way to their benefit.

Therefore you must improve the former means of conviction. You must be convinced of the preciousness of time, by the reason that can be shown of it, or you never will be convinced to your own benefit.

Let all therefore be persuaded to their utmost to improve their time. And I shall conclude with advising to three things in particular.

1. Improve the present time without any manner of delay. If you delay, and put off the improvement of time, still more time will be lost; and it will be an evidence that you are not sensible of the preciousness of time.

Don't talk of more convenient seasons hereafter, but improve your time whilst you have it, after the example of the Psalmist. Ps. 119:59, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

2. Be especially careful to improve those parts of time that are most precious. Though all time is very precious, yet some parts of time are more precious than others; as particularly, holy time is more precious than common time. Such time is a time of greater advantage for our everlasting welfare. Therefore, above all, improve your sabbaths; and especially improve the time of public worship, which is the most precious part of holy time. Don't lose that time, either in sleep, or in carelessness, and inattention, and wandering imaginations.

How sottish are they that waste away not only their common time, but holy time, yea, the very time of attendance on God's holy ordinances.

Again, the time of youth is more precious upon many accounts than other time. Therefore if you are in the enjoyment of this time, take heed that you improve it. Don't let the precious days and years of youth slip without improvement. Again, the time of the strivings of God's spirit is more precious than other time. That is the time when God is near; and we are directed in Is. 55:6 to "seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Such a time is especially an accepted time and day of salvation. II Cor. 6:2, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, [and in the day of salvation, I have succored thee]; now is the accepted time." Improve such a time as this is, if you are in the enjoyment of it.

3. Improve your time of leisure from your worldly business. Many persons have a great deal of such time, and all have some. Such time may be improved to great advantage, if persons are disposed to it. Such time,

wherein we are most free from cares for the body and business of outward nature, is an happy opportunity for the soul.

There is no necessity of your spending such times in idleness, because you have no worldly business to do. Therefore don't spend such times unprofitably, and so as you can give no good account thereof to God. Don't waste away these long winter evenings wholly in idle, unprofitable talk by your own or your neighbor's firesides, nor in useless diversions and amusements. Diversion should be used only in subservience to business. So much should be used and no more, as doth most fit the mind and body for the work of our general and particular calling. You may profitably spend the time in talking with religious persons of things of the greatest importance, in prayer and meditation, and reading profitable books. And if you han't such books, then get them. Don't straiten yourself for advantages for your soul, though you straiten yourself for other things.

You had need to improve every talent, advantage, and opportunity to your utmost, while time lasts. For it will soon be that it shall be said concerning you, according to the oath of the angel, that we read of in the tenth of Revelation, fifth and sixth verses, "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer."

WHY NOT A THREE-DAY WEEK?

By Maria Konnikova August 5, 2014

In 1930, John Maynard Keynes posed a question about the economic future of society: “What can we reasonably expect the level of our economic life to be, a hundred years hence? What are the economic possibilities for our grandchildren?” To Keynes, the answer was clear: the rapid accumulation of capital, combined with technological advances, had already, by his estimates, improved the average quality of life in the West fourfold since the Industrial Revolution, and there was no reason why that trend shouldn’t continue. “I would predict that the standard of life in progressive countries one hundred years hence will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day,” he wrote. The potent combination of technology and capital would render most material-based concerns irrelevant; people would no longer have to worry about basic problems of survival. One result would be an unprecedented abundance of leisure time, which would present a new problem for the average human: “How to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well.”

In some sense, Keynes’s insight was accurate. Work hours declined during the Great Depression, and they have since then continued to decline in most countries around the world. In 1935, the International Labour Organization (now part of the United Nations) set a forty-hour week for its member nations; though many nations took time to meet that standard, the forty-hour work week was widespread by the nineties. Today, in some countries, the number is even lower: a 1998 law reduced the French work week from thirty-nine to thirty-five hours, with no corresponding pay cut for workers. According to the latest estimates by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.), the average work week in twenty-four of its thirty-two member nations declined from 2011 to 2012, to just under thirty-four hours a week.

But the reality is more complicated than these numbers suggest. In the United States, where work hours have bucked the O.E.C.D. trend and have risen, we don’t seem any

closer to lives of leisure or to the problem of too much free time. Ask any investment banker, chef, lawyer, or taxi driver if he works the standard number of hours, and he'll probably laugh in your face. Recent efforts to limit the hours of medical residents, who often work for more than twenty-four hours straight, were met with controversy and blowback; a new rule, established in 2003, limited their work weeks to eighty hours, but supervisors have often found creative ways to circumvent it. On weekends and evenings, vacations and commutes, family events and meals, we are increasingly tethered to the office, increasingly able—and expected—to respond immediately to e-mails, requests, and queries. Free time is proving to be an ever-more elusive concept: the same technology that Keynes predicted would free us from work has instead brought work into our leisure time.

This trend is not only undesirable but may also prove unsustainable if we want to maintain a productive, creative, and happy society. That, at least, is the argument which was made recently by the Mexican telecom mogul Carlos Slim. During a talk at a conference in Paraguay two weeks ago, Slim proposed that the standard work schedule worldwide should be trimmed to three days a week. The current arrangement, he pointed out, was developed when life expectancy was lower and the world was, as a whole, poorer. Now, with people living longer and the structure of society shifting accordingly, a four-day weekend would improve quality of life, promote the development of other occupations, and healthier and more productive employees. Slim's proposal included two important caveats: employees would work longer hours each day, and would continue to work into their seventies. (At Slim's own company, Telmex, he is allowing workers past retirement age to keep working four-day weeks, at full salary.)

Slim's three-day work week was greeted with skepticism, but he is far from the first executive to criticize the structure of our working lives. In 1926, when six-day work weeks were the norm, Henry Ford proposed a five-day week: workers would receive the same pay and have their weekends free. Ford didn't take the change as a matter of faith; he tested worker productivity beforehand. "Now we know from our experience in changing from six to five days and back again that we can get at least as great production in five days as we can in six," he wrote. "And we shall probably get a greater, for the pressure will bring better methods." Ford saw the five-day week as just one step in ongoing efforts to reduce working hours. "The five day week is not the ultimate, and

neither is the eight hour day,” he wrote. “It is enough to manage what we are equipped to manage and to let the future take care of itself. It will anyway. That is its habit.”

In 2010, Anna Coote, the head of social policy at the New Economics, made a recommendation even more extreme than Slim’s: a twenty-one-hour work week. According to Coote, a twenty-one-hour week would help to address “overwork, unemployment, over-consumption, high carbon emissions, low well-being, entrenched inequalities, and the lack of time to live sustainably, to care for each other, and simply to enjoy life.” We may be reluctant to believe these claims—isn’t long, hard work necessary for success? But here’s the thing: when workers feel that they are being cheated or slighted by their employers, their productivity falls and their propensity to cut corners increases. In a study of non-union employees in the United States, the organizational psychologist Daniel Skarlicki found that workers’ perception that they are being treated unfairly not only causes negative emotions but also breeds a desire for retribution. If employees feel that they aren’t paid enough, they may feel entitled, for instance, to mistreat office property or to waste office materials. If they feel that they are being asked to work longer hours than they’d been led to believe they would have to, they may decide to spend more time in the office on Facebook, take longer lunch breaks, work more slowly, or call in sick. A common gripe is, “I don’t get paid enough to work as hard as I do.”

One of the main factors affecting how motivated we are at work is whether we feel in control of our jobs, and whether we think our actions and views can actually make a difference. In a 2010 survey of employees and supervisors at a large I.T. company, feelings of empowerment affected both intrinsic motivation (wanting to do the work for its own sake, rather than for money or for other external rewards) and creativity. A 2012 review of workplace-empowerment studies since the early twentieth century concluded that helping employees to feel more in control has “proven to be competitively advantageous.” Fostering a sense of control and self-efficacy, it turns out, is a far more effective way to encourage productivity and creativity than demanding a certain output. We’re creative and productive when we feel we have space to find our own way; we’re frustrated and stubborn when we don’t.

While feeling in control and working fewer hours may seem like distinct issues, they are fundamentally connected. When we own more of our time, we feel like we’re in

charge of our lives and our schedules, which makes us happier and, ultimately, better at what we do. Our health and happiness also increases in the course of our lifetimes and, with it, our value to the workplace and to society as a whole. Additionally, we may finally recover from chronic sleep deprivation, which is one of the greatest health hazards currently facing the average employee. Sleep quality, in turn, translates to better cognition, clearer thinking, and increased productivity. Instead of the usual vicious circle, we get a virtuous one.

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That, of course, is one possibility—one grounded in psychology theory. Whether a shorter work week would lead to actual benefits for employers and employees would depend, in large part, on how it was implemented. Would thirty-three hours really mean thirty-three hours, or would we end up sneaking in extra hours of work during our off time, frightened that we might otherwise lose our competitive edge? If so, many of the advantages of the shift would be lost.

At its core, this is a question of social values and norms. From its earliest days, the United States has fetishized hard work. In “Democracy in America,” Alexis de

Tocqueville was struck by Americans' relentless ambition, which remained high even among the most prosperous and successful citizens, and kept many Americans in a constant state of unrest and unhappiness. "These men left their first country to improve their condition; they quit their resting-place to ameliorate it still more," he wrote. "Fortune awaits them everywhere, but happiness they cannot attain." In "The Protestant Ethic," Max Weber pointed out that the foundational values of the nation were grounded in the virtue of work, work, work. According to a 2013 poll by Penn, Schoen, and Berland and Burston-Marsteller, Americans may be divided on political questions, but we share a commitment to economic enterprise.

In order for Slim's proposal to work, we would need to reconceive the value of leisure time and shift how we measure employee performance, rewarding over-all output instead of long hours. That change would have to come from the top, so that employees would know they were not being penalized for working less. As Goldman Sachs has shown with their new "no Saturdays" rule, we wouldn't have to start with something as drastic as a three-day week. Small changes in policy can lead to great shifts in mentality. The most important element of Slim's proposal is the idea of giving us back our time—and enabling us to trust that using that time for ourselves won't somehow disadvantage us.

Our challenge, then, will be to learn what it means to make good use of our leisure time. Keynes said that "it will be those peoples, who can keep alive, and cultivate into a fuller perfection, the art of life itself and do not sell themselves for the means of life, who will be able to enjoy the abundance when it comes." But he acknowledged that it would not be easy, "for we have been trained too long to strive and not to enjoy."



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