

**BRIEF REMARKS ON THE
HISTORY, AUTHORITY,
AND USE OF THE SABBATH**

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Brief Remarks on the History, Authority, and Use of the Sabbath by Joseph John Gurney

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BY
JOSEPH JOHN GURNEY.

Dominicum servasti:
Christianus sum; Intermittere non possum.

Hast thou kept the Lord's day? I am a Christian; I cannot
dispense with keeping it. *Acts of the Martyrs.*

WITH NOTES BY M. STUART.

ANDOVER:
FLAGG, GOULD AND NEWMAN.
1833.

[From the 2d London edition.]

PREFACE

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN. So said the Son of Man, who is Lord of the Sabbath, and who knows its value and importance to those for whom it was made. But if this holy day is adapted by infinite wisdom and goodness, to promote the highest moral and spiritual interests of the human race, (and thus much seems to be involved in the Saviour's declaration), then does it plainly follow, that the keeping of the Sabbath is not to be dispensed with. That which serves in a peculiar manner to promote the eternal interests of man, which "was made for him," is important to him in all ages and in all circumstances.

In this way do I satisfy my own mind, that the Sabbath is of perpetual obligation; and that it has been so, from the beginning of the world. When God rested from his work of creation, and sanctified the seventh day and blessed it, his design evidently was, to consecrate it as a day of rest and spiritual improvement for man, whom he had created in his own image. The fourth commandment appears to be only a republication of his original and immutable law, under peculiar circumstances, and with special additions which would secure its observance. The essence of the sabbatical precept seems to be as im-

mutable as the nature of God, and the nature of man, and the relation which subsists between them. The time never has been, and never can be, when man did not, and will not, owe homage and spiritual worship to his Maker. Equally certain is it, that unless there is a specific time assigned, when his homage and worship shall be their exclusive business, men will cease to render them. The hardness and unbelief of the human heart, and its estrangement from God, make this quite plain. Shew me a land where no Sabbath is kept, and I will shew you one where there is no religion. Malicious design against the highest and best interests of true religion, never developed more of the cunning of the old Serpent, than when the Sabbath was abolished in France and converted into a *Decade* devoted to sensual pleasure. Men never can be inactive. If they are not engaged in the service of their rightful Lord and Master, they will be the devoted slaves of him, who holds them in a bondage that is concealed from their present view, but which will issue in endless death.

We reason rightly, when we say that the fourth commandment is obligatory upon all mankind, because it is founded on the respective attributes and relations of God and man, and is as unchangeable as these. We need not undertake to prove the perpetuity of the Sabbath, from the fact that the fourth commandment was written on a table of stone, and was associated with other moral and spiritual commands. The fourth and fifth commandments are both modified in some particulars, by a respect to the condition and state of the Jewish nation. Their es-

sence, however, remains as immutable as the relations in which it is founded; but the costume of both has occasionally been modified by time and circumstances.

The reader who takes such a view of this deeply interesting subject, will peruse the following sheets with great satisfaction. The writer has evidently chosen for substance the same stand-point; and from it he has surveyed all parts of his subject, with a scrutinizing eye. I regard with much approbation the course in general which he has taken; and even in minute particulars, I scarcely see any good reason to dissent from him, except in a very few cases, where I have expressed my dissent either in a note or in the appendix. Mr Gurney will be the last man to complain of this; for a lover of truth, so sincere and enlightened as himself, will rejoice at every effort to disclose any thing which really pertains to the investigation of it.

The reader will be interested to know, that the author of the following sheets belongs to the Society of Friends in England. He has published several books on the subject of religion. In particular he published, sometime since, a volume of *Essays* on various religious topics; among which the Divinity of Christ and the Atonement made by his Death, stand conspicuous. "That work," says the Christian Observer of London in a review of it, "elevated him above the peculiarities of the religious body to which he belongs, and ranked him among the ablest defenders of our common Christianity, and of the great truths of which our Revelation consists." Subsequently, Mr Gurney published his

Biblical Notes and Dissertations, chiefly intended to confirm and illustrate the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. Of this volume the Christian Observer says: "It is an admirable work. . . . It fixes on an important subject, pursues it with clearness of argument, depth of sound critical knowledge, and sobriety, and discretion." It also characterizes the author, as 'having raised himself to a high rank among solid, able, and learned theologians.' The reader may see a specimen of this last named book, in the extract republished in No. VII. Art. I. of the Biblical Repository.

The author apologizes for publishing the present volume, after the excellent discourses of the Rev. Daniel Wilson had just been published. But the plan and the execution are, in many respects, so different from Mr Wilson's, that no apology was needed in England; and for the same reason, none is now needed in America. Mr Gurney's book has the distinguished advantage of being short, pithy, argumentative, and perspicuous. And although he has interwoven so much solid learning with it, he has made it intelligible, for the most part, to the great mass of the community. On all these accounts it deserves a republication in this country.

It is proper that I should state what I have done to the book, in preparing it for an American edition. I have revised the sheets, and made some changes in the punctuation, where some error of the press existed, or where our present mode of publishing in this country seemed to render some change expedient. Now and then I have struck out some unimportant word;

and in two or three instances I have introduced a word which would not be equivocal, for one which would be so in this country, although it might not be in England. For example; Mr G. speaks, more than once, of *congregational worship*, which I have changed to *social worship*, because *congregational* would here be equivocal to many readers, inasmuch as most of the New England Churches are *Congregational*. But in no case have I knowingly altered or cut short the sense of the author. Where I differ from him, in a matter that I deem to be of any importance, I have stated my reasons, in the manner already intimated. In a word, I have merely "done as I would be done by," in all the changes or additions that I have made. Mr Gurney may be assured that nothing but the high respect which I cherish for him and his work, would have induced me to perform the part of an editor in this case. His book is an excellent one, without any aid of mine; but if I can in any way make some contribution toward strengthening the impression which it is adapted to make, Mr Gurney will, if I rightly understand his character, be very far from finding fault with me for so doing. In this case he is the *author*, and takes all the praise which is due for so solid and excellent a performance; I perform only the humble, but (I would hope) useful, office of an occasional commentator.

To God and the churches of this country would I commend this little work. I have a full persuasion, that the question whether we shall continue strictly to observe the Sabbath, is the question whether religion in its purity shall

exist among us. The tendency among the more polished classes of society in our cities and great towns, is to convert this holy day into a day of social visiting and enjoyment. Even among some professed Christians, this is lamentably the case. If the perusal of the following sheets should serve to awaken in any a deeper sense of the sacredness of this day, and our obligation to keep it holy, the end of its publication will be answered.

It is encouraging to those who truly revere the Sabbath, to see such men as Mr Gurney, rising up among the Society of Friends. This denomination of Christians, it is devoutly to be hoped, will at least lend a listening ear, while one of their own number so ably pleads the cause of the holy Sabbath. To them would I most earnestly recommend this little work of their highly gifted friend, hoping and praying that they may all be persuaded by it to embrace the sentiments which it elucidates and defends.

May the great Lord of the Sabbath bless this attempt to defend one of his own institutions! May all who aspire to *that rest which remaineth for the people of God* in another world, seek to obtain a foretaste of it here, by REMEMBERING THE SABBATH, TO KEEP IT HOLY!

MOSES STUART.

Theol. Seminary,
Andover, March, 1833. }