

laws, which are technically denominated *moral natural*, and those which are *moral positive*; and on that occasion I remarked, that all the precepts of the decalogue, are moral in their very nature; except that part of the command now under consideration, which relates to the particular portion of time which we are to regard as holy; and I intimated that even in this there might be a natural fitness, with which we are not acquainted. In opposition to this, however, there have been writers of eminence, who have maintained that the whole of the fourth commandment was moral positive only; and ought to be regarded as no more than a part of those temporary institutions which were binding to the Jews, till the establishment of the gospel dispensation, but which, when this dispensation was fully introduced, were all abolished, and are now no longer obligatory. These writers admit without reserve, that there is a *natural fitness* in the worship of God, and that men are under a moral obligation to worship him; but they deny that Christians are bound to regard any specific part of time, as peculiarly holy. In other words, they maintain that the fourth precept of the decalogue, was abrogated along with the rest of the Jewish ritual, of which they consider it as a part.

These opinions, my dear youth, I must say, appear to me of very dangerous tendency, and to militate pointedly, both with reason and Scripture. Nothing is better known, as a matter of experience, than that a duty which we think we may perform at any time, is apt to be performed at no time; or if not entirely omitted, is likely to be but occasionally and often very slightly attended to. Those who purpose faithfully to discharge a stated duty, always, if they act wisely, fix its performance to certain *set seasons*. They find that this is the only safeguard against frequent and criminal neglect. Does it then seem reasonable to believe, that he who knows what is in man—who knows that the best of men are sanctified but in part, and are apt to be too much engrossed with worldly objects—has left the matter of his worship, the most important matter of our existence, without setting apart any particular time, in which it shall be specially regarded? To suppose this, appears to me highly derogatory to the wisdom of God, and therefore in the last degree improbable. Besides, it is admitted, that a rule was once given to the Jews on this subject, and I know of nothing in their circumstances which rendered it more necessary to them than it is to us. It should, moreover, be recollected, that men are bound to worship God in their social capacity, and this indeed is admitted by our opponents in the point before us. But without *set seasons* for the purpose, *social worship* can hardly take place—it cannot be regularly and generally attended on. *Set times* for its celebration, must be specified

and observed; and if not appointed by God, they must be of human appointment. But we cannot believe, that so important a concern as this, is left merely to human discretion. It relates to a point in which the honor of God is concerned, respecting which we know that he always exercises a holy jealousy. We are not, indeed, to confine the worship and service of our Creator to stated seasons. Our whole lives ought to be considered as, in a certain view, devoted to him; and we should never pass a day without the worship of God. But constituted and circumstanced as we confessedly are, we constantly need to have the undue influence of sensible objects on our minds broken, and our attention to be called and fixed for some length of time, on spiritual and holy objects: and for this purpose, *set seasons* of entire abstraction from the world, are of essential importance.

Let us now consider this subject in the light of Holy Scripture: and here I remark that it would appear strange indeed, that in the midst of a code of moral laws, intended to be of perpetual obligation, we should find one, and but one, of a merely ceremonial and temporary nature; and this without the smallest intimation that it was of a character different from the rest. There was, moreover, a marked difference between the manner in which the ten commandments were given, and that which was adopted in instituting the temporary ritual of the Hebrews. The ten commandments were uttered by an audible voice of Jehovah from Mount Sinai; and were also engraved by the finger of God on two tables of stone, which were to be laid up in the ark, and preserved with it in the most holy place. Not a single ceremonial institution, unless the fourth commandment is one, was given in this manner—a manner clearly intended to denote that those laws possessed a dignity and perpetuity of character, which did not belong to the ceremonial rites. These rites were indeed given by divine inspiration to Moses, and till the advent of the Saviour, were doubtless as binding on the Jews, as the precepts of the Decalogue. But the different manner in which they were promulgated and preserved, seems clearly to intimate the Divine appointment, that the latter should be temporary, and the former perpetual.

Again. A part of this commandment relates to Gentiles as well as to Jews; which was not the case with any institution merely ceremonial. "Thy stranger that is within thy gates," cannot intend proselytes, whether servants of the Israelites, or others; for these were never accounted as strangers. Gentiles, who came occasionally into the land of Judea, as here undoubtedly referred to. But such persons were not required to observe any part of the ceremonial law; yet they are in this command expressly enjoined to observe the Sabbath, and those with whom they sojourned, were required to exact this observance from them.