

IN TRANSLATIÖNE

Andrew Willet's *To the Pious Reader*

From Book One of Nicholas Bownd's

SABBATHVM VETERIS ET NOVI TESTAMENTI¹

It has been well established over the last 150 years, from the writings of James Gilfillan to James T. Dennison,² that Puritan Sabbatarianism did not simply "appear" in the late 16th century with the writings of men such as William Perkins, Richard Greenham, and Nicholas Bownd, whose large work, while not the earliest, sparked the first Sabbath controversy in English literature.³ The Puritan view, in practice if not in the underlying theory, had roots in strict ideals of observing the Lord's Day that existed at least in law even under the medieval church (Dennison, 1-32). After the Reformation, most of the statements on the fourth commandment were ambiguous as far as linking them theologically to a strictly Puritan view, but there were some initially strong statements at the beginning of Edward the Sixth's reign by John Hooper (1548) and Hugh Latimer (1552).⁴ Dennison fixes the period

ANDREW WILLET, D.D. (1562-1621). Dr. Willet was Rector of Barley from 1599 until his death. *To the Pious Reader*: TRANSLATED BY N. E. Barry Hofstetter, Th.M.

1. Nicholas Bownd, SABBATHVM VETERIS ET NOVI TESTAMENTI: *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath*... (1606) [A6-A7].

2. James Gilfillan, *The Sabbath Viewed in the Light of Reason, Revelation, and History*... (NY: American Tract Society & New York Sabbath Committee, c. 1862). James T. Dennison, *The Market Day of the Soul: The Puritan Doctrine of the Sabbath in England, 1532-1700* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2001).

3. Nicholas Bownd, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath, plainely layde forth and soundly proved* (1595). The first edition was based upon sermons delivered in 1586. "We have now come to the commencement of the earliest sabbatic contest, entitled to the name, in the Christian Church." Gilfillan, 66.

4. See Dennison, 10-11 n33.

5. See David S. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1988) 5.

6. Gervase Babington, *A very fruitful Exposition of the Commandments* (London, 1583). See Dennison, 34.

7. See the life of Andrew Willet in Benjamin Brook's *The Lives of the Puritans* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1994) 2.284-288.

8. *Synopsis Papismi, that is, a generall viewe of papistrise: wherein the whole mysterie of iniquitie, and summe of Antichristian doctrine is set downe*... (London: Printed by Thomas Orwin, for Thomas Man, 1592; new edition, London, 1852).

of 1562 to 1583 as the time of "precisionizing" the Puritan doctrine of the Sabbath (Dennison, 26). By 1570, there are indications of widely held Sabbatarianism in practice out in the English countryside,⁵ and the incident at Paris Garden in 1583 brought forth "a national clamor for the better observance of the Lord's day" (Dennison, 33). That same year Gervase Babington published the first unambiguous Puritan exposition of the fourth commandment.⁶

On the development of the Puritan doctrine of the Sabbath, Dennison writes (Dennison, 18-19):

... it should not be concluded that because the sources are not more explicitly strict, Sabbatarianism is nowhere to be found before 1583. Then how did it happen that, in 1583, Gervase Babington penned a statement on the fourth commandment which could have passed for a summary of Nicolas Bownd? In this writer's opinion the answer is contained in the underground development of Puritanism via prophesyings, lecturings and the universities. One must not neglect to weigh the almost certain effect of the biblical discussions in these Puritan gatherings—discussions which undoubtedly touched on the Sabbath discussion... Consider the fact that the following men, all of whom later expressed sentiments of a Puritan nature upon the fourth commandment, at one time attended Cambridge University, the "nursery" of Puritanism: John Knewstub, Edward Dering, William Perkins, Richard Greenham, Nicholas Bownd, John Stockwood, Philip Stubbes, Gervase Babington, William Fulke, and Andrew Willet. Furthermore, the Puritan lectureships and prophesyings were in full swing in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign.

The Latin prefatory to Nicholas Bownd's monumental work on the Christian Sabbath, translated here for the first time, was written by the last of the aforementioned men, Andrew Willet. Born in 1562,⁷ Andrew was the son of Thomas Willet, who was sub-almoner to King Edward the Sixth, who suffered under Mary's persecution, and "was preferred to a prebend in the church of Ely" under Queen Elizabeth. By an early age Andrew exhibited "uncommon genius" and by the age of fourteen he was sent to Cambridge, where he became friends with men such as William Perkins and John Downham. He would go on to become a celebrated theologian, penning many commentaries, and the massive *Synopsis Papismi*,⁸ a refutation of Roman Catholicism which brought him wide celebrity. In this preface to Bownd's work, Willet provides personal testimony which supports Dennison's contention that his time at Cambridge was his introduction to Sabbatarian views.

CHRIS COLDWELL

To the Pious Reader

In this degenerate age, inclined to evil, when not only does zeal for piety fail throughout but also the health of doctrine slips, nothing can be brought forth which assists more for the moment either in correcting errors or in cultivating the purity of virtue, than that the worship of God be kept whole and inviolate for God on that day set aside for him, the Lord's Day. For God has said: "Observe my Sabbaths, since they are a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you."⁹ If indeed God wishes to render anyone more holy, then he calls the pious mind to holiness on *that* day. If he should think it worthy to reveal himself to anyone, then at that quite sacred time he insinuates himself, opens the spirit to visions, and imbues it with spiritual service: something which we read that John happily experienced in Rev 1: 10. It is not because the divine work is circumscribed by the time (for the Spirit works without restraint), but because the media have been used by which the business of the soul is promoted: public prayers, the administration of the word and sacraments, are assuredly brought together on that day. Just as it is fitting for the family to obtain food in the market place at some point during the week, so is the Christian Sabbath, as it were, the better part of the soul, in which heavenly nourishment is sought for the rest of the week. Well did Isocrates have it, that men become better when they approach God, nor is it credible that there is anything of goodness in the one hastening to church, to present himself before God, though in the final analysis he thinks and feels it not at all holy. Just as we observe that birds ascend to the threshold of the lofty heavens, as it were, by the movement of their wings, so men on the Lord's day are joined to heaven by the conveyance of their prayers. Thus the Christian Sabbath is called by worthy Chrysostom *the architect of all virtue*,¹⁰ in Nyssenus, *the custodian of self-control*, and in Basilus, *the necessary debt*, which is paid to God. Let that day be kept entirely sacred, consecrated with divine exercises only. Let all hear the word attentively; let them celebrate the divine mysteries devotedly; let them offer prayers humbly; let them eagerly sound forth hymns; let them compare pious sermons; let them meditate studiously on the works of God; let them kindly help the poor; let them courteously visit the sick; let them mercifully console those who mourn; let them not ply the hand in their accustomed works nor delight in frivolities; let them not indulge in vain pleasure-seeking; let them not be idle in drinking parties or games. Whatever things are of God, by the rule of Christ must be returned to God (Matt. 22:21, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2). God does not permit an equal partner, nor does he allow what is his by right to be transferred to another.

They are Judaizers who, clinging to the external rest itself, are said to be addicted too much to ceremony. Others,

contrary to them, detract greatly from the honor of the day when they wish to rest the celebration solely on ecclesiastical tradition, and cause other days to be equal to it. There is yet a third class of profane men who think that whatever they wish is permitted to them on the Lord's day. You might say that the first are those who run ahead of the way, the second are those who run behind the way, and the third are those who run outside the way.¹¹ To all these errors, the most serious and learned author of this book has prepared an antidote, which now again has come forth into the light, much better than before, and more complete than all other works of a similar nature. Hereupon, as I happily remember my initiation into these studies at Cambridge Academy, so now I rejoice in those same streams from which first I tasted privately, that so rich a vein of all erudition and piety might flow abroad to all. I therefore heartily commend to all this work, pleasing in its manifold variety, sincere in the purity of its doctrine, necessary for further use, and quite worthy of our contemplation. Therefore I conclude with the sentiment of Ambrosius, appropriate to the Sabbath (though he offered it concerning fasting):¹² "You seek remedy, and yet flee the Sabbath, as though you were able to find some other, greater remedy." Farewell, most gentle reader, and that which here is most piously taught, faithfully pursue. If you praise the design of the author, then at the same time apply it, that the design of your life might be praiseworthy according to this rule:¹³ *Practice according to what you read, and read with an eye to what you should practice.*

I have written of these things of ancient times as proof of friendship and esteem.

Andrew Willet, Doctor of Sacred Theology.

TRANSLATED BY N. E. BARRY HOFSTETTER, Th.M. ■

9. [Exodus 31:13. Willet either paraphrases or offers his own translation. Willet, *Sabbata mea observate, quoniam signum est inter me, et vobis, ut sciatis quod ego Dominus, qui sanctifico vos. The Vulgate has: loquere filiis Israhel et dices ad eos videte ut sabbatum meum custodiat quia signum est inter me et vos in generationibus vestris ut sciatis quia ego Dominus qui sanctifico vos* (Tell the sons of Israel and say to them: "See to it that you are to keep my Sabbath, since it is a sign between me and you in your generations that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you").]

10. [Willet cites the original Greek without noting the source; This is a rendering of his Latin translation, which here and in the two following examples are fair translations of the Greek.]

11. [Possibly an allusion to Psalm 1.]

12. Isadore Pel[usium]

13. [Ed. Literally, "Practice logically and read practically." The Greek text is very difficult to discern given the copy of the text consulted and the old orthography. It may be *prassete logikos kai lege pragmatikos*, or *praktis logikos kai lege praktikos*. Our thanks go to Ray Lanning for his input on this particular part of the text.]