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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

### The Sabbath and the Lord's day.

LETTER III.

DEAR BROTHER,

I have purposely abstained, as yet, from any reference to the argument for the authority of the sabbath, derived from the law of the commandments. It is usual to speak of the Mosaic institute as comprising three departments, the moral, the civil, and the ceremonial. The moral law, or the ten commandments, included those duties which are binding on all men, but were enforced on the Jews by special motives. The civil and ceremonial laws belonged to the Jews only, and could not be fully carried into effect except in Palestine. Moses designates the ten commandments as "the covenant," while the other injunctions were "the statutes and judgments;" see Deut. iv. 13, 14. The "covenant" or ten commandments pointed out men's obligations to God and to one another. The "statutes and judgments" enjoined on the Jews certain duties, by attending to which those obligations would be discharged, and which duties were peculiar to that nation. Thus, the ceremonial law directed them how to serve God; the civil law, how to behave in the community. And these latter were instituted for the purpose of preserving the knowledge and worship of God among one people, during the Pagan apostasy, till "the fulness of time" should come.

If, now, it be admitted that mankind have been bound, in all ages, to love God and to love one another, which are the two "great" commandments of the law; and if it be further admitted that these commandments have not been abrogated, since they belong, not to Judaism, but to the original constitution under which all men have existed from the beginning; it will follow that the law of the sabbath is not a Jewish law, and has not been abolished. It forms part of that divine code which binds the whole race. It has always been man's duty to worship God, and Him only. It has always been man's duty to show due regard to his fellow-creatures in every relation, and to abstain from doing them harm. It has been equally his duty, and is still, to labour six days and then to rest one day. No further argumentation is required. The moral law has never been repealed; the moral law includes the injunction of sabbath observance; that injunction, therefore, not having been repealed, is in full force.

I have not employed this argument, however, because I wished to show that the obligation law of the sabbath may be sustained, though Judaism be left altogether out of the question. The Sabbath, like circumcision, was enjoined on the Jews, "not because it was of Moses, but of the fathers"; only the institution goes further back, not beginning with Abraham, as circumcision did, but with Adam in Paradise.

Mr. Lithgow, I observe, inserts a proviso to human law. He says—"I affirm, that unless restricted by the law of the land in which he dwells, a christian may work on Sunday without violating any divine law." This is hardly consistent with his advice to fishermen in a preceding letter. Thus he writes:—"To all fishermen then, who may read this, I would say, in all good conscience, when the fish show on Sunday, and you can take them, hesitate not to do so; and if any one accuse you of breaking the Sabbath-day, hand them this paper, and until he answers my arguments to your satisfaction, make your mind perfectly easy. In so doing you transgress no law of Christ, who is your lawgiver and judge." Here, there is no allusion to the restrictions of human law; the fishermen are recommended to take the fish if they "show" on the Lord's day, and to make themselves "perfectly easy" as to consequences. I hope none of them will get into trouble by taking the advice.

The right of the legislature to prohibit working on the Lord's day being admitted, and the law of the land on the subject being explicit, the fishermen, on Mr. L.'s own showing, are bound, after all, to lie still on Lord's days, however plentiful the fish may be; and the only effect his letter can produce will be

to excite their discontent with the law. Small advantage this!

Opinions vary with respect to the right of governments in this matter. But if it be conceded that they may, if they think fit, enjoin abstinence from ordinary work on the Lord's day, which is equivalent to constituting it a holiday, they can go no further. The religious observance of the day is out of the scope of legislation. I do not see how a christian can consistently acknowledge the authority of any government in religious affairs. Neither king nor parliament has any right to command me to worship God, or to direct me how or when to worship Him.

And it is very necessary that this should be clearly understood. If Mr. Lithgow, for instance, would counsel the fishermen to remain on shore on the Lord's day, though shoals of fish, "show" outside the harbour, and would so advise them on the ground that the laws of the land prohibit working on that day, he confesses the right of human governments to legislate on religious matters; for the law prohibits work on that day *avowedly* because it is the Lord's day. I cannot go that length;—I plainly see that this concession would lead to others, and would in fact sanction the usurpations of religious establishments,—the union of Church and State.

My object in writing these letters has been to set before your readers those views of truth which appear to me most consonant with scripture, and in doing so to furnish a reply to the erroneous representations made by Mr. Lithgow. In opposition to his statements I have argued that the sabbath was not merely "part and parcel of the Mosaic or national law, binding only on Jews," but was instituted for mankind, and is binding still, being now specially dedicated to the honour of the Saviour; and that this is fairly deducible from the records and teachings of the New Testament. Some collateral topics have been also noticed.

Nothing now remains but to offer a remark or two on Mr. Lithgow's theory of the Lord's day observance in primitive times. He admits that christians were "accustomed to come together" on that day "to break bread and for mutual edification and comfort"—their meetings for these purposes being, as he thinks, commonly held in the evening;—and though he maintains that "a christian may work on Sunday without violating any divine law," he adds—"provided he neglect not the Apostolic exhortation to forsake not the assembling of himself with his brethren to break bread." But although christians were "accustomed" to meet on the Lord's day, he does not think that they were under any obligation to do so. Every one was at liberty, according to Mr. L., either to observe the day or not to observe it. So that now, if any believers should choose to work next Lord's-day and hold their meeting on the following Tuesday—and to change it for Thursday the week after, or even to hold no meeting at all that week, each being "fully persuaded in his own mind" that he could get most good by serving God alone—there is nothing to forbid or prevent them. True, Mr. L. judges that the Lord's supper should be observed weekly, because the first christians introduced that practice; but I say again, that was, in his view, custom only—a praiseworthy precedent, and nothing more. It involved no obligation, on themselves or others, for that would have been an infringement on liberty. The whole matter, on this theory, is at loose ends, and the church of God is "without law." It is as if the Saviour had said—"Serve me when you please, how you please, just as you feel inclined—this day or that day—and shift the time as you will. Enjoy your freedom." I cannot think that this harmonises with primitive christianity, or that its general adoption would promote true godliness.

I know that there is much diversity of opinion on this subject, and that eminent writers have adopted and promulgated views similar to those held by Mr. Lithgow. He may claim Neander, and Paley, and Baden Powell, and Alford, with other clergymen, who read the ten commandments when the communion is celebrated, and listen to the response of the congregation—"Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." But greater names by far, and much more numerous, appear on the other side; the general verdict of Christendom may

be pleaded. And some who are inclined to the scheme adopted by Mr. Lithgow accept it only in part: Paley, for instance, considers the worship of God on the Lord's day as of "divine appointment." Dr. Arnold's expressions, in a letter to Mr. Justice Coleridge, deserve quotation. He says:—"Although I think that the whole law is done away with, so far as it is the law given on Mount Sinai, yet so far as it is the law of the Spirit, I hold it to be all binding; and believing that our need of a Lord's day is as great as ever it was, and that, therefore, its observance is God's will, and is likely, so far as we see, to be so to the end of time. I should think it most mischievous to weaken the respect paid to it."

Here I close the discussion. The following observations relate to practice.

An interesting inquiry presents itself. *How should the Lord's day be spent?*—The no-sabbath men say—"Just as any other day; but you may meet for worship in the evening, if you think proper, as the first christians did; or you may spend some other part of the day in religious exercises, if you prefer it; or even all the day, if you can spare the time. But there is no duty in the case; you are not under bondage. It will be useful to you to give the day to religion; yet you will not sin against God if you act otherwise. There is no compulsion."

It seems to me that a spiritually-minded man will instinctively shrink from this. Plausible as some of the representations and reasoning used by the advocates of their scheme may appear, at first sight, a close inspection will reveal their true character. The servant of God would rather be bound in this respect than free. He would rather that his Lord should give him laws than that he should be left to be a law to himself. The godly man's prayer in every dispensation has been "Teach me to do thy will."

Believing that it is the will of the Lord that we should observe the first day of the week, I proceed to the inquiry, *How should the Lord's day be spent?*

In the first place, there should be an abstinence from all unnecessary labour. The necessities of the day should be provided for, as far as possible, the day before.

Next, the day should be spent for the Lord. It is pre-eminently *Jesus Christ's day*. Let its hours be employed as will be well-pleasing in his sight.

This includes the perusal of the scriptures, prayer, meditation, and such other religious exercises as may tend to the strengthening of piety, and especially to the increase of gratitude and love to the Saviour.

It includes the social and public worship of God, and the observance of the ordinances of the gospel.

It includes christian fellowship in its varied forms, the mutual exchange of thoughts and sympathies, as it was in old time, when "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another."

It includes benevolent and holy activity—the Sunday School—teaching and preaching from house to house—visiting the sick—and any other good work which may commend itself to christian love, zeal, and discretion.

The whole day is to be so occupied. Wordly business is suspended. Conversation on worldly affairs is not allowable, nor reading newspapers, nor any other reading for mere literary gratification. See Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.

But I do not think it needful to multiply rules. If the heart be in a right state the day will be well spent. Bound as a christian is "to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," that principle will direct and govern the employment of his hours on the day of rest and gladness. "Will it please the Saviour?"—is the question he will ask in all doubtful cases; and the answer will determine his course.

How merciful and wise is this appointment! How thankful we ought to be for one day in seven divinely bestowed on us! And how jealously we should guard the privilege, lest in any way we fail to realise its value, or suffer ourselves to be defrauded of its benefits! The "Pearl of days," as it has been most appropriately designated, is too precious to be slighted or lost. Probably we have all experienced the pleasures and comforts of religion in a far less degree than if we had been

at all times rigidly conscientious in the observance of the day. Let us take heed that we fall not into temptation. Those who live in country districts, where there is but one public service on the Lord's day, and in some instances a single service only once a fortnight, or even once a month, are in great danger of mis-spending the holy time. I would affectionately urge them to consider seriously their obligations to the Lord, and to beware lest they deprive themselves of the advantages of the christian sabbath. If they cannot have the ordinary public worship, because there is no gospel minister present, they can meet to read the word of God, to pray, and to exhort one another. If this should be impracticable, the inmates of neighbouring houses can associate for the same purposes. And every family should be provided with good books, (there is a plentiful supply now, and at reasonable rates) so that none should be at a loss how to spend the blessed day. Thus, devoting the time to the contemplation of the word, and works, and ways of God, and especially of his greatest and best work, the redemption of lost sinners by the blood of atonement, their souls will be nurtured and strengthened, and the cause of truth will be advanced.

"In holy duties let the day,  
In holy pleasures pass away.  
How sweet a Sabbath thus to spend,  
In hope of one that ne'er shall end!"

Much, very much might be said on the evils that have resulted from a disregard of God's day. How many criminals have confessed that Sabbath-breaking was their first wrong step, too surely followed by others, leading them to ignominy and ruin!

But according to some there is no such thing as Sabbath-breaking. God forgive them, and change their hearts!

Yours truly,

J. M. CRAMP.

Acadia College, Nov. 12, 1860.

P. S. Since writing the above I have seen the *Morning Chronicle* of to-day, which contains an announcement of a meeting at Temperance Hall on Friday Evening next, when Mr. Lithgow proposes to "defend his views;" that is, to endeavour to persuade the public that it is lawful and right (the law of the land to the contrary notwithstanding) to work on the Lord's day, as on other days; with the exception of an evening service.

The style of the advertisement invites reproving criticism. See Jude ix. I clip the following from the *Watchman and Reflector*. It is significant.

An English Protestant writes to the *London Morning Advertiser*—"As we have many in England who have a great desire to read the commandment, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,' as if it ran, 'Remember the Sabbath morning; I have thought it worth while to send you an extract from a letter received last week from a young man who is spending his vacation at Dresden. The German Protestants, by the help of what they call 'criticism,' have long since satisfied themselves that this reading of the commandment is the true one. And here is the result: 'Divine service begins here on Sunday at half past eight o'clock. At one church I have seen advertised a service at five in the morning. The great object is to keep as much as possible of the day free for picnics in the woods, or expeditions by steamboat on the river.'"

### Dr. Guthrie on Black Faces.— Was Adam Black or White?

At a large and enthusiastic anti-slavery meeting, held in Edinburgh a short time ago, Dr. Guthrie, who presided, delivered a very animated speech. He said that, as Dr. Cheever—one of the best, holiest, and greatest men in America—would be in Edinburgh in three or four weeks to roll on the ball that Miss Remond had set a moving—(cheers)—he should then have an opportunity of expatiating on the subject of slavery, and he would keep his shot in the locker till Dr. Cheever came. (Laughter and cheers.) He had occasionally heard people doubt the words of Holy Scriptures, "That God had made of one blood all the nations and families of the earth," and they had been inclined to maintain that the dark were an inferior race to the white man. Now, he was not sure but what Adam was black. (Much and long-continued laughter and cheers.) He would tell them the reason why. (Renewed laughter.) Major Denham, a distinguished African traveller, went to that country, and spent three or four years in the home and cradle of