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Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Sabbath and the Lord's day.

DEAR BROTHER,

Mr. Lithgow advocates catching herrings, selling goods, building houses, and doing any other kind of work on the Lord's day. He affirms that the first day of the week is not the Christian sabbath—in fact, that there is now no sabbath, but that every man may do what is right in his own eyes all the week through, Sunday included.

The Rev. J. Brewster, Wesleyan Minister, has entered the lists with Mr. Lithgow, and the conflict is still going on. I should not have interfered in the matter had I not been aware that many of your readers see the *Acadian Recorder*, in which Mr. Lithgow's letters appear, but have not the opportunity of perusing Mr. Brewster's rejoinders, in the *Provincial Wesleyan*. It may also be desired able to place the subject before them as viewed from a Baptist stand-point. I may probably find it necessary to send you two or three letters.

The sabbath was the first religious institution of divine appointment. It was God's gift to man. The law of labour was established from the beginning, for Adam was placed in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." Gen. ii. 15. The gift of periodical rest was co-existent with the law. Man was enjoined to work six days in succession, then to rest one day, and then to resume his work—and so to spend his life. That was God's arrangement. And it was made "for man," as the Redeemer said, Mark ii. 27; not for any one nation, but for mankind. Six of God's days were spent in the creation, and then he rested. In like manner his earthly creatures are to labour during six of their days, and then to rest. "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made," Gen. ii. 3.

The original institute was incorporated into the Mosaic law, with numerous additions, pointing out the manner in which it was to be regarded by the Jews; but they were accustomed to observe the sabbath before the publication of the law of Moses. The directions given them for gathering a double quantity of manna on the sixth day indicates this, for the gift of the manna preceded the announcements of the law from Mount Sinai. Their Egyptian taskmasters had probably compelled them to work continuously. But the sabbath institute was not forgotten. As soon as they were restored to freedom we find it taking its proper place. Even the difficulties occurring at the time of its re-establishment, and the refractoriness of some of the people, illustrate the position now taken. The language used by God when he reproved them for their disobedience shows that no new command was given them; they were breaking a well-known law which had been in partial abeyance through cruel necessity, but was now to be strictly observed. "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." Exod. xvi. 28, 29.

All through the history of that dispensation the observance of the sabbath was regarded as an important part of religion. Not only was all toil to be forborne, but double sacrifices were to be offered on that day, and there was to be "a holy convocation," Lev. xxiii. 2. The ninety-second psalm is entitled "A psalm or song for the sabbath day," when the servants of God found it to be "a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." Gracious promises were made to those who conscientiously kept this law, Isa. lvi. 13, 14. In times of declension it fell into neglect, as did other parts of the divine institute; but when reformers appeared, the restoration of the honours of the sabbath always distinguished a revival of religion. "In those days," says Nehemiah, "saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the

sabbath day? and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I continued with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath," Neh. xiii. 15-22.

Jewish elders added to God's commands. Their unauthorised traditions were condemned by the Saviour, and the true meaning and design of the law pointed out. He taught the people that it was perfectly right to do good on the sabbath day, and that works of necessity might be performed without incurring guilt. In giving these instructions he laid down principles and assumed authority which are in full force to this day. When he said, "The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day," Mat. xii. 8, he asserted his right to regulate the manner of observance in all respects. The question is, has he issued any injunctions, directly or indirectly, affecting that observance?

A preliminary remark may be advisable here. Ceremonial observances are as scanty in the new dispensation as they were plentiful in the old. Nor is there any thing like the precision of the latter in the injunctions relating to them. General directions, historical notices, brief hints, and statements or allusions in letters to the churches, take the place of the explicit commands and minute details of the Mosaic economy. If we except baptism and the Lord's supper, which, as might have been expected, are enjoined with sufficient distinctness, the manner in which the worship and service of the Lord are to be conducted is to be gathered, and sometimes inferred, from the brief narrative of the first ecclesiastical historian, entitled, "The Acts of the Apostles," and from exhortations, or references to existing practices, found in the Epistles. The reason for this lies in the difference between the two dispensations. The Mosaic law was a national institute: Christianity is a personal blessing. The former was typical; the latter, real. The outward characterised the one; the inward, the other. That was local and temporary; this, universal and everlasting. The law was given to one people, and was neither designed nor adapted to any other; the gospel is the expression of God's bountifulness to all nations, and, as might have been anticipated, is fitted to the condition and meets the wants of all. Hence the simplicity of its ritual. Form is almost nothing; the spirit is everything. Highly significant are the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria;—"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth," John iv. 23, 24.

I will now resume the discussion. Our Saviour rose from the dead on the first day of the week. On that day week he appeared again to his disciples, See John xx. 26. On the same day of the week, as is commonly believed, the Holy Spirit descended upon them, and the new dispensation was solemnly inaugurated. It may be fairly asked, why that day should be especially selected for these manifestations? Of itself, this fact proves nothing; but when considered in connection with other facts, presently to be mentioned, it will be seen that no small importance is to be attached to it.

We are told that Jesus frequently showed himself "to his disciples after his resurrection," "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," Acts i. 3. It was then that he gave them his final instructions. Referring to those instructions, he directed them to teach those who should be converted "to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them," Matt. xxviii. 20. We have the results in the subsequent practice of the apostles. In establishing christian churches they followed the directions received from the Lord. If we can satisfactorily ascertain how those churches were constituted, how they were governed, and how they served

God, we shall know "the mind of Christ." Apostolic institutions were the embodiments of his laws, as communicated to them during those memorable forty days, or afterwards by the Holy Spirit. The proceedings of the Apostle Paul were in entire harmony with this view of the subject, for he informs us that he had an express "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 12), by which he was guided in all his teachings.

In the first fervour of gratitude and love, and under the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, the believers at Jerusalem appear to have met every day for prayer and praise and other christian exercises. That state of things, however, could not last long, and was evidently limited to Jerusalem. When the Apostles went forth on their mission they availed themselves of the opportunities furnished by the weekly meetings of the Jews, and were found in their synagogues every sabbath, preaching the word of the Lord. But it is not to be supposed that they instructed their converts to observe that day as God's day of worship, since it was then regarded as a Jewish festival, (though originally instituted, as has been shown, immediately after the creation) and the virtual abrogation of the institutes of Moses was already taught. Nevertheless, the actual disuse of the day could only be brought about gradually, so tenacious were all Jews of the Customs of their fathers. We meet with no reference to any other day of worship till towards the close of the history, as it is contained in the Acts, ch. xx. 5-7. The Apostle Paul arrived at Troas, on his way to Jerusalem. He reached that place on Monday or Tuesday, and did not leave it till the Monday following. We have no account of his proceedings in the interval, but the words used by the historian—"Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread"—warranted the inference that he purposely waited till the first day of the week, that he might join the church in its customary worship. That day was then the christian's day of meeting. They "came together to break bread" (for the Lord's supper was in that age celebrated weekly); Paul discoursed to them till midnight, and after a short intermission resumed the exercise, not ceasing till "break of day." That the first day of the week was at that time set apart for religious engagements is further rendered probable by the direction given to the church at Corinth;—"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him," 1 Cor. xvi. 2. In the former part of the epistle there is a reference to the celebration of the Lord's supper which plainly intimates that they met for that purpose on a specific day. "When ye come together therefore into one place"—ch. xi. 20—is an expression which denotes a time well known to the readers. That time was unquestionably the first day of the week.

The selection of the day was in the highest degree appropriate. The death and resurrection of the Saviour were the two great events of the redemption. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," Rom. i. 7, 25. What more suitable than that they should be regularly and jointly celebrated? As the resurrection was the crowning glory, there was a fitness in assigning to the weekly return of that day the religious engagements which were peculiar to a sabbath; while, by the observance of the Lord's supper on the same day the two events were brought under christian notice, and as often as the brethren met they were reminded of their obligations to him who "died for them and rose again."

Thirty years after Paul wrote his last epistle (probably the second to Timothy) the beloved disciple penned an account of the wondrous revelations and visions with which he was favoured. The scene opened "on Lord's day," Rev. i. 10. This is the only passage in which that expression occurs. It is susceptible of but one meaning. As "the Lord's supper" was an ordinance observed in honour of the Lord, so "the Lord's day" was a day kept in honour of the Lord. That can only be the first day of the week, for no other day was ever so kept. It follows that at the close of the first century that first day of the week was regarded as a day consecrated to the Lord, and the manner in which it is alluded to indicates that the christians of

the age, into whose hands the Apocalypse would come, would understand the allusion. It was a mode of speech they were accustomed to.

About ten years afterwards Pliny wrote his celebrated letter to the emperor Trajan, in which he says, on the information of the christians themselves, "that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ, as to God." That "stated day" was the first day of the week.

Forty years afterwards Justin Martyr published his "Apology," addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius. Giving an account of christian worship, he says, "On the day called Sunday there is an assembling together of all who dwell in the cities or country." We meet together on Sunday, because it is the first day, in which God, having wrought the necessary change in darkness and matter, made the world; and on this day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead."

The sum is—that whereas the references in the New Testament to the circumstances of christian worship are exceedingly general and scanty, the only notices of stated or periodical time for such worship are connected with the first day of the week, now called the Lord's day. We have no record of the observance, on christian grounds, of any other day. And the earliest christian writers agree in the statement that that day was the resting day, the day of joy and thanksgiving, in which all believers should glorify God for his mercy, and celebrate the acts of the redemption. It might be, and probably was, long before the state of society enabled them to dedicate the whole day to the Lord; but that desirable object was ultimately accomplished. We are inevitably brought to the conclusion that the practice of the churches was in accordance with the will of the Saviour. In celebrating on the first day of the week his death and resurrection they acted in obedience to the instructions which they received from the Apostles, and they were either communicated by the Lord himself before his ascension, or by the teaching of the Holy Spirit at subsequent periods. Such was the good pleasure of the Lawgiver of the Church.

Difficulties, objections, and duties are yet to be considered.

Yours truly,

J. M. CRAMP.

Acadia College, Oct. 30, 1860.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Union Plan—Significant Facts, &c.

MR. EDITOR,—

I am glad the Home Mission Board at Halifax took the liberty through the Convention, to call the attention of the Churches to the consideration of a Union Plan or system of effort in regard to our benevolent enterprises. The step originated with and was proposed to the Board, as I am informed, by our late valuable, now much lamented brother McLearn, on one of his last occasions of meeting with the Board. I like the plan suggested.—On inspection it is more simple and practical than at first appears. In my opinion it is what is wanted and what can be carried out with little labor and no expense as is justly claimed for it. It is found in the Convention Minutes page 18. For the sake of wider notice, will you not, Mr. Editor, have the kindness to copy it into the Messenger, with any remarks you may see fit to make upon it?

I have of late thought much upon this subject. I was forcibly struck with a significant fact, that met my eye sometime since, looking over some old Minutes of the N. S. Baptist Association. That Association in 1847-8 it seems, with a membership of 9,324, raised for benevolent purposes £1134 2s. 8½d.—Now how does it happen, that last year the three Associations, with an aggregate membership of 14,389 raised but £632 9s. 11d! And the year before last the sum was considerably smaller still! How is this strange difference to be accounted for? Is it because there was greater pecuniary ability in the denomination, or a deeper interest in the great objects of christian benevolence in 1847-8 than now? I cannot believe it. Is not this the true explanation rather?—Then, there was in operation a Union system of collection,