



The Sabbath Recorder.

Alfred Centre, N. Y., Fifth-day, July 26.

REV. N. V. HULL, D. D., - - - EDITOR.

All communications, whether on business or for publication, should be addressed to The Sabbath Recorder, Alfred Centre, N. Y.

SIXTH LETTER FROM W. O. PHILLIPS.

The Sabbath controversy will naturally continue so long as the practical outcome of a diversity of opinion on the part of good men and able scholars puts on the aspect it now does in certain localities. There will be, if I may judge from the working of my own mind on the question, a continued unfolding of new queries and new suggestions as to the ground of Sabbatarian ideas, wherever the Christian element is thus divided. I have not in these papers intended to convey the idea that the practice of keeping Saturday as Sabbath is founded on illusory or wholly unsubstantial grounds. Nor would I resort to irony or ridicule as if to underrate the strength and reasoning of an opponent. But I have gone over most of the arguments extant, on this subject, and am by far more fully decided in the opinion that it is the Lord's will that one day of the week be in all ages set apart for religious duties, and that under the gospel dispensation this day be the first day of the week, than I began the discussion. But I propose to make an end of what I have to say, in this number, unless some special explanation should be demanded. My readers will observe that I have not followed anybody's line of argument. And I have endeavored only to make suggestions for those who are interested, and furnish hints for further study; and since there were no better places to stop than here, or one where we might hope for better results, therefore, as the preacher says, a few thoughts and "I am done."

I. In reference to Sabbath reform which is with you a favorite phrase, I would say two things: 1st. It seems to me quite absurd to suppose that the esteeming of one day above another in this relation has any tendency whatever to make us more holy, inasmuch as there could be no sacrifice, no crucifying of the flesh, no self-denial whatever in making the change. Grant if you please, that Constantine decreed the heathen's day of the heathen's worship of false gods as a day for rest and worship, throughout the Christian world, and what under the canopy could be suggested as an objection. We have said that Christian worship can not make the day more holy, and now say that heathen idolatry could never have done the day any injury. 2d. The facts in the case will, if I do not greatly err, prove that this dividing of the day between opposing sects which agree on all other points of doctrine and duty, shows quite the reverse of a reform tendency in any community. On this I could not speak without offending, and so I forbear, hardly confident still that I do not shrink from saying what should be said in this connection.

II. You say God rested on blessed and sanctified the seventh day of the first week of time. And in that paragraph you quote from the 20th of Exodus at considerable length. "Now, is there no significance in the fact that the phrase 'seventh day of the week' is not found in the Bible, and that the first day of the week is used in the New Testament no less than eight times? I would not repeat this only to enlarge a little on what I may have hinted before. That the Jewish seventh day had temporary elements that were not to be binding forever, will not be denied. It is classed with those observances which nowhere obtain under the new covenant. Who contends that the Jewish feasts, the passover, or circumcision are binding on Christians? But point me to the scripture that tells us of the change more than it tells of a change in the matter in question. It was enough for Paul to say that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, let no man judge you in respect of a day, etc. I grant you on this point I should destroy what I built up in reference to the perpetual binding obligation of the Sabbath, but for the explanation in my last paper. But this is the ground now taken by all European scholars, both English and continental. They generally agree in this, that the Sabbath of the Decalogue is no longer in existence as a divine institution. Dr. Hersey, in his Bampton Lectures, for the year 1861, has advocated this view with great learning, ability and earnestness, and yet he maintains that the Lord's day is a divine institution to be perpetually observed. This is his principal proposition. "That the Lord's day is a (a festival on the first day in each week in memory of our Lord's resurrection), is a divine institution, and peculiarly Christian in its character, as being indicated in the New Testament, and having been acknowledged and observed by the apostles and their immediate followers as distinct from the Sabbath (a Jewish festival on the seventh day in each week), the obligation to observe which is denied both expressly and by implication in the New Testament." But I incline to the opinion that there is a moral element in the fourth commandment, and that what is said in the New Testament and the patristic writings against Sabbatizing has reference only to the Jewish Sabbath.

III. But whether the law is found in the fourth commandment or not, for the welfare of society, for the defenses of morality, and the higher interests of man in all respects, we feel authorized to speak, and eager to speak in highest terms and with most emphatic utterances in favor of the day the Lord hath made, that all his saints should rejoice and be glad in it. From the very beginning a high estimate was put upon this day. That most sublime and glorious vision of the beloved in Patmos was on this day. Irenaeus, who lived and wrote at least a hundred years before Constantine, said, "The mystery of the Lord's resurrection may not be celebrated on any other day than the Lord's day." Tertullian, born about A. D. 160, says, "We have nothing to do with sabbaths or other Jewish festivals, much less with those of the heathen. We have our own solemnities, the Lord's day, for instance, and Pentecost." We find an Epistle of Barnabas not later than the middle of the second century, in which it is said, commenting on a passage in Isaiah, "Ye perceive how he speaks; your present sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made [namely this] when giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, i. e., a beginning another world. Therefore also we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead." We might quote also from Justin Martyr, who wrote in this same period, and others; but

IV. You will say again "to the law and to the testimony." "What have we to do with the commandments of men to teach them for doctrines?" If we put the Fathers above the Bible; why, Popery! Now on this I have a word to say. Logicians (if I have not forgotten about what was memorized thirty years ago) put among their fallacies the "argumentum ad verendum." This is it, "there is danger of speaking thus, lest you do not do so, some error which the whole world abhors." So we are frightened away from the real question. We might give illustrations, but it is needless. Popery! If it has the truth in it, why not follow its leading? And that the Roman Catholic Church has held the truth in reference to very many things, who shall doubt? If it has taught that the church is above the Scriptures, we will not receive the dogma, but if it has taught that those within the half a century and a century of apostolic times, if these fathers of the church did not get their ideas on this subject from the apostles, from whom did they get them? In such a case nothing is found in the New Testament that would justify sayings false, inasmuch as nothing can be shown as probable in reference to the motive of this change—that it was to gratify the flesh, that it was in the interest of an unscriptural priesthood, that it ran counter to that liberty which Paul exhorts the Galatians to stand fast inasmuch as what is written by inspiration is all confirmatory, or if not confirmatory, at least in a way of sanction and favor of what the Fathers have said, and written, therefore the evidence in favor of their testimony is in so far cumulative and but little short of proof positive.

V. I misspoke myself when in answer to your question as to whether the Scriptures say anything about a change in Sabbath observance. I admitted as much as I did. On this I need not dwell only by referring to what I have already said in reference to the change—a change in the penalty of the violation, a change in the manner of its observance. But you will note that the change spoken of by Christ and his apostles is all nugatory. There is no positive directions as we have said before, either by Christ or his apostles as to how the Sabbath shall be observed.

VI. But you say the doctrine of a change in the Sabbath was not held by the early church, and "that this question of reference to the Sabbath in the simplest one in the world." And you say "that the only and only sentiment held by them was that the Sunday was a festival of the church, resting wholly upon human authority." Now, if you will find me a remark from any one of the fathers indicating that such a change was adopted by them, and became a custom of the early church, rested wholly upon human authority, I will stop all pretensions to being a public teacher, and go back to the study of the Greek and Latin. No, my brother, the early fathers got their lessons from Christ and his apostles, and did not admit that this and that was wholly by human authority. That's what the Pope can't admit if I'm rightly instructed.

My quotation above from the epistle of Barnabas is in answer of your assertion. But that there was nothing said about the transfer of Sabbath observance from the last to the first day of the week is admitted. In the Greek church the two days are regarded as distinct. Saturday is called the Sabbath and Sunday the Lord's day.

VII. Now, I would repeat what you chose to call a fanciful idea, that the Egyptian and Assyrian as Persians got their Sunday from the Patriarchs. The Zend or Zoroastrian is a book ascribed to Zoroaster, and containing his pretended revelations, which the ancient magi and modern Persians have observed and revered in the same manner as Christians do the Bible. But it is the opinion of all antiquarians that very much of that book is borrowed from the Old Testament. Dr. Baumgarten asserts that this book contains doctrines and facts actually borrowed from the Jews. Now the line of Gentile pedigree runs back as far as does that of the Jewish. What would or could be a more natural supposition than in the original division of time, the day of the worship of God and that of the wor-

shippers of idols was one in seven, and that both forms of worship fell alike on the same day, and that day put one day back for Jewish observance and restored to its original place on the day of Pentecost, which was the Lord's day. And the change was made in accommodation to the facts of longitude and the earth's rotundity, which were not known by man at the time the day was instituted. I must insist the idea is not at all so fanciful.

VIII. And now I thank you, Mr. Editor, most sincerely, for the space you have given me for this friendly discussion. If in your answer to my suggestions you may have assumed any of your brethren to a more full and firm persuasion in their own mind on this subject, or if I have contributed aught that can be of interest or profit to those who desire to pursue the subject further, our common interest in these letters. It will be seen that I have for the most part pursued a line of argument that is not hackneyed or stale. I would refer the readers to Jonathan Edwards' three sermons on the subject, A. N. Arnold, in *Christian Review*, April, 1868, and what I regard as the soundest and most conclusive, a brief article in Smith's Bible dictionary, Olshansen, Lange, and a multitude of commentators which I have consulted but not followed in these letters. I have tried in my own peculiar method to suggest and hint rather than expand and elaborate.

Should I write further on the subject it should be in the interest of those who labor for the more holy and sacred observance of a day for Christian improvement, and restraining self-restraint and holy consecration, as one of the most effective of all the customs and observances on which a reasonable hope for our country and our race can be predicated.

W. C. PHILLIPS.

I. The Sabbath controversy will, beyond all question, continue until the teaching of the Scripture shall be respected as they now are not. Here, and here alone, is the difficulty. Let the question be submitted to the Scriptures, "without our comments," and there is not a particle of difficulty about it. Scarcely in all the range of religious discussion is there a question where the ingenuity of men has played such fantastic tricks as here. It would seem impossible for either learning or dullness to do more than have done on this subject. The most artful dodging upon the one hand has been practiced, while upon the other the most stupid utterances have found their way into the public prints. At times, as we have for these forty years waded through volume after volume of these works, asked ourselves the question, "What does all this mean? How can men, with the Bible before them, professing to respect its teachings, say such things about what it plainly says, as they do? Men have seemed to try in every possible way to put the question out of sight. No stone has been left unturned to accomplish this object. But still it lives. That the Sabbath is a necessity, is admitted in one form or another by all parties, and yet for the sake of opposing the Sabbath of the Bible, Christian men of high standing will argue in the interest of the no-Sabbath doctrine. We think, however, we have learned where the difficulty really lies. The whole struggle is to get around the day involved in the controversy. That God rested on, blessed, sanctified, and commanded to be observed the seventh in the order of days, as they occurred in the first week of time, is certain from the reading of the sacred record. To get rid of this simple statement, men have wriggled and turned this way and that, until one is filled with shame and amazement! Outside the Scriptures, in the world, another day comes up as the rival of the one named in the Bible, and with a boldness and persistency that is strange beyond expression, seeks to clothe itself with the powers and honors only given to the day it seeks to rob. Of the seventh day of time, is certain from the reading of the sacred record. To get rid of this simple statement, men have wriggled and turned this way and that, until one is filled with shame and amazement! Outside the Scriptures, in the world, another day comes up as the rival of the one named in the Bible, and with a boldness and persistency that is strange beyond expression, seeks to clothe itself with the powers and honors only given to the day it seeks to rob. Of the seventh day of time, is certain from the reading of the sacred record. To get rid of this simple statement, men have wriggled and turned this way and that, until one is filled with shame and amazement! 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