

CORRESPONDENCE RE “THE SABBATH”

A BROTHER, who does not desire his name to appear, asks for something on the subject of our obligation or otherwise to keep the Ten Commandments, especially as bearing on the observance of the seventh day. His desire appears to be met in the subjoined communication from

Brother F. CHESTER, Kankakee, (Ill., U.S.A.): “Having been in contact with seventh-day adventism for two or three years last passed, and knowing that the brethren in England will many of them soon (if not already) be in contact with them, as they have put up a 100,000 dols. printing establishment in London, within the last 18 months,—I have thought it advisable to write an article upon the question, which would save the brethren wading through a mass of rubbish in order to get at S. D. A.’s views upon certain texts. We have had various articles put forward upon the question of the Sabbath, but there has been no formal systematized answer to the seventh day adventist’s arguments. Of course the arguments are often even foolish, yet the how to answer does not readily be within everybody’s power.”

Are Believers Under the Dominion of the Law Given from Sinai?

Some say, yes, with regard to the ten commandments. They rely upon the fact that the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it after resting upon it. Without doubt Adam kept a seventh day, for Jesus says: “the Sabbath was made for the man;” yet there was no command concerning it in the law which Adam transgressed, nor is there any authority for believing that the Sabbath was in any way incorporated in a law until the promulgation of the law to the children of Israel. The testimony of Paul makes it clear that there was no law from Adam to Moses. He says: “*until the law*, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed *where there is no law*.” Here is a period which Paul defines as a time when *there was no law*. He speaks of it as a period previous to the law. It is not a question of the law not having been written, because he says sin was in the world but it could not be imputed because there was *no law*. But, says the objector, sin is defined as “the transgression of the law” (1 Jno. 3:4). How could sin, or transgression of law be in the world when there was no law; especially as Paul says “where there is no law there is no transgression.” The answer is that although Jehovah had made known to mankind what He required to constitute righteousness, there was no law to punish wrong doing, and transgression was therefore not sin after the similitude of Adam’s transgression. Paul says: “the law entered that the offence might abound.” Now we know that law was given to Israel and to no other nation; Paul states this fact in Rom. 9:4, “Who are Israelites to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory, and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service and the promises.” This is still more evident from the history of the matter as recorded (Neh 9:13, 14): “Thou camest down upon Mount Sinai and spake with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgment and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and made known unto them Thy holy Sabbath; and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Thy servant.” Here is a distinct identification of the commencing point of the law, as including the Sabbath. But it may be said, is it not written that Abraham “kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws?” Yes, but this was not the law of Sinai. We are not left in the dark as to what was commanded Abraham, who received circumcision as a statute binding upon future generations and with a penalty affixed.—(Gen. 17:9–14). He also obeyed in other recorded particulars. It is argued from Exodus 16. that the law (decatalogue) was in existence previous to Mount Sinai, but more especially the fourth commandment. We read at verse 4: “Then saith the

Lord unto Moses: Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them whether they will walk in My law or no.” Upon this it is contended that there was a test turning upon the fourth commandment which must have been already in existence. But this argument ignores the nature of the transaction. The very fact that God was going to prove them whether they would walk in His law or no, is evidence that they had not as yet received the law concerning which He speaks, but that a law was about to be given. If they had it before they certainly had time to be proved during the preceding three months. It is evident that the preparing for the seventh day was not a previous custom at all. God said to Moses: “And it shall come to pass that in the sixth day, they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.” And verse 17 shows that the apportionment was of God: for “some gathered more and some less, yet when they came to measure it with an homer he that had gathered much had nothing over and he that had gathered little had no lack.”—(verse 18). Our seventh day friends hold that the first covenant was made concerning the ten commandments and nothing else. In illustrating the subject they read down to verse 18 of chapter 20., then pass over to chapter 24., where Moses took the blood and sprinkled it over the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.” They understand that “all these words” mean the ten commandments. It must be evident however, that “all these words” include that which was spoken to Moses after the people drew back in terror, when the Lord spoke to them out of the midst of the cloud enveloping Mount Sinai. It is evident it is so from the allusion to the first covenant in the prophetic promise of the new covenant: “Behold the days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, . . . for this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord—I will put My laws into their mind, and in their hearts will I write them, and I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people.”—(Jer. 31:33–34; Heb. 8:12). There is no room left for doubt as to the basis of the first covenant which is to be done away. Exodus 24. tells us that “Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments, and all the people answered with one voice, and said: all the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” Did they mean all the ten commandments but not the others? Unquestionably, “all the words” mentioned in the answer of the people, necessarily includes all the commandments and judgments, as Jehovah bears witness, in Ezekiel, “I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which, if a man do he shall even live them.”—(Ezekiel 20:11).

The record continues, that Moses wrote all the words of the Lord in a book, and he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people, and they said all that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient; then, after sprinkling the people, Moses said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.”—(Ex. 24:3–8). Paul, in Heb. 9., refers to this very matter and quotes as follows: “For when Moses had spoken *every precept to the people according to the law*, he took the blood of calves and of goats with water and scarlet wool and with hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people.” He also says, “and almost all things are by the law purged with blood.” Now it cannot be shown that the ten commandments purge or purged anything with blood. But Paul shows that this law had reference to sacrifices; and a little farther on in his epistle says concerning this same law, that “the law was a shadow of good things to come,” showing when he spoke of “the law,” he did not mean the ten commandments, but the whole system delivered by Moses. The covenant included more than the ten commandments; but as these commandments, written on stone, were to be

placed in the ark of the covenant as a testimony to future generations of the fact that God had spoken with their fathers—the same as the pot of manna and Aaron’s rod which budded—they are termed the tables of the covenant, and the tables of testimony, and the words thereon engraven were the words of the covenant, the ten words (Ex. 34:28); that is upon the tables was written the ten commandments of the covenant, not that the ten words were all the words, for we have shown otherwise; but as all the commandments, in one way or another, were connected with the ten, the ten are emphatically the words of the covenant as representing the whole.

James 2:8.—“But if ye have respect to persons ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” Now the interdict against having certain persons in respect to the detriment of others, is found in Lev. 19:15—not in the ten commandments; and as James refers also to two commands found in the ten, we can but conclude that “the law” referred to, includes all the commands delivered by Moses.

Paul enquires: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law.”—(Rom. 3:31). This text is the ultimatum of the seventh day people—they say there certainly was a law abolished (Eph. 2:15), and a law cannot be at the same time abolished and established, and therefore there must be a law not done away, viz., say they, the ten commandments. But a law which represents something in figure, is abolished by the substance which it represents when the substance is come, and yet the substance would establish the figure, although it would render the figure valueless. Hence, we do, through faith in the substance and love to one another, establish the whole law. But if the S. D. Adventists’ position on this text is correct, we find that the law was not established till “faith came” (Gal. 3:23–24), and then the *we* of Romans 3:31, establishing it. If we establish the law through faith in the substance to which it pointed in shadow, are we still under its shadow? No; having truly come to the substance by faith, we no longer look to the shadow. It is held, however, that the seventh day is not a figure or type of something future, but simply a memorial of God’s rest after the six day’s work of creation. It is said that a type was not admissible till after sin entered the world, and that the seventh day was sanctified after God had rested and before sin had entered. We must in these matters, however, be governed by apostolic usage rather than theological tradition. Paul states plainly in Hebrews 4:4–5, that the seventh day is the rest which remains for the people of God. Now, he can only have meant that the seventh day was so in type. Mark, he says: “He spake in a certain place of the seventh day, on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all His works,” “and in this place again,” which shows he was speaking of the seventh day in both places, for he speaks in one place of the seventh day, and in another place speaks of it again. Now Paul exhorts the brethren to labour to enter the rest spoken of, from which it follows that it is a future rest he is speaking of. The conclusion is therefore forced upon us that the seventh day and “God’s rest” are the same rest in type and antitype. The statement that a type would not be allowable till sin entered the world, is true only so far as a type may be connected with sin. Adam being placed on probation to labour to enter God’s rest, a type in the case is certainly permissible. “Therefore, let no man judge you in meats or drinks, or of the new moon, or in respect of any holy day, or of the Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come.”—(Col. 2:16–17). “What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.”—(Rom. 3:19). “And ye are not under the law, but under grace.”—(Rom. 6:4). “Know ye not that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? . . . wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.”—(Rom. 7:1, 4). The law has no dominion over a dead person, therefore, if we be dead with Christ, the law has no dominion over us. We are under the law to

Christ, but not under the law to Moses. Why, then, (it may be asked of some), “why, as though living in the (Mosaic) world, are ye subject to ordinances?”—(Col. 2:20–23). “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.”—(Gal. 5:1).

F. C.¹

Brother J. HAWKINS, of Grantham:—“The recent unsettled state of some men upon the question of Jewish Sabbath keeping, and its incumbency upon modern disciples, has some notice paid to it by a brother, F. C., in the February number of the *Christadelphian*. There is, however, a further development of our liability ‘under law to Christ’ which he made incumbent upon all his disciples, Jew and Gentile alike. Mosaic institutions were (1) national, (2) individual: a righteous nation was thus sought for through the aggregate of obedience among the people. If a man sought life, he sought it by keeping the ordinances of Moses contained in the commandments, as well as by ordinances of ceremony; and his motive power was ‘faith.’ Had this principle been all-pervading, the result would have been ‘a righteous nation.’ But a righteousness was sought by the multitude through a slavish observance of the law’s technicalities, the result showing an almost entire lack of the faith of our father Abraham; and the nation as a whole, became a miserable failure. The indictment brought against the leaders of the people by the Lord Jesus was (Mark 7:8, 9), ‘For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, . . . full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your tradition (13 v.), making the word of God of none effect.’ The consequence of this being the aggregate of the national development, the law had failed of its object, and, finally, it was swept away, ‘But,’ says one, ‘the Sabbath was not set aside;’ if the law was set aside, the Sabbath, as part of it, was also; and though it may be argued that the Sabbath existed before the law, the same holds good of animal sacrifices, of circumcision, &c.; all of which were shadows of good things to come, and are to be held needful for the growth of a kingdom when the people are gathered. ‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth,’ was prospective, as well as present and retrospective—and so circumcision was given, and so circumcision is practised by the modern Jew, and thus evolution—true evolution—the result of ‘the gifts and callings’ of the Father, perpetuates the Hebrew, who perpetuates his Sabbath also. Who does not, knowing the truth, rejoice in his tenacity, and sing:

‘Hasten, O Lord, the promised days,
When Israel shall rejoice?’

It is notorious that many of the early brethren were poor men: conditions of ancient life were those of bondsmen. The time of these men was not at their own disposal, and no plea of Sabbath observance would be held good by their Roman owner for instance. The man was a chattel absolutely: his serfdom tempered by such laws as might exist on his behalf; or contrariwise, by no laws for him but the will of his imperious master. To such the injunctions to Timothy applied, with a force such as we can hardly understand: ‘Let as many servants (slaves) *as are under the yoke*, count their masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed.’—(1 Tim. 6:1) This admonition is also given to the Ephesians (6:5); to the Colossians (3:22); to Titus (2:9); and again by Peter (1 Peter 2:18), showing the universality of

¹ (2001). *The Christadelphian*, 17(electronic ed.), 83–86.

the institution of slavery and its recognition as a condition of ancient life; the freedom to which such brethren were entitled being part of their future great reward. If slaves then, were to be 'obedient in all things' was it reasonable, was it possible, that they could keep from all labour from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset? He must be a wilfully ignorant man who could suppose such a thing—and a slave must know such a condition, surely, before he could become a disciple of Christ. Therefore, his master's will would be set aside if he undertook to be a Christian, and an obedience 'in all things,' as the apostles inculcated, would be abuse of terms to such men. Besides, we should have had indicated to us by record, as well as by instance of observance, that a day was kept as a Sabbath. Instead of that, we have the whole question of observances of days made one of individual taste by Paul, that Pharisee of the Pharisees, whereof he says: 'One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day: let every man be fully answered in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.'—(Rom. 14:5, 6). And in another place he makes 'observance of days' a cause for rebuke, inasmuch as by this a chain was being forged, like the one (Gal. 4:9, 10) from which men had ceased to be held in bondage to the ceremonial law; and so, seeing the consequences, he says (5:11): 'I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.' But, some one will properly ask, did the Lord Jesus re-enact for his disciples anything which the law contained? We say, Yes: for he seized such commands (not contained in ordinances) as were necessary for the perfection of individual character, the units of the body of Christ, and re-enacted these:

1. As to belief in Jehovah—(Deut. 6:4): 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God (Mark 12:29) is one.'
2. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Mark 12:31); and, in addition, in reply to his questioner, a ruler, he added;
3. Thou shalt do no murder.
4. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
5. Thou shalt not steal.
6. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
7. Honour thy father and mother.

The apostolic injunctions, also, are precisely these, as was necessary they should be (Rom. 13:8, 9), and they are declared to be all comprised in what James calls 'the royal law' (Jas. 11:8) 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'"²

² (2001). *The Christadelphian*, 17(electronic ed.), 127–128.