

Seventh-day Adventism

A DIALOGUE.

BY S. J. B. CARTER.

G. MORRISH,
20, PATERNOSTER Sq.
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A Dialogue on Seventh-day Adventism.

“I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” (Gal. ii. 19.)

YOU say that you are a seventh-day adventist?

Yes.

Ah! I have read some of your tracts.

Well, and did they convince you?

They *did* convince, but of only one thing: that the writers were strangers to the grace of God. Pardon me, but do you know your sins forgiven?

I do.

Something you said just now made me think that the root of the matter was in you, otherwise I should have felt it was useless to talk to you on the fallacies of the system which has entangled you. Dissatisfied with your

denomination, you seem to have eagerly taken the sop of seventh-day adventism, hoping it would afford you something better. But has it?

Excuse me, I would like to ask *you* a few questions.

Go on.

What day is the Sabbath?

The seventh.

And what day is that?

Saturday.

Is there any scripture to shew that the Sabbath was ever changed to the first day of the week?

Not a line. On the contrary, the Sabbath and the first day of the week are contrasted in scripture, thus shewing that they are regarded as distinct days. (Matt. xxviii. 1.)

Exactly. Now, please tell me why *you* change the day, and keep the Sabbath on the first day instead of the seventh?

I do not change the day, for I do not keep the Sabbath at all!

Not even on Sunday?

No.

Do you, then, open your office on

Sunday, and otherwise engage in your daily duties and pursuits ?

God forbid ; it would be a bad testimony to the world. " Let not your good be evil spoken of." I thank God for " the Lord's day " as a day of relaxation from earthly toil. Yet I do not keep Sunday as the Sabbath, for, as we both admit, it is not that. It is " the Lord's day." *

But at the beginning God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it. Surely, then, if only on creatorial grounds, you ought to keep *it* as the Sabbath.

If I did I should ignore the fact that sin came into the world and marred God's creation rest. God works now—He has been working ever since the fall—and He will go on working till " the rest of God," based not on creation but on redemption is ushered in. (John v. 17.) In Hebrews iv. we read : " There remaineth therefore a keeping

* Some say that Revelation i. 10 means " the day of the Lord " ; but the Greek text is different from 1 Thessalonians v. 2 and 2 Peter iii. 10 where this term is used.

of a sabbath to the people of God." [Margin.] Until *that* Sabbath is kept during the millennium, there can be no true Sabbath-day keeping on earth either for God or man.

But what of Isaiah lvi., and many other Old Testament scriptures, which declare that the Gentiles shall keep Jehovah's Sabbaths?

A glance should suffice to shew that such passages refer not to the present period, but to the coming age of Messiah's glory and reign.

But ought we not to keep God's holy *law* concerning the Sabbath?

Do you keep it?

I think so.

Indeed. The law says: "In it thou shalt not do *any* work." (Exo. ~~xxxi.~~ 14; Deut. v. 14, etc.) So that a man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath was stoned to death. (Num. xv. 35, 36.) Do you ever light a fire on a Saturday (Exo. xxxv. 3), or travel on that day more than "a Sabbath day's journey"? (Acts i. 12.)

Of course there are works of necessity.

But, my dear friend, the law of God makes no allowance for "works of necessity." You cannot tone down God's law to meet modern requirements. If you put yourself under it, you must keep it or die.

How do you get over the difficulty, then? I suppose you want to make out that God's law concerning the Sabbath has been set on one side.

No, indeed.

But *you* try to set it on one side!

I set *myself* on one side; or rather, God sets me on one side. The law is not dead; oh! no—but *I am*! The law is still in force, and if a man thinks he can keep it, and puts his trust in it, and breaks even one of its ten links, he breaks the whole chain. (James ii. 10; Gal. iii. 10.)

What do you mean by saying that you are dead?

I mean that I am judicially dead in the eye of God's holy law, because that law has enacted the death penalty from Him who took my place and died in my stead. (Rom. vii. 4.) I have died to the law, and my new life

is hid with Christ in God. (Col. iii. 3.) My new life, with all the principles and motives which govern it, is as far beyond the jurisdiction of the law as Christ is. Daniel of old broke the law of the Medes and Persians, and that law condemned him to death, and put him down into the lions' den. But God brought him up, and though Daniel lived for years afterward, yet the law could not touch him. The law was not dead, but in the eye of the law Daniel was a dead man. Hence he could say: "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." (Gal. ii. 19.) "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live [not by the law, but] by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

But is not the apostle there speaking of the ceremonial law, not of the moral law.

Both are human terms unknown to scripture! If you put yourself under the very smallest obligation of the

law, be it ritual or precept, you are responsible to obey the whole of it. Circumcision in itself was a trivial matter, but says Paul, "I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." (Gal. v. 3.) The law is a united system of commands and ordinances which deals with man in the flesh, and which shews him what he is: a transgressor (Gal. iii. 19), guilty (Rom. iii. 19, 20), cursed (Gal. iii. 10) and helpless (Rom. vii. 9-25). This is still its true use, and its only use. (I Tim. i. 8-10.)

But surely, though the law is not the ground of life to the sinner, it is the rule of life to the Christian.

The law is the rule of *death* (Rom. vii. 10); Christ is the rule of *life*. (I John iii. 3.) Thus if I want to know how to live, I go not to the law, but to Christ. (Eph. iv. 20, 21.) On the ground of the new covenant, I find that it is not the law that God puts into my heart and writes in my mind, as it will be with Israel in the millennium (Psa. cxix. *passim*), but it is

Christ. (2 Cor. iii. 3.) The law is too low a foot-rule for the Christian if he would live up to his heavenly calling and character and be here for God's pleasure. His standard of perfection must be nothing short of Christ in glory. (Phil. iii.)

But Paul says that the righteousness of the law is to be fulfilled by us. (Rom. viii. 4.)

Not *by* us, but *in* us ; that is, we exemplify it. The righteous requirement [*dikaïoma*] of the law is fulfilled in us ; but how ? Is it by setting the law up as our true standard of life ? No ; for scripture distinctly says, " If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain " ; and again it says : " Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth " ; and yet again we read : " If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."

How, then, can any one possibly fulfil the righteousness of the law if the law is not our rule of life ?

Simply because all its righteous and

moral claims are embraced in christian doctrine, and enforced in the epistles when corrective ministry is needed. Thus, whether it be love to God and one's neighbour (1 John, *sic passim*), or idolatry (1 Cor. x. 14), or profanity (James v. 12), or obedience to parents (Eph. vi. 1, 2), or covetousness (Heb. xiii. 5), or false witness (Col. iii. 9), or stealing (Eph. iv. 28), or adultery (Gal. v. 19), or even murder (1 Peter iv. 15; 1 John iii. 15), I have no need to go back to law. Grace teaches me how to live.

You miss the Sabbath!

It, too, finds its completeness all in Christ, of whom it was a shadow. (Col. ii. 16, 17.) Why be occupied with the shadow when we have the substance? Why rest in a day when we can rest in a divine Person?

You maintain, then, that the Christian is not in any way under the law?

No, not in any way. The law neither saves nor teaches; grace does both. (Titus ii. 11, 12.) The new Husband does not put His wife back under the old husband to learn how to behave;

He instructs her Himself. (Rom. vii.) Ishmael, son of the bondwoman (the old covenant of law), cannot dwell with Isaac, son of the free woman (grace). (Gal. iv.) Law and grace cannot be amalgamated, whether it be as the principle of our justification before God (Rom. xi. 5, 6), or of everyday righteousness before men. (Gal. iii. 2, 3.)

But did not Christ keep the Sabbath?

He was born "of a woman" to shew He was a true man. He was "made under the law" (Gal. iv.) to shew He was a true Jew, and He fulfilled and made it honourable. Thus He was able to present Himself at the cross as a perfect victim on whom the law had no claim. Then when He had borne its curse, He died to it, and it is our privilege to know our association with Him. (Rom. vii. 1-4.) Seventh-day adventism denies the very genius of Christianity, for it treats me, a Christian, as though my spiritual status before God were that of a fallen child of Adam, whereas the gospel shews that in the death of

Christ I can know that I lost my Adam standing, and that now I have a new position, for I am in Christ (Rom. viii. 1), and a new state, for Christ is in me. (Rom. viii. 10.) "By the law is the knowledge of *sin*," and not simply the knowledge of *sinning*. When the law comes it reveals to me an evil principle that is in me—"sin that dwelleth in me." It proves to me that "sin is lawlessness" (1 John iii. 4, Greek), and that "the mind of the flesh . . . is not subject to the law of God," and that "they that are in the flesh"—in its grip and power—"cannot please God" by keeping the law, however much they may try. Though they may try to keep it as hard as did the wretched man in the seventh chapter of Romans, they find "sin in the flesh" too strong for them.

Thus it continues till the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets them free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. viii. 1-4.) The sin offering was not made known prior to the giving of the law! When the law

made known to man a wicked, lawless will working within him and without him in the world-system, the sin offering was given to meet it. When we see Christ made sin for us, who knew no sin, we see sin, root, branch and fruit, condemned and ended, for faith and for God. (2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. viii. 3.) There is nothing wrong with the law—it is “holy, and just, and good,” but it is “weak through the flesh”—the flesh is such bad material that the law cannot produce from it the righteousness which the law demands.

I can scarcely follow you.

I daresay you cannot, my dear friend, but perhaps my endeavours to bring out the truth may give you a glimpse of the blessings you are forfeiting through putting your neck under “the yoke of bondage.” (Acts xv.) I have long felt that the only way to deliver an upright soul from the meshes of seventh-day adventism does not consist in quoting isolated texts, but in shewing that Christianity is not a patching-up or a filling-in of

Judaism. (Matt. ix. 16, 17.) It is an entirely new economy which finds its centre in a heavenly Christ. When the death of Christ is understood, as the moral end of man in the flesh, then the Sabbath, and the mass (a repetitious sacrifice), and legal enactments, and a humanly ordained priesthood, and church millinery, and all that is borrowed from Judaism, is left behind at the cross; and the believer learns that as risen with Christ, his life, conduct, and true associations down here are not controlled by law, but by love, because they are connected with a new sphere in which the thunders of Sinai are never heard, and where "Christ is all, and in all." (Col. iii. 11.)

Let us now summarise our points:—

(1) According to scripture, the seventh day, and only that day, is the Sabbath.

(2) Christendom neither keeps the Sabbath on the right day nor in the right way. (Exo. xx. 10.)

(3) Whatever instruction the Jew received to observe the seventh day, the **Christian** has received absolutely

none at all! On the contrary, he is warned against incorporating Jewish days, etc., into Christianity. (Gal. iv.) True, he recognises, as scripture recognises, "the first day of the week" as the Lord's resurrection day, but he cannot intelligently observe it as the Sabbath—for it is not that.

(4) The believer, as having died with Christ, is "dead to the law"; and as "risen with Christ," and as "in Christ," he belongs to "a new creation," of which Christ, and Christ alone, is the perfect rule of life and godliness.

S. J. B. C.

