

A LETTER
ON
THE OLD AND NEW CREATIONS

IN RELATION TO
The Sabbath and the Lord's Day.

BY
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A LETTER.

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MY DEAR ———,

I entirely concur in the sentiments on "the Lord's-day" you have quoted from C. H. M.,* and repudiate with my whole heart, that any one should avail

* "The idea of any one calling himself a Christian making the Lord's-day a season of what is popularly called recreation, unnecessary travelling, personal convenience, or profit, in temporal things, is to us perfectly shocking. We are of opinion that such acting could not be too severely censured. We can safely assert that we never yet came in contact with a godly, intelligent, right-minded Christian person who did not love and reverence the Lord's-day; nor could we have any sympathy with one who could deliberately desecrate that holy and happy day.

"We are aware, alas! that some persons have, through ignorance or misguided feelings, said things in reference to the Lord's-day which we utterly repudiate, and that they have done things on the Lord's-day of which we wholly disapprove. We believe that there is a body of New Testament teaching on the important subject of the Lord's-day quite sufficient to give that day its proper place in every well-regulated mind. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead on that day. (Matt. xxviii. 1-6; Mark xvi. 1, 2; Luke xxiv. 1; John xx. 1.) He met His disciples once and again on that day. (John xx. 19, 26.) The early disciples met to break bread on that day. (Acts xx. 7.) The apostle, by the Holy Ghost, directs the Corinthians to lay by their contributions for the poor on that day. (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) And, finally, the exiled apostle was in the Spirit, and received visions of the future on that day. (Rev. i. 10.) The above Scriptures are conclusive. They prove that the Lord's-day occupies a place quite unique, quite heavenly, quite divine. But they as fully prove the entire distinctness of the Jewish sabbath and the Lord's-day. The two days are spoken of throughout the New Testament with fully as

himself of my name, in support of the idea that the secularization of that day by Christians is right. With such a thought I have absolutely nothing in common.

It does not surprise me, however, that persons indoctrinated in a legal or semi-legal system should fall into this error, on discovering that that is not of law which they had been taught to practise as legally imposed. It is the legitimate fruit of the old error, when detected before the opposite truth has been learned and understood. They have quitted Jewish principles without having entered on Christian principles, and as a consequence, have planted themselves on heathen ground.

much distinctness as we speak of Saturday and Sunday. The only difference is, that the latter are heathen titles, and the former divine. (Comp. Matt. xxviii 1; Acts xiii. 14; xvii. 2; xx. 7; Col. ii. 16.)

"Having said thus much as to the question of the Jewish sabbath and the Lord's-day, we shall suggest the following questions to the reader; namely, Where in the Word of God is the sabbath said to be changed to the first day of the week? Where is there any repeal of the law as to the sabbath? Where is the authority for altering the day or the mode of observing it? Where in Scripture have we such an expression as "the Christian sabbath?" Where is the Lord's-day ever called the sabbath?

"We would not yield to any of our dear brethren in the various denominations around us in the pious observance of the Lord's-day. We love and honour it with all our hearts; and were it not that the gracious Providence of God has so ordered it in these realms that we can enjoy the rest and retirement of the Lord's-day without pecuniary loss, we should feel called upon to abstain from business, and give ourselves wholly up to the worship and service of God on that day, not as a matter of cold legality, but as a holy and happy privilege.

"It would be the deepest sorrow to our hearts to think that a true Christian should be found taking common ground with the ungodly, the profane, the thoughtless, and the pleasure-hunting multitude, in desecrating the Lord's-day. It would be sad indeed if the children of the kingdom and the children of this world were to meet in an excursion train on the Lord's-day. We feel persuaded that any who in anywise profane or treat with lightness the Lord's-day act in direct opposition to the word and Spirit of God."—*A Scriptural Inquiry into the True Nature of the Sabbath*, &c., by C. H. M., pp. 7-9.

The remedy is not in endeavouring to bring them back under the legal yoke, whether by means of ecclesiastical penalties or by any other means, but in seeking to indoctrinate them better in principles properly Christian; elevating their sentiments through the intelligence of the doctrines of grace, till they are in terms to appreciate the distinction between a privilege conceded and a yoke imposed.

From the moment that a thing is set on the ground of *privilege* it cannot be imposed by force, for privileges are *conceded*, not imposed. Whoever despises the privilege loses the benefit, and the means of inducing its acceptance is not by constraint, but by inciting the desire for it by the presentation of motives.

The question is not superficial, turning on the interpretation of this or that text of Scripture, but is fundamental, involving the radical distinction between Christianity and Judaism, or, to speak more broadly, between the new creation and the old.

One of the principal keys to the Scriptures is to perceive that, before God, all is resolved into two men, heads of two distinct creations. They are the two Adams, the first and the last—Adam and Christ. Each of these is head not simply of a *family*, but of a creation. The first man fell, and dragged with him into ruin and death the entire creation at whose head he stood. (Rom. v. 12; viii. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 22, &c.) The second man, passing by means of death out of this first creation, rose again as head of a new creation, formed on new principles; and carried with Him on to this new ground, those whom He redeemed by His death (Eph. ii. 6), who being in Him (“in Christ”) are of the new creation, (*καὶνὴ κτίσις*—2 Cor. v. 17, Gal. vi. 15,) for them “old things have passed away; behold, all

things are become new." Into this new position they have individually passed by faith, accepting thereby identification with Christ in His death, and thus bowing to the sentence of death denounced by God on the entire old creation in Adam, and on themselves as pertaining to it; consenting to pass thus by death out of the old state, in order to enter by resurrection into a new state—to die to Adam, that they might rise in Christ. Passing thus *by faith* out of the old creation, through the same door by which Christ *literally* passed out, they also enter by faith, through the medium of resurrection and the new birth, into the new creation, as head of which He actually lives as risen. (Rom. vi. 3, 4, 11; Col. ii. 12; iii. 1, &c.) This truth then, of their being *in the reckoning of God* dead and risen, so that old things have for them passed away, and *all things* become new, and all of God, (not of Adam,) they endeavour to apply practically at every point. By faith they reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God; (Rom. vi. 11,) dead to the law, that they may live to Christ; (Rom. vii. 4,) dead to the world and to its rudiments, (Gal. ii. 20; vi. 14; Col. ii. 20,) in such wise that they are no longer, as though living in the world, subject to ordinances, proper to the old creation, but only sojourn in the midst of it as pilgrims and strangers—a heavenly people, citizens of a heavenly country. (1 Peter ii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 48; Phil. iii. 20.)

The separation is absolute and complete between the old and the new, between the Adamic and the Christian; as complete as if death had been literally realized. The relations of the man to God in the old creation have been totally and absolutely wound up, and have been re-established on entirely new ground, under new auspices, and on new principles. For the man in Christ there subsists

not a single one of his old relationships, whether with God or with men, that subsisted on the old ground, to be filled or fulfilled as of the old obligations. All, absolutely all, have become *new* !

It is true that the man in Christ, finds himself placed in many relationships, identical with those in which he stood as a man in Adam, and in so far as the relationships are identical, in the same proportion are the obligations growing out of them identical also ; but nothing of this sort constitutes an exception to the fact that *all things have become new* for him ; the principle on which he fulfils them now is altogether diverse from the old, and when he only complies with such duties as pertaining to the old creation, (as of the law,) he shows that he is lacking in Christian intelligence, and that his faith is not yet up to the height of Christian truth.

If the believer, in the hour of his conversion to God, had fallen dead on the ground—literally dead—and his spirit, departing to be with Christ, had, like Paul, penetrated to the third heaven, what would have been the effect of that death on his relations to the terrestrial creation to which he had lately belonged ? Would there not have been an end to all of them ? Would he be still bound to his wife so as to owe to her the duties of a husband, or to his parents so as to owe to them the honour and obedience of a son ? Rom. vii. 2 solves the question as to the first point, and in solving that solves every other that stands on the same footing.

Thus is the man then completely loosed from all the relationships, with their respective obligations, which belonged to him as a man among men and towards them.

And how would it be as to his relations to God ? It

would be exactly the same. He would have entered on new relationships towards Him, in the new sphere of existence. Some of these would be identical with some of those of the old sphere—God would still be his Creator, benefactor, &c., and thence he would owe to Him in these characters duties as aforetime, but it would no longer be as an earthly man, but as a heavenly man he would have to fill these relationships, and to fulfil their duties. Even the relationships which corresponded to the old would be on a new footing, and he would stand in other relationships entirely unknown to his earthly state.

Very well, let us now suppose that this new heavenly person, after a brief sojourn in the heavenly places, were told by his Lord to return again to earth, (John xx. 21,) and to take up once more the body in which he had formerly lived there as a man in the flesh—a man in Adam, and in the old creation—but that he should now take it up in his new and proper character of a man in Christ—a heavenly man (1 Cor. xv. 48)—and as such should employ its members, which aforetime he had used as instruments of sin, as instruments thenceforth of righteousness unto God. (Rom. vi. 13.) That at the same time, while maintaining his relations with God at the full height of his new position and character, so that he should no more return to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, (Gal. iv. 3, 9; Col. ii. 8, 20,) he should place himself withal under certain of the old relationships of life on earth—such as might comport with his character and mission—in order to live in them now as a heavenly man, representative of Christ; that he might manifest the life of Jesus in his mortal body, (2 Cor. iv. 10,) and show forth the virtues of Him who had called him out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 Peter ii. 9.) In obedience to

this, the man resumes his relationship to his wife, and to his parents, &c., and fulfils now the duties proper to these relationships, not with reference to the law, to which as a man in Christ he is no longer subject (the law pertaining to the old creation), but as subject to Christ, (*ἐννομος Χριστῷ*, 1 Cor. ix. 21,) formed on His model, and led by His Spirit. So walking—not after the flesh, but after the Spirit—the result would be that the righteousness of the law (that which the law demanded in vain of him as a man in the flesh) would be fulfilled in him now in a manner and upon a principle altogether new and different. The Spirit would produce in him *as fruit* in the new creation that which the law in vain sought to obtain from him by pressure in the old. Led by the Spirit, he would not be under the law, (Gal. v. 18,) and yet he would do of his free will and as by nature (as a tree produces fruit) the moral works which the law claims from those under it.

Such is precisely the position which the believer occupies, save that not having literally died in his own person, but (in God's reckoning) with Christ in His death, he is called to realize it by faith; proceeding in all things on this principle of death and resurrection, and making it all as real to faith as though it had been made good to actual experience.

The two creations being so completely distinct and diverse one from the other, it follows, that the rule of life or conduct, that was suitable under the first, will not suffice under the other. In the new creation new relationships toward God are met with, on the ground of redemption, and in the character of Father, in which He has now revealed Himself; relationships also towards the Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer, Mediator, Lord, &c., all of them unknown to the old creation; relations towards the

brethren in Christ—a new bond which had no existence under the old order of things; so that to teach believers to adopt as their rule of life the law, which was the rule for a Jew (a man in the flesh) in the old creation, is a complete mistake; is to drag him back from his legitimate position, to a scale of duties incalculably inferior to what is really incumbent on him; is to degrade Christianity into a species of half-caste Judaism that is neither one thing nor the other.

Jesus said *to His own*, “A new commandment give I unto you, that ye should love one another, as I have loved you;” and John makes on this precept the practical comment, “He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” If this commandment is *new*, then it cannot be part of the law, which already was *old*; and if this commandment, which is new, makes part of the Christian’s rule of life, and at the same time does not make part of the law, it follows, beyond all controversy, that the law is not the rule of life for believers. And the reason is easy to understand. This new commandment of the Lord regulates the duties of a relationship of which the law knew nothing, and could know nothing—brotherhood in Christ. The law only bade to love one’s *neighbour* as one’s self; but here is a precept that bids to love the *brethren* in Christ *more* than oneself; for it requires one to love *as Christ has loved us*, and He loved us more than Himself when He sacrificed Himself for us, laying down His life.

Even in the old creation the law did not enter till about two thousand years after creation, but this by no means implies that men were not in duty bound to fulfil all the moral obligations which the law, when given, codified and prescribed to the Jews. Cain, Abel, Seth, and their co-

temporaries, were as much under moral obligation to have no other gods beside Jehovah; to make no images to worship; not to fail in reverence to His name, as Moses and Aaron or any other Jew after hearing the voice from Sinai; because these duties are the natural consequence of God's being what He is, and they His creatures. In the same manner they were under as much moral obligation to honour their parents, and to respect the various rights of their neighbours, both openly and as to the desires of the heart, from the simple fact, that these duties were the legitimate and natural consequence, of the relationships in which God had set them towards their neighbours, placing them on a footing of equal rights.

That they had *as clear an understanding* of these duties I do not affirm, but the duties were there, and rested on them, and the lack of their fulfilment was sin, and the sin was visited with its legitimate penalty—death, “from Adam unto Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression”—that is, transgressing a precept—for this reason, that there were no precepts to transgress; for, after Adam and Eve, coveting the knowledge of good and evil (conscience), acquired it at the cost of their fall, God left them to the experience of it; and until the law there was no other guide or rule of life save conscience, unless exceptional communications from God to individuals, as to Noah, Abraham, Job, &c.

All the world then, during that long period, was in the state of “the Gentiles which have not the law;” yet, even so, there were among them those who at times did “by nature the things contained in the law” when it arrived. They revered God, as Job, and obeyed their parents, as Isaac, and thus doing, they showed “the work of the law” (mark not “the law,” but its work) “written on their

hearts;" to wit, the operation of conscience. (Romans ii. 14, 15.)

There were then the duties; there was the sin with its penalty; but in all that time there is not a single example on record, of a sin after the likeness of that of Adam—there was no transgression of a command, because there was no command to transgress, and "sin is not imputed [as transgression or offence] where there is no law;" for "where no law is, there is no transgression." (Rom. v. 13; iv. 5.)

In the midst of this state of things the law entered (*παρεισηλθεν*—came in by-the-by) that the *offence* might abound—mark well, not that *sin* might abound, but the *offence*—that sin might thenceforward have the character of offence or transgression, in order "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful," manifesting itself in its true character of enmity against God, (Rom. v. 20; vii. 13; Gal. iii. 19, &c.) and that thus by the law might be the knowledge of sin. (Rom. iii. 20.)

Such was the object of the law—to make evident, beyond all equivocation, the indomitable wickedness of the heart of man—of "the flesh."

In the new creation also the law exists not. There it remains in the old creation, established as firmly and immutably as ever, denouncing its penalties on all who being under do not comply with it, knowing nothing of mercy nor of grace. But the Christian is beyond the reach of its threatenings and penalties, because outside its jurisdiction, which only extends over the old, and has nothing to do with the new creation. And it was the law itself that put him outside its own jurisdiction, executing upon him its extreme penalty of death, in the person of his Substitute, so that he by the law is dead to the law.

(Gal. ii. 19.)* By this death, inflicted by the law, he passed out of the old creation, where it rules, and afterwards by faith rose, with Christ, into the new creation, where the law has no say. He, as much as Cain, Abel, or Seth, is under obligation to have no other gods, nor images, and to respect the all-venerable name of the Lord his God. He, as much as they, is in duty bound to honour his parents (if he has such), and to respect the rights of his neighbour, so long as he has a neighbour; and the ground of the obligation is the same as in their case; to wit, not the law, but the morality of the things. It is true that he, among many other advantages which they had not, has that of the clearness with which the law set

* I hardly know a greater misinterpretation than to quote Rom. iii. 31 to prove that "the law" still bears rule over believers. To say that they are still under the law, and, though failing to keep it, are nevertheless exempt from its penalty, is to "make void the law,"—is to make it a dead letter; to do the very thing the apostle protests that his doctrine does not.

When, in the criminal statute-book of a nation, the death penalty is denounced on murderers, it is customary to deposit in the hands of the sovereign a dispensing power, by which the crown can, in certain cases, commute or annul the sentence. Such precautions are needful in human jurisprudence, always fallible, and where the innocent might otherwise suffer at times, through defective evidence or the like; but in case the monarch should employ the power thus entrusted for extraordinary purposes, to revoke every sentence of death given by judge and jury, that were to "make void the law;" for it would stand in the code declaring "the murderer shall die," while the sovereign would say, "In spite of the statute, the murderer shall live."

In like manner had Paul taught that Christians are *under law* in any sense whatever; (for Scripture knows nothing of the notion of persons being under law in one sense and not in another;) and at the same time, that though failing to keep it, God, for Christ's sake, exempted them from its penalties, he would by his doctrine have done the same as the monarch in the supposed case: he would have "made void the law." When however he teaches that the believer has passed altogether beyond the jurisdiction of the law through faith, and that thus only—*i.e.* by meeting its penalty in his Substitute—could he get beyond it, he establishes the law—maintains its authority inviolate on its own ground.

forth these moral duties. There stands the law in its place in God's book, and, like all the rest of Scripture, it is profitable for him—good, if he use it lawfully (2 Tim. iii. 16, 1 Tim. i. 8,)—but *as a law* it has nothing to do with him. Just as, in the case of the heathen, the work of the law showed itself as written on their hearts, when they, without knowledge of the law, practised by conscience the things which the law also, when given, demanded; in the same manner “the righteousness of the law” is fulfilled in those who, led by the Spirit, practise the same things without being subject to it.

In respect, however, of the precept which commanded the Jew to observe the seventh day as a sabbath, it belongs entirely to that old creation with which the Christian's relations are ended for ever. It commemorates the rest of God in the first creation, and the Christian has nothing more to do with that. God's rest was broken before a second sabbath had arrived, and never since did God find rest in the old creation; He had to set His hand immediately to the task of counter-working the ruin, until He should bring out the new creation from its midst. Thus Jesus, when accused of violating the Sabbath by curing the paralytic, justified Himself by replying, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” (John v. 17.)

In Christ, in whom the new creation is complete and perfect, (Col. ii. 9, 10,) from the beginning to the end, God has found His eternal rest, and the believer his—a rest of which the Sabbath was but the shadow. (Col. ii. 16, 17.) With the commemoration, therefore, of a creation ruined by the fall of man—and so ruined that he had to accept of death in order to be able to get out from it and its condemnation—the Christian has nothing to do. Another thing, however, he has true reason to commemorate; namely, the day on which the new crea-

tion, in Christ its head, came forth complete and perfect from the sepulchre of the old, a triumph of the grace, the power, and the wisdom of God! This day indeed, not the seventh of the week of the old creation, but the first day of a creation altogether new, the Christian has every motive for turning into a day of rejoicing, and to thank God and the Lord for the holy privilege of being permitted, and by the Spirit led to the desire, of consecrating it to the memory and to the worship of Him who rose from among the dead, bearing him along with Him. The heart that appreciates the place it occupies in the presence of God in Jesus Christ, and the love, the grace, and the work which brought him there, the soul which by the Holy Ghost has learned to love the person of Him who died for Him and rose again, needs no law to oblige him to this; and for this reason its observance is never set in Scripture on the ground of *duty*, nor is it ever sought in any part of it to enforce it by commands or penalties; it is only made plain that it is pleasing to the Lord that the day should be observed, and that He has honoured it by giving it His name. For the heart that is led by the Holy Ghost, this is enough; and as to the soul which does not appreciate these things, that he should keep the day ostensibly and corporeally, drawing nigh to God with the mouth and honouring Him with the lip, while the heart is far from Him, this is worthless for the Lord. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." This is the motto of Christianity; all else is worthless. The Lord's-day is not for the world, but only for the Church. That the world should make it a resting-day or not is no matter to God. Before the world can keep the Lord's-day, it must first be converted—die, be born again, and be raised from the dead. For men in the

flesh—the world—in the old creation, He made rudimentary rules and ordinances—"Touch not, taste not, handle not," work not; and these were fulfilled in the letter by corporeal abstention from the prohibited things. All these were of the "old things" that have passed away. Now, that which has value for Him is only that which bears the stamp of "spirit and truth;" and where this is, there is no need of penalties and enforcements, whether ecclesiastic or other; where this is not, neither penalties nor commandments can create it; and for any Christian assembly to undertake to compel any one to keep the Lord's-day under pain of excommunication, would be a proof that they were as deficient in Christian intelligence as he. It is a legitimate case for the efforts of pastoral care and instruction; and when these do not succeed in correcting the error, a little patience and waiting, with much prayer to the Lord, will leave occasion to the Holy Spirit either to lead the erring one to better thoughts, or else to leave him to fall into some offence which will expose him in his true character, and render him amenable to discipline; but in any case the assembly has no right to exceed the limits the Lord has set. He has given no orders to put away for such a motive, and the assembly ought not. Let believers be taught the true import of their "heavenly calling," and, as risen with Christ, they will seek those things which are above, not those which are on the earth, (Heb. iii. 1; Col. iii. 1, &c.) and this will free them from that spirit of "filthy lucre" which leads to the preferring an open shop on the Lord's-day, to the worship and service in spiritual things, of Him by whose cross the world is crucified to them and they to the world.

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I remain, your brother in Christ, R. H.