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ON THE SABBATH No. V.

ITS DUTIES.

The moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath, and its divinely authorized transfer from the seventh to the first day of the week, having been proved, I will in resuming the subject, devote a number to its *duties*, or the manner in which the Sabbath should be sanctified. This can be learned only from the Scriptures. And doubtless, He who requires us to keep the Sabbath, has given plain instructions as to the manner in which it should be kept. In the statute itself, which has been shewn to be a constituent part of the moral law, the great Lawgiver is very explicit on this subject;---“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do *all* thy work; but the Seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK; THOU, NOR THY SON, NOR THY DAUGHTER; THY MAN-SERVANT, NOR THY MAID-SEPVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, NOR THY STRANGER THAT IS WITHIN THY GATES: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” In accordance with this, but with more direct reference to the proper *spiritual* observance of the sabbath, is the language which God puts into the mouth of his prophet;---“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.”

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[From the Charleston Observer.]

LETTER III.

PSALMODY---DIVINE AUTHORITY.

My Christian Friends,---It was intended, in this Letter, to enter directly on the main point in dispute on the question of Psalmody, viz: *the Divine authority* for the exclusive use of David's Psalms, which involves another point not to be overlooked in the discussion, viz: *the Divine authority* for the use of human compositions in the praise of God. But before adducing any arguments, in favor of the exclusive use of the inspired Psalter, it may be proper to offer some considerations, showing the importance and necessity of having Divine authority for all our acts of worship. It is believed that this matter is too much overlooked. It has been the prevailing disposition of men, ever since the fatal transaction of our first parents in Eden, to set aside the Divine Commandment, and adopt some course of their own; or, at least, to blend their own inventions with the appointed ordinances of Heaven. This was, perhaps, the leading sin of the antediluvians; it was the crying, besetting sin of the Israelites; it has been the crime of the heathen world from time immemorial: "for when they knew God, they worshipped him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations," &c. This of adding to and amending God's ordinances, has been the Mammoth sin in the Christian Church---a sin which began to work in the days of Paul, and has worked like leaven, to the entire corruption of the Roman Church---the "Mother of Harlots"---and it is to be feared that there is not a single Protestant community which has entirely escaped the contaminating influence of this evil principle---this meddling with Divine things. The notion that it matters not what a man believes, provided he is *sincere*---or what he sings in Divine worship, provided it is, as Mr. C. says, "orthodox, devotional, and proper"---is altogether too prevalent. The acceptableness of a man's worship is made to depend on the state of his feelings, or on the character of his service. While it is very necessary that the feelings should be enlisted in our devotional exercises, it is *most* necessary that the act of worship should be *authorized*. To illustrate this, permit me to call to your recollection a number of cases recorded in the Scriptures, in which the necessity of adhering rigidly to the Divine appointment in all that we do pertaining to God, is presented clearly and convincingly, and often under the most appalling circumstances.

1. The first case to which I cite you, is that relating to Nadab and Abihu, recorded, Lev. 10. These men offered *strange fire* unto the

Lord, instead of fire from off God's altar; and for this transgression "there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them." By a sudden and awful judgment, they were cut off from the congregation of Israel. Why? Because they had taken upon themselves to do, not an act which God had positively forbidden, but one "which he commanded them not." This shows the importance of conforming strictly to the Divine appointment in all our approaches to him, or in all our acts of worship. If God has "not commanded" a particular service or act of worship, it is sufficient to condemn it.

Let us apply this principle to the matter in hand, for I always like to come to the point, or as near as possible. Let it be admitted that God has not positively forbidden the use of human compositions in his praise, yet if he has "not commanded" their use, either by precept or example, or in any sense whatever, the want of such a command is sufficient to seal forever their condemnation. It is the same as if they had been positively forbidden. Had God commanded his people to burn incense and offer burnt-offerings upon his altar without providing any fire for such services, then they might have procured fire wherever it could be procured most conveniently, just as did Noah, Abraham, and others. But when it was God's will that the fire of the altar should be employed in His worship, it was highly improper to use common fire, though the use of such had not been positively prohibited. It was "not commanded." So God has provided His Church with a Book of Psalms, and commanded their use, and human compositions are not to be introduced into His worship instead of His own songs, for He has "commanded them not." But the cases are not parallel; for while it was proper to use common fire in the worship of God before the standing or Tabernacle altar was consecrated, it was not proper to use uninspired songs in the praise of God before the Book of Psalms was compiled, much less is it proper to use them after the compilation has been made. The *strange fire* which Nadab and Abihu took, would have answered the purpose of burning the incense or consuming the sacrifice, just as well as the fire from off the altar; but it was "not commanded," and that was sufficient---it should not by any means have been offered. But can the same be said of those *strange Hymns* which are substituted in the place of the Divine songs? Do they, like the strange fire, answer the purpose just as well as those furnished by the Holy Spirit? Is the Divine appointment all that is wanting to render them an acceptable offering?

2, In the judgment inflicted on Uzza, (1 Chron. xiii. 10.) we have

another impressive evidence of God's jealous concern over His own ordinances, and of his determination that no human contrivances or measures shall be introduced, with impunity, into his worship. Why was a breach made upon Uzza because he put forth his hand to stay the Ark? Because David and the Levites did not conduct the proceedings on that occasion "after the due order." 1 Chron. xv. 13. The Ark was to be carried, not on a cart, as they were doing, but on the shoulders of the Priests. And after the Sanctuary was covered, and prepared to be removed, the Priests were not to *touch* any holy thing about it under the pain of death, Numbers vii. 9. and iv. 15. No doubt Uzza was *sincere*, and supposed that his conduct in thus staying the Ark, was altogether "orthodox, devotional, and proper." But in the calamity that befel him we are taught, to use the words of the Westminster Divines under the Second Commandment, that neither "custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever," will excuse a man, or a company of men for improving upon Divine ordinances. Perhaps it was thought an improvement to carry the Ark on a "new cart," instead of "after the due order," but the death of Uzza showed the folly and crime of the *new measure*.

And now to apply this to the matter in hand. If to carry the Ark on a new cart, instead of on the shoulders of the priests; and if to touch it, to prevent its fall or injury, was so criminal in the sight of heaven, what is it to exclude entirely from the worship of God his Divine songs, and substitute our own in their stead? Has God authorized such a course? Where? When? In what part of Scripture has God condemned his own Psalter, and declared it unfit for the Gospel Church as it stands, with all its figures and flowers, its prayers and promises, its curses and its consolations? No proof can be adduced from the Bible that we have authority to remodel the Psalms, and gospelize them, and substitute our own improvement of them, and our own songs in their stead. And is the lack of such authority a matter of no moment? Is God less jealous now, respecting His worship and authority, than he was in the days of Nadab and Uzza? Certainly not; he is the same unchangeable Jehovah, yesterday, to-day, and forever; and in the coming downfall of Babylon--- in the dreadful catastrophe that is to overwhelm the "Man of Sin" for changing times and laws, and seating himself in the Temple of God, the Church will be taught most emphatically that God is to be sought now, as formerly, "after the due order."

3. But of all the chastisements recorded in the Bible, as inflicted on the children of men for want of conformity to the commandment

of God, there is no case, to my mind, more touching and subduing than that of Moses and Aaron, particularly the case of Moses, recorded in Deut. iii. 23--27, and iv. 21--22. This distinguished servant of God was sent from the "burning-bush" to lead the tribes of Israel from Egypt to the Land of Promise. God, by his hand, performed the most stupendous miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea. For twice forty days, or for nearly three months, he was on Sinai's awful top communing with the great God---for many a weary day did he lead the children of Israel through the great and terrible wilderness, and bore with patience their perverseness. At length they arrived at Kadesh, and when the people chode with Moses on account of the scarcity of water, God commanded him, and his brother Aaron, to take the rod and gather the assembly together, and said God, "speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water." But instead of *speaking* to the rock as they were commanded, they *struck* it twice with the rod---instead of speaking to the *rock*, they spake to the *people*, in tones of harshness, which God "commanded them not." For this sin---this (some might think slight) deviation from the Divine commandment, they were excluded from the promised land---a land toward which they had journeyed so long, and amid so many difficulties---a land toward which they had looked with such joyous anticipations, and such ardent aspirations. How imploringly did Moses pray to be permitted to enter the promised inheritance! "I pray thee let me go over and see the good land, that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." But God, who had often heard his prayers in behalf of Israel, would not grant this petition. "Let it suffice thee, said he, speak no more unto me of this matter." What a lamentable case! But while we are called to shed the tear of pity over the misconduct and misfortunes of "Moses, the man of God," we are also led to contemplate the inflexible purpose of God to have any thing that he requires at our hand, especially of a public nature, done, precisely, according to Divine appointment. God's judgment upon Moses was recorded for our sakes; for "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." If God dealt thus with Moses, with whom he was accustomed to speak "face to face," because he failed to sanctify him at Meribah, it surely behoves us to inquire with the utmost anxiety, whether in all our religious services, and especially in our songs of praise, the point in debate, we are acting according to Divine appointment.

Other examples might be brought from the Old Testament, afford-

ing evidence of God's jealous regard for his ordinances, and confirming what has been said above. The same spirit likewise pervades the New Testament. Hear the dreadful denunciations which Christ uttered against the Pharisees, who had perverted the worship of God in many things, and were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." See him scourging the guilty traders for polluting and perverting his Father's house---the Temple. Read the language of Paul and others respecting the false teachers who were, in their day, perverting the Word and worship of God: Read the letters to the Seven Churches of Asia, and other parts of the Revelation, and the necessity of conforming to the Divine commandment under the New as well as under the Old dispensation will be very apparent.

If, then, it is so very important that we should have a "thus saith the Lord," or a Divine appointment for all our acts of worship, and conform strictly to it, the question now comes up, who has, and who conforms to this appointment, so far as the praise of God is concerned?

Are the "ninety-nine hundredths" of the Christian Church who sing "any thing and every thing," acting by Divine appointment in the matter, or has God appointed the Psalms of David to be used exclusively in His praise? I contend for the latter, and attempted to prove the point in the Discourse I am now called upon to defend, but did not by any means succeed to the satisfaction of my friend Mr. C.; and what is somewhat discouraging he is well persuaded that we never can succeed in establishing our position. He will give us from Genesis to Malachi to produce "one single declaration *implying* that the Book of Psalms constituted the exclusive, or even the *principal Psalmody of the Jews.*" It is certainly very generous in him to allow us so wide a field to search for evidence in favor of our position, or rather in favor of the half of that for which we contend: for he is willing to give us the whole of the Old Testament to produce one single declaration *implying* that the Psalms of David were to constitute the *principal Psalmody even of the Jews.* But we will not be out-done in generosity. I suppose if it is necessary for us to produce divine authority for the exclusive use of the inspired Psalter---God's own songs of praise---much more is it incumbent on Mr. C. to produce Divine authority for the *exclusion* of these songs from the worship of God, and for the substitution in their place of mere human compositions. But has he, or can he furnish Scripture proof for the use of human hymns, either instead of, or in addition to the Psalms of David? We will not only give him from Genesis to Malachi, but the whole Bible; from the words "in the beginning," to the final "Amen,"

to produce one solitary text of Scripture which plainly and positively enjoins the use of human compositions in the praise of God. And farther, we will give him the whole Bible to furnish one text of Scripture from which it may be fairly and legitimately *inferred* that we ought to set aside the inspired Psalter for songs of man's composing. And farther still, we will give Mr. C. the whole of Church History, and all the Fathers, from Ignatius down to Father Ralston of Western Pennsylvania, to prove that any section of the Christian Church, until the time of Dr. Watts, was ever exactly on *his side* of this controversy. He sets out with the broad assertion that the "ninety-nine hundredths of the whole Christian Church in every age" have been against us---the Seceders---and with him and his brethren;---and as he advances in the debate he finds that a great many persons and sections of the Church, and even the Seceders themselves, with Dr. Brown and Ralph Erskine at their head, have been against us, and on the side of our opponents.

Now we ask, when, or where, has any portion of the Christian Church existed, previous to the time of Dr. Watts, which substituted a mutilated imitation of David's Psalms for the Psalms themselves?

Where then has Mr. C. or his portion of the Church *authority* for the Psalmody they use in Divine worship? We have seen that it is of the utmost importance to have Divine authority for our acts of worship, and if he cannot show either direct or inferential authority from the Bible for the course which his Church has adopted---and if he cannot prove that *one* portion of the Church in *any* age, except the present, instead of the "ninety-nine hundredths in *every* age," have sanctioned the course which he and his Church have pursued on the subject of Psalmody---if he cannot, as we are sure he has not, produce either Divine or human authority, either precept or example justifying the Church in the rejection of David's Psalms, and substituting in their place the imitation now in use, then in what a predicament are they placed as far as *authority* is concerned in this matter? And in what a condition, on the score of authority, are those Churches placed from which the Psalms of David are entirely excluded, and the compositions of "any body and every body" are employed? They are, one and all, utterly destitute of authority, and to use the words of my friend, their condemnation is "sealed." We have said that our friend was generous in affording us such ample scope to prove our point; but he is careful to display his generosity when he thinks there is nothing to be lost by his liberality. He is sometimes disposed to be *unfair* in his demands. For example, he demands from us (No. 3.)

“plain and positive proof” for the exclusive use of David’s Psalms. It is, he says, “a positive institution. It must, therefore, depend on positive determination, which, from the very nature of the case, must be plainly, surely, and undeniably expressed.” Indeed! does he always reason in this strain? Are there not some positive institutions or ordinances which he advocates, but for which he can find no “positive proof, plainly, surely, and undeniably expressed?” Where does he find a “thus saith the Lord,” for infant baptism---for observing the first instead of the seventh day of the week, as the Christian Sabbath---and for the Presbyterian form of Church Government? He will establish and defend these institutions by fair and necessary inference from Scripture, and is it not just that we should do the same in defending David’s Psalms, especially since we cannot by implication prove that these Psalms constituted the *principal* Psalmody even of the Jews?

There are, at least, three rules by which any ordinance or institution of the Church may be established. 1. There must be a “thus saith the Lord”---a plain and positive precept---or, 2. there must be the example of those whose example is authority, such as that of Christ and his Apostles,---or 3, in support of an ordinance there must be fair and legitimate, or necessary inference *from Scripture*.

For any institution that can be sustained under any one or all of these rules, there is *Divine authority*, and on those that cannot, “Tekel” must be inscribed. Under one or all of these rules we hope, in succeeding letters, to establish incontrovertibly the exclusive use of David’s Psalms in the praise of God, and by so doing “seal” forever the condemnation of the opposite *excluding* system.

Yours truly,

W. R. H.

Lindo, Abbeville, S. C. Jan. 6, 1843

We are bound to forgive others, even as Christ forgave us. Forgiveness is that trait in the character of God which makes him so different from the heathen gods. “Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his inheritance.”