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INTERESTING LETTERS

VIRGINIA

DEAR BROTHER:—I have been thinking much on the covenants lately. It is a significant fact that in all ages God has made Covenants, with *visible signs* thereof. His first covenant was made for all nations, and called an everlasting covenant, the sign of which he produces. (Gen. 9:12-17.) The token of the next covenant is described in Gen. 17:11. His covenant made with and for Israel at Horeb has its visible sign to be repeated by those under that covenant.—Ex. 31:17; Ezek. 20:12.

Now, I want to ask, what is the visible sign of the New Covenant, if not the Memorials? Does not the Apostle bear out this, by saying, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death," etc.? Does it not *show* that we are under the New Covenant of love? He said, "Do this in remembrance of me," and, when we "do this," we show our love for him, for, "he that loveth me keepeth my commandments." Would like to hear from you on this. We could not tell whether Israel recognized their Law Covenant or not, were it not for the observance of the Sabbath sign. This, of all the Ten Commandments, was the only one that others could decide as to their observance.

Yours in the blessed hope,

M. L. STAPLES.

[In reply: While we believe that symbolic immersion is enjoined as an outward testimony or witness to the true immersion of the will into the will of God, as expressed in Christ; and that the Memorial Supper is enjoined as the proper and helpful remembrancer of our Lord's death, yet we do not regard these in the same light as circumcision to the children

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of Abraham and the Sabbath of the Jew, for they were compulsory as to outward form: ours are obligatory in their essence, but not in their outward form if not clearly seen. For instance, Cornelius was accepted under the New Covenant when he had eaten of the Paschal Lamb by faith and had immersed or buried his will into the divine will, *before* he ate of the symbolical Memorials (bread and wine), and before he had been symbolically buried with Christ into death in immersion. The same has been true of many since who did not at first, and others who, perhaps for lack of

proper instruction, never discerned the relationship between the symbols and the facts.

The Passover and the Sabbath and Circumcision were so strictly enjoined that the man who did not observe them could not be reckoned a Jew; but many are recognized both by God and men as Christians, under the New Covenant, who do not properly appreciate either baptism or the Memorial supper.

Rather we would say that all the *typical* things of the past find antitypes under the New Covenant. The Passover lamb typified Christ slain as our ransom price; the eating of the lamb represents our faith-appropriation of Christ's righteousness, and was perpetuated as a type in the bread and wine Memorial. Circumcision typified our putting away the filth of the flesh [selfishness in every form] as new creatures; the Sabbath typified the rest of faith provided for all who come into New Covenant relationship with God. But the seal or mark of the New Covenant is on a wholly different plan: it is the possession of the spirit of Christ.

The manifestations of this holy spirit are three-fold. (1) Love supreme to God and joyful loyalty to his cause even at the cost of suffering. (2) Love of the brethren—unselfish, noble, pure,—a desire for their welfare which is always alert to do them good. (3) Love, sympathetic, for the world, prompting to good works, as opportunity may afford, and to a desire and effort always to live peaceably with all men. Necessarily the foregoing will imply development in patience, meekness, etc.

“If any man have not the spirit of Christ [in some degree, and progressively] he is none of his.” His spirit is the bond of perfectness, the seal of the New Covenant.—EDITOR.]

PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR BROTHER:—Last Sunday at our meeting we had a lesson from Romans 12:1, and among many thoughts brought out from such a prolific subject were some on the use we make of our consecrated time. I am engaged in the grocery business; but the condition of trade in general demands almost “eternal vigilance” at the present time.

The question which has presented itself to me many times is, Should I, as one of the consecrated, put forth such efforts to make and maintain custom as it is now necessary to do? I issue weekly price-lists, many times offering goods at less than cost for baits, and give away many more “gifts” with more profitable goods; not of preference to that sort of dealing, but because all my competitors are doing the same thing, and, to maintain my trade and living (as I am not wealthy), I am compelled to follow suit.

Another objectionable feature about that kind of method is that it squeezes my weaker brother in the same line of business. I am acquainted with many of them; some are widows striving to make an honest living by selling goods, but I am compelled to throw all my better feelings to the wind and “wade in,” no matter whom it injures. This is a sad confession for one who is bidding for the position of assisting our Lord in the lifting of mankind out of the chasm of selfishness from which they must be saved in the age we believe to be so close at hand. I am not trying to get you to justify my actions in this matter, but desire your opinion as to the advisable course of God’s professed children engaged in business during the present time, when it is a case of the big fish eating the smaller ones.

Yours in Christ, _____.

[In reply: The conditions you name are common to nearly every form of business, and prevail throughout the civilized world increasingly. It is a part of the general “trouble” of our times. The increase of machine capacity and the increase of the human family, both contribute to reduce wages and make steady employment more precarious. More men seek to engage in business; and competition and small profits, while beneficial to the poor, are commercially killing the small store and high prices. In consequence small stores and small factories are giving way to larger ones which, by reason of better and more economical arrangements, permit better service and lower prices. Larger stocks of fresher goods at lower prices and with better service are to the general advantage of the public as compared with the old time little shops with stale goods, high prices and careless service; even though temporarily some poor widows or worthy ones may suffer through mental, physical or financial inability to keep up with the new order of things. And even these, if they can take a broad, benevolent view of the situation, may rejoice in the public welfare, even though it enforces an unfavorable change in their own affairs. They may rejoice with those that are benefited and wait patiently for the coming Kingdom which will make God’s blessings more common than at present to all. But only those who have the “new nature” and its love can be expected to view things thus unselfishly. The present commercial competition is not, therefore, an unmixed evil. It is one of the great lessons being given to the world as a preparatory study before entering the great Millennial age, when the business of the world will be largely, if not wholly, on a socialistic footing—not for the wealth or advantage of the individual, but for the general welfare.

Meantime, however, the selfish competitive strain grows more galling continually to those possessed of noble, generous impulses, whether Christians or not. We are glad to note your own appreciation of the

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subject and your dissatisfaction.

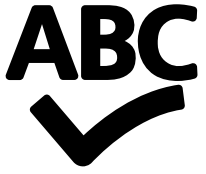
Our advice is that you keep a sharp lookout, and, if you see some other branch of business less beset with competition and therefore more favorable, make a change. If not, or until you find a more favorable business or more favorable conditions, we advise that you continue where you are and *modify* your course to some extent; *i.e.*, divide matters as evenly as you can between the three conflicting interests,—your own, your competitors' and your patrons' or neighbors' interests. If your business is meeting expenses and a reasonable profit, endeavor to keep it there, but do not push it in the endeavor to become "rich;" for "they that *will* [to] be rich fall into temptation and a snare." (1 Tim. 6:9.) We should avoid any dishonorable competition or meanness toward competitors, and any misrepresentations of goods to customers. Justice and honesty must be carefully guarded at *any cost*: then add all the "moderation" in favor of your competitor that love may suggest and circumstances permit.

We are not forgetting the injunction, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exod. 23:2), nor counselling the slightest compromise with injustice. Your question, we take it, is not whether you may do injustice, but whether *love* will permit you to do all that *justice* would not object to and that custom sanctions. The worldly heart does not scruple about such "trifles:" it is your "new nature," whose law is love, that would prefer to see your competitor prosper, and longs to do good unto all men as it has opportunity—especially to the household of faith. Cultivate this "new nature" by obeying its law of love in every way *possible*. "If it be possible, so much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,"—dealing generously and according to love. He who is imbued with the spirit of love thinketh no evil toward his competitor, and seeketh not his own (welfare, merely) and would not rejoice in a competitor's failure.

The difficulty is that the whole world is running on the depraved basis of selfishness, which is quite incongruous to love. With some the plane is higher, and with some lower: some limit their selfishness to the line of *justice*, others descend in selfishness to injustice and dishonesty, and the tendency is always downward. The "New Creature" in Christ must never go below justice and honesty and must seek as much as possible to rise above this highest worldly standard toward perfect love. It is the fault of the present competitive system that the interests of the buyer and those of the seller are ever in conflict. No power can correct, control and alter all this except the one power that God has promised,—the Millennial Kingdom, which shall enforce the rule of love and liberate from the propensities and bonds of selfishness all who, when they see and know the better way, will accept of the help then to be provided.—EDITOR.]

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— September 1, 1896 —



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