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Labor Troubles and the Sabbath.

Who Are Responsible for Sabbath Desecration?

THERE is no question among the various classes of thinking men as to the evil of the recent great railway strike and boycott, resulting in the paralysis of commerce throughout the breadth of a continent, in the financial ruin of thousands, in throwing myriads of laboring men out of work and reducing their families to beggary, in bringing untold loss upon thousands of innocent farmers and tradesmen, in defiance of law and authority, in broadening the gulf between rich and poor, in the loss of a score of lives. Great evil resulted from the strike, and those who feel it most are the families of the men who quit work at the bidding of a few autocratic, irresponsible leaders.

Many causes of the strike have been assigned, but space will not permit their analysis or enumeration. What we wish to examine here is an alleged cause, from a religious standpoint, of the great strike and its consequent lawlessness. This cause has been presented with a decided unanimity of sentiment by different religious authorities.

Said the Rev. W. W. Case, of the Howard Street

Methodist Episcopal Church, San Francisco, in a sermon preached July 15, on "The Infant Hercules Strangling Juno's Great Snakes," reported in the *Chronicle* of July 16 (the Italics in the following quotations are ours):—

"They [the railroad companies] have done more to overthrow *one of the pillars* of God Almighty than anybody else," said the speaker, "and that pillar was, '*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*'"

The speaker then referred to the utter disregard of all railway companies to keep the Sabbath day. They even went so far as to offer reduced rates on Sunday. He directly charged the railroad companies with being responsible for the present strike.

Rev. R. F. Coyle, D. D., of the First Presbyterian Church of this city, in a sermon on "The Signs of the Times," preached July 15, printed in the *Oakland Enquirer* of July 17, uttered the following sentiments:—

Again, the signs of the times point to the retributions which must follow the violation of God's law concerning the Sabbath. Capital, in its greed, in its insatiable avarice, has robbed the workman of his sabbath, and now it is reaping its harvest. It has kept him at work, especially in connection with our railways, seven days out of the week, taken from him the opportunity of developing his conscience and improving his moral nature, and see what has come of it? Lawlessness is rampant, property is threatened and destroyed, a spirit of violence is in the air. We can hardly wonder at it. *When capital forces its employes to break God's laws, it can hardly expect them to be loyal to human law.* When rich corporations trample upon the commandments of Heaven, and become the most conspicuous law breakers in the world, they are sowing the wind, and need not be surprised if they have to reap the whirlwind. The riots of 1877, which came so near laying Pittsburg in ashes, were carried on by workmen whom capital had robbed of their sabbaths. In the lurid light of burning buildings flung upon the sky, one might have read *the judgment of God against the*

desecration of his holy day. The rioters of the present hour, the turbulent, maddened disturbers of the peace, whose acts have paralyzed trade, and threatened the very life of the country, are mostly men who have been denied the boon of sabbath rest and the uplift of sabbath worship. . . .

The retribution of violated sabbaths is not all on the side of capital. Labor is feeling it. Labor unions have contributed their own share toward *secularizing the Lord's day, and the bread of disobedience to God* which they cast upon the waters they are finding again. It is coming back to them, and they are compelled to eat the bitter food of their own cooking. They cry out against capital for requiring of them Sabbath labor, and they have a right to; but while they are doing it, by picnics, by excursions, by Sunday travel, and by Sunday buying, they do not hesitate to rob some of their own fellows of their sabbath rest. If they travel, somebody must serve them; if they buy, somebody must sell; if they turn the sabbath into a day of pleasure, somebody must do the drudgery. There is nothing more certain than that our workingmen, by their high-handed desecration of the sabbath, are partners with capital in girdling the tree that shades them. They are helping the money power to cut away their protection, and bringing down upon their heads the judgments of God.

We are all guilty here, more or less. Christian people are guilty. *They, too, have dropped down into a widespread profanation of God's day, and are robbing the Almighty.* They buy, and sell, and ride unnecessarily, even as do others. Their example does not emphasize their regard for the sabbath. Toward every point of the horizon there is evidence that *they do not remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. The church is guilty. She has become surfeited with pride and worldly prosperity, and turned a deaf ear to the command that rings down from the lips of Jehovah to reverence his Sabbaths.* Upon us all, therefore, the retributions of God's law are coming. *Sinai is not a back number.* The mountain still smokes and thunders. *The Decalogue is still in force. The fourth commandment still holds.* But we have violated it as a people, and filled up the cup of God's righteous wrath by our disobedience,

and he is making us drink it. Heaven grant that the drinking of it may hurry us to repentance, and bring us back with broken hearts to cry unto God for mercy.

The *Christian Statesman* of July 7 says, on the strike question:—

The violence connected with the railroad strike owes its origin to the education the railroads have given their employes in sabbath [Sunday] desecration. *They have compelled men to disregard God's law until they have come to set all law at defiance.* We believe the time is not far distant when *those who teach men to set the law of God at defiance* will reap the fruit of their own sowing, and it will be so manifest that they cannot mistake it. It is just as inevitable as destiny that the nation that will not obey God's law shall perish. Patriotism as well as piety demands a return to a *strict compliance with the fourth commandment*, as well as all other divine requirements affecting the nation. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked."

The *Advance* (Congregationalist), in its issue of August 2, in an article on "Anarchy Is Irreligion," thus speaks:—

Woe to the child that grows up to despise parental authority. Unhappy indeed is the nation where children have not learned to obey the law of their homes.* It is for the same reason that God has appointed a Sabbath, to remind men at stated intervals of the existence of law, and to cause them to bow before its sanctity. *The Sabbath serves the same purpose to-day as did the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden; a prohibition is laid upon it, that men may not use it for their own pleasure.* This prohibition is to test them and train them. It is designed continually to teach them reverence for law. *That man is an Anarchist at heart who deliberately flaunts at the sacredness of the Sabbath, or sneers at any other distinct revelation of the law of God.*

With all that is said above in regard to the sacredness and importance of the Sabbath of the Lord, we are in

hearty accord. With the Rev. W. W. Case, we hold that one of the pillars of God's government is the Sabbath commandment. With Dr. Coyle, we contend that "*Sinai is not a back number.*" "*The Decalogue is still in force. The fourth commandment still holds.*" With the *Christian Statesman*, we agree that "*piety [at least] demands a return to a strict compliance with the fourth commandment.*" And with the *Advance*, we declare that the Sabbath is a test, and that "that man is an Anarchist at heart *who deliberately flaunts at the sacredness of the Sabbath, or sneers at any other distinct revelation of the law of God.*" With the above writers, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed Presbyterian, and Congregationalist, and with others of other denominations who might be quoted in the same line, we agree in the above respects, and that the world of capital and labor, of trade and commerce, of Church and State, are guilty of trampling God's law underneath their feet, desecrating and profaning his holy day, and thus inviting upon the transgressors the sure penalty of disobedience; for "sin is the transgression of the law," and "the wages of sin is death."

A VITAL QUESTION.

But what day is the Sabbath of the Lord? We have the right to ask the question. More, it is the sacred duty of every Christian to ask the question. The question is not a settled one. It has not been for centuries. A question is never settled until it is settled right. A question is never settled right with the Bible Christian, with the true Protestant, till it is settled according to, and upon the rock of, God's word. Councils, creeds,

Roman Catholic "Fathers," traditions, one or all, cannot determine the fact; what says the Bible?

God's law of the holy Sabbath, which Dr. Coyle declares "still holds," is as follows:—

"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 manservant, nor thy maidservant, 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 the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Ex. 20:8-11.

The following are recognized principles in the interpretation of law, as all jurists will admit; let us apply them to God's law:—

In the case of all law, it is THE INTENT OF THE LAWGIVER that is to be enforced.

When words are plain in a written law, there is an end to all construction; they must be followed.

When the intent is plain, nothing is left to construction.

Certainly the words of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue are plain. If language means anything, that law means that the *intent* of the Lawgiver was that the *seventh* day should be regarded by his subjects as the Sabbath. And this law God based upon reasons—his resting on the day, blessing the day, and the sanctification or setting apart of the day—which can apply to no other day of the seven; for God rested on no other day, blessed no other day, set apart no other day.

But God did not leave his *intent* to be declared by words alone. He showed by the threefold weekly miracle of the manna for forty years that the seventh day was the Sabbath, thereby *precluding any construction* of the plain words of the law.

THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK.

More than this: This seventh-day Sabbath was *the seventh day of the week*, for it was the day which came

just before the first day of the week. See Matt. 28 : 1 ; Mark 16 : 1, 2 ; Luke 23 : 56 ; 24 : 1. In short, the only weekly Sabbath or holy day known to the word of God is the seventh-day Sabbath, the memorial of creation, and the sign of sanctification, redemption, or re-creation in Christ. Eze. 20 : 12. It was the day hallowed by Christ, the Creator, in Eden, kept by patriarch and prophet, and magnified and made honorable by the holy obedience of Jesus Christ, our Example. We can "profane" only that day which God has hallowed. We can "desecrate" only that day which God has made sacred. We can remember to *keep holy* only that day which God has *made holy*. God has placed this honor upon only one day, namely, the seventh day of the week.

What then? Then the above quotations are true in principle but wrong in application. In applying to Sunday, the first day of the week, what God has indubitably and eternally, according to the plain words of Scripture, applied to the seventh day, the day just before Sunday, these teachers are instructing men to break God's law. More than this, there are many teachers among the various Protestant denominations who are continually heaping terms of reproach upon the very day thus honored of God. The Sabbath given by Jehovah and honored by Christ has been called "Jewish," "the old Jewish Sabbath," the "Saturday Sabbath," an "obsolete institution;" and still other terms of reproach have been heaped upon it. In doing these things are not these teachers countenancing disobedience and rebellion against God's law? Are they not saying with all their tremendous influence that God does not mean what he says, that his commands are not important? And may not both capitalists and laborers draw the conclusion that if God does not mean what he says in respect to the *day* and *time* of the Sabbath, he does not mean what he says in other respects? And if he did not mean by the plain words he uses that the very day named in his law should be regarded, can those words be made to mean

that any other day should be observed as the Sabbath? And may we not say, in the adapted language of Dr. Coyle and the *Christian Statesman*, quoted above, that "when religious teachers instruct men to break God's laws, they can hardly expect them to be loyal to human law"? Is it not true of these religious teachers (unwittingly, perhaps) that "they have taught men to disregard God's law till they have come to set all law at defiance"? And what shall we say of that religious teacher (he numbers thousands) who, in the language of the *Advance*, "deliberately flaunts at the sacredness of the [only true] Sabbath," which is a most "distinct revelation of the law of God"?

Christian brethren, in the light of the above truths, who are the most responsible for Sabbath desecration? God's Sabbath, like the forbidden fruit, is a test; what will you do with it? It is not a question merely of days; it is not a question of denominations; it is not a question as between parties of men. It is a question between the traditions and errors of an apostate church and the word of the living God. It is a question of simple faith in the Scriptures of truth, upon which rests your soul's eternal interest. Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." The Sunday sabbath is not of God's planting. The seventh-day Sabbath is an important part of the revealed will of God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Behind the Sunday stand the heathen sun worship, the great apostasy, antichrist. Behind the Sabbath is the great Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Christ of God, Jehovah our Righteousness. Which will you choose? On which side do you stand? Under whose banner are you enlisted? Will you not prove loyal to God?

M. C. W.