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THE QUESTION OF ECCLESIASTICAL PROPERTY,
AND FRANCHISES—IN ITS BEARING ON THE TRUE
MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

THE student of the Bible is aware, that God gave to the tribe of Levi, no inheritance amongst the other tribes of Israel. Cities were appointed for them to dwell in; and provision was made for their comfortable support—in the ordinary working of the religious system of the Jews. But the whole system of church property and franchises, as well as the entire method of the support of religion and its ministers, and the movement of spiritual life in its organic connection with property—were placed on a footing, in that divinely organized commonwealth,—peculiarly remote from the possibility of vast accumulations, and from the danger of secularizing religion, by the agency of money.

It is also well known, to every one who has examined the subject, that the Christian Church, for nearly three and a half centuries after the birth of Christ,—was placed in circumstances, which, according to our present notions on the subject of ecclesiastical property and franchises, would render its continued existence, much more its wonderful progress—well nigh inconceivable. Without charters, without estates, without permanent funds, without separate colleges or schools, without churches, nay, even without a visible existence recognized for any other purpose but persecution—the early Church of Christ subdued the ancient world, in a period about equal to that which has elapsed since the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

In some respects, the conversion of the great Emperor Constantine, must be considered one of the greatest calamities which ever befell the Church of Christ. The whole question of ecclesiastical property and franchises, in its widest, and most desolating form—gradually received that solution, and that firm establishment through-

influence, waiting a trumpet's call to awake them to life and motion.

We care not even greatly, to see agitation against selfish ends, nor against localities aspiring to be head quarters, which make themselves rivals of the whole cause of Christ in the land, nor against place-worshippers, nor against Sleepy Hollow, nor against centralism. It would look too much like "breaking a butterfly upon a wheel." We know the prompt hand and brave heart of our beloved Zion too well, not to know that these things will be swept away, clear and clean, as soon as their existence, as abuses, can be fairly demonstrated.

But we are for agitation in the Church, in the work of struggling up into a more deep and thorough apprehension of truth, and in increasing the vitality, and in elevating the intellect of the generation—agitation against dull books, and dry, drowsy, inefficient newspapers.

We suspect that we go just as much for the independence of the Press, as those who go farthest in that direction. We beg leave however, to retain that subject on our card, for some future utterance. There are cases supposable, in which the printing press belongs very affectionately, to Presbytery, or Synod, or Assembly, when commendation is wanted, and imprimatur is sought. Then it is the organ! Then Peter's shadow, falling on the Press, will not hurt, but heal. Then the Press can be free, and under Peter's shadow at the same time. But, by and by, comes a time, when that Press is not wanted there; when its presence is as much intrusion, as the installing a minister, to the empty walls of a Church—when the strife and turmoil of opposition, to drive out what is censurable only with miserable inefficiency, and invitality, can hardly be afforded, and when Peter's shadow will hurt, and not heal, and therefore must be kept very clear away. Possible cases of this kind, will convince thinking minds, that there is much to be thought out, and settled, and limited, correctly and judiciously, on this subject, between the present system of the control of the Church by the Press, and the other extreme, of the full control of the Press by the Church.

PASTORAL LETTER ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH—TO THE CONGREGATIONS UNDER THE CARE OF THE PRESBYTERY OF BALTIMORE.

The following letter was reported by a Committee of the Presbytery of Baltimore, and read before that body, on the 12th of April, 1854;—and, though not formally adopted, was approved by them, and the author requested to publish it.

DEAR BRETHREN: We, Ministers and Elders, in Presbytery assembled, respectfully and earnestly ask your attention to the following Resolutions, adopted by the General Assembly of our Church,

at their sessions in Philadelphia, in May, 1853, and to some considerations which we venture to add, by way of explaining, illustrating and enforcing them.

The resolutions are :

1. *Resolved*, That the proper observance of the Christian Sabbath is essential alike to the purity and progress of the Church, and to the prosperity of the State. A Church without the Sabbath is apostate: a people who habitually desecrate this Divine Institution, have abandoned one of the grand foundations of social order and political freedom.

2. *Resolved*, That the General Assembly most earnestly enjoin it upon their Churches, ministers and members, both in their public and private capacity, both by their discipline and example, to sustain the strict observance of the Holy Sabbath. The Assembly look upon the increasing desecration of this day, by the various modes of public conveyance, as of a most alarming character, as a manifest abuse of the great temporal prosperity of the country, and as tending to provoke the judgments of God upon the Church and the nation. So far as Christians are connected with the system of Sabbath desecration, by their ownership of stocks or other interests in our railroad and other corporations, there can be no doubt of their duty to protest earnestly and constantly, against the violation of the Sabbath, and to use all the influence of their position to arrest this growing evil.

That this is a seasonable testimony, cannot be denied by any serious observer of the signs of the times. In the universal agitation and conflict of opinions, which is one of the most striking characteristics of the age, the great questions touching the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath institution, and the change in the day of the week, from the seventh to the first, have again been subjected to a discussion, which, though earnest and solemn, has not been more solemn than the glory of God and the prosperity of the Church demanded, or more earnest than the discussions of men generally are, when their interests are concerned in upholding or in destroying any thing venerable for its age or influence. No ordinance of God can dread discussion: no plant of our Heavenly Father's planting, can ever be rooted up by the storms of controversy: and we are under no apprehension that the Sabbath, which (beside the institution of marriage), is the only flower that has been transplanted from Paradise in our fallen world, and which has survived the scorching heats and blasting winds of wickedness, for so many centuries, will be done away, till He comes who is the substance of all the shadows, the complement of all pledges and earnestness, which have been given to the people of God, and the final rest of all who are troubled for the cause of truth and righteousness. Still, unstable souls may be led astray, and even well instructed Christians may be reduced to perplexity and doubt, "by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." We exhort you, therefore, to study the Word of God, and especially the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, in which the Apostle brings out clearly the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath as a day of rest, and also the change (and nature of the change,) of the day, from the seventh to the first; by showing that when the warning was given in

Psalm 95: 11, the rest founded upon the finishing of creation, (which included the observance of a particular day,) and the rest founded on the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, (which also included the observance of a particular day, Deut. 5: 14, 15, and compare the same as it occurs in Exod. 20: 10, 11), had both passed away, and, consequently, there "remained still a rest, (Greek, in the margin, a 'sabbatism,' or 'keeping of Sabbath,') for the people of God:" a rest which also included the observance of a particular day; to wit, the day on which Jesus entered into His rest, having ceased from His own works, as God did from His. In thus studying the Word of God, you will find that the obligation to observe the first day of the week as a day of rest, and the consequent promises and privileges belonging to a conscientious and faithful observance of it, stand upon a foundation which cannot be shaken by the plausibilities of Christian argument, much less by the rhetoric of men to whom "gain is godliness." So shall you have boldness in the day of judgment and trial, and be able to stand before any tribunal on earth, and "give a reason for the hope that is in you."

The tide of immigration, unexampled in fullness and constancy, which is flowing into this country, invests this subject with peculiar importance to you, as American Christians and American citizens. The strangers from the old world, who come here, are, for the most part, from Ireland and the provinces of Germany. The vast majority of the Irish emigrants are Papists; and all the world knows with how little even of decent respect, the apostate community of Rome has been accustomed to regard the Lord's day. It has multiplied days of its own, till whole nations, subject, by the curse of God, to its dominion, have been reduced to desolation, misery and crime, and all possible evils which can flow from ignorance and idleness; but the desecration of the Lord's own day, has been tolerated with a long-suffering, very remarkable in her who has drunk the blood of the saints, for refusing to obey her commands. In this, as in all things else, obedience to God is eternal enmity to Rome. You, who reside in the city of Baltimore, need not be told what Rome thinks of the Sabbath of the living God. Your eyes are shocked with their childish processions: your ears are offended, and your worship is disturbed, by their bells and bands of music, grating harshly upon that solemn quiet, which ought never to be broken, but by strains of heavenly melody, the sweet invitations of the Gospel, or the voice of prayer. In all this they are consistent; they are not content with equal rights; they are not satisfied with the privilege of worshipping God or Mary undisturbed, but they must disturb others in their worship. They are driving us nearer every day, to the decision of the great question which must be decided, sooner or later, whether Protestantism and liberty, or Popery and despotism, shall rule this country: a decision which will not be doubtful.

In connection with the despotism of Rome, and its contempt for the Sabbath, and by way of illustrating the political tendencies of

the Sabbath institution, we quote the following passage from the world-renowned "working-man," Hugh Miller. We quote the whole passage, though the whole does not bear upon this particular point: "Among the existing varieties of the genus philanthropist," he says, "benevolent men, bent on bettering the condition of the masses, there is a variety who would fain send out our working people to the country on Sabbaths, to become happy and innocent in smelling primroses, and stringing daisies on grass-stalks. An excellent scheme theirs, if they but knew it, for sinking a people into ignorance and brutality—for filling a country with gloomy work-houses, and the work-houses with unhappy paupers. 'Tis pity rather, that the institution of the Sabbath, in its economic bearings, should not be better understood by the utilitarian. The problem which it furnishes is not particularly difficult, if one could be made to understand, as a first step in the process, that it is really worth solving. The mere animal, that has to pass six days of the week in hard labor, benefits greatly by a seventh day of mere animal rest and enjoyment: the repose, according to its nature, proves of signal use to it, just because *it is* repose according to its nature. But man is not a mere animal; what is best for the ox and the ass, is not best for him; and in order to degrade him into a poor, unintellectual slave, over whom tyranny, in its caprice, may trample, rough-shod, it is but necessary to tie him down, animal-like, during his six working days, to hard, engrossing labor, and to convert the seventh into a day of frivolous unthinking relaxation. History speaks with much emphasis on this point. The old despotic Stuarts were tolerable adepts in the art of kingcraft, and knew well what they were doing, when they backed with their authority the Book of Sports. The merry, unthinking serfs, who, early in the reign of Charles 1st, danced on Sabbaths round the Maypole, were afterwards the ready tools of despotism, and fought that England might be enslaved. The Ironsides, who, in the cause of civil and religious freedom, bore them down, were staunch Sabbatarians.

In no history, however, is the value of the Sabbath more strikingly represented, than in that of the Scotch people, during the seventeenth, and a large portion of the eighteenth centuries. Religion and the Sabbath were their sole instructors, and this in times so little favorable for the cultivation of mind, so darkened by persecution, and stained with blood, that, in at least the earlier of these centuries, we derive our knowledge of the character, and amount of the popular intelligence, mainly from the death-testimonies of our humbler martyrs, here and there corroborated by the incidental evidence of writers, such as Burnet. (Memoirs, vol. 1, p. 431.) In these noble addresses from prison and scaffold, the composition of men drafted from oppression, almost at random, from out the general mass,—we see how vigorously our Presbyterian people had learned to think, and how well to give their thinking expression. In the quieter times which followed the revolution, the Scottish peasantry existed,

as at once the most provident and intellectual in Europe; and a moral and instructed people, pressed outwards beyond the narrow bounds of their country, and rose into offices of trust and importance, in all the nations of the world. There were no societies for the diffusion of useful knowledge in those days. But the Sabbath was kept holy; it was a day from which every dissipating frivolity was excluded, by a stern sense of duty. The popular mind, with weight imparted to it by its religious earnestness, and direction by the pulpit addresses of the day, expatiated on matters of grave import, of which the tendency was to concentrate and strengthen, not scatter and weaken, the faculties; and the secular agitations of the week came to bear, in consequence, a Sabbath-day stamp of depth and solidity. The one day in seven, struck the tone of the other six. Our modern apostles of popular instruction, rear up no such men among the masses, as were developed under the Sabbatarian system in Scotland. Their aptest pupils prove but the loquacious *gabbers* of their respective workshops,—shallow superficialists, that bear on the surface of their minds a thin diffusion of ill-remembered facts, and crude theories; and rarely, indeed, do we see them rising in the scale of society; they become Socialists by hundreds, and Chartists by thousands, and get no higher. The disseminator of mere useful knowledge, takes aim at the popular ignorance, but his inept and unscientific gunnery does not include in its calculations the parabolic curve of man's spiritual nature: and so aiming direct at the mark, he aims too low, and the charge falls short." (First Impressions of England, &c. c. 3.)

In reference to that portion of our German population which is connected with the Church of Rome, we need add nothing, as what has already been said of the sort of reverence for the Lord's day, entertained by that Church, admits of the same application to them. Rome has reverence for nothing but her own inventions. In this respect she is truly, always and everywhere, and in all her votaries, the same; and always will be, till the Son of God shall destroy her "by the brightness of His coming." In reference to the Protestant portion of the German population, (we allude of course to those who have not been long in the country), a similar want of reverence for the Lord's day, must, to a great extent, be acknowledged. Whatever may have been the cause, whether the misapprehension of some of the leading Reformers, in regard to the true relation of the Fourth commandment to the law of Moses, and their consequent doubt as to its perpetual binding force, to the end of the world,—a misapprehension arising, perhaps, from some passages of the New Testament, and strengthened by the authority of some of the early writers in the Church, as well as by the preposterous abuse, on the part of Rome, of holy days—whatever account we may give of the fact, the fact itself is unquestionable, that the Sabbath has not been held in reverence as it should have been, among the churches

on the Continent of Europe, Lutheran and Reformed. And the case is far worse, since the formulæ and practical results of the modern pantheistic philosophy, have come down to the masses of the people. Thousands who understand, and can understand, nothing of the processes of reasoning, by which the startling conclusion has been reached, that every man is God, are able to perceive and feel the bearing of that conclusion upon the great questions of law, of personal immortality, of personal responsibility. Nothing can be idler, than to talk to such men of moral obligation, and especially, of moral obligation to observe a positive institution of God. The assembly of Germans who, a few years ago, issued their manifesto from Cleveland, and those who responded to them on this side the mountains, evidently regarded themselves as Olympian divinities, sovereign and supreme, and, therefore, subject to no law but that of their own will, and to be restrained by no bounds, except those imposed by the clashing of interests which must, of necessity, occur among a plurality of independent and lawless Gods. It is greatly to be feared that these sentiments extensively prevail; that many of the secret associations amongst us, have been organized upon the atheistic, radical, anarchical principles, which, at the close of the last century, were cherished in the Jacobin Clubs of Paris, and the societies of the Illuminati, and finally deluged, like burning lava, the institutions and governments of Europe. The Germans of St. Louis, or a portion of them, have already protested, formally, against the Sabbath laws, as unconstitutional encroachments upon their civil rights; and others, in other parts of the country, if published documents can be relied on, seem to regard laws of any sort as unjust restraints upon their liberties. When such doctrines as these are unblushingly avowed, it is time that the Church should utter a voice of remonstrance and protest, and say, with our General Assembly, to the world, that the "Sabbath is essential to the prosperity of the State, as well as to the purity and progress of the Church," and that not only "is a Church without the Sabbath apostate," but that "a people who habitually desecrate this divine Institution have abandoned one of the grand foundations of social order and political freedom." No wonder is it, brethren, that the lovers of their country, on these happy shores, are organizing themselves to resist and roll back the foreign influence which threatens to swallow up the precious inheritance of regulated liberty, left us by our fathers, and sealed and consecrated with their blood! We will have nothing to do, by the grace of God, with continental religion, or continental politics, except by our instruction and example, to rebuke, and if possible, to mend them.

As the government of this country is eminently one of law and of opinion, as contradistinguished from military force, it is evident that public morality is of the very last importance to our safety. But in what nation has public morality survived the degradation of the Sabbath? We have already alluded to the connection between the

Sabbath and the institution of marriage, as the common and only survivors of the fall; and the experience of the world demonstrates that when the first falls into contempt, the last, which is the great bulwark of morality and social order, will share in its disgrace. The only people in Christendom, who have attempted to abolish the Sabbath formally, and by law, were so far abandoned as to place a shameless strumpet upon the throne of God; and their short and melancholy reign is written in blood. If we give up the fourth commandment, which is the citadel of the first table of the law, we must soon surrender the seventh commandment, which is the citadel of the second table; all personal and public morality will be prostrate; our countrymen will become "brute-beasts, fit only to be taken and destroyed," "living in divers hurtful lusts and pleasures, hateful, and hating one another." God forbid that it should ever be said of us, as Napoleon said of the people just referred to, "Their great want is *mothers*," chaste and noble matrons, who, like Cæsar's wife, must not even be suspected; faithfully and laboriously polishing their jewels, and then with confidence in God, giving them to their country, to adorn and bless it.

In illustration of this point, let us recur for a moment to the present condition of some parts of Germany. In a recent number of one of the leading British Quarterlies, it is stated, that "in Breslau, the stronghold of Silesian Lutheranism, only a third of the Protestant population are church-going,—the public houses are forty times the number of places of worship, and the proportion of illegitimate births is one in four. Stettin, the chief city of Pomerania, seems now sunk to the most deplorable depth of Pagan, and worse than Pagan immorality. In a population of 50,000, the church attendance is only seven per cent. The number of persons in jail has doubled since 1851, their crimes being mostly committed under the influence of strong drink. One person in seventy lives by prostitution. The number of divorces yearly, (which the Prussian law allows,) is one hundred," &c. The statistics of Paris, the royal residence of his Christian Majesty, would doubtless make a more appalling commentary, upon the connection of the fourth and seventh commandments. Without the public worship of God, there can be no religion. "Without the Sabbath," says Daniel Webster, (Arg. in Girard case,) "there can be no public worship," and where there are not, there cannot be morality. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." (Rom. 1: 28—31.) Can we read this catalogue of the fruits of despising God, and not tremble? Be assured, brethren, no

people ever robbed God of His time, or of the glory of His name, without paying for it. Remember the eagle in the fable, which stole a coal from the altar, and thereby kindled a fire in her nest, which involved herself and her young in common conflagration and ruin. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just." (Pr. 3: 33.)

We had intended to say something to you in regard to another point in the resolutions of the Assembly; the responsibility of those who own "stock or other interests, in our railroad or other corporations," which violate the Sabbath, but must content ourselves with only a word or two.

There seems to be an aggravation of human guilt, in the use of our iron roads and copper wires. God, in opening these fields of discovery and improvement, has added greatly to the length of human life,—if life is to be measured by the successions of the mind, instead of astronomical revolutions—has made a very large addition practically, to the six days which He gave to man, while His proportion, His *one* day, remains the same, and yet men rob Him of this little. Will He not avenge such a *sacrilege* as this? Remember, brethren, that an omnipresent responsibility invests you. In all relations, in every place, at all times, you are accountable to God. If you have but one share in a joint-stock company, God will look into the manner in which you have managed that trust; and a few dollars here, will be but a poor compensation for the frown of your Maker on that day.

Finally, brethren, we say to you, that the Sabbath is the sign of God's covenant with us. (Exod. 31: 13—17.—Ezek. 20: 12.) It is a brilliant bow of promise upon the very darkest cloud that hangs upon the horizon of our country. So long as we observe it, so long shall the floods of Popery and despotism, Infidelity and anarchy, threaten us in vain. If we abandon it, or treat it with contempt, then comes merited vengeance; the opening of the windows of Heaven, the breaking up of the foundations of the deep, and a shoreless ocean, engulfing all that has exalted us, and made us prosperous as a people, and the brightest hopes and anticipations of the nations of the earth.

CHURCH UNITY AND THE EPISCOPAL MEMORIALISTS.

Two years ago, a memorial, signed by twelve Episcopal clergymen, for themselves "and others," was presented to the House of Bishops, setting forth the views of these clergymen, as to the very limited usefulness of the Episcopal Church, and urging a scheme