

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 3—July, 1890.

I.

RECENT DISCUSSION IN MATERIALISM.

THESE are phases of contemporary materialism which have little in common with the doctrines of ancient and mediæval materialists, and which in point of subtlety and philosophical attractiveness are quite in accord with the advanced position of nineteenth century thought. The idealist of to-day flatters himself that he avoids the inconsistencies of Berkeley and Fichte, so the materialist smiles at the mention of Priestly, D'Alembert, and Holbach. But these growths respectively in idealistic and materialistic thought have not been parallel. Idealism has tended in the last thirty years to withdraw its gaze from the thought-ultimate as a monistic conception, to perception as a dualistic relation, that is from cosmic to psychological idealism; while materialism has tended in quite the opposite direction, *i. e.*, from the crude postulate of matter in bulk to the search for an ultimate materialistic principle, that is from psychological to cosmic materialism. Each has strengthened its flank and the battle is now joined between psychological idealism and metaphysical materialism.

Spiritualism has gained vastly by this change of base. As long as the ontology of spirit rested upon a dogmatic assertion of universal mind, there was no weapon at hand wherewith to attack the corresponding assertion of universal matter. I have as good right to assert an universal as you have and *chacun à son goût* is the rule of choice. But now that philosophy is learning to value a single fact more than a detailed system, and is sacrificing its systems to the vindication of facts, it is spiritualism and not materialism which is profiting by the advances of science. Materialism has appealed to the metaphysics of force, spiritualism has appealed to consciousness

VIII.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

SUBSTITUTES FOR THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

THE obligation to observe a weekly day of rest and worship is recognized by the whole Christian Church, with few and insignificant exceptions. But there is a great difference as to the ground on which this obligation is supposed to rest. Very many agree with the Westminster Confession of Faith, which traces the duty back to the Decalogue and insists upon the continued and binding authority of the Fourth Commandment. But there is, at least, a large minority who deny that this Commandment has any force under the Christian dispensation. It is not proposed to canvass the grounds upon which this denial is made. That is sufficiently done in all the popular treatises on the subject. But it may be worth while to consider what is offered to us in place of the divine command given with so much solemnity from the blazing summit of Sinai. For it is admitted on all hands that the observance of the Lord's Day is a matter of the greatest importance; that it is necessary to man's physical and social welfare, and especially to his spiritual interests; and that without it there is great danger that the true religion would perish from the earth. We need, therefore, to look well to the grounds upon which it is commended to the attention of men.

The most common and obvious of these is: 1. *The Authority of the Church*, which, it is claimed, has a right to appoint a day of rest and worship and to enforce obedience. So Dean Alford, in his comment on Rom. xiv. 5 ("Gr. Test.," ii. 452), calls the Lord's Day "an institution of the Christian Church, analogous to the ancient Sabbath, binding upon us . . . by the rules of that branch of the Church in which Providence has placed us." To this may first be replied what John Owen said in his "Exercitations to the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Part v, Exer. iii. Sec. 58), viz.: "When God, by His authority, had commanded the observation of a day to Himself, and the Lord Christ, by the same authority, hath taken off that command and abolished that institution, it is not in the power of all the churches in the world to take up the religious observance of that day to the same ends and purposes. . . . Be it that the Church may appoint holy days of its own, that have no foundation in nor relation to the law of Moses, yet doubtless it ought not to dig any of his ceremonies out of their grave,

and impose them on the necks of the disciples of Christ; yet so must it be thought to do on this hypothesis that the religious observance of one day in seven is absolutely abolished by Christ as a mere part of the law of commandments contained in ordinances, which was nailed to His cross and buried with Him." But passing this point, which has more weight than seems generally to have been given to it, the proposed authority cannot be recognized by any who hold the cardinal principle of Protestantism that the Bible is the only rule of faith and practice. A Church can command only what it is authorized to do by the Scripture, but in this case it undertakes to do what the New Testament declined to do. The question was distinctly before Christ and His apostles, but according to the theory they abrogated the Fourth Commandment and yet put nothing in its place; nor anywhere is there to be seen even the semblance of an authorization for the churches to take action on the subject. Again, the Church may appoint what it deems suitable times for public worship, and may require obedience of its members, which is one thing, but it is quite another for it to make a day holy so that secular work, which may be innocently performed at other times, becomes sinful by being done on this day. This is surely beyond its powers. Moreover, according to this theory, each Church is at liberty to make its own enactment on the subject, for no one body has a right to control the action of another. They might then adopt different days, or at least might adopt different views as to the proper method of observing the sacred day. Nay, they might adopt the modern opinion of some eminent men that the entire notion of a sacred day is unwise and harmful, since every day should be regarded as belonging unto the Lord. What now are plain men to do in the midst of this confusion and varying authority? And how are they to feel the constraint of an obligation which is altogether human in its origin, which comes from fallible men, and which is often questioned by some who, on other grounds, are worthy of respect? But even if ecclesiastical sanction could control the conduct of confessed believers, how small an influence would it have on the outside public? Men at large would say that a Sunday statute was very well for those who were in full communion with the body that enacted such a statute, but it could not possibly have any binding force upon others. Nor is it easy to see what answer could be made to them. Surely, this point is one of no small importance at a time when there is such a growing desecration of the sacred day.*

2. A second substitute is found in *Apostolic Example*. The most conspicuous advocate of this is Dr. Hesse, in his Bampton lecture for 1860. He says, "The Lord's Day is not a continuance, in the strict

* To show how far this view of the obligation of the rest-day has spread, the writer may state that some years ago he was in the company of two theological professors, one a great light of the Lutheran Church, the other an eminent member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, both of whom declared that the Fourth Commandment did not bind and that the authority of the Church was sufficient.

sense of that word, of the Sabbath, but rests upon a foundation of its own;" which is thus stated, "The Lord's Day (a festival on the first day in each week in memory of our Lord's resurrection) is of divine institution and peculiarly Christian in its character, as being indicated in the New Testament, and having been acknowledged by the apostles and their immediate followers as distinct from the Sabbath (a Jewish festival on the seventh day in each week), the obligation to observe which is denied, both expressly and by implication, in the New Testament." This is a singular statement. The Lord's Day is "a divine institution;" yet he does not refer to a single utterance of God, or of any of his representatives, appointing its observance. The whole weight of the claim rests upon "the example of the apostles and their immediate followers." This is very complete and efficacious if we view the sanction of the Decalogue as still surviving, but not otherwise; as, indeed, the same writer seems to admit in his article on the Lord's Day in Smith's "Bible Dictionary" (p. 1677), where, after enumerating all the passages referred to (Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; Heb. x. 25, and Rev. i. 10), he adds, "Taken separately, perhaps, and even all together, these passages seem scarcely adequate to prove that the dedication of the first day of the week to the purposes above mentioned was a matter of apostolic institution, or even of apostolic practice." All that their example covers is simply the propriety of holding religious services on the first day of the week—a point about which there is no dispute, save with an insignificant handful of sectaries. The cases cited prove nothing, say nothing, as to keeping the day holy, renouncing secular labor, cultivating individual and family religion, etc. And every habitual profaner of holy time could justly reply to any remonstrance on the subject, "I do all that the apostles did: I go to church once, and that having been done, I consult my own taste about the rest of the day." And surely, if the Christian Sabbath is an entirely new institution, in no way connected with the Jewish, we should need some clear and definite precept concerning it; and one may well ask in wonder why was the abolition of the old day so clearly stated, as it is claimed to be, and yet nothing at all said in the way of command respecting the new one? Besides, experience shows that men need to have points of duty laid down in well-defined lines. That which comes to them only in the way of inference they are sorely tempted to dispute under various pretexts, such as that the apostles were in a peculiar position, that circumstances have changed, that what was proper at one time may not be called for at another, etc., whereas it is by no means so easy to evade a clearly drawn and express statute. The objections, then, to this substitute for the commandment are, that it does not cover the ground; it does not provide for the setting apart of the day from secular to sacred uses; it has no binding authority, and it puts the apostles in the attitude of setting themselves up against their Master, for, according to the theory, He abolished the day of rest, but they of their own

accord introduced it, and we are asked to follow them rather than Him. Example in the line of a precept or an acknowledged duty has great weight, but standing by itself has none at all, for it is always and everywhere true that we are to obey God rather than man, and the holiest of believers cannot bind another man's conscience.

3. A third substitute is found in *Humanity and Religious Expediency*, a phrase used by Dean Alford in the passage before cited. There is no doubt that a valid and cogent argument for the day of rest may be constructed on these grounds. Sunday observance is fraught with manifold blessings to the world. It is especially a boon to the poor. It is a pleasant interruption to the hard grind of daily toil. It furnishes opportunity for mental and moral culture. It enables the laborer to spend one whole day with his family. This is so plain that many who see no sacredness at all in the first day of the week, yet admit that the institution is most benign in its results, and for that reason deserves universal recognition. But how large a portion of the race can be made to see this truth and act upon it, when it runs counter to their interests, their habits or their tastes? How easily could a manufacturer or other employer of labor persuade himself that the men under him were just as well off without a Sunday rest as with one? What chance has humanity when there is arrayed against it avarice, or ambition, or the pursuit of pleasure? Surely, this is a broken reed upon which to rest the right of our fellow-men to a weekly day of rest. Nor is the case different when the appeal is to "religious expediency," for the very nature of this principle is that it is to be determined by every man for himself. The expediency referred to means that it is only by having a fixed day, regularly recurring, for the purpose that men can meet for worship and religious instruction. What multitudes there are who would admit cheerfully the propriety of such a day for others, or even for the community as a whole, but would insist that, in their own case, it was "expedient" to take a walk or a drive, or go on an excursion, or give an entertainment? How many would feel, as some have been known to say, "Yes, Sunday is a blessed gift of God to man, and the best return we can make to Him is to enjoy His gift and spend the time in whatever ministers pleasure to the sense, the taste or the reason." And as they think so they act. They are right, then, who say that to place the observance of the rest-day on such grounds as these is, and must be, disastrous. It is giving to the average man a far larger measure of liberty than he is capable of wisely enjoying. It leaves so much that is discretionary with us, that the majority of men will follow the impulse of the moment rather than any lofty regulative principle. Even Christian people cannot safely trust themselves to a fast-and-loose theory of this kind. When an obligation is reduced to a calculation of interest, or has its authority made dependent upon its results, the temptation often becomes irresistible to give up attendance upon church, Sunday-school and other means of grace, and substitute promiscuous reading, or lounging, or visiting.

But one is not left to mere theory on this point. A good illustration from actual fact is furnished in the case of Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the famous author of the motto, "Property is Robbery," who flourished in the last generation. He was an extreme Socialist and thoroughly skeptical, but a scholarly and thoughtful man, and his power as a writer has never been denied. Among his published works is one containing an able argument for the observance of Sunday. It is entitled "De la Celebration du Dimanche." While he repudiated the very idea of a divine revelation, he admired the Decalogue, and, most of all, its fourth commandment. "Nothing equal to the Sabbath, before or after the legislator of Sinai, has been conceived or executed among men." While disclaiming utterly any religious authority for the institution, he elaborately indicates its propriety on several grounds. The first is *civil*. This weekly festival made the Jews not a mere aggregate of individuals, but a society of brethren. It secured them instruction concerning their history, their ritual and their laws. It drew out their affections and fused them together as one in origin and in character. And thus it contributed largely to the preservation of law and order and the stability of the State. Again, it had a *domestic* value. It upheld and guarded the family. The statute included the household, with its servants, dependents and even guests. All had a common interest in its observance, and were brought together in close and joyous fellowship. The rest-day curbed the master while it gave a lift to the underling. It checked the lust of gain and arrested the wear and tear of making haste to be rich. Further, it had a *moral* bearing. The rest enjoined is not one of sloth or frivolity, but of self-possession and thought. Release from toil and care, allowed time to acquire knowledge, to converse with nature and to study one's own character. So consecrated, the day would be one of tender memories, heroic dedications, costly sacrifices, lofty musings and noble aspirations. Once more, there is the argument of *public hygiene*. Rest is necessary to health, but it must be periodical and stated. Experience shows that one day in seven is just what is required. Less would be insufficient, more would be excessive. "If you give forty-eight hours of rest after twelve consecutive days of labor, you kill the man with inertia after having worn him down with fatigue." Nor would it answer to rest half a day after three days of work.

Now, on this fourfold ground, Proudhon urged with great ability the claims of the Sabbatic institution, founding them upon reason and the nature of things, and appealing to all that a man holds dear. And what was the result? Nothing, absolutely nothing. He founded no school, had no followers. There has indeed been considerable improvement among the French within the last thirty years as to the degree in which Sunday is observed. But that improvement is in no sense due to Proudhon's forcible argument. Men read it and praised it and then went on just as they had been doing. It was the influence of

the church, speaking in the name of a lofty and supreme authority, that was effective. Men will yield to the "categorical imperative" of a divine law when they will yield to nothing else. Take away the religious sanction of Sunday, and its hold on the individual and on the public mind is gone. What men need to hear is the call of Duty,

Stern daughter of the Voice of God.

This has power, even amid the rush of passion and the conflict of interest. It addresses the strongest elements of our nature and insists upon being heard. It may be disregarded, but this is always with misgiving and fearful apprehension.

4. A fourth substitute is found in what is called the *Liberty of Love*. Assuming that the law on the subject is done away, although written and engraved on stones, the duty is made to rest upon the answer to such questions as these: "Does the love of Christ constrain us to it? Does the love of God, the love of man, the love of our own souls, impel us to the voluntary commemoration of this first day of the week? Or does this love find fit and useful expression in such a commemoration?" Of course, there is but one answer to such queries. These motives are high and lofty, and they make the day far more joyful and profitable than it possibly can be to one who considers the day to be a burden and keeps it only because he feels that he ought. At the same time very slight observation shows the folly of putting the obligation of the day of rest and worship on any such ground. It is far above the reach of the average Christian. It may be disagreeable to make such a confession, but it cannot be avoided. True, the ideal of Christian character is that men should do what is right, because they love to; but if it be said to men in general, do as you please, they will please to do wrong. The apostle found that the Christians of his time were ready enough not only to use but to abuse the liberty which he proclaimed as their right in Christ, and they even claimed the liberty to indulge in gross sin. Hence, his caution to the Galatians (v. 13), "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another." The plain teaching of Scripture is that men never can rise above the law as a rule of conduct, and that so long as they do not obey it gladly and spontaneously, they are to obey it from a sense of obligation. And the history of the church shows that, whenever liberty has been asserted to the exclusion or neglect of law, license has been the immediate result. Happy is the man who can rise superior to the law, who does not need to recall its directions, because his sense of Christ's love impels him gladly to do what it commands; but, until such an advanced stage of Christian progress is attained, we must acknowledge and observe the law's restraints. There is a serious danger in making love the sole foundation of the duty to keep the Lord's Day, because it will be understood by those in whom this motive is not sufficiently strong that they need not keep it at all. Nor

is it a sufficient answer to this to say that they ought to love Christ, and that this is the first obligation to be put before them. For while this is true, we do not therefore hold back all other duties, and tell men that they are at liberty to neglect them until they do love Christ. On the contrary, we reiterate the law and appeal without ceasing to the conscience until the heart is made right, when liberty becomes safe and is in no danger of being used as an occasion to the flesh.

This view of the ground upon which the obligation of the Lord's Day rests is liable to the same objection as some of the previous substitutes that have been mentioned. It leaves too much to the discretion of the individual. It is remitted entirely to his own judgment whether he will keep the day of rest and worship or will disregard it, and, also, if the former, in what way or to what extent. It is not in accordance with the divine methods in other positive duties to leave men so entirely to their own notions of what is right. Their tendency is to go astray when allowed to choose their own course. Men in general, even converted men, have so much of the old Adam remaining in them, are so exposed to insidious temptation and so much influenced by casual associations of time and place, that they need the counsel of an unerring guide in all matters of conduct. As well leave a patient, delirious with fever, to choose his own medicine as to leave a man to take his own course in a matter so vitally related to his eternal welfare as the observance of the Lord's Day. It is true that a genuine believer delights in the law of God after the inward man, but at the same time, as the apostle tells us, there is a different law in his members warring against the law of his mind. And in this conflict he needs the help which comes from an external authority. He needs to reinforce faltering resolutions with the thought of the great Lawgiver, who is higher than the highest and whose words are an end of controversy.

5. A fifth substitute, and the last one we shall mention, is that which denies the necessity and the propriety of any sacred day, maintaining that *All Time is Holy*. Dr. Arnold said ("Life," i, 315): "St. Paul would have been utterly shocked could he have foreseen that, eighteen hundred years after Christianity had been in the world, such an institution as the Sabbath would have been still needed." So Baden Powell ("Christianity against Judaism," 1871) laid it down that "relegating religious duties to certain periods and days is most grateful to human nature, but radically hostile to Christian principles." F. W. Robertson advocated the same view, saying that "the spiritual intent of Christianity is to worship God every day in the spirit." But owing to the dull hearts of the Jews "a law was given specializing a day in order to lead them to the broader truth that every day is God's" ("Sermons," second series, pp. 204, 205). Notwithstanding the apparent loftiness of this conception and the great names by which it is advocated, there is no hesitation in pronouncing it fallacious in principle and ruinous in practice. It is very true that

religion is to pervade the whole life and should not be confined to certain days and acts. Eating and drinking and all things else are to be done to the glory of God. But this does not supersede the necessity of special seasons of communion with God. And, therefore, God has appointed such seasons in order that they who observe them may be fitted for the right discharge of secular duties. It is not true that all things are alike holy. The very meaning of the word—that which is set apart—forbids such a supposition. Worldly things, indeed, should be cared for in the light of heavenly things, but the difference exists notwithstanding. And to confuse the two endangers all the interests of man. In fact, they who pretend to make all things equally sacred make nothing so. Men who are obliged to toil for their daily bread on farms, or in factories, or shops or wherever else a livelihood is gained, must give their chief, often their whole, attention to that in which they are engaged, and hence they require to have days when they can rest and give their supreme attention to other things. The quiet and meditation and private and public worship of the Lord's Day are necessary in order to maintain the true spirit of consecration on other days. Without these all time becomes secularized. The best believer alive would wreck his own spiritual interests did he attempt to do the same things on the sacred day that he does on other days, under the idea that he would make them all religious. The sure result would be to make them all alike worldly. It is true all our time belongs to God, but it is that we may use it as he directs. And his direction is to labor six days and give the seventh to rest and religion. And all who set out to be wiser and holier than their Maker should remember that "To obey is better than sacrifice."

The principle underlying this theory would make an end of all festivals, anniversaries and celebrations. Days of public thanksgiving have been recognized the world over and in all ages. But thankfulness being a duty imperative at all times, it has been argued that to confine it to a single day in the year is to lessen the permanent obligation. Yet experience shows that the solemn observance of one day, instead of weakening the sentiment of gratitude for other parts of the year, rather enkindles it, whereas to relinquish the public observance would produce the opposite effect.

These various substitutes for the Fourth Commandment, however they differ in other respects, all agree in one point, and that the chief one, viz., that they have no grip on the conscience of men. They do not speak with authority. They admit of evasion or even denial. Whereas, the voice that spoke from Sinai admits of neither. It brings men face to face with their Creator and their Judge. They are confronted with a specific commandment in plain words, and with motives drawn from the unseen and eternal. This holds and ever will hold, but nothing else will. Two centuries ago John Owen said, of the day of rest and worship: "Take this off from the basis whereon God hath fixed it, and all human substitutions of anything in the like

kind to the same purposes will quickly discover their own vanity.' Every generation since bears witness to the absolute truth of his declaration. Men may multiply arguments and illustrations to show the necessity of the observance of the Lord's Day, its benefits to man's physical and moral nature, its importance to the family and the State, its conformity to natural law and the testimonies of a wide and varied experience to its usefulness, but it is in vain. All such considerations are, in the hour of temptation, what the green withes of the Philistines were to Samson. Nothing human, nothing earthly, has abiding force upon human convictions. For that is required the leverage of a personal God, the God of knowledge by whom actions are weighed. This is confirmed by all observation. Wherever the observance of the Lord's Day has been made to rest upon the express divine authority given in the Hebrew Scriptures (Gen. ii, 3, and Ex. xx, 8), there the duty has been performed with strictness and regularity, at least among the people of God; but wherever it has been inculcated on other grounds, no matter what, the observance has become irregular, formal and sadly imperfect. Scarce anything is more notorious than the difference between the British and American Lord's Day and the Continental Sunday.

If this be so, the matter is one of the highest importance. For the existence of a weekly day of rest and worship is vital not only to the prosperity but to the continuance of religion on the face of the earth. And this whether one considers the public and solemn profession of our faith before the world, or the exercise of its rules and principles in the private life of individuals. Neither can be maintained without the aid of the day of sacred rest, for, apart from the opportunities it affords, they become fitful, vague and inefficient. The tree begins to decay at once in its root and in its branches. The affair, therefore, is not one of trifling or temporary or outward interest, but touches the foundation. It is not a question of more or less, but of all or none. It does not concern the outworks of the Christian system, but its citadel. Theologians and exegetes discuss whether the command is positive or moral or both; one thing is sure, that obedience to it is essential, is indispensable. No man, no church, no land can do without the holy rest-day. Our best issues for time and eternity are bound up with it.

T. W. CHAMBERS.

NEW YORK.