

Our Contributors.

Sunday Travelling by Christian People Is It Justified?

The writer has been frequently asked this question. Many Christians—especially the young are perplexed by it. The work of the Lord's Day Alliance is not to settle questions of conscience or conduct in regard to the Lord's Day—which is the work of the Church—but rather to preserve the day in its integrity to all the people. The writer claims to speak, therefore, only for himself in answering the above question.

The question we are to consider is not whether Sunday travel is in its nature—always and necessarily—a breach of the moral law, and therefore sinful. It may become, in certain emergencies, a work of necessity or mercy. David's special need justified his eating the shew bread, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been wrong. And there may arise in the experience of anyone exceptional conditions which would justify Sunday travel by whatever means may be available. To do so under such special circumstances is one thing, and in ordinary conditions quite another.

Nor is the question before us whether Christians are justified in traveling on the Lord's Day for mere pleasure or in the interests of business. No follower of Jesus would defend such a misuse of the day given for rest, worship and kindly Christian activities.

Our inquiry is, rather, Whether Christian people are warranted in using these public hired means of conveyance on the Lord's Day, in the ordinary course of things, habitually, aforethought, for objects in themselves commendable, such as visiting friends or the sick, or to attend worship, or do Christian work.

People undoubtedly at times find it less trouble, less expense in money and time, to use such means of conveyance, or they find that they are thus enabled to overtake more work, and they ask, "Why not?" A minister of the writer's acquaintance, after the Sunday cars were introduced into one of our cities, said, "The Devil introduced them, but let us use them for the glory of God."

Presbyteries, Conferences, Home Mission Committees, etc., not infrequently put certain far-apart preaching appointments together into one mission field or pastoral charge on the understanding that the missionary or minister in charge will use the Sunday train or car or steamer in going between his appointments, and many a missionary of tender conscience has felt compelled to set aside his scruples on entering upon a new field of labor and use the Sunday train or quit the field altogether and leave it without the means of grace. And this church court or committee defends its action because it is a saving of church funds.

Not a few ministers and laymen use the Lord's Day in traveling to or from church gatherings "to save time" for other work during the week, or the use of the Sunday car to enable them to fill an exchange with a brother minister in a remote part of their city.

Is this right or expedient? That is

the question we seek to answer. And with our present light we are compelled to answer with a respectful but unhesitating negative. The motive of those who for such purposes travel on Sunday may be the purest. We shall assume this to be the case. But is it prudent, expedient and in view of all the circumstances, right?

We are engaged in a keen controversy—are waging a strenuous warfare—over the Christian Sabbath in this country just now. Its sanctity is being broken down; its integrity seriously invaded. The forces of evil are being concentrated in a determined assault on its defences. The Church of Jesus is the one force which can meet and stop this onslaught. But even the church of the living God will not find its task a light one. It cannot afford to carry any handicap. It will need to lay aside every weight. Every ounce of available energy will be needed for battle. There will be none to spare for the bearing of needless impedimenta.

Moreover, large numbers of men—Christian and non-Christian—are being deprived of their rest-day rights and privileges by greed and selfishness and—Christian people who travel on the Lord's Day. These do not travel for greed or selfishness, it may be, but in the hope of doing more good. Does the end justify the means? Is it right to seek to do good or to oblige a brother or a friend when the doing of it helps to rob others of the opportunity to get the benefit of the means of grace? There are 50,000 people in Canada engaged every Sunday "conveying travelers," good, bad and indifferent. What a pity one cannot write "bad and indifferent." The fact that the good have to be counted in makes it so much the more difficult to arouse the public to a sense of the wrong that is thus being done. The fact that some of the good are being conveyed on errands not evil is taken as sanctifying the whole cruel, hurtful business. This is the free and easy view the many take of it. The pleasure-seeker says, "The pastor uses these public conveniences." The man who travels on Sunday to "save time for business" other days, says "the Sunday school teacher does the same thing." It may not be fair for the pleasure-seeker and gold hunter to put it thus, but they do it; and the mass of everyday folk look on, and, seeing that all sorts of people use the train and car, ask, "Why should not I? It must be all right." Thus what the Sunday traveler does of good with one hand he more than undoes with the other.

In the view of non-Christians, Sunday travel by good people is grossly inconsistent. The writer was addressing a labor union recently, and, among other things, said that all work excepting what was "necessary" was wrong and should be prohibited. One of the men asked if Sunday cars were "necessary." He replied, "Not in his view." "Why don't the parsons stay off them then?" Perhaps such ought to inquire what the parson travels for, but he does not. The non-Christian world expects Christians to be Puritanically consistent,

avoiding the very appearance of evil. When D. L. Moody made this discovery he immediately discontinued the use of the Sunday cars to enable him to fill attractive appointments, and on one occasion in London, when he found the local committee had arranged his Sunday services so far apart as to entail sixteen miles of travel, he walked the sixteen miles, but he slept the sleep of the just that night.

A young lady of tender conscience desired particularly to hear a dear friend preach who was about to depart for the mission field for a period of several years. When she found that this could only be done by using the Sunday car she stayed at home and choked down her bitter disappointment, but she had the satisfaction of learning afterwards that a non-Christian friend had been influenced for good by her loyalty to conviction, and a Christian friend's faith greatly quickened.

What would Paul do about patronizing public hired Sunday conveyances if he lived in Canada today? He would probably say, "Though all things are lawful to me, all things are not expedient," and "if my going on Sunday cars, trains, or steamers makes my brother to offend, I will not patronize such conveyances while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Paul's is a pretty good example to follow!

J. G. S.

The Church and the Rum Traffic.

The *Pioneer* (Toronto) says: Not a week goes by that does not leave us further evidence of the important fact that the Church of God and the liquor traffic are not only recognizing each other as enemies, but are more and more coming into close conflict. The dividing line will soon be so complete, and the contest will soon be so intense, that the warfare can only be terminated by a substantial victory for one or the other party.

Resolutions of Synods, Conferences, unions, and other church bodies grow stronger. Leading men in different denominations are forgetting sectarian differences in their united earnestness to effect the overthrow of the common adversary.

More and more are the Christian churches—perhaps we should say church members—coming out beyond the circumscribing boundary of mere resolutions into the broad field of active effort on practical lines of campaigning against the liquor traffic. Every week brings its story of new victories for the prohibition cause, won largely through the efforts of Christian men and women, often led by courageous clergymen, who fearlessly call upon the electors to vote in the right way.

Not an unimportant evidence of progress is the alarm of the liquor traffic. Not the least cheering of the indications is the bitter denunciation against preachers and churches in which liquor journals indulge. Further cheer comes from the growing outspokenness of church organs in their exposure of the liquor evil and their demand for better laws. We hail with joy the dividing up of the people in the struggle that daily grows in intensity, for the full development of the division will mean the complete overthrow of the evil.

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