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Sabbath Observance.

The following report on Sabbath Observance was presented to the Synod of Hamilton and London by Rev. Dr. Samuel Lyle, Convener of the Synod's Committee :

During the past year the interest taken in the Sabbath question has been intense. Many public meetings of various kinds have been held in different parts of the Synod to discuss the important question of how to keep the Lord's Day holy. The Legislature has been asked to pass more stringent Sabbath laws in order to prevent the secularization of the day, so sacred in the eyes of the Presbyterian Church, and it has been decided to call in the aid of the Bench to interpret the existing laws, and if possible so to enforce them as to stop the street cars and boats, so as to secure more rest for the working man.

From the returns of the Presbyteries, it is clear that the subject has received a fair share of attention in the preaching, and in the deliberations of the subordinate courts of the church ; and it is needless to say that the press has kept this matter constantly before the minds of the people of Ontario. But in spite of all that has been said, written, and done, the progress made has not been much, if any. Most of the Presbyterians complain of more or less open and glaring violations of the laws of God and of man in relation to the Sabbath—violations that would be impossible, were it not that religion is a much less powerful factor in moulding our civic life than we could wish. Materialism in philosophy and in life, worldliness in society and in the Church, love of pleasure so unfriendly to the love and law of God, have done much to lower the standard of Sabbath Observance, and to popularize practices clearly condemned by the fourth commandment. Card playing and gambling in its many forms, boating, boxing, horse racing, drinking, wheeling, and bribing at elections are the chief causes of Sabbath desecration. Over work during the six days of the week, and too late hours for closing stores on Saturday ; games such as football, baseball, tennis, hockey, and curling—games played so late on Saturday as to end in travelling on Sunday, the common custom of leaving home on Saturday evening so as to arrive in New York, Chicago, and Montreal on Sabbath ; the semi-sacred Sunday travelling in car, boat and buggy in quest of pleasure, of health, and of religion in its grotesque and more exciting forms so dear to the hearts of the weak brethren ; the half political, half ecclesiastical Sunday meetings veneered with as much Christianity as makes them respectable in the eyes of honest, old fashioned orthodoxy—meetings opened and closed with prayer and praise though the middle is essentially of the earth earthy ; the advertising of all sorts of subjects for sermons, which, if preached as advertised, would be as

remote from the gospel as the glib talk of the quack doctor commending his pills ; the everlasting Monday puff, professing to give a true and faithful account of the wonderful eloquence of the past Sunday, but really a cheap advertisement for the coming Sunday ; the glaring inducements held out to the music-loving public of rare opportunities granted to church members to hear the leading operatic singers at cheap rates and that without the sin of going to the theatre, are the secondary causes of Sabbath desecration—causes deeply rooted in our social, our civil, and our ecclesiastical life, and leading to the wide spread demoralization of our families, our State, and our Church.

In order to reform the present abuses, and lift the Church to a higher plane of moral and spiritual life, the interests of the individual, of the family, of the Church must be called forth, and the Lord's Day be made not a mere negation, but a positive delight. No state enactments however just and stringent, can secure this desired end apart from the spiritualizing of the masses of our people. While the natural heart is enmity against God, the law of the Lord will be trampled on, in spite of legislation, of organization, of pains and penalties.

Your Committee would respectfully ask the earnest attention of the ministers and members of the Synod to the great importance of taking just, true, and scriptural grounds when discussing the Sabbath question. To condemn street cars and steam boats, while permitting livery stables to do business, not to speak of the private driving to and from church and from house to house ; to denounce railway companies and boat owners as sinners above all sinners, and have no word of bitterness, no look of disapproval for the company that sells the gospel on the Lord's Day, pockets the proceeds when the star preachers are paid, and grows fat on the prayers and the piety of God's people, is more likely to convince a thoughtful public of the ignorance, if not the dishonesty of the advocacy, than it is to aid those who truly wish to see the Lord's Day kept as our Lord and Master did. Laying the emphasis on man's need of rest after six days of honest toil, of the inspiration to man's intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual nature to be found in the services of the sanctuary as conducted by Christ and His Apostles ; looking less to the laws of the land and more to the laws of God ; depending less on the arm of flesh and more on the aids of the Spirit, let us tell our people that the Sabbath was made for man, made to meet his physical wants, mental and spiritual.

Your Committee would further request that the Synod would enjoin on its ministers under its care the duty of preaching at least once on the subject of the Sabbath during the coming year.

That the special attention of the heads of families should be drawn to the importance of seeing that the young are taught to keep the Sabbath as God has commanded it to be kept.