

FROM CHAPTER 11

Rev. W. Matheson's breach of resolution on Church Privileges - Communication from Ontario Kirk-Session re Sabbath use of public conveyances - Rev. R. Mackenzie's reply to Session's resolution - Ontario congregation's action takes it outwith Church.

REV. W. MATHESON'S BREACH OF RESOLUTION ON CHURCH PRIVILEGES

The Free Presbyterian Church all along had laid special stress on Sabbath observance,¹ and in 1921 the following declaration anent Church Privileges was made by the Synod:

"The Synod declares in accordance with former resolutions that Church Privileges, such as Baptism, are not to be given to any who engage in Sabbath work (other than works of necessity or mercy), or who travel by trains or cars run in systematic disregard of the sacred day. The serious and careful consideration of Kirk-sessions is to be given to special cases, such as that of a husband who has ceased to acknowledge the Christian religion, or who refuses to adhere to the above standard of Sabbath observance, but whose wife (desiring baptism) fulfils the demands of this declaration and is otherwise exemplary."

In 1927 the Rev. Neil Macintyre, as Convener of the Canadian Mission Committee, read correspondence at the Business Committee of the Synod which had passed between Rev. William Matheson, Chesley, and himself. At the following sederunt of Synod the Rev. Neil Cameron moved as follows: "The Synod express strong disapproval of the conduct of the Rev. William Matheson, Chesley, Ontario, inasmuch as he admitted to the Lord's Table and Baptism at Winnipeg, parties debarred by findings of this Synod anent Sabbath observance, and also by the lax and modern views revealed in correspondence with him about this matter; and, while the Synod refrain from taking further steps as to his conduct in the matter referred to, they warn him and all concerned that the findings of the Synod must be honoured."

When the Synod met in 1928, the Clerk read communications from Rev. William Matheson, the Ontario elders, and the Winnipeg Kirk-session; a letter received from the Rev. James Tallach was also remitted by the Southern Presbytery to the Synod. After discussion the following became the unanimous finding of the Synod: "The Synod reaffirms its adherence to its resolution on Church Privileges printed in 'Church Documents' of 1923, viz.: The Synod declare, in accordance with former resolutions, that the Church's privileges, such as admission to the Lord's Table and Baptism are not to be given to any one who engages in Sabbath work (other than works of necessity and mercy) or² who travel by trains or cars run in systematic disregard of the Lord's Day." This was followed by another motion unanimously agreed to: "The Synod require all who receive Church Privileges in this Church to honour this reaffirmed declaration, and such as may infringe on the Synod's ruling shall be dealt with by the courts of the Church, and that the attention of all adherents of the Church is seriously drawn to this matter."

COMMUNICATION FROM ONTARIO KIRK-SESSION

¹ See 'Free Presbyterian Magazine'. XXXVII, 415. 492.

² "or" was substituted for "and" to avoid misunderstanding ('Free Presbyterian Magazine'. XXXIII. 96).

At this Synod a paper on the "Synod's Statement in Reference to Church-going by Public Conveyances on the Sabbath"³ was approved of by the Synod. The paper was drawn up by the Rev. R. Mackenzie, M.A., Gairloch, and discussed at considerable length by a special Committee, consisting of the whole Synod. The following year a communication from the Kirk-session of Ontario was read at the Business Committee of Synod, intimating that they were not to recognise the Synod's Declaration on Church Privileges. A letter in reply from Rev. R. Mackenzie was also read.

Ontario Kirk-session Communication -

"At Chesley and in the house of Rev. William Matheson there on the evening of Wednesday, September 19th, 1928, the Kirk-session of the Ontario Congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Canada met and was constituted. Sederunt with Rev. William Matheson, Moderator; Messrs Hugh Scott, Ailsa Craig, Clerk of Session; Alexander Macfarlane, Chesley; and Murdoch Matheson, Lochalsh, Ruling Elders.

"The minute of last meeting was read and confirmed. The Moderator then introduced the matter of certain resolutions of the Synod anent the use of public conveyances for churchgoing on Sabbath, which the Clerk of Synod had officially intimated to him and also to the Clerk, and which had since been published in the 'Free Presbyterian Magazine'. The draft of a resolution embodying what had been agreed upon tentatively by the members of Session at a previous unofficial conference was then presented with certain amendments and additions, and, after due prayerful deliberation, it was moved, seconded, and unanimously agreed that, whereas we are bound in conscience and before God and men by our ordination vows, (i) To recognise the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and the only rule of faith and manners. (ii) To own and declare sincerely the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church, to be the confession of our faith, and to own the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine which we will constantly adhere to. (iii) To approve of the Deed of Separation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland adopted at its first Presbytery of Portree, August, 1893: and (iv) To observe uniformity of worship, and of the administration of all public ordinances within this Church, as the same are at present performed and allowed: and whereas (1) The Synod has failed to show any authority from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments for the Declaration anent Church Privileges, being XIV in 'Church Documents', as amended and as said to be reaffirmed by the Synod of 1928, in that part of section thereof referring to 'travel by trains or cars run in systematic disregard of the Lord's Day', as interpreted by the Synod to embrace in its reference, and to debar the use of public conveyances for churchgoing on Sabbath; and whereas (2) We are convinced that said Declaration as thus interpreted is not only without, or beside, the Word of God, but is plainly contrary thereto, as (a) While we rejoice that we do so entirely agree with the motives and aims, and so closely with the prohibitory interpretations of the Synod's Statement in Reference to Churchgoing by Public Conveyances on the Sabbath, and while we sincerely agree in 'allowing for the extreme exigencies of necessity and mercy' (Sec. iii of above Statement), we cannot refuse to recognise also that no such exigency can surpass in

³ This Statement is printed in Appendix below.

urgency the need of the human soul, and that ' . . . it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe' (I Cor. 1, v. 21): (b) Having accepted this concession of the Synod, we are compelled to recognise further that no exigency can possibly make lawful what is wrong in itself. Thus we agree that the act of using a public conveyance on the Sabbath is not wrong in itself. We have then to find the ground of condemnation elsewhere than in the mere act. We are thus compelled to look for the ground of condemnation in the sphere of motive. But we cannot find any such ground in the motive of the party who uses public conveyances on the Sabbath for churchgoing only. On this Sabbath question we are commanded to 'judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment' (John 7, v. 24), and cannot hold this party in any way responsible for the reprobate actions or motives of the one who runs a public conveyance for gain on Sabbath. To do so would be unjust and unscriptural. (See 'meat and drink' passages of the Epistles of Paul.) Our acceptance of this concession of the Synod's Statement has, therefore, left us without just and scriptural ground of condemnation of the use of public conveyances for churchgoing on the Sabbath: and (c) While we heartily recognise that the Apostle urges abstinence from actions, with respect to which we have liberty, on the ground of conscientious scruples of fellow-believers, we recognise, however, that he carefully safeguards the principle, ' . . . for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?' (I Cor. 10, v. 29.) He does not, therefore, in such cases, curtail our liberty. He does not command abstinence. He simply exhorts to it. Nor has the Lord given His Church any authority in such cases to command abstinence. We have authority only to exhort to it: and whereas (3) The doctrine of the Confession of Faith (chap. xx, Sec. 2), is that 'God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship. So that to believe such doctrines or to obey such commandments out of conscience is to betray true liberty of conscience, and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also': and whereas (4) The Deed of Separation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland explicitly proclaims adherence to 'the whole principles embodied' in 'the Acts of Assembly of the Church of Scotland prior to 1843', among which Acts is the Act of 1697, commonly called the Barrier Act, an Act to regulate the procedure of the Church in interpreting the fixed constitution of the Church: and whereas (5) 'The whole principles' of the Barrier Act, which Act applies these principles to the functioning of the Assembly itself, apply as readily to the functioning of the Synod as the Supreme Court of the Church, and require 'that before any General Assembly of the Church shall pass any Acts, which are to be binding rules and constitutions to the Church' 'General Assemblies be very deliberate in making of the same, and that the whole Church have a previous knowledge thereof, and their opinion be had therein, and for preventing any sudden alteration or innovation, or other prejudice to the Church, in either doctrine or worship, or discipline or government thereof': and whereas (6) The whole Church had not previous knowledge thereof, nor was their opinion had therein, nor were Presbyteries consulted thereanent, prior to the effort of the Synod to enforce said declaration, as interpreted to embrace in its reference and to debar the use of public conveyances for Sabbath Church-going, as a binding rule and constitution to the Church, and thereby the matter became prejudiced, and such procedure, if allowed and established, would subvert

the constitution of the Church: and whereas (7) In the administration of the public ordinances at the time of our ordination it was allowed, and, to our knowledge, practised, to grant privileges of the Church to persons who used public conveyances for Sabbath Church-going within this Church, with the one published exception wherein the authority of the higher courts of the Church seems to have been usurped, and uniformity of administration of public ordinances to have been ignored: therefore be it, and it is hereby resolved, that we, as a Court of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, jealous for the authority and honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great King and Head of the Church, and in all goodwill and fidelity toward all other courts of the Church, faithfully, firmly, and fully, asserting, maintaining, and defending the Testimony and the Constitution of the said Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, according to our ordination vows, refrain from recognising the said Declaration as interpreted to embrace in its reference and to debar the use of public conveyances on the Sabbath for Churchgoing purposes, in that part or section thereof, referring to 'travel by trains or cars run in systematic disregard of the Lord's Day', as a binding rule and constitution of this Church:

That the Clerk of Session send a duly certificated copy of this resolution to the Clerk of the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland: and that a copy of the same be forwarded to the Editor for publication in the 'Free Presbyterian Magazine'. This minute of the meeting was read and adopted. The meeting was then closed with prayer. Extracted by Hugh Scott, Clerk of Session."

REV. R. MACKENZIE'S REPLY TO SESSION'S RESOLUTION

Mr Mackenzie's Reply:

"A copy has been given me of a recent resolution of the Ontario Kirk-session relative to the Synod's attitude on the question of churchgoing by public conveyances on Sabbath. As in the providence of God I shall not be present at the first meeting of Synod, at which this resolution is likely to be dealt with, and since I am anxious not to appear to shirk responsibility in the matter, it has occurred to me that I should communicate to my brethren in the Synod my views on the subject.

The resolution referred to seems to me to contain no new arguments worthy of consideration in favour of the position taken up by the Ontario Kirk-session unless those which appear in Sections (2)(a) and (b). These, on account of their being related to certain words occurring in the Synod's 1928 Statement which the Session construe, no less erroneously than gratuitously, as a 'concession of the Synod', and on account of their being otherwise cleverly and plausibly stated, are of a kind likely to influence the minds of such as are either unable or unwilling to examine them critically. That they involve fallacies which render them of no avail whatsoever to invalidate the Synod's position will no doubt have appeared to you. At anyrate, that is the view I am led to take as the following considerations will show:

(1) The first argument, which is more insinuated than expressed, may be stated as follows: 'It is allowable to use public conveyances on Sabbath in cases which involve the extreme exigencies of necessity and mercy. The urgency of the need of the human soul represents such an exigency, and "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1, v. 21). Therefore it is allowable to use public conveyances on Sabbath for the purpose of

going to church.' When thus reduced to plain language, the argument must appear immediately to every unprejudiced mind to be at fault somewhere. If I am asked what is wrong with it, I reply unhesitatingly and emphatically that the premises do not warrant the conclusion. From the standpoint of incorrect reasoning, it is just as warrantable for the Ontario Kirk-session, and not one iota more, to base their conviction on the grounds stated, as it would be for me to argue from premises exactly similar that it is allowable to hire an aeroplane on Sabbath for the purpose of going to pray in a certain place in Lewis where it pleased God to save some. In the one case no less than in the other there is involved the mistake of reasoning from the need of the human soul in general to one particular way in which it pleases God to supply that need, to the utter exclusion and consequent disparagement of other ways. It is right that we should urge liberal views within scriptural and reasonable limits of the importance of the public ordinances of God's worship, but to take up a position, whether in reasoning or otherwise, which in effect, if not in plain outspoken words, represents the public as the only means of salvation, and therefore indispensable to it, and our attendance upon them as an extreme exigency of necessity and mercy, is surely a serious blunder.

"(2) The second argument appears more or less in full philosophical dress as follows: We are compelled to recognise further that no exigency can possibly make lawful what is wrong in itself. Thus we agree that the act of using a public conveyance on the Sabbath is not wrong in itself. We have then to find the ground of condemnation elsewhere than in the mere act. We are thus compelled to look for the ground of condemnation in the sphere of motive. But we cannot find any such ground in the motive of the party who uses public conveyances on the Sabbath for Church-going only.' The inference is not stated. Of course it goes without saying - there is no ground whatsoever for condemning the act of the party who uses public conveyances on Sabbath for purposes of church-going only. One good test of the validity of a process of reasoning is its universality. Valid reasoning holds good in every relevant case. On the other hand, a fallacy which does not so manifestly appear in one certain context, will often stand out in relief, so to speak, in another. In the interests of brevity I will do little more than apply this test of universality here by taking a case somewhat different from that in point but strictly relevant. By this method I hope to show that an argument, such as the above, which makes motive the sole determining principle of morality, in the case of acts even which are not wrong in themselves, is little short of a philosophical monstrosity.

"The act of killing a man, while wrong in some circumstances, is justifiable in others, as, for example, when one commits it of necessity in self-defence. The act of killing a man, therefore, is not wrong in itself. Now suppose for a moment a certain party wants to get to church and is opposed in this by another. And suppose (what is improbable but not altogether impossible) the churchgoer resorts to the expedient of killing the man who opposes him, for the sole purpose of getting to church, mark you, unquestionably a good and commendable motive surely. In accordance with the above form of argument we must reason thus in estimating the morality of the churchgoer's act: 'We agree that the act of killing a man is not wrong in itself. We have then to find the ground of condemnation elsewhere than in the mere act. We are thus compelled to look for the ground of condemnation in the sphere of motive. But we cannot find any such ground in the motive of the party who kills a man for the purpose of getting to church only.' We thus arrive at the shocking conclusion that it is perfectly legitimate to kill a man in

order to get to church. No one will for a moment believe that the Ontario Kirk-session would accept such a conclusion, or that they would base any other conviction on it than that they were grossly imposed on and misled. Yet it is the perfectly logical outcome of a perfectly reasonable application of the form of argument they here employ to prop themselves up in what amounts to an attitude of defiance. As such it serves to exemplify what extravagance men are ready to lapse into who think they are the people and that wisdom shall die with them.

"(3) The position of the Synod with reference to points raised in connection with their including in their 1928 Statement the words 'allowing for the extreme exigencies of necessity and mercy' is, to my mind, alike clear and consistent, notwithstanding all attempts made to misconstrue and to misrepresent it in the interests of proving the contrary position and of exhibiting the Synod's condemnation as out of its own mouth, so to speak. When it is objected that their allowing the use of public conveyances on Sabbath under any circumstances, implies an admission on their part that the act of using such conveyances on Sabbath is not wrong in itself, and that, therefore, their position is rendered inconsistent, a reply is ready at hand. The Synod have nowhere condemned the mere act of using a public conveyance on Sabbath as such, simply because they were never called upon to deal with such an impalpable abstraction. Their whole position in the matter is set down in these words of their 1928 Statement, in the light of which the entire statement must be read, 'ordinarily (that is, allowing for the extreme exigencies of necessity and mercy) no one can lawfully make use of such services, whether for the purpose of going to church or for any less-worthy purpose'. Plainly, what they condemn is not the act in itself, but the act in relation to circumstances of an ordinary kind which do not constitute an extreme exigency of necessity and mercy. On the other hand they recognised that circumstances of an extraordinary kind may and do emerge, circumstances which give rise to extraordinary cases, and call for extraordinary treatment. Hence, and in order to make themselves perfectly understood, they inserted in their 1928 Statement the words "allowing for the extreme exigencies of necessity and mercy". In this they are no more chargeable with inconsistency" than is the Word of God which condemns the doing of any secular work on the Lord's Day, but allows it in cases of necessity and mercy.

"That attendance at church does not, strictly speaking, come within the category of works of necessity and mercy, the Synod were at some pains to show. Incidentally they represented it rather as a duty, an important duty certainly, but one which we recognise may well give place to the works of necessity and mercy, properly speaking. If we take the view of the Ontario Kirk-session, and regard church-going as a work of necessity and mercy on the ground of the surpassing urgency of the need of the human soul, then we are bound to hold also that, in the proportion of urgency, no circumstance or consideration in the world is sufficient to justify our staying away from church in one instance. We must leave the ox to perish in the pit, must abandon a dying brother to death, must shut our hearts against all consideration for others, and go to church because 'no exigency can surpass in urgency the need of the human soul', and 'it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe' (I Cor. 1, v. 21). God forbid that the Synod should ever adopt such a view, nor need they fear much hurt at the hands of such as lend themselves to it. " "I withhold from entering upon a discussion of the question of Christian liberty, which in the resolution is linked up with the second argument dealt with above, for these two, among other reasons:

first and principally, that I still hold the opinion that this question does not properly enter into the subject in hand, and a discussion of it might only serve to confuse issues, and secondly, that such a discussion would swell my letter out of due proportions. The other points raised in the resolution, such of them at least as are worthy of notice, have already been adequately dealt with, as, for example, the Barrier Act question.

"And now, in concluding, permit me to commend you to the grace of God, having special regard to the difficulty of the situation with which you are called upon to deal, and which, in certain respects, is without precedent in the history of our Church. May the great Head furnish you with all resources of wisdom and knowledge, and guide you to a decision which will alike conserve His honour and procure peace and prosperity in His Church."

ONTARIO CONGREGATION'S ACTION TAKES IT OUTWITH CHURCH

The Rev. Neil Cameron then moved a motion which became the unanimous finding of the Synod: "that the Synod order the Clerk to send a copy of the Synod's finding to the Kirk-session of Ontario with the intimation that, if they do not notify the Clerk by the last day of August, 1929, that they have fallen into line with the Synod's decision *simpliciter* they will not be considered after that a Kirk-session of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland." In the course of his remarks, Mr Cameron pointed out that Mr Matheson was present when the draft minute of the resolution on Sabbath observance was read at the Synod in 1922, and that it was to him a great surprise that he (Mr Matheson) remained quiescent about it at the Synod. The Rev. Ewen Macqueen, in seconding, said he hoped the Synod would give a clear bill on this occasion, for it was high time it was done. Mr Macintyre, in supporting the motion, pointed out that it was clear that the Session of Ontario, both minister and elders, were prepared to act defiantly. They were setting at defiance the Synod, and it was high time this was put a stop to. One could not understand how any one with a spark of grace would do anything to oppose the Church's weak efforts in the defence of the Sabbath Day.

At next Synod communications were read intimating that the Kirk-session of Ontario before the 30th August, 1929, had reaffirmed their former decision, and the congregation of Ontario indicated they were in sympathy with the attitude taken up by Mr Matheson and his Kirk-session. It was accordingly moved and unanimously agreed to that, "seeing the people who adhered to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Ontario were not included in the Synod's **decision concerning the Kirk-session last year, this** Synod resolve that the people be given till the 30th August, 1930, to decide for themselves whether they will adhere to this Synod or follow the defiant attitude of the Kirk-session. If the Clerk of Synod will not have received their decision, or that of any number of them, by the above date, all, or any, who adhere to the Kirk-session, will then by their own action cease to be considered adherents in Ontario of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland."

In the spring of 1930 Mr Matheson visited Scotland and consulted a S.S.C. in Edinburgh, from whom he obtained advice on two specific points: (a) The question of responsibility under the Sabbath Law as, in distinction from the Synod rule of recent date, we hold parties using public conveyances for church-going on Sabbath innocent of wrongdoing therein, while agreeing with the Synod in condemning the running of such conveyances on Sabbath for other purposes, (b) the question of the constitutional power of the Synod to pass the rule in

question as a new term of communion which we deny. On going north Mr Matheson consulted Messrs T.S.H. Burns & Son, Dingwall, and they addressed a letter to the Synod in which they state that Mr Matheson felt hurt that the Synod should have come to the decision it did without giving him an opportunity to be personally heard in the matter. They express the hope that the Synod will accede to the request of Mr Matheson putting before the Synod an answer }o the case made against him. They conclude by saying: "While we are personally hopeful that all differences may be adjusted, we have to say quite frankly on behalf of Mr Matheson and his congregation that the foregoing suggestion is made without prejudice to our client's rights and pleas. As Mr Matheson has specially come to Scotland to deal with this matter, it is essential that it be disposed of without delay, and we shall therefore be obliged by the Church giving it their immediate attention."

When the letter was read at the Synod, strong disapproval was expressed against the course taken by Mr Matheson, and also to the interference with the liberty of the Synod by lawyers in a matter that was of a purely disciplinary nature. The Rev. James Macleod, after some discussion, moved, "that in view of the fact that the Rev. William Matheson has refused to subject himself to the judicatories of the Church, and that he has given his case into the hands of the civil law, this Court take no further steps in the matter." The Rev. E. Macqueen, in seconding the motion, referred to the statement in Messrs Burns' letter as to Mr Matheson's feeling hurt on account of the Synod's action. He appeared, however, to have no word of the hurt which his action had inflicted on the Church. The motion became the unanimous finding of the Synod.

In connection with the Kirk-session and congregation of Ontario the Rev. Neil Cameron, seconded by Rev. D.A. Macfarlane, moved, "that after the 30th August coming, the Clerk be instructed to remove from the records of this Church the Kirk-session of Ontario as the real sequel of the resolution passed by them on the 19th June, 1928, and reaffirmed by them on 29th September, 1929, and all who will adhere to them." This motion also became the unanimous finding of the Synod. In 1931 communications were read from the groups at East Williams and Chesley of the Ontario congregation, intimating that they still adhered to the Free Presbyterian Church. The Synod passed unanimously the following motion: "The Synod would remind the congregation of Ontario that the Synod's motion of 21st May 1930, was to the effect that all or any who would adhere to the Kirk-session of Ontario in their opposition to the Synod's resolution would by their own action cease to be considered members or adherents of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Ontario after 30th August, 1930, and that as the Clerk received no communication until the above dates, all who adhered to the Kirk-session of Ontario ceased by their own attitude to be connected with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland."

APPENDIX II

SYNOD'S STATEMENT IN REFERENCE TO CHURCHGOING BY PUBLIC CONVEYANCES ON THE SABBATH

In view of the nature of certain communications received with regard to their attitude towards the question of churchgoing by public conveyances on Sabbath, the Synod have considered it desirable to issue the following statement on the subject:

I. In passing the several motions which bear upon Sabbath observance at intervals within the past number of years, the Synod have been actuated by a regard for the sanctity of the Lord's Day as exhibited in the Word of God; by a sense of the duty and responsibility, devolving upon the Christian Church in this connection; and by an apprehension of the growing menace to the religious and social well-being of the community at large arising out of the evils of unlawful Sabbath labour, business, and recreation.

II. While not in any way condemning or disallowing the use of mechanically-driven or other conveyances on the Lord's Day when the purpose and manner of their employment are in keeping with the spirit of the Sabbath, and in accord with the precepts and precedents of Scripture, the Synod do, notwithstanding, most emphatically denounce as sinful and subject to the censure, not only of men, but of God, the practice of running such conveyances on Sabbath for reasons dictated by considerations of worldly or carnal expedience and on terms which are essentially mercenary. Under this description the Synod include the Sabbath services of trains, tramway-cars and motor-cars run for ordinary hire. It must surely appear to all who hold by the scriptural interpretation of the Sabbath law, as set forth, for example, in the Shorter Catechism, that such services, being maintained in utter disregard of the claims, and at the expense, of sanctity, constitute a flagrant breach of the Fourth Commandment.

III. This being their view, the Synod further hold that, ordinarily, that is allowing for the extreme exigencies of necessity and mercy, no one can lawfully make use of such services, whether for the purpose of attending church or for any less worthy purpose. Any use made of them on the part of an individual entails the giving by that individual of a certain proportionate moral and material contribution towards the support of the evil, thereby making him a party to it and involving him in the guilt of it. In consideration of this, and by way of raising a testimony against Sabbath desecration, the Synod have passed a motion which in effect excludes from Church privileges those who thus use public conveyances on the Lord's Day.

IV. Some responsible individuals in the Church have taken exception to this action of the Synod, maintaining that, while the practice should not be encouraged, yet in itself it is not necessarily sinful, and does not properly constitute a bar to Church membership.

V. One of the principal arguments put forward in support of this contention is, in substance, that a right motive on the part of the person travelling legitimises the use of public conveyances and the payment of fares on the Sabbath. The well-known judgment of the Apostle Paul in the matter of the eating of meats offered to idols is quoted for authority. With regard to this argument, and in refutation of it, the Synod would point out that

(1) There is a very fundamental difference in principle between the case with which the Apostle Paul dealt and that with which the motion of the Synod deals. In the former case, the question at issue concerned the eating of meats that had been offered to idols - in other words, the use of that which, in another connection, had been abused. The Apostle, one would almost say naturally, saw nothing wrong in eating such meats, provided no offence were given thereby to the consciences of others. The judgment, surely, would have been materially different had the Apostle been called upon to deal with Christians who had themselves been involved in the idolatry, who had contributed to the provision of meat for the offering, had countenanced the service, and had lent a hand with the performance. It is a case analogous to this, on the other hand, that the Synod's motion contemplates. That

motion, be it noted, does not in the least disparage the lawful employment on week days of conveyances which have been unlawfully employed on the Sabbath. Inasmuch as it does not, it involves no deviation from the principle of Christian liberty stated by the Apostle in connection with the "meats" controversy, a principle, by the way, which, because of its very preciousness, requires the most scrupulous handling. It does, however, in effect, declare it sinful and a bar to Church membership to be a party to the unlawful employment of them on the Sabbath in the spirit of that passage of the Apostle, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils" (I Cor. 10, v. 20, 21).

But even if it is granted for the sake of argument that the cases are parallel, and that the ruling of the Apostle in the "meats" controversy applies equally to the question at issue here, the case for the Synod's declaration loses nothing, as a careful examination of all the facts of the matter will show. The liberty of the Corinthian Christian to accept an invitation from an idolater and to eat the meat set before him was a conditional liberty only. In deference to the fact that others had consciences as well as he, although all had not knowledge, he was to ask no question of his host about the meat because "the earth is the Lord's and all the fulness thereof", and it mattered nothing to him whether it had been offered to idols or not, for to him an idol was nothing. If, however, his host told him, and it was now a matter of common knowledge that the meat had been offered to idols, then he was no longer at liberty to eat it, nay, he was bound to abstain, because (i) of the conscience of the idolater who, if he ate it, would naturally conclude that his Christian guest saw nothing wrong in idolatry; and (ii) of the conscience of his weak brother for whom Christ died. In consideration of the latter, the Apostle characterises the mere act of sitting at meat in an idol's temple as being something calculated to cause a brother to offend, and as being, on this account, a sin against the brethren and a sin against Christ. Now, in the case of public conveyances run on the Sabbath, one knows without being told of it that they are run in sacrifice to Mammon. According to the rule laid down by the Apostle, therefore, one is not merely at liberty, but is bound not to use them out of respect to his own conscience and the conscience both of those who run them for monetary purposes and of those to whom such use may be a stumbling-block.

(2) It is incorrect and dangerous to affirm that a right motive legitimises an action and then leave the matter there (which just amounts to saying that the end justifies the means). Some actions are notably in their content, direction or mode wrong, and persist so in spite of right motives. Take for example, the payment of money in gambling. It is wrong. Nor can it be justified to the extent of a farthing under any circumstances, not even by instancing, if it were possible, the case of a man who gambles with no baser motive than to devote his whole returns for the payment involved, should these amount to thousands of pounds, to the cause of religion or charity. The same applies to the payment of fares in connection with Sabbath travelling by public conveyances. It, again, is wrong - wrong, because, in itself it is, and claims to be, nothing more or less than a piece of worldly, "week-day" business, conducted on worldly, "week-day" lines, and transacted on God's holy day in which "He challengeth a special propriety for Himself" - wrong on the part of the payee, because, without deference, implied or expressed, to what the Fourth Commandment prohibits, on the one hand, or allows, on the other, he, as a contracting party, carries forward into the business of the Lord's

Day the same mercenary aims, the same working conditions, and the same contract terms which he lawfully and necessarily employs on the six days during which, God says, "thou shalt do all thy work" and wrong on the part of the payer, because, as the other contracting party, by availing himself of the service, and by paying the stipulated fare, he voluntarily, and for the most part, cheerfully accommodates himself to these aims and conditions and accepts these terms. Nor can any amount or species of motive serve to make it right.

It has been noted above that the Apostle Paul is mentioned as an authority in connection with the view under discussion. Let it here be observed with what vehemence he disclaims any such connection in Romans 3, v. 8 "(as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil that good may come? whose damnation is just."

VI. Some have urged that travelling to church on Sabbath by trains, trams, etc., when no other means is available and where distance precludes walking, comes within the category of works of necessity and mercy, and is therefore not essentially unlawful. The Synod cannot accept this view for the following reasons:

(1) It has been well said: "In no case can the plea of necessity be advanced for Sabbath churchgoing, while the alternative of staying at home is recognised." The Synod do recognise this alternative in cases, and in those only, where an alternative is properly admissible. The recognise it in such circumstances, for example, as when the state of one's health renders a person's going to church physically impossible, and again when one's duty to a fellow-man, or even to an animal, renders his staying at home morally imperative. In the case in point, when circumstances, both physical and moral, combine to prevent one's attendance at church - circumstances

which in the one direction are related to the inscrutable providence of God, and in the other have a direct bearing upon His glory - when one is placed at a distance which he cannot walk, and can only get to church by employing a public conveyance on the condition virtually, that he drop a coin into the world's cash-box, and with Naaman, bow in the house of Rimmon (or, to be more exact, in the house of Mammon), before he reaches, if ever he does reach, the house of God - in such a case, the Synod hold that a man, not only may, but must stay at home or be answerable to God.

(2) On the score of mercy, the Synod are of opinion that much need not be said to show that this plea is in favour, not of countenancing and of continuing, but of abolishing for ever the practice of Sabbath travelling by public conveyances and the amount of Sabbath work it involves. It is, indeed, a mercy to be able to get to church lawfully (but not otherwise). It is a mercy also to enable a fellow-sinner to go, even should it necessitate one's staying at home, and substituting private for public worship. The one is a mercy received, the other a mercy bestowed. Which of these two is the more relevant to the matter in hand, we need scarcely discuss. Suffice it to say, and surely all loyal Free Presbyterians, at least, will say with us, that it would be a great mercy indeed if the travelling public, including church-goers, of Britain, of America, of the world would consent to do all their travelling by public conveyances on week days, and by abstaining on the Sabbath, would thus set free from the trammels of unlawful labour and from the snare of filthy lucre hundreds, thousands, perhaps millions, all told, of their unfortunate brethren to possess the privileges and enjoy the rest of that one day in seven which, for all alike, the law of nature demands and the law of God provides, and to this extent, at least, deter them from ruining their souls for eternity.

VII. Having thus far put the case for the motion in question, wholly upon its own merits, before all concerned, and especially before those of our own people who have called it in question, the Synod would fain hope they have made it tolerably clear that, in taking the step they did, they merely did their duty. They entertain the confidence, therefore, that all who have placed themselves under their ecclesiastical jurisdiction will recognise it as their duty in turn to accept the principle and submit to the rule which the motion represents, by their avoiding all abuse of public conveyances on Sabbath in future. This may appear in the case of some to constitute a hardship in so far as it precludes them from worshipping under conditions to which they had formerly accustomed themselves. The Synod believe, however, that in the end this will be found to be a hardship in appearance only; that the difficulty of it will be seen to have yielded to the forces of faith and faithfulness; and that the compensations of obedience to the truth and of preserving a conscience void of offence toward God and man are more than sufficient to counter-balance any amount of specious comfort foregone and of inconvenience suffered. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments."