

Opposed to the Gospel

When there is legislation in regard to matters of religion, there must of necessity be the use of force, for a law without a penalty is no law at all. Now, legislation upon matters of religion is sinful, not only because force is utterly foreign to the spirit of the Gospel, but because it directly lowers the standard of religion.

When men are brought to think that the State has a right to legislate upon matters of religion, to enforce its observance, and to punish acts of disobedience, then religion is brought down to a merely human level. The State then teaches that there is nothing more to religion other than what it can enforce. But it cannot read a man's heart, and therefore the idea is spread that religion consists merely in outward forms. "Whatever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Now there is no power either on earth or in heaven that can force a man to believe. Faith works by love; but that which is of force is not of love; therefore that which is not of love is sin. And therefore any service which is forced is sin. So, when Government enacts and enforces laws pertaining to matters of religion it is simply using its power to make people sin. **Religious legislation is therefore directly opposed to the gospel.**

The Apostle Paul writes of those in the last days who have "a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:5). The gospel is the power of God. But when professed Christians appeal to the Government to enforce certain things that are wholly religious; when ministers plead for Sunday laws, so that they can have "fair play one day in the week," they thereby admit that the Gospel which they preach has not the power of God. The form is there, but by their appeal to human power they deny the power of God; for no one who is conscious of the power of God to back His message, and who knows in his own person what that power is, would insult God by asking for human power to supplement the power of God.

We have one lawgiver and one judge, namely, God, and that whoever judges another is really sitting in judgment on the law. But religious legislation calls for human judgment upon law of God. For men to incorporate the laws of God in the human codes, is to usurp the place of God as lawgiver, and therefore His place as judge. But this is the characteristic of "the man of sin." It is the perfection of apostasy, for the apostle said that the apostasy that was working in his day would culminate in the man of sin, "the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). This man of sin is the same as the "little horn" of the fourth beast of Daniel's prophecy, which is thus described: "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time" (Dan. 7:25).

The Roman Catholic Church is the result of the attempt to build up Christianity by means of the State. Religious legislation asked for and received by the church, made

the Papacy. Therefore whenever any man, professed Protestants though they be, ask for legislation in behalf of religion, no matter to what degree, they are simply following the steps of the Papacy.

No, they are doing more than simply following in the steps of the Papacy; they are joining it, and becoming a part of it; because religious legislation is the very essence of the Papacy. And this is still further emphasized by the fact that it was legislation upon the Sunday that made the Roman Catholic Church. It is that which is the Catholic Church's boast, and showing its power. In "Plain Talk about the Protestantism of To-day," from the French Mgr. Segur, we find the following:—

"It is worth its while to remember that this observance of the Sunday,—in which, after all, the only Protestant worship consists—not only has no foundation in the Bible, but it is in flagrant contradiction with its letter, which commands rest on the Sabbath, which is Saturday. It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has transferred this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants, is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves to the authority of the church."

Any amount of history might be quoted to show that the adoption of Sunday instead of the seventh day, as the Sabbath is the distinguishing mark of the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore when professed Protestants not only follow the practice personally, but fall into line and enforce its observance by law, they are identifying themselves with the Papacy.

And now read the warning against doing such a thing, and against in any way recognizing such laws when they are made. He who will read the whole of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation will see that it deals with the time reaching down to the coming of the Lord. It presents the last proclamation of the Gospel, in these words:—

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:6-12).

This warning against the worship of the beast, or of his image, is the union of any professed Protestants with the civil power, and is the proclamation of the gospel, because as we have shown, religious legislation is the deadly enemy of the gospel. It is the denial of Christ as the power of God. It is the denial of God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and as the Creator, by that same power, of men in Christ to do His will. Therefore wherever there is any movement towards getting the State to help the church along in its work, the voices of all who would have the gospel of Christ preserved in its purity must be raised in protest and warning. This is the message for these days. It is to present Christ as the power of God, and the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ as the only righteousness which will cover men from the wrath of God. Who will heed it, and say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."