**“The Basis of Sunday Laws” American Sentinel 8, 25.**

E. J. Waggoner

Those who have read the papers to any extent cannot have failed to notice that the enforcement of Sunday observance is increasing. In Birmingham, in Southampton, in Belfast, and at various other places in the Kingdom, crusades have been carried on against those who have ventured to take Sunday as a business day, instead of a day of rest and worship. These things are becoming so common, and are done so much as a matter of course, that it is necessary again and again to call the attention of the people to the basis upon which Sunday laws rest. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.1}

First, however, let us recall a statement concerning the action taken in the Isle of Man. A correspondent of the *Christian Commonwealth* said:— {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.2}

“The Sunday trading question is becoming a vexed one in the Isle of Man. For some time past the sale of newspapers in the streets, and Sunday trading generally, have become distasteful and intolerable to the majority of the Manx people; and on the introduction of the Local Government Act into the House of Keys, Mr. John Thomas Cowell, the member for North Douglas, moved the insertion of a new clause, to the effect that any person publicly crying, showing forth, or exposing for sale any wares, merchandise, fruit, newspapers, or any chattels whatever, on the Lord’s Day, shall at the instance of a constable, be liable to a fine of 40s. for each offense. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.3}

The clause was carried by a vote of fifteen to five, but was thrown out on being sent back to the Legislative Council. One member declared that he would rather lose the whole Bill than consent to such a piece of legislation. The writer above referred to says: “This will undoubtedly be the case, as the Manx ire is now fully aroused, against the wholesale Sunday desecration of recent years, and things are gradually growing worse. The Council may play the part of obstructionists for a time, but the voice of the people must ultimately be heard, and a strong measure be passed prohibiting Sunday trading.” {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.4}

**NO CONNECTION WITH TEMPERANCE**

In this connection it may be well to note the fact that the Bishop of Sodor and Man said that during his twelve months’ residence on the island, he has been favorably impressed with respect to the temperance question. “So far as he could recollect, he had observed only one case of drunkenness in a Manxman.” So it will be seen that it cannot be claimed that Sunday legislation is necessary on the ground of temperance. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.5}

We have already repeatedly shown that the Sunday observance question cannot in any sense be considered a temperance question. The same number of the *Christian Commonwealth* which contained the item in regard to the Isle of Man, had an editorial on the drink question. From that editorial we quote the following:— {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.6}

Most temperance advocates believe that Sunday closing ought to be national, and not local. But why do they think so? Simply for the reason that the country is ripe for a national Sunday Closing Bill, and that such a Bill is right in itself. Undoubtedly these are weighty considerations. But we fail to see why Sunday Closing should be made national, and total closing local. The evil influence of the drink traffic for six days in the week must be more than for one day; and yet some who are comparatively indifferent to the former, are sticklers for the latter. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.7}

This should be sufficient to settle the question as to the connection of Sunday closing with temperance. There is none whatever. “The whole country is ripe for a national Sunday Closing Bill,” but not by any means for national prohibition seven days in the week. Sunday closing would make but little appreciable difference in the amount of liquor consumed, for the workingmen are as idle on Saturday nights as they are on Sundays, and there is ample time then for them to get rid of their wages, even if they did not lay in a supply of drink for the next day. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.8}

**NOT A PHYSICAL NECESSITY**

We may therefore leave the question of temperance entirely out of our study of the basis of Sunday laws. There are only two other possible grounds on which compulsory Sunday observance may be based, and they are (1) the physical benefit to be derived, and (2) the religious character of the day. We will consider them. But first, again, let us see how much importance is attached to this matter of Sunday observance. The *Christian Commonwealth* of March 20 said:— {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.9}

If shopkeepers persist in needless Sunday trading, they must be stopped by the strong arm of the law. In Birmingham the nuisance has become so intolerable that a Watch Committee has been formed, and is making a crusade against Sunday trading.... We should prefer Sunday closing to be voluntary, but if this cannot be realized, the only alternative is to make it compulsory. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.10}

Take now the idea that Sunday observance is necessary for the physical well-being of people, especially of the workingmen. At the most that can be claimed for a weekly physical rest it is of far less importance than many other things. For instance, it is far more necessary that a man should have a regular amount of sleep in every twenty-four hours. A man may work every day in the week for an indefinite time, if he has sufficient regular daily rest; whereas if he is broken of his rest at night for a few nights, he will be totally unfitted for work. But we never hear of a proposition that laboring men should be compelled by law to sleep seven hours every night, and nobody will ever be foolish enough to advocate such a thing. Laws are not needed to compel people to rest when they are tired; nature will attend to that. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 194.11}

Again, if enforced Sunday rest is only for the physical well-being, then it is most absurd, not to say tyrannical, because all persons do not become weary and in need of rest at the same time. Different kinds of labor induce different degrees of weariness; and to say that all men shall take exactly the same amount of rest, and at the same time, is as absurd as to say that they shall all eat the same amount of the same kind of food, and at precisely the same time. One man’s work does not make another man tired, neither does the fact that a hundred men are working hinder one from resting, and therefore there is no reason why every man shall rest at a given time, simply because a few wish to do so. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 195.1}

But it is often urged that the Government has the right to set apart certain days as holidays. Very true, but that is not what Sunday is desired to be. A holiday is a day on which people are permitted to cease labor if they wish; on Sunday it is desired to force people to cease work whether they want to or not. If a man wishes to dig in his garden on a Bank Holiday, instead of going to the parks, he is at liberty to do so. If there were an attempt to force everybody to stop all kinds of work on a Bank Holiday, there would be such a protest as would put an end to the attempt. Pleasure cannot be forced, and neither can rest. {AMS June 22, 1893, p. 195.2}

E. J. WAGGONER.
*London, England.*