

Support of Courts

In the regaining and maintaining of this right of "freedom to worship God" the church has the support of practically all of our Courts. From deliverances of many of our state Courts bearing on this subject we quote the following:

Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

"Rest and the public worship of Almighty God, were the primary objects of the institution, both as a divine and civil appointment. . . . These statutes were not designed to compel men to go to church, or to worship God in any manner inconsistent with personal preferences; but to compel a cessation of those employments which are calculated to interfere with the rights of those who choose to assemble for public worship. . . . It would be a small boon to the people of Pennsylvania to declare their infeasible right to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience amid the din and confusion of secular employments, and with desecrations on every hand of what they conscientiously believe to be hallowed time."

Supreme Court of Virginia

In a case which came before the Court in 1922 involving the opening of a cave for public patronage on the Lord's Day the Court said:

"From the creation of the State until the present time this State has been recognized as a Christian State, at least in the sense that the great body of its citizens adhere to the tenets of the Christian religion and, while at all times according freedom of conscience to all men, it has so far respected the opinions of this great body of citizens as always to preserve from desecration the sanctity of Sunday, which they regard as holy."

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FREEDOM TO WORSHIP GOD

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Through the encroachments of secular business and commercialized amusements on the Lord's Day a fundamental right of Americans, constitutionally guaranteed, is being increasingly infringed upon—the right of public worship.

A Guaranteed Right

Our forefathers came to America that they might have "freedom to worship God." In Europe many of them sacrificed their lives in defense of this right. When they came to set up the American Republic they considered this right so fundamental that they embodied it in their Constitutions of Government. An examination of the Constitutions of the forty-eight states of the United States recently made, reveals the fact that this right is referred to in all these Constitutions save three. In fifteen it is unequivocally asserted as a right of every man; "It is the natural and infeasible right of every man to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience." In twenty-five of them it is not only declared to be a right but this right is guaranteed to every citizen; "All men shall be secured in their natural right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their consciences." In the remaining Constitutions in which reference is made to it it is said, "it shall be allowed," "is entitled to protection," or "no law shall prohibit its free exercise."

Public Worship A Duty

A few State Constitutions not only declare it to be a right but assert it to be a duty. The Constitution of Massachusetts says it is "the duty of all men in society publicly and at stated seasons to worship the Supreme Being"; of Delaware, "it is the duty of all men frequently to assemble together for the public worship of Almighty God"; of Vermont, "Every sect or denomination of Christians ought to observe the Sabbath, or Lord's Day, and keep up some sort of religious worship, which to them shall seem most agreeable to the revealed will of God."

Public Worship Guaranteed

In all these references to freedom of worship it is public worship in particular that is referred to. The rights of our European forefathers to worship in whatever manner they chose in the privacy of their own homes was never interfered with. It was in their public worship that this right was denied. The civil power said, "You must use this prayer book" or, "You shall receive the Gospel at the mouth of the minister whom the King sends to you." They would have none of this. They said, "We must be free to worship God in public assembly as our conscience dictate." To enjoy this freedom untrammelled they came to this new world and when they set up a government, so important did they consider the right of freedom of public worship, that they wrote it into their Constitutions of Government.

What It Involves

What does the exercise of this constitutionally guaranteed right involve?

We have always stressed freedom of worship "according to the dictates of conscience." But before one can have freedom to worship God publicly according to the dictates of conscience, he must be free to engage in public worship. This involves a time set apart for this purpose, free from the obligations of secular labor and business. To provide a time for public worship, to guarantee to every man "freedom to worship God," our forefathers enacted civil laws, forbidding all secular labor and business, except works of necessity and mercy, on the Lord's Day. In no other way could they have guaranteed freedom of public worship to all.

How could the people of America assemble on week days for public worship? The youth are in school. The great majority of adults are so engaged in offices, banks, stores, factories and scores of other employments, as to render attendance upon public worship impossible. The Sabbath Day free from the engagements of the business and labor of other days and the Sabbath law preventing selfish and greedy employers from requiring their employees to work on this day, are necessary to guarantee this right to our people.

According to American tradition "freedom to worship God" involves not only a day free from

the secular labor and business of other days but also the right to worship on this day in peace and quiet, amid surroundings in keeping with its sacred character and in an environment which shows at least an outward respect for the Christian sentiment which regards the day as holy.

This Right Denied

This right is denied to millions of Americans today through the breaking down of our Sabbath Laws and the crowding in of secular business and commercialized amusements on the Lord's Day. In their effort to capture the Lord's Day for amusements and make it the most lucrative day of the week for their business, these highly commercialized and monopolized interests are requiring Sunday labor of hundreds of thousands of our citizens and bringing into the Sabbath the noise and bustle of other days.

There are said to be more than 5,000,000 Sunday toilers in the United States, the great majority of whom are engaged in labor which is neither works of necessity nor mercy. What "freedom to worship God" do they have? These millions have souls. They are denied the right to care for them. Their higher self is being ground to pieces by the greed of our modern industry and the present-day craze for amusements which are commercializing the Lord's Day.

Let Us Regain It

It is high time for the Christian people of America to assert this fundamental and constitutionally guaranteed right of all Americans and to demand that it shall be secured to all. Surely, we prize too highly this heritage of liberty our forefathers purchased at a great price, to stand idly by while millions of our fellow citizens are being robbed of it.

The Church is the special guardian of this right. She stands for the things of the soul. Her interests are involved in reclaiming and maintaining this right for all the people. Let her proclaim it. Let her stand four-square for it. Let her defend the Sabbath law which safeguards it. Let her declare to all people that this right must not be surrendered at the behest of any selfish interest.