**“A Lesson in Obedience” The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 75, 25.**

E. J. Waggoner

***Present Truth.***

Many people imagine that the times when quiet, unoffending people could be made to suffer real persecution for their loyalty to God and His Word, are in the past, and that men in these days are too enlightened to persecute their fellow-men for conscience’ sake; but we have had under close observation for nearly a year a case which shows that all the elements of religious persecution are everywhere present as much as they ever were, and that more extended and relentless persecution than has ever yet been known is not only possible, but is highly probable, yes, more, is actually inevitable, since careful and systematic preparations are being made for it. The case in question is highly interesting and most instructive, and as the whole affair is now ended, we will give a brief account of it. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.1}

**NARRATIVE OF THE CASE**

Early in 1897 Christen Rasmussen, a young man nineteen years of age, from Hurup, Denmark, was called to perform the military service that is demanded of every able-bodied young man. At that time he was not converted, but during a short visit at his home he gave himself to the Lord, accepting Christ as his Saviour, and fully decided to obey his heavenly Master in all things, according to the Sacred Word. This was no mere formal matter with him, as his subsequent history shows. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.2}

He should have presented himself at military headquarters at one o’clock, April 10, 1897, but as that day was the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath according to the commandment of the Lord, to whose service he had given himself, he did not put in an appearance until after sunset. For this seeming dilatoriness he received a reprimand, and was thereafter assigned to his duty. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.3}

During the week he made a request to the captain, to be exempted from service on Sabbath days, but the answer was that nothing could be done for him in that direction. The young man, however, had no question in his own mind as to whether the king of Denmark or the King of the universe had the first claim upon his service. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.4}

Accordingly, the next Sabbath morning when the soldiers appeared for inspection, he remained in his room reading his Bible. A corporal came with orders for him to take his place, but he answered, “I cannot, because it is the Lord’s Sabbath.” Then a lieutenant came, and commanded him to take his place in the ranks, but he replied, “I cannot.” “Why not?” said the lieutenant. “Because it is the Sabbath.” Finally he accompanied the lieutenant outside, but could not be induced to take his place in the ranks. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.5}

**NO PLACE FOR GOD’S LAW**

He was brought to the captain, who said, “Why do you not take your place?” “Because the Lord has said, The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.” “Well, you are a soldier, and must obey; nothing of that kind is taken into consideration here. Take your place,” said captain. “I cannot, sir.” Without further parley a sergeant was ordered to take “No. 52” to prison, which was done. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.6}

Before the military court he had nothing else to answer than this: “The God who created heaven and earth has said, ‘On the seventh day, which is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt do no work,’ and I cannot do anything other than obey Him.” He was thereupon sentenced to three times five days’ solitary confinement in a dark cell, on bread and water. The successive periods of five days’ darkness were separated by one day’s imprisonment in the light. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.7}

At the close of this sentence he was asked by his friends how he had it in prison. “Oh,” said he, “it was somewhat lonesome at times, but I prayed to the Lord, and sang praises to Him, and so my heart was glad.” {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.8}

**AN EXCELLENT CHARACTER**

It should be stated that the military authorities gave the young man an excellent character. His reputation for activity and soldierly ability was good. The officer said that he was the best man in the company. At target practice he proved himself superior to all the rest. The colonel who had to send a report of the case to the King talked with him, and told what a good report he had heard of him from the officers, and said, “You are a clever marksman, can you shoot as well at the Germans, when you get in the battle?” {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.9}

“No,” was the reply, “I cannot shoot or kill a fellow-men, since God’s law forbids it.” {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.10}

“Oh, yes,” said the colonel; “I believe you are a faithful man to do what you believe to be right. You will fear God, and live for Him. I have nothing bad to report about you, but I must write that you are deluded.” {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.11}

Several times was young Rasmussen before the military court for insubordination, the only charge being that he would not work on Sabbath, and as often must he undergo punishment, so that as an Aarhus (Denmark) paper said in giving an account of this case, he spent the greater part of the summer in discharging penalties, and these were naturally made more severe one after the other. Dark cells and bread and water were everyday affairs with him. The closeness with which one punishment followed another, depended only on whether he came out of prison the first or the last day of the week; for as surely as Saturday came, was there the refusal to work, and the swiftly following sentence. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.12}

**“ACCOUNTED MAD”**

At last he was sent to the insane asylum, to be kept under observation for three months, to see if he was of sound mind. Here his surroundings were by no means pleasant, but the Lord whom he served did not forsake him, and he always maintained his courage. Whenever his friend saw him in the intervals of his imprisonment, he seemed glad and happy in the Lord, and had not a hard word to say of those at whose hands he was made to suffer. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.13}

In the insane hospital the doctor had naturally many talks with him, but could find in him nothing different from other men, except his loyalty to what the Bible says, and his confidence and happiness in the Lord. The doctor’s report of his first examination ran something as follows:— {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 391.14}

“The patient was sent in for examination as to a state of mind; because he, as an Adventist, had ever since his call to military service refused to work on Saturday, and had therefore undergone one punishment after another. His behavior in the hospital has been good, and one cannot know any other abnormal symptom in him than his defense of the sacredness of Saturday, which he supports with innumerable texts from the Bible.” {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.1}

As with Daniel, the only fault found in him was concerning the law of his God. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.2}

The 2nd of last October he was sent back to the army with the declaration that it was perfectly sane, whereupon the old history began to repeat itself. Friday evening soon came, and, as before, he respectfully but firmly refused to continue his work. Judgment followed quick and strong, and twice more was he obliged to suffer for his faithful “disobedience,” each time five times five days in the dark cell, on bread and water, the last time without any bed. In all this time he uttered no complaint, only expressing the hope that he might soon receive his final sentence of continuous imprisonment. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.3}

Finally his case was settled, and he received a sentence of eight months’ hard labor in the penitentiary. This was less than he expected. From the time that he was taken to the prison, until, a little less than two months later, he was pardoned on the king’s eightieth birthday, nothing was known of him except that the inspector said he must learn to obey, and he had no doubt but that they would succeed in teaching him, and that in the prison he would be obliged to work on Sabbath, or else be punished according to the prison regulations. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.4}

It transpires that on its refusal to work on the Sabbath, he received the mildest punishment prescribed for such an offence. Instead of being flogged, he was obliged to spend the Sabbath in a dark cell or hole, where, as it was winter, and there was no fire, he suffered much from the cold. Now, however, he is free from prison and from all further military service; and as none of the things he endured could spoil his peace, it may well be believed that he is now glad in the Lord, to whose service he is more than ever devoted. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.5}

**WHO WAS DISOBEDIENT?**

We have he headed this narrative “A Lesson in Obedience,” and such it is. The military authorities thought all the time that they were engaged in teaching the young recruit obedience to order; but the fact was that it was he who was giving them a practical lesson in obedience, which most of them were too dull to appreciate, their senses having been blunted by their military training. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.6}

It is true that Rasmussen was technically disobedient, but that which in his case was called “disobedience” was the highest kind of obedience. A writer for one of the Danish newspapers well said: “I cherish the highest respect for this young man. The faithfulness and integrity which he exhibits is so rare that it ought to be rewarded by some other means than the House of Corrections.” In reality it was the military authorities who were disobedient, for the law which says, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” is for all, and the king on his throne is under the same obligation to keep it that the peasant is. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.7}

That Rasmussen’s case is only faintly suggestive of what may yet follow in multiplied instances in every land, is indicated by the following taken from the Aarhus *Folkeblad* February 19:— {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.8}

“One cannot comfort himself with the thought that this is an isolated case, for there will soon be many, I know of a certainty. We really come to the heart of the matter only when we see that such a man can come into a yet more serious situation in time of war. For according to what I have been able to learn by conversations with men belonging to the Seventh-day Adventists, they will absolutely refuse to go against an enemy with weapons in hand. They will hold themselves strictly to the fifth [sixth] commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ They will allow themselves to be killed, but they will not kill. If this is correct, and I believe it is, then these men are useless as soldiers, and may, if war should break out, come into the most deplorable condition in that they may be condemned to death, and put others in the painful situation of being obliged to pronounce so hard a sentence upon them.” {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.9}

**THE GOD OF WAR**

When one stops to consider how the war spirit is dominating the nations of earth, and what its nature is, it will be apparent that there are indeed “perilous times” ahead, and not far distant. The demon whom men call “the god of war” is stern, harsh, unyielding, unrelenting, and mercilessly cruel. The groans of the wounded and dying, and the wails of widows and orphans, are music to his ears. Men call him Mars, but he is well represented by the ancient Moloch, that brazen image into whose red-hot arms living children were flung, while the beating of drums and the blare of trumpets drowned their dying cries, or mingled with them to work the multitudes up to the highest pitch of frenzy. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.10}

The Danish people are as kind and courteous and gentle a people as can be found in the world. Moreover all those who came in contact with young Rasmussen liked him personally, and the officers praised his efficiency and willingness, yet the worship of the military demon begets so false a conception of duty, that not one of them would hesitate in obedience to inflict upon him any sort of punishment. Why?-Because in their minds human Government is greater than God. Young Rasmussen was not punished because the officers had any ill will to him, nor because they were hard-hearted men. Far from it. On the contrary, it caused them pain, and they did it at the sacrifice of personal feelings and to what they conceived to be their duty. The same thing would be done in any other country in the world, only the punishment might be much more vigorous. The kings and rulers of earth have set themselves against God, and have assumed the right to set aside His law, which says, “Thou shalt not kill,” and as a matter of course the other portions of that law are as lightly regarded by them. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.11}

**A FALLACY**

This case shows the fallacy of another idea, that is entertained by many, namely, that religious persecution must be prompted by hatred of the religious principles of the ones persecuted. In this case those at whose hands Rasmussen suffered had no religious bias. They cared more for the Sunday than for the Sabbath. It was absolutely immaterial to them what religion the soldiers professed, or if they professed none at all. The only thing that concerned them was, to secure implicit and unquestioning obedience to the regulations of the army. If a man disregards them, the fact that he does so in obedience to God’s law is not for a moment taken into consideration; punishment must follow to the bitter end. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.12}

**MILITARISM ABOVE GOD**

“But there must be discipline in the army, or else its efficiency is at an end; and if partiality is shown there will be an end of discipline,” will be urged by many, and not last, by any means, by men who occupy the places of influence in the church. Think of the wickedness of such a defense! God and His law must be considered of secondary importance to the military machine! It is of more importance that the army should be maintained, than that God should be regarded! The mere statement of the case is sufficient to show that it is as gross paganism as ever existed. What hope can there be of peace on earth as long as such principles rule? {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.13}

The situation will be worse in the future than it has ever been in the past, for war is now sanctioned by the professed ministers of the Gospel, as it has never been before. It is so easy for the rulers to raise the cry of “humanity” in justification of any war, or else there is always that magic word “patriotism;” and when a country is “Christian,” it is readily argued that to defend its “honor” is a Christian act; so that he who will refuse to disobey God’s law, “Thou shalt not kill,” will be condemned as a traitor to God in his country, and that even by the ministers of religion. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.14}

**PAGANISM**

Is it not time that the question were again asked: “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God serve Him, and if Baal, then serve him.” In so-called “Christian” countries the worst sort of paganism is assuming overwhelming proportions. The great mass of people seem to think that when “Government” (which is in the main only another name for the army) commands disobedience of God’s law, there is no alternative but to disobey it; and those who refuse to transgress God’s law are branded as lawless and disobedient. What is it but heathenism thus to ignore God, and to set the military god above him? {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.15}

Thank God that there are still faithful witnesses to the truth, lone voices in the desert, saying, “Behold your God!” When the testing time comes the single voices will be multiplied by thousands, whose quiet lives of humble obedience to God’s law will speak louder than any words, and will result in bringing many from the camp of Satan, to enlist under the banner of the Prince of Peace. {ARSH June 21, 1898, p. 392.16}