**“What Do They Want?” American Sentinel 1, 4.**

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The second article of the Constitution of the National Reform Association reads, in part as follows: “The object of this society shall be to maintain existing Christian features in the American Government; ... And to secure such an amendment to the Constitution of the United States as will declare the nation’s allegiance to Jesus Christ, and its acceptance of the moral laws of the Christian religion, and indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all the Christian laws, institutions, and usages of our Government on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the land.” {AMS April 1886, p. 27.1}

We must suppose that those words are intended to conceal some ulterior design; for we are morally certain that none of the National Reformers care to see just the condition of things which the above article might, on a casual reading, seem to demand. By a little examination of the subject we can see that the expressed object of the National Reform Party could not be realized unless the religious bodies this country should undergo a great transformation. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.2}

Our first question is, What is Christianity? Webster defines it as, “The religion of Christians; the system of doctrines and precepts taught by Christ.” Then right in connection with this, we must answer the question, What are Christian institutions? The obvious answer is, The ordinances of the Christian religion; instituted by Christ. And as all the professed followers of Christ, professors of the Christian religion, are termed as a body, the church we may say that Christian institutions are ordinances of the Christian church. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.3}

When we come to an examination of the subject of Christian ordinances, we shall find that there are very few of them. The apostle Paul describes one of them in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: “For I have received of the Lord that which delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” {AMS April 1886, p. 27.4}

One Christian ordinance, then, is the Lord’s Supper. It was instituted by Christ, is enjoined upon all his followers, and is peculiar to Christianity. One more: Just as Christ was about to ascend to Heaven, he said to his disciples: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall, be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15, 16. To these two ordinances some Christians add the washing of feet as found in John 13:1-15; but all are agreed on the first two. Here, then, we have two, or at the most, three Christian ordinances. They are peculiar to Christianity, and besides them there are no others. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.5}

Some one will exclaim, “What about the Golden Rule?” We reply, That is not peculiar to Christianity. Do not misunderstand us. We do not say that the keeping of it is not necessary to Christianity, but that it is not peculiar to Christianity. When our Saviour said, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,” he immediately added, “for this is the law and the prophets.” The golden rule is simply a summary of the last six precepts of the decalogue; but the decalogue was in existence and of obligation before man fell, and consequently before there was any need of Christianity. The ten commands, which comprise all primary obligation, would have been just as much in force as they are now, even if there had been no fall involving the necessity for a Christian religion; and more than this, they are now, as they were in the beginning, of universal obligation; so that they are equally binding on Jews, Mohammedans, Christians, and pagans. But baptism and the Lord’s Supper not only are not obligatory upon Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans, but they are positively denied to such until they profess allegiance to Christ. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.6}

We repeat, therefore, that the only possible Christian ordinances are baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the ordinance of humility, or feet-washing. These are the features which outwardly indicate the possession of Christianity. And therefore if a nation is to be really a “Christian nation,” these features must exist in it. If it demands that all its subjects submit to these ordinances, then it will be, in name, a Christian nation; but if none of these features exist in it, then it is in no sense a Christian nation. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.7}

Has the United States any of these Christian features? Does it require any or all of them as a condition of citizenship? Everybody answers, No. Then it has no “existing Christian features” to be maintained. National Reform zeal, therefore, in that particular, is entirely misapplied. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.8}

Now for a brief consideration of the difficulties in the way of making this a “Christian nation,” *i.e.*, a nation having Christian features. At the outset we are met with a controversy over baptism. A large and respectable body of Christian professors hold that nothing but immersion is baptism. Many more hold that sprinkling meets the requirement of the Saviour; while still others teach that either immersion, sprinkling, or pouring is baptism. Most immersionists hold that a single immersion is all that can be allowed, while some claim three immersions are necessary to constitute baptism. Here is an irreconcilable controversy; for though the matter has been under discussion for centuries, it is no nearer a settlement than in the beginning. Concerning the Lord’s Supper there is almost equal division. A large part of the so-called Christian church withholds the cup from the laity, while many are of late disposed to dispense with the entire ordinance. As for the third ordinance, it is celebrated by but few, the greater part of professed Christians being utterly opposed to it. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.9}

But it is useless to carry this point any further, for if you were to put the question, the entire body of “National Reformers” would with one voice declare that they desire no such thing as that the nation shall recognize baptism, the Lord’s Supper, etc. And in so saying they would speak the truth. Nevertheless they do declare that this is, or ought to be, a Christian nation, and that “all Christian laws, institutions, and usages,” should be placed “on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the land;” and we know that that can be done only by making the Constitution require the celebration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as a condition of citizenship. It must be that they have something else in mind, which in their opinion is peculiar to Christianity, and upon which there would not be among professed Christians so much difference of opinion. What do they want, anyway? In a future article we shall let them tell for themselves. E. J. W. {AMS April 1886, p. 27.10}