**“Will ‘National Reformers’ Persecute?” American Sentinel 1, 8.**

E. J. Waggoner

In the “National Reform” convention held in Pittsburgh, in February, 1874, Dr. A. A. Hodge made a speech in favor of the proposed amendment, in the course of which he uttered the following words:- {AMS August 1886, p. 59.1}

“If the Christian majority prevail and maintain Christian institutions, the infidel minority will be just where they have always been, and the exact position in which they voluntarily accepted citizenship; and while they may be restrained from some self-indulgence, they can be constrained as to violation of their convictions. {AMS August 1886, p. 59.2}

“On the other hand, if the unbelieving minority prevail, the Christian majority will lose their precious heritage from their fathers, which they held in trust for their children, and they will be outlawed. For, when the law of man contradicts the law of God, the Christian has no alternative but to obey the law of God, disobey the law of man, and take the consequences.” {AMS August 1886, p. 59.3}

From this deliverance we draw the following necessary conclusions:- {AMS August 1886, p. 59.4}

The idea intended to be conveyed is that “we,” the “National Reformers,” are all good; “we,” would not persecute anybody; but if the unbelieving minority should prevail, “we,” the innocent and helpless majority, would be at their mercy. As a piece of sentimental cant, the utterance was a success; to common sense and truth, it was a failure, for minorities have never yet persecuted majorities, and the very idea of such a thing is absurd. No matter how violent a man may be, the man who has twice the power that he has is in no danger. What Dr. Hodge calls the “unbelieving minority,” now occupies, according to the “National Reformers,” the very ground for which they are striving. The “Reformers” claim that they want to Christianize this Government, then it must be that this “unbelieving minority” now holds the ground, and yet we have not heard of any persecution being raised against the “Christian majority.” As a matter of fact, no people have ever suffered persecution for consciences’ sake, except from the hands of those who professed some form of religion. {AMS August 1886, p. 59.5}

These “National Reformers” do not agree among themselves. Dr. Hodge says that: If their project carries, infidels will be just where they have always been. But Mr. Coleman says that the essence of their movement will “*disfranchise* every logical conscientious infidel.” We believe Mr. Coleman’s statement because (1) from the very nature of the case the “Reformers,” if successful, must disfranchise those who dissent from their position, and because (2) Dr. Hodge’s very statement provides not only for the persecution of those Christians who may disagree with the majority. Notice carefully the following:- {AMS August 1886, p. 59.6}

“On the other hand, if the unbelieving minority prevail, the Christian majority will lose their precious heritage from their fathers, which they hold in trust for their children, and they will be outlawed. For, when the law of man contradicts the law of God, the Christian has no alternative but to obey the law of God, disobey the law man, and take the consequences.” {AMS August 1886, p. 59.7}

With the last clause we agree. Where there is a conflict between the law of God and the law of man, the law of God must have a preference. “But,” say the “National Reformers,” “we propose to make the law of God the law of the land, and then there can be no persecution, because a law of men will coincide with that of God. “The fallacy in this proposition lies in the assumption that they, if successful, will make the perfect law of God the law of the land, or that, if they should do so, all who revere God’s law would agree with their understanding of it. They count on there being no dissenters except infidels, forgetting or ignoring the fact that there are conscientious differences of opinions even among Christians. {AMS August 1886, p. 59.8}

It is a fact that among professed Christians there is not perfect unanimity of opinion concerning the law of God. On this point the Christian world may be divided into the following classes:- {AMS August 1886, p. 59.9}

1. Those who hold that the law of God is binding upon all men. {AMS August 1886, p. 59.10}

2. Those who hold that the law was abolished at the cross, and that it now has no claim upon anybody. The first class may be still further divided as follows:- {AMS August 1886, p. 59.11}

1. Those who hold that the fourth commandment requires the observance of the seventh day of the week, commonly called Saturday. {AMS August 1886, p. 59.12}

2. Those who believe that the fourth commandment now enjoins the observance of the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday. {AMS August 1886, p. 59.13}

As all of those who reject the authority of God’s law are agreed that Sunday is the proper rest day for mankind, it follows that the only practical controversy over the law of God is concerning the application of the fourth commandment; the great majority of professed Christians including the National Reformers, construe it as enjoining the Sunday rest, while a small minority are positive in their conscientious conviction that it requires them to keep Saturday. Now even allowing that the majority are actually right, and that their interpretation of the law of God is correct, the fact remains that a minority do not admit their interpretation. Those in the minority are conscientious in their belief that the laws which the majority sustain is opposed to the law of God, and when the law of man conflicts with the law of God, Christians have no alternative but to obey the latter, and disobey the former, they must follow their convictions, and, as Dr. Hodge says, “take the consequences.” That these “consequences” would be punishment for violating the law of the land, is a necessary and obvious conclusion. Dr. Hodge says in the same speech from which we have quoted:- {AMS August 1886, p. 59.14}

“The Christian minister receives the word of God as the law of the church, and interprets it for himself! The Christian magistrate receives the same word as his rule in the State, so far as it casts light upon human duties and relations involved in the function of government; and the magistrate interprets it for himself.” {AMS August 1886, p. 59.15}

{AMS August 1886, p. 59.16}

**“‘National Reformers’ the Enemies of American Institutions” American Sentinel 1, 8.**

E. J. Waggoner

The readers of the Sentinel must know that in its opposition to the so-called National Reform Movement it is actuated by no personal feelings whatever. Although frequent reference is made to the men and papers that are working for the amendment, it is not done with the design of impugning their motives or calling special attention to them, but because the only way we can show the errors of the National Reform movement is by quoting what its supporters say for it. We believe that many if not all of the leaders in the movement are honest in their motives but they have become blinded by a selfish ambition which they mistake for religious zeal. To show that the movement is directly contrary to the spirit of the golden rule, we quote from an article by Rev. J. J. Carrell, entitled “The Civil Sabbath,” in the *Christian Nation* of June 9. He says:- {AMS August 1886, p. 68.1}

“Those who have come from afar, and find life a burden here, knew the character of our institutions before they came. If they have helped to develop our resources and fight our battles, we are not slow to recognize the full value of those services. We accord to them the full rights of citizenship, and all the blessings of preserved nationality, the common reward of all alike. But we decline to accept the doctrine that those services confer upon them the privilege of bringing upon our beloved land a worse scourge and destruction than those averted by the civil war. If any of our citizens find our institutions intolerable, our strict Sunday laws too hard to bear, our attempts to secure sobriety, quietness, and decency, too great a burden for their freedom-loving souls, there is only one way of escape from this bondage. Our gates of egress are three thousand miles broad, and are shut neither by day nor by night. If these oppressed and over-burdened souls wish to seek a better country under the sun, the way is open, and not a tongue will ever wag dissent.” {AMS August 1886, p. 68.2}

We wish it to be distinctly understood that we would be second to none in upholding “American institutions” against any attempt on the part of “those who have come from afar,” to overthrow them. With anarchy and Anarchists we have no sympathy. When men combine to overthrow the laws that protect the rights of men we would oppose them in every lawful way. But we have no more objection to this kind of work when done by “those who come from afar” than when done by those born in the land. Now let us notice the inconsistency and the selfishness and disregard of the rights of others, that is manifested in the above paragraph. {AMS August 1886, p. 68.3}

The writer says that foreigners who do not choose to conform to our customs and usages should leave; and the keeping of Sunday presumably on the authority of the fourth commandment, is regarded as one of those usages. If men do not want to keep Sunday according to the strict law of Pennsylvania, they have no business here. Now we would like to know how the Amendmentists can harmonize such a position with the position which they take on the Chinese question. The Chinese are heathen; they do not acknowledge God, but bow down to the most disgusting idols, thus breaking the first and second commandment; they know and care nothing about Jesus Christ; like all heathen, they think it no wrong to defraud or steal, if they are not detected; and they pay not the slightest regard to Sunday, and know no rest-day but their New Year Holiday. Many American citizens are endeavoring to have these Chinese driven from our country, and have succeeded in securing laws prohibiting their further immigration. But the Amendmentists utterly condemn all such proceedings. They claim that such a course is unjust. Now we ask how they can harmonize their wish to drive off the man who objects to their strict Sunday laws, with their objections to driving off the Chinaman who not only disregards Sunday, but who openly and repulsively violates all the commandments? The application of the National Reform principles today, or ten years from today, would make it necessary to press every ocean steamer into the service of carrying Chinamen back to their native land. It would exclude the Chinese from this country as effectually as would the wildest scheme ever advocated by Kearney or O’Donnell. So we say that National reformers are inconsistent. {AMS August 1886, p. 68.4}

Now as to their selfishness. This country was settled by those who came here that they might worship according to the dictates of their own conscience, free from oppression for opinion’s sake. The principle of religious freedom is the principle on which this Government was founded. It is the first and best of our “American institutions.” Now the error of the National Reformers is in regarding the particular beliefs and practices of the pilgrim fathers as American institutions, which must be upheld all hazards, forgetting that the principle of liberty, both civil and religious, is the only distinctive American institution. They say, “Our fathers, who settled this country, venerated the ‘Christian Sabbath’; they have bequeathed it to us as an American institution; and if we would not be false to their memory we must see that the Sunday is kept by all men, and kept as they kept it.” But in that very resolution they are false to the memory of our fathers who bequeathed to us the principles of liberty which we possess. True loyalty to American institutions would be to say, “Here are some who do not hold as we do on some points of religious faith and practice; now we will not only allow them to hold and carry out their ideas, but will protect them in so doing, just as we ourselves would like to be protected in our opinions.” This would not only be in accordance with American institutions, but it would be in harmony with the golden rule: “All things whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them.” {AMS August 1886, p. 68.5}

Of course it is always understood that is guaranteeing all men liberty of thought and action, the Government stipulates that no one shall disturb others in the exercise of their rights. Nothing less than this would be liberty to all. But the further error of the National Reformers is in supposing that all who differ with them are infringing on their rights. Mr. McCarrell of Pennsylvania, together with enough Pennsylvanians to make a strict Sunday law, imagine that because they want to keep Sunday strictly everybody else must do the same. It may be that their neighbor does not believe that Sunday ought to be observed; he may be a strict and conscientious observer of Saturday; but that makes no difference; “we are *the* people, and you must do as we do; if you don’t like our ways, you may go somewhere else.” And this they call upholding American liberty? Surely, American history has been written to no purpose, so far as National Reformers are concerned. {AMS August 1886, p. 68.6}

{AMS August 1886, p. 69.1}

If we happen to differ with the National Reformers, they certainly differ with us to the same extent; then why should we leave the country any more than they? This is our country as much as it is theirs. We will not attempt to characterize the proposal of Mr. McCarrell as it deserves, but will simply quote a few words from the speech of Mr. Blaine in regard to a similar proposal by Lord Salisbury concerning the Irish: “Lord Salisbury gives the remedy. He says, if the Irish do not want to be governed by the British they should leave. But the Irish have been in Ireland quite as long as Lord Salisbury’s ancestors have been in England... Therefore we have to say that Lord Salisbury may be called impudent. We would not transgress courtesy if we called him insolent. We would not transgress truth of the called him brutal.” We can only add, We would not be uncharitable if we substituted “the National Reformers” for “Lord Salisbury,” and applied Mr. Blaine’s language to them. {AMS August 1886, p. 69.2}

Now we claim that these conscientious observers of the seventh day, have the same right to protection that the strict observers of Sunday have. The “American institution” of equal liberty for all, grants each party the right to worship on the day which they regard holy, and forbids either party to interfere with the worship of the other. It also guarantees to the non-religious the privilege of observing no day at all, but forbids him to disturb those who conscientiously rest. {AMS August 1886, p. 69.3}

We submit to any candid, unprejudice person that the liberty that is guaranteed by our Constitution as it now stands, is all that can be asked by any consistent follower of the golden rule; and that they who ask for a religious amendment to the Constitution, are seeking to overthrow the only distinctive institution which America has; and if all who are seeking to overthrow American institutions should be banished, the National Reformers should be the first to go. E. J. W. {AMS August 1886, p. 69.4}