**“A Substitute for the Church” American Sentinel 2, 3.**

E. J. Waggoner

The *Christian Statesman* of Dec. 16, 1886, after considering the manner in which the Labor Party in Philadelphia was captured by Socialists said:- {AMS March 1887, p. 18.1}

These proceedings, taken in connection with the utterances of Henry George and his supporters in the campaign, the intercession of the Knights of Labor in convention at Richmond for the condemned Anarchists at Chicago, the efforts which have been made to secure for them a new trial, and the stay of proceedings granted by the Supreme Court which reprieves them for five months, are ominous signs of the impending social struggle. They render more timely and significant too the religious declarations in the platforms of the Prohibition party, and the efforts which are to be made to secure such acknowledgments by all existing parties. The party which will make and adhere to a simple and hearty acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the actual ruler of nations, and of the supreme authority of his moral laws, will, by virtue of that very fact, become the leading party in the struggle which is even now upon us. There are multitudes of laboring men who will not stand on the Socialist platform and who will be powerfully attracted toward any party which declares for a fearless and uniform application of the law of God to civil affairs.” {AMS March 1887, p. 18.2}

We agree with the *Statesman* that these are ominous signs of the impending social struggle. We do not think that the danger to which this country is subject from the Socialistic element can be overestimated. But we cannot see how this danger is to be averted by the formation of a political party whose platform shall contain religious declarations. There is no condition of affairs which the Statesman, or any lover of order, may desire to see, which cannot be brought about by the simple influence of the gospel, if it can be brought about at all; that is to say, if the spread of Socialistic ideas is prevented at all, it must be through the gospel, which is directly opposed to Socialism. Just to the extent that the gospel is accepted, the spread of Socialism will be hindered. The *Statesman* admits this when it says, “There are multitudes of laboring men who will not stand on the Socialist platform and who will be powerfully attracted to any party that declares for the fearless and uniform application of the law of God to civil affairs.” {AMS March 1887, p. 18.3}

The acceptance of the gospel is necessarily an acceptance of the entire Bible, the moral law included, for the apostle Peter, speaking of the word of God, says: “This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Peter 1:25. The sole business of the church is to teach the gospel; therefore it is the church’s duty to declare for the “fearless and uniform application of the law of God,” not only to civil affairs but to every affair in life. Thus the Lord, speaking to the church though the prophet Isaiah said: “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Isaiah 58:1. The church was established for the express purpose of “holding forth the word of life” and teaching obedience to the law of God, at the same time that it announces pardon for sins already committed. If it does its duty it teaches men how to regulate their conduct toward one another, by announcing Christ’s summary of the second table of the decalogue: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” {AMS March 1887, p. 19.1}

The church is not only the body that is appointed to teach the application of the law of God to human affairs, but it is the only power to which this duty has been committed. Moreover, it is the best adapted for the carrying on of this work, because it addresses itself to the individual, and not to mankind as a whole. If it were possible to entirely convert men from Socialistic ideas, then the church, dealing as it does with individuals, would present the most feasible plan of work. For if each Socialist were converted, Socialism would be at an end. We do not wish to be understood as claiming that the church should be expected to convert all men, for the Bible expressly declares that but few will find the way leading to life. But we do say that as far as any progress is made in bringing men to the acceptance of the law of God, it must be made by the church. A political party with a religions platform would simply be trying to do the work which the church is set to do. The *Statesman* says that such a party would draw multitudes of laboring men who will not stand on the Socialist platform. If that be true, why are they not drawn to the church? The answer is simply because they do not care for the law of God, but for their own selfish aims. If therefore they were drawn to such a political party it would be because they could gain political preferment. {AMS March 1887, p. 19.2}

We should think that for professed Christians to announce that the work which should be done by the church can be done only by political parties would be a humiliating confession. When the church itself applies to the civil power for aid, it acknowledges that it has lost its own power; the spirit of the gospel has departed from it, and the salt has lost its savor. They may *seem* to get what they desire, namely, the peace of the millennium, but it will be only the shell with a blasted kernel inside. If the church has lost its power to convert men, of what used will a “religious” party be? “If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?” {AMS March 1887, p. 19.3}

E. J. W.

**“Ethics of Sunday Legislation” American Sentinel 2, 3.**

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In quite a number of the States there is at present considerable stir over the passage of Sunday laws. This is directly in the line of National Reform work, and is a danger to American liberty, of which the AMERICAN SENTINEL, as a watchful guardian, must give warning. There are very many people who are opposed to the work of so-called National Reform, who would heartily support a law enforcing Sunday observance, not perceiving that the very argument against National Reform in general is equally valid against this particular phase of that work. We purpose to note a few features of Sunday legislation, and how it will work injustice to a large class of citizens. {AMS March 1887, p. 21.1}

There are two grounds upon which Sunday legislation is. based: one the civil, and the other the religions; and the two are antagonistic, although both are often held by the same individual. On one side it is claimed that Sunday should be enforced, not as a religious institution, but as a civil holiday, and that Sunday laws are to be regarded as police regulations. Others plead for laws enforcing Sunday rest, on the ground that Sunday is the “Christian Sabbath.” But upon whichever ground Sunday legislation is urged, such legislation is entirely inconsistent with perfect civil and religious liberty. If it be urged that man’s physical nature requires rest on one day in seven, and that the Government should set apart Sunday as a civil holiday, and restrain people from working thereon, it comes directly in conflict with all usage in respect to holidays, and cannot be consistently sustained by sound reason. There are quite a number of days that are set apart as national holidays, yet on none of them are people forcibly restrained from labor if they choose to work. This very fact shows the absurdity of the claim that Sunday legislation is not religious legislation, for no advocate of Sunday laws would be content for a moment with a law placing the day on a level with other holidays. {AMS March 1887, p. 21.2}

Again, the absurdity of the idea of enforcing Sunday observance because of man’s physical need for rest is equally evident. For example: It is just as certain that man’s physical nature requires a certain amount of sleep in every twenty-four hours as it is that his physical nature requires rest one day in seven. It is an undeniable truth that thousands of people do not take regular rest, and that they suffer physically because of the lack of a proper amount of sleep. Now if it be granted that a State has a right to enforce Sunday observance because people need the physical rest, then it necessarily follows that the State has a right to enact that everybody shall take a given amount of rest in each twenty-four hours. And on that ground we might expect the Government to compel people to go to bed every night at ten o’clock, and to prescribe the hour when they should arise. It is certain that no one can maintain Sunday legislation from a civil standpoint, and it is equally certain that no one really has this in view. {AMS March 1887, p. 21.3}

It must be, then, that it is as the “Christian Sabbath” that the plea is made for enforced Sunday observance. But when it is put upon this ground, we have the State legislating on matters of religion, and thus stepping outside of its sphere. Indeed, Sunday legislation stands for union of Church and State. For if the State can legislate in behalf of one Christian institution, it may with equal propriety legislate in behalf of all of them. If it can enforce the observance of the “Christian Sabbath,” it has also a right to enforce Christian baptism. But the right to enforce any religious tenet depends upon the right to decide upon matters of faith, for before the State legislates in behalf of any practice, it must first decide that that practice is correct. Indeed, such decision is implied in the very act of passing the law. Therefore we say, if the State can enforce the observance of the Christian Sabbath, it may also enforce baptism, and may determine what Christian baptism is, whether sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. It may also with equal propriety enforce the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper on all within its jurisdiction, and can determine how it shall be celebrated, whether in one kind or in both. And this is union of Church and State, as much as has ever existed in any age or in any nation. So we say that all, no matter what their religious belief, who are opposed to the union of Church and State, must be opposed to the enactment of Sunday laws. {AMS March 1887, p. 21.4}

But whether the observance of Sunday be enforced from a civil or from a religious standpoint, it cannot fail to be unjust and oppressive to a large class of law-abiding citizens. We refer to those who conscientiously observe the seventh day of the week. We know that it is commonly urged that Sunday laws do not interfere with the rights of any Sabbatarian, because they leave him perfectly free to carry out his conscientious convictions by resting on the seventh day of the week. But if it is man’s religious *duty* to rest on one day in seven, which all advocates of Sunday laws allow, then it is also his religious *privilege* to labor on six days in seven. Now if a man conscientiously believes that the word of God demands that he shall rest upon the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, and the State compels him also to rest upon the first day of the week, it is certain that his religious privileges are interfered with. {AMS March 1887, p. 21.5}

Again, if rigid Sunday laws are enacted, and a man is punished for laboring on Sunday after having conscientiously kept Saturday, such punishment is nothing less than persecution for conscience’ sake. His punishment is really as much for his observance of the seventh day as it is for laboring on the first day. Thus: Necessity compels him to labor six days in the week for the support of his family; and the divine command certainly gives him the privilege of working six days, it it does not really command it. But his conscience imperatively forbids him to labor on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, therefore necessity and religion compel him to labor on the first day of the week. That is to say, his labor on the first day of the week is made necessary by his conscientious observance of the seventh day of the wee. So then if he is punished for his first day labor, he is equally punished for his seventh day rest; and so it becomes

clear that the enactment of Sunday laws, and the execution of penalties for the violation thereof, is simply persecution for conscience’ sake. {AMS March 1887, p. 22.6}

We are not now concerned as to whether Sunday is or is not the Christian Sabbath; in either case the argument is the same. Neither if we take, it for granted that Sunday is the rest-day enjoined by divine command, is there, as some claim, any analogy between the punishment by civil authority, of a man who quietly labors on that day, and the punishment of the polygamist, even allowing that the polygamist is conscientious in his practice; for polygamy is the violation of the seventh commandment, which is contained in the second table of the decalogue, defining the relations of men with one another, and is thus a proper subject for civil legislation. But the keeping of the Sabbath is enjoined by the fourth commandment, which is a part of the first table of the decalogue, defining man’s duty to God, and is not a proper matter for civil legislation. The polygamist and the adulterer, for a polygamist is an adulterer, sins not alone against God, but against society in general, and some person or persons in particular. Like the thief, he takes that which belongs to some one else, and to which he has no right. But the man who pursues his own lawful occupation on the first day of the week, interferes with no one’s rights or privileges. He deprives no conscientious observer of that day, of his Sabbath, even if he observes no day whatever; so long as he does not disturb the rest and worship of anyone else, he is answerable alone to God. {AMS March 1887, p. 22.1}

Again, Sunday legislation virtually places a premium upon crime. This may seem a bold and unwarranted statement, but we can easily show its truthfulness. I have before me the bill which it is purposed to have passed by the present California Legislature. It provides that every person that shall sell goods, keep open any store or other place of business, or shall sell or give away to be drunk any spirituous, vinous, malt, or other intoxicating liquors, on the first day of the week, or who shall engage in any riot, fighting, horse-racing, gambling, or other public sport, exorcises, or shows, or any person who shall keep open any place where such sports, exercises, or shows, are carried on, shall be deemed guilty of misdemeanor. It will be seen that gambling, rioting, fighting, and the selling of intoxicating liquor, are placed on a level with the keeping open of stores to sell goods. The sale of goods at proper times is not only legitimate, but it is absolutely necessary. It is wrong only when engaged in upon the day divinely set apart for rest. Now to pass a law forbidding the sale of intoxicating liquors upon Sunday, saying nothing about its sale upon other days, puts that business on a level with legitimate industry, and virtually says that the sale of intoxicating liquors is all right upon any day but Sunday. {AMS March 1887, p. 22.2}

As a matter of fact, liquor selling is an unmitigated evil; it does nobody any good, but does untold harm. The only one whom it enriches is the man who sells it. It is a drain upon all classes of citizens. The man who drinks spends his money without receiving an equivalent; his family is robbed of that which rightfully belongs to them; and the man who abstains entirely is taxed in order that the paupers, insane people, and criminals, that are made by the sale of intoxicating liquor may be provided for. And now for the State to enact a law enforcing the observance of the “Christian Sabbath,” and declaring that the carrying on of the business of liquor selling is a violation of the “Christian Sabbath,” and therefore punishable by a fine, is simply to place the infamous traffic on a level with the dry-goods or grocery business, and to say that it is all right to engage in it on any day but Sunday. {AMS March 1887, p. 22.3}

That this is putting a premium upon crime, may be made still more apparent. Suppose the State should enact a law to the effect that anyone who should steal or commit a murder upon the first day of the week, should be deemed guilty of felony and should be punished, everybody would cry out against such a law. They would say that stealing and murder are in themselves criminal, and that the perpetration of those crimes on the first day of the week does not add to the criminality of the act. They would justly claim that such legislation virtually made murder and theft legitimate acts if committed on any other day than Sunday, thus putting a premium upon crime. The case is the same with Sunday laws wherever they exist or are proposed. By specifying gambling, the selling of intoxicating liquor, etc., they virtually place such occupations in the list of legitimate employments when pursued on any other day. And so we say that Sunday legislation is not only contrary to religious liberty, but it is also against the interests of true morality. {AMS March 1887, p. 22.4}

Next month we purpose to take up this matter still further and demonstrate these propositions by actual facts. {AMS March 1887, p. 22.5}

E. J. W.