**“Jonathan Edwards’s Speech” American Sentinel 3, 11.**

E. J. Waggoner

[This speech was delivered at the National Convention of the National Reform Association, held in New York City, February 26, 27, 1873. It is part of the published proceedings of that convention, and, together with the other speeches, is circulated to this very day, as representative National Reform literature. Although extracts have previously been made from it in the Sentinel, we publish a large portion of it at the present time, in order that our readers may feel fully assured that there is necessity for just such work as the Sentinel is doing; and that in op-posing what is miscalled National Reform, we are opposing nothing but a scheme of wicked selfishness. The few comments that we make will be found in brackets. E.J.W.] {AMS November 1888, p. 84.1}

We want State and Religion-and we are going to have it. It shall be that so far as the affairs of State require Religion, it shall be revealed Religion, the Religion of Jesus Christ. The Christian oath and Christian morality shall have in this land “an undeniable legal basis.” We use the word Religion in its proper sense, as meaning a man’s personal relation of faith and obedience to God.. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.2}

[What is Christian morality? It is simple Christianity. As Mr. Edwards says, it is “a man’s personal relation of faith and obedience to God.” And this takes in not simply outward acts, but the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is what Mr. Edwards and the National Reform Association want to see placed on “an undeniable legal basis.” That is, the Christian religion and Christian morality shall be enforced by law. A man’s personal relation to God, in matters of faith and obedience, is to be interfered with by the law of the land. In reality, the National Reform Association proposes that no man shall have any direct, personal relation with God, but that he shall approach God only through the medium of the State, controlled by “the Church.” In other words, the State Church is to be to the individual in the place of God. And what will that be but another Papacy, or an exact copy of the present one? Nothing else in the world. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.3}

But it will be asked, “How will it be possible for the State to deal with Christian morality, since it has to do with the thoughts of the heart, and the faith which one holds? How can the laws take cognizance of a man’s thoughts and personal belief?” In the very same way that the Papacy did, in whose steps the National Reform Association is following, and after which it is modeled. By means of the inquisition the church forced the mass of people to believe just what it wanted them to believe. Whenever a man was suspected of heresy, he was dragged into the secret chamber, and was stretched upon the rack. In most cases that succeeded in making him an obedient child of the church. Yes, the church will have ample power to deal with heretics when it has its dogmas fixed on an “undeniable legal basis.” The rack, the thumbscrew, and the stake are wonderful promoters of “orthodoxy.” To say that the National Reform theocracy when formed would not follow the Papacy in this respect just as much as in the formation of a man-made theocracy, is to say that men are now made of different material from what they were three hundred years ago. Religious persecution will be the necessary result of the success of the National Reform Association.] {AMS November 1888, p. 84.4}

Now, we are warned that to engraft this doctrine upon the Constitution will be found oppressive; that it will infringe the rights of conscience; and we are told that there are atheists, deists, Jews, and Seventh-day Baptists who would be sufferers under it. I accept it as a compliment that we are called upon to consider objections of this sort, if there be any ground for them. We are the conscience party, the free conscience party. We are the very people to be held responsible if we trespass upon the conscience of others. And it will be found that we do not intend to do this, and that we do not do it in fact... {AMS November 1888, p. 84.5}

The atheist is a man who denies the being of a God and a future life. To him mind and matter are the same, and time is the be-all and the end-all of consciousness and of character. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.6}

The deist admits God, but denies that he has any such personal control over human affairs as we call providence, or that he ever manifests himself and his will in a revelation. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.7}

The Jew admits God, providence, and revelation, but rejects the entire scheme of gospel redemption by Jesus Christ as sheer imagination, or, worse, sheer imposture. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.8}

The Seventh-day Baptists believe in God and Christianity, and are conjoined with the other members of this class by the accident of differing with the mass of Christians upon the question of what precise day of the week shall be observed as holy. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.9}

These all are, for the occasion, and so far as our amendment is concerned, one class. They use the same arguments and the same tactics against us. They must be counted together, which we very much regret, but which we cannot help. The first named is the leader in the discontent and in the outcry-the atheist, to whom nothing is higher or more sacred than man, and nothing survives the tomb. It is his class. Its labors are almost wholly in his interest; its success would be almost wholly his triumph. The rest are adjuncts to him in this contest. They must be named from him; they must be treated as, for this question, one party. Now look at it-look at this controversy. The question is not between opinions that differ, but opinions that are opposite, that are contradictory, that mutually exclude eachother. It is between Christianity and infidelity. It is between theism and atheism, between the acknowledgement of a God and the denial that there is any God. We cannot too seriously ponder this, since the rights of conscience are held to be involved. The atheist does not believe in the soul; he denies that there is any such thing as conscience; yet he comes to those who confess both to insist upon his rights of conscience! I have a few plain, earnest words about all this. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.10}

I do not believe that every man is an atheist who says he is one. I distinguish between minds that doubt or deny the existence of God, and those who doubt or deny the sufficiency of the logic usually employed to prove it. And I love to think genuine atheism impossible to the human soul. But now bring forward your atheist, your man who confesses to neither God, angel, nor Spirit, your man who believes in all unbelief, and in nothing else, and I know at once what his position is. His religion is irreligion; his morals are only natural morals-the morals of the body, the animal in man, which, in his view, is all there is of man. His speculations do not rove or float among the dreams of philosophy, but they run into the concrete forms of politics-into the plat-forms of parties and the enactments of Legislatures. Atheism is always political. What are the rights of the atheist? I would tolerate him as I would tolerate a poor lunatic, for in my view his mind is scarcely sound. So long as he does not rave, so long as he is not dangerous, I would tolerate him. I would tolerate him as I would a conspirator. The atheist is a dangerous man. He not only rejects and opposes my faith, but he aims to overturn every institution, and to dissolve every relationship growing out of my faith. He would destroy the very foundations, pull down everything, and build up nothing. But he shall be tolerated. He may live and go free, hold his lands and enjoy his home, he may even vote, but for any higher, more advanced citizen-ship, he is, as I hold, utterly disqualified. And we are aiming, not to increase, but to render definite his disqualification; to give to our Government and all our free institutions a guarantee that he shall never have control over them. {AMS November 1888, p. 84.11}

[In the above declarations, we have religious persecution defended as plainly as words can do so. Notice: The man who believes in God, the Bible, and the gospel of Jesus Christ, but who differs with the mass of professed Christians solely upon the question of what precise day of the week shall be observed as the Sabbath, is declared to be an atheist. The man who observes the seventh day of the week, instead of the first, is declared by this representative of the National Reform Association, to be an atheist, although he implicitly believes in God and the Bible, and trusts in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He conscientiously observes the seventh day as a religious duty, and does it as an act of worship to the God who created “the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is,” yet he is to be treated as an atheist. And what sort of treatment is the atheist to receive? He is to be treated as a conspirator or a lunatic. That is, he is to be kept underground, and shut up. If he has the courage of his convictions, and attempts to teach others what he believes to be a matter of solemn obligation to God, he is “raving,” and must be shut up as a dangerous man. One would suppose that Ignatius Loyola must be the patron saint of the National Reform Association. Whatever plea its leaders make, they invariably run into religious persecution. That is the logic of National religion.] {AMS November 1888, p. 84.12}

Yes, to this extent I will tolerate the atheist, but no more. Why should I? The atheist does not tolerate me. He does not smile either in pity or in scorn upon my faith. He hates my faith, and he hates me for my faith. He is bent on exterminating me and my faith altogether. “Crush the wretch!” said Voltaire of my Saviour and his cause. And this is still the atheist’s motto and his aim. I have received letters and tracts which show this very clearly. Were I to read to you the shocking blasphemies, the words of hate and of murder, which they contain, you would shudder in horror. He means to make all these words good among us as soon as he can. And I am asked to accord rights of conscience to a man who says to me, “Come, let me show you how I can use the knife with which I purpose one day to cut your throat.” “Come, let me explain to you the force of some nitroglycerine which I have prepared to blow you up!” I can be as calm and as willing in the one case as in the other. And I am asked to tolerate the atheist’s creed under peril of violating the rights of conscience. And this tolerating of atheism means, I suppose, that our Constitution and laws shall be so framed as to imply that there is as much of truth, probability, and good in atheism as in Christianity! Tolerate atheism in this sense, sir? Never, never! We know what atheism is, and what atheism does. We know what it builds, and how it operates with its “Natural Morals,” its “Death an Eternal Sleep,” its “Liberty. Equality, Fraternity.” Twice, at least, in the world’s history has it shown what it is capable of doing. Twice across the plains of gay and sunny France has it driven its car of progress, and the whole track has been rapine, and blasphemy, and blood. {AMS November 1888, p. 85.1}

[If this is a true specimen of National Reform Christianity, may we be delivered from it. That it is a fair representation, cannot be denied. Few, however, are so incautious as Mr. Edwards, in revealing the true inwardness of the scheme. The argument is, “The atheist does not tolerate me, therefore I will not tolerate him. He does not love me, therefore I will not love him.” Christ says: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.” Matthew 5:44, 45. But the National Reform idea of Christianity is just the opposite of this. It is to hate those that hate you, and to set them an example in hating, and to give them cause for hatred by hating them first. Therefore it is as plain as anything can be that National Reform religion is antichristian. How could it be anything else? It is modeled after the Papacy, and the Papacy is antichrist. While there are many good people who are indifferent now, or are even in the ranks of the National Reformers, because of imperfect knowledge, the time will soon come when no man can be a Christian-that is, a real follower of Christ-unless he actively opposes the work of what is called National Reform. National Reformers accuse us of joining hands with infidels in opposing their work. We oppose it because we are Christians, and because we want the pure religion of Christ to have free course]. {AMS November 1888, p. 85.2}

I can tolerate difference and discussion; I can tolerate heresy and false religion; I can debate the use of the Bible in our common schools, the taxation of church property, the propriety of chaplaincies and the like, but there are some questions past debate. Tolerate atheism, sir? There is nothing out of hell that I would not tolerate as soon. The atheist may live, as I said, but, God helping us, the taint of his destructive creed shall not defile any of the civil institutions of all this fair land! Let us repeat, atheism and Christianity are contradictory terms. They are incompatible systems. They cannot dwell together on the same continent. And let us note that this atheism among us is busy. It is aggressive, with societies, with organs, with agents, with their papers and their preachers. But recently they have imported a man, the papers say, at a salary of $15,000, to go through the land lecturing and organizing, telling us how to Germanize and un-Americanize our country. Their organizations raise money, issue publications, form public sentiment, and secure votes against our Sunday laws, our blasphemy laws, our temperance laws, our cruelty laws, our laws for social purity and home sanctity, our oath-sealed guaranty for truth and fidelity, and to bring us all down to mere natural morals. We, too, must organize and make effort. “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge!” {AMS November 1888, p. 85.3}

Another anticipated difficulty which is urged against us is to determine what Bible to recognize. This difficulty is but imaginary. There is but one Bible. What is called the Catholic or the Protestant Bible is but the Catholic or the Protestant version of the one original Bible. And with every strong conviction that the Protestant version is the better one, I am free to say that any Bible is better than no Bible. {AMS November 1888, p. 85.4}

And yet another objection is that the laws of Moses will have to be re-enacted and enforced among us, and that these laws are not at all fitted to our times, our freedom, our civilization. I confess that I am not at all afraid of Moses. I find among his institutions the germs of our own glorious republic, and the provisions and the spirit of our best laws. But the objectors do not seem to have read the Bible enough to see what a self-interpreting book it is. It records a prophecy, and afterwards records its fulfillment. It records a promise, and afterwards states when and how the bestowment was effected. It records a ritual, and afterwards records what abrogated it and took its place. It gives of itself the clue to distinguish what is of enduring value and moral obligation from what is local, typical, transitory. Now, if there be anything in the laws of Moses which the coming of Christ and the subsequent overthrow of Judaism did not abrogate, let them be pointed out-there cannot be many of them-and we are prepared to accept them and have them re-enacted. Thus much as to objections and objectors... {AMS November 1888, p. 85.5}

[Nothing more is needed than to ask the reader to stop a minute and consider the un-paralleled presumption of this statement. Could anything more clearly show the spirit of the Papacy? The apostle Paul described the Pope as “that man of sin,” “the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. And what position does the National Reform Association occupy? It proposes to occupy the very same position. If there is anything in the Old Testament that has not passed away,-that was not transitory and local, and that has not expired by statute of limitation,-they propose to re-enact it when they set up their theocracy. That is to say, that none of the laws of God will be valid until they have set to them the seal of their approval. What more could they say to show that by their proposed scheme of government they oppose and exalt themselves above all that is called God?] {AMS November 1888, p. 85.6}

It will not do to say, We had better leave things as they now are. Things are in a state of change, of transition; they will not stay as they now are. It will not do to say, Let us trust the voice of a Christian people for the perpetuity of Christian principles and usages among us; for, in despite of their voice and their influence, the moulding, over-riding force of our national Constitution has more and more eliminated the notion of God and of moral character from our recent State Constitutions and from the decisions of our courts. If we do not carry this measure, we take the side of atheism. You are called upon, fellow-citizens, to make your election between Christianity and atheism. “Under which king, Bezonian?” You cannot be too soon in making your response. I cannot doubt what your decision will be. {AMS November 1888, p. 85.7}

[We would that we could be assured that the great majority of the people would decide against such a scheme of iniquity as this. But we have no such hope. Our greatest hope and desire are to arouse those who still have the spirit of true Protestantism in their hearts. It matters not how many fine speeches National Reformers may make, nor what good professions they may make, it is by such utterances as those that we have been considering that the thing must be judged. To all who read this, we say, You are called upon to make your decision between the religion of Christ and that of antichrist. Which will you choose? You cannot be too soon in making your response.] {AMS November 1888, p. 85.8}

**“Back Page” American Sentinel 3, 11.**

E. J. Waggoner

The *Christian Statesman* says:- {AMS November 1888, p. 88.1}

“The American Sentinel is gradually defining its position, and American Christians will know exactly where to find it.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.2}

Yes, we intend that “American Christians” and everybody else shall know exactly where to find the Sentinel. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.3}

National Reform petitions in favor of Senator Blair’s constitutional amendment, are being circulated for signatures. They will be presented to you before long, and when they are, you want to bear in mind that that amendment provides for the establishment of a National religion, and a consequent religious despotism. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.4}

The Executive Committee of the National Reform Association held a meeting in Pittsburgh September 14; and one of its recommendations is this:- {AMS November 1888, p. 88.5}

“That Secretary Weir be appointed especially to press the cause of National Reform upon the attention of political parties, during the next four years, and to enlist, as far as possible, in this endeavor the influence of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.6}

In 1596, when James VI. of Scotland (I. of England), was attempting to force Episcopacy upon Scotland, a number of the Scottish clergy had an interview with the king, and when his Majesty accused them of holding seditious meetings (for so he characterized the meetings of the church for its own purposes), and of alarming the country without reason, one of them, Andrew Melville, thus answered him:- {AMS November 1888, p. 88.7}

“Sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again I must tell you, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is King James, the head of this commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member... We will yield to you your place, and give you all due obedience; but again I say, You are not the head of the church; you cannot give us that eternal life which we seek for even in this world, and you cannot deprive us of it. Permit us then freely to meet in the name of Christ, and to attend to the interests of that church of which you are the chief member.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.8}

Which was equivalent to saying that they recognized the king’s authority in civil matters, but that in matters of religion they acknowledged no sovereign but Christ. And that is just what the Lord himself taught when he said: “Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” It is to be regretted that all men have not as clear views of the true relation of Church and State as were expressed by Andrew Melville to King James. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.9}

In the *Christian Statesman* of September 6, M.A. Gault says:- {AMS November 1888, p. 88.10}

“I had a long talk with Hon. T. C. Richmond, leader of the Prohibition party in Wisconsin. He is a popular speaker and a logical reasoner. He is almost constantly in the field addressing large audiences, endeavoring to convince the people that the Prohibition party should drop every other issue but Prohibition.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.11}

Mr. Richmond’s idea is correct. If Prohibition is what the Prohibitionists want, why are they not willing to work for that alone? If Prohibition is what they want, why are they not willing to secure the help of every element that can be enlisted in favor of Prohibition? The very fact that the so-called Prohibition party will not work for Prohibition alone, is proof that the religio-political managers of that party are only using the Prohibition issue as a stepping-stone to the establishment of their power, and the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical power. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.12}

A short time ago a preacher in Selma, Cal., delivered a sermon on Temperance, Prohibition, etc., in which he said:- {AMS November 1888, p. 88.13}

“We have laws to punish the man who steals our property; but we have no law to prevent people from working on Sunday. It is right that the thief be punished; but I have more sympathy for that man than I have for him that works on that day.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.14}

This is directly in the line of things promised by the Prohibition party. Whenever any party sets itself up as the protector of the Lord, and legislates upon things pertaining to God, then offenses, or supposed offenses, against God take precedence of all things else. Heresy becomes the highest crime. Then the thief will be let run, and receive sympathy, while the man who quietly works at his lawful and honest calling is prosecuted, fined, and imprisoned. And Senator Blair’s proposed amendment and Sunday law open the way for such men as this to carry their views into effect, by the civil power. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.15}

The *Tribune* of this city thinks that we are needlessly alarmed about the Blair Sunday Bill. The *Tribune* evidently does not understand the situation. The bill in question may fail to become a law, but that does not prove by any means that the serious consideration of such a measure is not a menace to religious liberty in this country. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.16}

The systematic and persistent efforts which are being made by hundreds of thousands of people banded together in various churches, associations, and societies throughout our land to secure religious legislation in this country, should arouse every liberty-loving citizen to a sense of danger, and set him to work to enlighten others in regard to National Reform designs and practices. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.17}

Senator Blair may be, as the Tribune intimates, a harmless “crank,” but there are many thousands afflicted with the same religious-legislation mania, and there is a dangerous method in their madness. We cannot afford to settle down in fancied security when such measures are being seriously proposed in the Senate of the United States. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.18}

The *California Christian Advocate* some weeks ago gravely informed its readers that “Congressman Plumb, of Kansas, has offered an amendment to the Sunday Civil Bill providing an appropriation for the building of a public drinking fountain in the Capitol.” Of course the bill to which the Kansas Congressman has offered an amendment is the Sundry Civil Appropriation Bill; but in these days of proposed Sunday legislation it is perhaps not strange that the friends of Sunday laws fail to discern what to them seems so small a difference. The time may come, however, when even the Sundry Appropriation Bill may contain clauses relative to Sunday, and then it will indeed be literally the “Sunday Civil Bill.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.19}

Not long since a Prohibition Convention was held in Visalia, Cal. The preachers were very active and enthusiastic in it; and they succeeded in arousing a good deal of enthusiasm in the body of the convention. After the convention had dispersed the following question was put to two of the preachers: “I suppose the object of this is, in the long run, to work it into a Sunday law?” And the answer was this:- {AMS November 1888, p. 88.20}

“That is what it is; but we are not saying anything about that now, till we get the thing in running order-then we will bring that in.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.21}

That is precisely the scheme which the preachers are working through the third-party-Prohibition movement, and that is just the way that they are working it. Under cover of Prohibition and temperance legislation they are working for the establishment of a religious despotism. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.22}

In a speech in Boston on “The Prospects of Catholicism in the United States,” Dr. Daniel Dorchester (Methodist) said:- {AMS November 1888, p. 88.23}

“Some people have been very anxious lest the Pope should come to this country. But I say, Let him come; it is the best thing that could be done. And I really think I would attempt to raise money to buy 10,000 acres of the best land in the United States, and make him a present of it for the seat of his Government. But when he comes here, he will be a great deal less of a man than he is at Rome.” {AMS November 1888, p. 88.24}

No, he would not. If the Pope should come here, with the politicians, and the Protestant ecclesiastics ambitious of civil power, he would soon be the head of the Nation in all matters of advice and arbitration-he would virtually soon be the dictator. See the influence of Cardinal Gibbons. But if it is thus with only a Cardinal, what would it not be with the Pope? No, indeed; let not the Pope ever set foot in the United States. {AMS November 1888, p. 88.25}