**“Relation of Civil Governments to the Moral Law” American Sentinel 4, 28.**

E. J. Waggoner

Among right-minded persons there can be no question as to the right of earthly governments to exist. There is a class of persons known as “Anarchists,” who deny that there is any necessity for government or law, or that one person has a right for exercise authority over another; but these persons, true to their name, believe in nothing; had they the power, they would cast God down from the throne of the universe as readily as they would the earth monarch from his limited dominion. With such persons we have nothing to do. It is useless to argue with those who will not admit self-evident propositions. The only argument that that can effectually reach them is the strong arm of the law, which they hate. Our argument shall be addressed to those who acknowledge God as the Creator and the supreme Ruler of the universe, and the Bible as the complete and perfect revelation of his will concerning his creatures on this earth. With such, the declaration of the prophet, that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Daniel 4:25), and the statement of the apostle, that “the powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1), together with many other Scripture references to earthly governments, are sufficient evidence that nations have a right to exist. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.1}

Admitting that earthly governments are in the divine order of things, the next question is, For what purpose? The word itself indicates the answer: Governments exist for the purpose of governing, or, in other words, for the purpose of enforcing laws by which justice and harmony may be maintained. The apostle Peter says that governments are sent by the Lord “for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.” 1 Peter 2:13, 14. Paul says also that the ruler if God’s minister to execute wrath upon them that do evil. Romans 13:4. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.2}

The next step in the investigation would naturally be to find out what laws earthly rulers are to execute. This is plainly indicated in the text first referred to. If the ruler is a minister of God, then the laws against which he is to execute *wrath*, need be such laws as God can approve-they must be in perfect harmony with the laws of God. Indeed, it could not be otherwise; for since God’s law is *perfect* (Psalm 19:7), covering in its range every act and thought (see Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 5:20-22, 27, 28), even, human law must be embraced with its limits. No one can dissent from this proposition. It is one of the fundamental principles of human law, as will be seen by the following extract from Blackstone’s commentaries:— {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.3}

“Upon these two foundations, the law of nature and the law of revelation, depend all human laws; that is to say, that no human laws should be suffered to contradict these. There are, it is true, a great number of indifferent points in which both the divine law and the natural leave a man at his own liberty, but which are found necessary, for the benefit of society, to be restrained within certain limits. And beside it is that human laws have their greatest force and efficacy, for with regard for such points as are not indifferent, human laws are only declaratory of, and act in subordination to the former. To instance in the case of murder: This is expressly forbidden by the divine, and demonstrably by the natural law; and from these prohibitions arises the true unlawfulness of this crime. These human laws that assess a punishment to it, do not at all increase its guilt, or superadd any fresh obligation, *in fora conscientia* [in the court of conscience], to abstain from its perpetration. Nay, if any human law should allow or enjoin as to commit it, we are bound to transgress that human law, or else we must offend both the natural and the divine.”—*Blackstone, vol. 1, p. 36.* {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.4}

The State, then, according to both sacred and secular testimony, has no power to contravene the law of God, it cannot declare an act to be right or wrong unless God’s law so declares it, and in that case the innocence or guilt arising from the performance of the act is due solely to the enactments of God’s moral law, and not to the human enactment, the latter being subordinate to the former. The indifferent points, in which, as Blackstone says, human laws have their only inherent force, are such as regulate commerce, the tariff upon imported goods, etc. These are simply matters of convenience or expediency. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.5}

These questions being settled, the last and most important one is this: How far in morals have human laws jurisdiction? or, For how much of the violation of the moral law has God ordained that earthly rulers shall be his ministers to execute wrath? The Bible, which settles every important question concerning man’s duty, must also divide this. We shall find the answer in the thirteenth chapter of Romans, a portion of which must be briefly examined:— {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.6}

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good.” Romans 13:1-4. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.7}

The “high powers” do not include the *highest* power. While every soul is to be subject to earthly powers, some are absolved from allegiance to God. The service of the two will not be incompatible, so long as the earthly powers fulfill the object for which they are ordained, viz., to act as ministers for *good*. When they forget this, their subjects are bound to follow the example of the apostles under similar circumstances, and say, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Acts 2:28. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.8}

The verses above quoted from the thirteenth of Romans show plainly that earthly governments alone are the subject of consideration in that chapter. The following verses show, with equal clearness, the extent of their jurisdiction:— {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.9}

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:8-10. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 218.10}

“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law,” and “love is the fulfilling of the law.” What law?—Why, the law concerning which earthly rulers are the ministers. The law of God is summed up in the two great commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” and, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” See Matthew 22:36-40. The second great commandment, defining our duty to our fellow-men, is expanded into the last six precepts of the decalogue, showing to what law he refers when he says, “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” To make this still *more* emphatic, he closes his enumeration of the commandments composing the last table of the decalogue, with the statement that “love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is *the fulfilling* of the law.” Now since the apostle is speaking only of earthly governments, and the duty of their subjects, we know that he who does no ill to his neighbor—loves his neighbor as himself—has fulfilled all the law of which these earthly governments are empowered to take notice. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 219.1}

Thus it is seen that Paul’s argument concerning the office of civil government is confined to the last six commandments of the decalogue. But let it not be supposed that human governments can recognize all violations of even these last six commandments. Earthly governments are solely for the purpose of securing to their subjects mutual rights. So long as a man does no ill to his neighbor, the law cannot molest him. But any violation of the law of God affects the individual himself first of all. For example: Christ said that the seventh commandment may be violated by a single lustful look and evil desire; but such look and desire do not injure anyone except the individual indulging in them; it is only when they result in the commission of the open act of adultery, thus injuring others besides the adulterer himself, that human governments can interfere. To God alone belongs the power to punish sins of the mind. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 219.2}

Of the sixth commandment we are told that whosoever hates another has violated it; but the State cannot prevent a man from hating another, nor take any notice of hatred until it culminates in open crime. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 219.3}

There are innumerable ways in which the fifth commandment may be violated, for which the civil government has neither the right nor the power to punish. Only in extreme cases can the State interfere. A man may be covetous, and yet he is not liable to punishment until his covetousness results in open theft or swindling. Yet before the *act* is accomplished, of which the State can take notice, a man’s covetousness or lying or hatred may work great annoyance to his neighbors. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 219.4}

We see, then, how imperfect are human governments even within the sphere allotted to them. God alone has the power to read the heart, and he alone has the right to “bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” With matters of purely a religious nature-those which rest solely upon our relation to God, and not to our neighbor-human governments have no right to interfere. Concerning them, each individual is answerable to God alone. {AMS August 7, 1889, p. 219.5}

**“An Unchristian Union” American Sentinel 4, 29.**

E. J. Waggoner

At the State Convention of the Vermont Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, something over a year ago, the 170 delegates adopted by unanimous vote, {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.1}

“*Resolved*, That we believe Christ, as the author and head of government, should be recognized in all political platforms, and by all societies, and we will rejoice to see the day when a political party distinctly gives such recognition.” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.2}

Miss Willard is reported as having said concerning this resolution, “There is not a W. C. T. U. in the land that will not echo this.” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.3}

This is sufficient of itself to settle the question as to whether or not the W. C. T. U. is an ally to the National Reform Association. But it was not especially for the purpose of commenting on this resolution that we quoted it, but to place before our readers some correspondence which took place in regard to it, and which, though old, will doubtless be new to a great majority of the readers of the AMERICAN SENTINEL, and will be of interest, as the principles are ever the same. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.4}

Shortly after the passage of this resolution, Mrs. Lucinda B. Chandler addressed an open letter to Miss Willard, which was deemed of sufficient value by the latter to merit what she termed “a reply.” After a brief introduction Mrs. Chandler proceeds as follows:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.5}

“It is impossible for me to understand the record of the teaching of Jesus so as to claim him as ‘the author and head of government.’ He emphatically declared that his kingdom was not of this world. Jesus of Nazareth neither established ecclesiastical nor civil government. He founded neither church nor State. The great burden of his teaching was to pronounce the relation of humanity to the Father as one of spirit, and the only worship he enjoined was to worship in spirit and in truth. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.6}

“How much would this true worship and love of the Spirit be promoted by grafting upon political platforms the name of Christ as ‘the author and head of government.’ {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.7}

“With your fertile imagination I beg you to forecast the effect upon the native honesty and integrity of office-seekers and political partisans, of making the condition of a place in office and political power a religious test, and the subscribing to a claim that Jesus Christ is ‘the author and head’ of our national affairs. Have we not already enough of lying and hypocrisy in our land? Have we not enough of centralizing power already oppressing the people in mammom-bred monopoly? Shall we have added a religious test to the sycophancy, and hypocritical pretense?” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.8}

It would seem as though this should commend itself to everybody as just criticism. It is in-comprehensible how any one with any knowledge of American politics, or with any knowledge of human nature, should think that politics will be purified and human nature elevated by a political party having as the chief plank in its platform the recognition of Christ as “author and head of government.” When we see how ready men are to profess anything, in order that they may advance their own interests; when the history of the world contains scarcely anything else than the record of the time-serving policy of men, of how men have sold their influence and their honor and everything, to gain popularity and power; how men have professed one religion to-day and another to-morrow, according as one or the other had the greatest hold upon the masses of the people—it is as clear as noon-day that if a political party should base its platform chiefly on the recognition of Christ as “author and head of government” it would only make hypocritical followers of Christ. Just as soon as it should by any means,—and it could not do it by Christian methods,—begin to gain control of affairs, all the baser element, all those who intend to feed at the public crib at any cost, would turn and support it; and men who are gross and profane and licentious in private, if not in public, would shout themselves hoarse for Christ and his kingdom. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.9}

Again we quote:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.10}

“Religious tests as qualification for civic service would not develop a spirit of truth. Religious tests and a formal recognition of the name of God or Christ would inevitably become the fettering gyves of an assumptive hierarchy. The Protestant idea and principle having abnegated itself by adopting the method of hierarchial authority, would be swept into the abyss where liberty had already been cast, wounded unto death. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.11}

“No, no, my much-respected sister, I must hope that your more matured consideration will lead you to a different conclusion and determination. I cannot believe you wish religious liberty overthrown. I cannot think you would welcome the reign of hypocrisy and cant as an agency of political power. To enforce outward conduct by offering political preference would not advance either the spirit of truth or of love.” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.12}

We quote again:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.13}

“Righteousness, justice, truth, and above all ‘love which vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up,’ cannot be actualized in peoples or nations through legislative enactment.” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.14}

With this last paragraph everybody ought to agree. It is self-evident. Love is not a thing that can be forced. Who is there so foolish as to think that one person can be compelled to love another? Who is there that would think of using physical force to get a child to love its teacher? and yet the W. C. T. U. and other National Reform bodies think to promote love for Christ and his truth by legal enactments! The statement of their desire should be sufficient to show the folly of it. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.15}

The letter proceeds as follows:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.16}

“It is earnestly to be hoped that the W. C. T. U. will not lend its influence to any proposed political measures to destroy our constitutional liberties, religious or civil, but that they will continue to work diligently on the lines of education, toward a higher physiological, social, and moral standard of life on the comprehensive principle of temperance.” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.17}

We heartily second this wish. With the legitimate work of this W. C. T. U. as we have always been in sympathy. If they would ... they begun, to labor for the advancement of temperance by moral and intellectual *thought* they would never have a word of criticism from us. We heartily support them in their work to educate the children and all others in the principles of health and temperance and morality; but we cannot go with them when they depart from this reasonable and just method of work,—the only method which can accomplish any real results,—and adopt the unreasonable and unjust and wicked method of attempting to compel men to be Christlike. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.18}

We do not see how anyone can answer the following paragraph of the open letter to Miss Willard, except by endorsing it:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.19}

“Jesus said to Zebedee’s sons: ‘Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not he so among you. Whosoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant.’ The real followers of Christ will serve and minister unto humanity, and not seek to establish political power by means of religious test, even of the name of Christ.” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.20}

The following also is worthy of careful consideration:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.21}

“If the church under the constitutional freedom secured to it cannot leaven the people with a love of justice, and make itself a power against political corruption by its higher life, and the spirit of truth in its membership, it would surely fail of accomplishing it by platform dogmas or constitutional amendments.” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.22}

This last paragraph strikes at the very root of the matter, and shows that such a course as is marked out by the National Reformers is derogatory to the Christian religion. It virtually says there is no power in the Spirit of Christ, and that God, working through his own divinely appointed ways, cannot accomplish the result that he designed; that if men work according to the rules he has laid down they will fail, and that therefore they must inaugurate a system of their own. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.23}

Further than this, it can be shown that a political party with such a platform as is desired by the W. C. T. U. can succeed only by stultifying itself. It can come to power only by going directly contrary to all the principles of Christ and his kingdom, which they profess to wish to establish. Thus, political parties have influence according to the number of votes that they can control. These alone count. Now why is there call for such a party as the W. C. T. U. desire to see? Why do they wish it? Simply because existing parties are corrupt. And why are existing parties corrupt? Because the men who control them are corrupt; and not only are those who control them corrupt, but the pen they control are corrupt. In other words, politics is corrupt because the good men, the Christian men, and the men of high moral principle in the government are in the minority. They are outvoted by those who have no principle but selfish policy. Now how is this reform party to secure the controlling influence? Only by meeting these corrupt elements on their own ground, by opposing policy to policy, and by wire-pulling and underhanded means, such as are now employed; and then if they ever get into power, what will constitute their strength? Simply the number of votes they can secure to back their principles? And from what ranks will these voters have been secured?—from the ranks of the existing corrupt parties, from professional politicians who will have taken their stand because they have been led to think that there is profit in it; and as they will have a party professing allegiance to Christ, but made up of the very same men who composed and controlled the old parties, and holding the very same principles; and, worse than all, these men will think themselves good Christians because they belong to the “Christian party.” We say that all good Christians ought to pray to be delivered from complicity with any such party as this. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 226.24}

We say nothing concerning anyone’s personal Christianity, but we are sure that no one who is really and intelligently Christian can ever favor any such scheme. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.1}

But how did Miss Willard reply to the letter from which we have quoted these strong, sensible paragraphs? She acknowledged the whole point in the questions so pertinently addressed to her, and simply reiterated her declaration in favor of a national Christianity. Here is a specimen:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.2}

“Can the heart of God beat anywhere more potently than in a party and a platform that allies itself to God as revealed in that Christ spirit which knows neither foreign nor native, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but lifts humanity to one equal level of opportunity and hope?” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.3}

It is indeed true that in Christ there is neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, and all are one; but does Miss Willard expect this state of things to be brought about by political action? Every Christian knows, both from observation and experience, that there is nothing but the personal work of the Spirit of Christ in the heart that can break down distinctions of race and personal peculiarities and preferences, so that different peoples may unite as one. But can party platforms control the Spirit of Christ and bring it into the hearts of men. The fact that written creeds do not make Christians is almost universally recognized; and what would a political party with a platform recognizing Christ be but a creed; and how can such a creed have any more effect in transforming the life and character than a creed which men may receive or reject voluntarily? {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.4}

There is indeed a party whose platform and all who compose it should be allied together by a tie that would break down distinctions of nationality and personal peculiarity, and that party is the church. Those only who are Christians can unite in the most perfect fellowship, but those who are Christians are members of this church, which is His body. It follows therefore that when Miss Willard desires a party that shall have this for its object she simply desires a political church, in other words, a union of Church and State. Of course, the object will fail of being achieved, and she will have simply a form, and such a church will not be the church of Christ. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.5}

Here is Miss Willard’s idea of recognizing Christ. She says:— {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.6}

“Christ is to-day the great world force for righteousness, for gentleness, for purity; and I believe with all my heart the world can in no other way do itself so great a favor as by making much of his mission. He is so high as to be seen from everywhere; to whom else can the nations rally with such unanimity. He is so vast as to encompass us all in his plan and his record; shall we not let him gather us as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings? He is so universal as to be claimed by all, from Catholics to Spiritualists, and even agnostics and atheists say with Pilate, ‘I find no fault in the man.’ Can we not all then consent to be claimed by him as loyal, loving followers?” {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.7}

We are amazed that a woman of so much culture and presumably Christian experience as Miss Willard, can be so blinded as to think that a union of Catholics, Spiritualists, agnostics, and atheists, together with evangelical churches, upon a platform recognizing Christ, can be anything more than the most hollow and wicked sham. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.8}

Here the reader may see that all we have charged upon the movement is just. There will be no Christianity in it whatever. He who says that there will be real Christianity in the union, must say that infidels, agnostics, and atheists are real Christians. We believe that these men can be good citizens, but we are certain that they are not Christians. It needs no argument to show that a man who denies Christ is not a Christian. If it is true, as Miss Willard says, that all the Christian Unions in the United States are in favor of this thing, and are working for it, it is true the National W. C. T. U. is working itself into a position where it will be not a Christian Union, but an un-Christian union. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.9}

We do not know that we need to quote any more from this letter. It shows that the National Reform party, of which Miss Willard stands as the best representative, is visionary in the extreme. We are willing to grant that they desire a better state of things than now exists. They see that there is wickedness and corruption, and they desire to see a reversed state; but, they have dreamed an impossible thing. Their desires may be laudable, but their methods of work do not indicate a knowledge either of human nature or of the gospel of Christ. {AMS August 14, 1889, p. 227.10}

E. J. W.