**“Sunday Prohibition” American Sentinel 4, 31.**

E. J. Waggoner

In the SENTINEL of May 1, 1889, we referred to a bill passed by the Tennessee Legislature, making it a misdemeanor to sell wine, ale, or beer on Sunday. In commenting upon this we stated that the bill makes it a righteous act to sell those articles on the other six days of the week. To this statement exception has been taken. A gentleman who writes that he is friendly to the work of the SENTINEL, says that he thinks it is wrong to sell intoxicating drinks at any time; but believes that if the traffic cannot be wholly suppressed, it is right to suppress it partially. We will state in brief our position, and explain the statement that we made. {AMS September 11, 1889, p. 261.1}

We believe that the liquor traffic is entirely wrong. We are also in favor of suppressing it to any extent that can be done, and we do not decry a measure that will actually diminish the sale of liquor, for the simple reason that it is not total suppression. We believe that even less than half a loaf is better than no bread, but we have yet to see any evidence that the closing of Sunday saloons diminishes the amount of liquor drank. But even if this could be shown, it would not at all militate against our comment on the bill passed by the Tennessee Legislature. Our comment had reference not so much to the closing of saloons on Sunday, as to the way in which the matter was put. It was stated that selling not mean that it is not a misdemeanor to sell it on other days, it does not mean anything. That it does mean to convey the idea that it is net a misdemeanor to sell it on other days, is shown by the fact that there is no penalty attached to the selling of it on other days of the week, whereas there would be a penalty if it were considered a misdemeanor. But a misdemeanor is misbehavior, wrong-doing; therefore to specify Sunday as the day on which it shall be considered a misdemeanor to sell liquor is virtually the same as saying that there is nothing wrong in it on other days of the week. {AMS September 11, 1889, p. 261.2}

We do not see how anyone can controvert this view, and so we repeat, as we have often said, that the great objection we have to so-called Sunday legislation is that it tends to lower the standard of what temperance really is, and tends to make the liquor traffic respectable, thus making it impossible to gain the end that is de-sired by many who are earnest temperance people, and conscientious in their efforts to stop the sale of liquor on Sunday. {AMS September 11, 1889, p. 262.1}

E. J. W.

**“Our Position” American Sentinel 4, 34.**

E. J. Waggoner

It has been our duty in our work to criticise very severely at times the actions and sayings of certain men,—churchmen, ministers of the gospel and lay workers,—and also the action of certain religious organs, in connection with the movement to secure national enforcement of Sunday observance. It has not been a pleasant task to do this, and we have not done so because of any feeling of antagonism to the individuals so criticised; much less have we done so because of any antagonism whatever to religion; but there are some who do not distinguish carefully, and there are others, we are sorry to say, who willfully misrepresent our motives. Therefore we will make a few statements. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.1}

We do not oppose this Sunday movement because we have no respect for the convictions of those who observe Sunday. Not only do we reverence the Bible, but we have respect for every man’s belief concerning the Bible. We are perfectly willing to afford to every person the free privilege of believing as he chooses. Not only are we willing but we insist upon it for every person. We believe that the government must protect all. We believe that the government should protect the Sunday observer in his observance of Sunday, just the same as it protects one who observes another day of the week in his observance of that day. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.2}

It is only the unchristian methods of doing what professes to be Christian work, but which is in reality unchristian, that we oppose. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.3}

We oppose Sunday legislation not because we are not willing that people should observe Sunday if they wish to, and not because we are unwilling that the government should see that they are not interfered with in their observance of Sun day, but we oppose the Sunday movement because it is unchristian, and it is shown to be unchristian by the unchristian methods employed in its maintenance. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.4}

We have the kindest feelings for all religious people. We would grant them the same consideration in their belief and practice that we would ask them to show us. It is only when they claim as their right that which they are not willing to grant to those who differ with them that we oppose them. When they do that, they are doing just that which they would not have others do to them, and that very thing shows their movement to be unchristian, because it is contrary to the rule laid down by Christ. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.5}

Let this distinction be kept constantly in view. Anything that can be shown by argument to be right, the SENTINEL will not oppose. Nay; more; although we do not believe that Sunday has the slightest sacredness, or has any claim to respect, more than Monday or Tuesday, yet if they will confine their advocacy of it to legitimate lines,—namely, the pulpit, the press, the Sunday-school, the family,—the SENTINEL would never say a word against them. In fact if this were so, there would be no SENTINEL. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.6}

The advocates of Sunday have the most perfect right to go anywhere or everywhere that they can secure a hearing, and speak night and day, teaching people to observe Sunday as a day of rest, appealing to their conscience and bringing arguments to bear upon them. They have a right to publish papers and circulate them everywhere, wherever they can induce people to read them. Against such work the SENTINEL would never lift its voice. But when they advocate the use of force, when they advocate measures which they would by no means consent to have carried out toward themselves were the conditions reversed, then the SENTINEL will oppose them, and it will call upon every consistent Christian to unite with it in its opposition. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.7}

We want it distinctly understood that the SENTINEL is opposed to nothing that is Christian-like. It was not started with the idea of antagonizing Christianity or any Christian movement. With doctrinal matters it has nothing to do. Its sole work is the maintenance of religious liberty of thought and action, because under such circumstances alone can true Christianity flourish. It does not claim to be the arbiter of what Christianity is, it does not presume to say what men ought to believe, or what they are to teach, or what religious customs they are to practice; it has only to do with efforts to propagate views by methods that tend only to oppression. Who is there that cannot stand upon the same platform? {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 264.8}

E. J. W.

**“The State to Let Religion Alone” American Sentinel 4, 34.**

E. J. Waggoner

We recently had the pleasure of listening to one of a series of talks by Bishop Vincent, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on the epistles of Paul to Timothy, and were much edified by some remarks that he made upon the first two verses of the second chapter of the first epistle, which read as follows:— {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 265.1}

“I exhort therefore; that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 265.2}

Said he, “We should pray for kings and those in authority-for what purpose? That the church may have power in the government? No. That our ministers may have good appointments under the government? No. That the church may have the authority of the government to carry forward its work? No. But that they may so mind their business that we may have a quiet and tranquil life. The church makes a gross mistake when it seeks to secure worldly position, and to influence temporal power. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 265.3}

He said that he always admired the answer that Diogenes made to Alexander, when the king visited the philosopher and asked him what he could do for him. The philosopher answered, “Stand out of the light.” “Such,” said he, “should be the position of the church. All that Christians should ask of the government is to let us alone, and to stand out of the way so that we may live quietly and peaceably, and carry on the work of the gospel by the power of the Spirit.” {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 266.1}

The bishop said further, “The abomination of abominations is the aspiration on the part of the church for temporal power. What the church wants is spiritual power.” He then stated that the spiritual power of a church always declines in proportion as the church gains temporal power. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 266.2}

These are truths that have been time and again set forth in the AMERICAN SENTINEL, but we are glad to be able to present them anew from the mouth of so prominent and eminent a man as Bishop J. H. Vincent. It shows that the work of the AMERICAN SENTINEL in opposing the so-called National Reform movement, instead of being infidel or atheistic, is most truly Christian, and that the most active Christian workers,—those who have a right to that title,—promulgate the very same principles that the SENTINEL does. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 266.3}

While we in our work often have to make severe strictures on certain churchmen, we would not have anyone get the idea that it is because we are opposed to churches or Christianity. Our strictures upon those persons are not because we oppose whatever of true Christianity they may possess, but it is because they are doing not only unchristian but antichristian work. They are attempting to secure the very thing which Bishop Vincent says is the abomination of abominations in the church, and tends to dearth of spirituality. Therefore we may say without fear of successful contradiction that the AMERICAN SENTINEL is working for the conservation of true Christianity in this country. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 266.4}

E. J. W.

**“‘Does it Pay’” American Sentinel 4, 34.**

E. J. Waggoner

Not long since, we listened to a lecture by Col. Elliott F. Shepard, president of the American Sabbath Union, on the question, “*Does the Sabbath pay?*” The lecture was notable chiefly for what the lecturer did not say, but there were one or two points which are worthy of careful attention, inasmuch as they show the principle, or rather the *lack of Christian* principle in this movement for the legal observance of Sunday. The whole. thing is contained in the subject of the lecture, viz., “Does it pay?” We will note a few statements. Said Mr. Shepard:— {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 266.5}

“Divine finance; what is it? The Old and the New Testament agree in contradicting Wall Street, and show that prosperity is to be found in obedience to God’s commandments?” {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 266.6}

This was the main feature of the lecture, namely the proof that more money could be made by resting on Sunday than by working upon it; and nothing but a mercenary motive was placed before the people. In the course of his remarks, Mr. Shepard said to the chairman of the meeting, “I would make some converts here to-night;” and then he proceeded to state that the railroads of the United States have suffered pecuniary loss because of their Sunday work. To emphasize this be made a little mathematical calculation to demonstrate, which we shall not try to follow; but the conclusion of which was that a manufacturer would make thirty-six per cent. more on Sunday might make fourteen per cent. on his investment, by a strict observance of the day he would make fifty per cent. on his investment. This shows a gain of thirty-six per cent. for Sunday observance. And then the question was asked, Which is better, for a man to work on Sunday and make fourteen per cent. or to rest on Sunday and make fifty per cent. Anyone will say the latter is better.” {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 266.7}

We are not at all convinced that Mr. Shepard’s mathematical calculations are correct, but let that pass. The question that at once arose in our mind was this: If Sunday-keeping pays pecuniarily, and if it can be demonstrated that a merchant or a manufacturer can make thirty-six per cent. more by resting on Sunday than by working, what need is there to ask the government to pass laws making it a crime for working on Sunday? Are the merchants and manufacturers in the United States so blind to their own business interests, so obtuse, so dull where dollars and cents are concerned, that they cannot be made to see the gain there is in Sunday observance? and, seeing it, would they deliberately choose a small per cent. in preference to a very large per cent? We are forced to conclude that there is either something wrong with Mr. Shepard’s mathematics or with his position as president of the American Sabbath Union. But this is not the worst feature of the case. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 267.1}

The pernicious effect of such teaching as that of Mr. Shepard cannot be seen now, but it will be demonstrated in time. The only argument he presented in the course of the whole evening (and his discourse was on Sunday evening too) was that there would be pecuniary profit in resting on Sunday,—that Sunday-keeping would invariably bring prosperity, and that Sunday-breaking would as invariably result in financial ruin. Now any person of common sense knows that this is not so; but that is not the point. People do not always use their common sense, and that idea of Mr. Shepard’s is getting to be quite common. Now couple this with another statement that he made in the same discourse. Said he, “It is useless for any one to claim that the Sabbath [by which he meant Sunday, of course] has any rights, except as they plant themselves on the divine commandment” He had already stated that the fourth commandment was the first commandment with blessing, and the only blessing that he made reference to was financial prosperity. Therefore the natural conclusion from his talk would be that the only blessing that is connected with the fourth commandment is temporal. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 267.2}

Still further: It is not a fact that obedience to the commandments of God will invariably bring temporal prosperity. In fact, it is most often the opposite, and has been so from time immemorial. The Psalmist recorded his feeling when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, seeing they were not in trouble as other men were, while the righteous were cast down. Everybody knows that some of the richest men in the world have been profligate, often base, grinding the poor, and have obtained their wealth by the most dishonorable methods, and have trampled upon every principle of right and justice. But let such teaching as that of Colonel Shepard become generally accepted, and what will be the result? Simply that the possession of great wealth will be taken as an expression of divine favor. The man who is enormously wealthy will be taken as a special favorite of Heaven. Let it be accepted that keeping the commandments necessarily results in worldly prosperity, while a violation of them results in embarrassment and ruin, and there can be no other conclusion but that the man who is rich is the one who is doing right; and so people in estimating his character will not compare his life with the commandments to see if he is obeying them, but will simply measure his bank account; and no matter how vile he has been, or by what unjust methods he may have obtained his wealth, he will be considered righteous. And so we have another indisputable proof that this Sunday movement is unchristian, and tends only to immorality. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 267.3}

We know that in ancient times the idea prevailed that the possession of wealth was a sign of the divine blessing. This idea was firmly fixed in the minds of the ancient Pharisees. So firmly did they believe it that many of them made it the great point in their lives to get wealth, regardless of the means by which it was acquired. And while continually transgressing the divine commandment in acquiring their wealth, they would point to the possession of that wealth as the evidence that they were righteous, and that God loved them. There are Pharisees enough in the world now, but Col. Shepard and the Association to which he belongs are doing their best to make more. {AMS September 18, 1889, p. 267.4}

E. J. W.