**“How to Change a Bad Law” American Sentinel 14, 42.**

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[This question, which engages so much attention here among promoters of reforms in political and social life, is ably discussed and clearly answered in *Present Truth*, of London, Eng., as follows:-] {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 667.1}

By a bad law we do not mean a law that some people do not like, but a law that requires something that is wrong. Many people dislike that which is good; and human nature is ever inclined to make itself the standard of goodness, and to say that whatever is opposed to its desires is bad; but our tastes and inclinations are not to be taken into account at all; there is one standard of right, and that is the law of God-God’s own life. Whatever is contrary to God’s Word-the word of life-is bad, and should be shunned as one would shun the plague. To obey a bad law is identical with breaking a good law. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 667.2}

Now there are laws that are bad. They are found to a greater or lesser extent in every nation. Such are the laws that are directly opposed to the law of God, although they may be in harmony with the sentiments of the majority of the people. In every nation there are also to be found men who are sorely distressed over the existence of such laws, and to exert themselves in various ways to have them repealed. This opposition usually takes the form of political agitation, of the same nature as that by which the laws were enacted, sometimes going even to the extent of armed rebellion and revolution. In some instances the opposition is apparently successful, but in most it is an open failure, and in no case is the success real and lasting. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 667.3}

At the present time in this country the burning question is that of ritualism in the Church. Inasmuch as the Established Church is in reality a State institution, so long as it remains an established church, dissenters as a rule feel that they have as much interest in the controversy as have Churchmen. Accordingly both Protestant and Catholic journals discuss the question freely, but there is a great difference of opinion among anti-ritualists as to how the swelling flood of sacerdotalism in the Church is to be checked. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 667.4}

In the *Contemporary Review*, Dr. Guinness Rogers has an article on “The Archbishops and the Ritualists,” in which he says, “I do not believe in coercive legislation, even in the interests of Protestantism.” To this statement the *Methodist Times* takes exception. It should be stated that Dr. Rogers declares that “we shall resist all efforts to Romanize the establishment-that is, we shall do our utmost to prevent the present compromise from being altered in a sacerdotal direction.” Whereupon the *Methodist* *Times* responds thus:- {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 667.5}

But how does he propose to resist the Romanizers except by “coercive legislation”? At every period of history the only kind of suasion that has any effective influence over clerical extremists is legal suasion. In the last resort, as in the days of the Reformation, the House of Commons, representing the laity, must compel lawless priests to obey or resign. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.1}

It is not our purpose to enter into the controversy; but it is a duty to point out that since State legislation-politics in the Church-brought about the present state of things, State legislation, even though it be called into requisition for the purpose of reformation, can only perpetuate the existing evil, possibly under another form. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.2}

How then can any reform ever be effected? This is what we propose to show; and since nothing is so convincing as a case already worked out, we shall content ourselves with referring to an instance where a bad law was effectually changed. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.3}

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, the greatest king that the world ever saw, made a great image of gold, ninety feet high, and set it up in the plain of Dura, and then gathered the chief men from all parts of the world to come and fall down before it. Under threat of the most terrible death if they disobeyed, all were commanded to fall down and worship the image at a given signal. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.4}

Here was a law directly contrary to God’s Iaw, which says: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” It was therefore a bad law, although the most of the people had nothing against it. At least they obeyed it without question. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.5}

But there were three men who knew the law to be bad, and who knew that to obey it would be to sin against God; so while the others fell down and worshiped, they stood upright. We all know the story well. The king was very gracious toward them, and though they had not heeded his law, he was willing to give them another chance. But they gave him to understand that they were fully decided, and did not need any time to think over the matter. They said, “Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.6}

This was not disobedience but obedience. They were not law-breakers, but lawkeepers. The true law was, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve;” the king’s law was in itself an act of despite to the law, so that when the three men refused to regard it, they were only showing their faithfulness to law. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.7}

Let it be noted, however, that these man were not rebellious. They did not attempt to raise any insurrection. They did not harangue the people about the injustice of the law, and the wickedness of the threatened punishment. They made no appeal for sympathy, but simply proclaimed the power of their God. They were not there to oppose the king, nor to defend themselves, but to honor God. So they refused to be disobedient to their Creator, and willingly allowed themselves to be bound and cast into the burning furnace. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.8}

Everybody knows the result. They fell down in the furnace, bound hand and foot, but immediately stood up again, for the fire destroyed their bonds, and set them free. Rather, it demonstrated their freedom. It had no power over them. They walked about in the fire, with the Lord by their side, as comfortably as though they were promenading in the cool of a summer evening. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.9}

Then the king called them out, and bore witness before all the assembled rulers that these three men had changed the law. “Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king’s word.” Daniel 3:28. There is no doubt but that the law was changed, abolished, for nobody was again commanded to worship the golden image. Nebuchadnezzar himself recognized God as the only One to be worshiped, and declared that these three captive Jews had changed his decree. Surely this was a wonderful deed. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.10}

How did they do it? As we have seen; they made no stir, they did not appeal to the people, they circulated no petitions, they did not plead, and they did not threaten. They used no coercive legislation, nor any other kind. How then did they succeed in getting the law changed? King Nebuchadnezzar himself tells us. He said, “They have changed the king’s word, *and yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.*” {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.11}

This confirms what we have said. They were not disobedient, but obedient. They were not rebellious, but yielding. They changed the laws by yielding their bodies to death, rather than do wrong. That was all, but was sufficient, for there is almighty power in righteousness. {AMS October 26, 1899, p. 668.12}