**“History Repeating Itself” The Signs of the Times, 19, 11.**

E. J. Waggoner

The agitation of the Sunday question that is going on, especially in connection with the World’s Fair, furnishes much matter for thought. All who have read ecclesiastical history to any extent must see the similarity between these times and those when the church was begging the “protection” of heathen emperors, and thereby selling out to Paganism. For the benefit of the many who have not had the privilege of such reading, and of others who may have forgotten some of the incidents, a few quotations will be given. {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.10}

We shall first notice an editorial in the New York *Independent*, in referring to Bishop Potter’s proposition to have the Exposition open in the afternoon on Sundays and closed in the forenoon. The editor says:— {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.11}

The obvious reason for exempting the morning is that the churches occupy it with services. The advocates of afternoon opening seem to think that, while the morning is occupied, the afternoon is free. Take that, they say in substance, and welcome. {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.12}

But is the afternoon free? True, there are no preaching services; but what about the Sunday schools? They are just as legitimate, just as important, as the service which the sermon constitutes. God is worshiped as acceptably, the truth is presented as faithfully, souls are influenced as effectively, as in the morning. Expositions are just as attractive to those who sit in the classes as those who sit in the pews. The superintendents and teachers are as anxious to have every scholar in his place receive the things provided for him as the preacher can possibly be. The afternoon is the young people’s time. Why rob them of it? We have no sympathy with the compromise. {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.13}

Conscientious observers of the first day of the week are in no danger of being robbed of their rest or their worship by any number of open shows on Sunday. The admission is plain, however, the great objection to having the Fair open any part of Sunday is that it will be so great a rival of the churches and Sunday schools. The thoughtful reader can draw his own conclusions, while we present an extract from history. It is from Neander. Speaking of the days immediately following Constantine’s reign, he says:— {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.14}

Owing to the prevailing passion at that time, especially in the large cities, to run after the various public shows, it so happened that when these spectacles fell on the same days which had been consecrated by the church to some religious festival, they proved a great hindrance to the devotion of Christians, though chiefly, it must be allowed, to those whose Christianity was the least an affair of the life and of the heart. Church teachers, such as Chrysostom, were, in truth, often forced to complain that in such competitions the theater was vastly more frequented than the church. And among those who gave up the church for the theater, many might be found not wholly unsusceptible of right feelings, who, if they had not been hurried along by the prevailing corruption, would have employed Sunday in a way more serious and more healthful for their inner life. Moreover, by the civil relations of those times, many were obliged, on account of their particular place among the citizens, to take part in the arrangements necessary for the support of the public shows, and so to be interrupted in their devotion even against their will. Hence, the North African Church, resolved at an ecclesiastical convention held at Carthage in 401, to petition the emperor that the public shows might be transferred from the Christian Sunday and from feast days, to some other days of the week. Owing to the prevailing passion for the shows, this petition could not be granted perhaps, without considerable difficulty. First, in the year 423, the exhibition of spectacles on Sunday, and on the principal feast days of the Christians, was forbidden, in order that the devotion of the faithful might be free from all disturbance. In this way the church resisted help from the State for the furtherance of her ends, which could not be obtained in the preceding period. But had it not been for that confusion of spiritual and secular interests, had it not been for the vast number of mere *outward conversions* thus brought about, she would have needed no such help.-*History of the Christian Religion and Church, vol. 2, section 2.* {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.15}

In this Dr. Neander has not only given us the fact, but he has also set forth the true reason for that fact. The reason why the Sunday games and shows proved a hindrance to Christians, was because their religion was not an affair of the life and the heart. And had it not been for the fact that conversions were only outward, the church would not have needed the help that she craved from the State. That is an obvious conclusion. “Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? Or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?” Jeremiah 18:14. Will a man who has a Rothschild for his patron seek help from a laboring man? Will a church which has the power of God in it, seek support from earthly rulers? {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.16}

But let us have the testimony of another man, celebrated alike for his learning and his piety. Dean Milman says:— {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.17}

The Christians obtained a law from Theodosius, that games should be prohibited on the Lord’s day. The African bishops, in the fifth council of Carthage, petitioned that this prohibition might be extended to all Christian holidays. They urged that many members of the corporate bodies were obliged officially to attend on these occasions, and prevented from fulfilling their religious duties. The law of Theodosius the elder had inhibited the celebration of games on Sundays; one of the younger Theodosius added, at Christmas, the Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, and directed that on those days the theaters should be closed, not only to the Christians, but to the impious Jews and superstitious pagans. But notwithstanding this law, which must have been imperfectly carried into execution, the indignant preachers still denounce the rivalry of the games, which withdrew so many of their audience.-*History of Christianity, Book, 4, chapter 2.* {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.18}

All this took place in the formation of the Papacy. It was the means by which it grew. The papal power is represented in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation as a beast with seven heads and ten horns, to which an image is made. The appeal of the churches in America for help from the government in the carrying forward of their work, is a step in the formation of the image of the beast. And the granting of that help is the formation of that image. The Bible tells us that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. Therefore, whenever the church makes an alliance with the world, and seeks aid from it, that fact is evidence that it is departing from the Lord. The only saving thing is that in the church now, as well as in the ancient times, there are not a few who, both by their lives and their voices protest against exchanging the power of the Lord for that of the world. {SITI January 16, 1893, p. 119.19}