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BOLD AND BASE AVOWAL.



WITH the self-styled National Reformers the name of Rev. Dr. Jonathan Edwards stands very high; and we ask no better evidence that it will not do to intrust civil authority to the hands of ecclesiastics than the fact that the most eminent professors of Christianity, even those to whom their fellows look up with reverence, often assume the most overbearing demeanor when asserting what they claim as their special prerogatives. We would not be misunderstood in this expression. We would as readily trust to their hands the exercise of the functions of government as to the hands of any others, so long as they will confine their actions to the sphere for which civil government exists. It is only when they assert their right to enforce their theological ideas, that they are self-asserting and arrogant.

Dr. Edwards delivered an address at the National Convention of the "Reformers" held in New York in 1873. In this address are a number of things worthy of notice; but one portion of it, which we now consider, is particularly offensive to all who have any regard for the rights of our common humanity, because

it is contrary to the spirit of Christianity as taught by Christ and his apostles.

First, we will notice an error into which all these reformers run, namely, that of confounding civil with religious rights and privileges. In fact, they draw no line between them. As the Government deals with us in civil matters, so would they deal with their opponents in matters of religion. Thus he speaks :—

“We may not buy a lot among the fine houses on Broadway, or the fashionable avenues of New York, and there set up and operate a foundry, a tin shop, a bone-boiling establishment, or a soap chandlery. If we try it we shall find both ourselves and our business treated as a nuisance. People do not like the smoke, the noise, the fumes of such establishments. The majority are against us, and in this country and in all republics majorities govern. To be in a minority involves more or less of inconvenience. In business, in politics, in fashion, in morals, and in religion, whoever differs materially from the majority will certainly be made to feel it more or less in due time.”

If the blasphemers and the hardened scoffers were to place our religious rights and privileges on a level with the right to erect a tin shop or a foundry in a certain locality, or were such a one to class our religion with worldly business, politics, or the fashion, we should not be so greatly surprised. But that Dr. Edwards should class religious rights with the right to set up “a bone-boiling establishment or a soap chandlery,” is truly astonishing. We do not hesitate to say that if the Government should deny us the right to boil bones or make soap *anywhere* we should acquiesce and seek some other business. But if the same Government should insist that we deny the faith we hold and abstain

from the practice of the religion we profess, we should dissent in the most emphatic terms. We would not yield our religious faith and practice for all the majorities the world can produce; we would not accept another in its stead, either in theory or practice, at the demand of the strongest Government or the most relentless tyrant. This is our declaration and that of every genuine Christian in the land. We ask only for grace to maintain it.

Would Dr. Edwards yield *his* religion to the will of the majority, even as he now yields in many secular matters? Certainly not. It is not *his religion* of which he speaks, when he subordinates religion to the will of majorities. It is *somebody else's* religion,—a religion which does not agree with his; it is a religion which he cannot control without the aid of the civil power!

But this is only the prelude to the avowal to which we specially call attention. In classifying those whom he considers enemies to the National Reform cause, he speaks as follows:—

“The atheist is a man who denies the being of God and future life. To him mind and matter are the same; and time is the be-all and end-all of consciousness and of character.

“The deist admits God, but denies that he has any such control over human affairs as we call providence, or that he ever manifests himself and his will in a revelation.

“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.

“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.

“These all are, for the occasion, and as 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 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.”

Everyone who has any knowledge of the Seventh-day Baptists, either in regard to their *history* or to their *principles*, must set down the above utterances of Dr. Edwards as not only uncharitable but unchristian. They were the conservatory of religious freedom at a time when there was much danger of a permanent union of Church and State in New England. More than to all others, we verily believe, it was to those of that faith that Rhode Island owed her liberality to all sects of Christians, so far in advance of the other colonies at an early day. The Seventh-day Baptists of Rhode Island and the Baptists of Virginia left to this country a legacy of the principles of both civil and religious liberty, for which we have reason to be thankful even at the present day.

But the regrets expressed for them by Dr. Edwards arise from the “accident of [their] differing with the mass of Christians upon the question of what precise

day of the week shall be observed as holy." We doubt the propriety of calling that an "accident" which grows out of conviction and intention. It is not our desire to enter into a discussion of the subject thus laid open by the National Reformers in their statement of the object of their movement; but this affords us an excellent opportunity to show the spirit of this professed reform, and what we may expect if its advocates ever get control of our Government. Dr. Edwards admits that the Seventh-day Baptists believe in God and Christianity; and we affirm that he would be unable to find in their faith an item which is not considered orthodox by large bodies of Christians in the land, except in the case of the "accident" mentioned. Our readers may query, as we do in all seriousness, if the fact of their observing the original day of the Sabbath—the identical day which all concede was embodied in the fourth commandment of the decalogue—is a good and sufficient reason for classing them with atheists.

There is not a single point of religious belief upon which there is entire uniformity of faith among the churches; why, then, should a difference on this point be singled out and branded as atheism? The National Reformers affiliate with the Unitarians, who differ with them materially on the nature and divinity of Christ. They speak well of the Catholics, expecting yet to work together with them in their pretended reform, though the Catholics do not recognize them as being any part of the church of Christ, and openly and habitually deny in faith and practice the second commandment, which forbids adoration of images. These appear to

be immaterial errors, while the observance of the seventh day of the week is branded as atheism, though the observers are confessed to be orthodox in every other respect?

We take up two declarations of these reformers, namely, that the Bible shall be recognized as the supreme rule of conduct in the nation, and that the ten commandments shall be acknowledged as the rule of morality in our Government. Is it a fact that the practice of the Seventh-day Baptists in observing the seventh day is such a wide and manifest departure from the Bible and the ten commandments, that they may with reason be called atheists? Every school-boy who is taught in the Bible knows that it says, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." So far it is according to the Bible. And every school-boy knows that the commandment says, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Thus it is "according to the commandment."

IMPORTANT ADMISSIONS.

Now it is by all conceded that "the mass of Christians" do not keep that seventh day which is spoken of in Genesis 2 and Exodus 20. Without entering into the controversy as to the correctness or lawfulness of the change from that day to another, we are compelled to inquire: Is the change so clearly laid down in the Scripture, or another day so clearly enjoined, that a person must be an atheist to deny that change? We will draw the answer to this question from the most orthodox authorities, without offering any opinion of our own, or giving any coloring either way to the testimony.

1. Dr. Buck's Theological Dictionary says: "It must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day."

2. The Encyclopedia of McClintock & Strong uses the same language.

3. The Augsburg Confession says: "We find not the same commanded by any apostolic law."

4. Dr. Heylyn, of England, in his "History of the Sabbath," says: "For three hundred years there was neither law to bind them [the churches] to it, nor any rest from worldly labor required upon it."

5. Dr. Scott's Commentary says: "The change from the seventh to the first appears to have been gradually and silently introduced, by example rather than precept."

6. The *Christian Union*, answering a question on the subject, said: "The Sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, not by any positive authority, but by a gradual process."

7. The *Inter-Ocean*, also answering a question, said: "The change of the day of worship from the Sabbath, or the last day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week, was done by the early Christians; but the work was so gradual that it is almost impossible to tell when the one left off and the other began. It was not until after the Reformation that the change was confirmed by any legal enactment. In the first ages after Christ it does not appear that the Christians abstained from their regular business upon that day, but they were accustomed to meet early in the day, and indulge

in singing and some other religious services. It was not until the beginning of the third century that it became customary for Christians to abstain from their worldly business and occupation on that day."

8. Dr. C. S. Robinson, in the *Sunday School Times*, said: "It is not wise to base the entire Sabbath [Sunday] argument on the fourth precept of the decalogue. . . . We shall become perplexed if we attempt to rest our case on simple legal enactment. Our safety in such discussions consists in our fastening attention upon the gracious and benevolent character of the divine institution."

Query: But is not that an evasion? Doubtless the Seventh-day Baptist would not disagree with him upon the "benevolent character of the divine institution," but they would ask him to open the Bible and show them what *is* "the divine institution."

9. The *Christian at Work* says: "Some plant the observance of the Sabbath [Sunday] squarely on the fourth commandment, which was an explicit injunction to observe Saturday, and no other day, as 'a holy day to the Lord.' So some have tried to build the observance of Sunday upon apostolic command, whereas the apostles gave no command upon the matter. . . . The truth is, so soon as we appeal to the *litera scripta* [plain text] of the Bible, the Sabatarians have the best of the argument."

It is true that others claim more than this in behalf of the first day; but it only serves to show that the subject of a change is so obscure that they cannot agree among themselves! We could greatly

multiply testimonies like the above, but these are quite sufficient for our purpose, showing as clearly as can be shown that the Seventh-day Baptists, in their observance of the seventh day, do not walk contrary to any fact or precept of the Bible, but rather have the *litera scripta* of the commandment on their side, and thus, on biblical ground, "have the best of the argument." And yet for the "accident" of clinging to the exact language of the Bible, and thereby disagreeing with these *model reformers*, they are boldly branded as atheists!

Dr. Edwards has taken up the religious standing of the Seventh-day Baptists, and we have shown that, according to the testimony of those of his own faith, the Seventh-day Baptist occupies the vantage-ground on the Bible argument. There are some very interesting and important Scripture facts concerning the subject in controversy between the parties, which we will introduce by way of question and answer. We must bear in mind that an atheist is one who disbelieves the existence of God; and an infidel is one who disbelieves the Scriptures, God's revelation to man.

How does God open his revelation to man? "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The true God first reveals himself to man as the *Creator*.

How does he contrast himself with all false gods? "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He [Jehovah] hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." Jer. 10: 11, 12.

But many nations have forgotten the true God, and worship the work of their own hands; has the Lord afforded them any means of knowing better? "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. 1: 20.

Did the Lord establish any certain means of keeping his being and creative power in remembrance? "I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and hallow my Sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God." Eze. 20: 19, 20.

How, or wherein, does the keeping of the Sabbath impart or perpetuate the knowledge of the true God? "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day [Heb., the day of the rest, cf. Gen. 2: 3], and hallowed it." Fourth commandment, Ex. 20: 8-11.

They who keep this commandment, just as God gave it, forever keep before them, and in their minds, the great truth that Jehovah, the true God, created all things; they cannot forget him. Of all people upon the earth, they *should not* be classed with atheists.

Now comes a most interesting query: When the

Constitution is religiously amended, what shall be done with these people who presume to disregard "the traditions of the elders," and who are so perversely atheistical as to stand upon the *litera scripta* of the decalogue? Dr. Edwards has given us definite information on this subject. He speaks thus for the body, for it has published his address to the world, and others of their number have spoken much in the same strain. He said:—

"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 a conspirator. The atheist is a dangerous man. He not only rejects and opposes my faith, but he aims to overthrow 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 citizenship, he is, as I hold, utterly disqualified."

The reader must remember that this language is applied to the Jew and Seventh-day Baptist. They and atheists are "one party." They are all "counted together." They must "be treated as one party." And how very gracious these "mild-mannered" reformers are! The poor Seventh-day Baptist may be tolerated as a lunatic or conspirator is tolerated. He may even "live and go free, hold his lands and enjoy his home," if he "*does not rave.*" Let him hold his peace; let him hide his knowledge of the *litera scripta*

of the ten commandments, for woe be to him if he crosses the track of "*my faith!*"

We grow more and more distrustful of humanity when we read the literature of that people, and see their unblushing effrontery in declaring that a Religious Amendment to the National Constitution is necessary "to secure the rights of all classes." Can they possibly think that the people are so blind that they cannot perceive the deception which is being practiced? that they cannot discover the enemy of equal rights lurking under these specious pretenses? We pity those who cannot see this. And we blame those who *will not* see the danger impending, or who are in anywise instrumental in precipitating such a calamity upon our country. They are not asking for protection, for this they now have most fully; *they are seeking for power*. And their own avowals prove that if they ever get the power they seek, this land will cease to be "the land of the free."

J. H. WAGGONER.

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