**“‘As the Oracles of God’” The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 72, 16.**

E. J. Waggoner

***(London. Eng.)***

When the apostle Paul was in Rome, a prisoner for the faith, he made this request of the brethren: Pray “for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:19, 20. It will be noticed that his sole burden was for the gospel, that it might be presented in a proper manner. How one ought to speak in such a case is set forth by the apostle Peter: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; ... that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 4:11. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.1}

While we are positively forbidden to take any thought, when we are brought before councils, as to how or what we shall speak (Matthew 10:19), we are as positively commanded to study the sacred oracles, since they are the only light for our steps. The Spirit will bring to our remembrance only that which has been pondered upon. In the Sabbath controversy which is now progressing the oracles of God must be especially prominent. The fourth commandment is our warrant for keeping the seventh day of the week, instead of any other day or no day at all; and therefore it is a matter of course that it must be that around which the battle will center. And it is a matter for thanksgiving that the case has been made so simple that an unlearned people need have no difficulty in presenting it. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.2}

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day as the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shall not do any work.” Exodus 20:8-10. And then follow the facts upon which the Sabbath is based in the account of its institution. In this we have a divine warrant that will do to present before kings. In the repetition of the commandment in Deuteronomy 5:12, we have the same thing stated in reverse order. “Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it.” This is the same as, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” says to keep holy, or hallow, or to sanctify, are the same thing. The same Hebrew word is used in each case. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.3}

The force of the commandment rests on the word “sanctify.” What does it mean? The Scriptures make this very plain. It was very necessary that the people should be kept away from Mount Sinai when the Lord came down upon it to speak his law. So the Lord told Moses to set bounds so that the people could not come up to it. This was done, and when the Lord repeated the charge after he had come down, and Moses had gone up to meet him, Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.” Exodus 19:23. It is evident that a barrier—“bounds,”—had been erected which made a plain division between the ground that was sacred because of the presence of the Lord and that which was common. The mountain was so set off from the surrounding country that no one could fail to see the distinction. It was sanctified. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.4}

To sanctify a thing, therefore, means to make such a distinction between it and other things that nobody need have the slightest difficulty in distinguishing it from everything else. To sanctify the Sabbath as required by the commandment, is to make a marked difference between it and every other day of the week. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.5}

How is this difference shown in the case of the Sabbath? The commandment tells us. It says that we are to sanctify the Sabbath by resting upon it. The words, “Six days shall thou labor, and all thy work,” cannot be held to be an absolute command to work on every one of the other six days; but in the command to sanctify the seventh day we are charged to make a difference between it and the other six days in a matter of work. If we treat any other day as we do the Sabbath, we break down the distinction and fail to sanctify the Sabbath. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.6}

If we work on the seventh day, it is very clear that we do not sanctify it, because we treat it just as we do all other days. Suppose now that instead of working on the seventh day, we rest, and that we also habitually rest on another day of the week as well; is it not clear that in this case we fail to sanctify the Sabbath just as surely as we do in the other? We break down the distinction, so that, so far as our actions are concerned, we could tell which of the two days is the Sabbath. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.7}

It is very clear, therefore, that in order to keep the Sabbath day according to the commandment, we must not only rest on the seventh day, but we must also habitually treat all other days of the week as laboring days. This would be true in any case; but when there is a day, as the first day, which is put forth as a rival to the Sabbath of the Lord, and which claims to be the Sabbath in its stead, the duty of emphasizing the difference becomes more urgent. We are by the commandment bound not only to show that the seventh day is the Sabbath, but also that the first day of the week is *not* the Sabbath. Of course in all this we are to keep in mind the golden rule, and the injunction of the apostle, “If it be possible, as much as lieth *in you*, live peaceably with all men.” But by no means are we to compromise the truth of God, and when a power sets itself up against God, and demands that we give to the first day of the week the same outward honor that we give to the Sabbath of the Lord, then we are bound, as loyal subjects of the King of kings, to sanctify the Sabbath in the fullest sense of the word. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.8}

In a word, then, the fourth commandment is our sole sufficient warrant for working on Sunday when the laws of men require us to cease from labor on that day. Whether speaking to the people from the free platform or from the prisoner’s dock, we have a simple and clear line of truth to present; namely, the commandment of the Lord of heaven and earth. There can be no stronger ground than this. It is so simple that any child can hold it against all opposition or cross-questioning, and it is all the warrant that is needed. Whoever, therefore, presents something aside from the commandment, by just so much weakens the force of this testimony. As opposed to this ground, let us consider in another article the question of rights. {ARSH April 16, 1895, p. 242.9}

(*Concluded next week*.)

**“‘As the Oracles of God.’ The Question of Rights” The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 72, 17.**

E. J. Waggoner

***(London. Eng.)(Concluded.)***

Is it not a fact that we have a right to work on the first day of the week, and that this right is God-given?-Most certainly. Then may we not stand on this ground also, and demand our rights? The answer is, no: and the reason is plain. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 258.1}

1. There are many rights which we do yield without a murmur, in order to keep the peace, when there is no principle involved. We are required to do this as Christians. If we are going to stand for our rights in the matter of Sunday work, why not in every other matter? Of course the answer will be that we have no option in this case, since the commandment requires us to sanctify the seventh day. Then it is not a question of our rights but of the Lord’s, and we ought not to obscure the real issue by putting ourselves forward. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 258.2}

2. We ought not to begin on any line that we are not prepared to carry to the end. Now what does a demand for our rights always involve?-Nothing less than a battle. For instance, I go into a public park and sit down. I have a right there, and am interfering with no one’s peace. A man comes along and demands my seat, and persists in his demand. I can quietly wave my right to retain the seat, and seek another place, or I can insist on my right, and fight with the ruffian in order to maintain it. It needs no argument to show which would be the Christian course. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 258.3}

3. The case is clearer yet when it is a question of equal rights, as when I and the other man both come to the seat at the same time, we both have a right in the park, and both have the same right to that particular seat. We are both determined that we shall not yield our rights. It is not necessary to indicate the result: but everybody knows that Christ would not be in it. Then certainly no Christian can take such ground. The Bible forbids us to come into conflict with government, or to take a position which involves rebellion against authority; for the insistence upon our rights means revolution if there be power and of with us to maintain our position. Of course no one contemplates any such thing. Then why should we begin on a line that we do not intend to carry to the end? {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 258.4}

4. The last paragraph presents a case perfectly parallel to the case between us and the government, provided we insist upon our rights, since the case is really one of equal rights. We have an undoubted right to keep the Sabbath of the Lord; but our neighbors have an equal right to disregard it. Christ said: “If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” John 12:47. Of course the man who does not believe must take the consequences, and Christ made this very plain, by saying that the word would judge the unbeliever at the last day. But the fact is clear that God has given to every man the absolute right to believe or not, to obey him or to disobey him. Let no one become confused over *rights* and *right*. It is not right to do wrong, but God has given every man the liberty to do wrong if he chooses to do so and to suffer the consequences. This liberty, or freedom of will, we call “rights.” Our work on this earth is to set before men what is right and the consequences of doing wrong. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 258.5}

Now the rights which belong to a single individual must necessarily belong to any number of individuals. Any State or government is but an aggregation of individuals, and therefore the rights which God has given to the single individual necessarily inhere in the State. Rulers, therefore, have the same liberty to disobey that we have to obey. When the men composing any government enact laws involving the violation of God’s law, they are doing as a government just what each individual does when he refuses to obey the Lord; and they have the same liberty to do it as a government that they have to do it as individuals. Of course they will suffer if they exercise that liberty, but it is accorded to them nevertheless. God has set before all men life and death, good and evil, for them to choose which they will. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 259.1}

When Christ was on trial before Pilate, he recognized the right of rulers to oppose the truth and to persecute. When Pilate said that he had power to crucify Jesus or to release him, Jesus said, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” John 19:11. Pilate, as governor, had the right given him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and cast his lot in with him, or to condemn him and suffer the consequences in the judgment. When a man becomes a ruler, he loses none of the rights that he had is a private individual, but his responsibility is greater. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 259.2}

It is sometimes said that governments have no right to legislate concerning the commandments in the first table of the law. But the law is undivided, and one part is as spiritual as another. Governments have the prerogative, or right, to defy the Lord in any way they choose. The Lord has not laid down in the Bible the rights and duties of governments, but of individuals, and he has not commissioned us to tell the world how governments should be conducted, but to tell individuals, whether private persons or rulers, what they must do to be saved. Wicked men, whether acting individually or as a government, have the liberty, or right, to reject the Lord and to persecute his people; and God’s people have the right to acknowledge him and to suffer for it. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 259.3}

5. But the worst feature of this appeal for our rights is that it hides the commandment of the Lord, and elevates ourselves. Instead of witnessing for the Lord, we are witnessing for ourselves. But we are to speak only as the oracles of God, “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” The only use that the Lord has for us in this world is to exalt himself and his law. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 259.4}

What, then, shall be our plea? Simply this: We have no option in this matter. God has given us the commandment, and we have no choice but to obey. Then the whole burden may be thrown upon the authorities, as in the case of the apostles,—“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” The responsibility is thus thrown upon them, whether they will array themselves against God or not. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 259.5}

By standing upon the Word of God alone, and refusing to make any other plea, we are preaching the word all the time. The commandment of God is held up as the greatest thing in the world,-as something which is above kings. Moreover we ourselves do not come into conflict with the government all. We are simply God’s mouthpieces, by which he tells the judges themselves that they are opposing him, and by which he warns them of the consequences. It is not a question of whether our rights shall be maintained as against the rights of government, but of whether the rulers will as individuals yield to God his rights. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 259.6}

Furthermore, we are on ground, from which we need never retreat one inch. We can speak with boldness, because our foundation is the everlasting truth of God. There is no defeat, even though we be put to death, because the truth triumphs. It will stand when everything else gives way. On this ground the accused can be perfectly calm while their accusers and even their judges tremble. When Paul opened his mouth boldly to speak the gospel in court, Felix trembled. And when the commandment of the Lord is steadfastly maintained, and it is made clear that we have no personal interest in the matter, and that our only anxiety is that the Lord should have his rights in the obedience of those for whom he gave himself, some will refuse to be any longer found fighting against God, and he will thus be glorified. {ARSH April 23, 1895, p. 259.7}