**“A Proposed Christmas Truce in South Africa” American Sentinel 14, 50.**

E. J. Waggoner

**“Present Truth.” (London, Eng.)**

The incongruity of two “Christian nations” engaged in deadly conflict at the same time celebrating what they suppose to be the birthday of the Prince of peace, and listening to the message, “Peace on earth, goodwill to men,” appeals very forcibly to some people, and accordingly it has been suggested to the authorities in South Africa, both at Cape Town and the Transvaal, that “on that day, at any rate, there should be peace from midnight to midnight.” {AMS December 21, 1899, p. 796.1}

It is sad that any Christian should have so little knowledge of the Gospel as not to see the incongruity of such a proposal. What a caricature of peace it would be, what a travesty of upon the Gospel of peace, for two armies to cease all hostilities on midnight of the 24th of December, expecting to resume them at midnight on the 25th, and in the meantime solemnly to announce that they were celebrating the birthday of the Prince of peace! It would be awful mockery. {AMS December 21, 1899, p. 796.2}

The proposal, evidently made in all sincerity, shows how much the Gospel has come to be considered as a mere form and ceremony, as satisfied by the observance of certain days and certain ceremonies. Such religion is essentially heathenism, differing from that which is ordinarily known as such only in kind. If the suggestion were adopted, it would doubtless be hailed as an evidence of the hold that Christianity has on the people of the world, whereas it would simply show how greatly people are controlled by superstition in spite of centuries of Gospel preaching. We are reminded of the man who reckoned himself a good Christian, for while he would usually swear till the air was blue with oaths, he never swore on Sunday! {AMS December 21, 1899, p. 796.3}

Even supposing that the 25th of December were the day on which Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which it most certainly is not, the mere observance of that day, in any way whatsoever, would have no element of Christianity in it. Christianity is a life, and if it exists at all in any person, must be the whole of his life. People often have enough perception of the fitness of things to say that it is useless to give one day of the week to God and all the rest to the world and the devil; but the fact is, such a thing is impossible. Such an idea is on a par with the stories of dead men who on certain occasions come out of their graves and walk about. It is just as impossible for a man to render real acceptable service to God on only one day in the year, or in the week, and to serve himself and the devil all the other days, as it would be for a man to come from the grave in full vigor one day in each year or each week, and lie lifeless all the rest of the time. {AMS December 21, 1899, p. 797.1}

God can raise the dead, but when He does it, it is to the end that death shall no more have dominion over them. The Spirit of God can quicken into life those who are “dead in trespasses and sins;” but He does not do this periodically. Christ “ever liveth,” but His life is nothing to us unless He lives in us; and while He is longsuffering, and will come back even after having been received and again thrust out, it is not conceivable nor possible that any soul should open the door at midnight to receive Him, with the express understanding that He must leave at the next midnight to come again if called for at any time. That would be but to make a plaything of the Lord. {AMS December 21, 1899, p. 797.2}

The birth of Christ must be regarded, but not by celebrating a day. We are left in utter ignorance of the day when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, so that there need be no temptation to substitute the celebration of it for real acceptance of Him; just as God did not allow the Israelites to see any form when He talked with them from Sinai so that they could not attempt to make a likeness of Him, and substitute that for Him. Deuteronomy 4:15-19. Yet men have presumed to do both. The birth of Christ is to and for each individual. If Jesus be not born in a man’s heart and life, it will be of no avail to him that He was born in Judea nineteen hundred years ago. {AMS December 21, 1899, p. 797.3}