**“The Issues of the Present Time” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 5, 5.**

E. J. Waggoner

The nearer we approach the end of time, the more momentous are the issues that present themselves. It has always been a great thing to be a follower of God. In every age there have been difficulties in the way of the true believer, due to the fact that he belonged to a class that was greatly in the minority. Since the fall of man, it has been true that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:14. Added to the natural disinclination of the human heart to follow that which is good have always been the difficulties thrown in the way of Christians by evil men, whom Satan has used as his agents to turn the faithful away from the path of life. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.1}

While many look to the Dark Ages as the time of the church’s greatest trial, it seems evident that for a brief period just before the coming of the Lord the true followers of Christ will be subjected to trials of faith exceeding those of any other age. Following are some of the reasons which indicate this:- {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.2}

1. The “little horn”-the papacy-is represented as making war with the saints, and prevailing against them, “until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” Daniel 7:22. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.3}

2. The two-horned beast, whose great work is to make an image to the papal beast, “exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him,”-that is, in his presence (Revelation 13:12),-and issues sentence of death against all who refuse to worship the image instead of God. Verse 15. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.4}

3. The dragon, with whose voice the two-horned beast speaks, is represented as “wroth with the woman,”-the church,-and going “to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:17. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.5}

4. The apostle Paul says that “in the last days perilous times shall come.” 2 Timothy 3:1. If the last days were to be days of no greater peril than those which precede them, there would be no force in this statement. The fact that the last days are distinguished as “perilous,” shows that they are to be such in a pre-eminent degree. And then, after telling of the fierceness and maliciousness of the reprobates who, despise those that are good, the apostle adds: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.6}

Add to these reasons the fact that Satan is gathering all his forces for a final struggle, knowing that his end is near, and we cannot but conclude that the conflict before God’s people, though short, will be terrible. The adversary will seek to drag down to his own ruin as many as possible, and will endeavour accomplish this by the deceitfulness of sin and by the terrors of persecution. Let us note the indications that these forces are rapidly gathering for the conflict. The effort to secure a national Sunday law, which will result in the revival of the methods of the Inquisition, is gaining strength. Moreover, some of the leaders have no hesitancy in declaring that those who presume to differ with them have no rights which ought to be regarded. The persecutions that have already taken place under the Sunday laws of certain of the United States give an intimation of what will result when national Sunday laws are enacted. These intimations are emphasized by the fact that leading national reformers do not apologize for these persecutions, but uphold them as righteous acts. Yet severe as are the persecutions which await the people of God, these are doubtless not the greatest dangers that lie before them. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.7}

The apostle Peter, in his description of the false teachers of the last days, says, “For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.” 2 Peter 2:18. At the present time the way is being prepared as never before, for just such deceptions. Spiritualism, under the form of Christianity, is permeating all the churches. So-called “rationalism” is undermining faith in the Bible as the literal Word of God. The popular taste is for amusements of a questionable character, to say the least. The newspapers teem with reports of immoralities, which are nearly always, by the jocular way in which they are described, made to appear comparatively innocent. Thus the moral sense of the reader is unconsciously blunted; and even when brutal crime is reported in all its hideousness, the frequency of it has a tendency to beget that familiarity which destroys loathing for it. Everywhere are the foundations being undermined, and the way being made more easy for the lusts of the flesh to assert themselves. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-8. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.8}

In view of these things, our duty is clear. The injunction in Isaiah 58:1, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins,” must be faithfully obeyed, not in a spirit of Pharisaism, but of humility. The world must be warned of impending danger. The peril of persecution, which threatens the faithful commandment-keepers, must be lost sight of in view of the greater peril which threatens those “who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The people most be shown in kindness the inevitable result of religious legislation. Literature upon this subject must be circulated as freely as the literature which seeks to beguile men. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.9}

The fraudulent methods of the Sunday-law advocates must be exposed, not in any captious spirit, but in order that the unwary may not be deceived. Error must be met with truth. Bitterness of spirit must be met with meekness and humility. Let each worker ever keep in mind the words of the apostle in 2 Timothy 2:24-26: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.10}

But the work is not all to be done for those who are without. The first work must be done for ourselves, by the Spirit of God. The growing skepticism of the age must be guarded against by unswerving devotion to the Word of God, an intelligent love for which is the only safeguard against the sins that so easily beset us. Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And we shall find that the means by which this is accomplished, will, at the same time, prepare the soul for the persecutions that will follow. He who has proved the power of Christ to destroy the power of sin in the flesh, will not lack for strength to endure tribulation. The soul that stands in the evil day, undaunted by the prospect of imprisonment, hunger, loss of friends and property, and even death, will do so only by depending on Christ, of whose sufferings he will be a partaker; and the time to learn that dependence on Christ is now. The- {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.11}

*“faith that will not shrink.
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe.” {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.12}*

is the faith that has been gained in the conflict with self. Let the shield of faith be used with “all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance” (Ephesians 6:18), and the result of the present issue will be eternal victory. {BEST March 1, 1890, p. 74.13}

**“Reasons Against Sunday Laws” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 5, 6.**

E. J. Waggoner

If Sunday were a divine institution, that is, if its observance were a duty which man owed to God, there are two reasons against compelling observance by civil law: 1. It is an insult to God. It says virtually that the Lord’s way is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the case without man’s interference. God requires heart work, free service freely given, with the source of all good motives, a pure heart, behind the deeds. Anything less than this is not acceptable to him, and law and penalties can never compel love. {BEST March 15, 1890, p. 90.1}

2. It is oppressive to those who may not agree with the law-makers. The violator of a Sunday law may be just as conscientious, be just as good a husband, father, neighbor, friend, citizen, in every respect, as the makers of a Sunday law, except in respect of the law under consideration; and in this respect the difference between them is drawn by those, who, being in the majority, are able by the brute maxim, “Might makes right,” to lord it over those who are in the minority, and hence politically weaker. They really put themselves in the place of God by dictating to men religious duty. They show the most overweening selfishness in saying to others, You must do thus and so because we wish you so to do. And unrestrained selfishness in political matters always means tyranny. In the first case it is putting man in the place of God, arrogating to him responsibilities and powers belonging only to God; and in the second place it is transgressing the golden rule, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” No Christian would have an infidel compel him to be an infidel; why do professed Christians seek to compel the infidel to observe a religious institution repugnant to his conscience? If Sunday observance were a divine professed Christians seek to compel the infidel requirement, it is wrong to compel it, for the reasons above given. {BEST March 15, 1890, p. 90.2}

If Sunday is not a divine requirement, it is equally wicked to enforce it. Man has no right, under the second reason given above, to compel his brother to observe any religious institution which he would not be willing his brother should compel him to observe if the circumstances were reversed. All civil Sunday laws, or Sabbath laws, are wicked, and wicked only. {BEST March 15, 1890, p. 90.3}