**“Why Are They Not Seventh-day Adventists?” The Signs of the Times, 8, 46.**

E. J. Waggoner

This question arose not long since, after reading an article in a religious journal, in which the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventists were characterized as “pernicious.” Of course we did not admit for a moment that the doctrines are pernicious, for in that case the above question would have been answered. The journal was an organ of the Methodist denomination, and we at once instituted a comparison between the leading points of faith held by the Adventists, and the views of the Methodists upon the same subject. {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.1}

The distinctive features of the body of Seventh-day Adventists are indicated by the name. Believing that the whole law of God is still binding, they keep the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, the day which God sanctified in the beginning, and gave a place in the fundamental law of his government. Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:8-11; and they are looking for the second coming of the Lord, according to his promise. John 14:1-3. These are the two great truths which make Seventh-day Adventists a separate body of believers. All other points of doctrine that are held by them will be found to depend directly upon these. {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.2}

Without stopping to inquire what there is in these doctrines that is injurious, we at once turned to the Discipline of the Methodist Church to find if the Articles of Faith contained anything that would prevent a member of that church from keeping the Sabbath. Immediately our eye rested upon the following paragraph:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.3}

“The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the Old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; *no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral*.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.4}

This is substantially the same as is found in the Creed of the Church of England, and is similar to that held by the Presbyterians and the principal Protestant denominations. Looking still farther to see just what the Methodist authorities meant by “the commandments which are called moral, we found the following comment of Dr. Clarke on Exodus 20:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.5}

“It is worthy of remark that there is none of these commandments, *nor any part of one*, which can fairly be considered as merely ceremonial. All are moral, and consequently of everlasting obligation...... Through by the incarnation and death of Christ all the ceremonial law, which referred to him and his sacrifice, is necessarily abrogated; yet as none of these ten commandments refers to any thing properly ceremonial, therefore they are not abrogated.... Though Christ is said to have fulfilled the law for us, yet it is nowhere intimated in the Scripture that he has so fulfilled these TEN LAWS as if to exempt us from the necessity and privilege of being no idolaters, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, disobedient and cruel children, murderers, adulterers, thieves, and corrupt witnesses.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.6}

Again, Dr. Clarke in his comments on Matthew 5:17, paraphrases the verse thus: “I am not come to make the law of none effect-to dissolve the connection which subsists between its several parts, or the obligation men are under to have their lives regulated by its moral precepts.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.7}

One more quotation from Dr. Clarke will suffice to show the belief of the Methodists that the law of God is still binding on all men; it is from his comments on Romans 7:13:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.8}

“Thus it appears that man cannot have a true notion of sin, but by means of the law of God. For this, I have already given sufficient reason in the preceding notes. And it was one design of the law to show the abominable and destructive nature of sin, as well as to be a rule of life. It would be almost impossible for a man to have that just notion of the demerits of sin, so as to produce repentance, or to see the nature and necessity of the death of Christ, if the law were not applied to his conscience by the light of the Holy Spirit; it is then alone that he sees himself to be carnal, and sold under sin; and that the law and commandment are holy, just, and good. And let it be observed that the law did not answer this end merely among the Jews, in the days of the apostles; it is just as necessary to the Gentiles, to the present hour. Nor do we find that true repentance takes place where the moral law is not preached and enforced. Those who preach only the gospel to sinners, at best, only heal the hurt of the daughter of my people but slightly. The law, therefore, is the grand instrument in the hands of a faithful minister, to alarm and awaken sinners.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.9}

These testimonies are sufficient, although many more might be given. They show that true Methodism teaches perfect obedience to the whole law of God. And when in that law we read, “The *seventh day* is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; *in it thou shalt not do any work*,” we cannot avoid the conclusion that a Methodist who is consistent with his profession of faith must be an observer of the seventh-day Sabbath; it is absolutely irresistible. A man who was well versed in the Scriptures, and also in the doctrines of the Methodist Church, having been a local preacher in that denomination for many years, one said to us, “A consistent Methodist must be a Sabbath-keeper. I have known that the seventh day is the Sabbath since I was a boy, and I have always held that we Methodists were not consistent with our profession.” Not long after that he decided to be “a consistent Methodist,” as he expressed it, but he soon found out that this involved his leaving the church, which he did. In order to fulfill the vows which he took when he joined the church, and which he had broken for many years, he had to leave the church. A strange affair, truly. {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.10}

We give one testimony from Dr. Barnes, a Presbyterian, to show that the Methodists are not alone in this dilemma. In his comments on Matthew 5:18, he says:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.11}

“The moral law as far such as grow out of the *nature of things*, and which cannot, therefore, be changed-such is the duty of loving God and his creatures. These can never be abolished, as it can never be made right to hate God, or to hate our fellow-men. Of this kind are the ten commandments, and these our Saviour has neither abolished nor superceded.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.12}

And now a few words as to the second point-the Second advent of Christ. Article 3 of the M. E. Church says:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.13}

“Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and... he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.14}

Dr. Clarke, on 1 Thessalonians 4:16, says:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.15}

“*The Lord himself!*-That is, Jesus Christ shall descend from Heaven; shall, in like manner as he was seen by his disciples to ascend; *i.e.*, in his human form; but now infinitely more glorious, for thousands of thousands shall minister unto him; and thousand times ten thousand shall stand before him; for the Son of man shall come on the throne of his glory; but who may abide the day of his coming, or stand when he appeareth?” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 547.16}

Dr. Barnes on John 14:2, 3, says:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 548.1}

“‘*I go to prepare a place for you*.’ By his *going* is meant his death and ascent to Heaven. The figure is here taken from one who is on a journey, who goes before his companions to provide a place to lodge in, and to take the necessary preparations for their entertainment. It evidently means that he, by the work which he has yet to perform in Heaven, would secure their admission there, and obtain for them the blessings of eternal life. That work would consist mainly in his intercession.... ‘*Ye may be also*.’ This was language eminently fitted to comfort them. Though about to leave them, yet he would not always be absent. He would come again at the day of Judgment and gather all his friends to himself, and they should be ever with him.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 548.2}

See also Dr. Barnes’ notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16, where unequivocal testimony is given on this subject. Indeed, there is scarcely any doctrine more universally held than that of Christ’s second coming. There is good reason for this, for there is no truth that is more prominent in the Scriptures. We do not hear it preached very often nowadays, except by a few, but we find it in the writings of all denominations. If we should quote all that has been said and written on the subject, it would fill volumes of the SIGNS. It is very evident that the majority of Protestants, if they were consistent with their profession, would be Seventh-day Adventists. That people are not a sect who are teaching some new thing, some wicked heresy, but they are those who are endeavoring to conform to the original faith. Since, then, the fundamental truths which they hold are those that are taught by the leading men in all Protestant denominations, why are not all Seventh-day Adventists? {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 548.3}

But it may be urged: You teach that the soul is not immortal; that it sleeps between death and the resurrection; that it receives immortality only through Christ; and that none go to heaven at death. That is true, but what is there pernicious in that? Does it not necessarily follow from a belief in the second coming of Christ? Read also the testimonies quoted above. The object of Christ’s coming is to “judge the quick and the dead;” can any hope to go to Heaven before they are judged? He has gone to prepare a place for his followers, John 14:2; would it not be presumptuous to think of going to Heaven before the place is prepared? He said that he would return again, and receive us to himself; how can we get there before he does come for us? Paul says that it is only by his returning that we are able to be for ever with him. A belief in the second coming of Christ, according to the Scriptures, necessarily involves the belief that men do not receive their reward at death. Those who hold the former and reject the latter, are inconsistent. But that all may see that we do not hold this view alone, we quote only one testimony from Dr. Barnes on 1 Thessalonians 4:14:- {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 548.4}

“‘*Which sleep in Jesus*.’ A most beautiful expression.... They do not ‘sleep’ in heathenism, or in infidelity, or in the gloom of atheism-but in the blessed hope which Jesus has imparted. They lie, *as he* did, in the tomb-free from pain and sorrow, and with the certainty of being raised up again. When, therefore, we think of the death of the saints, let us think of what Jesus was in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. Such is the sleep of are pious friends in the grave; such will be our own when we die.” {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 548.5}

It is true that Dr. Barnes says other things contrary to this point, but that does not invalidate this testimony, nor the plain declaration of Scripture. Many good men have held views utterly at variance with the Scriptures and have died in their erroneous belief. Their minds had not been drawn out to fully grasp certain points. But it does not follow that men who have the light, or have the chance to have it, can be saved on account of lack of knowledge. And so the question still remains, Why are they not Seventh-day Adventists? Why do not the churches live up to their published teachings on the law of God, and await with joy the second coming of their Redeemer? Is it because as Dr. Clarke says, that these things have not been applied to their consciences by the Holy Spirit? We will not presume to answer the question; but we will still continue to earnestly we pray that all the honest, who have not been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and all those who are resisting its leading, may be found when the Saviour returns, keeping the “commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” E. J. W. {SITI December 7, 1882, p. 548.6}

**“Why It Is” The Signs of the Times, 8, 47.**

E. J. Waggoner

A man who has been out in a very dark night finds it impossible to see objects distinctly, if he suddenly enters a well-lighted room. It would be just as well, yes, even better, for him if the room were at first only partially lighted, for then his eyes would the sooner accommodate themselves to the changed conditions. So also, a man who has been in a very deep well, or a cave, cannot see when he suddenly finds himself in the blazing sunlight. Everything at first appears in a haze, then the outlines of forms begin to be seen, and finally everything stands out in full relief. {SITI December 14, 1882, p. 559.1}

The same principle holds good in other things. If you should place a work on geometry in the hands of an Indian just from the plains, you could not expect him to understand it. Its figures would convey no meaning whatever to him. Or if you should place a Greek Testament in the hands of a bright Sabbath-school scholar, it would be unintelligible to him, although he might be able to read the English language with ease. But give him a few years’ time, and he would be able to read the Greek. Yet he would not read it readily at first. He would learn the letters, then certain forms and rules, and then he would stumblingly pick out the meaning of a simple sentence. Even if a book were in a child’s own language, and he were unable to read, he would have to acquire a knowledge of it gradually. And so in everything; all knowledge is gradually acquired. {SITI December 14, 1882, p. 559.2}

Now let us apply this principle to another case. We claim that the Bible very plainly teaches that the seventh day is the Sabbath, and that no other day is, or can be, the Sabbath of the Lord. But the question comes up, Why did not all the good of past ages believe and teach thus, if it is Bible doctrine? Why did not the Reformers keep the Sabbath? The question is already answered. For centuries the Catholic Church had had supreme sway. Its policy was to keep men in ignorance, especially of the Bible; that was a proscribed book. Wherever one was found, it was burned by the priest, and the possessor treated as a heretic. The priests themselves knew nothing of the Bible. Even the cardinals and archbishops, the men in highest position in the church, were ignorant of its teachings. They were taught to look upon it as a vile book, and to look to the church for their spiritual knowledge. {SITI December 14, 1882, p. 559.3}

Among the common people the ignorance was of course still greater. There were very few who had ever seen a Bible. If they had seen one, the most of them would have spurned it as a loathsome thing, whose very touch would contaminate. Had they ventured to open its pages, it would have conveyed no more to them than if it were blank, for the Bible had not been translated into the language of the common people. The small portions of the Bible that the church allowed the priests to have, were written in Latin. And even if the Bible had been translated, to thousands it would still have been a blank; for where there is ignorance of the Bible, there is ignorance of the deepest kind. Very few of the people could read; many even of the nobles and princes could not; there was no incentive for them to do so. This was the night, the darkest part of the night; and the darkness, like that of Egypt, could indeed be felt. {SITI December 14, 1882, p. 559.4}

But night does not always last. God’s Spirit was at work in the hearts of men, and that always brings light. There were men who had all the wisdom that schools could bestow. They had been moved to acquire this knowledge by a desire to benefit their fellowmen. And yet in regard to the Bible they were as ignorant as the poorest peasant. But they were anxious to serve God, and Christ says that “if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.” And so these men found the Bible, and, unmoved by the threats of bishops and popes, they translated it and studied it. {SITI December 14, 1882, p. 559.5}

The Reformation gave the Bible to the people; but they could not grasp all its truth at once. Its simplest doctrines were so directly opposed to the teachings of the church, that it took a long time for their minds to comprehend them. The one great point then needed, was to make men understand that the Pope had no power to forgive sin, or to give men license to sin, or to remit the punishment due to sin; works of penance would not suffice to gain the favor of God. “The just shall live by faith,” was the watchword of the Reformation. People must first learn to believe that the Bible, not the Pope, could alone point out the way of life. {SITI December 14, 1882, p. 559.6}

Some of the Reformers had glimpses of still further truth, but not all. The Reformation had only just begun when Luther and his fellow-laborers died. Many grievous papal errors still existed. Other men followed them, who were moved by the same spirit, and now the light began to dawn more brightly, and more and more of the Bible was made clear to men. They had become somewhat accustomed to its rays of light. Some rested content with the little light they had received, and refused to receive any more. But others looked still farther, and were rewarded by finding new treasures. And now a great flood of light shines forth from the sacred page, and men are beginning to endure the sight. But this could not have been done at once, any more than men who have been long confined in a dark dungeon could look at once upon the sun at noonday. And this answers the question, “Why were these things not found out before?” E. J. W. {SITI December 14, 1882, p. 559.7}

**“Second Coming of Christ.—Is it Near?” The Signs of the Times, 8, 48.**

E. J. Waggoner

Not long since a religious journal, in stating some of the things believed by Seventh-day Adventists, said: “The Adventists believe that the coming of Christ will be personal and visible, and may occur at any moment.” The first part of this statement is correct, but as far as Seventh-day Adventists are concerned, the latter part is a mistake. We believe that Christ’s coming will be literal; that he will appear in person in the clouds, with power and glory. In the face of such texts as Acts 1:9-11, and Revelation 1:7, and many others, we cannot believe otherwise. We also believe that his coming is very near; the signs given in Matthew 24 have been fulfilled, and Christ said that when all these things should be seen, we might know that his coming was near, even at the doors, just as surely as the near approach of summer is indicated by the putting forth of leaves in the spring. {SITI December 21, 1882, p. 571.1}

While we know that Christ’s coming is near, we are prevented from setting any time for that event, by the statement, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man.” Those who professed to be able to locate the time are assuming the possession of knowledge which God has expressly declared is not revealed to man. Man has a right to search into anything concerning which God has spoken, but he need not concern himself about those things which God has not made known, or has said cannot be known. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.” Deuteronomy 29:29. {SITI December 21, 1882, p. 571.2}

But although the last prophecy relating to time has long since been fulfilled, there are certain things yet to transpire before the coming of the Lord. By tracing down the lines of prophecy, we can easily tell what yet remains to be accomplished. All the particulars given in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image have been fulfilled, except the last; the stone has yet to smite the image on the feet, and grind all to powder. The same is true of Daniel’s vision related in chapter 7. The four kingdoms indicated by the lion, the bear, the goat, and the dreadful and terrible beast, have passed away. The fourth kingdom was divided into ten, and the little horn, the papacy, has come up and run its career of bloodshed, lawlessness, and blasphemy. His dominion has been taken away, “to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” Verse 26. All of that prophecy that now remains to be fulfilled is that the beast should be destroyed, and his body given to the burning flame, and that “the kingdom and dominion and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” The 2300 days of Daniel 8, at the close of which the Sanctuary was to be cleansed, expired in 1844. Nothing of that chapter remains yet to be fulfilled except the great consummation of all things. {SITI December 21, 1882, p. 571.3}

As far as these prophecies are concerned, we might look for the coming of Christ at any minute; but there is one point in the line of prophecy, contained in Revelation 12-14, that has not yet been fulfilled. We can easily traced it out. All commentators are agreed that the great dragon of Revelation 12 symbolizes pagan Rome; and the leopard beast to whom “he gave his power and his seat and a great authority” Revelation 13:2, represents Papal Rome. These, as has been seen, have had their day. Then “another beast” “coming up out of the earth.” To those who have carefully traced the prophecy down to this point, the conclusion is irresistible that this beast represents of our own country, the United States of America. For a full and detailed exposition of this prophecy, see “Thoughts on Revelation,” and “The United States in the Light of Prophecy,” published at the office of the SIGNS. {SITI December 21, 1882, p. 571.4}

Of this beast it was said that it should make an image to the first beast. This we understand can be done in no other way than by bringing about such a state of things that certain ecclesiastical dogmas shall be upheld, and their observance enforced, by the secular government. This state of things is contemplated by the National Reform Association, which is working for “such a Religious Amendment to the Constitution of the United States as will indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all Christian laws, institutions, and usages on an undeniably legal basis in the very Charter of the Government.” The enforced observance of Sunday as the Sabbath is the main point hoped for by the adoption of this amendment the prophecy plainly indicates that this will yet be accomplished, and that before the coming of the Lord men will actually be persecuted for rendering obedience to the law of God. The spirit to do this now exists, and the power will not be long delayed. The National Reform Association numbers among its members some of the most influential clergymen, statesmen, and jurists in the land, and its ranks are rapidly filling. The Sunday question is beginning to occupy a prominent place in politics; and although it has met with some rebuffs, these only make its friends the more determined. The gigantic proportions which this matter has assumed within a few years, and especially within the last, show that a few years at most will suffice to bring it to completion. When that takes place, the world will have been fully warned, and the harvest of the earth will be reaped. Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Revelation 14:9-15. {SITI December 21, 1882, p. 571.5}

Here, then, is where we stand. We are not momentarily expecting the coming of the Lord, for something still remains to be done. We cannot be deceived by those who set time, because no one can tell how long it will take for the image to be fully set up. Yet we know that it is just at the door, on the threshold, so that the removing of a very thin barrier will cause it to burst on our sight. We have no time to spend in idle conjectures. A work is given us to do, which we must faithfully perform, with watchfulness and prayer, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of Man. E. J. W. {SITI December 21, 1882, p. 571.6}