**“Why Not?” The Signs of the Times, 8, 41.**

E. J. Waggoner

We are constantly told by the adherents to Sunday observance that the main idea of the fourth commandment is rest; that the particular day on which men should rest is of minor importance; that the Lord saw that rest would be a necessity to mankind, and wisely provided for it, but left it for men to determine which day would best suit their convenience. People can worship God just as well on Sunday as on Saturday; and since this is so, it is evident that the day which is most convenient for the majority, is the day which the Lord intended should be kept. {SITI November 2, 1882, p. 488.1}

Thus they argue. Now for a practical application. The President of the United States has appointed Thursday, November 30, as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer. Any individual can plainly see by reading the proclamation, that the greatest stress is laid on the giving of thanks, and that but very little is said in regard to the day on which thanksgiving services should be held. If people are only properly thankful it can certainly make no difference to the President on what day they express their thanks, since there is nothing in the day itself. {SITI November 2, 1882, p. 488.2}

Now, it is a fact that to stop work, and shut up stores on Thursday, Nov. 30, as many good people will feel under obligation to do, will be a great inconvenience. Not only will it be an inconvenience to those who thus rest, but it will seriously interfere with the business of many who do not intend to pay any attention to the President’s proclamation. And since the giving of thanks, and not the observance of any specified day, is the real point of the proclamation, it is evident that its requirements will be fully met if the people meet in their respective churches on Sunday, December 3. That day will be the most convenient for the great majority of the people, and hence it seems clear that the President really designed that the thanksgiving services should take place on that day. {SITI November 2, 1882, p. 488.3}

And further, there may be some eccentric people who will imagine that the President really meant what he said, and will keep the identical day mentioned in the proclamation, thus showing that they are bound by the form, and cannot grasp the spirit of the proclamation. But since such fanatical persons will form only a small minority of the inhabitants of any State, it will be highly proper, and absolutely necessary, that the majority should pass a law compelling all to keep thanksgiving on the third day of December. This will insure uniformity. {SITI November 2, 1882, p. 488.4}

It is true that uniformity of practice might be gained by all uniting to celebrate the day which the President appointed, but since, on account of the inconvenience, all will not do this, it is manifestly better to choose some day upon which nearly all can agree, than to have many people observing no day of thanksgiving whatever. {SITI November 2, 1882, p. 488.5}

And now we ask our Sunday friends if such a course would be obeying the President’s proclamation. Would it be showing proper respect to the Chief Magistrate of the United States? Would it not be putting the will of the governed above that of the ruler? No one will hesitate to say that such a course would be, to say the least, highly disrespectful. And now the question arises, Is not the great Jehovah, the creator of the universe, entitled to be treated with as much respect as the President of the United States? If not, why not? E. J. W. {SITI November 2, 1882, p. 488.6}

**“Death or Translation?” The Signs of the Times, 8, 42.**

E. J. Waggoner

One of Oakland’s most prominent D.D.’s., when announcing the death of the Rev. Thomas Guard, spoke highly of his many good qualities, and said, “Death to such a man is translation.” The thought at once arose, “According to your theory of the condition of man after death, is it any special favor to a man to be translated?” Let us see. The Doctor holds, of course, in common with all so-called orthodox believers, that all men are essentially immortal, and that none cease to exist even when they are said to die; that the wicked go at once to their punishment, and that the good at once enter into a state of never-ending bliss. Now if this were really true, of what benefit would it be to any man to be translated? What better off would one be who was translated, than one would be who had died, except that he might have escaped some of the suffering incident to dissolution? It does not appear that he would gain anything. {SITI November 9, 1882, p. 499.1}

But in the case under consideration the man had actually died, yet the preacher said that his death was equal to translation. The idea conveyed to the mind of the hearer was that since the man had been an unusually good man, he was, according to the preacher’s idea, granted a favor not allowed to ordinary people. If the preacher had been a Catholic, the thing would have been plain enough. Then we would have said, “He means that the man was so pure that he was permitted to enter Heaven at once, without stopping in purgatory to expiate some unconfessed sin. But he was not a Catholic, and so we set the expression down as an instance of the impossibility of accurately describing an erroneous doctrine with the language of Scripture. {SITI November 9, 1882, p. 499.2}

One thing was plain, however, and that was that even to the darkened spiritual understanding of the speaker, the word “translation” expresses something different from what most people finally pass through; something better than death. The Bible alone shows us how it is better and more to be desired. {SITI November 9, 1882, p. 499.3}

The fifth chapter of Genesis contains nearly all that we know of the patriarchs who lived before the flood. The sacred writer has simply given the number of years that they lived, and closes the record of each with the sentence, “And he died.” Only once exception is made; of Enoch it is said that “he was not; *for God took him*.” Paul says of him, “By faith Enoch was translated *that he should not see death*.” Now we see that there is a great deal of difference between death and translation, and that translation is to be preferred to death. It was a great favor that was conferred upon holy Enoch. And how was he favored above the other patriarchs? The answer is found in these words: “For God took him.” The others all died, but God took Enoch. Noah walked with God, but he died; faithful Abraham was called the friend of God, but he also died. And so the record runs. Only one besides Enoch is said to have been translated. {SITI November 9, 1882, p. 499.4}

Now does the Bible mean to convey the idea that Enoch received a special favor in being translated? No one can doubt it. We then ask, “Can the believers in natural immortality tell in what that favor consisted?” If when Enoch arrived in Heaven he found that Adam was already there, by how much was he the gainer? It is clear that in such a case Adam would have been the gainer by fifty-seven years, for he died that long before Enoch was translated. {SITI November 9, 1882, p. 499.5}

But there need be no questioning about the matter. If language means anything at all, the record is clear that God did not “take” those of whom it is said that they died. Paul settles the matter when he closes the long list of tried and faithful ones, with the words: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:29, 30. With a few exceptions, none of the good of past ages have yet entered upon their reward. There is no precedence in point of time. They do not enter Heaven till we do. And how is it finally to be accomplished? There are but two ways, as we may say, of entering Heaven, and death is not one of them. Both are given by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord {SITI November 9, 1882, p. 499.6}

Resurrection or translation are the alternatives. Those who have died cannot be translated, and those who are to be translated cannot have died. And all are to be glorified together: Noah, Daniel, Job, Paul, or the beloved disciple, will be on a level, so far as the time of reward is concerned, with the weakest saint that lived. But when the last great day shall come-that day to which Paul looked with such anxious longing-when the dead are raised incorruptible, and the living are changed to immortality, all can join in the triumphant shout, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” E. J. W. {SITI November 9, 1882, p. 499.7}

**“A Criminal Theology” The Signs of the Times, 8, 43.**

E. J. Waggoner

The *American Baptist Flag* recently contained the obituary notice of an infant, to which the following lines were appended:- {SITI November 16, 1882, p. 511.1}

*“Asleep in Jesus,
Oh so young.
Yet the Lord has said
‘Suffer them to come.’” {SITI November 16, 1882, p. 511.2}*

We have no disposition to criticize the so-called “poetry,” but to call attention to the implied comment on the well-known words of Christ, “Suffering little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” It has never occurred to us that there could be more than one meaning attached to this verse. In it Christ shows his care for the children, and indicates that even the little ones may believe on him, and he will receive them; that they are nearer the kingdom than any others, for all must become as little children before they can enter therein. {SITI November 16, 1882, p. 511.3}

But now a new idea is presented. A little one has died; it is, as the writer says, “asleep in Jesus.” In the popular mind, however, the Bible never means what it says, and when it says that the dead are “asleep,” it is taken for granted that it means that they are alive and more acutely conscious than they ever were on earth. According to this writer, people “come to Jesus,” only when they die. {SITI November 16, 1882, p. 511.4}

Paraphrasing Matthew 19:14 to express the view thus taught, it would read, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to die,” etc. No one can deny that this is a legitimate rendering, according to popular notions. The idea expressed in the lines quoted is, Do not prevent the children from dying, for Jesus has invited them to come to him, and that is the only way they can get there. And then the inference might easily be drawn that it would be a pious deed to quietly help them off, or in other words, to kill them. {SITI November 16, 1882, p. 511.5}

This is written with no irreverence, except for the false doctrine which makes such an interpretation of Scripture possible. To be sure, natural affection causes the majority of people to take care of the children as much as possible, and there is implanted in the natures of all an instinctive dread of death, which no amount of false teaching about the benefits which death confers can eradicate. Still there are instances where persons of weak minds have been led to destroy their children, in order that they might sooner enter upon the bliss of Heaven. And who that believes as the writer of that obituary notice does, could say that they were not right? Believing that the ten commandments are abolished, and that death “is but the voice which Jesus sends to call departing friends to his arms,” why should they hesitate to enter upon a war of extermination, and slay all the righteous? We are glad that people are often more consistent in their practices than in their theories otherwise the scenes of the papal persecution would be outdone by an immolation from love of the victims. {SITI November 16, 1882, p. 511.6}

We have no sympathy for a doctrine which makes Herod a benefactor of the race, and gives to Satan the key of Heaven. The word of God is pure, and the one who strictly follows it cannot be guilty of inconsistency either in faith or practice. But error is always inconsistent with itself, and the man who adopts one error, is driven to the acceptance of a hundred more. E. J. W. {SITI November 16, 1882, p. 511.7}

**“Christian Advocate on Sabbath-Keeping” The Signs of the Times, 8, 44.**

E. J. Waggoner

Our readers will remember that a little more than two years ago the editor of the SIGNS published a series of articles in review of a Sunday book by Dr. Benson. In that review the demerits of the book were plainly shown. At that time, it was stated that the book was not noticed on account of any strength of argument which it contained, but because it was endorsed by the leading men in the Methodist denomination on this coast. The book itself was one of the weakest things ever put into print; its assertions had not enough of the semblance of reason to be dignified by the name of sophistries. The California *Christian Advocate* has been repeatedly called on to defend the obviously untrue statements of that book, together with another Sunday book, or else to cease circulating them; but it has contented itself with an occasional advertisement of the book, and wisely refrained from attempting to substantiate any of its assertions. But at last it has spoken, and here’s what it says:- {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.1}

“Our friend who wishes something on the Sabbath day, will find Dr. Benson’s little work very good.” {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.2}

We do not know that we can seriously dissent from this statement. We must judge of the value of a thing by the use for which it is intended. An instrument that is of no use for one purpose, may be well adapted for another. A plow would be of no account as a vehicle for pleasure riding, but it is a very serviceable farming implement. So Dr. Benson’s book is utterly useless for the purpose of showing the truth on the Sabbath question, or converting any one to Sunday observance; but it is as good as is required for satisfying those who are determined to keep Sunday, and want somebody to assure them that they are right. The Sunday side of the Sabbath question does not admit of Bible argument, and, consequently, assertions are all that can be brought to bear in its favor. Dr. Benson’s book is profuse with these; therefore, we see no reason why it is not as good as could be desired. But the *Advocate* proceeds thus:- {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.3}

“We wish to state two things: 1st. We believe it is impossible to show that in the latitude of Egypt, Sinai, or Palestine, Christians do not keep the original, identical Sabbath day as Moses and Joshua kept it.” {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.4}

We care very little for what the *Advocate* “believes,” but would very much like to learn something about what it knows. We know and can prove that neither the Christian Sunday of Egypt, Sinai, or Palestine, nor those of any other century, who observe the first day of the week, keep the original, identical Sabbath day as Moses and Joshua what kept it. Will the *Advocate* undertake to prove that they do? It is a very easy way to pass the whole thing by, and say, “We believe it is impossible to show” that certain things are not so, but that does not begin to show that they are so. Moreover, the *Advocate* itself does not believe that the Christians of Egypt, Sinai, or Palestine, who keep the first day of the week, keep the original Sabbath that Moses kept. This can easily be shown. The latitude of these places is also that of California. Then if first-day Christians there keep the original Sabbath that Moses kept, the first-day Christians here must also keep the original Sabbath. The *Advocate’s* statement concedes this. If that is so, what mean the sneers so frequently found in Dr. Benson’s book and in the *Advocate*, against the Seventh-day Adventists for keeping the “Jewish Sabbath”? Moses was a Jew, and if they are keeping the same day that he did, they must be keeping the Jewish Sabbath, and we some other day. {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.5}

Again, not long since the *Advocate* said in regard to Sunday, “We cannot sustain it before the people, if we claim its sanctity as a religious institution.” In this we think it spoke the truth; but if Sunday be the original Sabbath day as kept by Moses, why cannot it be sustained as a religious institution?It must be the fault of its defenders, for the Bible abounds in evidence as to the sacredness of the original Sabbath day. {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.6}

Once more, Christians of every latitude and nation, claim to keep the first day of the week in honor of Christ’s resurrection. We agree with them that Christ rose on the first day of the week; but will they seriously claim that they are keeping the seventh day to commemorate any event that took place on the first? No; they all claim that the Sabbath was changed at that time from the seventh to the first day of the week. But on the day that Jesus lay in the tomb, the day immediately preceding his resurrection, the disciples rested, “according to the commandment.” Luke 23:56. That was the original Sabbath day as kept by Moses, and was the same day that Seventh-day Adventists keep. We can prove this in the following manner: The Jews, who made no change in their religious practices, but continued to observe the seventh day, observe the same day of the week that we do. Shortly after the resurrection they were scattered abroad, and are now found in every civilized land; but there is no disagreement as to the day of the week. The day that they keep is not the day that is kept by the majority of Christians. The Mohammedans observe Friday, not as a Sabbath, but as a festival day, and in Egypt and Palestine, they celebrate their day the day before the Jews celebrate their Sabbath. And the great body of so-called Christians, comprising the Catholic, Greek, and Protestant churches, unite in the observance of Sunday in honor, as they say, of Christ’s resurrection, and there has never been any clashing between them and the Jews or the Mohammedans. {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.7}

When Sunday-keepers make the claim that they are keeping the original seventh day, they virtually give up the whole argument. For it is equivalent to saying that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, the original seventh day, is the only true Sabbath, and is still binding; and since no one has ever proved that Sunday is the seventh day, and could not if they should try, all can see at once that they are standing on nothing. The assertion is made solely for the purpose of confusing the minds of those who are not well-informed on the subject, and who do not wish to take the trouble to think for themselves. But we will read farther:- {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.8}

“2nd. To keep one and the same time all over the earth, for worship and rest, is a physical impossibility, and it is not now and never has been, and never can be so kept, and every intelligent man must and does know it. Therefore, God did not intend to make, and did not make, any law requiring exactly the same time to be kept by all.” {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.9}

“Who is this that darkeneth counseled by words without knowledge?” Who ever claimed that it was a possibility to keep one and the same time all over the earth? Not Seventh-day Adventists, we can assure him. But that it is possible to keep *the same day* in all parts of the earth, we know that and are assured of. Our knowledge is based upon reason and experience. We know that there are Sabbath-keepers in America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. We know people who have visited each of these countries, and have never met with any difficulty. Wherever they went they were agreed with the inhabitants as to the days of the week. Moreover, we never knew of anyone who found any difficulty. A trip from this country to Europe is as common a thing nowadays as a trip from New York to Chicago, but we never learn that those who go way keeping Sunday come back keeping some other day. Away back in the Dark Ages, before Columbus ventured across the Atlantic Ocean, when men thought that the earth was flat, and dared not go out of sight of land for fear they might never return, there would have been an excuse for people thinking that the same day could not be observed in all parts of the world; but for a person in this enlightened age, who has had the privilege of our common schools, who is old enough to vote, and who even presumes to talk on politics and religion,-for such a one to make the above the assertion, is the quintessence of silliness. We are inexpressibly thankful that our religion does not oblige us to make such inane claims in its defense. {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.10}

We close with these propositions: God, who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, made man. His intention was that man’s descendants should inhabit, not one place merely, but the whole of the earth. Isaiah 45:18; Acts 17:24-26. He also at the close of his creative work sanctified the seventh day as a rest-day for man. Genesis 2:2, 3. That is, he set it apart and made it holy, and commanded men to observe it. He formally repeated this commandment, together with others, on Sinai, twenty-five hundred years after creation. In neither place did he limit its application to any particular people or any particular locality. The other commandments are conceded on all sides to be of universal obligation. We can see no reason why the Sabbath commandment is not of universal obligation also; for it is no where stated that it was to be an exception. Besides, Paul, says that the law, in which this Sabbath commandment is contained, was made “for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,” etc. 1 Timothy 1:9, 10. He also says that “the Scripture hath concluded all under sin.” Galatians 3:22. There is no spot on this earth where these sins are not committed. By these texts we think we are fully justified in saying that God did intend to make, and did make, a law requiring the same day-the seventh day-to be kept by all, the editor of the *Advocate* among the rest. When the *Advocate* quits dodging the point, and says squarely that God did not make any law requiring the same day to be kept by all, we have a few more propositions for its consideration. E. J. W. {SITI November 23, 1882, p. 523.11}

**“How Readest Thou?” The Signs of the Times, 8, 45.**

E. J. Waggoner

A correspondent of the *Sabbath Recorder* has asked that paper the question, “What is the difference between Seventh-day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists?” The *Recorder* states the principal points of difference, but on two points it seems to misapprehend the position Adventists. In this article we will notice one of these points, because it is one which concerns all, and it involves the interpretation of the Scriptures.The *Recorder* says:- {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 535.1}

“These different views grow, mainly, out of different means of interpreting the Scriptures. The Adventists interpret everything literally. The Seventh-day Baptists recognize the fact that Scripture language is often ‘highly figure and must be interpreted accordingly.’” {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 535.2}

As far as the last sentence is concerned, we are one with our Seventh-day Baptist brethren. We know that Scripture language is at times very highly figurative. No sane person who is ever read the Bible could think otherwise. For instance, the twelfth chapter of Revelation is plainly figurative. No one can suppose that that chapter is an account of a literal woman being pursued by a literal dragon, or that any literal dragon withdrew literal stars from Heaven with his tail. But by reference to the book of Daniel we learn that beasts are used to represent earthly governments, Daniel 7:17; 8:20, 21; and when we come to the thirteenth of Revelation and find that the dragon gave to a certain beast his “power, and his seat, and great authority,” Revelation 13:2, we cannot do otherwise than conclude that this dragon is also used to represent an earthly government. So also with the beast. We do not believe that a literal beast had a mouth speaking great things, and opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, or that any wild animal would pursue the saints of God in preference to sinners. These things plainly show that this beast represents a blasphemous, persecuting, earthly power. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 535.3}

Such instances of figurative language might be given infinitely, but these are sufficient to show that Seventh-day Adventists recognize the fact that the Bible does contain figurative of language. A more important consideration is, by what rule to interpret the Bible. This is not so difficult a matter as most people suppose. There is not a book of any importance in the English language, or in any other, that does not contain figures. There is not an individual who does not use figures in his daily conversation. Yet we have no difficulty in understanding them. Now we think that the Bible has the advantage of all the books in its use of figures, and for this reason: It is the language of inspiration, and, consequently, there is harmony throughout; its figures are never confused; but men are liable to change and often use figures entirely inappropriate. The Bible, then, may be understood as well as any other book. No one who believes that it is a revelation from God to man can doubt this; for it would be folly to give a communication that could not be understood. If it could not be understood, it would not be a revelation. The following simple rules of interpretation will guide to a correct understanding of the Scriptures: {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 535.4}

1. Accept a statement as literal, unless it is plainly figurative. If there is any absurdities in the statement when interpreted literally, or if it would not harmonize with other parts of Scripture, then it must be a figure. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.1}

2. Figures that are in common use must be interpreted as they would be in any other book; give them their most obvious meaning. Any word in the Bible has the same meaning that it has anywhere else, unless the sense requires that it should be understood as figurative. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.2}

3. When a figure is used, if its meaning is not obvious, an explanation will be found either in connection with it or in some other part of the Bible. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.3}

4. When we have found the correct meaning of a figure, or that which a symbol represents, we can substitute this meaning for that figure or symbol, and it will make good sense. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.4}

5. When we have the correct understanding of any passage, however figurative the language may be, it will not contradict any other part of the Bible, figurative or literal; there will be harmony throughout. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.5}

6. If after a prophecy is fulfilled we find that it corresponds in every particular with the events which our principles of interpretation would lead us to expect, then we may know that our rule is correct, and we may confidently apply the same principles of interpretation to those parts of the prophecy which are yet to be fulfilled. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.6}

7. And most important of all, we must *believe* that the Bible is the word of God, and that as such it must be true in every particular, and, consequently, perfectly harmonious. This belief must be so strong that it amounts to absolute knowledge. Enough of the Bible has been fulfilled to demand such faith. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.7}

These rules will, we think, guide to a correct knowledge of the Scriptures. A few illustrations may be given. Thus: When it is stated that Job had seven thousand sheep, or that lambs were to be offered in sacrifice, we understand that literal sheep and lambs are meant. But when Christ said to Peter, “Feed my sheep, and “Feed my lambs,” we have no difficulty in understanding that he desired Peter to have a care for his disciples, and to encourage and strengthen them. The fact that Christ calls himself the Shepherd, and his followers a flock, confirms this. When Daniel speaks of seeing a goat, Daniel 8:5, 8, we readily conclude from the context that a literal goat is not meant, and when we come to the 21st verse we find the explanation given. We read both in Daniel and in Revelation that the beast continued a certain number of days. We conclude that these are not literal days for two reasons. 1. They are used with reference to beasts, which are plainly declared to symbolize kingdoms. 2. The number of days indicated would, if literal, be an insignificant length of time for any kingdom to retain power, and the kingdoms there brought to view did actually exist for a much longer period. Having found the days to be symbolical, we search the Scriptures, and find that a day in prophetic language represents a year. Numbers 14:33, 34; Ezekiel 4:6. We then read these days as years and find that they represent a reasonable length of time for a government to last; and when we consult history, we find that these nations did actually hold power a number of years equal to the number of days mentioned in the prophecy. Thus our chain of reasoning is complete and our mode of interpretation is established as correct beyond the shadow of a doubt. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.8}

And so we might go on in giving examples of interpretation. There are in the Bible many things “hard to be understood,” but it is not impossible to understand them. “If any of the lack wisdom, let him ask of God, .... and it shall be given him.” James 1:5. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.” John 7:17. Unaided human reason cannot grasp the meaning of the Scriptures; but a sanctified judgment, one that is directed by the Spirit of God, can understand. See 1 Corinthians 2:4-16. E. J. W. {SITI November 30, 1882, p. 536.9}