**“‘We Have Abraham to Our Father’” The Signs of the Times, 17, 14.**

E. J. Waggoner

“And think not to say within yourselves. We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Matthew 3:9. These are the words which John the Baptist spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism. These men were corrupt at heart. Their character is described by our Saviour himself in Matthew 23:13-33, where they are said to have outwardly appeared righteous, while within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Both John the Baptist and our Saviour called them vipers. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 98.4}

These men were lineal descendants of Abraham, and were of the stock of Israel, but they had lost the spirit of Israel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Hebrews 11:13. They did not expect their portion in this life, nor an earthly inheritance; but they looked for a city from heaven, and an inheritance in the new earth, wherein righteousness alone should dwell. 2 Peter 3:13. And they knew that the possession of righteousness would be the only passport to that heavenly inheritance. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 98.5}

The Pharisees, on the other hand, had ceased to look for a Messiah who should finally reign over a righteous nation, and who should prepare subjects for that kingdom by cleansing them from sin. They did not look at their hearts, which were corrupt, but only on the outward appearance, which was fair. Consequently, seeing no sin in themselves, they felt no need of a Saviour. And so they came to John’s baptism, not because they felt any need of flying from the wrath to come, but because they thought that by enrolling themselves in the ranks of the new leader, whose coming John announced, they would be sure of places of honor in the coming kingdom. They expected that that kingdom would bring simply emancipation from the Roman yoke, and would place the Jewish nation in the seat of dominion over the whole world; and they had not the slightest doubt but that they would have a place in the kingdom, because they were children of Abraham. Their sole anxiety was to have as high a place as possible. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 98.6}

John saw through their mask of hypocrisy, and told them that they need not flatter themselves that they were children of Abraham. The promise to Abraham and to his seed would be fulfilled, but sooner than count them as the seed of Abraham, God would raise up children unto Abraham out of the stones of the ground. The inheritance was promised to Abraham, not because God regarded his person or his descent as superior to that of other men, but because he had the righteousness of faith. Consequently, those who are counted as heirs with him must be men of like character. It certainly would not be just to accept Abraham solely because of his faith in God, and to accept others solely on account of their parentage. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 98.7}

Afterward, when Christ was talking to the wicked Jews, he said, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” John 8:39. The apostle Paul also says, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:29. The Pharisees who came to John to be baptized thought that the fact that they could prove their descent from Abraham would insure them a place in the kingdom of Christ; but Paul shows that they had turned the matter around. They could only prove themselves children by bringing forth such works of repentance as would show them to be Christ’s. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 98.8}

There are many to-day who have as erroneous ideas of the kingdom of Christ as the Pharisees and the Sadducees had. There is a large party called the National Reform Association, whose members think that Christ’s kingdom is going to be established at the polls, by the votes of men. And they imagine that they are sure of a place in that kingdom, because they can trace their ancestry back to the Covenanters, or some of the Reformers. They forget that the Reformers did not follow the multitude, but took the Bible for their guide, as far as its truths were revealed to them, and that in following its teachings they suffered untold hardships. The Reformers became such solely because their love for God and his truth was so great as to lead them to endure privation and to be considered as outcasts. And yet these men imagine that they can ride into the kingdom of God on the top wave of popularity. How terribly mistaken they will some day be. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.1}

The kingdom of Christ is promised only to the true Israel, but the true Israel are only those “whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Romans 2:29. Those who will be great in that kingdom must be content to be small here; and whosoever will be chief, must be a servant; “even as the Son of man [the King himself] came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28. He was in the form of God, and had all glory and honor, yet when he saw the lost world, he did not think his glory was a thing to be desired, so he laid it all aside, and “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” Philippians 2:7-10. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.2}

“The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.” Let none therefore imagine that he is going to get into the kingdom on the strength of a profession, nor because he is a descendant of the Reformers, nor a member of a large and influential church organization. Let none think that he can be more favored than the King, and can obtain the kingdom by any other means than humble self-denial and a godly life. Neither let any think that Christ’s reception of the kingdom depends on them. He receives his kingdom from the Father (Psalm 2:7-9; Daniel 7:13, 14), and will admit into it only those who upon the foundation of faith have built a superstructure of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Peter 1:5-11). E. J. W. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.3}

**“In Christ We Have All Things” The Signs of the Times, 17, 14.**

E. J. Waggoner

[Extract from a discourse, at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Battle Creek, Mich., March 22, 1891, by Elder E. J. Waggoner.] {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.4}

“What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Take this verse and read it, and commit it to memory, and then remember to say, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” Revelation 12:11. And remember that Christ gave the example of defeating Satan by the word of the testimony; every time the temptation came, he said, “It is written.” So when the clouds of darkness come, and the thick darkness gathers around, just say, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” And God *is* for us, as is shown in that he gave Christ to die for us, and raised him again for our justification. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.5}

There is peace in the thought that God works out all things after the counsel of his own will, and that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Then it does not matter what comes against us, for in that it comes against us, it comes against the purpose of God, and that is as sure and firm as the existence of the Almighty can make it. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.6}

Now who is against us? Satan is against us. That does not make any difference if he is. Satan has tried his power with Christ, and it has proved itself to be nothing. “All power in heaven and earth is given to me,” says Christ. Then if all power has been given to Christ in heaven and in earth, and it has been given, where is there any left for Satan?—There is none. In a contest with Christ, Satan has no power; so if we have Christ for us, nothing can be against us. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.7}

Some of us have been talking about the power of Satan in the past; but he has none, there is none left for him. Technically speaking, Satan is against us. Who is he?—“The prince of the power of the air.” He brings pestilence, he brings disease, he puts things in our way, and arrays them against us. But the very things which he arrays against us to work our ruin, God takes and makes for us. They are all good. We often sing:— {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.8}

*“Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me.
Secure of having Thee in all.
Of having all in Thee.” {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.9}*

But we often sing things that we do not believe at all. Now I would not have anyone sing these things any less, but I would have you believe them more. It is often the case that if you believe them more. It is often the case that if you took the words from the music, and put them into plain prose, there would not be anyone in a whole congregation who would believe or dare to say them. Let us believe them, not because they are in the hymn, but because they are Bible truth. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.10}

We are like the people who are represented by the prophet Ezekiel: “Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against [about] thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, everyone to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord.” That is it,—they say, Come, let us go to meeting, and hear the sermon. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.” Ezekiel 33:30-32. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.11}

I say that a great many of these truths are just a song to many people. They hear them and are interested in them, and then pass on, but they do not believe or do them. But the Lord has given them for us, to both believe and to do, and they will be our strength. So everything works for good to them that love God. We cannot always see how, or tell how, but God has said it, and we know it is so. There are many things that we cannot tell why we believe, and to our very senses they do not appear to be so; but the very fact that God has promised that if we do believe them they will be so makes them so, when we take hold and believe them. We can never know this till we do believe; but when we do believe, then we will know. So if God be for us, who can be against us? {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.12}

Think of that lone prophet of God, Elisha. He was down in Samaria; the mountains were all around him. A whole host of armed men had come to take him. He stood alone with his servant, and that servant was afraid. He did not think in that moment, nor did he say, that the king of Israel ought to send a troop of horse, or some infantry, to defend him. The young man came to him, and said, “Alas, my master! How shall we do?” Elisha prayed, “Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes.” And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire round about. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.13}

The whole mountain and plain were filled with chariots and horses, and any one of them was stronger than the whole host of the enemy. It is as true in our case as in that of Elisha that “they that be for us are more than they that be against us,” and the only thing for us to do is to get our eyes open so that we may see that this is so. What opens our eyes?—The word; it is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path, and if we believe it, we will know that they that are for us are more than they that are against us. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 106.14}

He who is with us is the living God of Israel, who has power to turn darkness into light, and weakness into strength; and every evil thing that comes against us, he turns into a blessing to help us on our way. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 108.1}

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Why will he with Christ also give us all things?—Because all things are in him. Note Ephesians 1:23, “Which is his body, the fullness of *him that filleth all in all*. {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 108.2}

He that hath put on Christ is “strengthened with all might.” Why?—Because God has placed Christ “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” Therefore everything is in Christ. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He has all power given him in heaven and in earth. Do you not see that, this being the case, it is a foregone conclusion that when God gave Christ for us, and freely delivered him up for us all, in him he does give us all things? {SITI April 6, 1891, p. 108.3}

**“Safety in the Time of Trouble” The Signs of the Times, 17, 15.**

E. J. Waggoner

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Isaiah 33:14. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 108.4}

This text is to some a stumbling-block in the way of their believing that the wicked are to be utterly and eternally destroyed. The difficulty arises from the supposition that the prophet means, Who of us shall suffer from the devouring fire, or, in other words, Who of us shall in the last day be found sinners? But that is not the idea of the text. The true meaning is found when we read the answer to these questions, which is found in verse 15: “He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” From this we learn that the prophet does not mean to ask who among us shall be sinners, but who among us shall be righteous. And therefore, when he says, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” he does not mean to ask who shall be punished with this fire, but who shall escape it. Thus the text has no reference whatever to eternal torment. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 108.5}

But the question will be asked, How can it be said that the righteous shall dwell with devouring fire and with everlasting burnings? This will be understood after we have quoted a few texts. The Psalmist, speaking of the coming of the Lord, says, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.” Psalm 50:3. And again, “A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies around about.” Psalm 97:3. In Habakkuk 3:3-6, we find the following: “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand; and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow; his ways are everlasting.” From the sixteenth verse of this chapter we learn that this is the description of the time of trouble that shall just precede the coming of the Lord. It is the same that is referred to in the ninety-first psalm, where we read of the “terror by night,” the “pestilence that walketh in darkness,” the “destruction that wasteth at noonday,” and the plagues which the wicked shall suffer, and which the righteous will see, although they shall be unharmed by them. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 108.6}

Now if with these texts we read Joel 1:15-20, which also describes the time of trouble, we shall understand about the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings. That text reads thus:— {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 108.7}

“Alas for the day for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O Lord, to thee will I cry; for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee; for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.” Read also Joel 2:1-3. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 108.8}

We find from this text that just before the coming of the Lord there is a time of trouble for the wicked, in which there is pestilence, and plagues, and devouring fire; and that the righteous witness these plagues that are poured out upon the wicked, but are protected. The enemies of the Lord will be consumed by the devouring fire, but those who are described in Isaiah 33:15 will be able to dwell with everlasting burnings. Of such a one Isaiah says, “He shall dwell on high;” David says, “He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” While the meat is cut off because the corn is withered, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, “Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.” And while the wicked behold only a desolate wilderness, he “shall behold the land that is very far off.” This last reference also show that the time of the everlasting burnings is before the coming of the Lord. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 114.1}

The thirty-fourth chapter of Isaiah gives the result of this time of trouble. There it is said of the earth that “the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch” (verse 9); and to show that it is the same everlasting burnings that accomplish this, verse ten says: “It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.” Now, to show that even this is limited in duration, and that the fire ceases to burn when that upon which it feeds is consumed, read the next chapter, especially the first two verses: “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.” {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 114.2}

Happy indeed will be the lot of the man who in that awful time of trouble can say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust.” They who in this day of salvation wash their robes of character, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, can say in that day when God stands and measures the earth, scattering the everlasting hills, and causing the perpetual hills to bow: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Psalm 46:1-3. Who would not wish for such confidence in a time when fearfulness surprises the hypocrites? E. J. W. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 114.3}

**“What We Gain by Being in Christ” The Signs of the Times, 17, 15.**

E. J. Waggoner

[Extract from a discourse, at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Battle Creek, Mich., March 22, 1891, by Elder E. J. Waggoner.] {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 114.4}

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3. “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Peter 1:2-4. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 114.5}

Christ has all power, and he *hath* given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Notice that the past tense is used. This has been done for us. Then why don’t we have them?—For just one reason,—because we don’t take them. We have been mourning for so long, and saying that we want these things; well, we can have them, they have been given to us, and there is no reason why we should not appropriate them to ourselves. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 114.6}

Suppose I come to you and say that I am very hungry, and that I would like something to eat. “All right,” you say, “just sit down here to the table, and we will get something for you.” Soon you place the best of what you have on the table, and tell me, “There it is, and now eat.” But I say, “Oh, I am so hungry, and I do want food so much!” “All right, take it and eat.” “But I am so hungry, and I do want something to eat; I have not had anything for days.” “Well, take it.” “Yes, but I do want food so bad.” You would say that I was out of my mind if I acted that way, and did not eat of the food that was so freely placed before me. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 114.7}

Said one to me the other night, “If that is the way that the Lord does with these blessings that pertain to life and godliness, we are certainly foolish that we do not take them; but I do not think that the illustration is a fair one, because we cannot see these things that the Lord has to offer, and we can see the food.” Neither do I think that it is a fair illustration, because it does not half fill the bill. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 115.1}

Have you not often thought you saw something that you did not see? Does not your sight often deceive you? Sometimes you thought you saw a thing that you did not see, and then again you saw things that when you came to look at them closely, were not as they really appeared to be. But the word of God never deceives. Therefore I am more sure of the things promised in the word of God than if I could see them. “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.” Romans 4:16. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 115.2}

“The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:18. We must revise our logic a little in this matter. We think that anything that we can see is all right and sure. Therefore we get hold of a house or a piece of land or some other property, and think that we have something, because there is in our possession something that we can see. But the truth of the matter is that the only things that we can depend on are the things that we cannot see. We can see the earth, and we can see the heavens, but they are going to pass away. “But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Peter 1:25. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 115.3}

With the Psalmist we can say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” Psalm 46:1-3. Can we say that? Brethren, that time is coming. The earth will reel to and fro like a drunken man, and be removed like a cottage, and the mountains will skip away, and pass over into the ocean. That is going to happen, and there will be some people at that time who will feel perfectly calm and trustful; but they will not be composed of man and women who have never learned to say that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. The man that doubts God now will doubt him then. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 115.4}

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? That promise includes *all*. “Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. This is not in the future. All things are yours at the present time. Everything is ours, and therefore we can say with the Psalmist, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.” {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 115.5}

Yes, we have everything; we are children of the King, of the Most High. What difference does it make if people do not own us? God owns us, and he knows us; and therefore, if men heap on us reproach and persecution, the only thing we can do is to pity them, and labor for them, for they do not know the riches of the inheritance. {SITI April 13, 1891, p. 115.6}

**“Effects of Erroneous Opinions” The Signs of the Times, 17, 16.**

E. J. Waggoner

It is very common for those who are quite loose in their belief, or who do not believe much of anything, to ease their consciences by saying, “God will never condemn a man on account of his opinions; it is how a man lives that determines his condition at last.” How these people acquired such intimate knowledge of God’s plans, so as to be able to speak so definitely of what he will or will not do, is not apparent, for it is very evident from the Bible that a man’s opinions have a good deal to do in deciding his final destiny. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 115.7}

It seems never to occur to those who use the expression quoted above, that they are strangely inconsistent with themselves. The very ones who use such language will speak very slightingly of one who “has not the courage of his convictions,” that is, one who holds opinions which he dare not act out. Such a man they justly accuse of leading a double life; and yet they seem to think that God will be perfectly satisfied with a man who leads such a life. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 115.8}

But the great mistake is in supposing that a man can hold opinions which will not to a greater or less extent influence his actions. The statement by Watts, the “the mind’s the standard of the man,” is but another way of expressing the truth uttered by Solomon that as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he.” A man cannot entertain vile thoughts and still have all his actions pure. Neither can a man entertain erroneous opinions without acting in accordance with them, unless his circumstances hinder him; and in that case he is entitled to no more credit than the thief in prison is to be commended for not stealing. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 115.9}

In times past people have suffered severely on account of their opinions. When Paul says, “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace,” he says in effect that the inhabitants of Jericho perished because they believed not. If they had believed, they might have been saved as well as the harlot Rahab. But they were of the opinion that their gods were stronger than the God of Israel. Somebody might have said to them, “It doesn’t make any difference what ideas you have about God; it is your actions that will determine your final lot.” But their ideas of God had everything to do in shaping their actions, and their erroneous ideas led them into practices which caused their ruin. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 115.10}

Again we read of the children of Israel: “For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he [Christ] grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Hebrews 3:16-19. Here we have the plain declaration that it was the unbelief of the Israelites that shut them out of the promised land. “They could not enter in because of unbelief.” But would they not have been allowed to enter in if they had not sinned?—Certainly; and they would not have sinned but for their unbelief. Their sin was a necessary consequence of their unbelief. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 115.11}

How was it with the inhabitants of Sodom? When Lot, who believed the warnings of the angels, went out to tell his relatives that God was going to destroy the city, “he seemed as one that mocked.” They regarded him as a fanatic; very likely they thought he was losing his mind, and would have to be cared for. But the Lord did destroy the city, and all those who disbelieved perished with it. It was their opinion that they were safe enough, and in consequence of their erroneous opinion they perished. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 115.12}

We may learn a lesson from them. Indeed, their case is recorded for our admonition. Christ says: “As it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” Luke 17:28-30. All over the land the coming of the Lord is being proclaimed. The sure word of prophecy foretells that his coming is now very near. Yet these things are to thousands as idle tales. Those who preach the nearness of the second advent are regarded as fanatical. It is the common opinion that the world is just in its infancy. Men say, “Well, it doesn’t make any difference how we believe in regard to the coming of the Lord, if we only live right.” But still the truth exists that only “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Hebrews 9:28. Why will this be so?—Simply because those who do not believe that his coming is near at hand, will not be getting ready for it. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 122.1}

Let no one delude himself with the idea that he has “a right to his own opinions,” and that he can believe what he pleases and still be safe at last. It is true that so far as other men are concerned he has a right to his own opinions; that is, he is not answerable to any man for what he believes; but all men are answerable to God for their opinions. No man has a right to hold an opinion contrary to what God has revealed in his word. And those who will cling to their self-assumed right to believe what they please, will find at the last that it was a dearly-bought privilege. Among those who “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” the *unbelieving* occupy a prominent place. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” E. J. W. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 122.2}

**“The Working of the Mystery of Iniquity” The Signs of the Times, 17, 16.**

E. J. Waggoner

Among ancient church Fathers, Origen stands at the head. Mosheim says that he “unquestionably stands at the head of the interpreters of the Bible of this [the third] century;” and Farrar says of that century and the one following, that “half the sermons of the day were borrowed, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, from the thoughts and methods of Origen.” This being the case, it becomes a matter of the greatest importance, in studying the change that took place in the church, to know what were the thoughts and methods of Origen, especially in regard to the Bible. These we find very plainly set forth in the first chapter of his fourth book, “*De Principiis*,” in which he treats of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Having stated his theory of the “threefold sense” of Scriptures, he says, in section 15:— {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 122.3}

“But since, if the usefulness of the legislation, and the sequence and beauty of the history, were universally evident of itself, we should not believe that any other thing could be understood in the Scriptures save what was obvious, the word of God has arranged the *certain stumbling-blocks,* as it were, *and offenses, and impossibilities, should be introduced into the midst of the law, and the history*. In order that we may not, through being drawn away in all directions by the merely attractive nature of the language, either altogether fall away from the (true) doctrines, as learning nothing worthy of God, or, by not departing from the letter, come to the knowledge of nothing more divine. And this also we must know, that the principal aim being to announce the ‘spiritual’ connection in those things that are done, and that ought to be done, where the Word found that things done according to the history could be adapted to these mystical senses, he made use of them, *concealing from the multitude the deeper meaning*; but where, in the narrative of the development of super-sensual things, there did not follow the performance of those certain events, which was already indicated by the mystical meaning, the Scripture *interwove in the history (the account of) some event that did not take place, sometimes what could not have happened, sometimes what could, but did not*. And sometimes a few words are interpolated which are not true in their literal acceptation, and sometimes a larger number. And a similar practice also is to be noticed with regard to the legislation, in which is often to be found what is useful in itself, and appropriate to the times of the legislation; and *sometimes also what does not appear to be of utility;* and *at other times impossibilities are recorded* for the sake of the more skillful and inquisitive, in order that they may give themselves to the toil of investigating what is written, and thus attain to a becoming conviction of the manner in which a meaning worthy of God must be sought out in such subjects.” {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 122.4}

In order that the reader may see a practical illustration of Origen’s thoughts and methods in regard to the Bible, we quote further, from section 16:— {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 122.5}

“*Nor even do the law and the commandments wholly convey what is agreeable to reason*. For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? And the first day was, as it were, also without a sky? And who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden, towards the east, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting of the fruit by the bodily teeth obtained life? And again, that one was a partaker of good and evil by masticating what was taken from the tree? And if God is said to walk in the paradise in the evening, and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, *the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally*.... And the attention reader may notice in the Gospels innumerable other passages like these, so that he will be convinced that in the histories that are literally recorded, circumstances that did not occur are inserted. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 122.6}

“And if we come to the legislation of Moses, *many of the laws manifest the irrationality*, and others the impossibility, of their literal observance.” {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.1}

When we are told that Origen stood at the head of Scripture interpreters of his age, the question naturally arises, With such a view of the Bible, what need was there of interpretation? Why not let the Bible go entirely? It would, indeed, have been better if Origen had utterly repudiated the Scriptures, instead of undermining their authority while professing to believe them. But before we call attention to the inevitable result of such teaching, we wish to quote a short passage from another renowned Father of the same school, namely, Clement of Alexandria. Says he:— {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.2}

“For many reasons, then, the Scriptures hide the sense. First, that we may become inquisitive, and be ever on the watch for the discovery of the words of salvation. Then it was not suitable for all to understand, so that they might not receive harm in consequence of taking in another sense the things declared for salvation by the Holy Spirit. Wherefore the holy mysteries of the prophecies are veiled in parables—preserved for chosen men, selected to knowledge in consequence of their faith; for the style of the Scriptures is parabolic.”—*Miscellanies, book 6, chap. 15.* {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.3}

We have not quoted these things for the sake of holding those men up to reproach, but that the reader may learn a lesson from the past that will keep him from wandering from the right way at the present time. Let us, therefore, see what was the inevitable result of such teaching in regard to the Bible. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.4}

First, the acceptance of these views naturally tended to discourage the common people from attempting to study the Scriptures. Why should they trouble themselves to try to understand a book that was purposely couched in language that none but philosophers could understand? So Neander tells us that as early as the time of Clement of Alexandria there were those who, when exhorted not to follow certain heathen practices, replied: “We cannot all be philosophers and ascetics; we are ignorant people; we cannot read; we understand nothing of the Holy Scriptures; why should we be subjected to such rigorous demands?” {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.5}

Second, the key of knowledge being thus taken away, the people would naturally take men for their authority, instead of the Bible. Not only would they unquestioningly accept the statements of men as to the meaning of Scripture, but, not having any incentive to read the Bible for themselves, they would soon have no knowledge of its contents, except as retailed to them by their teachers. And in a short time the Bible would sink entirely out of sight, and those self-constituted interpreters of the Bible would stand in its stead. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.6}

Third, human reason being thus placed above the Scriptures, and put in place of them, there would necessarily arise a demand for some ultimate authority, to whose decision final appeal could be made. For, while the common people were resting with calm and unthinking confidence in the superior knowledge of their philosophical teachers, those teachers, having each one supreme confidence in his own wisdom, would naturally fall to disagreeing among themselves. Thus, from this setting up of human reason above the Bible, arose church councils and finally an infallible pope. Thus the Saviour’s statement that the truth of God was revealed unto babes, was ignored; and the Scriptures being by a natural process removed from the people, there was nothing to hold them, and gross immorality and licentiousness inevitably resulted. And this tide of evil, instead of being checked by knowledge in the sciences and the arts, was rather accelerated by it. The truth of the words of Paul concerning the heathen was again demonstrated:— {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.7}

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man; ...wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts.” Romans 1:22-24. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.8}

In the above recital the reader can see that we have simply traced in brief the rise of the Papacy, with all of its abominations. But what of it? What similar danger is imminent at the present time, which we may avoid by considering the above facts? The story is quickly told, and the thoughtful reader will see that the saying is as true as it is trite, that “history repeats itself.” E. J. W. {SITI April 20, 1891, p. 123.9}

(*Concluded next week.*)

**“The Working of the Mystery of Iniquity. (Concluded.)” The Signs of the Times, 17, 17.**

E. J. Waggoner

A short time ago Union Theological Seminary, of New York City, one of the principal Presbyterian theological seminaries in this country, founded a new professorship of Biblical Theology, to which it called Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., who has for a long time occupied the chair of Hebrew in the same institution. Professor Briggs is a very learned man, a natural teacher, and one who has through his natural and acquired gifts an unbounded influence over the young men with whom he comes in contact. As a theologian he occupies a high place. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.10}

On taking the chair, Professor Briggs delivered an inaugural address, on the subject of “The Authority of the Scriptures,” and the New York *Independent* of January 29 contained an authorized syllabus of it, from which we extract a few leading points. The first paragraph is as follows:— {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.11}

“Divine authority is the only authority to which man can yield implicit obedience. There are historically three great fountains of divine authority: 1. The Bible. 2. The Church. 3. The Reason.” {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.12}

Here we see that the Bible is made only once source of divine authority, and the church and human reason are put on a level with it, and both are regarded as divine. Thus the way is opened for men to reject the simple statement of the Bible whenever it conflicts with human reason. The Bible is not to be the instructor and guide of reason, but reason is to be the judge of the Bible. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.13}

Again, after speaking of the superstition of “Bibliolatry” as equal to that of Mariolatry, he says, “The divine authority is not in the style or in the words, but *in the concept*.” That is, the authority lies not in the Bible itself, but in what the learned teacher conceives concerning it; and since different teachers have different conceptions, we shall have many different standards of divine authority, necessarily requiring that there shall be some ultimate tribunal, as a pope or a council. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.14}

The fourth barrier to the Bible is given as follows:— {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.15}

“*Inerrancy*.—This confronts historical criticism. There are errors in the Scriptures which no one has been able to explain away, and the theory that they were not in the original text is sheer assumption, upon which no mind can rest with certainty. The Bible itself nowhere makes this claim. The creeds of the church nowhere sanction it. It is a ghost of modern evangelicalism to frighten children.” {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.16}

Here again we have human reason exalted above the Bible. On what grounds is it claimed that there are errors in the Bible?—On the same grounds on which Origen made the same claim, namely, that there are things in it that are not agreeable to human reason. This being admitted, it follows that the number of errors claimed to be in the Bible will differ according to different men’s conception of it. Thus again the Bible ceases to be even one source of divine authority, and fallible human reason becomes supreme. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.17}

Finally, to pass by other things, Dr. Briggs says:— {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.18}

“The neglect of the church as a means of grace retards the rise of the Bible itself as a means of grace, and dulls our sensitiveness to the presence of God. The reason has also its rights, its place, and importance in the economy of redemption. *I rejoice in the age of rationalism*, with all its wonderful achievements in philosophy. I look upon it as preparing men to use their reason in the last great age of the world. It is impossible that the Bible and the church should ever exert their full power until the human reason, trained and strained to the utmost, rise to the heights of its energies and reach forth after God and his Christ. Let us remove every incumbrance out of the way of a new life; the life of God is moving Christendom; the spring-time of a new age is about to come upon us.” {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.19}

But to this “new age” the words of the wise man will most aptly apply: “Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.” Ecclesiastes 1:10. And that time which this “new age” will be like is the Dark Ages. Like causes invariably produce like effects. The exaltation of human reason above the Bible, by ancient “Christian philosophers,” notably Origen and Clement, resulted directly in the Papacy and the destroying of the Bible; Professor Briggs stands on the same ground that they did; and just in proportion as such views become popular, will the same results follow. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 123.20}

It is a sad fact that, although Professor Briggs’ views have met with a hearty protest from many religious journals, notably the *Independent*, those views are gaining in popularity. Professor Briggs is not the only theological professor who holds such loose views concerning the inspiration and authority of the Bible; and a very few men in places where the young men resort, who are to mould the thought of the people at large, can soon cause their loose ideas to permeate the great mass of people. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.1}

It is time for people to awake. While many are watching the progress of religious legislation, and tracing in it a likeness to the growth of the Papacy, few realize that the great danger lies primarily and chiefly in the growing disrespect to the Bible as the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice, and the tribunal to which human reason must yield. Many men who will fight to the last every semblance of religious legislation will, because of their neglect of the Bible, or disregard for it, suffer themselves unconsciously to be bound in the most cruel religious despotism. Let them cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. “To the law, and to the testimony.” The Bible not only contains the truth, but is itself the whole truth, and the only truth that makes free. He who acknowledges its authority, who studies it prayerfully, seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit, and who hides it within his heart, esteeming it more than his necessary food, will alone know true religious liberty, and be saved from the foolish ignorance which will engulf even the most learned who trust in their own reason. E. J. W. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.2}

**“Judged by the Law” The Signs of the Times, 17, 17.**

E. J. Waggoner

[Synopsis of a discourse on the first part of Romans 2, by Elder E. J. Waggoner, at the late General Conference.] {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.3}

The first chapter of Romans, after its introduction, can be summarized as the condition of man without God, and how he gets in that condition. The cause of this condition can be stated in one word-unbelief {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.4}

Coupled with unbelief is self-exaltation; with faith, humility. They lost God, “because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Verse 21. They attributed everything to *themselves*, and as *self* was advanced, faith in God decreased, till thy were in the darkness of idolatry. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.5}

Men, in the days of Plato, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, taught what they called moral science; Confucius taught moral precepts. But what they all lacked was to tell men how to do what they taught to be right. Even these men who taught moral science and virtue were themselves practicing the things they condemned, and coming far short of doing what they set forth as moral duty. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.6}

While those teachers tell us what to do, but fail to give us power to do it, the religion of Jesus Christ not only makes known what is right, but gives us ability to perform that which is good. Thus when Christ is not woven into the teaching, the very effort to teach morals is simply the old pagan science of morals, which is immorality. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.7}

All admit that the State should not teach Christianity; but some say we must teach morals without it. Moral science aside from Jesus Christ is immorality; it is sin. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.8}

The works of the flesh are clearly stated in the last part of chapter one. These are found in every individual that has not been converted to Christ; we denounce the heathen for doing these things, but “there is no respect of persons with God” (Romans 2:11), and he condemns those things in us just the same, and shows us that we are no better than they. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.9}

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” Romans 2:1. Whoever knows enough to condemn the evils of the heathen is condemned himself, for he does the same things. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.10}

The first part of Romans 2:1 may be summed up in, God is no respecter of persons. He will render to *every man according to his deeds*. In the judgment nothing is taken into account but a man’s works. “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give *every man according as his work* shall be.” Revelation 22:12. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward *every man according to his works*.” Matthew 16:27. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.11}

The character of the works shows the amount of faith in Christ. A simple profession will not do. “Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” God does not respect our person or profession. We may call ourselves Christians, and pretend to keep the law, and pity the poor heathen, but God classes all together who fail to have good works. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.12}

“As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” Romans 2:12. This with the verses following shows that the law is the standard by which ever man in the world will be judged. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.13}

But what is it to keep the law?—It is to keep all its precepts; our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, which was only an outward form. If we hate, it is murder (Matthew 5:22); if we have impure thoughts, it is adultery (verse 28); if we have an impure heat, we violate all the rest of the law. We may be ever so strict in outward Sabbath observance, and adhere closely to the outward obligations of all the rest of the law, but an impure heart renders every act sinful. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.14}

“When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” Romans 2:14. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.15}

God has by various agencies placed enough light in the heart of every man to lead him to know the true God. Even nature itself reveals the God of nature. And if a man in the darkest heathenism has a desire to know the true God, he will, if necessary, send a man around the world to give him the light of truth. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.16}

So every man that is finally lost will have rejected light that, if cherished, would have led him to God. {SITI April 27, 1891, p. 130.17}