

## The Sunday Law Movements

For over 100 years, Seventh-day Adventists have anticipated Sunday legislation in fulfillment of end-time prophecy. In 1888, a Sunday law movement arose in America, but it died. The time was not yet. Today, many among us doubt whether such a prediction will ever occur. Haven't times changed? Yes, they have, but God's "sure word of prophecy" (King James Version, 2 Peter 1:19) hasn't. We must open our eyes, for a Sunday law movement has again resurfaced—led by Pope Francis—and daily grows in strength.

By the time you read this, Pope Francis has already arrived in America for speeches in Washington D.C., New York, and Philadelphia. As you are about to see, this Pope is pushing Sunday, and he isn't alone. This article is designed to be a valuable resource for Adventists. With divine insight, Ellen White wrote in "The Great Controversy" that eventually:

... as the question of enforcing Sunday observance is widely agitated, [and] the event so long doubted and disbelieved is seen to be approaching, [then] the third message will produce an effect which it could not have had before (605).

We are told that "Those who place themselves under God's control, to be led and guided by Him, will catch the steady trend of the events ordained by Him to take place" (White, RH, Aug. 5, 1902). Notice this steady trend:

- And on the Seventh Day We Rested? (Time, July 25, 2004).
- Tightrope: Better take a break [keep Sunday], or you'll break down (USA Today, Oct. 25, 2007).
- German Court Enforces Day of Rest (ABC News, Dec. 3, 2009).
- Slow Sunday: The simple solution to global warming. "Using Sunday as a day of rest and renewal would be good for our personal health as well as the health of the planet" (The Guardian, Sept. 17, 2009).
- Let's Make Sunday a day of rest, for God's sake (FoxNews.com, April 22, 2012).
- Keeping stores open on Sunday is not beneficial for society: Pope Francis (NY Daily News, July 6, 2014).
- Pope: No Work Sundays Not Just for Faithful (Fox News, July 5, 2014, same story).
- Arizona State Senator: Make Sunday Church Attendance Mandatory (CNN, March 27, 2015).
- Sunday as a Mark of Christian Unity (Lord's Day Alliance of the U.S., April, 2015).
- Capitalism's War on the Sabbath [Sunday] (Patheos, Sept. 7, 2015).

The "leopard-like beast" described in Revelation 13:1,2, "unquestionably points to the papacy" (White, GC 439). "The light we have received upon the third angel's message is the true light. The mark of the beast is exactly what it has been proclaimed to be" (White, 6T 16). "...[W]hen Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome ... will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—"the mark of the beast" (White, GC 449).

Momentum picked up on June 18, 2015, with the release of Pope Francis's 184-page encyclical on "climate change" entitled "Praised Be You: On the Care of Our Common Home." Section 237 states, "Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which

heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world” (emphasis added). The same day this encyclical was released, President Obama declared:

I welcome His Holiness Pope Francis's encyclical, and deeply admire the Pope's decision to make the case—clearly, powerfully, and with the full moral authority of his position—for action on global climate change ... I believe the United States must be a leader in this effort ... ” (White House Press Release, June 18, 2015).

Prophecy is being fulfilled. Pope Francis represents the first beast of Revelation 13:1, whereas President Obama represents the second beast (13:11). Revelation 13:11-17 informs us that in the closing moments of time, the second beast (USA) will promote the first beast (the Papacy), and finally enforce its “mark.” In the above statement, President Obama stated that America “must be a leader” to implement the Pope’s suggestions in his encyclical—an encyclical that encourages the world to keep Sunday.

Significantly, an interreligious, grass roots movement is now seeking to influence public opinion to support the Pope’s encyclical. This has also resulted in increased Sunday law agitation:

### **Should Sunday Trading Be Reformed?**

South News, Aug. 12, 2015

A spokesman for campaign Keep Sunday Special, made up of faith groups, retailers and unions, said that there was concern not just because of the religious principle of the Sunday rest, but also for the effect on family and community life with those who work on Sundays not able to make up the time spent away from their children.

**The Religion of Climate Change:** Lending the power of the pulpit to the cause of environmental politics (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 6, 2015). “Some 170 evangelicals—pastors, religion professors, nonprofit directors and others—sent an open letter to the president ‘to offer our support and encouragement for your efforts to overcome the climate challenge’ ... This teaming up of church and state on environmental issues has become common.”

**California Resolution in Praise of Pope Francis Encyclical (July 16, 2015).** The State of California recently voted to support the Pope’s encyclical. “Sen. Jim Nielsen (R-Gerber) called the resolution ‘a classic example of mixing church and state.’” The encyclical states that grass roots movements should “... bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power ...” (Francis, Praised Be, Section 206). This is happening now. Notice carefully:

... [papal] doctrines are exerting their influence in legislative halls, in the churches, and in the hearts of men ... in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance (White, GC 581, 592).

The Pope’s strategy is brilliant, and devilish. In his encyclical he creates this dichotomy: on the side of evil he places “out-of-control” capitalism, selfish consumerism, idolatrous profits, greed, exploitation of “our common home” (the earth), and neglect of the poor; while on the side of good he places the proper care of our environment, concern for the poor, respect for God, family values, the need for rest, and keeping Sunday as part of his global solution to our human crisis.

The global influence of Pope Francis is reflected in this article, “Why the Pope Matters” (Huffington Post, Aug. 20, 2015). “There is no other religious, entertainment or political leader alive today who could garner anywhere near the kind of response inspired by the pope.” God’s word predicts, “All the world marveled and followed the beast” (New King James Version, Revelation 13:3).

**Critical Points about the Third Angel’s Message of Revelation 14:9-12:** 1) It is to be proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists with a “loud voice” (see White, 9T 19), 2) Plainly exposes “the beast” (the Papacy), its “image” (in America), and its deadly “mark” (enforced Sunday observance, contrary to God’s law), 3) Warns of God’s just judgments unmixed with mercy poured out into “the cup of His indignation,” 4) Jesus Christ our Creator (John 1:3,10) drank this very same “cup” in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39) and on the cross—which places Christ, His love, His cross, and His mercy in the midst of the Third Angel’s message, 5) exalts “the commandments of God” (the Ten Commandments, God’s law of love which shows sinners their sins and need of a Savior; Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24), 6) and uplifts “the faith of Jesus.” “What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel’s message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin pardoning Saviour ... faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus” (White, 3SM 172). Thus “justification by faith” from the pending “wrath of God” through faith in Christ’s blood (see Romans 5:9) is “the third angel’s message in verity” (White, EV 190). The “mark of the beast” is essentially a permanent stamp of commandment breaking upon one’s character. Forgiven, justified saints love Jesus Christ, and by His power, they keep His law (see John 14:15).

**Proper positioning before the public:** “We should endeavor to disarm prejudice by placing ourselves in a proper light before the people. We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to restrict liberty of conscience” (White, 5T 452). Seventh-day Adventists should stress: 1) That we are defenders of globally recognized moral principles as defined by the Ten Commandments, 2) that papal principles deny salvation by grace through simple faith in Jesus Christ alone, and 3) that the papacy, by its very nature as a church/state union, opposes liberty of conscience. Thus we are defenders of morality, the gospel, and of religious freedom. This will disarm prejudice and create favorable impressions, 4) We must teach “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) and reveal Jesus Christ’s compassionate character.

**Another key headline:** “Pope Francis: Sundays are a gift from God – don’t ruin it” (Catholic News Agency, August 12, 2015). “Francis pointed to Sundays as a particularly important time for rest, because ‘in them we find God’” (emphasis added). He stressed this in the context of his September 26 speech in Philadelphia at the World Meeting of Families. Thus there is no doubt that stressing Sunday is high on the Pope’s agenda.

**Conclusion:** A grassroots “I Love Sundays” campaign leading to a September 20 “National Back to Church Sunday” offers additional evidence that what Seventh-day Adventists have been expecting for so long is “at the doors.” Truly, “the time is at hand!” Revelation 22:10. While we should not set dates, or act like mere alarmists, “those who place themselves under God’s control, to be led and guided by Him, will catch the steady trend of the events ordained by Him to take place” (White, RH Aug. 5, 1902, emphasis added).

Related quotations from Ellen White:

We must proclaim the third angel's message ... We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment. Unfurl your colors to meet the case of men and angels. Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise (White, Manuscript 16, 1890).

But although we are to stand firm as a rock to principle, we should be courteous and Christ-like in our dealings with all men. In meekness and love we should tell the people why we cannot accept the papal Sabbath, because it is a mark of special dishonor to God, whom we love and worship (White, RH, Feb. 7, 1893).

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position, and join the ranks of the opposition (White, GC 608)

But the days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor (White, 5T 79).

Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict (White, PK 725).