

Sunday Laws

Satan's Challenge to God's Authority

God denounces Babylon "because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." . . .

God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh, sanctifying this day, and setting it apart from all others as holy to Himself, to be observed by His people throughout their generations. But the man of sin, exalting himself above God, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself to be God, thought to change times and laws. This power, thinking to prove that it was not only equal to God, but above God, changed the rest day, placing the first day of the week where the seventh should be. And the Protestant world has taken this child of the papacy to be regarded as sacred. In the Word of God this is called her fornication [Rev. 14:8].--7BC 979 (1900).

During the Christian dispensation the great enemy of man's happiness has made the Sabbath of the fourth commandment an object of special attack. Satan says, "I will work at cross purposes with God. I will empower my followers to set aside God's memorial, the seventh-day Sabbath. Thus I will show the world that the day sanctified and blessed by God has been changed. That day shall not live in the minds of the people. I will obliterate the memory of it. I will place in its stead a day that does not bear the credentials of God, a day that cannot be a sign between God and His people. I will lead those who accept this day to place upon it the sanctity that God placed upon the seventh day."--PK 183, 184 (c. 1914).

The Sabbath the Great Point at Issue

In the warfare to be waged in the last days there will be united, in opposition to God's people, all the corrupt powers that have apostatised from allegiance to the law of Jehovah. In this warfare the Sabbath of the fourth commandment will be the great point at issue, for in the Sabbath commandment the great Lawgiver identifies Himself as the Creator of the heavens and the earth.--3SM 392 (1891).

"Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep," the Lord says, "for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Ex. 31:13). Some will seek to place obstacles in the way of Sabbath observance, saying, "You do not know what day is the Sabbath," but they seem to understand when Sunday comes, and have manifested great zeal in making laws compelling its observance.--KC 148 (1900).

The Sunday-Law Movement in the 1880s

[1. FOR HELPFUL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MORE EXTENSIVE E. G. WHITE QUOTATIONS, SEE SELECTED MESSAGES , BOOK 3, PP. 380-402, AND TESTIMONIES FOR THE CHURCH , VOL. 5, PP. 711-718.]

We have been looking many years for a Sunday law to be enacted in our land, and now that the movement is right upon us, we ask, What are our people going to do in the matter? . . . We should especially seek God for grace and power to be given His people now. God lives, and we do not believe that the time has fully come when He would have our liberties restricted.

The prophet saw "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Another angel, ascending from the east, cried to them, saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

This points out the work we now have to do, which is to cry to God for the angels to hold the four winds until missionaries shall be sent to all parts of the world, and shall have proclaimed the warning against disobeying the law of Jehovah.--RH Extra, Dec. 11, 1888.

Sunday-Law Advocates Do Not Realise What They Are Doing

The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. . . . They are working in blindness. They do not see that if a Protestant government sacrifices the principles that have made them a free, independent nation, and through legislation brings into the Constitution principles that will propagate papal falsehood and papal delusion, they are plunging into the Roman horrors of the Dark Ages.--RH Extra, Dec. 11, 1888.

There are many, even of those engaged in this movement for Sunday enforcement, who are blinded to the results which will follow this action. They do not see that they are striking directly against religious liberty. There are many who have never understood the claims of the Bible Sabbath and the false foundation upon which the Sunday institution rests. . . .

Those who are making an effort to change the Constitution and secure a law enforcing Sunday observance little realise what will be the result. A crisis is just upon us.--5T 711, 753 (1889).

Not to Sit in Quietude, Doing Nothing

It is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger. . . . A vast responsibility is devolving upon men and women of prayer throughout the land to petition that God may sweep back this cloud of evil, and give a few more years of grace to work for the Master.--RH Extra, Dec. 11, 1888.

Those who are now keeping the commandments of God need to bestir themselves that they may obtain the special help which God alone can give them. They should work more earnestly to delay as long as possible the threatened calamity.--RH Dec. 18, 1888.

Let not the commandment-keeping people of God be silent at this time as though we gracefully accepted the situation.--7BC 975 (1889).

We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience. Fervent, effectual prayer should be ascending to heaven that this calamity may be deferred until we can accomplish the work which has so long been neglected. Let there be most earnest prayer and then let us work in harmony with our prayers.--5T 714 (1889).

There are many who are at ease, who are, as it were, asleep. They say, "If prophecy has foretold the enforcement of Sunday observance the law will surely be enacted," and having come to this conclusion they sit down in a calm expectation of the event, comforting

themselves with the thought that God will protect His people in the day of trouble. But God will not save us if we make no effort to do the work He has committed to our charge. . . .

As faithful watchmen you should see the sword coming and give the warning, that men and women may not pursue a course through ignorance that they would avoid if they knew the truth.--RH Extra, Dec. 24, 1889.

Oppose Sunday Laws by Pen and Vote

We cannot labour to please men who will use their influence to repress religious liberty and to set in operation oppressive measures to lead or compel their fellow men to keep Sunday as the Sabbath. The first day of the week is not a day to be revered. It is a spurious sabbath, and the members of the Lord's family cannot participate with the men who exalt this day and violate the law of God by trampling upon His Sabbath. The people of God are not to vote to place such men in office, for when they do this they are partakers with them of the sins which they commit while in office.--FE 475 (1899).

I do hope that the trumpet will give a certain sound in regard to this Sunday-law movement. I think that it would be best if in our papers the subject of the perpetuity of the law of God were made a specialty. . . . We should now be doing our very best to defeat this Sunday law.--CW 97, 98 (1906).

The United States Will Pass a Sunday Law

When our nation shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery.--5T 712 (1889).

Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the papacy. By a national act enforcing the false sabbath they will give life and vigour to the corrupt faith of Rome, reviving her tyranny and oppression of conscience.--Mar 179 (1893).

Sooner or later Sunday laws will be passed.--RH Feb. 16, 1905.

Soon the Sunday laws will be enforced, and men in positions of trust will be embittered against the little handful of God's commandment-keeping people.--4MR 278 (1909).

The prophecy of Revelation 13 declares that the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns shall cause "the earth and them which dwell therein" to worship the papacy--there symbolised by the beast "like unto a leopard." . . . This prophecy will be fulfilled when the United States shall enforce Sunday observance, which Rome claims as the special acknowledgement of her supremacy. . . .

Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth, and even in free America rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favour, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance.--GC 578, 579, 592 (1911).

Arguments Used by Sunday-Law Advocates

Satan puts his interpretation upon events, and they think, as he would have them, that the calamities which fill the land are a result of Sundaybreaking. Thinking to appease the wrath of God these influential men make laws enforcing Sunday observance.--10MR 239 (1899).

This very class put forth the claim that the fast-spreading corruption is largely attributable to the desecration of the so-called "Christian sabbath" and that the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the morals of society. This claim is especially urged in America, where the doctrine of the true Sabbath has been most widely preached.--GC 587 (1911).

Protestantism and Catholicism Act in Concert

Protestantism shall give the hand of fellowship to the Roman power. Then there will be a law against the Sabbath of God's creation, and then it is that God will do His "strange work" in the earth.--7BC 910 (1886).

How the Roman church can clear herself from the charge of idolatry we cannot see. . . . And this is the religion which Protestants are beginning to look upon with so much favour, and which will eventually be united with Protestantism. This union will not, however, be effected by a change in Catholicism, for Rome never changes. She claims infallibility. It is Protestantism that will change. The adoption of liberal ideas on its part will bring it where it can clasp the hand of Catholicism.--RH June 1, 1886.

The professed Protestant world will form a confederacy with the man of sin, and the church and the world will be in corrupt harmony.--7BC 975 (1891).

Romanism in the Old World, and apostate Protestantism in the New, will pursue a similar course toward those who honour all the divine precepts.--GC 616 (1911).

Sunday Laws Honour Rome

When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result. . . .

The enforcement of Sundaykeeping on the part of Protestant churches is an enforcement of the worship of the papacy. . . .

In the very act of enforcing a religious duty by secular power, the churches would themselves form an image to the beast; hence the enforcement of Sundaykeeping in the United States would be an enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image.--GC 445, 448, 449 (1911).

When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvellous working of Satan and that the end is near.--5T 451 (1885).

Rome Will Regain Her Lost Supremacy

As we approach the last crisis it is of vital moment that harmony and unity exist among the Lord's instrumentalities. The world is filled with storm and war and variance. Yet under one

head--the papal power--the people will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses. This union is cemented by the great apostate.--7T 182 (1902).

Laws enforcing the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath will bring about a national apostasy from the principles of republicanism upon which the government has been founded. The religion of the papacy will be accepted by the rulers, and the law of God will be made void.--7MR 192 (1906).

A day of great intellectual darkness has been shown to be favourable to the success of popery. It will yet be demonstrated that a day of great intellectual light is equally favourable for its success.--4SP 390 (1884).

In the movements now in progress in the United States to secure for the institutions and usages of the church the support of the state, Protestants are following in the steps of papists. Nay, more, they are opening the door for the papacy to regain in Protestant America the supremacy which she has lost in the Old World.--GC 573 (1911).

A National Sunday Law Means National Apostasy

To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for a Sunday law....By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness. . . .

As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached.--5T 451 (1885).

We must take a firm stand that we will not reverence the first day of the week as the Sabbath, for it is not the day that was blessed and sanctified by Jehovah, and in reverencing Sunday we should place ourselves on the side of the great deceiver....

When the law of God has been made void and apostasy becomes a national sin, the Lord will work in behalf of His people.--3SM 388 (1889).

The people of the United States have been a favoured people, but when they restrict religious liberty, surrender Protestantism, and give countenance to popery, the measure of their guilt will be full, and "national apostasy" will be registered in the books of heaven.--RH May 2, 1893.

National Apostasy Will Be Followed by National Ruin

When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land, and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin.--7BC 977 (1888).

It is at the time of the national apostasy when, acting on the policy of Satan, the rulers of the land will rank themselves on the side of the man of sin. It is then the measure of guilt is full. The national apostasy is the signal for national ruin.--2SM 373 (1891).

Roman Catholic principles will be taken under the care and protection of the state. This national apostasy will speedily be followed by national ruin.--RH June 15, 1897.

When Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state. There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin.--Ev 235 (1899).

When the state shall use its power to enforce the decrees and sustain the institutions of the church--then will Protestant America have formed an image to the papacy, and there will be a national apostasy which will end only in national ruin.--7BC 976 (1910).

Universal Sunday Legislation

History will be repeated. False religion will be exalted. The first day of the week, a common working day, possessing no sanctity whatever, will be set up as was the image of Babylon. All nations and tongues and peoples will be commanded to worship this spurious sabbath. . . . The decree enforcing the worship of this day is to go forth to all the world.--7BC 976 (1897).

As America, the land of religious liberty, shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honour the false sabbath, the people of every country on the globe will be led to follow her example.--6T 18 (1900).

The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict in which all the world will act a part.--6T 352 (1900).

Foreign nations will follow the example of the United States. Though she leads out, yet the same crisis will come upon our people in all parts of the world.--6T 395 (1900).

The substitution of the false for the true is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal God will reveal Himself. When the laws of men are exalted above the laws of God, when the powers of this earth try to force men to keep the first day of the week, know that the time has come for God to work.--7BC 980 (1901).

The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God, the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal God will reveal Himself. He will arise in His majesty to shake terribly the earth.--7T 141 (1902).

The Whole World Will Support Sunday Legislation

The wicked . . . declared that they had the truth, that miracles were among them, that angels from heaven talked with them and walked with them, that great power and signs and wonders were performed among them, and that this was the temporal millennium that they had been expecting so long. The whole world was converted and in harmony with the Sunday law.--3SM 427, 428 (1884).

The whole world is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh-day Adventists because they will not yield homage to the papacy by honouring Sunday, the institution of this antichristian power.--TM 37 (1893).

Those who trample upon God's law make human laws which they will force the people to accept. Men will devise and counsel and plan what they will do. The whole world keeps Sunday, they say, and why should not this people, who are so few in number, do according to the laws of the land?--Ms 163, 1897.

The Controversy Centres in Christendom

The so-called Christian world is to be the theatre of great and decisive actions. Men in authority will enact laws controlling the conscience, after the example of the papacy. Babylon will make all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Every nation will be involved. Of this time John the Revelator declares: [Rev. 18:3-7; 17:13, 14, quoted]. "These have one mind." There will be a universal bond of union, one great harmony, a confederacy of Satan's forces. "And shall give their power and strength unto the beast." Thus is manifested the same arbitrary, oppressive power against religious liberty--freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience--as was manifested by the papacy, when in the past it persecuted those who dared to refuse to conform with the religious rites and ceremonies of Romanism.--3SM 392 (1891).

In the great conflict between faith and unbelief the whole Christian world will be involved.--RH Feb. 7, 1893.

All Christendom will be divided into two great classes--those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark.--GC 450 (1911).

As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom and religious and secular authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration.--GC 615 (1911).

As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government, and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places.--GC 626 (1911).

Show No Defiance

Those who compose our churches have traits of character that will lead them, if they are not very careful, to feel indignant, because on account of misrepresentation their liberty in regard to working on Sunday is taken away. Do not fly into a passion over this matter but take everything in prayer to God. He alone can restrain the power of rulers. Walk not rashly. Let none boast unwisely of their liberty, using it for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" [1 Pet. 2:17].

This advice is to be of real value to all who are to be brought into strait places. Nothing that shows defiance or that could be interpreted as maliciousness must be shown.--2MR 193, 194 (1898).

Refrain From Work on Sunday

In regard to the Southern field,[2. SUNDAY-LAW ENFORCEMENT WAS ESPECIALLY SEVERE IN THE SOUTHERN STATES IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE 1880S AND 1890S. SEE AMERICAN STATE PAPERS (REVIEW AND HERALD, 1943), PP. 517-562.] the work there must be done as wisely and carefully as possible, and it must be done in the manner in which Christ would work. The people will soon find out what you believe about Sunday and the Sabbath for they will ask questions. Then you can tell them, but not in such a manner as to attract attention to your work. You need not cut short your work by yourself labouring on Sunday. . . .

Refraining from work on Sunday is not receiving the mark of the beast. . . . In places where the opposition is so strong as to arouse persecution, if work is done on Sunday, let our brethren make that day an occasion to do genuine missionary work.--SW 69, 70 (1895).

If they should come here and say "You must close up your work and your presses on Sunday," I would not say to you, . . . "Keep your presses going," because the conflict does not come between you and your God.--Ms 163, 1898.

We should not feel it enjoined upon us to irritate our neighbours who idolise Sunday by making determined efforts to bring labour on that day before them purposely to exhibit an independence. Our sisters need not select Sunday as the day to exhibit their washing.--3SM 399 (1889).

Engage in Spiritual Activities on Sunday

I will try to answer your question as to what you should do in the case of Sunday laws being enforced. The light given me by the Lord at a time when we were expecting just such a crisis as you seem to be approaching, was that when people were moved by a power from beneath to enforce Sunday observance, Seventh-day Adventists were to show their wisdom by refraining from their ordinary work on that day, devoting it to missionary effort.

To defy the Sunday laws will but strengthen in their persecution the religious zealots who are seeking to enforce them. Give them no occasion to call you lawbreakers. . . . One does not receive the mark of the beast because he shows that he realises the wisdom of keeping the peace by refraining from work that gives offence. . . .

Sunday can be used for carrying forward various lines of work that will accomplish much for the Lord. On this day open-air meetings and cottage meetings can be held. House-to-house work can be done. Those who write can devote this day to writing their articles. Whenever it is possible, let religious services be held on Sunday. Make these meetings intensely interesting. Sing genuine revival hymns, and speak with power and assurance of the Saviour's love.--9T 232, 233 (1909).

Take the students out to hold meetings in different places, and to do medical missionary work. They will find the people at home and will have a splendid opportunity to present the truth. This way of spending Sunday is always acceptable to the Lord.--9T 238 (1909).

Beauty of Truth Made Apparent by Opposition

The zeal of those who obey the Lord will be increased as the world and the church unite in making void the law. Every objection raised against the commandments of God will make way for the advancement of truth and enable its advocates to present its value before men. There is a beauty and force in the truth that nothing can make so apparent as opposition and persecution.--13MR 71, 72 (1896).

This time, when there is such an effort made to enforce the observance of Sunday, is the very opportunity to present to the world the true Sabbath in contrast to the false. The Lord in His providence is far ahead of us. He has permitted this Sunday question to be pressed to the front that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment may be presented before the legislative assemblies. Thus the leading men of the nation may have their attention called to the testimony of God's Word in favour of the true Sabbath.--2MR 197 (1890).

We Ought to Obey God Rather Than Men

The adherents of truth are now called upon to choose between disregarding a plain requirement of God's Word or forfeiting their liberty. If we yield the Word of God and accept human customs and traditions, we may still be permitted to live among men, to buy and sell, and have our rights respected. But if we maintain our loyalty to God it must be at the sacrifice of our rights among men, for the enemies of God's law have leagued together to crush out independent judgement in matters of religious faith and control the consciences of men. . . . The people of God will recognise human government as an ordinance of divine appointment and will by precept and example teach obedience to it as a sacred duty so long as its authority is exercised within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God we must choose to obey God rather than men. The Word of God must be recognised and obeyed as an authority above that of all human legislation. "Thus saith the Lord" is not to be set aside for a "Thus saith the church or the state." The crown of Christ is to be uplifted above all the diadems of earthly potentates.--HM Nov. 1, 1893.

Satan offers to men the kingdoms of the world if they will yield to him the supremacy. Many do this and sacrifice heaven. It is better to die than to sin; better to want than to defraud; better to hunger than to lie.--4T 495 (1880).