

National Sunday Law – Fact or Fiction? Chapter 1

Strange Origins of the National Sunday Law

In order to understand the origin of the National Sunday law, one must go back to the turbulent 1840s. This was an era of unprecedented religious controversy in the Northeastern United States. The controversy centered around the timing of Christ's return. It all began when a farmer-turned-preacher named William Miller set out on a campaign to warn communities in his region that, according to his calculations of Bible prophecies, Christ's return was imminent. As Miller's popularity grew, other end-time revivalist preachers jumped on the band-wagon to spread the cry of alarm. Although Miller and his associates suffered a serious setback when Christ failed to return as predicted in 1843, it was soon discovered that a "mistake" had been made in Miller's calculations. After some discussion, a new date of October 22, 1844, was finally agreed upon by Miller's colleagues. Once again, the leaders of the movement went around to whatever churches and communities would still accept them, and tried to rouse people with the warning of Christ's imminent return.

While most Christians and serious Bible students dismissed Miller as a misguided fanatic, some were impressed by his so-called Biblical "proofs" and they wanted to know if the Bible had indeed set a date for Christ's return. Christians began to call upon Bible scholars to examine Miller's "proofs" to determine if they were indeed accurate. Scholars familiar with Bible prophecy and the original languages of the Bible examined Miller's 15 "proofs" and found them to be fatally flawed. Scholars pointed to numerous unfulfilled Biblical prophecies as proof that Christ's return was not yet imminent. They explained how Miller was standing upon dangerous ground in ignoring Christ's explicit instruction that no one knows the day of His return (Matthew 25:13). [For more info on how Miller was refuted by Bible scholars, click [here](#)]

Concerned pastors began warning their flocks of the deceptions and falsehoods of Miller's teachings. As Christians became more widely aware of the serious errors in Miller's teachings the churches began closing their doors to him. Accusations began

to fly between the two groups and antagonism reared its ugly head. Millerites claimed that the non-Millerites did not want the Lord to return, while the non-Millerites derided the Millerites as deluded fanatics. Some Millerites who were members of mainstream churches made such a nuisance of themselves that their churches felt compelled to expel them from their congregations, creating animosity on both sides.

Millerites were scoffed at, lampooned, ridiculed, and ostracized. Hooligans released greased pigs in their camp meeting crowds and collapsed tents on them. As the awaited hour approached, the Millerites became increasingly aggressive in their attacks on the churches and the clergy. Millerite leader Charles Fitch played his part in raising the level of animosity by labeling the Christian churches "Babylon":

"If you are a Christian, come out of Babylon. If you intend to be found a Christian when Christ appears, come out of Babylon, and come out now..."¹

Although William Miller initially captured the attention of some Christians in the early 1840s, by 1843 the movement had begun to crumble. As Bible scholars exposed the errors in Miller's proofs the tide began to turn against him and his fanatical teachings. Pastors were so successful in exposing the flaws in Miller's teachings that the movement began losing momentum. Miller's efforts to recruit new adherents to his doctrine were thus stymied and he and his associates reacted angrily. They denounced the Christian churches as "fallen Babylon," falsely accused them of not desiring Christ to return, and they withdrew themselves from the Christian churches and began meeting in homes and rented halls. Bitter animosity blossomed between the two groups with each side deserving part of the blame for the ensuing hostility.

As the projected date for Christ's return approached, many Millerites sold their farms and businesses and invested their life's savings with Miller and his associates to spread the message of Christ's soon return. By October 22, 1844, the movement had managed to garner close to 50,000 followers, almost entirely in the northeastern United States. As with all fanatical movements, this movement appears to have held a special attraction for the uneducated, the young, and those prone to follow after the latest religious excitement.

When the October 22, 1844, date passed without event, Miller's followers were severely disappointed. Many had suffered financial loss and ruin. Many had sold their means of making a livelihood. Now they were poor, destitute, and miserable. There were some who were so devastated that they committed suicide. The movement disintegrated and Miller finally admitted he was in error. His followers gradually began returning to their former churches. However, there was a small group that refused to return to their former churches for various reasons. Some were not ready to swallow their pride and return to churches they had so recently condemned as being synagogues of Satan. Some did not desire to face the censure and reprimands of their former brethren. These people began forming their own churches which eventually became known as the Adventist churches.

The split between the "Adventists" and the "non-Adventists" would form the foundation upon which the Sunday law teaching would later be built. After the Disappointment, the "Adventists" needed an issue upon which they could differentiate themselves from other Christians whom they referred to as Babylon. It was here that Joseph Bates stepped in and made his mark in Adventist history, developing a doctrine which would eventually lead to the National Sunday Law teaching.

Joseph Bates, father of the Sunday Law

One small group of Adventists was led by sea captain Joseph Bates. Bates felt burdened to understand the reason for the great disappointment of 1844. So he began studying Bible prophecy. Having no formal training in the principles of Biblical interpretation, Bates took an approach that differed widely from traditional scholarly work. For example, Bates took non-prophetic passages of the Old Testament and "discovered" end-time prophecies in these passages. He also assumed that the Book of Revelation was unfolding in the events of the Millerite movement.

Bates learned about Saturday being the Sabbath from a tract written by a Millerite preacher named Thomas M. Preble. Preble is thought to have learned it from Rachel Oakes, a Seventh Day Baptist. When Bates learned the true day of worship was Saturday, not Sunday, he finally discovered what he believed to be a credible reason for why Adventists had been separated from the other Christian churches.

They had been separated so that they could more readily adopt the Sabbath teaching of the Seventh Day Baptists.

Joseph Bates and the Shut Door

By 1845, the Adventists began splintering off into separate groups, and one of these groups became known as the "shut door Adventists." This group would later develop into the Seventh-day Adventist church. Joseph Bates was a leader among the "shut door Adventists." He believed that the door of salvation had been shut on all those who rejected the 1844 teachings of William Miller. In 1847, Bates published a book in which he quotes Miller:

"We have done our work in warning sinners and trying to awake a formal church. God in his providence has shut the door. We can only stir one another up to be patient. Never since the days of the Apostles has there been such a division line drawn, as was drawn about the 10th, or 23d day of the 7th Jewish month. Since that time they say 'they have no confidence in us.' We have now need of patience after we have done the will of God, that we may receive the promise; for he says, 'Behold I come quickly, to reward every one as his work shall be.'"²

Even though by the time Bates published this quote Miller had already repudiated this belief and admitted it was a mistake, Bates continued to hold that there was a division line drawn between the Adventists and non-Adventists. He believed that the Adventists were the only ones who could be saved and the door of salvation had been shut to the Christian churches who had rejected Miller. Like Fitch, Bates regarded the "nominal churches" as part of Babylon:

"And last, the cry is made in the Protestant churches, 'Come out of her, my people.' What is now the response? Thousands on thousands dissolve their connection, and out they come, under the full conviction that this loud cry is to them, and the churches which they are leaving are fallen Babylon, because they have rejected the message which preceded this. 'The hour of his judgment is come.' Their houses which they have closed against this second advent message, are left unto them desolate. God has left them in their own confusion. ... The advent doctrine was the last, and crowning test which God

ever gave his people to come away and separate themselves from all unrighteous unbelievers."³

Bates' bitter animosity against the mainstream Protestant churches is evident as he uses the derisive terms "desolate," "confusion," and "unrighteous" to describe them. Amazingly, Bates decreed the Protestant churches to be Babylon simply because they rejected a message that even the originator of the message himself admitted was a falsehood! In essence, Bates was claiming the Protestant churches were lost because they had rejected a false teaching!

Bates held to the belief that the labor of Christians for lost souls had ended in 1844, and he made no personal effort to save lost souls:

"Here then of course ended the 2300 days of the vision, because there is to be a tarrying after. Don't forget this, neither. 'For at the time appointed the end shall be.' Here too ended our last work in warning the world; and our labor ceased. Why? Because the messages ceased, and left us entirely destitute of labor. And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, a whole week or seven and a half days. Here we say our glorious High Priest began the cleansing of the sanctuary, and 'received his kingdom, dominion, and glory,' the 'New Jerusalem.'"⁴

In 1847, when Bates wrote the book quoted above, he believed the Adventist people were in the midst of a "seven day" period, which he taught was a seven-year period during which God would "test" the Adventist people--those who had been part of the 1844 Millerite movement. How did Bates arrive at this seven-year period? From a non-prophetic passage in the book of Leviticus. Here is how he describes it in his book:

"The seven spots of blood on the Golden Altar and before the mercy seat, I fully believe, represent the duration of the judicial proceedings on the living saints in the Most Holy, all of which time they will be in their affliction, even seven years; God by his voice will deliver them, 'for it is the blood that maketh the atonement for the soul' (Lev. 17:11). Then the number seven will finish the day of atonement (not redemption)."⁵

Somehow, in Bates' mind, those "seven spots of blood" on the altar became seven years. It is impossible to rationally explain how Bates came to this conclusion! Following in the footsteps of William Miller's questionable Bible scholarship, Bates apparently had his own methods of interpreting the Bible which remain a mystery to this day.

According to Bates, over those seven years, from 1844 to 1851, God intended to "test" the Adventists to determine which of them would accept the Seventh Day Baptist's Sabbath teaching. Bates claimed:

"...this message was urged on God's people, to test their sincerity and honesty in the whole word of God..."⁶

At the culmination of this seven-year period, in 1851, Christ would return to the earth. Those who accepted the Sabbath would receive the "Seal of God" and would be saved. Those Adventists who rejected the Sabbath would rejoin the Sunday keeping churches and receive the "Mark of the Beast." Bates' teachings on the Seal of God and Mark of the Beast would later become the foundation of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine on end-time events.

Bates and the end of the world

While to most candid observers there was no evidence of the imminent end of the world, Bates found evidence everywhere he looked. We must remember that Bates assumed large portions of the book of Revelation were being fulfilled in his day. Therefore, Bates tried his best to correlate current events to various passages of Bible prophecy. His efforts reveal how truly flawed was his understanding of Bible prophecy. In every fire, in every storm, in every disaster, he saw another sign of the end being fulfilled:

"Here lies before me a pamphlet of 83 pages, entitled, the voice of God, or an account of the unparalleled Fires, Hurricanes, Floods, and Earthquakes, beginning with 1845; also Pestilence, Famine, and Crime - compiled by Thomas M. Preble. Since this work was issued at the beginning of this year, the periodicals of foreign countries and those of our own boasted happy Republic, show that these calamities among men are still increasing to a

fearful extent. The inhabitants of many nations are at their wits' end."⁷

Bates warned that the third woe of Revelation was falling upon the world:

"...and tell me if you can what all these calamities mean. If it is not the third wo [sic] that is rumbling through the nations of the earth, and hastening greatly to form its focal centre for 'such a time of trouble as never was since there was a nation.'"⁸

Bates warns of fires...

"The entire loss by fires of the last two years amounts to about 65 millions of dollars, about 45 millions in this country. In 1845, about 31 millions of dollars' worth was destroyed in something like 38 cities and towns; in a majority of cases the heart, or business part, was destroyed; besides the multitude of small fires under twenty-five thousand dollars, and also thousands of acres of woodland, probably swelling the amount to about forty millions of dollars, and according to numerous accounts, in a majority of instances they raged beyond the control of man."⁹

...and floods...

"Sea and waves roaring. - The tremendous gales and storms of 1845, and many in '46, certainly have not been surpassed in past ages. ... Floods and inundations in 1845-6 - Since the days of Noah I believe we have no such records."¹⁰

...and, of course, earthquakes...

"Earthquakes. - I will not stop here to enumerate. The Scientific American records upwards of fifty in 1846."¹¹

...and pestilences...

"Pestilence. - The Asiatic cholera, a dreadful pestilence, God's flying messenger with a drawn sword in his hand..."¹²

As for famines, Bates turned to the apocryphal book of Esdras which he apparently believed to be inspired...

"Esdras says, 'the seed shall fail through blasting and hail.' xv. same prophet says, 'provision shall be cheap, (they have been) and suddenly the sown places appear unsown, (seed rotted under the clods,) the full storehouses suddenly be found empty.' Here is the fulfillment: hundreds on hundreds of our ships almost constantly leaving our shores, laden with provisions from the store-houses, to supply the famine in Europe. If accounts respecting the famine be true, they will continue to go until our store-houses be emptied. This is neither fancy nor fable, but history and the word of the Lord our God. The prophecy of Esdras begins to search and burn like fire."¹³

After reading these "fulfillments" of prophecy, it quickly becomes evident that Bates was wresting the Scriptures, trying to make the "square pegs" of current events fit into the "round holes" of Bible prophecy. There is no hiding the fact that his prophetic interpretations were based more upon his own personal theories about Christ's imminent return than upon actual facts. Furthermore, it calls into question Bates' entire prophetic theology. Here are some other examples of Bates' unusual teachings on prophecy, all of which were rejected by later generations of Seventh-day Adventists:

Bates claimed the third angel's message completed in the fall of 1844:

"I ask you to look back to the summer and fall of 1844, where you see the fulfillment of this 3d angel's message in a most wonderful and striking manner in almost every town and city throughout New England."¹⁴

In answering the question of why the 1844 movement [3rd angel's message] was largely restricted to the United States instead of the whole world, Bates contends that only the first angel's message went into all the world:

"If you will look at the 14, ch. again, you will see that it was the first messenger only that sent his message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people."¹⁵

Bates claimed that Christ received His kingdom in 1844:

"Here then is positive corroborated proof of Christ's receiving his dominion and glory and kingdom or as in the parable of the ten virgins the Bridegroom came to the marriage under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and after the third angel's message, and before six of the seven plagues are poured out."¹⁶

Most astounding of all, Bates claimed the Sabbath could not be kept prior to 1844...

"Says the reader, why did not the people 'keep the commandments of God,' as in the text, before the fall of 1844? Because the message had not been presented, nor could not be until the third angel's message (9th to 11th v.) had made this separation, for they could not keep the fourth commandment, the seventh day Sabbath, while they were united with the nominal church, (Babylon,) hence the separation."¹⁷

Bates' interpretation of the three angels' messages (Rev. 14) forces him to the conclusion that the keepers of the commandments of God did not exist before 1844. This ironic conclusion ignores the fact that Bates himself learned about the Sabbath from the Seventh Day Baptists, a large group of Christian Sabbath-keepers who were presenting the "message" of the Sabbath to Sunday-keeping Christians for over 100 years!

Joseph Bates: Can you trust this man's prophetic theories?

Let us review what we know about Joseph Bates and Bible prophecy.

1. He claimed that 7 drops of blood on the alter in Leviticus 17 indicated that Adventists were going to go through 7 years of testing on the Sabbath truth. At the conclusion of that 7 years, in 1851, Christ would return to take home those Adventists who had the Seal of God (Sabbath observance).

2. He claimed that minor disasters that occurred in the late 1840s were signs of the imminent end of the world.

3. He claimed the gospel message for the lost ended in 1844.

Can you see a pattern beginning to emerge? It is a pattern of prophetic miscalculation, bungling, distortion, and outright error. It is a pattern of a man who was self-deceived about the return of Christ and the meaning of Bible prophecy. The ultimate example of Bates' delusion is found in his claim that the gospel message itself ended in 1844! This quote alone should be sufficient evidence to any Christian that this man was not guided by the Spirit of God in his teachings:

"Now let this door be shut, and the preaching of this gospel will have no effect. This is just what we say is the fact. The gospel message ended at the appointed time with the closing of the 2,300 days; and almost every honest believer that is watching the signs of the times will admit it."¹⁸

How can we possibly trust a man who developed such warped and perverted understandings of Bible prophecy? Yet astonishingly enough, Bates' teachings became the foundation upon which the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the National Sunday Law would later develop! Any Adventist will recognize that Bates' teachings about Babylon, the Sabbath, the Seal of God, the Mark of the Beast, and the "remnant" are the same prophetic teachings that form the core of Seventh-day Adventist Bible prophecy.¹⁹ Bates laid the foundation for the National Sunday Law teaching and later Adventists have built upon his foundation.

Naturally, these bizarre teachings generated some resistance from the Christian churches in the 1840s. This resistance was interpreted by Sabbath-keeping Adventists as persecution and yet further evidence that the Christian denominations were fallen and lost. Bates' theories were easily shot to pieces by Biblical scholars, and the Sabbath-keeping Adventists gained few adherents. Bates needed some help to keep his sinking theories afloat and he soon found the help he needed in the young and impressionable prophetess Ellen G. White.

Bates finds a friend

Who was Ellen White? At the time they met, she was a frail nineteen-year-old girl who had been a devoted follower of William Miller. She had serious health problems resulting from a childhood brain injury. Later, she claimed to be receiving

visions from God, although many who witnessed her visions felt they were more the product of her ill health than inspiration. Sister White and her family were among the fanatics who had been ejected from a Methodist church in September of 1843 for causing disturbances during church services. According to the Methodist Church...

"The reason for their dismissal was not that they preached the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a tenant of our orthodox faith which is confirmed from the Articles of Religion 1784. Their dismissal was occasioned by their breach of discipline in proclaiming the views of William Miller's time-setting. ...after much quiet counsel to refrain from their disruptive behavior in church meetings the members of Chestnut Street Church took what they believed to be their only recourse, to dismiss the Harmon Family."²⁰

Ellen White's ejection from the Methodist church and subsequent events led her to believe the same thing Bates believed: The Protestant churches were Babylon. Mrs. White lost no opportunity to blast the Christian preachers who had opposed Miller's time-setting:

"Many shepherds of the flock, who professed to love Jesus, said that they had no opposition to the preaching of Christ's coming, but they objected to the definite time. God's all-seeing eye read their hearts. They did not love Jesus near. They knew that their unchristian lives would not stand the test, for they were not walking in the humble path marked out by Him."²¹

It was not long before Ellen White and Joseph Bates had linked up in their battle against the hated Sunday-keeping churches. Although Biblical evidence for Bates' teachings was severely lacking, the deficiency of inspiration was soon supplied by Sister White, who began having "visions" supporting the theories Bates had fabricated. Although the "visions" were merely repetitions of what Bates had already been promulgating, this put the prophetic seal of approval on his teachings. Bates, although initially skeptical of the young visionary, finally decided to accept the prophet whose visions so closely resembled his writings. This acceptance gave the Whites a much-needed boost in their own efforts to establish Sister White's claim to be the Spirit of Prophecy of the book of Revelation.

By 1850, Bates, Ellen White, and her husband James White had managed to convince several hundred followers that Bates' teaching about the Sabbath was God's last message to the world. However, the group fell on hard times in 1851, when Christ failed to materialize as Bates had promised. As the date approached and it became increasingly obvious Christ was not coming, the Whites began distancing themselves from Bates. When 1851 passed without event, the Bates and the Whites suffered a humiliating defeat. The Adventists began turning against Bates and the Whites. They questioned how a prophet of God could not have foreseen how Bates was wrong about the 1851 date. The Whites, disappointed that many of their followers had turned against them, decided to put some distance between Bates and themselves, and so they moved to the Midwest where they were not so well known.

While they discarded Bates' teachings about the 7-year period of testing, they continued preaching that the Sabbath was the final test for mankind. Mrs. White wrote,

"The light of the Sabbath was seen, and the people of God were tested, as the children of Israel were tested anciently, to see if they would keep God's law."²²

As Bates faded into the background, the Whites took charge of the work and managed to gather a small following and formed the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863.

The Seventh-day Adventists soon gained a reputation among other Christians. They became known for their efforts to recruit members from out of other Christian denominations. They were also known for referring to Catholicism as Babylon, and Protestants as Apostate Protestantism. The Whites were still convinced all other Christian churches were apostate because they had rejected Miller's fanatical time-setting movement. Needless to say, the Adventists' hostility towards other Christian denominations generated plenty of animosity between the groups. Ellen White describes her displeasure with the "fallen" Christian denominations:

"I saw that the nominal churches have fallen; that coldness and death

reign in their midst."²³

"The sins of the popular churches are whitewashed over. Many of the members indulge in the grossest vices and are steeped in iniquity. Babylon is fallen and has become the cage of every foul and hateful bird! The most revolting sins of the age find shelter beneath the cloak of Christianity."²⁴

Ellen White and her angel were so upset with Sunday-keeping Christians that they were prepared to pour out the wrath of God upon them:

"I saw that since Jesus left the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary and entered within the second veil, the churches have been filling up with every unclean and hateful bird. I saw great iniquity and vileness in the churches; yet their members profess to be Christians. Their profession, their prayers, and their exhortations are an abomination in the sight of God. Said the angel, "God will not smell in their assemblies. Selfishness, fraud, and deceit are practiced by them without the reprovings of conscience. And over all these evil traits they throw the cloak of religion." I was shown the pride of the nominal churches. God is not in their thoughts; their carnal minds dwell upon themselves; they decorate their poor mortal bodies, and then look upon themselves with satisfaction and pleasure. Jesus and the angels look upon them in anger. Said the angel, "Their sins and pride have reached unto heaven. Their portion is prepared. Justice and judgment have slumbered long, but will soon awake. Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." The fearful threatenings of the third angel are to be realized, and all the wicked are to drink of the wrath of God. An innumerable host of evil angels are spreading over the whole land and crowding the churches. These agents of Satan look upon the religious bodies with exultation, for the cloak of religion covers the greatest crime and iniquity."²⁵

In Ellen White's mind the non-Adventist Christian churches were full of sin. In her mind, their worst enemies were not atheists, pagans, and infidels. Their worst enemies were Sunday-keeping Christians!

Ellen White devises National Sunday Law teaching

In the mid-1800s there were a series of incidents where Seventh-day Adventists ran into trouble with the law because they worked on Sunday. In many states there were "blue laws" forbidding work on Sunday. It was against this background of persecution by the state that prophet Ellen White describes the coming persecution of Sabbath-keepers in a series of books and articles. She wrote:

"Then I saw the leading men of the earth consulting together, and Satan and his angels busy around them. I saw a writing, copies of which were scattered in different parts of the land, giving orders that unless the saints should yield their peculiar faith, give up the Sabbath, and observe the first day of the week, the people were at liberty after a certain time to put them to death."²⁶

In 1884, the end-time scenario is said to be brought about by the "superhuman" efforts of the clergy, who prevail upon the legislators to enact laws enforcing Sunday observance, with each subsequent set of laws gradually increasing in severity:

"The clergy put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light, lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and in this work, papists are solicited to come to the help of Protestants. The movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided. The law is invoked against commandment-keepers. ...

"In the last conflict the Sabbath will be the special point of controversy throughout all Christendom. Secular rulers and religious leaders will unite to enforce the observance of the Sunday; and as milder measures fail, the most oppressive laws will be enacted. It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the land ought not to be tolerated, and a decree will finally be issued denouncing them as deserving of the severest punishment, and giving the people liberty, after a certain time, to put them to death."²⁷

By the late 1880s the end appeared imminent to Adventists. The reason they

believed the end was so close was because a law was being considered before the United States Congress in the late 1880s which would have made Sunday a nationally recognized holiday. In 1886, Mrs. White warned of the soon-coming end:

"The end of all things is at hand. The time of trouble is about to come upon the people of God. Then it is that the decree will go forth forbidding those who keep the Sabbath of the Lord to buy or sell, and threatening them with punishment, and even death, if they do not observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath."²⁸

Then the unexpected happened. The Sunday law was defeated by Congress. While there may have been more than one reason the law was rejected, it was apparent that some in Congress felt the law would violate the separation between church and state. Besides, if the law was enacted, it would have likely been struck down by the Supreme Court. After this event, the Sunday Law movement lost steam and those supporting it gradually turned their attention to other more pressing issues. By the early 1900s it was beginning to appear unlikely that a Sunday law was going to be passed any time in the near future. Adventists now had a dilemma on their hands. They needed to come up with an explanation as to how a Sunday law could possibly be passed given the current circumstances. By 1904, the former scenario of an organized movement of religious leaders pushing Sunday legislation through Congress seemed unrealistic. Since a Sunday law now appeared extremely unlikely to occur under ordinary circumstances, there must be some extraordinary external events that trigger it. Thus, Ellen White concocts a new scenario in which the United States is faced with a sudden, terrible crisis. If the United States does not act to kill the Sabbath-keepers, there will be a terrible national catastrophe:

"They will point to calamities on land and sea--to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire--as judgments indicating God's displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed. These calamities will increase more and more, one disaster will follow close upon the heels of another; and those who make void the law of God will point to the few who are keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the ones who are bringing wrath upon the world. This falsehood is Satan's device that he may ensnare the unwary."²⁹

During this horrific crisis the Sunday law will be justified by politicians who would, under normal circumstances, reject the law. However, in this crisis situation, they are convinced to pass a Sunday law in order to prevent the whole nation from being "thrown into confusion and lawlessness."³⁰

While this is certainly a creative scenario, Mrs. White gives no Bible evidence for this new scenario, nor does she explain how killing the Sabbath keepers could prevent the nation from being thrown into confusion and lawlessness. The assumption here being that political leaders stop thinking rationally during a crisis and pass laws which make no sense to anyone. While it made sense to few, if any, outside the SDA Church, the followers of Ellen White gobbled it up and the unlikely scenario eventually found its way into the prophet's major book on end-time events, the Great Controversy.

In earlier years Mrs. White talked as if only "Christendom" would pass Sunday laws, but by 1911, she had once again changed her scenario, this time to include the entire world. Mrs. White writes in her landmark book, Great Controversy, published in 1911:

"The powers of earth, uniting to war against the commandments of God, will decree that "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond" (Revelation 13:16), shall conform to the customs of the church by the observance of the false Sabbath. All who refuse compliance will be visited with civil penalties, and it will finally be declared that they are deserving of death."³¹

This "universal" Sunday Law is further expounded upon in Mrs. White's final book published in 1917, a year following her death:

"In this our day, many of God's servants, though innocent of wrongdoing, will be given over to suffer humiliation and abuse at the hands of those who, inspired by Satan, are filled with envy and religious bigotry. Especially will the wrath of man be aroused against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment; and at last a universal decree will denounce these as deserving of death."³²

Thus we find the doctrine of the Sunday Law continually evolving and changing over the years to meet the particular challenges of that generation. After the death of the prophetess Ellen White in 1915, the position of the church on the National Sunday Law became frozen, and has remained relatively unchanged. This is understandable, since there is no longer anyone with prophetic authority in the church to modify the teaching. Although with every passing year, the outmoded teaching becomes less and less believable, the SDA Church continues to teach the same doctrine today that was taught in the early 1900s, albeit with less fanfare and languishing enthusiasm.

NOTES

1. Ronald Numbers and Jonathan Butler (editors), *The Disappointed*, p. 197.
2. William Miller, *Voice of Truth*, Dec. 11th, 1844, as quoted in Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Waymarks and High Heaps*, p. 86.
3. Joseph Bates, *Ibid.*, p. 69, 70.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
5. Joseph Bates, *The Typical and Anti-typical Sanctuary*, pp. 10-13.
6. *Second Advent Waymarks and High Heaps*, p. 114.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 91,92.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
12. *Ibid.*

13. Ibid., p. 122.
14. Ibid., p. 69.
15. Ibid., p. 69.
16. Ibid., p. 103,104.
17. Ibid., p. 114.
18. Second Advent Waymarks and High Heaps, p. 110.
19. Adventists continue to teach Bates' theories regarding the Sabbath, the Seal of God, the Mark of the Beast, and the "remnant" in the year 2007 as presented in their "Revelation Seminars". Many Adventists are not aware that Joseph Bates is the originator of these teachings.
20. Letter to Mr. Keith Moxon from the Chestnut Street United Methodist Church, June 3, 1988, sourced from Truth or Fables web site.
21. Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pp. 229-249.
22. Ibid., p. 254.
23. Ibid. p. 116.
24. Ellen G. White, Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 13.
25. White, Early Writings, p. 274.
26. Ibid., p. 282.
27. Ellen White, Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4 pp. 425, 444.
28. Ellen White, Historical Sketches, p. 156. See also "Special Testimonies on Education", p. 99: "The time is not far distant when the laws against Sunday labor

will be more stringent" (Feb., 1894).

29. Ellen White, *Southern Watchman*, June 28, 1904.

30. Ellen White, *Youth Instructor*, Jul. 12, 1904: "When the Sabbath becomes the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration. It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the state, ought not to be tolerated; that it is better for them to suffer than for whole nations to be thrown into confusion and lawlessness. This argument will appear conclusive; and against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment will finally be issued a decree, denouncing them as deserving of the severest punishment, and giving the people liberty, after a certain time, to put them to death."

31. Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, p. 604, (1911).

32. Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 512.

National Sunday Law - Fact or Fiction?
Chapter 2

Is the Sabbath the Seal of God?

In 1847, Joseph Bates first proposed that Sabbath-keeping was the Seal of God and Sunday-keeping the Mark of the Beast in his book, *Seventh Day Sabbath*. Adventist historian George Knight writes in the *Adventist Review*,

"Bates set forth what would become the Sabbatarian understanding of the mark of the beast. Building upon Revelation 12:17 with its idea that God would have a last-day remnant that would 'keep the commandments of God,' he noted that 'there will yet be a mighty struggle about the restoring and keeping [of] the seventh day Sabbath, that will test every living soul that enters the gates of the city' (SDS [1847], 60). God's people would be 'persecuted for keeping the commandments' by those who had the mark of the beast. 'Is it not clear,' Bates asked in examining Revelation 14:9-12, 'that the first day of the week for the Sabbath or holy day is a mark of the beast[?]' Thus at the end of time only two groups would live on earth—those having the mark of the beast and those keeping God's commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath (ibid. 59)."¹

In 1849, Bates published a book entitled, *A Seal of the Living God*, in which he writes:

"Now all advent believers that have, and do, participate in the advent messages as given in Rev. 14:6-13, will love and keep this covenant with God, and especially His Holy Sabbath, in this covenant; this is a part of the 144,000 now to be sealed.

"The other part are those who do not yet so well understand the advent doctrine; but are endeavoring to serve God with their whole hearts, and are willing, and will receive this covenant and Sabbath as soon as they hear it explained. These will constitute the 144,000 now to be sealed with 'a seal of the living God,' which sealing will bear them through this time of trouble."²

The Whites soon adopted Bates' teaching and Mrs. White began having "visions" supporting Bates' idea. It is apparent that Bates, Mrs. White and other early Adventists believed the sealing process to have already commenced because Mrs. White wrote an article in January of 1849 entitled, "To Those who are receiving the seal of the living God". In that article she writes thus:

"Now is the time for the law of God to be in our minds (foreheads), and written in our hearts. ... Time has continued on a few years longer than they expected, therefore they think it may continue a few years more, and in this way their minds are being led from present truth, out after the world. In these things I saw great danger; for if the mind is filled with other things, present truth is shut out, and there is no place in our foreheads for the seal of the living God. This seal is the Sabbath."³

To Ellen White, the Sabbath is what marked the difference between those loyal to God and those disloyal:

"The Sabbath is the great test question. It is the line of demarkation between the loyal and true and the disloyal and transgressor. ... It is the seal of the living God."⁴

"Thus the distinction is drawn between the loyal and the disloyal. Those who desire to have the seal of God in their foreheads must keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Thus they are distinguished from the disloyal, who have accepted a manmade institution in place of the true Sabbath. The observance of God's rest day is a mark of distinction between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."⁵

A Unique Adventist Teaching

The idea that the Sabbath was the "line of demarkation" between the loyal and disloyal represents a radical departure from traditional Protestant teachings of the 1800s. Protestants of that day taught the Mark of the Beast was allegiance to the papacy. Allegiance to the papacy included allegiance to the many errors and superstitions of the papacy, such as:

- * Veneration of the pope as God upon earth who is able to forgive sins
- * Adoration and worship of the Virgin Mary
- * Transubstantiation (bread becomes the body of Christ)
- * Purgatory
- * The confessional
- * An unmarried priesthood
- * Prayers to apostles and saints, prayers for those in purgatory, and repetitive prayers (rosaries)
- * Adoration of relics and idols of saints
- * Salvation by works
- * Extra-Biblical sources of inspiration such as the church fathers
- * Christianization of pagan holy days such as Easter and Christmas

More could be listed. As you can see, there are numerous items indicating allegiance to the errors of the papacy. Joseph Bates in his book *A Seal of the Living God* makes little mention of all of the profound differences between Catholicism and Protestantism and focused instead upon the one issue that was of utmost importance to him: Sabbath-keeping. In Bates' mind, the Mark of the Beast was not Mary worship. It was not belief in Purgatory. It was not belief in the confessional or transubstantiation. The Mark of the Beast was Sunday worship.

Why did Bates choose Sunday worship over all of the other identifying marks of Catholicism? In chapter 1 we read of the raging animosity between Bates and the mainstream Protestant churches. By identifying Sunday as the Mark of the Beast, Bates found a clever way to lump the hated Protestant churches into the same basket as the Catholics. With one master stroke he was able to consign to hell all those Protestant churches that had so infuriated him and his associates for rejecting Miller's time-setting movement. In one bold move Bates managed to redefine nearly three hundred years of Protestant teachings from Luther and other great reformers that identified the Mark of the Beast as allegiance to the heretical teachings of Rome listed above.

Stop for a moment and compare Joseph Bates with the great Protestant reformers. The Protestant Bible scholars, like Huss, Jerome, Luther and Zwingli, were all men of great learning, church leaders who were received by princes and kings. They had all distinguished themselves in the universities, they were fluent in the original

Biblical languages, and they were recognized by both friend and foe for their scholarly achievements. Contrast these great leaders with Joseph Bates. He was a little-known sea captain. He had no knowledge of the original Biblical languages. He had little understanding of Biblical principles of interpretation. He made reckless and unfounded predictions based on his flawed understanding of Bible prophecy. We learned about many of Joseph Bates' absurd and outlandish prophetic teachings in chapter 1. Despite all this, Bates placed himself in the position to overrule three hundred years of highly educated and highly esteemed Protestant Biblical scholars. In one masterful sweep he brushed aside the Protestant Reformers and shoved their churches into Babylon. He declared that a single heretofore unrecognized heresy, Sunday-worship, was the dreaded Mark of the Beast.⁶ Amazingly, a handful of believers actually took Bates' word over the word of esteemed and proven Protestant reformers, and Bates' idea would later become the core of Seventh-day Adventist prophetic teaching.

While Bates' theory appeared to find acceptance with those already predisposed to thinking of the Protestant churches as Babylon, it never really caught on with others. It was hard for some to understand how the Christian denominations could be lost, and yet these were the organizations sending out missionaries all over the world spreading the gospel while Adventists were claiming the gospel message had ended in 1844 and spent their time bickering amongst themselves over the Sabbath and differing interpretations of prophecy. Bates had a difficult task on his hands to try and convince people that the Mark of the Beast was no longer allegiance to the teachings of Rome as a whole, but only one teaching: Sunday-worship. Fortunately for him, he found an ally who could provide the inspiration that was so obviously lacking from the Bible. Bates turned to the young prophetess Ellen White who saw the following in vision:

"I saw that God had not changed the Sabbath, for He never changes. But the pope had changed it from the seventh to the first day of the week; for he was to change times and laws."⁷

So, with a little help from the prophetess, Adventists tied the change of the day of worship to the papacy, thus identifying Sunday worship as the single most important distinguishing feature of false Christianity.

Unfortunately for Ellen White, the theory that the Pope changed the day of worship was later refuted by one of Adventism's own scholars, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi. In his ground-breaking book, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, Dr. Bacchiocchi provides irrefutable evidence that the change in Sabbath-keeping from Sabbath to Sunday actually occurred far earlier than previously supposed. In the 1970s, Bacchiocchi was the first and only non-Catholic to ever be allowed to study at the Catholic Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. While there he was given access to the Church's archives and was able to find priceless research material for his book. While it probably was not the purpose of his book to exonerate the Pope, his research showed that the change from Sabbath to Sunday worship occurred far earlier in history than had been previously admitted by Adventists. In fact, the change happened long before the papacy was even established in power. These findings cast considerable doubt on whether Sunday worship could be considered allegiance to the papacy since the practice was well established throughout Christianity centuries before the first Pope arose.

In 1997, Dr. Bacchiocchi, wrote:

"I differ from Ellen White, for example, on the origin of Sunday. She teaches that in the first centuries all Christians observed the Sabbath and it was largely through the efforts of Constantine that Sundaykeeping was adopted by many Christians in the fourth century. My research shows otherwise. If you read my essay *HOW DID SUNDAYKEEPING BEGIN?* which summarizes my dissertation, you will notice that I place the origin of Sundaykeeping by the time of the Emperor Hadrian, in A.D. 135."⁸

Emperor Hadrian, A.D. 135 was nearly half a millennium removed from the first pope who began serving in A.D. 606.⁹ While most Adventists accepted Bacchiocchi's findings, some ultra-conservatives derided him as a Jesuit sent secretly by the Catholics to infiltrate and destroy the Adventist church. However, his vocal critics were never able to produce any evidence to refute his teachings or prove he ever had any connections with the Jesuits.

The True Meaning of "Seal of God"

Having established the Mark of the Beast as being Sunday worship, it only made

sense to Bates that Sabbath worship should be the Seal of God. Bates found his evidence in the Old Testament where the Sabbath was a sign of the Old Covenant between God and the Jews.¹⁰ However, Bates ignored the evidence given in the New Testament showing that the sign or seal of the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of a seal is to prevent the contents of the object being sealed from being changed. A law that was sealed by the king's ring could never be changed. When Daniel was thrown in the Lion's Den, the entrance was "sealed" indicating the king's will could not be undone. The tomb of Christ was "sealed" by Pilate to prevent anyone from touching its contents.¹²

The Book of Revelation does not give us many details about what the seal of God is, nor does it tell us much about those who are sealed. Revelation does tell us those that are sealed are the "servants of our God" (Rev. 7:3), and they are 144,000 in number (Rev. 7:4), and they are from the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:4). In Rev. 14:1 we find the 144,000 have the "Father's name written in their foreheads." In ancient seals, the king's name was usually found on the seal. We also know the 144,000 "were redeemed from the earth" (Rev. 14:3), "they are virgins" (Rev. 14:4), they "follow the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4), their speech was pure (Rev. 14:5), and they were "without fault" (Rev. 14:5).

In Revelation there is absolutely nothing said about the 144,000 keeping the Sabbath. If Sabbath-keeping is indeed the most important and prominent sign that separates true Christians from false ones, then why would not John have at least mentioned it?

Revelation does not tell us in precise detail what the seal is or how it is administered, so we must assume it was a well-known concept in the early church. As a matter of fact, the word "seal" appears many times in the New Testament. From studying these verses we can get a good understanding of how the church of the apostle John's day understood the meaning and significance of the "seal".

The Apostle John wrote of Jesus:

...him hath God the Father sealed. (John 6:27)

Just as ancient kings sealed objects to make them unchangeable, the King of the Universe sealed Jesus Christ so that evil could not destroy, change, or alter who He was. How was Jesus sealed? John wrote of Jesus....

...for God gives the Spirit without limit. (John 3:34, NIV)

Paul repeatedly talked about the Holy Spirit's presence being the seal of Christianity:

2Cr 1:22 - Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Eph 1:13 - In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.

Eph 4:30 - And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:30 make it abundantly clear that God seals us to keep us until the "day of redemption". The Holy Spirit is given to us so that evil can not destroy, alter, or change us.

Conclusion

Not once in the New Testament is the Sabbath ever referred to as a sign or a seal for Christians. Just as the Lord's Supper celebration replaced the Jewish Passover celebration, so has the Holy Spirit replaced the Sabbath as the "sign" or evidence that a person is one of God's people.

Consider this carefully. What is the best way to tell whether or not a person is a true Christian? Is it by what day they go to church on? Even Adventists will tell you that going to church on Saturday does not make someone a Christian. There are some people who go to church on Saturday while they deny their Christian faith by their actions. Their hearts are filled with perversion, hatred, adultery, and idolatry. So what is the best way to tell if a person is a true Christian? By their spirit! If they

have the Holy Spirit in their hearts, they will manifest the fruits of the Spirit in their lives: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." These fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit will be evident to all. These fruits are the true sign of a believer. The Sabbath is not the sign of a true Christian. It never has been. It never will be. The New Testament evidence testifies that the Holy Spirit is the "seal" with which the Father seals His faithful children.

NOTES

1. George Knight, "What is Adventist in Adventism - An excerpt from the book A Search for Identity, Online Edition of the Adventist Review, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2001-1524/story5.html>, extracted on Jan. 8, 2008.
2. Joseph Bates, A Seal of the Living God, pp. 61, 62.
3. Ellen White, Present Truth, Jan. 31, 1849.
4. Ellen White, Selected Messages Book 3, p. 423.
5. Ellen White, Review & Herald, April 23, 1901.
6. In the official doctrinal statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, entitled Questions on Doctrines (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1957), the SDA Church implies that the development of Sunday-keeping as the "Mark of the Beast" is a unique doctrine devised by Adventists: "None of these [Protestant] expositors, of the centuries past, applied the mark of the beast specifically to the Sabbath issue, but they did connect it with the Papacy. ... Adventist heralds of Sabbath reform came to make a further logical application of the mark of the beast—holding it to be, in essence, the attempted change of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue by the Papacy, its endeavor to impose this change on Christendom, and the acceptance of the Papacy's substitute by individuals." (p. 181) Although Adventists would no doubt like to take credit for having an original doctrine, Adventist historian Leroy Froom, in his book Prophetic Faith (pp. 913-916), indicates that some Seventh Day Baptists linked Sunday-keeping with the Mark of the Beast in the 17th century. Since Bates associated with Seventh Day Baptists and adopted their Sabbath teachings it is

possible he also acquired the teaching about Sunday-keeping being the Mark of the Beast from them. However, it is uncertain how prominent these authors were--even within their own church--and it is unknown if Joseph Bates possessed their writings or was even aware of them. It is questionable if these authors had support from the broader Seventh Day Baptist Church on this subject, because the SDB Church officially rejects any notion that Sunday-keeping was the Mark of the Beast: "Seventh Day Baptists do not associate Sunday observance with (or identify it with) 'the mark of the Beast' mentioned in Rev. 13:15-17, 16:2, 19:20 (NIV)." ("A Comparison of Seventh Day Baptists with Seventy-day Adventists", <http://www.seattlesdb.org/sda.htm>, extracted Jan. 10, 2008.

7. Ellen White, *Early Writings*, p. 32.

8. Samuelle Bacchiochi, Ph.D., February 8, 1997, in an E-mail message posted to the "Free Catholic Mailing List" catholic@american.edu.

9. The title, pope, which is derived from the Latin *papa* (father), was used in the second, third, and fourth centuries AD to refer to various leading bishops. At that time, it did not signify the universal leader of the Christian church, as the title pope is understood today. According to Catholics, the first pope was Peter, and there has been a line of popes succeeding after him. According to *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Earle Cairns, 1981), the "first medieval pope" was Gregory (590-604) who consolidated power within the church in Rome and asserted the spiritual supremacy of the bishop of Rome. However, he disclaimed the title pope. Hence, the first pope would be his successor, Sabinian, who followed after him in 606 AD. In reality, the bishop of Rome was not universally recognized as the leader of the Christian church until at least the seventh--and some historians say the eighth--century AD.

10. See for example, Exodus 31:13,17 and Ezekiel 20:12,20.

11. Esther 8:8; Daniel 6:17; Matt. 27:66.

National Sunday Law - Fact or Fiction?
Chapter 3

Is the Sabbath the Final Test?

"The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men."¹

Use your imagination for a moment. Imagine you are in college getting ready for your final exam. You have just spent the entire evening with your head buried in your school books studying for your final test. You believe you have prepared well. After all, the professor gave you a list of all the important topics and you have studied them thoroughly. Your brain is packed to the brim with all the facts, figures, and ideas you learned during the semester. With confidence in your step you walk into class and take your seat. The professor smiles and announces that there will only be one question on the test. You smile to yourself thinking that it will certainly be one of the items the professor passed out last week on the final test study guide. But when the exam is placed on your desk your mouth falls open as you stare at the question in utter disbelief. The question is not one of the questions on the study guide. In fact, the question asks you to write a five-page dissertation on a topic that was not even presented in class! As anger and frustration build up inside of you, your eyes zero in on the teacher and you mutter half out loud,

"What kind of a stupid teacher would test his students on a question he never stressed the importance of nor even discussed in class?"

That is a fair question, is it not? After all, we expect the teacher to cover the most important subjects in class, and we have every right to expect those same subjects to be part of the final test. If any teacher did what the teacher in the above illustration did, we would be outraged. It goes against every sense of human fairness and decency. We would consider it an offense, a sly trick, a sign of total incompetence. We would have every right to bring this behavior to the school board and ask for the teacher to be reprimanded.

Now consider Jesus. He is the greatest Teacher this world has ever known. There has never been a better teacher. Nor will there ever be another as good as Him. He was simply the best. He knew exactly how to prepare His students for the tests they would face in life. If Jesus and the Apostles understood that the Sabbath was going to be the great "final test" that will come to every soul, then surely they would have spent an appropriate amount of time teaching this to their followers. Surely they would have stressed the importance of Sabbath-keeping to their followers and warned them of the terrible dangers of worshipping on Sunday. If they failed in doing this, then we would consider them to be incompetent teachers.

Jesus an Incompetent Teacher?

Was Jesus an incompetent teacher? Did He somehow fail to get the point across about the Sabbath, leaving subsequent generations to flounder in mystery and confusion regarding the overwhelming significance of the Sabbath? The truth is that Jesus and the New Testament authors rarely mentioned the Sabbath, and the few times they did so, they left the impression that the day of worship was not to be a point of contention between believers.

Take the Apostle Paul, for example. When he believed something to be important, he emphasized it over and over again in his epistles. Utmost in Paul's mind was grace, faith, hope, and love, which he wrote about over and over again. If the Sabbath were of such dire importance, then Paul certainly had every opportunity to discuss it because the subject was apparently a matter of interest to the Romans and Colossians. In these letters Paul is most eloquent for what he does not say. Instead of making teaching believers about the overwhelming importance of Sabbath observance, Paul says nothing about its significance. He does not say it is a great separating wall between true believers and false ones; it does not shine brighter than the other commandments; it is not the "final test". Instead Paul downplays the significance of observing days:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day [alike]. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth [it] unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard [it]."²

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days]: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ."³

If Paul taught Christians that they should not judge one another in regards to keeping a day of worship, then how could the Sabbath possibly be the great "separating wall" between true believers and false believers? How could it be a test of loyalty? Paul allowed Christians to judge other Christians in regard to gluttony, immoral behavior, and teaching false gospels, but he would not permit them to judge each over a Sabbath day. Why? Could it be that the issue of Sabbath observance was of lesser import than these other behaviors? Should we not take a cue from Paul and treat the issue of Sabbath observance the same way he did?

Instead of focusing on the Sabbath, Jesus and the Apostles focused on the grand Christian themes of salvation, faith, self-sacrificing love, forgiveness, and eternal life. Why would Jesus and the Apostles focus so much attention on these themes if the Sabbath was to be the great deciding factor that would determine who was a true Christian and who was a false Christian? Were they incompetent teachers? Or have Adventists elevated the issue of Sabbath observance to a position that the Apostles never intended for it to occupy?

According to prophetess Ellen White, the Sabbath is the great final test of mankind:

"The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not."⁴

Contrast this with the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles who never describe the Sabbath as a "final test" of any kind. Jesus is very explicit as to what the "final test" is. In fact, in one of His greatest sermons to His disciples he explains precisely what the "final test" will be. Here is Christ's final test as described in the Adventist-authored Clear Word Bible:

"Everyone on earth will be gathered before Him, and He will separate

whose who are genuinely His from those who are not, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats during shearing time. He will call the sheep to His right and the goats to His left. Then He will say to those on His right, 'You are God's children because you are so much like Him. Come! It's time for you to receive your inheritance. You have cared about others, which shows that you care about me. When others were thirsty, you gave them water. When they were hungry, you gave them food, and when they were without a place to live, you took them in. When they had nothing suitable to wear, you gave them clothes. When they were sick, you visited and comforted them, and when they were in jail, you didn't forget them.'"⁵

Did Jesus say, "You are God's children because you went to church on Saturday and criticized those who went to church on Sunday?" No! The Sabbath has never been a test for gentile Christians and it never will be. The final test will be whether or not a person has the unselfish and loving character of Jesus Christ.

One could argue that the individual who most craves for the Sabbath to be the "final test" is actually Satan himself. Satan has always been portrayed in the Bible as one who seeks ways to distract Christians from the true gospel. For thousands of years he has been seeking to turn the attention of Christians to bickering over what legalistic requirements must be met in order to be perfect enough to be saved. If he can get Christians arguing over legalism, dietary restrictions, days and times, and other trivial requirements, then he can divert their eyes from the main theme of Christianity, which is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Satan's strategy is to get Christians to focus on what legal requirements they must do in order to be saved rather than focusing upon Christ's finished work of atonement. If Satan can make the Sabbath the "final test" then he will have succeeded in substituting a legal requirement for the true final test, which is to be born again, receiving the self-sacrificing character of the Lamb of God.

NOTES

1. Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 188.
2. Romans 14:5,6

3. Colossians 2:16,17.

4. Ellen White, Great Controversy, p. 605 (1911).

5. Matthew 25:32-36 as found in the Clear Word Bible.

National Sunday Law - Fact or Fiction? Chapter 4

What are the Odds of a National Sunday Law?

The world of the 21st century is far different than the world of the late 1800s. Over the last 120 years the demographics in the nation that is said to play the center stage in the National Sunday Law drama--the United States--have shifted dramatically. In the late 1880s the United States was a nation of church-going Protestants. Not so today. The nation is much more diverse today. About one-fourth of the population is now Roman Catholic. There are also now other religions with significant memberships in the United States. Let us consider some of these other religions and the power and influence they wield.

The Jews

The most significant example of the changing demographics of the United States is the Jews. Over the last century many Jews have immigrated to the United States. In 2007 there were well over six million Jews in the United States. Many of these either keep the Sabbath themselves or are sympathetic with those who observe the Sabbath. Any Sunday law would have to be passed over the objections of these seven million Jews. That is highly unlikely. The Jewish community has never been more influential in the United States' legal and political systems than it is today. In 2000, the first ever Jew--a Sabbath-keeping Senator from Connecticut named Joseph Lieberman--was nominated as a vice-presidential candidate and was narrowly defeated in the United States electoral college despite winning a majority of the popular vote. The U.S. media, legal system and the general power structure in Washington, D.C., are all inordinately influenced by Sabbath-keeping Jews. Many Jews hold key positions of power in high government positions where they can influence the American way of life. There are prominent Jews who hold substantial financial empires giving them wide influence in American society. To imagine the Jews would allow any type of law mandating Sunday observance to even advance to the serious consideration stage is utterly ludicrous.

The Muslims

The next significant minority to consider is the Muslim community. Islam is the fastest growing religion and the second largest religion in the world, with approximately 1.5 billion adherents in 2007. This rapidly growing religion now claims more than seven million adherents in the United States. The weekly holy day of Islam is Friday. This large community of believers would be outraged should Christians attempt to force them to observe Sunday as a day of worship. There is no doubt they would use their growing political muscle and any other means at their disposal to block such an attempt.

Secularism

The next large community to consider is the secular community. Unlike the 1880s when this community was small, today there are approximately thirty million members in this community. This includes agnostics, secular humanists, and well over a million atheists. Over the last forty years this group has been very successful in removing religion from the public arena. They have succeeded in removing the Ten Commandments and prayer from public schools. They have won success after success over the opposition of Christian groups. The Christians have been on the run from this group for decades. It is preposterous to suppose that this huge, highly educated, and politically powerful group of secularists is going to allow Christians one inch of ground in returning religion into public life. You can be sure this group will oppose any religious legislation, and it is probable they will have the same success against Sunday laws that they have had against every other religious institution in the United States during the past decades.

The Homosexuals

Another group that has to be considered is the homosexual community. These people, who potentially number ten to twenty million, belong to a variety of religions, including secularism. Because of the resistance of Evangelical Christianity to homosexuality, this community is strongly opposed to Catholics and Evangelicals--the two groups that would be most likely to favor a Sunday law. Homosexuals have tremendous political influence in the United States. Again, it is very likely that any proposed Sunday legislation would be opposed by this group.

Sabbath Keepers

Another increasingly powerful group is the Sabbath-keeping community itself. Sabbath-keeping has become an increasingly popular practice in the United States and through-out the world. This is shown by the Seventh-day Adventist church's rising political influence and its rising world membership--over 15 million members worldwide in 2007, a million of whom reside in the U.S. Seventh-day Adventists themselves, far from being a poor, impotent minority susceptible to the tyranny of the "power structure," have for some time now been a part of that very power structure. Adventists comprise a relatively affluent, well-positioned, politically conservative and widely accepted segment of American society. In all ways other than their quirky beliefs, they are virtually indistinguishable from the great mass of well-off, materialistic, middle-to-upper-middle-class Americans.

Unlike the 1800s, when Adventists were an isolated group with bitter animosity existing between them and other Christian churches, Adventists today are more accepted than ever. Seventh-day Adventism has moved a long way towards being accepted into the mainstream of religion. The Adventist church has softened some of its harsher, legalistic teachings, and the Christian community has become more accepting of them, even to the point of dropping the "cult" label that was so widely used in reference to Adventists in the mid-1900s. In recent decades Adventists have toned down the rhetoric, displaying a more tolerant face to the world by placing more emphasis on mainstream religious ideals, and downplaying many of the odd and distinctive doctrines that formerly caused many to regard Adventists as peculiar people. As a result of this "face-lift" Adventism has achieved an unprecedented level of acceptance in the United States. This was evidenced in the recent 2008 election campaign in the U.S.A. where both President Bush and Senator Hillary Clinton directly addressed Seventh-day Adventists, extolling their virtues while asking for their political support.

There have never been more citizens of the United States worshipping on Saturday than there are today. There are reportedly over 300 different religious organizations which worship on Saturday, including Adventists, various Church of God groups, Seventh Day Baptists, Messianic Jews, some Pentecostal churches, some Apostolic churches, and a whole host of others. Some of these groups have experienced near record rates of growth over this last century. Sabbatarianism has never been more

popular and more accepted than it is today. There is no doubt that any Sunday legislation would be bitterly opposed by these groups.

Eastern Religions

Another large group that would likely oppose Sunday legislation includes eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. In 2007, there were estimated to be six million Buddhists and three million Hindus living in the United States. These religions have absolutely nothing to gain by legislation enforcing the observance of a Christian holy day, and there is little doubt they would vigorously oppose it.

New Agers

There is a plethora of New Age, pagan, Native American, and tribal religions in the United States. Their adherents now number in the millions. These religions are experiencing a tremendous resurgence in recent years. For example, the Wiccan Church (witchcraft) is now the fastest growing church in the United States. These groups have no interest in any laws enforcing a Christian day of worship and would almost assuredly fight against it.

Other Christian Groups

In addition to all of these groups, there are a number of Christian churches which would be very unlikely to support any legislation enforcing religious observances. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), with nearly half of their 13 million members residing in the United States, shares many similarities with the Adventist movement and would be unlikely to support such laws. Likewise, the Jehovah's Witness, with over a million of their seven million members living in the U.S., would also be unlikely to support it. The Baha'I Faith would probably not support it. Scientology, which claims over 3 million members in the U.S., would most likely have no interest in a Sunday law. Neither would some Baptist groups which have a centuries-old tradition of championing religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Neither would the two million members of the Church of Christ. It is a fundamental doctrine of this church, maintained for many years, that neither Sunday nor Sabbath should be considered a holy day of worship. It is impossible to believe these 5 million members (2 million in the U.S.)

would support any type of Sunday legislation. They teach that no part of the Old Testament law is binding upon Christians. On the liberal side of the religious spectrum, the post-Christian Unitarian church would also be unlikely to push for laws enforcing religious observances.

Is there anyone left to push for Sunday laws?

So what are we left with? We are left with the mainstream Catholic and Protestant churches which have shown very little interest in pursuing Sunday legislation in the past 100 years. The legislation that these groups have pursued, such as returning prayer to public schools and banning abortion, have been repeatedly thwarted over the years. Various political action groups have arisen over the years, such as the "Moral Majority" and the "Christian Coalition," but have met with only limited success on the political battleground.

While keeping the Sabbath has been made into a gargantuan issue by Seventh-day Adventists, to non-Sabbatarians it is no issue at all. It is a meaningless, non-issue, and they give the whole subject no more attention than did Jesus Himself. Non-Adventists are certainly not threatened by Sabbath-keeping. If anything, they look upon Sabbatarians with pity--as being ignorant, spiritually blinded, self-deluded legalists. They do not see them as posing any threat whatsoever to themselves or to their belief systems. Therefore, it is certainly doubtful that even Evangelical Christians would make any effort at all to enforce their beliefs on Sabbatarians.

Native Americans successfully resist U.S. Government

Just to show how little political power is needed to resist governmental legislation in the United States, consider the tiny group of Native American Indians who smoke peyote, an illegal drug, in their religious services. The United States was unable to ban the use of an illegal drug by this tiny Native American religious group. If they could not even stop the use of illegal drugs in a religion, how are they possibly going to force a hundred million non-Sunday-keepers to worship on Sunday? Think about it.

A Universal Sunday Law? Is it possible?

What about the rest of the world? Christians account for less than one third of the global population. Who is going to enforce Sunday worship on the two billion Friday-worshipping Moslems? What about the two billion Hindus, Buddhists, and other eastern religions? Who is going to make them start observing Sunday? What about the hundreds of millions of people who are secularists, agnostics, and atheists? Who is going to make them worship anything at all? Are we supposed to believe that the United States is strong enough to not only force its own people to worship on Sunday, but also force the entire world to do likewise? We have seen the great difficulty the United States had in trying to maintain order in the tiny nation of Iraq in 2005-2008. If the United States cannot even maintain order in this one small nation, then how is it going to take on the whole world?

Communist China, a rising super-power with its rapidly expanding nuclear missile capabilities and the largest military machine on the planet, replete with high-tech hardware from the former Soviet Union, is not going to let the United States decide what day its people worship on. Hindu India, Muslim Pakistan, and Jewish Israel all have nuclear weapons. The United States cannot dictate anything to these nations. Let us face the facts. There is simply no possibility the United States can force the whole world to worship on Sunday and kill Sabbath-keepers.

A far-fetched end-time scenario

In order to extricate themselves from this predicament Seventh-day Adventists have invented a far-fetched end-time scenario which is not even remotely found anywhere in the Bible. According to Adventists, Satan is going to masquerade as Jesus, in order to convince the world to pass Sunday laws. Satan is going to appear as Jesus in certain places of the earth and somehow convince the entire world to start worshipping on Sunday and kill those keeping the Sabbath.

Stop for a moment and consider how ludicrous this truly is. We ask, what Christian is going to believe a Christ who wants to kill people for going to church on Saturday? Christ Himself said,

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9:56)

Who is going to believe a Christ that directly contradicts the words He spoke in the Bible? Christ would not even allow Peter to use his sword in self-defense! Can you imagine Christ ordering people to be murdered for worshipping Him on the Sabbath? We ask, What Christian is going to be foolish enough to believe a Christ who wants to kill people for no better reason than that they go to church on Saturday? The Bible clearly says Satan is a murderer (see John 8:44). Who is going to believe a Christ that wants to murder certain Christians? One would have to look far and wide to find a single Christian that is asinine enough to believe Christ is a murderer! If Satan made an appearance touting a "kill the Sabbath-keepers" plan, and tried to foist such an incredibly absurd ploy upon the world, the entire world would rise up against him and crucify him!

Why would Satan attempt something so self-defeating as passing a Sunday law? He is doing just fine now! The world is rapidly moving into a post-Christian era. Some claim that Australia and Europe have already entered a post-Christian era and the United States is not far behind. Pagan, New Age, and occult religions are experiencing a tremendous surge in popularity. Secularism, materialism, and sensualism are eating out the heart of Christianity. Why are Adventists looking into the future for persecution? Christians are already suffering record numbers of persecutions throughout the world. With all the success he is currently enjoying, persecuting Christians and leading people away from Christianity, why would Satan want to establish laws enforcing a traditional Christian practice upon the world? If he did so, he would be turning people's attention back towards Christianity, forcing people to spend time contemplating God. He would be fighting his own best interests! The Adventist end-time scenario simply makes no sense.

National Sunday Law - Fact or Fiction?
Chapter 5

Is the National Sunday law a real threat?

In 1998, a number of worried Seventh-day Adventists sent the author of this book e-mails. The Vatican had recently released an apostolic letter the Pope had written entitled "Dies Domini." In this letter Pope John Paul II extols the virtues of Sunday-keeping to his followers. Some Adventists conjectured that this might be the long-awaited beginning of the National Sunday Law. I read the Pope's letter and found nothing to warrant any concern about forthcoming Sunday legislation. The Pope briefly stressed the necessity of Catholics ensuring that governmental legislation respects their freedom to worship on Sunday:

"Therefore, also in the particular circumstances of our own time, Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy."¹

Of course, Seventh-day Adventist leaders often encourage their members to do the exact same thing--supporting legislation that guarantees their freedom to worship on the Sabbath.

Even though there was nothing in the letter to cause concern, for a while there was some excitement among Adventists. Perhaps their prophet's words were finally coming true. But alas, after more than a decade, nothing happened and the excitement gradually fizzled out. It began to appear as if the Adventists, desperate for any validation of their National Sunday Law theory, were grasping onto any mention of Sunday by a Christian leader as an indication of the long-anticipated Sunday laws.

While Adventists are fretting over a National Sunday Law, their Christian brothers and sisters seem to have no interest whatsoever in forcing Sabbath-keepers to worship on Sunday. It is true that there are some Christians who would like laws that would give them freedom to worship on Sunday without being forced to go to work. However, to imagine that Sunday-keeping Christians want to force others to

observe Sunday as a religious day is preposterous.

The most avid group promoting Sunday observance in the United States is the "Lord's Day Alliance." Recently the leader of that organization was asked if he intended to enforce Sunday observance upon Sabbath-keepers. Here is his response:

I believe in the volunteer way of worship and I do not believe that there should ever be a state church and therefore do not propound any kind of a civil religion.

I appreciate the freedom we have in our country and as I told you, I will do everything I can to help maintain that freedom, which includes freedom of worship. It is also completely foreign to me...to be involved in any kind of persecution with anyone who disagreed with me on any subject including the day of worship. ...we believe that the best way for people to worship as they should, is to worship as they are led without any legislation forcing that worship or that day of rest.²

This is a typical response from Christian leaders. They have no interest in enforcing Sunday observance on Sabbath-keepers. Below is an example of how one typical non-Adventist Christian church views the subject of enforcing religious laws on others:

Individual Soul Liberty

Every individual, whether a believer or an unbeliever, has the liberty to choose what he believes is right in the religious realm. No one should be forced to assent to any belief against his will. Baptists have always opposed religious persecution.³

Most Christians agree with what the apostle Paul said:

"One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."⁴

Most Christians would agree with Paul that the day of worship should be a matter of personal conscience and should never be an issue to divide believers. Most

Sunday-keeping Christians would probably be shocked and outraged if they were told that Adventists teach that Sunday-keepers are going to be involved in persecuting Sabbath-keepers and restricting their freedom of religion. Most Sunday-keeping Christians would be appalled at any such action and would fight against any legislation that would infringe upon the religious freedoms of other Christians.

The truth is that over the last century the Seventh-day Adventists have never produced any substantial evidence that Christian leaders intend to enforce Sunday observance on Sabbatarian Christians. On the contrary, there is significant evidence that Congress has no intention of passing any Sunday laws any time in the foreseeable future. For example, notice what the former United States House majority leader, Dick Armey wrote:

"I have not heard of any legislation in Congress which would establish a national blue law setting aside Sunday as a national day of worship."⁵

The only evidence Adventists have is the behavior of the Catholic church in the past. Their theory is that the Catholic church will once again regain supremacy in the world and will re-institute the inquisition and other religious persecutions of the past.

After spending recent centuries apologizing for its past errors it is difficult imagining the Catholic church re-instituting the very institutions it now admits were wrong. It is also difficult imagining the world community sitting idly by and letting the Vatican murder all the Sabbath-keepers in the world. What would Catholicism possibly hope to gain by killing all the Sabbath-keepers in the world? If they ever were to attempt such an outrageous act, they would be regarded as worse than Hitler, whom the entire world loathes. Would that be a wise thing for the Catholic church to do? Would that make them popular? Far from it! If they ever attempted such an act the whole world would probably rise up against them and destroy them just as it rose up and destroyed Hitler.

All the Adventist speculative talk of Catholicism regaining control of the world is amusing. For centuries the Catholic church has been on a steady decline of power. The church is losing ground in many places throughout the world. Pentecostal and

other Protestant churches, including Seventh-day Adventists, have made tremendous strides in winning converts in the once Catholic strongholds of Central and South America. If the conversions continue at present rates, the Catholic Church will soon become a minority in a number of these countries. In Europe the people are, for the most part, living in a secular, post-Christian world. Christianity in general and the Catholic Church in particular no longer have any relevance for many Europeans. The Catholic Church has been struggling financially. It has been having difficulty attracting new priests and nuns. The Catholic Church has even gone so far as to meet with its one-time enemy--the Lutheran church--in order to redefine its teaching on salvation in order make peace with the Lutherans. The Catholic church is also facing difficulties with sexual misconduct of priests, priests who publicly differ from the papal policies, and internal strife on a number of issues, such as the ordination of female priests. Rather than being a super-power poised to take control of the world and enforce Sunday observance upon everyone, Catholicism is a declining church, struggling to survive in a world that no longer grasps its relevance.

What about when Catholics and Protestants unite upon an issue? When they stand together do they have the political muscle to enforce their will upon the people of the United States? Not at all. For over 35 years Evangelical Christians and Catholics have unitedly battled to stop the murder of innocent babies in abortion clinics. This is a passionate issue that evokes strong feelings from many Christians. Despite all the strong feelings, despite all the attempts by church leaders to get their flocks involved in the battle, very little has been accomplished. If Catholics and Protestants have united upon the abortion issue for over 35 years and yet have not managed to pass a law stopping it, then how does one expect them to pass a law regarding Sunday observance--an issue that most Catholics and Evangelicals have no interest in? Can you imagine a pastor standing up in his pulpit trying to get his flock motivated to go out and pass laws to kill Sabbath-keepers just because they prefer to worship on Saturday instead of Sunday? That is the height of absurdity! If any pastor got up and said such a thing to his congregation it would probably be the last sermon he ever delivered in that church!

The religious groups that are supposed to be so strong and so anxious to persecute Sabbath-keepers are in reality suffering from the same spiritual bankruptcy, malaise, materialism, confusion, corruption and internal divisiveness as the Seventh-day

Adventist Church is suffering from. The Christian church is no longer making the rules in the United States. The Christian church is struggling just to maintain its position in an increasingly secular and materialistic society. In fact, the church does not even have the power to keep existing Sunday laws (called blue laws) on the books in the United States. According to Joseph Conn, a leader in the organization "Americans United for Separation of Church and State," new Sunday legislation is now highly unlikely in the United States:

I think there is little chance of Sunday legislation in the United States in the immediate future. Here the trend is in the opposite direction. Sunday closing laws are gradually being repealed or struck down by the courts.⁶

While Ellen White's end-time Sunday law scenario might have seemed somewhat plausible in the 1880s, it is so implausible today that it borders on absurdity. One would have to search long and hard to find a single Sunday-keeping Christian who wants to use force to get Sabbath-keepers to worship on Sunday. In recent years some Seventh-day Adventists have suggested that the Sunday law movement is taking place covertly. It is happening behind closed doors, under the covers of secrecy. Thus the National Sunday Law has become the ultimate conspiracy theory. Who are these mysterious people who want to enforce Sunday worship upon the world? Where are they? What are their names? What are they possibly gaining by hiding? It is doubtful we will ever know the answers to those questions.

NOTES

1. Pope John Paul II, Dies Domini.
2. Jack P. Lowndes, Executive Director, The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, in a letter to Azenilto Brito, dated March 5, 1993.
3. Regular Baptist Church, The Baptist Distinctives.
4. Romans 14:5,6.
5. Dick Arme in letter to Paul Lorenz, October 2, 1992. To view a scanned copy of the entire letter, [click here](#).

6. Joseph Conn as quoted in Liberty.

National Sunday Law - Fact or Fiction?
Chapter 6

Mark of the Beast?

In 1847 Ellen White wrote:

"I saw that the number (666) of the image beast was made up; and that it was the beast that changed the Sabbath and the image beast followed on after and kept the Pope's, and not God's Sabbath. And all we were required to do, was to give up God's Sabbath and keep the Pope's and then we should have the mark of the beast and of his image."¹

Fifty years later, in 1897, Adventist pioneer Uriah Smith reiterates the Adventist stance that the Pope's Sabbath is the mark of the beast:

"This change of the fourth commandment must therefore be the change to which the prophecy points, and the Sunday sabbath must be the mark of the beast!"²

In 1898 Mrs. White wrote:

"John was called to behold a people distinct from those who worship the Beast and his image by keeping the first day of the week. The observance of this day is the mark of the Beast."³

How does one obtain the mark of the beast? According to Seventh-day Adventists, it is by observance of Sunday. How does one observe Sunday? Mrs. White makes that perfectly clear:

"If the light of truth has been presented to you, revealing the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and showing that there is no foundation in the Word of God for Sunday observance, and yet you still cling to the false sabbath, refusing to keep holy the Sabbath which God calls "My holy day," you receive the mark of the beast. When does this take place? When you

obey the decree that commands you to cease from labor on Sunday and worship God, while you know that there is not a word in the Bible showing Sunday to be other than a common working day, you consent to receive the mark of the beast, and refuse the seal of God."⁴

Notice carefully that in order to receive the mark of the beast one must:

1. "Cease from labor on Sunday" and ...
2. "Worship God" on Sunday

In the 1800s a few Seventh-day Adventists managed to get themselves arrested and imprisoned for brief durations for violating laws forbidding work on Sunday. Two of their publishing houses, one in London and one in Basil, Switzerland, were closed for disregarding Sunday laws and laws regulating the hours of female labor. At this time many Adventists regarded ceasing from labor on Sunday as a violation of the 4th Commandment. The reason behind their refusal to cease from work is found in Exodus 20:9, "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." They interpreted this to mean they were under a requirement from God to work six days a week. Therefore, they felt it was a violation of God's commandment and a renunciation of their faith to cease working on Sunday.

There was a rift in the church on this subject. Some in the church questioned the necessity of purposely inciting local authorities by working on Sunday. They proposed that Adventists comply with the local laws forbidding Sunday labor. Finally, a small crisis occurred in Australia in the early 1900s. A law was enacted requiring the closing of certain businesses, including publishing houses, in Melbourne on Sundays. After receiving notice of the law the Adventists continued to operate their publishing facility for three Sundays. Finally, local authorities threatened them with arrest. Adventists were now faced with a decision. Was it worth being arrested to prove their point about working six days a week? Adventist leaders turned to their prophetess who provided a testimony from God to solve the problem:

"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 the 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."

"At one time those in charge of our school at Avondale inquired of me, saying: 'What shall we do? The officers of the law have been commissioned to arrest those working on Sunday.' I replied: 'It will be very easy to avoid that difficulty. Give Sunday to the Lord as a day for doing missionary work. 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.'"⁵

Notice that Mrs. White directs Adventists to keep Sunday the same way all conscientious Sunday observers do! They are instructed to hold religious "meetings" and do "missionary work!" They are to refrain "from their ordinary work on that day." Furthermore, the prophetess told them that "this way of spending Sunday is always acceptable to the Lord."

Ellen White, 1898

Ellen White, 1902

"...you receive the mark of the beast... When you obey the decree that commands you to cease from labor on Sunday." "Seventh-day Adventists were to show their wisdom by refraining from their ordinary work on that day."

"Give Sunday to the Lord...to hold meetings in different places, and to do medical missionary work."

It appears that the threat of arrest was enough to convert the Adventist prophetess to Sunday observance! In 1902 she said that holding religious meetings, refraining from ordinary work, and doing missionary work is an acceptable way for Adventists to spend Sunday. Therefore, it must also be acceptable for Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, and other Christians to do the same. How could Sunday-keeping Christians receive the mark of the beast for observing Sunday when God's prophet said that this type of Sunday observance is "acceptable to the Lord?" If Sunday-keeping Christians receive the Mark of the Beast for spending Sunday in religious meetings and doing missionary work, it logically follows that Adventists will also receive the mark of the beast for doing the

same!

If Adventists follow the counsel of their prophet, how will they ever possibly be persecuted for violating the Sunday law? What reason could Sunday-keepers possibly conceive to persecute and kill people who are holding religious meetings and doing missionary work on Sunday? Since Adventists will be holding religious meetings and doing missionary work on Sunday it will be impossible to distinguish them from Sunday worshippers! Therefore, it will be impossible to arrest them and impossible to prosecute them.

Why should Adventists fear persecution from a future Sunday law? They have already been given instructions that will prevent them from ever being persecuted for working on Sunday. This testimony invalidates the entire Great Controversy scenario of Sabbath-keepers being persecuted for not worshipping on Sunday. If a Sunday law is ever passed, Adventists will not be hiding in the woods or mountains. They will be holding religious meetings on Sunday and doing missionary work. The authorities will see that the Adventists are doing the exact same thing the Baptists next door are doing. Therefore, there will be no arrests and no persecution. It will be a non-event.

Ellen White a Convert to "Wordly Policy"?

Years before the Sunday law incidents, Ellen White made this statement:

"There is a prospect before us of a continued struggle, at the risk of imprisonment, loss of property, and even of life itself, to defend the law of God, which is made void by the laws of men. In this situation worldly policy will urge an outward compliance with the laws of the land, for the sake of peace and harmony."⁶

Did Ellen White adopt a "worldly policy" when she urged "an outward compliance with the laws of the land, for the sake of peace and harmony?"

In Daniel 3, a story is told of three Hebrews who refused to bow down to the golden image. Have you ever wondered what happened to all the thousands of other Hebrews? Why weren't they standing up? There were probably plenty of Hebrews

on the plain of Dura that morning that acted the same way the Adventists did in Australia. They compromised. The book of Daniel does not mention those Hebrews because they are not worth mentioning. Only those who have the determination to stand up for what they believe--even at the risk of their lives--are worth mentioning. True Christians do not try and see how close they can appear to non-Christians so that they can avoid detection. True Christians stand for what they believe. Ellen White and her associates backed down on the Sunday law issue when they agreed it was not an issue worth getting arrested over. There are only two possible reasons for this:

1. Either Sunday laws are not the mark of the beast...
- OR
2. The church's prophet and its leaders compromised their values.

Which was it?

NOTES

1. Ellen G. White, *A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 19 (1847).
2. Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 606, 1897 edition.
3. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 133.
4. Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 980.
5. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 9 pp. 232, 238. The testimony was written in 1902 to Elder Irwin who was in Australia at that time (see *Report of Progress*, December 3, 1907).
6. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 712.

National Sunday Law - Fact or Fiction? Chapter 7

Does it Really Matter?

After reading the previous six chapters are you beginning to get a sense of just how absurd, impossible, illogical, and ridiculous this whole Sunday law scenario is? Following are seven solid reasons to reject this teaching:

1. It originated from a biased source

Do you believe everything a smiling salesman tells you? Of course not! Why? Common sense tells you to be wary in believing something a person is telling you if you know that person holds a personal bias regarding that subject.

Consider Joseph Bates. Besides being an inept Bible scholar, Bates had a powerful personal bias against mainstream Protestant churches. After the bitter disappointment of 1844, this retired sea captain was searching for some way to condemn the Christian denominations and prop up his own prophetic theory that the door of salvation was shut. His strong personal bias against the Protestant churches is evidenced in his writing. Should it be any surprise to us that he opened his Bible and "discovered" that Sunday-keeping was the Mark of the Beast? Was this man really a true Bible scholar? Or was he twisting Bible verses out-of-context to prove his own personal prejudices?

2. The story keeps changing

Do you trust someone who keeps changing their story? When the National Sunday Law teaching was first proposed by Ellen White, the Adventists did not think that Christians needed any special prompting to pass the Sunday law. When Christians failed to enact a law as planned in the late 1800s, the story began to change. It was then proposed that a crisis would occur, and the law would be passed amidst a "stupendous crisis." When even this appeared unlikely, the story changed once again. Now it was proposed that Satan himself would masquerade as Jesus in order to convince world leaders they needed to kill people who go to church on Saturday.

Over time, as it becomes more and more evident a Sunday-law will never be passed, the tale becomes more bizarre and outlandish.

3. Sunday-keepers have little interest in the issue

There is very little interest in establishing Sunday laws even amongst the most ardent Sunday-keepers. In fact, most existing Sunday laws are being repealed. To most Sunday-keepers, the Sabbath-Sunday issue is irrelevant. There is no evidence that Sunday-keeping Christians have the least inclination to persecute Sabbath-keepers over their day of worship. Most Christians today would be appalled at the very thought of persecuting another Christian to death over a doctrinal issue.

4. Sunday-keepers do not have the political power to pass a Sunday law

The landscape of the United States has changed to the extent that it would be virtually impossible to pass a Sunday law over the objections of Jews, Muslims, secularists, homosexuals, and Sabbath-keeping Christians. Sunday-keeping Christians have neither the political power nor the will to pass a Sunday law, as is evidenced by an unbroken string of failures to keep religion in American society.

5. Neither Jesus nor the Apostles ever said it was a "test"

Adventists insist it will be a "final test" even though it is impossible to believe Jesus and the Apostles would be silent on such a profound issue. If the final climatic battle between good and evil, the war to end all wars, is to be fought over the Sabbath, then why did Jesus and the Apostles ignore the issue entirely? The day of worship is said to be so significant that it determines who has the Mark of the Beast and who has the Seal of God, even though Paul said that what day a person worships on should never be an issue to separate believers (see Rom. 14).

6. Their own prophet says its okay to worship on Sunday!

Adventists say they are going to be put to death for not worshipping on Sunday even though their prophet said God was "pleased" if they held religious meetings and performed missionary work on Sunday. If God is pleased by such activity, then

why do Baptists and Methodists receive the Mark of the Beast for holding religious meetings and doing missionary work on Sunday? If both Adventists and non-Adventists are holding religious meetings and doing missionary work on Sunday, how are authorities going to be able to determine who is breaking the National Sunday law?

7. It is economically impossible

Imagine the chaos that would result from such a law. Businesses and factories would have to be shut down on Sunday. The United States would suffer irreparable economic harm. The reduction in work hours would probably drive many businesses to move overseas. Imagine a U.S. police force that can barely keep up with chasing real criminals, trying to cope with forcing the 100 million people who do not worship on Sunday to start worshipping on Sunday! Imagine a U.S. prison system, that is already filled to the brim, trying to handle millions upon millions of new prisoners. Imagine the terrible economic impact of taking millions of hard-working individuals out of the work-force, putting them in prison, where they must be clothed and fed by tax-payers. The economic and social impact of this scenario would probably bankrupt the United States, both financially and morally.

Is this teaching dangerous?

After considering all of the evidence presented, some might say that while it is true that a Sunday law appears extremely unlikely, what is the danger of believing such a teaching? What harm could possibly come from it? The truth is that it is always harmful to believe a falsehood about Bible prophecy. Adventists, of all the people on the earth, should be able to understand how dangerous it is! Look what happened in 1844! Perhaps as many as 50,000 people were deluded by a fanatical leader to believe that Christ was returning in 1844. That delusion led to financial ruin, destruction of families, bitter disappointment, and in a few instances, even suicide. Is it dangerous to believe a false teaching? Was it dangerous for the Branch Davidians of Waco, Texas, to believe the misguided teachings of leader David Koresh?

Teachings such as the National Sunday law are deceptive. They take the focus off of the real issues of Christianity, and the real persecutions that are taking place

around the world. Instead, they focus the attention on future events that are unlikely to ever take place. While other Christians are following Christ's command to take the gospel into all the world, some Adventists spend all their time and effort trying to convince other Christians that a Sunday law is going to be passed and they need to start keeping the Sabbath in order to be one of the remnant that is saved when Christ returns. One Adventist pastor spends his time traveling around the world, visiting Adventist churches in order to warn people about the coming Sunday laws. This type of activity is not only a waste of time and effort, but it is also direct disobedience to Christ who commanded Christians to take the "good news" of salvation--not the "bad news" of fear--into all the world.

Teachings such as the National Sunday law are dangerous. Since Adventists know that a Sunday law will be passed before Jesus returns, there is always the danger that some will delay preparing their hearts for Christ's return because they think to themselves, "Well, the Sunday law is still years away, so I do not have to worry yet about getting my life in harmony with God's pattern right now." Humans have a tendency to procrastinate. Adventists are being lulled to sleep by a false sense of security. While they are putting Christ's return years into the future after a National Sunday Law is passed by Congress, Christ may decide to return far sooner than they expected.

Teachings such as the National Sunday law are divisive. Rather than promote love and understanding between those of different faiths, these teachings create fear and suspicion. How can an Adventist have fellowship with a Sunday-keeper whom they suspect is secretly planning to pass laws to torture and kill them?

The National Sunday Law serves only one purpose. It generates fear. No cult can survive long without fear. The time has come for Adventists to face the facts and admit that a National Sunday Law is no longer feasible or even meaningful. It is time for them to turn away from this unscriptural teaching and turn away from fear. It is time for Adventists to stop using fear tactics to persuade people to join their church. Many people become Sabbath-keepers for reasons other than fear. Giving up the Sunday law teaching does not mean Adventists must give up their Sabbath or any of their other distinctive teachings. It simply means that they are willing to take a second look at Bible prophecy and admit that perhaps the future may not unfold in the exact manner that their pioneers had predicted. It is time for

Adventists to stop preaching fear and join wholeheartedly with their Sunday-keeping brothers and sisters in fulfilling Christ's great commission to take the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ into all the world.

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