

Religious Legislation – Understanding its Spirit, Intent and Results.

The prophetic scriptures clearly indicate to us that the nations of earth led by false Protestantism will enact religious legislation in the final conflict against God, his law and his true people. So it must be important for the professing people of God to have some understanding or the most correct understanding that can be gained of the nature of religious legislation and teach it as part of the final message of truth hence opening up the understanding of the people far and near to the issues that are present and up ahead which will demand of them a decision for life or death.?

I ask a few simple questions as I commence this study for your contemplation and maybe varying conclusions:

Should there be protests against religious legislation? If yes, why? If not, why not? Should religion be the subject of religious legislation? Is religious legislation a friend or foe of religious liberty?

At what point will religious legislation touch you as a Sabbath keeper? At what point will it represent national apostasy? At what point will it conflict with the law of God.? Are there any circumstances in which you would support religious legislation?

The 3rd angel's message clearly indicates that just up ahead there will be universal religious legislation. Revelation 13 and 14 have forewarned us of such. Note carefully what is involved in compliance or non compliance to legislated worship.

The spirit of religious legislation

For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against authorities and powers, against the world-rulers of this dark night, against the spirits of evil in the heavens. For this reason take up all the arms of God, so that you may be able to be strong in the evil day, and, having done all, to keep your place. (Eph 6:12-13 BBE)

And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus: (Rev 12:17 ASV)

“Not a move has been made in exalting the idol sabbath, in bringing around Sunday observance through legislation, but Satan has been behind it, and has been the chief worker; but the conscience should not be compelled even for the observance of the genuine Sabbath, for God will accept only willing service. {RH, April 15, 1890 par. 13}

The spirit of religious legislation is the spirit of the dragon, the spirit of the papacy and is seen in apostate Protestantism. Religious legislation leads to a monopoly faith by force. It is that everyone must accept the legislated faith and its observances or face the legislated consequences. When professing believers ask for such they are unaware of what they are asking for and what they will get. And which faith will it be that is protected by the state? In such circumstances the legislated faith is really the faith of those in the majority. So if the minority becomes the majority at some point and legislate their faith as the faith then the same evil results are seen. Why, because the spirit of the dragon is behind all religious legislation. It is a persecutory spirit.

“The National Reform movement, exercising the power of religious legislation, will, when fully developed, manifest the same intolerance and oppression that have prevailed in past ages. Human councils then assumed the prerogatives of Deity, crushing under their despotic power liberty of conscience; and imprisonment, exile, and death followed for those who opposed their dictates. If popery or its principles shall again be legislated into power, the fires of

persecution will be rekindled against those who will not sacrifice conscience and the truth in deference to popular errors. This evil is on the point of realization. {5T 712.1}. Why? Because the same dragon spirit urges it on.

The intent of religious legislation

The first public measure enforcing Sunday observance was the law enacted [A. D. 321.] by Constantine, two years before his profession of Christianity. This edict required towns-people to rest on the venerable day of the sun, but permitted countrymen to continue their agricultural pursuits. Though originally a heathen statute, it was enforced by the emperor after his nominal acceptance of the Christian religion. {4SP 391.1}

That did not accomplish what was fully intended by the apostate church. So further steps had to be taken to establish what the real intention was. The intention was to make all comply with a particular faith and its observances and punish those who refuse to comply.

"A T Jones in dealing with the threat of a national Sunday law bill in 1888 made reference to the 4th century showing the intent is always the same as he responded to Senator Blair. He stated, "The establishment of a theocracy is the aim of the prime movers in this Sunday law movement, as it was also the aim of the church leaders of the fourth century. And what came of that movement at that time? I read again: -- "This theocratical theory was already the prevailing one in the time of Constantine; and. . . the bishops voluntarily made themselves dependent on him by their disputes, and by their determination to make use of the power of the State for the furtherance of their aims." -- Neander, p. 132.

This being their theory, which resulted in the determination "to make use of the power of the State for the furtherance of their aims," the question arises, what means did they employ to secure control of this power? The answer is, they did it by means of Sunday laws. The first and greatest aim of the political church managers of that time was the exaltation of themselves; and second only to that was the exaltation of Sunday. These two things had been the principal aim of the bishops of Rome for more than a hundred years when Constantine gave them a chance to make their schemes effectual by the power of the State. The arrogant pretensions of the bishop of Rome to secure power over the whole church, was first asserted in behalf of Sunday by Victor, who was bishop of Rome from A. D. 193 to 202. A T Jones N S L p 68

"By a law of the year 386, those older changes effected by the Emperor Constantine were more rigorously enforced, and, in general, civil transactions of every kind on Sunday were strictly forbidden. Whoever transgressed was to be considered in fact as guilty of sacrilege." -- Neander, p. 300. Page 69.

And when the papacy gained the power it was the same story again. "As the papacy became firmly established, the work of Sunday exaltation was continued. . . . But steadily a change was effected. Those in holy office were forbidden to pass judgment in any civil controversy on the Sunday. Soon after, all persons, of whatever rank, were commanded to refrain from common labor, on pain of a fine for freemen, and stripes in the case of servants. Later it was decreed, that rich men should be punished with the loss of half of their estates; and finally, that if still obstinate they should be made slaves. The lower classes were to suffer perpetual banishment. GC88 575

The decrees of councils proving insufficient, the secular authorities were besought to issue an edict that would strike terror to the hearts of the people, and force them to refrain from labor on the Sunday. At a synod held in Rome, all previous decisions were reaffirmed with greater force and solemnity. They were also incorporated into the ecclesiastical law, and enforced by the civil authorities throughout nearly all Christendom. {GC88 575.3}

In 1888 the intent was the same. The bill proposed by Senator Blair, and upon which the argument was made, is as follows: --

"IN the Senate of the United States, May 21, 1888, Mr. Blair introduced the following bill, which was read twice, and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor: -- "A bill to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That no person, or corporation, or the agent, servant, or employee of any person or corporation, shall perform or authorize to be performed any secular work, labor, or business to the disturbance of others, works of necessity, mercy, and humanity excepted; nor shall any person engage in any play, game, or amusement, or recreation, to the disturbance of others, on the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, or during any part thereof, in any territory, district, vessel, or place subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States; nor shall it be lawful for any person or corporation to receive pay for labor or service performed or rendered in violation of this section." Introduction. Nat sun law

A T Jones argued, "Sunday is a religious institution wholly; Sunday legislation, wherever found, is religious legislation solely; and this bill does not in its terms pretend to be anything else than religious. Being therefore as it is, religious legislation, it is clearly unconstitutional. In all the powers thus delegated to Congress, there is no hint of any power to legislate upon any religious question, or in regard to the observance of any religious institution or rite. Therefore, this Sunday bill, being a religious bill, is unconstitutional; and any legislation with regard to it will be unconstitutional. Sunday being a religious institution, any legislation by Congress in regard to its observance, will be unconstitutional as long as the United States Constitution shall remain as it now is. Nor is this all. The nation has not been left in doubt as to whether the failure to delegate this power was or was not intentional. The first amendment to the Constitution, in declaring that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," shows that the failure to delegate such power was intentional, and makes the intention emphatic by absolutely prohibiting Congress from exercising any power with regard to religion. It is impossible to frame a law on the subject of religion that will not prohibit the free exercise of religion. Therefore the first amendment to the Constitution absolutely prohibits Congress from ever making any law with regard to any religious subject, or the observance of any religious rite or institution. N S L pages 46-47.

It must there be understood that the final piece of religious legislation will have the same intent.

Results of religious legislation

So what happens when religious legislation is enacted? It seeks to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges. Oppressive power is exercised. Principles of false religion will be under the care and protection of the state. Intolerance and oppression will be manifested

There are many who, if they understood the spirit and the result of religious legislation, would not do anything to forward in the least the movement for Sunday enforcement. But while Satan has been making a success of his plans, the people of God have failed at their post. God had an earnest work for them to do; for the honor of his law and the religious liberty of the people are at stake. God would have us see and realize the weakness and depravity of men, and put our entire trust in him; "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. {RH, December 24, 1889 par. 2}

The position taken by some is that this evil enactment has no relation to the present observance of the Sabbath. Here again great blindness is shown to be upon them. In this they are not correct, for every move from the first made by Satan was the beginning of his work to continue to the end to exalt the false, to take the place of the genuine Sabbath of Jehovah. He is just as intent now and more determined to do this than ever before. He has come down with great power to deceive them who dwell on the earth with his Satanic delusions. His work has a direct reference to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and should the resolution be passed that because of inconveniences and loss of property, imprisonment and fines, the enactment of laws of the State shall compel Sunday observance, all must obey these laws God would certainly be dishonored; and the lesson given to those who need better advice shall be of a character to open the way and make it easy for souls to be carried away with the bold, swift current of evil. They will be tempted strongly because of the universal scorn which they see thrown upon the law of God to think slightly of it and to place the laws of men on an equality with the laws of God and give less and less reverence to the laws of Jehovah. Shall the overseers of the flock work with the great deceiver to make apostasy from God easy? {1888 477.3}

There are many, even of those engaged in this movement for Sunday enforcement, who are blinded to the results which will follow this action. They do not see that they are striking directly against religious liberty. .. Any movement in favor of religious legislation is really an act of concession to the papacy, which for so many ages has steadily warred against liberty of conscience. Sunday observance owes its existence as a so-called Christian institution to "the mystery of iniquity;" and its enforcement will be a virtual recognition of the principles which are the very cornerstone of Romanism. {5T 711.4}

And inspiration is clear, "If popery or its principles shall again be legislated into power, the fires of persecution will be rekindled against those who will not sacrifice conscience and the truth in deference to popular errors. This evil is on the point of realization. {Mar 131.4}

The prophecy of Revelation 13 declares that the power represented by the beast with lamb-like horns shall cause "the earth and them which dwell therein" to worship the papacy—there symbolized by the beast "like unto a leopard." The beast with two horns is also to say "to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast;" and, furthermore, it is to command all, "both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond," to receive "the mark of the beast." [Revelation 13:11-16

Let the principle once be established in the United States, that the church may employ or control the power of the State; that religious observances may be enforced by secular laws; in short, that the authority of church and State is to dominate the conscience, and the triumph of Rome in this country is assured. {GC88 580.3}

Protestantism will then have been fully married to the principles of Romanism and the united states will then be in national apostasy from the principles of republicanism upon which the government has been founded.

An amendment to the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience, has long been urged upon the legislators of the nation; and the question of enforcing Sunday observance has become one of national importance. Are we ready for the issue involved in the Sunday movement? {5T 712.3}

Our duty.

There are many who are at ease, who are, as it were, asleep. They say, "If prophecy has foretold the enforcement of Sunday observance, the law will surely be enacted;" and having come to this conclusion, they sit down in calm expectation of the event, comforting themselves with the thought that God will protect his people in the day of

trouble. But God will not save us if we make no effort to do the work he has committed to our charge. We must be found faithfully guarding the outposts, watching as vigilant soldiers, lest Satan shall gain an advantage which it is our duty to prevent. We should diligently study the word of God, and pray in faith that God will restrain the powers of darkness; for as yet the message has gone to comparatively few, and the world is to be lightened with its glory.

When God has given us light showing the dangers before us, how can we stand clear in His sight if we neglect to put forth every effort in our power to bring it before the people? Can we be content to leave them to meet this momentous issue unwarned? . . . {Mar 131.5}

Another action of special note was the adoption of a constitution for the National Religious Liberty Association, formed in Battle Creek on July 21, 1889. The pressure on Congress to adopt a national Sunday law brought the question of religious liberty prominently to the front. Both the Review and Herald and the Signs of the Times, through much of 1888 and 1889, carried articles in nearly every issue relating to the steps being taken and the perils of religious legislation. E G. White Vol 3 The Lonely Years 1876-1891-CN- 34-CT- The 1889 General Conference Session and Beyond-PR- 01-PG- 449

Suppose that our brethren had not come to Washington when they did. Suppose that they had dallied for six months or a year. What would have been the result?--The bill concerning Sunday legislation would have been slipped right in, and I do not know how long or how severe a battle we should have had to fight. But in the mercy of God our brethren were able to forestall this movement, although, in order to do this, they had to neglect other pressing work. I can assure you that their hands and hearts were full. They prayed, they reached out to God, and they sent out tracts and pamphlets everywhere. And wherever this reading-matter has gone, the light of the Sabbath truth has penetrated. Earnest work was done, and constantly our prayers ascended to God, that he would let his power rest upon every one engaged in the work. Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 05-25-05 The Work for This Time -PR- 06

He is exalting himself above God, in trying to compel the conscience. But God's people should work with persevering energy to let their light shine upon the people in regard to the law, and thus to withstand the enemies of God and his truth. When the law of God has been made void, and apostasy becomes a national sin, the Lord will work in behalf of his people. Their extremity will be his opportunity. He will manifest his power in behalf of his church. RH, December 24, 1889

The minds of the people of God have been bewildered, and they have not discerned that Satan was stealing a march upon them, exulting that he could employ their voice and pen upon matters of minor importance, and so keep them from warning the people of their danger. {1888 501.1}

But while Satan has been making a success of his plans, the people of God have failed at their post. God had an earnest work for them to do, for the honor of His law and the religious liberty of the people are at stake. Yet the watchmen failed to discern the deceptions of the enemy that they might give the trumpet a certain sound in season to have some decided influence. {1888 501.1}

With earnestness and fervor the message must be given: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah 55:1.

Are we ready?

A great crisis awaits the people of God. A crisis awaits the world. The most momentous struggle of all the ages is just before us. Events which for more than forty years we have upon the authority of the prophetic word declared to be impending are now taking place before our eyes. Already the question of an amendment to the Constitution restricting liberty of conscience has been urged upon the legislators of the nation. The question of enforcing Sunday observance has become one of national interest and importance. We well know what the result of this movement will be. But are we ready for the issue? Have we faithfully discharged the duty which God has committed to us of giving the people warning of the danger before them? {5T 711.3}

The law of God and the law of Caesar have come into collision, and will come into collision again. The question we have to answer is, Shall we obey God, or Caesar? A great movement is now on foot to put the first day of the week in the place of the day God has sanctified and blessed. Satan works under a guise of religion, and guided by him, the professed Christian world will be very zealous in working against the law of God. Satan is leading men and women to complete the ruin he began in heaven. He is willing for the world to declare that the calamity by land and sea and the destruction by flood and fire, are because Sunday is desecrated. Herein lies his deception. {RH, June 4, 1901 par. 10}

We have all the way along known that this battle must come and the two great powers, the Prince of Darkness and the Prince of Light, will be in close battle, and not one of God's people who understand the truth, if in the light where God would have them to stand, will teach by precept or example any soul to shirk now. Give them strengthening Bible diet and Bible duty to strengthen and brace the soul for the coming conflict. But there will be need at this time of men who have been leaders in this work of keeping step where Jesus leads the way. If they do not walk in the light as Christ leads the way and advance with the increasing light of the third angel's message, they will surely become blind leaders of the blind. (Exodus 31:12-17).{1888 477.3}

It is time for God's people to work as never before, because of the increase of wickedness. The God-fearing, commandment-keeping people should be diligent, not only in prayer, but in action; and this will bring the truth before those who have never heard it. The world is overborne with falsehood and iniquity, and those whom God has made the depositaries of his law, and of the pure religion of Jesus, must be determined to let their light shine. If they do nothing to disabuse the minds of the people, and through ignorance of the truth our legislatures should abjure the principles of Protestantism, and give countenance and support to the Roman fallacy, the spurious sabbath, God will hold his people who have had great light, responsible for their lack of diligence and faithfulness. But if the subject of religious legislation is judiciously and intelligently laid before the people, and they see that through Sunday enforcement the Roman apostasy would be re-enacted by the Christian world, and that the tyranny of past ages would be repeated, then whatever comes, we shall have done our duty. Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 12-24-89 An Address in Regard to the Sunday Movement-PR- 04. May God be merciful to us all.

Yours in Christian liberty

P L Blackman

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