

ORIGINAL SUNDAY LEGISLATION



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ORIGINAL SUNDAY LEGISLATION

THE church was fully conscious of her loss of the power of God before she sought the power of the State. Had she not been, she never would have made any overtures to the imperial authority, nor have received with favor any advances from it.

There is a power that belongs with the gospel of Christ, and is inseparable from the truth of the gospel; that is, the power of God. In fact, the gospel is but the manifestation of that power; for the gospel...

Romans 1

¹⁶ ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

As long, therefore, as any order or organization of people professing the gospel of Christ maintains in sincerity the principle of that gospel, so long the power of God will be with them, and they will have no need of any other power to make their influence felt for good wherever known.

But just as soon as any person or association professing the gospel loses the spirit of it, so soon the power is gone also. Then and only then, does such an organization seek for another kind of power to supply the place of that which is lost.

True and False Theocracies

Thus was it with the church at this time. She had fallen, deplorably fallen, from the purity and the truth, and therefore from the power, of the gospel. And having lost the power of God and of godliness, she greedily grasped for the power of the State and of ungodliness.

And to secure laws by which she might enforce her discipline and dogmas upon those whom she had lost the power either to convince or to persuade, was the definite purpose

which the bishopric had in view when it struck that bargain with Constantine, and lent him the influence of the church in his imperial aspirations. The bishops endeavored to convince themselves that in the theocracy which they had framed and of which they were now a part, the kingdom of God was come.¹

But they did not suppose for a moment that the Lord himself would come and conduct the affairs of this kingdom in person. They themselves were to be the representatives of God upon the earth; and the theocracy thus established was to be ruled by the Lord through them.

This was but the culmination of the evil spirit manifested in the self-exaltation of the bishopric. That is to say, their idea of a theocracy was utterly false; and the working out of the theory was but the manifestation of the mystery of iniquity.

Yet this is not to say that all ideas of a theocracy have always been false. The government of Israel was a true theocracy. That was really a government of God. At the burning bush, God commissioned Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. By signs and wonders and mighty miracles multiplied, God delivered Israel from Egypt, led them through the Red Sea and through the wilderness, and finally into the promised land. There He himself ruled them by judges, to whom...

Hebrews 1

¹ ...in divers manners,

–He revealed His will,

Acts 13

²⁰ ...until Samuel the prophet.

In the days of Samuel, Israel would have a king. They even rejected God that they might have a king. Indeed, they had to

¹ See *Great Empires of Prophecy*, Chapter XXX, “Constantine and the Bishops”.

reject God before they could have a king; because God was their king. Yet even though God was rejected from being their king, He still acknowledged the people as His, and guided the nation. Even the kingdom which they had set up, against His solemn protest, He made a means of instruction concerning Christ.

And when because of iniquity that kingdom could no longer subsist, to the last king, and in him to all people, He sent this message:

Ezekiel 21

²⁵ You profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus says the Lord God;

²⁶ Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high.

²⁷ I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.

The kingdom was then subject to Babylon. When Babylon fell, and Medo-Persia succeeded, it was overturned the first time. When Medo-Persia fell, and was succeeded by Grecia, it was overturned the second time. When the Greek Empire gave way to Rome, it was overturned the third time. And then says the word,

²⁷ It shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.

When Christ was born in Bethlehem, of Him it was said:

Luke 1

³¹ ...You...shall call His name JESUS.

³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David:

³³ And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

But that kingdom is not of this world, nor will He sit upon

that throne in this world. While Christ was here as “that prophet,”² a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He refused to exercise any earthly authority or office whatever. When appealed to, to mediate in a dispute between two brothers in regard to their inheritance, He replied,

Luke 12

¹⁴ Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

And when the people would have taken Him and made Him a king, He withdrew himself from them, and went to the mountain alone. On the last night He spent on earth before His crucifixion, and in the last talk with Pilate before He went to the cross, He said,

John 18

³⁶ My kingdom is not of this world...

Thus the throne of the Lord has been removed from this world, and will be no more in this world nor of this world, until, as King of kings and Lord of lords, He whose right it is shall come again. And that time is the end of this world and the beginning of the world to come. This is shown by many scriptures, some of which it will be in order here to quote.

To the twelve disciples the Saviour said:

Luke 22

²⁹ I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me;

³⁰ That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

As to when this shall be, we are informed by the word in *Matthew* thus:

Matthew 19

²⁸ ...in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones,

² Acts 3:23.

judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And the time when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, is stated by another passage in *Matthew* thus:

Matthew 25

³¹ When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory:

³² And before Him shall be gathered all nations.

By these scriptures and all others on the subject, it is evident that the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God, is not only not of this world, but is nevermore to be of this world. Therefore while this world stands, a theocracy can never exist in it again. From the death of Christ until now, every theory of an earthly theocracy has been a false theory. And from now until the end of the world, every such theory will be a false theory.

The New, and False, Theocracy

Yet such was the theory of the bishops of the fourth century; and being such, it was utterly false and wicked. The falsity of this theory of the bishops of the fourth century has been clearly seen by but one of the church historians: that one is Neander. And this, as well as the scheme which the bishops had in mind, has been better described by him than by all the others put together. He says:

There had in fact arisen in the church...a false theocratical theory, originating not in the essence of the gospel, but in the confusion of the religious constitutions of the Old and New Testaments, which...brought along with it an unchristian opposition of the spiritual to the secular power, and which might easily result in the formation of a sacerdotal State, subordinating the secular to itself in a false and outward way.

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.³

That which they had in mind when they joined their interests to Constantine's, was to use the power which through him they would thus secure, to carry into effect in the State and by governmental authority their theocratical project.

The New Kingdom of God

The State was not only to be subordinate to the church, but was to be the servant of the church to assist in bringing all the world into the new kingdom of God. The bishops were the channel through which the will of God was to be made known to the State.

Therefore the views of the bishops were to be to the government the expression of the will of God, and whatever laws the bishopric might deem necessary to make the principles of their theocracy effective, it was their purpose to secure.

As we have found in the evidence of the previous chapter, the church had become filled with a mass of people who had no respect for religious exercises, and now it became necessary to use the power of the State to assist in preserving respect for church discipline.

As the church-members had not religion enough to lead them to do what they professed was their duty to do, the services of the State had to be enlisted to assist them in doing what they professed to believe it was right to do.

In other words, as only worldly and selfish interests had been appealed to in bringing them to membership in the church, and as they therefore had no conscience in the matter, the services of the State were employed as aids to conscience, or rather to supply the lack of conscience.

³ Neander, *History of the Christian Religion*, vol. ii, sec. II, part i, div. i, pars. 2,3.

Law Secured for Rest on Sunday

Accordingly, one of the first, if not the very first, of the laws secured by the bishops in behalf of the church, was enacted, as it is supposed, about 314 AD, ordering that on Friday and on Sunday

...there should be a suspension of business at the courts and in other civil offices, so that the day might be devoted with less interruption to the purposes of devotion.⁴

To justify this, the specious plea was presented that when the courts and public offices were open and regularly conducted by the State on these church days, the members were hindered from attending to their religious exercises.

It was further argued that if the State kept its offices open, and conducted the public business on those days, as the church-members could not conduct the public business and attend to church services both, they could not well hold public offices; and that, therefore, the State was in fact discriminating against the church, and was hindering rather than helping the progress of the kingdom of God.

This was simply to confess that their Christianity was altogether earthly, sensual, and selfish. It was to confess that there was not enough virtue in their profession of religion to pay them for professing it; and they must needs have the State pay them for professing it.

This was in fact in harmony with the whole system of which they were a part. They had been paid by the State in the first place to become professors of the new religion, and it was but consistent for them to ask the State to continue to pay them for the continued profession of it.

This was consistent with the system there established; but it was totally inconsistent with every idea of true religion. Any

⁴ Neander, *Ibid.*, sec. iii, part ii, div. iii. Par. 2.

religion that is not of sufficient value in itself to pay men for professing it, is not worth professing, much less is it worth supporting by the State. In genuine Christianity there is a virtue and a value which make it of more worth to him who professes it than all that the whole world can afford—yea, of more worth than life itself.

This, however, was but the beginning. The State had become an instrument in the hands of the church, and she was determined to use that instrument to the utmost for her own aggrandizement and the establishment of her power as supreme. As we have seen by many proofs, one of the first aims of the apostate church was the exaltation of Sunday as the chief sacred day.

And no sooner had the Catholic Church made herself sure of the recognition and support of the State, than she secured from the emperor an edict setting apart Sunday especially to the purposes of devotion. As the sun was the chief deity of the pagans, and as the forms of sun-worship had been so fully adopted by the apostate church, it was an easy task to secure from the sun-loving and church-courting Constantine, a law establishing the observance of the day of the sun as a holy day.

Constantine's Famous Sunday Law

Accordingly, March 7, 321 AD, Constantine issued his famous Sunday edict, which, both in matter and in intent, is the original and the model of all the Sunday laws that have ever been made. It runs as follows:

Constantine, Emperor Augustus, to Helpidius: On the venerable day of the sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such op-

erations, the bounty of heaven should be lost. (Given the 7th day of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them for the second time.)⁵

Schaff attempts to give the Sunday legislation of Constantine a “civil” character; but this is not only an error as to fact, but an anachronism by fifteen hundred and fifty years. There was no such idea in the conception of government entertained by Constantine and the bishops; nor was there any place for any such idea in this piece of legislation. The whole thing was religious. This is seen in at least five distinct counts.

First Count. The theory of government intended by the bishops and sanctioned by Constantine, was a theocracy; that is, a government of God, which, in itself, could be nothing else than religious. We have seen the bishops, on behalf of the church, playing the part of oppressed Israel; while Maxentius was made to occupy the place of a second Pharaoh, and Constantine that of a new Moses delivering Israel.

- We have seen the new Pharaoh—the horse and his rider—thrown into the sea, and sunk to the bottom like a stone.
- We have heard the song of deliverance of the new Israel when the new Moses had crossed the Red Sea—the river Tiber.
- We have seen that the new Moses, going on to the conquest of the heathen in the wilderness, set up the tabernacle and pitched it far off from the camp, where he received “divine” direction as to how he should conduct “the battles of the Lord.”

Thus far in the establishment of the new theocracy, each step in the course of the original theocracy had been imitated. Now this establishment of Sunday observance by law, was simply another step taken by the creators of the new theoc-

⁵ Schaff’s translation, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. ii, sec. lxxv, par. 5, note 1.

racy in imitation of the original.

After the original Israel had crossed the Red Sea, and had gone a considerable journey in the wilderness, God established among them, by a law, too, the observance of the Sabbath, a day of weekly rest. This setting apart of Sunday in the new theocracy, and its observance being established and enforced by law, was in imitation of the act of God in the original theocracy in establishing the observance of the Sabbath.

This view is confirmed by the testimony of the same bishop who has already given us so extensive a view of the workings of the new theocracy. These are the words:

All things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's day.⁶

The Sunday Law Only Religious

Now the Sabbath is wholly religious. The government in which its observance was enforced was the government of God. The law by which its observance was enforced was the law of God. The observance of the Sabbath was in recognition of Jehovah as the true God, and was a part of the worship of Him as such.

Now when it was declared by one of the chiefest factors in the new theocracy that "all things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred" to the Sunday—this, in the connection in which it stands, is the strongest possible proof that the observance of the day, and the object of the law, were wholly religious, without a single civil element anywhere even contemplated.

Second Count. In accordance with their idea of a theocracy, the governmental system which was now established

⁶ Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms*, xcii, quoted in Cox's *Sabbath Literature*, vol. i, p. 361, and in the *Sabbath Manual*, by Justin Edwards, pp. 125-127.

composed the kingdom of God. We have seen how this idea was entertained by the bishops at the banquet which Constantine gave to them at the close of the Council of Nice. We have seen it further adopted when Constantine's mother sent to him the nails of the "true cross," of which he made a bridle bit, when the bishops declared that the prophecy was fulfilled which says,

In that day [the day of the kingdom of God upon earth] shall there be upon the bridles of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord.

This idea, however, stands out in its fulness, in an oration which Eusebius delivered in praise of Constantine, and in his presence, on the thirtieth anniversary of the emperor's reign. The flattering bishop announced that God gave to Constantine greater proofs of His beneficence in proportion to the emperor's holy services to Him, and accordingly had permitted him to celebrate already three decades, and now he was entered upon the fourth.

He related how the emperor at the end of each decennial period had advanced one of his sons to a share of the imperial power; and now in the absence of other sons, he would extend the like favor to other of his kindred. Then he gave the meaning of it all as follows:

The eldest, who bears his father's name, he received as his partner in the empire about the close of the first decade of his reign; the second, next in point of age, at the second; and the third in like manner at the third decennial period, the occasion of this our present festival.

And now that the fourth period has commenced, and the time of his reign is still further prolonged, he desires to extend his imperial authority by calling still more of his kindred to partake his power; and, by the appointment of the Caesars, fulfills the predictions of the holy prophets, according to what they uttered ages before: "And the saints of the

Most High shall take the kingdom.”⁷

Then as the sun was the chief deity in this new kingdom of God, the bishop proceeds to draw for the edification of the Apollo-loving emperor, the following picture of him as the sun in his chariot traversing the world; and positively defines the system of government as a “monarchy of God” patterned after the “divine original”:

He it is who appoints him this present festival, in that He has made him victorious over every enemy that disturbed his peace; He it is who displays him as an example of true godliness to the human race. And thus our emperor, like the radiant sun, illuminates the most distant subjects of his empire through the presence of the Caesars, as with the far-piercing rays of his own brightness. To us who occupy the eastern regions he has given a son worthy of himself, and a second a third respectively to other departments of his empire, to be, as it were, brilliant reflectors of the light which proceeds from himself.

Once more, having harnessed, as it were, under the self-same yoke the four most noble Caesars as horses in the imperial chariot, he sits on high and directs their course by the reins of holy harmony and concord; and himself everywhere present, and observant of every event, thus traverses every region of the world. Lastly, invested as he is with a semblance of heavenly sovereignty, he directs his gaze above, and
FRAMES HIS EARTHLY GOVERNMENT ACCORDING TO THE PAT-
TERN OF THAT DIVINE ORIGINAL, feeling strength in its CON-
FORMITY TO THE MONARCHY OF GOD.⁸

This is evidence enough to show that the system of government established by Constantine and the bishops was considered as in very fact the kingdom of God. The laws therefore, being laws of the kingdom of God, would necessarily have a religious character; and that such was held to be the case is made plain by the following passage:

⁷ Eusebius, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, chap. iii.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Our emperor, ever beloved by Him, who derives the source of imperial authority from above, and is strong in the power of his sacred title, has controlled the empire of the world for a long period of years. Again: that Preserver of the universe orders these heavens and earth, and the celestial kingdom, consistently with His Father's will. Even so, our emperor, whom He loves, by bringing those whom he rules on earth to the only begotten Word and Saviour, renders them fit subjects of His kingdom.⁹

Third Count. As the object of the emperor was to render the people fit subjects for this kingdom of God, the Sunday law was plainly in the interests of the new kingdom of God, and was therefore religious only. The purpose of the first Sunday law was...

...that the day might be devoted with less interruption to the purposes of devotion.¹⁰

Professor Walford's translation of the passage is as follows:

He also enjoined the observance of the day termed the Lord's day. which the Jews call the first day of the week, and which the Greeks dedicate to the sun, as likewise the day before the seventh, and commanded that no judicial or other business should be transacted on those days, but that God should be served with prayers and supplications.¹¹

Such was the character and intent of the first enactment respecting Sunday. And of the second Sunday law we have a statement equally clear, that its purpose was the same. In praise of Constantine, the episcopal "orator" says:

He commanded too, that one day should be regarded as a special occasion for religions worship.¹²

⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. ii.

¹⁰ This is Neander's translation of the statement of Sozomen respecting the first law closing public offices on Friday and Sunday. *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, vol. ii. sec. iii, part ii, div. iii, par. ii.

¹¹ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, book i. chap. viii.

¹² Eusebius, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, chap. ix.

And in naming the great things which Christ had been enabled to accomplish by the help of Constantine, this same bishop shuts out every element upon which a civil claim might be based, and shows the law to be wholly religious, by continuing in the following words:

Who else has commanded the nations inhabiting the continents and islands of this mighty globe to assemble weekly on the Lord's day, and to observe it as a festival, not indeed for pampering of body, BUT FOR THE COMFORT AND INVIGORATION OF THE SOUL BY INSTRUCTION IN DIVINE TRUTH?¹³

Fourth Count. The title which is given to the day by Constantine in the edict is distinctively religious. It is *venerabilis dies solis*—venerable day of the sun. This was the pagan religious title of the day, and to every heathen was suggestive of the religious character which attached to the day as the one especially devoted to the sun and its worship.

An additional act of the emperor himself in this connection, has left no room for reasonable doubt that the intent of the law was religious only. As the interpreter of his own law, and clearly indicating its intent, he drew up the following prayer, which he had the soldiers repeat in concert at a given signal every Sunday morning:

We acknowledge thee the only God; we own thee as our King, and implore thy succor. By thy favor have we gotten the victory; through thee are we mightier than our enemies. We render thanks for thy past benefits, and trust thee for future blessings. Together we pray to thee, and beseech thee long to preserve to us, safe and triumphant, our emperor Constantine and his pious sons.¹⁴

By Authority of Pontifex Maximus

Fifth Count. If, however, there should be yet in the mind of

¹³ Ibid., chap. xvii.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, book iv, chap. xx.

any person a lingering doubt as to whether Constantine's Sunday legislation was religious only, with no thought of any civil character whatever, even this must certainly be effectually removed by the fact that it was by virtue of his office and authority as pontifex maximus, and not as emperor, that the day was set apart to this use; because it was the sole prerogative of the pontifex maximus to appoint holy days. In proof of this, we have excellent authority in the evidence of two competent witnesses. Here is the first:

The rescript, indeed, for the religious observance of the Sunday...was enacted...for the whole Roman Empire. Yet, unless we had direct proof that the decree set forth the Christian reason for the sanctity of the day, it may be doubted whether the act would not be received by the greater part of the empire as merely adding one more festival to the Fasti of the empire, as proceeding entirely from the will of the emperor, or even grounded on his authority as Supreme Pontiff, by which he had the plenary power of appointing holy days.¹⁵

It is true that this statement is qualified by the clause,

...unless we had direct proof that the decree set forth the Christian reason for the sanctity of the day;

—but this qualification is wholly removed by another statement from the same author which says that:

The rescript commanding the celebration of the Christian Sabbath bears no allusion to its peculiar sanctity as a Christian institution. It is the day of the sun which is to be observed by the general veneration....But the believer in the new paganism, of which the solar worship was the characteristic, might acquiesce without scruple in the sanctity of the first day of the week.¹⁶

This is confirmed also by the fact that...

¹⁵ Milman, *History of Christianity*, book iii, chap. iv, par. 9 from end.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. i, par. 44.

...there is no reference whatever in his law either to the fourth commandment or the resurrection of Christ.¹⁷

Therefore, as it is admitted that unless we had direct proof that the decree set forth the Christian reason for the sanctity of the day, it was merely adding one more festival to the *Fasti* of the empire, the appointment of which lay in the plenary power of the *pontifex maximus*; and as it is plainly stated that there is no such proof, this plainly proves that the authority for the appointment of the day lay in the office of the *pontifex maximus*, and that authority was wholly religious.

Our second witness testifies as follows:

A law of the year 321 ordered tribunals, shops, and workshops to be closed on the day of the sun, and he [Constantine] sent to the legions, to be recited upon that day, a form of prayer which could have been employed by a worshiper of Mithra, of Serapis, or of Apollo, quite as well as by a Christian believer. This was the official sanction of the old custom of addressing a prayer to the rising sun. IN DETERMINING WHAT DAYS SHOULD BE REGARDED AS HOLY, and in the composition of a prayer for national use, CONSTANTINE EXERCISED ONE OF THE RIGHTS BELONGING TO HIM AS PONTIFEX MAXIMUS; and it caused no surprise that he should do this.¹⁸

In the face of such evidence as this, to attempt to give to the Sunday legislation of Constantine a civil character, seems, to say the very least, to spring from a wish to have it so, rather than from a desire to recognize the facts simply as they are.

Sunday in the Council of Nice

The Council of Nice, in 325 AD, gave another impetus to the Sunday movement. It decided that the Roman custom of celebrating Easter on Sunday only, should be followed throughout the whole empire. The council issued a letter to the churches, in which is the following passage on this subject:

¹⁷ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. iii, sec. lxxv, par. 5.

¹⁸ Duruy, *History of Rome*, chap. cii, part i, par. 4 from end.

We have also gratifying intelligence to communicate to you relative to unity of judgment on the subject of the most holy feast of Easter; for this point also has been happily settled through your prayers; so that all the brethren in the East who have heretofore kept this festival when the Jews did, will henceforth conform to the Romans and to us, and to all who from the earliest time have observed our period of celebrating Easter.¹⁹

This was followed up by a letter from “Constantine Augustus to the churches,” in which upon this point he said:

The question having been considered relative to the most holy day of Easter, it was determined by common consent that it would be proper that all should celebrate it on one and the same day everywhere....And in the first place it seemed very unsuitable in the celebration of this sacred feast, that we should follow the custom of Jews, people who, having imbrued their hands in a most heinous outrage, and thus polluted their souls, are deservedly blind....Let us then have nothing in common with that most hostile people the Jews....Surely we should never suffer Easter to be kept twice in one and the same year. But even if these considerations were not laid before you, it became your prudence at all times to take heed, both by diligence and prayer, that the purity of your soul should in nothing have communion, or seem to have accordance, with the customs of men so utterly depraved....

Since then it was desirable that this should be so amended that we should have nothing in common with that nation parricides, and of these who slew their Lord; and since the order is a becoming one which is observed by all the churches of the western, southern, and northern parts, and by some also in the eastern; from these considerations all have on the present occasion thought it to be expedient, and I pledged myself that it would be satisfactory to your prudent penetration, that what is observed with such general unanimity of sentiment in the city of Rome, throughout Italy,

¹⁹ Socrates’s *Ecclesiastical History*, book i. chap. ix.

Africa, all Egypt, Spain, France, Britain, Libya, the whole of Greece, and the dioceses of Asia, Pontus, and Cilicia, your intelligence also would readily concur in. Reflect, too, that not only is there a greater number of churches in the places before mentioned, but also that this in particular is a most sacred obligation, that all should in common desire whatever strict reason seems to demand, and which has no communion with the perjury of the Jews.

But to sum up matters briefly, it was determined by common consent that the most holy festival of Easter should be solemnized on one and the same day; for in such a hallowed solemnity any difference is unseemly, and it is more commendable to adopt that opinion in which there will be no intermixture of strange error, or deviation from what is right. These things therefore being thus ordered, do you gladly receive this heavenly and truly divine command; for whatever is done in the sacred assemblies of the bishops is referable to the divine will.

This throws much light upon the next move that was made; as these things were made the basis of further action by the church. At every step in the course of the apostasy, at every step taken in adopting the forms of sun-worship, and against the adoption and the observance of Sunday itself, there had been constant protest by all real Christians.

Those who remained faithful to Christ and to the truth of the pure word of God, observed the Sabbath of the Lord according to the commandment, and according to the word of God, which sets forth the Sabbath as the sign by which the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is distinguished from all other gods. These accordingly protested against every phase and form of sun-worship.

Others compromised, especially in the East, by observing both Sabbath and Sunday. But in the West, under Roman influences and under the leadership of the church and the bishopric of Rome, Sunday alone was adopted and observed.

Against this Church-and-State intrigue throughout, there had been also, as against every other step in the course of the apostasy, earnest protest by all real Christians. But when it came to the point where the church would enforce by the power of the State the observance of Sunday, this protest became stronger than ever. And additional strength was given to the protest at this point by the fact that it was urged in the words of the very arguments which the Catholic Church had used when she was antagonized, rather than courted, by the imperial authority.

This, with the strength of the argument upon the merit of the question as to the day which should be observed, greatly weakened the force of the Sunday law. But when, in addition to these considerations, the exemption was so broad, and when those who observed the Sabbath positively refused to obey the Sunday law, its effect was virtually nullified.

In order, therefore, to the accomplishment of her original purpose, it now became necessary for the church to secure legislation extinguishing all exemption, and prohibiting the observance of the Sabbath so as to quench that powerful protest.

And now, coupled with the necessity of the situation, the “truly divine command” of Constantine and the Council of Nice that “nothing” should be held “in common with the Jews,” was made the basis and the authority for legislation utterly to crush out the observance of the Sabbath of the Lord, and to establish the observance of Sunday only in its stead. Accordingly, the Council of Laodicea enacted the following canon:

CANON 29. Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honor, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Ju-

daizing, they shall be shut out from Christ.²⁰

The report of the proceedings of the Council of Laodicea is not dated. A variety of dates has been suggested, of which 364 AD seems to have been the most favored. Hefele allows that it may have been as late as 380. But whatever the date, before 380 AD, in the political condition of the empire, this could not be made effective by imperial law.

In 364 AD, Valens and Valentinian became emperors, the former of the East, and the latter of the West. For six years Valens was indifferent to all parties; but in 370 AD, he became a zealous Arian, and so far as in him lay, established the Arian doctrine throughout his dominion. Valentinian, though a Catholic, kept himself aloof from all the differences or controversies among church parties. This continued till 375, when Valentinian died, and was succeeded by his two sons, one aged sixteen, the other four years.

In 378 the reign of Valens ended, and Theodosius, a Spanish soldier, was appointed emperor of the East. In 380 he was baptized into the Catholic Church, and immediately an edict was issued in the name of the three emperors, commanding all subjects of the empire, of whatever party or name, to adopt the faith of the Catholic Church, and assume the name of "Catholic Christians." As now,

...the State itself recognized the church as such, and endeavored to uphold her in the prosecution of her principles and the attainment of her ends.²¹

And as Theodosius had already ordered that all his subjects...

²⁰ Hefele's *History of the Church Councils*, Laodicea. In both the Greek and Latin copies of this canon, the word "Sabbath" is used instead of "Saturday;" and the word "anathema"—accursed—is the one which Hefele translates "shut out."

²¹ Neander, *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, vol. ii, sec. iii, part ii, div. iii, par. 4.

...should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans, which faithful tradition...

–had preserved, and which was then...

...professed by the pontiff Damasus...

–of Rome; and that they should all...

...assume the title of Catholic Christians;

–it was easy to bring the imperial power to the support of the decrees of the church, and make the Laodicean Canon effective.

Sunday Work Made Sacrilege

Now was given the opportunity for which the church had waited so long, and she made use of it. At the earliest possible moment she secured the desired law; for,

...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.²²

As the direct result of this law, there soon appeared an evil which, under the circumstances and in the logic of the case, called for further legislation in the same direction. The law forbade all work.

But as the people had not such religion as would cause them to devote the day to pious and moral exercises, the effect of the law was only to enforce idleness. Enforced idleness only multiplied opportunity for dissipation. The natural consequence was that the circuses and the theaters throughout the empire were crowded every Sunday.

The object of the Sunday law, from the first one that was is-

²² Neander, *Ibid.* par. 5.

sued, was that the day might be used for the purposes of devotion, and that the people might go to church. But they had not sufficient religion to lead them to church when there was opportunity for amusement. Therefore:

Owing to the prevailing passion at that time, especially in the large cities, to run after the various public shows, it so happened that when these spectacles fell on the same days which had been consecrated by the church to some religious festival, they proved a great hindrance to the devotion of Christians, though chiefly, it must be allowed, to those whose Christianity was the least an affair of the life and of the heart.²³

Assuredly! An open circus or theater will always prove a great hindrance to the devotion of those Christians whose Christianity is “the least an affair of the life and of the heart.” In other words, an open circus or theater will always be a great hindrance to the devotion of those who have not religion enough to keep them from going to it, but who only want to use the profession of religion to maintain their popularity, and to promote their selfish interests.

On the other hand, to the devotion of those whose Christianity is really an affair of the life and of the heart, an open circus or theater will never be a particle of hindrance, whether open at church time or all the time. With the people there, however, if the circus and theater were open at the same time as the church, the church-members, as well as others, not being able to go to both places at once, would go to the circus or the theater instead of to the church.

But this was not what the bishops wanted. This was not that for which all work had been forbidden. All work had been forbidden in order that the people might go to church; but instead of that, they crowded to the circus and the theater, and the audiences of the bishops were rather slim. This was not at

²³ Neander, *Ibid.*, par. 19.

all satisfying to their pride; and they took care to let it be known.

Church teachers...were, in truth, often forced to complain that in such competitions the theater was vastly more frequented than the church.²⁴

The Church Obtains the Monopoly

And the church was now in a condition in which she could not bear competition. She must have a monopoly. Therefore, the next step to be taken, the logical one, too, was to have the circuses and theaters closed on Sundays and other special church days, so that the churches and the theaters should not be open at the same time.

There was another feature of the case which gave the bishops the opportunity to make their new demands appear plausible, by urging in another form the selfish and sophistical plea upon which they had asked for the first edict respecting church days. In the circuses and the theaters large numbers of men were employed, among whom many were church-members. But, rather than give up their places, the church-members would work on Sunday. The bishops complained that these were “compelled to work,” and were “prohibited to worship;” they pronounced it “persecution,” and demanded more Sunday laws for “protection.”

As a consequence, therefore, and in the logic of the situation, at a council held at Carthage in June, 401 AD, the following canon was enacted:

CANON 5. On Sundays and feast-days, no plays may be performed.²⁵

That this canon might be made effective, the bishops in the same council passed a resolution, and sent up a petition to the

²⁴ Neander, *Ibid.*

²⁵ Hefele's *History of the Church Councils*, Fifth Carthaginian.

emperor Honorius, praying

...that the public shows might be transferred from the Christian Sunday and from feast-days, to some other days of the week.²⁶

The reason given in support of the petition was not only, as above, that those who worked in government offices and employments at such times, were persecuted, but that

...the people congregate more to the circus than to the church.²⁷

The church-members had not enough religion or love of right to do what they professed to believe was right; therefore the State was asked to take away from them all opportunity to do wrong; then they would all be Christians! Satan himself could be made that kind of Christian in that way—and he would be the devil still!

The petition of the Council of Carthage could not be granted at once, but in 425 the desired law was secured; and to this also there was attached the reason that was given for the first Sunday law that ever was made; namely,

...in order that the devotion of the faithful might be free from all disturbance.²⁸

It must constantly be borne in mind, however, that the only way in which “the devotion of the faithful” was “disturbed” by these things was that when the circus or theater was open at the same time that the church was open, the “faithful” would go to the circus or the theater instead of to church, and therefore their “devotion” was “disturbed.” And of course the only way in which the “devotion” of such “faithful” ones could be

²⁶ Neander, *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, vol. ii, sec. iii, part i, div. iii, par. 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

freed from all disturbance, was to close the circuses and the theaters at church time.

In the logic of this theory, there was one more step to be taken. To see how logically it came about, let us glance at the steps taken from the first one up to this point:

1. First, the church had all work on Sunday forbidden, in order that the people might attend to things divine; work was forbidden, that the people might worship.
2. But the people would not worship; they went to the circus and the theater instead of to church.
3. Then the church had laws enacted closing the circuses and the theaters, in order that the people might attend church.
4. But even then the people would not be devoted, nor attend church; for they had no real religion.
5. The next step to be taken, therefore, in the logic of the situation, was to compel them to be devoted—to compel them to attend to things divine.

Origin of the Inquisition

This was the next step logically to be taken, and it was taken. The theocratical bishops were equal to the occasion. They were ready with a theory that exactly met the demands of the case; and one of the greatest of the Catholic Church Fathers and Catholic saints was the father of this Catholic saintly theory. He wrote:

It is, indeed, better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment or by pain. But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected....Many must often be brought back to their Lord, like wicked servants, by the rod of temporal suffering, before they attain the highest grade of religious devel-

opment.²⁹

Of this theory, the author who of all the church historians has best exposed the evil workings of this false theocracy, justly observes that

...it was by Augustine, then, that a theory was proposed and founded, which...contained the germ of that whole system of spiritual despotism of intolerance and persecution which ended in the tribunals of the Inquisition.³⁰

The history of the Inquisition is only the history of this infamous theory of Augustine's. But this theory is only the logical sequence of the theory upon which the whole series of Sunday laws was founded. In closing his history of this particular subject, the same author says:

In this way the church received help from the State for the furtherance of her ends.³¹

This statement is correct. Constantine did many things to favor the bishops. He gave them money and political preference. He made their decisions in disputed cases final, as the decision of Jesus Christ. But in nothing that he did for them did he give them power over those who did not belong to the church, to compel them to act as though they did, except in the one thing of the Sunday law.

In the Sunday law, power was given to the church to compel those who did not belong to the church, and who were not subject to the jurisdiction of the church, to obey the commands of the church.

In the Sunday law there was given to the church control of the civil power, so that by it she could compel those who did

²⁹ Augustine, *The Correction of the Donatists*, chap. vi. I adopt Schaff's translation, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. iii, sec. xxvii, par. 12.

³⁰ Neander, *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, vol. ii, sec.ii, part iii, div. i, last paragraph.

³¹ Neander, *Ibid.*, sec. iii, part ii, div. iii, par. 5.

not belong to the church to act as though they did. The history of Constantine's time may be searched through and through, and it will be found that in nothing did he give to the church any such power, except in this one thing—the Sunday law. Neander's statement is literally correct, that it was...

...in this way the church received help from the State for the furtherance of her ends.

That this may be set before the reader in as clear a light as possible, we shall here summarize the facts stated by Neander in their direct bearing. He says of the carrying into effect of the theocratical theory of the apostate bishops that they made themselves dependent upon Constantine by their disputes, and...

...by their determination to use the power of the State for the furtherance of their aims.

Then he mentions the first and second Sunday laws of Constantine, the Sunday law of 386 AD, the Carthaginian council, resolution, and petition, of 401; and the law of 425 in response to this petition; and then, without a break, and with direct reference to these Sunday laws, he says:

In this way the church received help from the State for the furtherance of her ends.

She started out with the determination to do it; she did it; and "in this way" she did it. And when she had secured control of the power of the State, she used it for the furtherance of her own aims, and that in her own despotic way, as announced in the inquisitorial theory of Augustine.

The first step logically led to the last. And the theocratical leaders in the movement had the cruel courage to follow the first step unto the last, as framed in the words of Augustine and illustrated in the horrors of the Inquisition during the

fearful record of the dreary ages in which the bishopric of Rome was supreme over kings and nations.

