

Sunday Laws? Really?

A Few Thoughts on Revelation 13

As part of our research on the pioneers' teachings on the king of the north, I read through the transcripts of the secret, 1919, Bible Conference held in July in Washington DC. During this reading I came across an interesting account by E.R. Palmer. This followed discussion the two horned beast of Revelation and whether it was the United States or Apostate Protestantism working through the United States.

“E.R.PALMER: I wish to bring before the Convention, – I don't want to take much of your time but I want to apologize at least for the rather radical thing that we did during the war period in dealing with 'Bible Readings,' and perhaps that will get one point before us in a little more concrete-form.

“I don't know that we have had much difficulty over this question of the United States in Prophecy, although it is well known that been some embarrassment in presenting the question outside of the United States, especially, and some of our brethren here in the United States have felt that we limited the subject too much to this country and that the second beast of Revelation 13 should be given a greater scope. And I notice it is referred to here in this convention as apostate Protestantism laying hold primarily of the Government of the United States and reaching out to all the governments of the earth the same as the Papacy did back there as represented in the first part of the chapter.

“When we got into the war, we found ourselves in some embarrassment over this chapter in 'Bible Readings.' Our agents were selling is extensively and the authorities were very active in looking up matter that we were publishing to see if we didn't belong in the penitentiary with the leaders of another denomination that had just previously been examined and the same men who were instrumental under the Government in putting, the leaders of the Russellite movement in the penitentiary, came to our headquarters to see where we belonged, whether inside or out, and I was so unfortunate as to be the first one looked up by them, although this question didn't come before them through our office first. The Southern Publishing Assn., got into difficulty over the matter and the Government asked them to submit 'Bible Readings' for examination and it was examined by the local attorney and sent up here to Washington.

“We thought it was an important matter for we had so many agents working on this book, and we put the matter into the hands of our attorney, Mr. Hogan, and he took the matter up very thoroughly and very carefully with the Department of Justice. It seemed that there was an impression on the part of leading men, beginning with the attorney there in Nashville, that our presentation of this subject , was an attack upon the United States Government. Some of our brethren will remember when the hearing was given before the Senate Committee here in Washington, that Mrs. Craft. stood up before the Senators and declared that we were a disloyal people as a whole because we represented the United States Government as a two-horned hog; and while they didn't give serious consideration to her charge, yet that seemed to be rather the impression of these men who were looking up our literature during the time of the war.

“This led us to much earnest study as to what we should do in handling many of our books, and to took up that chapter in 'Bible Readings', and we changed the first four questions, or rather the notes to these questions, so as to give a little different slant to the subject. Not having any mind to sacrifice the truth at all in order to smooth our way with the Government, but really to bring the chapter into harmony with the convictions of our editors and the General Conference Committee, a thing which we wouldn't have felt quite free to do without further counsel or consideration in such a meeting as this.

“So we made changes in this chapter, but with the unanimous vote of the Book Committee, and our Board, and the minority members of the General Conference Committee. And I have been surprised, but there gas been no protest that has come to us since that time. I thought perhaps you brethren would know better whether it is being protested against.

“I hardly know how to get this matter before you as you haven't the books, except by reading these four questions and the notes as they were in the first edition, and then follow it by the reading or the revised to see whether that meets your mind, – whether it was a proper thing for us to do.

“The title, is 'The United States in Prophecy,' sub-title, 'Making an image to the Beast.' Changed in the revision, the title is 'Making an Image to the Beast,' sub-title 'The Prophecy of Revelation 13.'

“PRESCOTT: You don't put in the heading, 'The United States in Prophecy' then?

“PALMER: No, We changed it so it does not appear in the title. I want to say we submitted this to our attorney, and through him to the Department of Justice, and they appreciated very much our effort to change the phraseology.

“PRESCOTT: Was the book, 'United States in Prophecy' protested against?

“PALMER: Not that I know of. It was dead on our shelves and not being sold at that time. They got after books that were being sold throughout the country.

[Elder Palmer then read the first four questions and their answers and notes in the old and in the revised edition, pointing out the changes made.]”

Finding this account of changing SDA publications to meet the demands of the civil government of the United States in 1914 very fascinating, I filed it away in my head to work on later. After several years I mentioned this incident to my brother. He has a 1914 and a 1919 edition of the “Bible Readings.” He immediately got them out to compare them and found some amazing things.

First of all, the 1919 edition claims to be a reprint (not a revision) of the 1914 edition. He therefore had assumed that they were identical, but in comparing the two we find this not to be the case, the 1919 edition is a revision. The title of the chapter on Revelation 13 is changed, just as Palmer said he had changed it. There were minor wording changes in the first four questions, as Palmer pointed out. The most significant of these, seem to be in question 4. The 1914 edition says that the churches of the United States are “clothed with civil power.” The 1919 edition says they “dominate the civil power.” At first this doesn't appear to be significant but when you think about it, it is. To be clothed with civil power, the churches would be invested with civil power by the state, thus making the state responsible for the acts of the church by giving the church civil power to enforce it's laws. But to dominate the civil power, the act would be of the church taking control of the government, thus making the church responsible for the laws it causes the state to enforce. If the two horned beast is the United States, as taught by Smith, then the prophecy clearly states that it is the United State that creates the image to the beast and enforces his mark. But the way they worded it in the 1919 edition of 'Bible Readings,' it is the image of the beast (the protestant churches) who enforce the mark on the United States.

The overall impression from the 1914 edition study is the that United States is the power that causes the image to be formed and enforces the mark of the beast, causing all the world to wonder after him. But the general impression formed by the wording of the 1919 edition is that there will arise a power within the United States, for which it is not responsible, that enforces this mark and causes the world to wonder after the beast. The first view is clear and consistent with the prophecy, the second is confusing and contradictory to the wording found in Revelation 13.

But the most profound alteration in the 1919 edition is found under question number 18. A question not mentioned by Palmer at the Bible Conference. The note in the 1914 edition brings out an explanation

that I have never heard in my life, and if correct, puts an entirely different view on events in this world in the last 100 years.

“18. What does the prophet say the two-horned beast-power will attempt to enforce upon the people?

“‘And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive *a mark* in their hand, or in their foreheads.’ Rev. 13:16.

“Notes. – This mark is the mark of the beast, or the false Sabbath. See Rev. 14:9,10, and reading on page 446. The hand is the symbol of *labor*; the forehead, of the *mind*, or that with which we *worship*. See Eccl.9:10; Rom. 7:25. To enforce the observance of Sunday as a ‘civil sabbath,’ by requiring only the cessation of labor, business, and trade on that day, would be to enforce the mark in the *hand*; to enforce it as a *religious* institution, or day of worship, would be to place the mark in the *Forehead*.

“Let the read note this twofold aspect of the Sunday Sabbath, as expressed by one of the most ardent and active Sunday-law advocates in the United States; ‘We, the Sabbath Union, W. C. T. U., all the churches, and the Y. M. C. A., are laboring with all our might to carry the *religious* sabbath with our right arm, and the all the rest will receive it as a civil institution, and thus we will sweep in the whole nation.’ Rev. W. F. Crafts, in *Sunday Union Convention, Wichita, Kans., Sept. 20, 1889.*”

This question reads very differently in the 1919 edition.

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“Notes. – This mark is the mark of the beast, or the false Sabbath. See Rev. 14:9,10, and reading on page 446. God’s seal, or mark, is set in the forehead (Rev. 7:3; 14:1), the seat of the mind, the Lord accepting only the worship of conviction and conscience. The mark of the beast, however, is said to be received in the hand or forehead. Some are deceived and give assent to the false teaching with their minds, receiving the mark in the forehead; others, coerced or indifferent, give formal, outward consent, and so receive the mark in the hand.

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The second note, in the 1919 edition, is much more familiar sounding, and what I have been taught all my life. The implications of the first note are astounding and actually make much more sense with the quote from Rev. Crafts, than the second note.

Let’s think about this a little bit. If the note in the 1919 edition is correct, then to cease from labor on Sunday, when the religious law comes in, would be to receive the mark in the hand. But how do we reconcile this with the statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that we should refrain from labor and do missionary work on this day, during the Sunday law enforcement? To follow this counsel would be to receive the mark in the hand according to the 1919 Bible Readings. To remove this seeming contradiction, I have heard that the Sunday law will require church attendance on Sunday and that to submit to this attendance requirement will be receiving the mark in the hand. However this seems an impossible requirement when you consider all the atheists and anti-religionists in the world and in this

very country. If this is truly what Revelation 13 means, then the whole world must be converted to Christianity before the Sunday laws can be enacted, an event that seems more and more remote as time goes on. This teaching has lead many non SDA's to reject the advent message an irrational because they cannot see how we can expect the entire country to simply walk into the church and press for Sunday legislation.

However, the note published in 1914, makes much more logical sense and does not contradict the Spirit of Prophecy council. If this view is correct, then we already have a partial fulfillment of this prophecy in the United States today.

Remember that book "United States in Prophecy," that Palmer mentioned as being "dead on our shelves?" It was written by Uriah Smith in 1874. In it we find an astonishing little piece of history.

"In 1830, certain memorials for prohibiting the transportation of mails and the opening of post-offices on Sunday were referred to the Congressional Committee on the Post-offices and Post-roads. The committee reported unfavorably to the prayer of the memorialists. Their report was adopted and printed by order of the Senate of the United States, and the committee discharged from the further consideration of the subject. Of the Constitution, they say:

"We look in vain to that instrument for authority to say whether the first day, or seventh day, or whether any day, has been made holy by the Almighty.

"The Constitution regards the conscience of the Jew as sacred as that of the Christian, and gives no more authority to adopt a measure affecting the conscience of a solitary individual than of a whole community. That representative who would violate this principle would lose his delegated character, and forfeit the confidence of his constituents. If Congress should declare the first day of the week holy, it would not convince the Jew nor the Sabbatarian. It would dissatisfy both, and consequently convert neither. . . . If a solemn act of legislation shall in one point define the law of God, or point out to the citizen one religious duty, it may with equal propriety define every part of revelation, and enforce every religious obligation, even to the forms and ceremonies of worship, the endowments of the church and support of the clergy.'

"The framers of the Constitution recognized the eternal principle that man's relation to his God is above human legislation, and his right of conscience inalienable. Reasoning was not necessary to establish this truth, we are conscious of it in our own bosom. It is this consciousness which, in defiance of human laws, has sustained so many martyrs in tortures and flames. They felt that their duty to God was superior to human enactments, and that man could exercise no authority over their consciences. It is an inborn principle which nothing can eradicate.'

"It is also a fact that counter memorials, equally respectable, oppose the interference of Congress on the ground that it would be legislating upon a religious subject, and therefore unconstitutional." *United States in Bible Prophecy, page 74.*

The law to close the post offices on Sundays, which the government had declared unconstitutional in 1830, was enacted in 1912. (See Bible Readings, 1914 edition, chapter on Revelation 13.) Today, we don't consider the fact that the post office and other government buildings are closed on Sundays to be unconstitutional in the least, nor do we consider it to be the enforcement of the mark in the hand. Maybe we should reconsider this point.

Uriah Smith also objects to the idea that the entire country must become Christian in order for Revelation 13 to be fulfilled.

“The objector may further say: You are altogether too credulous in supposing that all the skeptics of our land, the spiritualists, the German infidels, and the irreligious masses generally, can be so far brought to favor the religious observance of Sunday that a general law can be promulgated in its behalf.

“We answer: The prophecy must be fulfilled; and if the prophecy requires such a revolution, it will be accomplished. But we do not know that it is necessary. Permit us to suggest an idea, which, though it is only conjecture, may show how enough can be accomplished to fulfill the prophecy without involving the classes mentioned. This movement, as has been shown, must originate with the churches of our land, and be carried forward by them. They wish to enforce certain practices among all the people; and it would be very natural that, in reference to those points respecting which they wish to influence the outside masses, they should see the necessity of first having absolute conformity among all the evangelical denominations. They could not expect to influence non-religionists to any great degree on questions respecting which they were divided among themselves. So, then, let union be had on those views and practices which the great majority already entertain. To this end coercion may first be attempted. But here are a few who cannot possibly attach to the observance of the first day, which the majority wish to secure, any religious obligation; and would it be anything strange for the sentence to be given, Let these few factionists be made to conform, by persuasion if possible, by force, if necessary. Thus the blow may fall on conscientious commandment-keepers, before the outside masses are involved in the issue at all. And should events take this not improbable turn, it would be sufficient to meet the prophecy, and leave no ground for the objection proposed.

“To receive the mark of the beast in the forehead, is, we understand, to give the assent of the mind and judgment to his authority in the adoption of that institution which constitutes the mark. By parity of reasoning, to receive it in the hand would be to signify allegiance by some outward act.” *The United States In Prophecy, page 156-158.*

Another point to consider is that the 2 horned beast causes all the world to receive this mark and wonder after the beast. We have always thought that this would mean that the United States has to enact these religious laws first, before the rest of the world does. We have also thought that communism, being atheist, would stand in the way of these laws. Perhaps it's time to re-evaluate this. The United States enacted a law closing the post office in 1912. In 1913 it set up the Federal Reserve, something that had been tried and stopped more than once in the previous 100 years, but this time it was here it stay.

This institution, the Federal Reserve, was used to fund the war in 1914, the communist revolution, in 1917, and the rise of Nazism in the 1930's. The atheistic communist revolution enacted civil Sunday laws in the 1930's as did Hitler. Communist China also recognizes Sunday as a civil day of rest, something unknown in imperial China. So, we now have more than half of the world taking the mark of the beast in their hand, as an irreligious Sunday rest day. All funded by the Federal Reserve Bank of the United States!

But it is not the mark of the beast until it is enforced as a religious law right?

“It will be said again, then all Sunday-keepers have the mark of the beast; then all the good of past ages who kept this day had the mark of the beast; then Luther, Whitefield, the Wesleys, and all who have done a good and noble work of reformation, had the mark of the beast; then all the blessings that have been poured upon the reformed churches have been poured upon those who had the mark of the beast. We answer, *No!* And we are sorry to say that some professedly religious teachers, though many times corrected, persist in misrepresenting us on this point. We have never so held; we have never so taught. Our premises lead to no such conclusions. Give ear: The mark and worship of the beast are enforced by the two-horned beast. The receiving of the mark of the beast is a specific act which the two-horned beast is to cause to be done. The third message of Rev.14, is a warning mercifully sent out in advance to

prepare the people for the coming danger. There can therefore be no worship of the beast, nor reception of his mark, such as is contemplated in the prophecy, till it is enforced by the two-horned beast. We have seen that *intention* was essential to the change which the papacy has made in the law of God, to constitute it the mark of that power. So *intention* is necessary in the adoption of that change to make it on the part of any individual the reception of that mark. In other words, a person must adopt the change, knowing it to be the work of the beast, and receive it on the authority of that power, in opposition to the requirement of God.

“But how with those referred to above who have kept Sunday in the past, and the majority of those who are keeping it to-day? Do they keep it as an institution of the papacy? No. Have they decided between this and the Sabbath of the Lord, understanding the claims of each? No. On what ground have they kept it, and do they keep it? They suppose they are keeping a commandment of God. Have such the mark of the beast? By no means. Their course is attributable to an error unwittingly received from the church of Rome, not to an act of worship rendered to it.” *The United States in Bible Prophecy* page, 130-131.

This would indicate that Sunday becomes the mark when it is enforced by civil law, as it is in more than half the world, funded by the US, and when people consciously know that it is not God's Sabbath and choose to keep it anyway. The Christian world today and even many of the irreligious openly admit that Sunday is not the Bible Sabbath, but they contend that it doesn't matter anymore and rest on Sunday anyway, because it is convenient to do so. This was not the case 100 years ago when many actually thought that Sunday was the Bible Sabbath. Even a modern English dictionary today will tell you that the term Sabbath cannot be correctly applied to Sunday.

Should not this be recognized as a fulfillment of prophecy? But no, the Adventist leadership has followed the practice of taking that which was clear, simple, and logical, and making it ambiguous, unclear, confusing, and impossible to be fulfilled. Then we are told to look for this impossible fulfillment before we can expect to see the latter rain that will fit us up for the conflict that is occurring now! Again, the Adventist leadership has proved itself to be in the horrifying position of perverting prophecy so that you, the individual will be caught unprepared when Christ comes.

“Satan is working that the history of the Jewish nation may be repeated in the experience of those who claim to believe present truth.” *Selected Messages Vol. 2, page 111.*

“The trials of the children of Israel, and their attitude just before the first coming of Christ, have been presented before me again and again to illustrate the position of the people of God in their experience before the second coming of Christ – how the enemy sought every occasion to take control of the minds of the Jews, and today he is seeking to blind the minds of God's servants, that they may not be able to discern the precious truth.” *Selected Messages Vol. 1, page 406.*