Is the United States the Final Superpower?  
Mark Finley

Traditional Adventist View of Revelation 13  
Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

Sunday Laws in an Age of Freedom  
James D. Standish

Grace Amid Uncertainty  
Gregory W. Hamilton

The Image to the Beast  
Alan Reinach

The King of the North, The King of the South, Religious Liberty, and the Sanctuary  
Nick Miller

PROPHECY VALIDATED BY EVENTS, Edwin de Kock

BALANCING LIBERTY AND SECURITY AFTER 9/11  
Lewis Walton and Richard Walton

THE PAPACY AND AMERICAN POLITICS, Ed Reid

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WARNED, Lincoln Steed

WHY WE MUST BE VIGILANT NOW, Melissa Reid
As she looked upon the exquisitely beautiful panorama rewarded by her ascent of 14,000-foot Pikes Peak in Colorado in 1893, Katharine Lee Bates gazed upon the sea-like expanse overlooking the Great Plains, and was moved to pen her patriotic hymn poem America the Beautiful. Indeed, in that time of unlimited optimism for Americas bright future a little over a century ago now, the poet represented the collective voice of millions: America! America! / God shed His grace on thee, / And crown thy good with brotherhood / From sea to shining sea.

It still seems to many careful observers (including some excellent Bible students) the world over that God very intentionally raised up the United States of America to be a beacon of liberty to all the world, an exemplar of benevolence and tolerance. By any estimate of true blessings, the U.S.A. has shone out brightly among the entire roll of nations. Yet in our lifetimes, dear readers, something very sinister has been gaining a foothold in this signally favored land, and now is bringing in conditions that have long been feared. If your eyes have been open, surely you have sensed changes. Above all, this is a time, not to bash America for all its faults, but to be acutely aware of exactly where we stand in the prophetic time line of this worlds rapidly closing history.

On September 24, 1886, a Seventh-day Adventist religious liberty periodical known as American Sentinel was first published. In 1904 it became known as Liberty. I have subscribed to this important sentinel of Christian liberty ever since my baptism in 1977. Over the years I have felt impressed not only to subscribe but also to sponsor subscriptions on others behalf. Time is running out, friends. Thought leaders need to know what is coming upon the United States. For what is coming upon America will have immediate and profound repercussions on what is to come upon the whole planet, and that very soon.

Our own journal, too, happens to be American-based, but the present issue has been planned as much for the Adventist world church as it was for American Adventists. Well-informed members of the remnant church are keenly aware that both the Bible and the inspired writings of Ellen White describe the key role that the United States will play in the final movements of Earths history. To be uninformed or misinformed on the subject of America and its ultimate repudiation of religious liberty is to be, very likely, deceived, then lost. That ought to be a sobering thought for all of us to contemplate.

In light of such momentous considerations, this timely issue of ADVENTISTS AFFIRM might well be one of the very most important that we have ever published. Read it thoroughly. Read it carefully. Read it prayerfully. Most of all, I humbly implore you, my brothers and sisters, please read it!
Do you sense what I sense, more and increasingly more of late? The powers of Earth and Hell will manifest a terrifying, destructive activity. But the eye of faith will discern in all these manifestations harbingers of the grand and awful future, and the triumphs that will surely come to God’s people (Ellen G. White, General Conference Daily Bulletin, February 28, 1893, emphasis mine).

With a sense of the urgency of the moment, then, we have lined up several authors who specialize in last-day events and who are intimately familiar with the double-pronged issue of the United States in prophecy and the demise of religious liberty the world over. A full seven of them are first-time contributors, but we are confident that you will be blessed by the use all have made of their extraordinary gifts.

We begin with Mark Finley, who provides a Biblical exposition of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Revelation 13. Pastor Finley sets forth a convincing case that also might satisfy those not of our faith.

Next, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim examines the question of whether SDAs need to revise their traditional view of the prophetic scenario painted in Revelation 13.

Edwin de Kock presents fresh insights into evaluating the traditional Adventist view of the United States as the prophetic two-horned beast.

James Standish addresses the topic: Do the Supreme Court decisions relating to religious freedom of the last 50 years fit in with the traditional Adventist prophetic scenario? Could Sunday laws occur under the American system?

Greg Hamilton follows with thorough coverage answering the question: Since America is now the only world superpower, do the international economic and political claims of Revelation 13 become more realistic?

Alan Reinach presents a combination Bible study/historical analysis. He addresses the questions, What does speaking as a dragon mean, and Could the United States abuse of individual rights in its history be a foretaste of the time when its lamblike gentleness is transformed astonishingly quickly into the terrifying countenance of a fire-breathing dragon?

Lewis and Richard Walton take a close look at what has happened in the world of civil liberties after 9/11, and what we might expect in the future.

Ed Reid traces the emerging political relationship between the U.S. and the papacy from Reagan's ambassador to the Vatican, to the Holy Alliance against Communism, to Cardinal Ratzinger's aid in Bush’s recent election and where Benedict the XVI may take the relationship.

Nick Miller tells how an ancient conflict between medieval absolutism and moral relativism is mirrored in our political and cultural wars and how the Adventist sanctuary message shows a third way between legalism and liberalism. Where does the current debate over the Ten Commandments fit in?

Lincoln Steed provides serious food for thought for all Adventists in his coverage of subtle but ominous new threats to religious liberty.

We conclude this issue with a testimonial. Melissa Reid (whose father Ed was mentioned as another contributing author) writes of the necessity for us to be watchful in cultural/political issues that arise, including school vouchers, abortion, etc.

We are deeply thankful to all of our contributors for taking time out of their very busy schedules to share what you are now reading. As always, our earnest prayer is that you will be blessed as you thoroughly digest this vital information.
As I write, the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, is on the verge of disappearing from the map, a city of upwards of half a million souls, not to mention another million who only very recently lived in greater New Orleans. But on August 29, Hurricane Katrina was no respecter of persons. Haves and have-nots alike became so many homeless, jobless DPs (displaced persons) in a matter of hours, as catastrophic flooding overwhelmed levees designed to protect the below-sea level city. What wind and water did not annihilate, fire broke out to do its part in deepening yet further the already un gov ernable destruction. As if to strike the ultimate deathblow to a city already reeling from mortal wounds, Hurricane Rita became a most unwelcome caller on September 23, largely undoing frantic efforts that had just been made to pump the water out of major portions of thoroughly bedraggled New Orleans.

Some have called the cataclysm the American tsunami, with obvious reference to the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 26, 2004. Once nicknamed the Crescent City (describing its shape around the Mississippi River) and more recently the Big Easy (for its gentle pace of life and laid-back lifestyle), New Orleans by any appellation has been utterly ravaged by this hurricane.

On a personal note, for a brief time back in 1962, I sojourned in the Crescent City in an old mansion (converted into a boarding house) on St. Charles Avenue in the city's historic Garden District, and rode downtown via Canal Street on the quaint St. Charles Streetcar. I must now content myself to call to mind images of New Orleans as it then was. It will never be the same again, if in fact attempts are even made to rebuild it.

Just now I hear words forcefully echoing in the corridors of my mind, and I ponder how near we might be, truly, to the end of all things earthly. Over 100 years ago, Ellen White wrote of terrible calamities visiting the United States which show that the judgments of the Lord are falling on the world. The destruction of . . . cities is a warning to us to prepare for what is coming upon the earth (Ms. 72, 1902, in Manuscript Releases, vol. 18, p. 92). And the San Francisco Earthquake and fire of April 18, 1906 seems somehow so long ago that it is easy to relegate it to the trash heap of ancient history, instead of using it as a prophetic wake-up call for this very hour that we truly are in the midst of the last days, and have been for many years.

And this urgent work of preparation is not exclusively reserved for Christ's loyal followers within the remnant church, as though they could somehow hoard their privileged knowledge for themselves merely. O awake, I pray you, awake! for you bear the most sacred responsibilities. As faithful watchmen, you should see the sword coming, and give the warning, that men and women may not pursue a course through ignorance that they would avoid if they knew the truth. The Lord has enlightened us in regard to what is coming upon the earth, that we may enlighten others . . . (Review and Herald Extra, December 24, 1889).

Let me say it again: The timing of this issue of ADVENTISTS AFFIRM could scarcely have been more providential. Maranatha, dear friends, the Lord is coming! Therefore, comfort one another with these words. And as you are yourself comforted, warn a loved one, friend, or neighbor. Let all Adventists affirm the nearness of Christ's coming.
The vote was deadlocked on July 2, 1776. Should the band of British colonies declare their independence from England? The Continental Congress debated all that day. The Delaware delegation had three votes. Of the two delegates present, one voted for independence. The other opposed it. The third delegate was at home on his farm, marooned there because of a heavy rainstorm. But he received word that the congress had reached an impasse. And his vote might decide the future. And so on horseback he rode all night through the mud and rain to the Continental Congress to cast the deciding vote.

Legend has it that a little boy watched the delegates through the crack in the door. His grandfather had assigned him the task, because the grandfather was the local bell-ringer. And the old man waited at the bell tower, ready to ring the bell if the assembly signed the declaration. As the lad looked through the door, he saw quill pens signing the document and heard the shuffling of feet. The grandfather kept walking back and forth, muttering that they would never approve it.

But then the delegate from Delaware arrived to cast the deciding vote. The little boy ran over and shouted, Ring, Grandpa, ring for liberty.

The United States has always pictured itself as the place that cherishes liberty. It has become a stronghold of democracy in the modern world. In fact, the nation has become the dominant world power. The issues of liberty and human conscience loom large in the end-time drama that the Biblical book of Revelation highlights. Will the United States still be ringing the liberty bell in the last days?

Perhaps it does. Look at Revelation 13:11. John has just pictured the rise of the medieval church, the papal power, and predicted its role in the end-times. Now he introduces a second prophetic symbol: Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb. What clues do we have to identify this lamblike beast?

**CLUE 1: Where** this beast arises. The second beast, separate and distinct from the first, arises from the *earth*.

Letting the Bible act as its own interpreter, Daniel 7:17 reveals that prophetic beasts represent kingdoms or nations. So this second beast in Revelation 13 is a nation. And it develops out of the earth. Now where did the first beast of Revelation 13 come from? It had its origin in the sea. All the other beasts (that is, nations) had a similar origin.

Revelation 17:15 indicates that the sea symbol represents peoples, nations, and tumultuous masses of people. As an apocalyptic symbol, the sea had a negative
connotation, and the nations that arose from it opposed God and His chosen people. (Interestingly, Revelation 21:1 tells us that the world to come will have no sea.) But this second beast (nation) of Revelation 13:11 arises from the earthunique in apocalyptic predictions. In the book of Revelation the earth, the opposite of the sea, has a positive connotation. In fact, in Revelation 12:16, the earth helps the persecuted woman (symbol of Gods people) by swallowing the deluge that the satanic dragon spewed out in an attempt to drown it. The beast (nation) from the earth, unlike the beasts (nations) from the sea is on Gods side!

CLUE 2: The time period of the origin for the second beast.

Revelation 13:10 describes the first beast as going into captivity. Then the very next verse speaks of the rise of the second beast. The second beast (nation) thus came into being about the same time as the first beast went into captivity, the time it received that wound in its head (verse 3).

The first beast, the papacy, received a serious wound in 1798. Thats when the French took the pope prisoner, breaking the political supremacy of the papacy. The second prophetic beast began to gain prominence after this time. Does that fit the history of the United States? Yes it does. In 1798 the new country was gaining a reputation as a nation to be reckoned with. Thus when we scan history we discover that only one world power was arising in 1798the United States of America.

CLUE 3: How this second beast rose up. Revelation 13:11 tells us that it had two horns like a lamb. What significance do they have? Scripture uses horns as a symbol of authority or power, religious or political. The lamb is young with only a little apparent power. Furthermore, the book of Revelation uses the lamb to symbolize Jesus Christ 28 times. Here is another indication that this beast (nation) is not an enemy of God and His people.

CLUE 4: Previous beasts had crowns on their horns. Crowns indicate kingly power in prophecy. But here we see no sign of kingly authority, in contrast to the first beast in Revelation 13. I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns (Revelation 13:1). This suggests a different form of government.

CLUE 5: This lamblike beast has worldwide influence. It causes those who dwell on the earth to worship the first beast power (verse 12).

The United States didnt fit that picture a century or more ago. Like a lamb with its little horns, it seemed to have little power or authority. But now its global influence affects people everywhere financially, politically, and culturally.

So lets review the five clues about the second beast, the lamblike nation of Revelation 13. We know that it would arise around 1798. It would be a new nation that would not be opposed to God, and would have no crowned head or kinglike authority. And it would rise to a position of worldwide influence.

John the Revelator has pinpointed the rise of the United States of America precisely.

The nation that rose to champion religious and civil liberty will be a major player in the final end-time drama. But what exactly will that role be? Lets look at the evidence in Revelation 13:11: Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. Im afraid that the picture becomes grim rather quickly. The beast that had two horns like a lamb begins to speak like a dragon.

What Happened to the Nation?

Obviously something happens to this nation. It started out lamblike, but eventually it will have a dragonlike roar. How do nations speak? They speak through their legislative bodies. The officials of nations speak for that nation as they enact laws. Revelation 13 describes the change from a lamblike beast to that of one sounding like a dragon, suggesting that it will begin
to use its growing power in a coercive manner. The picture gets darker as we read verse 12: He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

Note carefully what this is saying. The second beast (nation) actually causes the inhabitants of Earth to worship the first beast. That is, it will persuade people to adopt the fundamental principle of the medieval church—the fusion of church and state. Once again, aspects of society that have been kept apart will unite to enforce religious practices. The strong arm of the state will again coerce in a way similar to religious practices through the centuries. Once Protestant America will join hands with religious oppression in a dangerous alliance of church and state.

You may wonder, How could something like that ever happen? It seems impossible.

But wait, there’s more. Look at Revelation 13:13, 14. Speaking of the second lamblike beast, John says: He performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to Earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth.

How can a country such as the United States give its allegiance to the beast of Revelation 13? Because of the miracles and wonders that soon will take place.

Many people assume that any miracle is Gods doing, that it confirms someones claims to truth. And God indeed performs signs and wonders as He thinks best. Sometimes miracles accompany the work of God, as in the case of Elijah on Mount Carmel. The fire that comes down from heaven is an allusion to the story in 1 Kings 18. But Satan, too, can work miracles. He can perform counterfeit signs and wonders. He can even bring miraculous-seeming fire.

As we saw before, Jesus warned His followers about what would happen during the last days. For false christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect that were possible (Matthew 24:24).

Spectacular signs and wonders are not necessarily a sign of divine favor. They can be an effort of our archenemy to deceive. And people who would rather have a sensational sign than the simple, straightforward truth of Gods Word are setting themselves up for a fall. They will find themselves deceived by the spectacular works of a sinister power.

John reminds us: They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle of that great day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:14).

Even the greatest individuals, including politicians and national leaders, will unwittingly accept the wonder-working power of the great deceiver. That power enables the lamblike beast to cause all to worship the first beast. That’s what will enable the United States to enforce religious intolerance.

**A False Religious Revival**

Does it sound hard to believe? Think about what would happen if a religious revival swept across a country, one featuring great miracles or other wonders. Consider how easy it would be to rally around what appears to be the work of God, perhaps the last chance to save the nation from moral ruinespecially if a national crisis occurs at the same time.

As miracles happen a spirit of unity prevails. People want to push the revival as far as it can go. They look for something that can unite everyone, some symbol of common worship. Why not emphasize the worship day itself? After all, its something that most Christians share. At first glance, the proposal seems so logical. Each Sunday the nation would all unite and worship in a spirit of brotherhood. Wouldn’t that bring a troubled country together and make it truly one nation under God?

Does this sound far-fetched? Some religious leaders already have boldly suggested that a common day of worship may be a partial solution to Americas recurring energy crisis. By
 forbidding all driving on Sunday, except to church, the United States could save up to 15 percent of its gasoline supply.

Back in the 1970s Harold Lindsell proposed that for the purpose of conserving energy that all businesses, including gasoline stations and restaurants, should close every Sunday (Christianty Today, May 7, 1976). Lindsell expressed his conviction that such a move would satisfy both natural laws and the will of God for all men. Sensing that it was highly unlikely that Sunday would voluntarily become a day of rest, he further suggested that one way to accomplish this would be by force of legislative fiat through the duly elected officials of the people.

Some time ago, the U.S. Supreme Court (McGowan et al. v. Maryland) ruled that in some instances Sunday laws may be enforced, not on the basis of religious considerations, but in the interests of safeguarding the health and welfare of the American people. The late Justice William O. Douglas disagreed and stated the following in his dissenting opinion to the majority decision of the Court: It seems to me plain that by these laws, the states compel one, under sanction of law, to refrain from work or recreation on Sunday because of the majoritys religious views on that day. The state by law makes Sunday a symbol of respect or adherence.

Are you aware that in the United States of America, right now, many are seeking to redefine religious liberty? U.S. Supreme Court Justice William H. Rehnquist wrote in 1985 (Wallace v. Jaffree) that the wall of separation between church and state is a metaphor based on bad history... It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned. A vocal element of American society is reevaluating the entire issue of the wall of separation between church and state. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 29, 1991, made an interesting observation: As the second century of the Bill of Rights draws to a close, the Supreme Court is redefining what religious liberty will mean in the third century. Broadly, the Courts new approach helps conventional religions while hurting unconventional ones.

The editorial proposes that the Court is moving in the direction of stating what an acceptable religion is. And if you happen to fall into that conventional religion you can have the stamp of approval.

Events are moving us toward that day when the lamblike beast will roar like a dragon. Lets look at one more characteristic of this second beast: He deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed (Revelation 13: 14, 15).

What does the phrase set up an image in honor of the beast mean?

An image of anything is something that looks like or resembles in some way something else. If a little boy is his dads spittin image, he has many characteristics in common with his father.

Remember, were dealing with symbols in Revelation. Thus the image of this beast wont be some literal object, that is, a statue or an idol. Rather it will be a repeat performance of what the beast did beforethe religious intolerance and oppression that happened during the Dark Ages.

**Religious With Civil Power**

At the height of its power, the medieval church both West and Eastclothed itself with civil power. It had the authority to appoint civil officials, punish dissenters, confiscate goods, imprison people, and even execute them. It was a powerful union of church and state.

Think about this scenario. Consider a nation ripped apart by crime and riddled with lawlessness. People anguish because moral principles seem to have gone out the window. Kids are mowing down other kids in the schools. Violence and obscenity and abuse intensify. Society seems unable to win the war on drugs, terrorism, or the many other problems that disturb it.
People even now are demanding solutions. And the most instinctive reaction is: There ought to be a law. Well-meaning citizens will band together to pass laws to save the country. They will think that they can rescue the nation by enforcing morality. We’ve got to make our nation Christian (or Orthodox or Islamic or Hindu or whatever) again, they will say. Although it’s a good motive, it’s a bad procedure. The temptation is to pass laws forcing people to do by civil power what religion has failed to do by persuasive teaching and preaching.

Think of how powerful this new approach will become when legislative initiatives are endorsed by a religious revival backed by signs and wonders.

In the United States Robert Grant, head of the Christian Voice organization, has said: If Christians unite, we can do anything. We can pass any law or any amendment. And that’s exactly what we intend to do. Another leader, Pat Robertson, wrote: The next obligation that a citizen of Gods world order owes is to himself. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy is a command for the personal benefit of each citizen. . . . Higher civilizations rise when people can rest, think, and draw inspiration from God. Laws in America that mandated a day of rest [Sunday laws] . . . have been nullified as a violation of the separation of church and state. . . . As an outright insult to God and His plan, only those policies that can be shown to have a clearly secular purpose are recognized (The New World Order, p. 236).

Do you see his reasoning? He is saying we have outlawed the Sunday laws. But if were going to bring this whole nation back to God, we have to worship God together. Therefore, it is logical in a time when moral values are waning in a time of crisis to unite on a point held in common, which is Sunday observance among most of the Christian churches. And it will require great conviction to hold on to the Biblical Sabbath.

No, the United States is not the final superpower. That is yet to come when the rock cut without hands smashes all human nations and sets up Gods divine kingdom.

Let me tell you about a man named Milton Schustek. He lived in Czechoslovakia during the years of Soviet domination and great religious oppression. When the Communists took over his country, he wanted to be free to read his Bible and continue his work as a pastor. But the Communists had other ideas. They had determined to turn all ministers into laborers. Milton knew that they wanted to send him as far away from his congregation as possible—far away to the coal mines.

But then he got an idea, one that might allow him to stay close to his pastoral work in the city of Prague. He thought of a job that nobody wanted—cleaning out the sewers. Nobody wanted to climb into those narrow, filthy culverts and clean them, hundreds of feet under the city.

Milton decided to see the Communist officials about taking that job. But first he got down on his knees and prayed. Jesus, he said, I want to worship You every Sabbath. Please help me to keep Your law and to be honest and faithful to You.

After being ushered in to see the local party official, Milton said to her, I understand you want to ship me to the mines to work. Let me tell you something. My grandfather worked in the mines, and my father worked in the mines, and I’m willing to work in whatever mine you send me to. But I have a suggestion. You need someone to do the worst job you have—climbing down into those sewers. And I’m willing to do it. Why don’t you assign me to clean the sewage system of Prague? I’d be happy to do it, because that would give me the privilege of worshipping my God here.

Something touched that Communist officials heart. She looked down at her desk, then glanced up at him and said, Pastor, I’m not a godly woman. I’m just trying to fulfill work assignments. But I’ll let you worship your God. Go and clean the sewer system.

Ill never forget the look on Miltons face as he related his story. He admitted it was a very tough, very dark, and very stressful job. But every day it was worth it, he said, because I could worship my God in loyalty, in truth.
Someday each believer will be called upon to demonstrate that same kind of faith.

Sunday Laws in an Age of Freedom

James D. Standish, JD, MBA

As I write this piece, John G. Roberts has just been confirmed as the next Chief Justice of the United States. Many Adventists will have noted with interest that Roberts is reported to be a conservative Roman Catholic. Some will speculate that this could be the justice who brings in the Sunday law. In this, Roberts is not new. For generations now, some Adventists have seen every president from John F. Kennedy to Jimmy Carter, from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush, as possible harbingers of imminent Sunday legislation. And yet, here we are, well over a hundred years since The Great Controversy was penned, and there seems to be no national Sunday law in sight.

Three Responses

Adventists have responded to this situation in three principal ways.\[1\] The first reaction is to believe Sunday laws are imminent. Speculation about secret efforts to pass Sunday laws sweeps periodically through our ranks, generating corresponding excitement for short periods of time, but generating cynicism when the predicted Sunday law fails to materialize.

A second group of Adventists has become convinced that Sunday laws are a thing of the past. They do not necessarily doubt the prophetic interpretation presented in The Great Controversy, but they believe it to be a conditional prophetic interpretation. When the conditions fail to be fulfilled, they argue, the prophetic interpretation becomes obsolete in the way that many Biblical prophecies concerning Israel failed due to unmet conditions.

Those in this second group argue that if Christ could have come in Ellen Whites lifetime,\[2\] but if He did not due to a failure of His people, as she states,\[3\] then maybe the end-time events scenario that would have played out in the late 1800s is also conditional.\[4\] Christ certainly will come again, it is argued, and the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation will certainly be fulfilled, but maybe in a different way than they would have if Gods people had met the necessary prerequisites in the 1800s. Those who take this position, which for convenience this article will refer to as reinterpreters, frequently rely on numerous factors that make the enactment of a national Sunday law unlikely under present conditions.

A third group of Adventists believes that the prophetic scenario laid out most clearly in The Great Controversy remains current, but that certain prerequisites are necessary before Sunday laws are passed. They agree that it would be most unlikely for a national Sunday law to be passed through the U.S. Congress and signed into law by the President under current conditions. However, they believe that prophecy has mapped out preconditions for the passage of the national Sunday law, and that once these preconditions are met it is not unlikely, but rather is a prophetic inevitability, that Sunday laws will be enacted.

The author of this article argues that the position adopted by the third group of Adventists is the appropriate approach in light of what we know of prophecy and the current state of the law, religion, and politics.
The Adventist message, at its purest, has always been one that combines the rigorous intellectual investigation of a broad array of academic disciplines with in-depth study of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our findings, at their best, are expressed with unflinching honesty as we strive towards the goal of discovering and understanding ultimate truth. The author endeavors to follow in this tradition.

**Is a Sunday Law Imminent?**

Rumors about secret movements toward the imminent enactment of national Sunday laws have swept through the Adventist Church for generations. There are three problems with these rumors.

The first is that all rumors to date have been without adequate documentation. The second is that if a Sunday law were passed in secret through stealthy movements, such a passage would not confirm prophecy, but rather would contradict it, as we are explicitly told that Sunday laws will be enacted through an open democratic process driven by public calls from Americas clergy.[5] Finally, all these rumors have proven untrue. Here we are in 2005, without a serious movement of any kind to pass a national Sunday law since the seminal events of 1888.

This final fact has created a growing culture of skepticism within the church. If our pastors, our academy teachers, our parents, and other pillars of authority within the Adventist Church have been repeatedly wrong in their speculative Sunday law scenarios, maybe they are simply wrong about their entire religious understanding.

Hence, the speculation some Adventists have engaged in over generations not only ignores important elements of the Adventist prophetic scenario, and not only has proven untrue, but also has had a serious negative impact on the faith of many associated with Adventism.[6]

**Is There a Need for a New Interpretation?**

The group of Adventists that calls for a reinterpretation of the prophetic scenario described in *Great Controversy* tends to do so in a quiet, more reasoned manner than those who engage in speculation, but their analysis is equally flawed for three reasons.

1. **Against Speculation.** The first is that some who adopt this position do so in reaction to the speculative excesses within the church. As noted above, the speculative excesses themselves violate the Adventist prophetic scenario. Reaction against statements that violate elements in the scenario by abandoning the scenario in toto is a misguided overreaction. One can well reject wanton speculation without simultaneously rejecting the studied interpretation of prophecy that, in fact, discredits speculators scenarios.

2. **Reinterpreting Ellen G. White.** The second reason is that many who adopt this skeptical position claim simultaneously to accept the inspiration of the writings of Ellen White. Unless one resorts to tortured reasoning, the two positions are mutually exclusive.

Precisely what inspiration means is, of course, a debate within the debate; but at the very least it must mean that when a prophet talks of prophecy, he or she can be relied upon. In the case of the Adventist prophetic scenario, Ellen White continued to reiterate the prophetic scenario outlined in *The Great Controversy* until her death in 1915. This was 27 years after Senator H.W. Blairs effort to pass a national Sunday law in 1888.

If the prophetic scenario was built around events leading up to and culminating in 1888, and if subsequent to that time the scenario was ripe for reinterpretation, Ellen White had almost three decades to communicate this. She did not. Indeed, late in her life, Ellen White continued to predict that a Sunday law would be enacted in the future.[7]

It is true that the Bible has many conditional prophecies that were never fulfilled due to a failure to meet the conditions. But there are two hallmarks to the conditional prophecies in the Bible. First, they provide conditional language in the text or imply conditions in the context. Second, at the time of conditions going unmet, God provided explicit guidance.
The example of the failed prophecies regarding Israel well illustrates this pattern. Not only were the conditions for fulfillment explicit, but also the time for conditions to be met was mapped out in Daniel centuries in advance. At the end of the prophetic period, Christ gave clear indication of the end of Israel’s prophetic period and after the period had ended, Paul wrote extensively explaining how the prophecies of the Old Testament related to the new Christian church. In short, a student of God's Word could not be in doubt over the conditional nature of the prophecies.

In contrast, the prophetic scenario laid out in *The Great Controversy* provides no conditions relating to whether the prophecy would be fulfilled; the only conditional factor related to the prophecy was when. Further, God did not provide an indication of a change through Ellen White as He did, for example, through Jonah. Still further, there is no time period provided for the prophetic fulfillment, nor has any other prophet risen up to provide an alternative explanation.

In summary, when prophecies were conditional, and when the conditions failed to be met, God expressed this to His people explicitly in times past. There has been no similar expression regarding the prophetic scenario provided by Ellen White. Therefore, if God inspired her prophetic scenario, it is still in effect. Others think that her prophetic scenario is wrong, and if so, she was not a true prophet of God. It is impossible, however, to reconcile Ellen White's prophetic gift if we are to believe that she was fundamentally wrong on her central interpretation of prophecy.

3. Sundaykeeping Today. The third reason that reinterpretation is unnecessary is that, while the passage of a national Sunday law seems unlikely under current circumstances, these circumstances will change. When conditions change, there are societal, legal, and political foundations that could pave the way for a national Sunday law movement.

It is likely that most Adventists who have come to doubt the prophetic scenario in *The Great Controversy* have done so because it appears so entirely unlikely, given our current social, economic, political, and legal climate.

Yes, it is true that there may be some indicators that reflect the prophetic scenario, it is argued. But it is also true that America has developed a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week economy; that it has become a much more religiously diverse society; that Sundaykeeping Christians dont revere Sunday as they once did, and even if they did, they dont have the power some ascribe to them; that large numbers of Americans have a religious faith expressed in a very different manner from the traditional Christian one; and that religious minorities enjoy broad rights today under American law which they did not in the 1800s. Each of these observations has merit.

To illustrate the difficulty of passing a national law requiring rest on Sunday, one only has to consider the economic implications of such a law. How would the manufacturing, retail, and entertainment sectors of the economy react to such a law? What would General Motors reaction be to a proposed law that requires shutting down its assembly plants 1/7th of the year? How would Wal-Mart react to closing its stores 14% of the week? How would the National Football League respond to a ban on Super Bowl Sunday?

We cant say for sure, because no serious effort to enact a national Sunday law has been mounted in well over a hundred years; but we do have indications. There is a bill currently pending in Congress that would make it easier for individual workers to take off time for religious observance, including a weekly Sabbath. Industry has not responded positively to the proposal, and its opposition has made passage of the bill—which is supported overwhelmingly by a broad cross section of America’s religious community—very difficult to pass.

The demographics of America are also much different today from the 1880s, and this is reflected in its power structure. One of the two congressional chaplains is a Seventh-day Adventist minister; there are two Jews on the U.S. Supreme Court, 37 Jews in Congress
the Senate and 26 in the House of Representatives), and two Seventh-day Adventists in the House.[15] Put another way, 50% of the congressional chaplains are Seventh-day Adventists, Jews comprise 22% of the Supreme Court and 11% of the Senate, and 6% of the House of Representatives are Jews and Seventh-day Adventists combined. The impact of this is profound. In 2004, for example, the Supreme Court decided not to hear cases on a Jewish holy day out of respect for its two Jewish members, and Congress no longer schedules votes on the first days of Rosh Hashanah, Passover, and Yom Kippur.[16]

American Seventh-day Adventists joined commercial interests to successfully oppose a national Sunday law in the 1880s, when the former were a small, marginalized minority. Today they are a significant presence, with a million members, over a thousand schools, and 52 hospitals in the United States. It is asked, couldn't Adventists, working with other Sabbathkeepers, secularists, and commercial interests, defeat a national Sunday law under current circumstances?

Not only have barriers risen to the passage of Sunday laws since The Great Controversy was penned, but the support for such laws has also waned. Most Christians don't revere Sunday as they once did. They routinely work on Sunday without complaint. They participate in sports, entertainment, and a wide range of other activities from which their forebears not only abstained, but also vigorously prosecuted those who did not conform. Not surprisingly, today's Sundaykeeping Christians have not proven keen to enact a national law that would prevent many of them on Sunday from engaging in activities that they have done all their lives.

As proof of a growing movement for a Sunday law, some have pointed to Pope John Paul II's letter regarding Sunday and its call for civil legislation to protect Sunday sacredness.[17] An alternative explanation that has been put forth is that the letter is a reaction to the weakness of observance among those whom the Catholic Church claims as its own adherents. If today virtually no predominantly Christian nations have comprehensive Sunday laws, it is asked, isn't this a sign that the pope's letter was written from a position of weakness rather than of strength?

Moreover, the political power of Christians is sometimes overstated. Since 1973 the full force of conservative Christians from Baptists to Catholics has been focused on abortion. And yet, if polls are to be believed,[18] even if the Supreme Court were to overturn Roe v. Wade, most state legislatures still would vote to uphold legalized abortions. It is asked, If Christians can't prevail on abortion in today's environment, what chances are there of bringing the economy to a grinding halt one day out of seven?

Some also believe America is becoming a more secular nation. It is true that it remains an unusually religious nation vis-à-vis other Western nations, it is noted, but it is also true that there is a growing trend away from identification with a particular denomination towards a more ambiguous spirituality, and that, with immigration, America has become a spectacularly spiritually diverse country. Both of these trends augur poorly, it is suggested, for a successful effort to pass a national law enforcing one group's holy day orthodoxy.

Finally, those in favor of revising the Adventist prophetic position often point to freedom that a broad range of faiths enjoys in this nation—freedom that is guaranteed by the federal and state constitutions and by a relatively large body of statutory and case law.

Maintain Our Understanding

Even if we accept all of the above observations of society, religion, politics, and the law, it does not necessarily result in the acceptance of a need to reinterpret the Adventist prophetic scenario. This is true for three reasons: (1) the above observations are only a partial view of society today, (2) the Adventist prophetic scenario is predicated on society changing radically before the passage of a national Sunday law, and finally (3), prophets have insights beyond what is available through reason and observation.

1. The Constitution and the Sunday law. Those ascribing to the need to reassess our prophetic vision sometimes appeal to the constitutional protections as evidence that the passage of a
national Sunday law is exceedingly unlikely. It is surprising to many reinterpreters to learn, however, that the Constitution contains no bar to the passage of Sunday laws.

In 1961, the Supreme Court decided two cases that challenged the constitutionality of Sunday closing laws. The Court went through a lengthy analysis of the origins and the nature of Sunday laws at the time of the cases. It acknowledged that Sunday laws have a religious origin, quoting from various state and Colonial laws that contained reference to the Lords day, prohibitions against profaning the Sabbath, and other similar overt religious language. Nevertheless, the Court found that by the 1960s the motivation behind Sunday laws was the protection of workers rights.

Thus, as Sunday laws now protect workers rights rather than enforcing religious doctrine, the Court found that these laws do not establish a religious belief, and therefore they do not violate the Constitutions ban on laws regarding an establishment of religion. In addition, the Court also found that Sunday laws do not violate the Equal Protection Clause or the Free Exercise of Religion Clause in the Constitution.

Justice Potter Stewart joined Justice William Brennan in dissent, stating that Sunday laws, when applied to those who keep the seventh day holy, unconstitutionally violate their religious freedom. He noted in his dissenting opinion in Braunfeld v. Brown: I think the impact of this [Sunday] law upon these appellants grossly violates their constitutional right to the free exercise of their religion.

Similarly, Justice William O. Douglas dissented in McGowan v. Maryland, stating: The Court picks and chooses language from various decisions to bolster its conclusion that these Sunday laws in the modern setting are civil regulations. No matter how much is written, no matter what is said, the parentage of these laws is the Fourth Commandment; and they serve and satisfy the religious predispositions of our Christian communities. It seems to me plain that by these laws the states compel one, under sanction of law, to refrain from work or recreation on Sunday because of the majority's religious views about that day.

While these dissents are eloquent and will resonate with many Adventists, they are, however just that: dissents. The majority opinion that Sunday laws do not violate the Constitution is the law.

It is over 40 years since these cases were decided. This raises the question whether the Supreme Courts analysis of Sunday laws has changed. It has not. Rather, the Court relatively recently has confirmed the concept that Sunday laws are constitutional. In 1990 the Court decided Employment Division v. Smith. In this case Justice Anton Scalia, writing for the majority of the Court, used Sunday laws as an example of the types of laws that impact peoples ability to practice their faith but which also are nevertheless constitutional. He stated:

Subsequent decisions have consistently held that the right of free exercise does not relieve an individual of the obligation to comply with a valid and neutral law of general applicability. ... In Braunfeld v. Brown, ... [for example] we upheld Sunday-closing laws against the claim that they burdened the religious practices of persons whose religions compelled them to refrain from work on other days.

A recent review of Sunday laws in the 50 American states found that 49 of them, plus the District of Columbia, have at least one form of Sunday law currently on the books. These laws range from requirements to close certain businesses on Sunday to prohibitions on engaging in certain activities on Sunday. Some of these laws have been challenged, but overwhelmingly they have been upheld as constitutional even if they may no longer be enforced rigorously in many jurisdictions.

2. The Congress and Sunday legislation. Of course, the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court considers Sunday laws constitutional doesnt mean that Congress must enact a Sunday law. It merely means that there is no constitutional bar to Congress, should it choose to enact a Sunday law. Is there any evidence that Congress is headed in that direction?
Under today's circumstances, there is little if any evidence that a national Sunday law is imminent. But the Adventist prophetic scenario is contingent on today's circumstances changing dramatically. Writing about Sunday laws, Ellen White stated repeatedly that they would only be enacted following a catastrophic series of disasters:

Satan puts his interpretation upon events, and they think, as he would have them, that the calamities which fill the land are a result of Sunday breaking. Thinking to appease the wrath of God, these influential men make laws enforcing Sunday observance (emphasis added). [32]

When the angel of mercy folds her wings and departs, Satan will do the evil deeds he has long wished to do. Storm and tempest, war and bloodshed, in these things he delights, and thus he gathers in his harvest. And so completely will men be deceived by him that they will declare that these calamities are the result of the desecration of the first day of the week. From the pulpits of the popular churches will be heard the statement that the world is being punished because Sunday is not honored as it should be. [33]

While it is impossible to prove that the American people will pressure Congress to pass a national Sunday law if faced with a series of unprecedented national calamities, it is certainly not inconceivable. In the face of enormous loss, people tend to examine why God allows the tragedy. This happened after 9/11, after the tsunami, and is happening today in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It is not remarkable to come to the conclusion that God permitted such great destruction because society has wandered from His principles.

But what principles would these be? Many Adventists believe that Christians as a whole have forgotten the Ten Commandments. Recent American court cases focusing on the Ten Commandments, [34] however, demonstrate precisely the opposite. Many Sundaykeeping Christians, like their spiritual forebears, speak with passion and conviction of the need for society to reflect the Ten Commandments in its laws. [35] This is not a dead concept of a bygone era, but a concept that has been remarkably resilient against many predictions to the contrary.

Further, the reemphasis on Sunday sacredness among the Catholic tradition, including the popes call for civil legislation to enforce Sunday sacredness, [36] is hard to ignore in the face of the reemergence of the papacy as arguably the most prominent spiritual voice in the world (including the United States). [37]

It is also worth noting that the growth of the conservative Protestant/Catholic political union in the United States is not, as some might wish, easily dismissed as inconsequential. The power of this union arguably made the difference necessary to elect the current President, George W. Bush; a majority in the Senate and the House; [38] by the end of this year will have been influential in the choice of over half of the justices on the Supreme Court; and will have contributed to the Republican control of a majority of state legislatures and state governorships.

This is not to suggest that these individuals are suspect, since conservative people of faith support them. Nor is it to suggest that candidates supported by the secular and religious left would be preferable. It is, however, to suggest that the political power of conservative religion is immense in America today; and to ignore this fact is to ignore political reality.

3. Religious minorities. The increased power and prominence of Sabbathkeeping minorities in America, along with non-Christian religions, while significant, should not be overstated. First, many non-Christian faiths do not stress a weekly holy day observance as do the Jewish/Christian traditions, and many non-Christian faiths meet on Sunday as a matter of convenience. [39]

Further, while a majority of Jews may observe the high holy days, those who refrain from secular work on Sabbath are a minority of a minority. [40] It is therefore hard to imagine non-Seventh-day Adventists reacting to a proposed Sunday law particularly in times of unprecedented crisis in the way Adventists would.
Moreover, the crisis that the Bible predicts for the end-time will undoubtedly cause havoc among commercial interests. It is unlikely that a commercial sector on the verge of collapse would be in the position to block Sunday legislation, even if it wanted to (in a time of unprecedented turmoil, business leaders may well seek to appease the same God as does society in general).

It is also difficult to ignore the fact that there are significant developments that make The Great Controversy scenario much more likely today than when the book was penned. For example, the intense anti-Catholicism that characterized American society for much of its history has, thankfully, largely ceased. This permits Catholics and Protestants to work closely together, a prediction that must have been hard to conceive in the 1800s. In addition, America is in a position to influence the nations of the world today in a manner that was inconceivable in the 1800s, when it was rebuilding from the Civil War and during which other world powers, particularly Great Britain, were far more influential on the global stage.

4. Reliability of Prophets. Finally, even if there were no contraindicators to the observations relied upon by the reintepreters, the role of the prophet is to give insight beyond what we can arrive at by mere human observation and reason. When Daniel predicted the powers to dominate in years to come, there was no objective evidence of the veracity of the vision. Similarly, if we believe Ellen White’s prophetic vision to have been derived from God, we can be assured of its fulfillment.

To summarize, we can reject wanton speculation without rejecting the prophetic scenario. There is no textual or subsequent prophetic message to indicate that the prophetic scenario is conditional. While there are many indicators that the enactment of Sunday laws under current conditions would seem impossible, there are significant legal and political trends that prepare the way for just such an enactment. Further, the Adventist prophetic scenario assumes an unprecedented series of crises in America that radically alter society in a fundamental manner. Finally, if we accept Ellen White to be a true prophet, her prophetic vision supersedes any conclusions we can draw through our observations alone.

Conclusion

It has become fashionable in Adventism to display ones intellectual openness by questioning the doctrines, practices, and interpretations of the past. While pushing knowledge forward is a hallmark of a follower of God, before we abandon the insights of those who went before us, we must look long and hard at the scholarship and inspiration that led us to those insights.

In the case of the Adventist prophetic scenario, particularly the Sunday law, increasing numbers of Adventists are erring on both sides. Speculators have it wrong because they separate a lone aspect from its prophetic whole. Reinterpreters have it wrong because they assume a continuation of current circumstances, they focus on the veneer of society, and, consequently, they degrade or deny the inspiration of Ellen White.

Those who stay a steady course of faith in the validity of our prophetic understanding in its entirety have it right; for it is the only consistent position with continued faith in God’s unfolding revelation, the foundation for the scenario is set in law and society, and the scenario is predicated on unprecedented events that will transform society.

Accepting the third approach has at least three very practical ramifications. First, while we must remain vigilant for Sunday laws, we should not be preoccupied in searching for signs of their imminence. We have been told that they will be enacted through the democratic process, preceded by an open public debate. In short, we will know when Sunday laws return to the national agenda.

Second, if the history of speculation has taught us anything, it must be that prejudging candidates for national leadership based on their personal faith commitment is not only substantively misguided, but it is wrong. From President John F. Kennedy to Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, there have been and continue to be many powerful Catholics who have had a positive impact on religious freedom. In nations where there are majority Catholic
populations[43] Seventh-day Adventists and other religious minorities routinely experience broad religious freedom. An individual's religious affiliation is a poor indicator of that individual's heart, and assuming otherwise can lead us to acts and opinions that are not merely unfair, but bigoted. We have to look far deeper than religious affiliation to determine an individual's disposition towards liberty of conscience.

Finally, until Sunday laws become an issue once again in the United States, there is much work to be done in the area of religious liberty. For example:

- As you are reading this article, there are men, women, and children, right now, who are rotting in gulags in North Korea for no other crime than taking the name of Jesus.[44]
- There are, right now, nations like Saudi Arabia that forbid by law the spread of the Gospel.[45]
- If today is an average day in the United States, three of your brothers and sisters in the faith were fired for no crime other than keeping the Sabbath.[46]

And religious freedom is only a part of our public work. Other issues in which we are engaged include:

- Women and children being sold across national borders as property for the sex industry;[47]
- Genocide occurring in the Sudan;[48]
- Some Western nations increasingly implicated in the worldwide spread of torturing prisoners;[49]
- Tobacco companies spending $34.1 million ($12.4 billion per year) on advertising in the U.S. alone to entice young children to become addicted to their deadly products;[50]
- Our society facing vexing issues ranging from abortion and other medical ethics issues to the challenge of alleviating poverty; from deciding how to promote stable families to ensuring access to healthcare and a quality education; from preserving the environment to promoting personal responsibility.

These lists only begin to scratch the surface of public issues for which there should be a Seventh-day Adventist voice. And yet, many Seventh-day Adventists today are completely disengaged from these critical issues, choosing instead to spend their time and energy chasing phantom Sunday laws and supporting financially those with the most spectacular, albeit speculative scenarios. This is not what Adventism is all about.

Our spiritual forebears targeted their activism in the public square on issues as they arose, from slavery to Sunday laws, from dress reform to temperance reforms. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians with a dedication to the Gospel, a firm belief in prophecy, a love for humanity, and a commitment to the liberty granted by God to His creation, we can and we must do the same.

Sunday laws will come, and when the movement for their passage begins, we should be there to counter them as we are instructed to do.[51] Until the movement reemerges, we have more than enough in the public square to challenge our intellects, utilize our talents, and engage our resources. It is the authors prayer that as a people we follow the example of early Adventists and become engaged in the issues of today, while remaining vigilant for the issues of tomorrow, and knowing that tomorrow may arrive sooner than any of us imagines.

[For more on how to support and become actively engaged in public issues close to the hearts of Seventh-day Adventist Christians, visit www.religiousliberty.info.]

Note on Author

James Standish earned his Juris Doctor degree, *cum laude*, from Georgetown University, where he was president of the Georgetown Church-State Law Forum and an editor of the *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy*; his MBA from the University of Virginia, where he was news editor of the *Darden News*; and his bachelor's degree from Newbold College, England, where he was editor of the college newspaper and later president of the student association. He serves as Associate Director of the General Conference Department of Public Affairs & Religious Liberty, where he represents the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the U.S. government. In addition, he serves as Executive Director of the North American Religious Liberty Association: www.religiousliberty.info.
NOTES

[1] This analysis is based on the authors conversations and written communications concerning Sunday laws with thousands of Adventist laypeople, clergy, and administrators over the last five years.

[2] Had Adventists, after the great Disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening Providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward (Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 299).

[3] Id.

[4] Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional (Ellen G. White, Evangelism, p. 695).

[5] From the pulpits of the popular churches will be heard the statement that the world is being punished because Sunday is not honored as it should be (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, September 17, 1901). Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth, and even in free America rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance (Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 129).

[6] This observation is based on the authors conversations and written communications with thousands of current and former Seventh-day Adventists.

[7] See, e.g., Sooner or later Sunday laws will be passed (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Feb. 16, 1905; Soon the Sunday laws will be enforced, and men in positions of trust will be embittered against the little handful of Gods commandment-keeping people (Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 4, p. 279) (1909).

[8] See, e.g., Deuteronomy 28, which begins with the prophetic promise that If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all His commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on Earth. The chapter goes on to list a long series of conditioned events. This is, of course, just one example of the hundreds of conditional prophecies.

[9] The 70-week prophecy of Daniel provides a time line for the events leading up not only to Christs birth, but also pointing to the end of the probationary period for Israel. Daniel 9:24-27.

[10] In Matthew 23 and the beginning of 24, Christ makes clear that the time for the fulfillment of prophecies regarding Israel was ending.

[11] Pauls writings, particularly in Hebrews, further provide an explanation of how the prophetic nation of Israel relates to the Christian church.


[14] The author co-chairs a coalition of 45 religious groups ranging from the Southern Baptists to the Supreme Islamic Council, from the Union of Orthodox Jews to the United Methodists.

Advantage, 2005).

[16] Information supplied by the American Jewish Committee.


[18] The August 2005 CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll found that 54% of Americans describe themselves as pro-choice and 38% describe themselves as pro-life. Although this polls numbers have fluctuated over the last 10 years, those who favor legalized abortion are consistently in the majority. Other polls have found a similar pro-legalized abortion majority. A good many polls on attitudes towards abortion are available at http://www.pollingreport.com/abortion.htm.


[21] Id.

[22] Id.


[24] *Braunfeld v. Brown*, 366 U.S. 599 (1961). (We cannot say that the Pennsylvania statute [Sunday law] before us is invalid, either on its face or as applied.)


[28] Id.


[30] Id.

[31] Id.


[34] *Van Orden v. Perry*; *McCreary County v. ACLU*.

[35] For example, the Family Research Council, a predominantly Christian entity, laments that the Ten Commandments are not displayed prominently in many public buildings, noting that the Ten Commandments are a timeless message of moral truths. Similarly, the *Baptist Press* ran a piece this year that states: Unbeknownst to many, American law and the Ten Commandments are inextricably associated. Jeremy Tedesco, American Law & the Ten Commandments, *Baptist Press*, February 23, 2005. These are just two examples of innumerable statements venerating the Ten Commandments and their place in American society and law.

[36] Pope John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, 1998 (concluding an approving discussion of Sunday laws by stating: Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy, a statement in its context which appears to support not merely laws that
accommodate religious observance, but more so laws that mandate rest on Sunday).

[37] The funeral of Pope John Paul II illustrated the unmatched influence of the papacy on the world stage. President Bush has made numerous statements concerning the spiritual influence of the papacy in the United States, including: I may not be a parishioner [of Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington, D.C.] but Im proud to live in your archdiocese. . . . The last leader of the Soviet Union would call [Pope John Paul II] the highest moral authority on Earth. . . . We thank God for this rare man, a servant of God and a hero of history. Remarks by the President at the Dedication of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, Office of the White House Press Secretary, March 22, 2001.

[38] The decisive role of conservative Christians in recent elections has been widely commented upon and analyzed. For example, the Baptist Press notes that, Faith and morality played major roles Nov. 2 [2004] as American voters re-elected President Bush, expanded the Republican Partys advantage in Congress, and approved amendments to protect marriage in 11 states. Tom Strode, President Bush Wins Re-election; Exit Polls Show Values Voters Made the Difference, Baptist Press, November 3, 2004. Similarly, after the 2000 election, there was much discussion about the importance of religious voters. For example: One of the big surprises in American politics in the last year is the focus on the Catholic vote. That focus is becoming more intense every day. . . . [R]eligion is playing a bigger role in American political life, to my mind, than ever in my lifetime. Juan Williams, host of National Public Radio's Talk of the Nation, August 6, 2001; Catholic bishops and priests are becoming more willing to be more active politically the way Protestant evangelicals are. . . . I think that religion is playing a larger and larger role in politics. Mara Liasson, National Public Radio reporter, on National Public Radio's Talk of the Nation, August 6, 2001.

[39] For example, the Sikh community in the U.S. generally meets on Sunday for worship.


[41] At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince Which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time Thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book. Daniel 12:1.


[43] Every year the Seventh-day Adventist Church publishes a world report on religious freedom. While there are many nations where religious persecution is severe, religious persecution in majority Catholic nations today is very rare. The world report on religious liberty is available at http://parl.gc.adventist.org/documents/world_reports/index.html.

[44] The U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom reported in May 2005, that in North Korea Persons found carrying Bibles in public, distributing religious literature, or engaging in unauthorized religious activities such as public religious expression and persuasion are arrested and imprisoned. There continue to be reports of torture and execution of religious believers, including a January 2005 report of the execution of six religious leaders.


[46] Based on estimates provided by the Office of General Counsel, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.


[50] According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, The tobacco industry spends more than $12.4 billion per year over $34.1 million a day marketing its deadly products in the U.S. alone, much of this reaching kids; http://tobaccofreekids.org/adgallery/.

[51] We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience.

. . . Let there be most earnest prayer, and then let us work in harmony with our prayers (Ellen G. White, Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 714).
Since the birth of the United States there has been a desire on the part of the Holy See to exchange ambassadors. Accordingly, the timing was calculated. The result is prophetic. The consequences are serious. On January 10, 1984, upon the orders of United States President Ronald Reagan and the Holy See, the central government of the Roman Catholic Church, represented by The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, full diplomatic relations were established between these two entities.

This cordial and cooperative framework did not always exist. In fact it took 208 years for the United States to enter into full diplomatic relations with the oldest international personality in the community of nations (Thomas P. Melady, The Ambassadors StoryThe United States and the Vatican in World Affairs, p. 41).

In the first few weeks after his election in November of 1980, President Ronald Reagan appointed William Wilson, his friend from California, as his personal representative to the Vatican. Then something happened that changed the course of history in this regard. President Reagan had a private meeting with the pope in the Vatican on June 7, 1982. Many modern historians use this date as the beginning of the Holy Alliance between the U.S. and the Vatican. (See my book Even at the Door, p. 232 for more details of this meeting and its aftermath.)

Following this historic meeting with the pope, in the last year of his first term as President of the United States, Ronald Reagan initiated a process for doing what had never been done before-sending a full ambassador, not just to the Vatican City State but to the Holy See-the central government of the Roman Catholic Church!

**From Personal Representative to AmbassadorThe Process**

President Reagans staff, aware of what had happened to potential ambassadors in the past, made an extensive study of the subject. This review included looking at section 2, article 2 of the Constitution that defines the presidents authority to nominate diplomatic officials, and the responsibility of the Senate to give its consent. The staff felt convinced that they could defend the proposed ambassadorship with their interpretation of the Constitution. In addition, though the legal situation had not changed (Congress had passed a law in 1868 that had prohibited funding for an embassy to the Vatican), the domestic political climate had changed significantly! Popular Protestant evangelist Billy Graham had stated publicly that he saw a significant difference in the national Protestant attitude. There would still be some opposition, but not of the magnitude of 30 years before.

Ambassador Melady states, Once he [Reagan] was convinced that the nomination of an ambassador to the Holy See was constitutional and in the national interest of the country, President Reagan approved a move to void the 1868 law which prohibited the expenditure of public funds for an embassy to the Vatican. This action was successful. The relative ease with which this action took place reassured the Reagan White House about proceeding with their
Melady adds these very significant statements: On January 10, 1984, President Ronald Reagan announced the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with the Holy See. . . . The announcement gave full recognition to the unique international sovereign role of the pope and his government, not only in Vatican City State but throughout the world where the pope and his government exercised their spiritual and political authority. There was no equivocation. The United States was extending full recognition for the first time to the government of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The announcement implied the acceptance of the international law principle that the Holy See is a bona fide international personality. Thus the announcement by President Reagan acknowledged the papacy as a religious organ with international rights and duties. This was not a qualified recognition of Vatican City State. In previous times it would have caused a firestorm of protest. But it immediately became evident, both in tone and substance, that there had been a major change in domestic U.S. political opinion (Melady, pp. 50, 53).

Understanding the Holy See

To the average Protestant layman the term Holy See has no meaning whatsoever. It is probably not even in common usage among Catholic laymen. The reason for this uncertainty is the unusual nature of the beast. It would be best, I believe, to get the definition of the Holy See from someone who ought to know. Back again to Thomas Patrick Melady, a Roman Catholic career diplomat and formerly the official Ambassador of the United States of America to the Holy See. His explanation is as follows: The government of the United States has diplomatic relations with the government of the Roman Catholic Church; that is, the Holy See.

The Holy See is the composite of the authority, jurisdiction, and sovereignty vested in and exercised by the pope and his advisers in the temporal and spiritual direction and guidance of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world. The Holy See, consequently, is a moral entity; in modern terms, it is the central government of the Roman Catholic Church (Melady, p. 178).

The Holy See is not just the small city-state of 110 acres called the Vatican within the city of Rome, Italy. It is the worldwide body of over one billion Roman Catholic members with the pope at its head. The Holy See has formal diplomatic relations with 174 nations including the United States. This is more than three fourths (76%) of all the nations on earth as recognized as sovereign nations by the United Nations (228). This represents an increase of 29 new nations with full diplomatic relations with the Holy See in the last nine years-an increase of 20%! The Vatican claims that during the pontificate of John Paul II that he tripled the number of nations with full diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

Working Together

So what will the future bring? Ambassador Melady concludes, I believe that the U.S., as the worlds only superpower, and the Holy See, as the only worldwide moral-political sovereignty, have significant roles to play in the future. Their actions will impact the lives of people in all parts of the globe (Melady, p. 10). Surely he doesn't realize how prophetic are his words.

Early in his first term as president, George W. Bush named James Nicholson as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. Nicholson had been the chairman of the Republican National Committee from 1996 to 2000 and had orchestrated the election of the President. And so this top-ranking politician represented the United States to the central government of the Roman Catholic Church. Inside the Vatican reported in an interview with James Nicholson, Several times he uses the word convergence in explaining the link between the interests of the church and the American government. The values of this [the Bush] Administration and those of the Vatican line up hand in glove, he said (Inside the Vatican, December 2001, pp. 24, 25).

The Holy Alliance between the U.S. and the Holy See to bring down the former Soviet Union was a result of the establishment of full diplomatic relations. This continued the healing of the
deadly wound. But just how much the wound had healed was revealed to the public for the first time in the events surrounding the death of Pope John Paul II. The change of attitude on the part of the United States toward the Vatican surprised even the Vatican!

**And All The World Wondered**

After nearly a decade of declining health, Karol Wojtyla, known as Pope John Paul II, died in his apartment in Rome on April 2, 2005. He had held the chair of St. Peter, or reigned as Supreme Pontiff for more than 26 years. He was the most photographed public figure of his era, having appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine a record 16 times.

*Newsweek*, April 11, 2005, in a special report by Kenneth L. Woodward, noted that John Paul transformed the See of Peter into a fulcrum of world politics his politics. The papal voice was heard and often heeded in major capitals like Moscow and Washington. Above all he took the papacy which only a century earlier was locked inside the ecclesiastical confines of Vatican City on the road. He visited Africa four times, Latin America five, managing altogether an astounding 104 pilgrimages to 129 countries around the globe. In doing so, he transformed the figure of the pope from a distant icon to a familiar face. His face.

The same issue of *Newsweek* stated in a picture caption, All the World His Stage. Under John Paul II, who helped bring down the Iron Curtain, the Holy See gained more political clout than it had enjoyed since the Renaissance.

When it was announced that the pope had died, the White House released the following statement by President Bush:

Laura and I join people across the Earth in mourning the passing of Pope John Paul II. The Catholic Church has lost its shepherd, the world has lost a champion of human freedom, and a good and faithful servant of God has been called home.

Pope John Paul II left the throne of St. Peter in the same way he ascended to it as a witness to the dignity of human life. In his native Poland, that witness launched a democratic revolution that swept Eastern Europe and changed the course of history. Throughout the West, John Pauls witness reminded us of our obligation to build a culture of life in which the strong protect the weak. And during the popes final years, his witness was made even more powerful by his daily courage in the face of illness and great suffering.

All popes belong to the world, but Americans had special reason to love the man from Krakow. In his visits to our country, the pope spoke of our providential Constitution, the self-evident truths about human dignity in our Declaration, and the blessings of liberty that follow from them. It is these truths, he said, that have led people all over the world to look to America with hope and respect.

Pope John Paul II was, himself, an inspiration to millions of Americans, and to so many more throughout the world. We will always remember the humble, wise, and fearless priest who became one of historys great moral leaders. Were grateful to God for sending such a man, a son of Poland, who became the Bishop of Rome, and a hero for the ages.

Not long after the above statement was released by the White House, President Bush issued the following executive order:

**A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America:**

As a mark of respect for His Holiness Pope John Paul II, I hereby order, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff at the White House and on all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the federal government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its territories and possessions until sunset on the day of his interment. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff for the same period at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and
other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush.

Accolades praising the pope came in from all around the world, including the many nations that the pope had granted diplomatic relations.

At the popes funeral, kings, queens, prime ministers, and presidents from over 100 nations were in attendance. Prince Charles of Great Britain postponed his wedding in order to attend. For the first time in history a sitting President of the United States attended a papal funeral. Due to security and space constraints, the papacy limited the U.S. delegation to 5 members. The five were President George W. Bush, First Lady Laura Bush, former President George H.W. Bush, former President Bill Clinton, and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. When the U.S. delegation went to St. Peters Basilica to view the remains of the pope the day before the funeral, they knelt before the body of the pope in prayer, with hands folded and heads bowed.

Viewing the picture taken by Getty Images of the U.S. delegation kneeling before the pope, is to be struck by how obviously the prophetic picture of Revelation 13 is coming into focus. With an estimated four million visitors to Rome, which included many trainloads, and over 700 passenger buses and hundreds of cars just from Poland alone, the popes funeral was the largest ever conducted in the history of the world. It was also estimated that over two billion people watched the event on television. The estimate was a result of the fact that between 3:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. eastern time on April 8, 2005, the popes funeral was almost all that was on television!

The publication Inside the Vatican produced a special commemorative issue in memory of John Paul II. The 100-page full-color document featured the life, the pontificate, and the final journey of the late pope. It featured prominently the U.S. Presidents kneeling before the pope, and noted that many of the worlds most powerful political leaders gathered to pay their last respects to the spiritual figure of John Paul II, whose body lay before them during the funeral in a simple wooden coffin. Five kings, four queens, and at least 70 presidents and prime ministers were surrounded by their entourages, with many of the women wearing black lace head coverings or black hats as a sign of respect. Some analysts considered it the largest gathering ever of world leaders.

The fact that the U.S. Presidents and the largest gathering ever of world leaders attended the funeral is not just evidence of the formation of an image to the beast; it is also a fulfillment of Revelation 13:3, And all the world marveled and followed the beast. The KJV puts it: And all the world wondered after the beast. This kneeling gesture by the U.S. delegation was noted by Bishop Renato Boccardo, now governor of the Vatican City State, who organized the popes funeral. When they all knelt in front of the pope, I thought, those who are leading the world, they are kneeling in front of this poor man, he says. He didn't have military forces or money or power, but those who are leading the world, are here recognizing the grandezza (the greatness) of the man (Inside the Vatican, August-September 2005).

**Voting Precincts**

For an interesting insight, visit the Roman Catholic Glenmary Home Missioners Web site at <glenary.org>, whose mission it is to establish the Catholic Church in rural America. They have a goal of being the predominant religious group in each county in the United States. On the Web site they have maps of the U.S. showing how many counties are already predominately Catholic. There are presently 3,143 counties, parishes, or independent cities in the United States. These are all political subdivisions or voting precincts. According to the
Glenmary group presently the Roman Church is predominant in 1,259 counties, which is a full 40% of all the counties in the United States! This is why it is so essential to win the Catholic vote in order to be successful in national elections!

The Supreme Court Controversy

When Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O’Connor announced her retirement, President George W. Bush nominated John G. Roberts to succeed her. At the time of this writing the Senate confirmation hearings are just beginning. It is the opinion of most court observers that Judge Roberts, who is a devout Roman Catholic, will be confirmed. Our Sunday Visitor reported in its August 14, 2005 issue that, if confirmed by the U.S. Senate, John G. Roberts will be the fourth Catholic presently on the U.S. Supreme Court. This would mean that, at the moment, almost half of the justices are Catholics [four out of nine]. He would join fellow Catholics Scalia, Kennedy, and Thomas.

There could even be a fifth Catholic nominated when ailing Chief Justice Rehnquist retires or dies. The President has said that since the Hispanics have now become the largest minority in the U.S., he is considering nominating a Hispanic man or woman to the Supreme Court. A high percentage of Hispanics are at least nominally Catholic, so if the President makes good on his consideration there could be a fifth and deciding Catholic vote on the court. The President has indicated that his first choice for the Hispanic nominee would be Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. However, some believe that Gonzales is not confirmable by the Senate.

The constitution of the Supreme Court may be significant when the Sunday law that will be encouraged by the pastors and urged by the people is enacted by a Congress that wants to stay in the good graces of the people and keep their seats. It is very likely that some group would challenge a Sunday law as being unconstitutional. If the case is brought before the Supreme Court and the majority is Catholic, it is quite likely that they would find a way to support the law.

Some have said that many of the Catholic senators and Congress members are more liberal in their philosophy and vote. They point to leaders such as John Kerry and Ted Kennedy as being pro-abortion in contradiction to Catholic teaching. It is interesting to note that both of these senators, in order to keep in the good graces of the church, spent considerable time and money to have the church annul their marriages to their first wives so that they could remarry and stay within the membership of the church. There is, in fact, growing pressure on Catholic congressmen to vote as Catholics or face disciple or even excommunication.

Awaiting White Smoke

The conclave has been described as a blend of prayer, piety, politics, and intrigue. When the white smoke cleared over the Vatican on April 9, 2005, German theologian Joseph Ratzinger had been elected to replace Pope John Paul II as supreme pontiff of the worlds 1.2 billion Roman Catholics (World, April 30, 2005).

Cardinal Ratzinger was for 24 years the prefect [director] of the Office of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith formerly known as the Office of the Inquisition. His nicknames coined by fellow Catholics include, Gods Rottweiler, The Popes Enforcer, The Panzer Cardinal, and so forth. His strict adherence to Catholic theology cost many people their jobs. For example: Ratzinger helped spearhead a church investigation that culminated in the 1979 revocation of Swiss theologian Hans Kungs license to teach Catholic theology. Largely responsible for inspiring the Vatican II reforms, Kung was fired because of his works challenging papal infallibility (U.S. News & World Report, May 2, 2005, p. 36). So we know what his attitude will be regarding papal infallibility.

We have known that The papal church will never relinquish her claim to infallibility. All that she has done in her persecution of those who reject her dogmas she holds to be right; and would she not repeat the same acts, should the opportunity be presented? Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution (The Great
In a surprise to many, Benedict XVI has named an American cardinal to take his place as the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He is San Francisco Archbishop William J. Levada. At first blush it appears to be another link between the U.S. and the Vatican.


Roman Catholic voters were crucial to Mr. Bush’s re-election last year: 52 percent chose him over Massachusetts Democratic Sen. John Kerry, a Catholic, who garnered 47 percent of their vote.

Archbishop Chaput told the audience that faith should affect our political decisions, adding that Catholics must work to keep religion from being banished from public discourse because our bigger task is to help renew American public life by committing ourselves ever more deeply to our Catholic faith and acting like we really mean it.

With the Religious Right, consisting of conservative Catholics and evangelical Protestants, getting much more deeply involved in American politics, it should be of real concern to those of us who value religious liberty. For we are told, 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. When our nation shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else than giving life to the tyranny which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to spring again into active despotism (*Maranatha*, p. 131).

I will conclude this article with two relevant quotes from Ellen White.

I have been shown that Satan is stealing a march upon us. The law of God, through the agency of Satan, is to be made void. In our land of boasted freedom, religious liberty will come to an end. The contest will be decided over the Sabbath question, which will agitate the whole world (*Evangelism*, p. 236).

While the Protestant world is by her attitude making concessions to Rome, let us arouse to comprehend the situation and view the contest before us in its true bearings. Let the watchmen now lift up their voice and give the message which is present truth for this time. Let us show the people where we are in prophetic history and seek to arouse the spirit of true Protestantism, awaking the world to a sense of the value of the privileges of religious liberty so long enjoyed (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 716).

---

**NOTES**

1. **G. Edward Reid** is the Stewardship Director of the North American Division. He is an ordained minister and licensed attorney. This article is based on his new book, *Sundays ComingSecond Edition*. Italics and bolding supplied by the author for emphasis.

2. In fact, Chief Justice Rehnquist did die on September 3, very shortly after this article was submitted; and, in a historically rare move, President Bush nominated John Roberts, not now merely as a new Associate Justice but as the Chief Justice! Roberts was sworn in on September
29. Ed.