

SABBATH LEGISLATION

1. WHO made the Sabbath?

“In six days *the Lord* made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them. is, and *rested the seventh day*; wherefore *the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*” **Exodus 20:11.**

2. To whom does the Sabbath belong?

“The seventh day is the Sabbath of *the Lord thy God.*” **Verse 10.**

3. To whom, then, should its observance be rendered?

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and *to God the things that are God’s.*” **Mark 12:17.**

NOTE — When men make Sabbath laws, therefore, they require Sabbath observance to be rendered to the government, or, presumably, by indirection, to God through the government, which amounts to the same thing.

4. In religious things, to whom alone are we accountable?

“So then every one of us shall give account of himself *to God.*” **Romans 14:12.**

NOTE — But when men make compulsory Sabbath laws, they make men accountable to the *government* for Sabbath observance.

5. How does God command us to keep the Sabbath day?

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it *holy.*” **Exodus 20:8.**

6. What does He indicate as one of its purposes?

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, *an holy convocation*; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.” **Leviticus 23:3.**

7. Seeing, then, that the Sabbath is *holy*, is to be *kept holy*, and is a day for *holy convocations*, what must be its character?

It must be *religious*.

8. What, then, must be the nature of all Sabbath legislation?

It is *religious legislation*.

9. When the state enacts religious laws, what is effected?

A union of church and state.

10. What has always been the result of religious legislation, or a union of church and state?

Religious intolerance and persecution.

11. What was Constantine's Sunday law of March 7, 321?

"Let all the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades rest on the venerable day of the sun; but let those who are situated in the country, freely and at full liberty, attend to the business of agriculture; because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn and planting vines; lest the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted by heaven." *Corpus Juris Civilis Cod., lib. 3, tit. 12, 3.*

12. What further imperial legislation in behalf of Sunday observance was issued in 386?

"By a law of the year 386, those older changes effected by the emperor Constantine were more rigorously enforced, and, in general, civil transactions of every kind on Sunday were strictly forbidden." *Neander's "Church History," Vol. II, page 300, edition 1852.*

13. At the instance of church bishops, what still further law was secured under Theodosius the Younger, in 425?

"In the year 425, the exhibition of spectacles on Sunday and on the principal feast-days of the Christians was forbidden, in order that the devotion of the faithful might be free from all disturbance." *Id., pages 300, 301.*

14. What does the historian say of this legislation?

"In this way the church received help from the state for the furtherance of her ends. . . . But had it not been for that confusion of spiritual and secular interests, had it not been for the vast number of mere outward conversions thus brought about, she would have needed no such help." Id., page 301.

15. What did Charlemagne's Sunday law of 800 require?

"We decree . . . that servile works should not be done on the Lord's day, . . . that is, that neither should men do field work, either in cultivating the vineyards or by plowing in the fields, by cutting or drying hay, or by placing a fence, or by making clearings in the woods or felling trees or working on stones or constructing houses or

working in the garden; neither should they come together to decide public matters nor be engaged in the hunt. . . . Women may not do any textile work nor cut out clothes nor sew nor make garments. . . . But let them come together from all sides to church to the solemnities of the mass, and let them praise God for all things which he does for us on that day.” *“Historical Chronicles of Germany,” Sec. 2, Vol. I, 22 General admonition, 789, M. Martio 23, page 61, par. 81.*

16. How does the Sunday law of Charles II, of 1676, read?

“For the better observation and keeping holy the Lord’s day, commonly called Sunday: be it enacted . . . that all the laws enacted and in force concerning the observation of the day, and repairing to the church thereon, be carefully put in execution; and that all and every person and persons whatsoever shall on every Lord’s day apply themselves to the observation of the same, by exercising themselves thereon in the duties of piety and true religion, publicly and privately.” *“Revised Statutes of England From 1235–1685 A. D.” (London, 1870), pages 779, 780; cited in “A Critical History of Sunday Legislation,” by A. H. Lewis, D. D., pages 108, 109.*

17. What did the first Sunday law enacted in America, that of Virginia, in 1610, require?

“Every man and woman shall repair in the morning to the divine service and sermons preached upon the Sabbath day, and in the afternoon to divine service, and catechizing, upon pain for the first fault to lose their provision and the allowance for the whole week following; for the second, to lose the said allowance and also be whipped; and for the third to suffer death.” Articles, Laws, and Orders, Divine, Politique, and Martial, for the Colony in Virginia: first established by Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, Lieutenant-General, the 24th of May, 1610.

NOTES — These are the original Sunday laws, after which all the Sunday laws of Europe and America have been modeled. Church attendance is not generally required by the Sunday laws of the present day, nor was it required, in terms, by the earliest Sunday laws; but that is and ever has been the chief object of all Sunday legislation from Constantine’s time on and it is as much out of place today as it ever was.