

A National Sunday Law Could be Enacted by Obama

The enactment of the National Sunday Law in America is a matter of deep concern to every Advent believer who understands and believes the Bible/Spirit of Prophecy counsels which God has given to His people for these last days.

We had been assuming that this law would be passed by a Republican administration, but it could happen under a Democratic-controlled one.

With this in mind, let us consider a few facts:

It is generally thought that George W. Bush was the most faith-based U.S. president in recent history. But disclosures, made by a former White House staff member late in his administration, revealed that he and his vice president, Dick Cheney, were actually very cynical about Christian groups that urged recommendations which could lead to the enactment of various Christian objectives.

During a meeting with key Christian representatives, he would be very friendly and generalized promises would be made to do certain things.

But after each such group left, he would make disparaging remarks about them and changes they wished to accomplish. The truth was revealed by Bush's *Faith-Based Initiatives* director, after he quit the White

“The conventional wisdom was that George W. Bush was the most faith-based president in recent history . . . But religion might be playing an even bigger role in Barack Obama’s administration.

“While Bush invited megapastor Rick Warren to low-key White House functions, Obama had him deliver the invocation at his internationally televised inauguration. Bush encouraged White House prayer groups, but Obama begins public rallies with the recitation of a White House-commissioned prayer [written for him to say].

“Obama has quickly expanded Bush’s faith-based initiatives to include an advisory council of religious leaders on matters as diverse as abortion and Middle East peace. ‘This administration has used faith more overtly than any other in its first hundred days,’ say Barry Lynn [a prominent atheist], executive director of *Americans United for Separation of Church and State*.

“But rather than appeal mostly to Evangelicals as Bush did, Obama is reaching out to a broad spectrum of believers and nonbelievers. He is carving out a bold new role for faith in the White House.”—*U.S. News and World Report*, June 2009.

House in disgust.

Bush actually had relatively little interest in making many changes, either in foreign relations or the U.S. economy.

But Barack Obama has shown himself to be very different. He listens to others, and considers everything told to him. Then he not only decides on a new course of action—but he sets in motion efforts to begin pushing many of those views through Congress.

This, of course, does not mean that his decisions are necessarily correct or wise. So intent is he on action, that causal relationships and ultimate outcomes of his objectives may not be carefully thought through.

A good example of this is his frenzied concern to require everyone in America to be enrolled in some kind of medical-care program—government or private—in spite of certain facts.

Many people prefer to use natural remedies and do not want drug medications, so why should they pay as members of a medical-care program? (During the election campaign, Senator Clinton also wanted AMA-type medical care, but only for those who wanted to be part of such a program.)

It might also be mentioned that those who choose to partake of liquor, tobacco, and meat eating ought to pay their own very costly medical bills.

Due to foolish greed by the financial sector, and the permanent shipment of American industry overseas, our nation is facing a permanent financial problem from which it is unlikely ever to recover.

Yet at such a time as this, Obama wants to put in a variant of socialized medicine! Experts are convinced that, if enacted by Congress and not stopped, this will eventually bankrupt the nation. (But because of a measure included in the 2010 budget agreement already approved by Congress—without a single Republican vote,—senators can pass health-care reform with a simple majority of 51 votes—and not the usual “super majority” of 60 needed to break a Senate filibuster.)

With such a willingness to start new things, what are the possibilities that Obama will eventually want to push through a National Sunday Law.

Several factors favor the possibility of such a law being enacted during the Obama Administration:

First, the deepening national financial and unemployment crises will call for additional measures to maintain public confidence. A supposed “return to religion” would temporarily help restore that confidence.

Second, the dramatic increase in immorality in many areas of American life—would also prompt a National Sunday Law. Without legislating against the homosexuals, the abortion industry, the gambling syndicates, and other legal evils in the nation,—the enactment of a nation-wide Sunday Law would nicely appear to make us all look religious—when the evils have not at all been curtailed.

Third, Obama's concern to please both Christians (especially Catholic leaders!), as well as non-Christians. While pleasing Christians, such a law would not endanger the ongoing immorality and profits of non-Christians—so would probably be acceptable to them.

The remainder of this article contains additional facts I have been able to cull on this likelihood:

In early June, Joshua DuBois, President Obama's head of the White House Office of *Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships*, in a panel discussion, discussed how anxious President Obama was to maintain good relations with the Christian community.

It is significant that Obama's version of faith-based and government dealings has met with no opposition from most quarters; yet eight years ago when then-President George W. Bush established the *White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives*, people complained that any formal connections between the government and faith organizations violated separation of church and state notions. But no one is complaining now. It has become an accepted fact.

In that meeting, DuBois said the White House is "casting a wide net" as it continues to "fully explore" its role in how to help tackle the "big challenges in this country." But he also said that exactly how Obama wanted to please Christians more fully had not yet been decided.

In regard to the controversy surrounding whether, under the new administration, faith-based groups accepting federal money can hire and fire according to their religious beliefs, DuBois said that such decisions will be made on a "case by case" basis.

Another example of how anxious Obama is to

"Gay rights groups and liberals pressured Obama to rescind his inaugural invitation to Rick Warren [to give the Inaugural prayer], because of the pastor's support for a gay marriage ban in California. Obama's refusal sent a clear message to Evangelicals and other cultural conservatives [i.e. Catholics] that he respected their values . . .

"Southern Baptist Convention public policy chief Richard Land . . . gets regular phone calls for DuBois, Obama's faith-based office director . . . As someone who said last year that he prays 'to be an instrument of God's will,' the president appears to be operating as a true believer."—*U.S. News and World Report, June 2009.*

please both sides occurred when DuBois was asked about the marriage issue. He said that the White House was anxious just now to "improve fatherhood" as a main objective while avoiding confrontation over who should be able to marry (man and woman, or also man and man and woman and woman).

DuBois said the new challenge is finding the right policy initiatives for the now competitive faith-based groups. When discussing those specific objectives, DuBois went back to the first press release issued when the White House rebranded the initiative in early February: Those goals include making such groups a part of the economic recovery, supporting women and children through reducing the need for abortion, and fostering international and interfaith dialogue.

Obama's faith-based office has focused on a mostly domestic agenda of promoting responsible fatherhood, building interfaith dialogue, and reducing domestic poverty and unintended pregnancies.

Then there is USAID. This is the federal agency in charge of allocating government money to religious charities, such as our own ADRA.

J. Brady Anderson (under President Clinton, USAID administrator), an Evangelical Christian, was permitted to start a "charitable choice" policy for USAID in 1996, which prohibited discrimination against faith-based organizations for certain blocks of federal grants as long as they did not use the money to share their faith while they were taking Federal funds.

Under the Bush administration, Christian organizations providing aid around the world with U.S. funds enjoyed a measure of freedom to keep their faith integrated with their services; but they are unsure now whether a new administration with new restrictions will alter their work in both body and soul. At the same time, debates over the role of evangelism in humanitarian work grow as the bigger tent "religious left" takes its seat at the table under a new administration.

In a speech in July 2008, Obama said that organizations will not be able to use federal funds to "proselytize." In practice, this means that a Christian anti-addiction program could not say that faith in Jesus will enable a person to fight the despair that pushes people to heroin.

Obama has also argued that faith-based groups should not "discriminate" in hiring against those who do not share their faith. But that was the policy started by the Bush Administration, which Obama has not changed in the slightest.

He also said that he would not permit religious organizations, receiving federal funds, to discriminate in hiring and firing. But so far the president has not made any changes in policies that currently allow religion-based hiring.

Seven of the top 10 recipients of USAID grants—according to numbers compiled by the *Boston Globe* through 2005—are Christian organizations. Our ADRA

is included in this list of the top-ten recipients of money from the U.S. federal government. Also: *Catholic Relief Services*, *World Vision*, *Food for the Hungry*, *Samaritan's Purse*, *World Relief*, and *Opportunity International*.

While USAID has strict rules about the sharing of faith, the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable can blur.

Currently, staff members are permitted to pray or worship after providing a meal, for example, as long as they indicate recipients don't have to pray in order to eat. Staff can talk about God's love as long as the conversation occurs outside the physical location or time when aid is delivered. (The "or" is something that changed under Bush, allowing faith expressions and aid to occur in the same place.) Organizations can have government-funded activities in church buildings. USAID's current guidelines read, "A religious organization need not purge, conceal or compromise its religious character."

This could change, especially depending on whom Obama chooses to head USAID. A new director can make subtle changes in the fine print—like encouraging AIDS prevention through "delayed sexual initiation and partner reduction" instead of "abstinence and faithfulness" programs, all aside from major changes like forbidding religion-based hiring.

"There has been no pressure on *World Vision* to stifle our religious values and motivation," Richard Stearns, president of *World Vision U.S.*, announced recently. "However, we have always understood that government monies cannot be used for religious purposes."

On one hand, Obama has resisted efforts by atheist organizations to eliminate funds to Christian organizations; on the other, he has continued granting new funds for their use.

Barry Lynn, executive director of *Americans United for Separation of Church and State*, has lobbied to prevent stimulus funds from going to the *Compassion Capital Fund*, a program the Bush administration created to fund many faith-based organizations. But Obama has refused to cancel that program.

At the same time, this year's multi-billion-dollar stimulus legislation provided funds for grants to nonprofits, which could include faith-based ones, but under a different name than President Bush's fund.

Christian organizations defend their acceptance of federal funds by pointing to the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, which permits religion-based hiring for faith-based groups.

World Vision's president, Stearns, is adamant that his organization is indeed "Christian" and that part of its work is bringing the gospel through word and deed. Poverty, he said, is both "material and spiritual." *World Vision* requires its employees in America to sign either the organization's faith statement or the Apostle's Creed. But overseas, almost 20 percent of World

Vision's staff is Muslim; and they practice the Islamic religion.

Andrew Natsios, who served as vice president of *World Vision* from 1993 to 1998 and as the head of USAID from 2001 to 2006, said because *World Vision's* structure is diffuse it is a "larger tent" than church-based organizations.

World Vision Australia is very secularized, much more so than the U.S. In Latin America, *World Vision* is deeply involved in "liberation theology," the theory that the purpose of Christianity is to primarily solve people's economic problems.

We would hope that our own ADRA presents the Adventist view better in its overseas work. Is ADRA also employing dedicated Muslims?

Fearing the compromises that receiving federal funds might lead to, some in the Christian nonprofit world have abstained from government funds to avoid secularizing pressures. Richard Land, president of the *Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission*, has strongly encouraged Southern Baptist organizations to refuse government dollars. In contrast, *World Vision's* board permits up to 35 percent of the organization's revenue to come from the government. Our own ADRA receives millions in government money on a 4-to-1 basis. It must raise \$1 from nongovernmental sources, for every \$4 it receives from the federal government.

In connection with this research study on the likelihood of a National Sunday Law enactment during the Obama Administration, it would be well to consider how Americans might accept such a law.

A *Baylor University* survey in 2006 showed that two-thirds of Americans who claim no religious affiliation say they believe in God. A 2008 *Pew Forum* study found two of every five religiously unaffiliated persons still describing religion as important in their lives.

Pew reported that "the unaffiliated have one of the lowest retention rates of any of the major religious groups, with most people who were raised unaffiliated now belonging to one religion or another." The survey showed 39 percent of those "raised unaffiliated" are now Protestant, and most of these are in Evangelical churches. Another 15 percent of those unaffiliated as children or teens are now in Catholicism or some other faith.

In comparison, 80 percent of those raised as Protestants are still Protestants (some 3 percent are Catholic, 4 percent are involved with some other faith, and 13 percent are unaffiliated). So while some Christian youth are drifting away, others are coming in to fill their places. The movement is both ways.

According to Stephen Prothero, head of the religion department at Boston University, "If you meet a random American walking down the street, the odds are only one in 62 that he or she will self-identify as

atheist or agnostic.”

In contrast, let us consider what is happening to Christianity’s main religious opponents, Islamism and Hinduism. They can only hold onto their members by banning or persecuting Christian missionaries and attempting to restrict discussion. Those religions fear open debate. In Europe and America, Christianity’s opponents try to avoid free and open encounters by using ridicule.

Most conservatives agree that the first three-plus months of the Obama administration have been enough time to gauge where the country is headed politically: bigger federal government as the answer to many of the nation’s ongoing problems.

And with the recent defection of Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania to the Democratic Party, giving Democrats a near filibuster-proof majority, the drive for bigger government just got a lot easier for the Obama Administration. Whatever he wants, he is now even more likely to get.

The president wasted no time signaling this shift when, during his first-ever address to a joint session of Congress in February, he proclaimed: “I reject the view that says your problems will simply take care of themselves—that says government has no role in laying the foundation for our common prosperity.”

If he decides that our “common prosperity” includes passage of a National Sunday Law, most Americans—as well as Congress—are likely to accept it.

It is known that, during the last election campaign, 73% of most white Evangelicals supported McCain in November. But Obama was able to win over Roman Catholic support at the polls. For him to win so many Catholic votes, it is likely that the priests were telling their congregations to vote for him.

Here is an example of how easy it is for Obama to get things done: In mid-February, he signed a \$787 billion stimulus bill that passed without the support of a single House Republican. Then two days after his joint session speech, Obama delivered a \$3.6 trillion budget blueprint to Congress. That was followed in March by a \$410 billion omnibus spending measure signed by the president, containing billions in earmarks.

Many have been shocked at how easy it has been for Obama to enact major changes without many contentious hearings or lengthy floor debates.

These changes have been enacted without much protest from the moderate wing of the Democratic party, who many expected would show more resistance and force Obama to legislate more from the ideological center.

In contrast, President Bill Clinton earlier attempted to pass a \$25 billion spending bill—a mere fraction of Obama’s stimulus package,—which stiff opposition in Congress reduced to \$16 billion. And it still lost. But with the speed of a runaway train, it took Obama less than a

month to introduce, pass, and sign his stimulus plan.

Barack Obama has caused the entire nation to pay attention to what he is doing. They may well be ready for, and generally quite receptive to, plans he may announce to impose a National Sunday Law on the nation. America has gotten used to dramatic events from Obama. Indeed, he has been able to enact absolutely huge spending programs in a nation already deeply in debt, and in the midst of a major recession,—and at the same time announce medical insurance programs which experts declare will ultimately bankrupt the entire country.

All of this has come while the media have given President Obama more coverage than Bush and Clinton combined, and more positive coverage than either received at this point in their presidencies. This is from a *Center for Media and Public Affairs* study that found that nightly newscasts spent almost 28 hours on Obama’s first 50 days compared with eight hours for Bush in his first 50 days. Meanwhile, the study found that 58 percent of those reports on Obama were positive, compared with 33 percent positive for Bush and 44 percent positive for Clinton during their first days.

Beyond hope, Obama made bipartisanship a major message of his campaign. But, according to the *Pew Research Center*, early signs indicate that Obama has “the most polarized early job approval ratings of any president in the past four decades.”

Obama has launched a gigantic tax-and-spend program to solve the nation’s problems. Financial experts believe it may bring the nation to the verge of bankruptcy.

We have been told that enactment of the National Sunday Law will bring our nation to ruin. Perhaps, as it nears financial ruin from Obama’s policies, he might in desperation decide that such a law might save the America from such a possibility.

But, of course, Inspiration tells us that such legislation would have the opposite effect.

The U.S. legislators will yield to the demand for a NSL (*GC 592*). Protestantism will join hands with popery in carrying this through (*5T 712*). America will disconnect fully from righteousness when this is done (*5T 451*). It will be an oppressive (*7BC 985*) and most severe and exacting law (*TM 473*). Persecution awaits those refusing to bow to it (*2SM 380*). Satan plans to exterminate Sabbathkeepers through it, for the death penalty will be invoked against violators of this law (*TM 473*).

So think not that we can wait for a Republican president to come along, before any possibility of a National Sunday Law could occur. Barack Obama is determined to please all sides—including the Christian community.

So please remain alert! According to God’s Word, we live in a most unusual time in world history.

—vf