

The German Sunday Law

I am being asked how Germany could have a national Sunday law, when it is first supposed to start in America?

My reply is that, first, many localities and nations have had Sunday laws in recent times; but these have usually been Sunday-closing laws—requiring most stores and shops to not open from midnight Saturday night to midnight Sunday night.

(For a brief but excellent history of this in America, see my books, *National Sunday Law Crisis* and *Enforced Sunday Law*.)

But, when the THE National Sunday Law is enacted by the U.S. Congress, it will be in direct fulfillment of the prophecies of Revelation 13 that are detailed in the Spirit of Prophecy (*Great Controversy, Chapter 25, God's Law Immutable, etc.*). THAT law will not merely close stores,—it will require that everyone worship God on Sunday. It will not be merely a Sunday-closing law.

When this law is enacted, it will rather quickly spread to the nations of Christendom, and then to all the other nations. See my book, *The End of Time*, which explains all this in great detail. This book is the most complete collection of Spirit of Prophecy statements on coming events which has ever been compiled.

Here is a collection of nine newspaper articles about the German nationwide store-closing Sunday Law which was upheld by the German Supreme Court on December 1, 2009.

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German court to rule on Sunday shopping in Berlin, June 23, 2009, World de Deutsche Welle—

The Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe has opened a hearing into whether allowing shops to open 10 Sundays of the year in Berlin is in line with the country's law governing religious freedom.

Unlike in some other European countries, Sunday shopping has long been taboo in Germany. In keeping with Article 140 of the Basic Law, Sundays and holidays are designated as "rest" days.

The 1956 law stipulated that shops must close by 6:30 p.m. on weekdays and at 2 p.m. on Saturdays. Decades later, in 2004, the Federal Constitutional Court, in Karlsruhe, reaffirmed that businesses must limit themselves to the prescribed working hours.

However, with reforms to Germany's federal setup in 2006, the various individual states became responsible for closing times of businesses and shops. Many states decided to put their newfound powers to test,

allowing sales in large department stores and shopping centers, especially during the Christmas season.

Berlin stores open longest

However, no state has taken as much advantage of the new rules as Berlin. Many shops in Germany have extended their opening hours. (*See Großansicht des Bildes mit der Bildunterschrift.*)

Shops in Berlin can remain open from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. on all four Advent Sundays of the year. On other holidays, the Berlin government decided, "in public interest," not to impose restrictions on the shopping hours. Shops can also open on two additional Sundays or holidays for "special events."

In most other states, only four Sundays and holidays are free for business, while in Brandenburg it's six and in Baden-Wuerttemberg, three.

The federal reforms marked a new chapter in a long history of the liberalization of shopping hours in Germany. Way back in 1956, the so-called "*lange Samstag*," or long Saturday, was introduced. More than three decades later, in 1989, the "evening working hours" were instituted, which allowed shops to remain open until 8:30 p.m. on Thursdays.

From 1996 onwards, shops could remain open for business till 4 p.m. on Saturdays. And finally, in 2003, the weekend closing time was pushed to 8 p.m.

Churches have opposed changes

(*See Bildunterschrift: Großansicht des Bildes mit der Bildunterschrift: Church Officials Have Called the Laws Unconstitutional*)

While most shoppers welcomed the changes, the liberalization didn't go down well with everyone.

Unions and churches have been up in arms over the move. According to their estimates, some 2.7 million workers in the retail sector are suffering due to the extended shopping hours. They say these employees had already been subjected to unhealthy working hours that are not family friendly.

In late 2007, the Protestant and Catholic churches in Berlin decided to take their grievances to the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe.

In their plea, the churches say that almost a fifth of all Sundays, and especially the four Advent Sundays, are affected.

Moreover, they argue, the Berlin law on Sunday shopping does not provide effective sanctions against any violations. Church representatives say offenses can be punished with a fine of up to 2,500 euros which they say is a pittance for big department stores and chains.

2 Germany's Highest Court Strictly Enforces Day of Rest, Bans Sunday Shopping, Dec. 3, 2009, ABC News—

Many visitors to Germany can find themselves standing outside a closed department store, perplexed to find that they cannot do a bit of shopping during their weekend trip. This is a result of Germany's long-held resistance to Sunday shopping, even in the face of growing consumerism.

December 1, 2009, Germany's highest court has ruled that Sunday should be kept as a day of rest and has overturned a Berlin law easing restrictions on Sunday shopping. Most German newspapers on Wednesday greeted the ruling, some for reasons of religion and tradition, others out of a concern for workers' rights (Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters).

Yet many of Germany's 16 states have already made some exceptions, allowing stores to open a few Sundays a year. And, in Berlin, the city government had gone the furthest in chipping away at the ban on Sunday trading. In 2006 the German capital gave the green light for retailers to open on 10 Sundays a year, including the four Advent Sundays preceding Christmas.

However, Germany's Constitutional Court has now upheld a complaint made by the country's Catholic and Protestant churches, based on a clause in the German constitution that Sunday should be a day of rest and "spiritual elevation."

The court on Tuesday decided in favor of the churches, saying that Sunday opening should not take place four weeks in a row. The ruling will not affect shopping this December, but would come into force next year. However, the ruling did not overturn completely the principle of limited Sunday store opening.

The labor unions had joined the churches in their campaign to ring-fence Sunday as a day off for the nation. However, their focus was not on protecting the right to practise religion, but rather on protecting workers in the retail sector from having to work on Sundays, sometimes the only day they might get to spend with other members of their family. The services union Verdi greeted Tuesday's ruling with "relief and joy," saying this was a boon to shopworkers and their families.

German papers on Wednesday are broadly in favor of the ruling, though their reasons for supporting the court's decision are strikingly different.

A Day to Synchronize Society, December 3, 2009, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung—

The Constitutional Court had to overthrow the Berlin law. The judgement was not 'out of touch with reality,' as the Berlin Chamber of Commerce claims, but is actually very closely in touch with real life. The great diversity of working lives brings with it the fact that members of a single family are forced into different and sometimes incompatible working hours. If the state does not use some of its regulatory power to give a dependable rhythm to at least one free day—and that is still Sunday—then the family faces the threat of being pulled further apart.

If they have no time with each other and for each other, then the formal notion of belonging together loses value. This danger faces many families in society. The fact that, in the face of growing commercialization and fewer jobs, hardly any employee ever dares to ask for a free Saturday led the labor unions to join the churches in their campaign—with noticeable success.

December 2, 2009, Die Welt—

The churches have argued correctly that employees in the retail sector are not given the possibility of organizing their Advent Sundays according to Christian principles: going to church, being involved in the community, singing and reading aloud. It is part of religious freedom to be able to do these things.

The judges did not just endorse the division of time marked by Christianity, but also the necessity for this division. There is no ambiguity about this weekly rhythm. We people as social animals are duty bound and justified in dividing our time together. It is good to have free time together. It helps us to live as the social beings that we are.

December 2, 2009, Süddeutsche Zeitung—

The judgement sounds antiquated, maddeningly unmodern and pretty patronizing. It tells citizens when they are allowed to shop, and when they are not. It makes shopping on a Sunday an exception. It is a ruling that goes against the economic liberal zeitgeist and is a ruling against the round-the-clock commercialization of life.

Yet, the ruling is humane. It is an act in favor of the public spirit. Those who regularly go shopping on Sundays today will have to work regularly on Sundays tomorrow.

It may sound old fashioned but it is still correct: Sunday is Sunday because it is unlike other days. This is not about tradition or religion or a social heritage. Sunday is more than just a day off for individuals. If that were so, then it wouldn't matter if someone took a day off on Tuesday or Thursday. It is a day to synchronize society, that is what makes it so important. Without Sunday, every day would be a working day and a fixed point in the week would disappear. Of course there can be exceptions, there have always been particular professions who work on Sundays. But when the exception becomes the rule, then the commercialization of Sundays will not end at the department stores.

The court has given everyone the right to a day off on Sundays. You don't have to take it. Everyone can do what they like with it. But it is good to have it.

An Interference in Individual and Economic Freedom? The Financial Times Deutschland, December 2, 2009—

The ruling by the Constitutional Court has revived the emotional debate about opening hours of shops on Sundays. That alone is annoying. But even more annoying is that, with its strong emphasis on the religiously based day of rest on Sunday, it is interfering in individual and economic freedom.

Without a doubt the freedom to practise religion is of great value. However, in an increasingly secular society with more and more individualized rhythms of living, it seems an anachronism for the country's highest court to use retail of all things to save the day of rest.

In the public debate there is too little mention of the freedom of shop owners to keep customers through opening on Sundays, who would otherwise order online. And the freedom of towns to use Sunday opening hours to attract tourists. Or the freedom of customers to decide for themselves if they would rather spend Sundays amidst the crowds in the shopping malls or walking in the forest.

Appreciating these rights does not mean throwing away the country to the false god of consumerism. It means allowing a debate . . . about what Sunday really means to us. That includes protecting the rights of salespeople, paying them extra for working on Sundays and not putting anyone under pressure to work on Sunday.

If this is achieved, then it is high time that Sunday opening hours are no longer discussed in terms of belief but rationally.

December 2, 2009, Die Tageszeitung—

Sunday as a day off is a great gift. The treadmill is closed for 24 hours. The court has given relaxation, rest and 'spiritual elevation' precedence over the thirst for profit and the right to a consumer fix. However, it made it clear in its ruling that Sunday was not just for those who wanted to practise their religion undisturbed. It is also to play cards, go for a walk or simply to laze around. After all, even the strictest atheist needs the switching off that Sundays allow.

World de Deutsche Welle, December 2, 2009—

High court reaffirms ban on Sunday shopping.

Ruling in favor of the Catholic and Lutheran churches, Germany's highest court has found that the city of Berlin's ten shopping Sundays a year go against the constitutional protection of Sundays as a day of rest.

Germany's Constitutional Court ruled on Tuesday that shops must close on Sundays, and that legislation in Berlin allowing for ten shopping Sundays was unconstitutional. Germany's Basic Law protects Sunday and public holidays as "days of rest from work and of spiritual improvement."

Berlin legislation, passed in 2006, had allowed shops to remain open up to ten Sundays a year, including the four Sundays before Christmas. The Catholic and Lutheran churches had challenged the change and took the issue to the nation's highest court.

A majority of the following quotations can be found in 7 Bible Commentary, 975-977.

"There are many, even of those engaged in this movement for Sunday enforcement, who are blinded to the results which will follow this action. They do not see that they are striking directly against religious liberty. There are many who have never understood the claims

"Legal protection measures must recognize Sundays and public holidays as days of rest from work," said Hans-Juergen Papier, president of the Constitutional Court. "A mere economic interest in revenues and the basic desire of potential shoppers to buy does not justify allowing these shops to be open as an exception."

The protection of Sundays in Germany's *Basic Law* is a holdover from the *Weimar Constitution* of 1919 and can be found in *Article 139*.

The shopping Sundays already planned in Berlin for the Advent season this year will take place, and the ruling will come into effect in 2010.

Trumpet, December 1, 2009—

Germany Reaffirms Sunday Law is a historic day in Germany in more ways than one. Coincident with the enacting of the *Lisbon Treaty/EU Constitution* on December 1, Germany's Constitutional Court has ruled that the nation's capital must, like the rest of the country, abide by the law instituting Sunday as a day "of rest from work and of spiritual improvement" (*Deutsche Welle, December 1*).

Since the war, Berlin had enacted its own legislation allowing 10 shopping Sundays per year. That local ruling is now quashed. Effective from Jan. 1, 2010, Berlin must fall into line with the law institutionalizing Sunday as a day of rest and religious contemplation as contained in Germany's Basic Law.

The actual law establishing Sunday as Germany's weekly day of worship is enshrined in an appendix to the Basic Law under the heading, "*Extracts From the German Constitution of Aug. 11, 1919 [Weimar Constitution]*." There we find, under the subhead "*Religion and Religious Societies*," *Article 139*, which reads: "Sunday and holidays recognized by the state shall remain protected by law as days of rest from work and of spiritual improvement."

Though, under that same section, *Article 137 (1)* states "There shall be no state church," the effect of the Sunday law is to institutionalize Roman Catholicism and its daughter churches as Germany's state religion.

Those aware of the history of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation will see this move by Germany's highest court as one step further toward enforcing Rome's religion, not only as the state religion on Germany, but on the whole European empire enacted by treaty on this infamous day, Dec. 1, 2009.

of the Bible Sabbath and the false foundation upon which the Sunday institution rests. 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 vir-

4 tual 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.”—*5 Testimonies, 711-712.*

Prophecy represents Protestantism as having lamb-like horns, but speaking like a dragon. Already we are beginning to hear the voice of the dragon. There is a satanic force propelling the Sunday movement, but it is concealed. Even the men who are engaged in the work are themselves blinded to the results which will follow their movement.

“Let not the commandment-keeping people of God be silent at this time, as though we gracefully accepted the situation. There is the prospect before us of waging a continuous war, at the risk of imprisonment, of losing property and even life itself, to defend the law of God, which is being made void by the laws of men.”—*Review, January 1, 1889.*

“Already preparations are advancing, and movements are in progress, which will result in making an image to the beast. Events will be brought about in the earth’s history that will fulfill the predictions of prophecy for these last days.”—*Review, April 23, 1889.*

“The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided. [Revelation 13:11-17 quoted.] . .

“This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed. All who prove their loyalty to God by observing His law, and refusing to accept a spurious sabbath, will rank under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and will receive the seal of the living God. Those who yield the truth of heavenly origin and accept the Sunday sabbath, will receive the mark of the beast.”—*7 Bible Commentary, 976.*

“The Word of God plainly declares that His law is to be scorned, trampled upon, by the world; there will be an extraordinary prevalence of iniquity. The professed Protestant world will form a confederacy with the man of sin, and the church and the world will be in corrupt harmony.

“Here the great crisis is coming upon the world. The Scriptures teach that popery is to regain its lost supremacy, and that the fires of persecution will be rekindled through the timeserving concessions of the so-called Protestant world.”—*2 Selected Messages, 367-368.*

“When the legislature frames laws which exalt the first day of the week, and put it in the place of the seventh day, the device of Satan will be perfected.”—*Review, April 15, 1890.*

“History will be repeated. False religion will be exalted. The first day of the week, a common working day, possessing no sanctity whatever, will be set up as was the image at Babylon. All nations and tongues and peoples will be commanded to worship this spurious sabbath. This is Satan’s plan to make of no account the day instituted by God, and given to the world as a memorial of creation.

“The decree enforcing the worship of this day is to go forth to all the world. In a limited degree, it has already gone forth. In several places the civil power is speaking with the voice of a dragon, just as the heathen king spoke to the Hebrew captives.

“Trial and persecution will come to all who, in obedience to the Word of God, refuse to worship this false sabbath. Force is the last resort of every false religion. At first it tries attraction, as the king of Babylon tried the power of music and outward show. If these attractions, invented by men and inspired by Satan, failed to make men worship the image, the hungry flames of the furnace were ready to consume them. So it will be now. The papacy has exercised her power to compel men to obey her, and she will continue to do so. We need the same spirit that was manifested by God’s servants in the conflict with paganism.”—*Signs, May 6, 1897.*

“A time is coming when the law of God is, in a special sense, to be made void in our land. The rulers of our nation will, by legislative enactments, enforce the Sunday law, and thus God’s people be brought into great peril. When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land; and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin.”—*Review, December 18, 1888.*

“The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict, in which all the world will act a part. Men have honored Satan’s principles above the principles that rule in the heavens. They have accepted the spurious sabbath, which Satan has exalted as the sign of his authority. But God has set His seal upon His royal requirement. Each Sabbath institution, both true and false, bears the name of its author, an ineffaceable mark that shows the authority of each.

“The great decision now to be made by every one is, whether he will receive the mark of the beast and his image, or the seal of the living and true God.”—*Signs, March 22, 1910.*

“Sundaykeeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol sabbath. The time will come when this day will be the test, but that time has not come yet.”—*Last Day Events, 224-225.*