

“Watchman, what of the night ?”

*“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!”*

Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

► THIS ISSUE'S READING

THE SUNDAY ISSUE

THE LORD'S DAY ALLIANCE:

RE-EXAMINED

Editor's Preface

We devote this edition of WWN to an updated look at The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States (LDA) and its present influence within the larger context of Sunday legislation. The LDA, first organized in 1888 under the name of The American Sabbath Union, is arguably the most influential inter-denominational organization today promoting social enactment of Sunday rest and observance. For over a century however, its efforts - along with other similar organizations - have failed to produce any Sunday keeping laws of major consequence. Especially since the 1960's, the forces of secularism, multiculturalism, and globalization have been instrumental in restraining or reversing what little legal progress the LDA had earlier achieved.

The ensuing decades have seen little interest or will by the general public and legislators in the United States - indeed in most of the world - to establish Sunday keeping by law. The LDA has not been ignorant of this fact. They, along with other groups traditionally associated with the Sunday legislation movement, have been increasingly downplaying the religious aspect of Sunday-keeping in favor of bolstering the secular benefits of Sunday rest to family and community. It appears that the persistence in framing the issue in this manner is now slowly gaining more attention. Recently, sentiment is growing in various segments of the non-



religious world that since Sunday observance promotes the well-being of all society, perhaps civil legislation should be considered wherever this well-being is either lacking or threatened. This in turn has given fresh impetus to the religious understanding of legalizing Sunday rest as a means of unifying people of faith and then the rest of the world for the peace, prosperity, and security of us all. The "Sunday Sabbath" is again being looked to as the central point anchored in time and space to best accomplish this goal. Attitudes concerning this matter are again shifting favorably in this direction.

Both religious and secular forces appear poised to support the notion with their individual and collective influence and affluence. And though it needs to be emphasized that serious attempts to advance Sunday legislation are still practically nonexistent - despite the frenzied, over-exaggerated, and misplaced zeal of many Seventh-day Adventists over the years in regard to "The National Sunday Law" - it is incumbent, however, upon all of us to take note of this changing outlook and what it may mean in light of the present truth for our time.

"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13: 37).

"SUNDAY ISSUES"

DEVELOPMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

[Note: The following article, posted on the LDA's website, was written by Dr. Rodney L. Petersen. ¹ It appears to be an abridged

synopsis of a book co-authored by him entitled Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture, a collection of 14 essays which includes - among other things within a larger global context discussion - references supporting the idea of supplanting the seventh-day Sabbath with the "Lord's Day" (Sunday). ²

Dr. Petersen is an American scholar in the area of history, ethics, and religious conflict. He currently works as the Executive Director of the Boston Theological Institute, and is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, USA. He serves on the committees and Boards of numerous academic and ecclesiastical organizations including the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the Massachusetts Commission on Christian Unity, and the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States. Editorial comments within the text will be italicized within brackets.]

Reflections: Finding our Voice and our Place

There is a resurgence of interest in Sabbath and Sunday practices in American culture today. And it comes from such disciplines as Health and Psychology, Human Resources, Environmental Studies - as well as from the more expected fields of Spirituality, Theology, and Religion. As the LDA works on the question of how, "Sunday and Sabbath Speak to 21st Century Spirituality and Social Practice," we need to find our voice and our place.

[Notice that it is not just from "the more

expected fields of Spirituality, Theology, and Religion" that the "resurgence of interest in Sabbath and Sunday in American culture today" is coming from. Less expected sources, such as the more secular disciplines mentioned, also have a heightened awareness of the subject and are contributing their input as well to the overall discussion. In light of this development, the LDA (and no doubt other like-minded organizations) are admonished to find their "voice" and "place" within this expanded context.]

Some of the things we can do include supporting others as they discover for the first time, or re-discover, the meaning of Sabbath and the Lord's Day in their lives. This may mean sorting out what we ourselves believe about the Sabbath of Creation, the Mosaic Sabbath, the New Testament Sabbath, or the celebration of the Lord's Day. Second, we can lobby for and practice in our lives and even corporate life the maintenance of a Lord's Day asking, what would Jesus do on this day? Something like this must have been at work in the mind of the late S. Truett Cathy who did so much to model and make possible the practice of Sunday as a Sabbath in his own life and in the lives of others. Third, we can explore how the Sabbath Commandment and its New Testament exhortation find places of integration with all of life, in other words how the Sabbath Command bridges duty to God ("spirituality"), as depicted in the first three Commandments and duty to neighbor ("social practice"), as noted in Com-

mandments Five through Ten. As such, we can explore and find meaningful their integration. After all, is this not where the message of Isaiah 58:6-14 and Luke 4:18-21 take us?

[Accordingly, in order to support others who are discovering or re-discovering "the meaning of Sabbath and the Lord's Day" (i.e. Sunday), the LDA may themselves have to sort out what they "believe about the Sabbath of Creation, the Mosaic Sabbath, the New Testament Sabbath, or the celebration of the Lord's Day." Considering that these designations are usually understood within the stated historical framework of the LDA's "sole purpose ... to maintain and cultivate the first day of the week (Sunday) as a time for rest, worship, Christian education and spiritual renewal" ³, the "support" will undoubtedly be focused largely on that goal. Exhortation to maintain "a Lord's Day", both personally (individually) and corporately (societally), is urged through personal practice and lobbying - an act of influencing or swaying those in positions of power and authority to act decisively in favor of the lobbyist's interests. The example of the late billionaire entrepreneur S. Truett Cathy, an avid Sunday-keeping activist who closed down his chain of "Chick-fil-A" restaurants on Sundays, is cited as a "model {to} make possible" this objective. Finally, the "third" thing advocated that "we can explore," for the most part admirably sets forth the place of the Sabbath Commandment in the setting of the moral law of the Ten Commandments. However, the biblical explora-

tion of the Commandments will recognize that only the true seventh-day Sabbath is the "sign" between the true God and His people - the indicator that He is their sanctifier (see Ezekiel 20:10-12, 19-20). Only through the grace of Christ, "Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28), can we "find meaningful their integration" - but only freely in the private and public lives of genuine believers as revealed in the seventh-day Sabbath's "New Testament exhortation": "There remaineth therefore a keeping of a sabbath to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." (Hebrews 4: 9-10, marginal reading). This is "where the message of Isaiah 58:6-14 and Luke 4: 18-21 take us," passages that say nothing, of course, about Sunday observance.]

As the LDA finds its voice in a society that is hungry for its message it can best do this in alliance with others. For example, we have partnered with the *Academy of Preachers* as young men and women have had the opportunity to preach in preaching festivals associated with our conferences. We can join together with the organization *Blessed Earth*, concerned about the social, personal and mental health benefits of the Fourth Commandment and its implications for the stewardship of the earth. We might also think of working together with *Day1*, the radio and audio company formerly known as "The Protestant Hour." They could highlight our winning sermon contest individual and assist with the distribution of LDA products.

On a more substantive side, we might partner with *REFO500*, the international organization planning for coherent and connective events associated with the significance of the 500th Anniversary of the Luther Reformation. We have much to learn through an exploration of the roots of Sabbath/Sunday thinking in western culture and the points of relationship between Human Rights and the Decalogue. Such could lead to work with the United Nations Advisory Committee on Environmental Sabbath/World Day of Rest. And, there are almost endless possibilities of engagement with the *Labor Sabbath* movement and *Marketplace Ministries*.

In other words, if we look around we might find many who would rally to an alliance of the Lord's Day and its integration of spirituality with social justice, as we find our voice and our place in challenging times.

[These concluding paragraphs reveal further the LDA's perception of the general public's present favorable mood toward its mission. The strategy is to enter into alliance with "others" who will partner with, join together, work together, and engage with them and their "message." Notice that the organizations already listed represent a diverse range of social, political, financial, as well as religious interests, both national and international. It looks like the LDA is stepping up its attempts to take advantage of these more encompassing relationships to rally "many ... to an alliance of the Lord's Day" (Sunday-keeping). Through its lobbying efforts and "the distribution of

LDA products," this organization is aspiring to "find its voice in a society that is hungry for its message." In conjunction with its allies, it is seeking to promote "the Lord's Day (Sunday) and its integration of spirituality with social justice" as the means of finding "{their} voice and {their} place in challenging times." For now, the actions being taken to integrate (unite or combine) spirituality with social justice seem largely well intentioned and positive. The methods being used to advance the cause are largely free of compulsion, coercion, or legal force. Overall, it looks good and no doubt is actually accomplishing some good. But history has shown, time and again, that when religious interests and worldly interests unite and mobilize to support a cause which is essentially religious in nature, those who dissent are ultimately retaliated against. Considering the wide-range of divergent interests that the LDA is joining itself with, these alliances may well be the fertile soil necessary to sow the seeds of religious intolerance and persecution (?).]

Sunday as a Mark of Christian Unity

[Note: This second article, also posted on the LDA's website, was written by Dr. Demetrios E. Tonnias. ⁴ Dr. Tonnias is a Greek Orthodox priest and ecumenical officer of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston. He serves as Dean of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England. While he holds a number of distinguished degrees in theology, Dr. Tonnias specializes in Eastern Christian-Jewish dialogue and

the early church Jewish-Christian Relationship. Presently, he serves on the board of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the inter-religious and Jewish-Christian convening panels of the National Council of Churches, and as a consulting scholar for the International Council of Christians and Jews.]

The Christian Church, from its very beginning, has struggled with the concept of unity. Indeed, within the Pauline corpus we see the many ways in which the Apostle to the Gentiles struggled to keep together his young and fragile network of communities. As the church grew, there arose a variety of challenges, large and small, to threaten its unity. The Orthodox Christian Divine Liturgy bears witness to these challenges in the petitions and prayers, which are offered in the Eucharistic rite. We pray for "the unity of all," "the unity of the faith," for Christ to "reunite those separated" and to "unite us all to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and the Cup in the communion of the one Holy Spirit." We recite the Nicene Creed with its portentous closing phrases stating belief in "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church," its sacred claim to "confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins", and its exultation of Sunday as the Lord's Day and the gift of resurrection with the statement "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the ages to come."

[The first thing Dr. Tonnias establishes as he begins his essay on Christian unity is the supposed link between the first century

("from its beginning") Christian Church and the "Orthodox Divine Liturgy." The Orthodox Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church is basically its worship service, which is primarily an "Eucharistic rite" (a transubstantiated view of the Lord's Supper), and is for all practical purposes the general equivalent of the Roman Catholic Mass. The significance of this assertion lies embedded in the dogma of "Apostolic Succession"; the claim, adhered to by practically all the Orthodox/Catholic type of churches, that an unbroken, authoritative, and infallible chain of faith and doctrine has been passed down from the Twelve Apostles through their successors, the duly ordained bishops. This concept bestows upon the teachings, practices, and traditions of the post-Apostolic era a level of truth equal to the Bible and therefore views it as another parallel source of divine inspiration. This is an important point that we dare not overlook. As Christendom increasingly looks to human leadership in its longing for guidance and "visible" unity, those churches which profess to embody and wield this extra-biblical authority are enjoying a resurgent popularity and respect from the rest of the Christian denominations - and even to some degree, throughout non-Christian circles. The vaunted promises of certitude, order, strength, and unity proclaimed through this hierarchical form of church governance is becoming more attractive and desirable to Protestants and other non-Catholic groups who are envious to procure for their churches the same supposed benefits. Notice that along with the various prayers for

unity in the "Liturgy," the "Nicene Creed" is recited. This creed is widely accepted within these communions as a statement of "The Apostolic Faith" and carries the connotation of scriptural authority. Each phrase of this creed has specific theological meaning which must (finally) be understood as expounded upon by the bishops. Thus, the creed's closing statement "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the ages to come," is interpreted as the "exultation of Sunday as the Lord's Day."]

The Divine Liturgy is, most certainly, a fitting place to offer such prayers and confessions of faith, for the preeminent celebration of the Liturgy takes place on Sunday. From the moment the myrrh bearers found Christ's empty tomb, Sunday was known as ἡ Κυριακή ἡμέρα - the Lord's Day. By definition, each and every Sunday is a call to Christian unity since it is on this day that we are called to communion with the Lord, by the Lord. In spite of all of the challenges that have tugged at the threads of Christian unity, the Lord's Day remains the one, unassailable marker of Christian unity since it is on this day that all of us, despite our many differences, gather together as believers in Christ.

[The only Bible truth found in this paragraph is the fact that our Lord's resurrection did occur on Sunday ("early the first day of the week"- Mark 16: 9). The Greek phrase (ἡ Κυριακή ἡμέρα) translated "the Lord's day" is used by the Bible only once in Revelation 1: 10, which was written around 96 A.D. Nowhere in this text, or in

*all the rest of Scripture, is this Greek phrase identified as the first day of the week (Sunday), nor is it used in reference to the day Christ rose from the dead. If Christ "is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12: 8), then "the Lord's day" that John "was in the Spirit on" was probably the Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week. Whatever the case, since "by definition" there is absolutely no scriptural authority for equating this text with Sunday, then the claim that "every Sunday is a call to Christian unity .. to communion with the Lord by, the Lord ... the one, unassailable marker of Christian unity since it is on this day that all of us ... gather together as believers in Christ," is completely baseless and false. Only by appealing to the post-Apostolic tradition can these declarations be established.] » *To be Continued.**

1. Rodney L. Petersen, *Reflections: Finding our Voice and Place* (Atlanta, GA: The Lord's Day Alliance of the U.S., September 22, 2014), www.ldausa.org/lda/reflections/

2. Edward O'Flaherty, Rodney L. Petersen, Timothy A. Norton, *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Publishing Co., September 7, 2010), 19.

3. The Lord's Day Alliance of the U.S., *About: Our History* (Atlanta, GA: lda.org), www.lda.org/lda/about/

4. Rev. Dr. Demetrios Tonias, *Sunday as a Mark of Christian Unity* (Atlanta, GA: The Lord's Day Alliance of the U.S., April 18, 2015), www.ldausa.org/lda/sunday-as-a-mark-of-christian-unity/

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

BEYOND BELIEF (?) The cover story for the March 21, 2013, issue of the Adventist Review, dealt with the ongoing concern over why those who hold membership in

the SDA Church leave. A new study conducted in 2011 revealed that more were now exiting over doctrinal matters rather than personal problems. According to a SDA pastor who helped initiate the study, one of the two subjects that he gets asked about most is the doctrine of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. "The mistreatment they got because they were questioning" he said, was "one of the main underlying factors" for their leaving.

If the truth on the sanctuary was being presented in the advancing light of Scripture, how problematic would this be?

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