

“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

► (Conclusion) ◄

Editor’s Preface

(With this publication of WWN, we continue and conclude our present analysis on “The Sunday Issue.” As previously noted in the June / July edition, The Lord’s Day Alliance of the United States (LDA), along with other Sunday promoting organizations, appear to be riding a current growing tide of favorable social, public, and religious opinion and cooperation on this topic. To illustrate the point, we drew from two recent “Featured Articles” posted on the LDA’s website as examples. The first article approaches Sunday observance from a more social / civic benefit perspective while the second one concentrates almost exclusively on the religious aspect. Both of these views, most notably when blended with one another, represent an outlook on Sunday that is becoming more palatable to a growing segment of the populace frustrated by the rigors of secular society. *Note: The text below begins where WWN #11 left off. Comments by the present Editor are italicized within brackets).

Sunday as a Mark of Christian Unity

by Dr. Demetrios E. Tonias *(Continued >>)*

There were always differences about days and dates in the Christian world. There were divisions surrounding the dating of Pascha from the



earliest years of Christianity. The Puritans rejected the commemoration of the birth of Christ on December 25 as unscriptural. The Lord's Day, however, as a time of communal, Christian gathering has never been in question. The commemoration of the Lord's Day is an historical reality that bears witness to the centrality of the Resurrection and all that this event meant and signifies for the cosmos. Therefore, what better marker of Christian unity can we have? Indeed, what stronger case can one make for the significance of Sunday as a hallmark of Christian unity than the understanding that Christians throughout the centuries have conceived of this day as a day of new creation, an eighth day set apart from all others.

[The "differences about days and dates ... from the earliest years of Christianity," illustrates how soon and fast errors of this nature began creeping into the Church after the first century. Sunday as the Lord's day, the new "Sabbath," was one of those errors. The assertion that "The Lord's Day (meaning Sunday) ... as a time of communal, Christian gathering has never been in question," is simply a complete distortion of the historical record. Agitation on this "question" has continued down through the centuries even into our time! Much of the falsehood surrounding this subject is embodied in the post-Apostolic tradition and it is from this source that "the commemoration of the Lord's Day (Sunday) {as} an historical reality" comes from, not the Bible. Scripture indeed "bears witness to the centrality of the Resurrection" and

its glorious meaning for all; but it was only through the writings of the 'Church Fathers' that Sunday as a "marker of Christian unity" was "conceived ... as a day of new creation, an eighth day set apart from all others." Again, the Bible associates none of these eisegetical teachings and practices with the resurrection of Jesus.]

For the Orthodox Christian mind, this historical relationship is critical to our understanding of Christian unity. For the Orthodox Christian, unity implies a transcendent ecumenicity - an ecumenicity that exists throughout time and space. It is a communion of all believers, at all times. Put simply, nothing in the calendar unites us like Sunday. It is a day that changed the world on the very first Sunday and, I would argue, every Sunday after the first. The world was transfigured through a myriad of Sunday's when Christians gathered in communion and heard the Gospel message. It was on Sunday when Christians learned to love their enemies and care for those in need. It was on Sunday when Christians first met to share a meal of love they called by the Greek word ἀγάπη. It was, is, and shall always be on Sunday when the best hope for humanity shines forth from churches large and small and the "Eucharist after the Eucharist" travels forth from the four walls of the church and into the home and homeless shelter, the playground and the hospital, the wedding feast and the wake.

[The author now moves on to further elaborate upon how the principle of Apos-

tolic Succession is understood by "the Orthodox Christian mind" (this would include all the Orthodox/Catholic type of churches) in its application to the topic under discussion. The "historical relationship" which links the resurrection of Christ with the unbiblical practices and teachings of the post-Apostolic Tradition promoting Sunday worship is now put forth as a basis for uniting the "communion of all believers, at all times." This "transcendent ecumenicity ... that exists throughout time and space" is stated as meaning: "Put simply, nothing in the calendar unites us like Sunday." Next, by emphasizing the "time" of the resurrection (Sunday) as "a day that changed the world," the conclusion is drawn that "every Sunday" thereafter transfigures "the world" and proceeds to list how this was accomplished "through a myriad of Sunday's." According to this reasoning, all the events that bear witness to the Christian Faith appear to have taken place on Sunday. The implication seems to be that these events are dependent on, and at least in some manner subservient to, this specific time (Sunday), because: "It was, is, and shall always be on Sunday when the best hope for humanity shines forth from churches large and small."]

It is human nature to think parochially - in terms of our own family, our own exclusive church, our own unique religious entity. In this historical light, however, Sunday takes on a new meaning. Sunday worship is something more than simply what our parents and grandparents did. Sunday worship is even more than what our local

faith community has done. Sunday worship is something that *all Christians*, at all times have celebrated. When we gather on Sunday the unity we achieve takes us back in time, across the ages to the earliest believer; it also moves us forward in time to embrace generations not yet born. In this way, the spiritual unity we have thus achieved possesses an eschatological character. The unity to which we bear witness and which we embody is a manifestation of the kingdom to which we all aspire.

[*The argument for Sunday progresses further by moving the Apostolic Succession concept from the past to present, and now into the future. Again, "in this historical light (i.e., the post-Apostolic Tradition), Sunday worship is something that all Christians, at all times have celebrated." Therefore from "the earliest believer ... forward in time to embrace generations not yet born ... the spiritual unity ... possesses an eschatological character." This particular understanding can be summed up in Dr. Tonia's own words: "When we gather on Sunday the unity we achieve ... is a manifestation of the kingdom to which we all aspire." The fallacy with this reasoning - indeed with the major presupposition of this article - is the foundational error that from the resurrection of Christ forward, Sunday - the first day of the original creation week - is now to be recognized and honored as the day of re-creation, "a day of new creation, an eighth day set apart from all others." All of this, as noted earlier, has no valid basis in Scripture, which clearly outlines the true significance of the*

timing of Christ's resurrection. The Bible states: "Christ our passover {was} sacrificed for us ... according to the scriptures; And ... he was buried, and ... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Corinthians 5: 7; 15: 3-4, emphasis added). Our Lord was crucified on Passover "according to the scriptures" (Nisan 14, 1st day - Leviticus 23: 5 - which in that year, 31 A.D., fell on Friday, "the preparation" - Luke 23: 54). The next day, Saturday (Nisan 15, 2nd day, which was the beginning of the seven day feast of unleavened bread and an annual sabbath day - Leviticus 23: 6-7), our Lord lay "buried" in the tomb resting from His "servile work" of sacrificial redemption accomplished for us by His death. The day following, Sunday (Nisan 16, 3rd day, which was the day "a sheaf of the firstfruits" offering of the early barley crop was waved "before the Lord" in anticipation of the harvest to follow - Leviticus 23: 9-11; compare with Joshua 5: 10-12), our Lord rose from the dead "the third day according to the scriptures ... and become the firstfruits of them that slept ... Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15: 4, 20-23, emph. added; compare with Colossians 1: 18 and Revelation 1: 5). The anti-typical meaning of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is specifically linked in the New Testament to the typical fulfillment of the first three days of the Passover/Unleavened Bread festal season. This line of fulfillment not only pinpoints the typical/anti-typical importance of the meaning of the events, but also their timing. Thus, the biblical significance of the

timing of the resurrection occurring on "the first day of the week" (Sunday) is not that the first day of the week, in and of itself, was recognized as having any import. Rather, it is in the fact that, "according to the scriptures," it was "the third day" of the Paschal season that year (31 A.D.). The first followers of Christ, most of whom were Jewish, clearly understood this through their knowledge and familiarity with the Hebrew ceremonial services. The traditions that have come down to our time, accepted and promoted as inspirationally authoritative, completely replace this (and other) biblical truths with fanciful, man-made, theories. In order for "unity" to be a genuine "manifestation of the kingdom to which we all aspire," it has to be built on truth, pure and unadulterated - not on wrested interpretations of Scripture blended with pagan ideas.]

In order to fully appreciate Sunday as a mark of Christian unity we must expand our definition of unity. We must all strive for a Christian community - one throughout the ages - for such a transcendent unity yields many fruits. If we are in union with the earliest Christians then we will share in their zeal. If we are in unity with the martyrs then we partake of their devotion. If we are in unity with those compassionate Christians then we feel and can bestow their healing touch. When we assemble in faith on Sundays, we gather not simply with other parishioners in a local place of worship, but with Christians throughout every land and all the ages - and there is no greater evidence of unity

than this. In our century, as with its predecessors, challenges large and small threaten Sunday. However, when we stand in faith, as members of a Church beyond all churches, we reclaim Sunday for the God who gave it to us.

[In closing, the article reiterates the need to "expand our definition of unity," for it is in this manner that we can "fully appreciate Sunday as a mark" of this unity. The "Christian community (church) - one throughout the ages (transcendently universal, 'one body ... one faith' - see Ephesians 4: 4-5)," is connected with a series of virtuous benefits - "fruits" - which consolidate within Sunday worship and therefore culminate in unity "with Christians throughout every land and all the ages." Yet again, Dr. Tonia reiterates the central role that he believes Sunday observance and worship occupies in Christian theology and experience. Sunday is consistently presented throughout this exposition as a divinely ordained institution, a rallying point which promotes and displays the unity within the entire universal Christian community - past, present, and future. Accordingly Sunday, as the chronological and spatial "marker" of this unity, implicitly becomes an inseparable part of the Church's existence. The emphasis between the symbiotic relationship of Sunday observance and the faith, practice and worship of the Christian Church is repeatedly stressed. In fact, the proposition that Christian unity is explicitly defined by this relationship is the entire premise of the essay. This is an important point to note, espe-

cially as we recall that the author of this article is a Greek Orthodox priest and understands all this within the context of "the Eucharistic rite." In the Orthodox churches, in basic concord with the Roman Catholic Church, this "rite" forms the very center and heart of its faith and worship. And since, as stated earlier in the article, "the preeminent celebration of the Liturgy (i.e. 'the Eucharistic rite') takes place on Sunday ... 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 summary "challenges large and small (that) threaten Sunday" are threats to the Church and its unity. While the admonition to "stand in faith, as members of a Church beyond all churches {to} reclaim Sunday for the God who gave it to us" is presently devoid of any call for political / civil assistance, post-Apostolic history reveals that the "Church" was not always so benign in the face of such "challenges." Often, when opportunity arose, it did not hesitate to use civil coercive force in an attempt to crush anything that was perceived as a threat to its "unity." Bible prophecy reveals that shortly before the second coming of Christ, which is looming ahead in our near future, such opportunity will again arise and plunge the entire world into a massive deception over these principles which ultimately center in worship (see Revelation 13: 1 - 14: 13; 17: 1 - 19: 3.] ❖ GLP

"SUNDAY ISSUES" DEVELOPMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS - (conclusion)

The presentation of this topic was initial-

ly entered into with a certain degree of reluctance. The Adventist community is so rife with misguided excitement over "The National Sunday Law" that any discussion involving "Sunday" runs the risk of triggering a flurry of ill-considered responses. Much of this is based upon a misinterpretation of the Ellen G. White writings which fails to take into consideration "time and place" within the proper context. ¹ Yet, in spite of this problem, we believe the contemporary tone of society is now generally open and favorable toward the comprehension and contemplation of "Sunday rest." The embracing of the personal, social, and economic benefits of such rest has also boosted the religious appeal. Presently, this aspect is what we need to rightly understand and consider.

The article by Dr. Demetrios E. Tonnias clearly shows that the Orthodox / Catholic type of churches, in particular, are promoting Sunday as a type of 'glue' that unites "all Christians" together in faith and worship; the central element of which is the celebration of the Eucharist. In these churches, the Lord's Supper is a transubstantiated sacrifice of Christ effected by an ordained priest who receives this conferred power through a properly ordained bishop. The authority for this false, blasphemous system of worship, which puts a counterfeit sacrifice and ministration of human priests on earth in the place of Christ's one true sacrifice and His High priestly ministration in heaven, is not derived from Scripture but from the post-Apostolic tradition of Apostolic Succession. The bonds between Sunday ob-

servance and the Eucharistic rite, along with the deceptive dangers it poses as we near the final crisis, was recognized and expounded upon by Elder William Grotheer years before his death in 2009. In light of the current situation, particularly the growing willingness by many to accept the authority of Tradition and Succession over the Bible, some selected excerpts on this from the 2003 Encyclical Letter by Pope John Paul II entitled "*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*," as quoted in WWN, Issue # XXXVI - 10 (03), will prove highly informative at this time: ²

"'Visible unity' not only involves the doctrine of the nature of the Eucharist itself, whether a commemoration as in 'the Lord's Supper,' or a transubstantiation as in the Roman Eucharist; but also the doctrine of 'the sacrament of Holy Orders.' This John Paul II made very clear. He stated:"

"Lastly the [Roman] Church is apostolic in the sense that she 'continues to be taught, sanctified and guided by the Apostles until the Lord's return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops assisted by priests, in union with the Successor of Peter, the Church's supreme pastor.' Succession to the Apostles in the pastoral mission necessarily entails the sacrament of Holy Orders, that is, the uninterrupted sequence, from the very beginning, of valid Episcopal ordination. This is essential for the Church to exist in a proper and full sense.

"The Eucharist also expresses this sense of apostolicity. As the Second Vatican

Council teaches, 'the faithful join in the offering of the Eucharist by virtue of their royal priesthood,' yet it is the ordained priest who, 'acting in the person of Christ, brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people.' For this reason, the Roman Missal prescribes that only the priest should recite the Eucharist Prayer, while the people participate in faith and in silence. (par. 28 ...)

"The ministry of priests who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders, in the economy of salvation chosen by Christ, makes clear that the Eucharist which they celebrate is a gift which radically transcends the power of the assembly and is in any event essential for validly linking the Eucharistic consecration to the sacrifice of the Cross and to the Last Supper. The assembly gathered together for the celebration of the Eucharist, if it is to be a truly Eucharistic assembly, absolutely requires the presence of an ordained priest as its president. *[On the other hand, the community is by itself incapable of providing an ordained minister. This minister is a gift which the assembly receives through episcopal succession going back to the Apostles. It is the Bishop who, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, makes a new presbyter by conferring upon him the power to consecrate the Eucharist. Consequently, "the Eucharistic mystery cannot be celebrated in any community except by an ordained priest, as the Fourth Lateran Council expressly taught".]* (Par. 29; emphasis his...)

"Citing a more recent Encyclical, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), he stated, 'I drew particular attention to the Sunday Eucha-

rist, emphasizing its effectiveness for building communion ... Precisely through sharing in the Eucharist, the Lord's Day also becomes the Day of the Church, when she can effectively exercise her role as the sacrament of unity.'" [Par. 41; *emph. his*].

1. (An excellent commentary on this matter is found on our partner website under the following link:) [http://www.adventistlaymen.com/Special Topical Pages/NATIONAL_SUNDAY_LAW.htm](http://www.adventistlaymen.com/Special%20Topical%20Pages/NATIONAL_SUNDAY_LAW.htm) For those without web access, send a S.A.S.E. to our Postal address for a paper copy.

2. William H. Grotheer, "Watchman, what of the night?" (Ozone, AR: Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., October 2003), 2, 6.

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

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