

## Ask The Tennessee Mockingbird



by June Griffin

**"She dipped her pen in controversy"**

juncture it was recorded that 5,000 Southern soldiers were converted and their singing of hymns echoed over the hills whenever there was a service or lull in battle.

Today, the Mockingbird turns Chaplain to look at the root causes of our nation's run of losses - from integrity to temperance to economy. During the Civil War, Confederate President Jeff Davis, realizing that his troops were given to loose living and debauchery, ordered out Chaplains.

One such gentleman, Chaplain Bennett, writing around 1877, in his book, *The Great Revival In The Southern Army*, sat down the four sins of the Army - Sabbath desecration, profanity, drunkenness, and gambling. The preaching against these sins brought such a revival that at one

These four sins were thundered against by other evangelists and pastors, including the famous Sam Jones for which Captain Ryman, being converted from gambling and alcohol, built the Union Gospel Tabernacle (Ryman Auditorium) so Sam Jones wouldn't have to preach on the street. Further along, J. DeWitt Talmage, the famous Pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York, used as the inseam of his preaching, admonitions against these four sins of man.

Dwight L. Moody, in 1890, said: "I believe that the Sabbath question today

is a vital one for the whole country. It is the burning question of the present time. If you give up the Sabbath the church goes; if you give up the church the home goes, and if the home goes the nation goes. That is the direction in which we are traveling." Indeed, we have 'come a long way, baby.' Our grandfathers called it The Sabbath, our Fathers called it the Lord's Day, we call it Sunday and our children call it The Weekend.

If one thinks that keeping the Lord's Day is a modern innovation, he is sadly mistaken. After the birth of the Saviour, as early as the fifth century AD up until 1980, all over the civilized world, laws and edicts ordered the keeping of the First Day of the Week to honor God and the resurrection of Christ. For example, under Alfred the Great in 871, a revival of the Commandments and the Golden Rule furnished this Law. "If anyone engage

## Root Causes

in Sunday marketing, let him forfeit the chattel, and twelve oxen (192 pence), among the Danes, and thirty shillings among the English." Recognizing God as the Creator, Aelfric, in 995, issued the following:

24. Sunday is very solemnly to be revered, therefore we command that no man dare on that holy day to apply to any worldly work, unless for the preparing of his meat; or except it happen to anyone that he must of necessity journey...On Sunday, God first created the light, and on that day he sent to the people of Israel, in the desert, heavenly bread; and on that day he rose from death, when he before, with his own will, had suffered death for the salvation of mankind, and on that day he sent the Holy Ghost into his disciples."

All through the ages, dozens of laws and ordinances, with attendant penalties, demanded that this day be counted holy. Let ignorance say that these were merely English innovations under a State Church. Far from it. The first order of the Pilgrims was to institute Sabbath ordinances with stiff penalties. The Virginia, Carolina, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New Haven, Connecticut, Plymouth colonies all had prohibitions against Sabbath desecration. The Province of Pennsylvania in 1700-01 passed a general law under William Penn, forbidding servile work, the

servicing of civil process, public drinking-houses; the Massachusetts Bay Colony, New Netherlands Colony (New York)...1834, Maryland; 1843, Alabama; 1848, South Carolina; 1848, Iowa; 1850, Arkansas; 1854, Missouri...on to Minnesota, 1861-New York; then Texas, Georgia, and in 1888 the supreme Court said: "At common law Sunday was dies non juridicus, and no strictly judicial act could be performed upon that day, and this was recognized in the Judiciary Act, which expressly excluded Sundays in the computation of the ten days within which supersedeas could be obtained."\*

Even after the heinous and lawlessness of the 60's, the supreme Court held fast to Sunday closing laws by stating: "Sunday Closing Laws go far back into American history, having been brought to the colonies with a background of English legislation dating to the thirteenth century...Almost every State in our country presently has some type of Sunday regulations and over forty possess a relatively comprehensive system.

"It would scarcely be asked of a Court, in what professes to be a Christian land, to declare a law unconstitutional because it requires rest from labor on Sunday (except works of necessity and charity), and thereby promotes the cause of Christianity...If the Christian religion is, inci-

dentally or otherwise benefited or fostered by having this day of rest, as it undoubtedly is, there is all the more reason for the enforcement of laws that help to preserve it. Whilst Courts have generally sustained Sunday laws as "civil regulations," their decisions will have no less weight if they are shown to be in accordance with divine law as well as human." And despite the invasion of the lawlessness of courts and universities, up until 1980, 41 States had some type of restriction on Sunday activities.

Oh, how wise we have become! How lofty! To look down on ancient wisdom, even on Moses and Jesus Himself and decide we can do "every man what is right in his own eyes." Well, we will see whether the God of our Fathers is pleased with our ways and we will see if those who keep the Sabbath are prospered, who haven't run out to pick up a few things at the market on Sunday, or taken it to be their day instead of the Lord's Day, we will see how profitable it is and see if He will not put a difference between those who fear Him and those whose belly is their god.

In the words of a little song: "Once children played so still while Sabbath prayers were heard, Sobs of repentant ones whose hearts were deeply stirred, Now at McDonald's Sunday's just another word... Shame, shame, shame on America..."

\*Some quotes lifted from *The Sabbath And The Lord's Day* by Charles A. Weisman, Permission granted.



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