

# A HISTORY OF THE SABBATH AND SUNDAY



The Age of Catholic Christianity



The Age of Imperial Christianity



The Age of Christendom



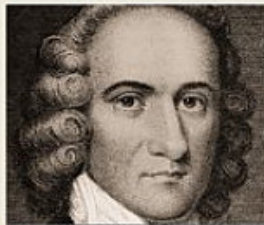
The Age of Christendom



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JOHN KIESZ



# A HISTORY OF THE SABBATH AND SUNDAY

This book is dedicated to all lovers of TRUTH.

*“If ye continue in my word . . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” — our Lord and Savior.*

By John Kiesz



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# PART I

# SABBATH HISTORY THROUGH THE AGES

## Origin of the Sabbath

The Sabbath question has been of concern to mankind in general throughout the religious history of the human race. The Creator Himself, after six days of labor, rested on the seventh day of the week (**Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 31:17**). The weekly cycle, measured by the Sabbath at the end of the week, is the oldest division of time (**Genesis 8:10, 29:27**). Although there have been eight and ten-day cycles introduced by some groups over the millennia, the weekly division of time has been the general rule, especially among all Semitic races. Of one of these groups Professor A. H. Sayce says:

“The Sabbath-rest was a Babylonian, as well as a Hebrew, institution. Its origin went back to pre-Semitic days, and the very name, *Sabbat*, by which it was known in Hebrew, was of Babylonian origin. In the cuneiform tablets of the *Sabattu* is described as a ‘day of rest for the soul,’ and in spite of the fact that the word was of genuinely Semitic origin, it was derived by the Assyrian scribes from two Sumerian or pre-Semitic words, *sa* and *bat*, which meant respectively ‘heart’ and ‘ceasing.’ The Sabbath was also known, at all events in Accadian times, as a ‘dies nefastus,’ a day on which certain work was forbidden to be done, and an old list of Babylonian

festivals and fast-days tells us that on the seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days each month the Sabbath-rest had to be observed” (*The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 74, 1895).

Secular and sacred history reveal that the Sabbath was observed from very ancient times. Although not mentioned by name, the Sabbath was kept by the ancient patriarch Abraham, as seen from his complete obedience to his Maker. “Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (**Genesis 26:5**). Abraham lived at approximately the same time as Hammurabi, the founder of the Old Babylonian Empire, who has by historians been called the Babylonian Moses because he promulgated a code of laws which in some respects were the same as the Mosaic code for the Hebrews.

What the Children of Israel practiced in respect to Sabbath-keeping while in Egyptian bondage is not recorded. We do know that they did not lose sight of the righteous principles of the Most High, as is evidenced when the Hebrew midwives were asked to kill the newly-born babes. They refused because they “feared God” (**Exodus 1:17**). We also know that on their way to Mount Sinai, before Israel ever received the Tables of Stone and various other laws, statutes, and judgments (**Exodus 16:1-29**), they were reminded to keep the Sabbath as well as other commandments and laws. When in the Fourth Commandment they were asked to “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” it definitely indicated that they should observe that with which there had been an acquaintance previously.

The Jewish historian Josephus refers to the Sabbath institution, not as something that originated for them at Mount Sinai, but as something in effect from the very beginning of time, in these words:

“Moses says that in just six days the world and all that is therein was made. And that the seventh day was a rest and a release from the labor of such operations. WHENCE it is that we celebrate a rest from our labor on that day, and call it the Sabbath; which word denotes rest in the Hebrew tongue (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Section 1).

When we leave the books of Moses, in six successive books of the Bible, for a period of about five hundred years, the Sabbath is not mentioned. Nevertheless, idolatry and Sabbath breaking were some of the

besetting sins of Israel, which finally, in the days of the prophet Jeremiah, caused them to be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon for a period of seventy years (**Jeremiah 17:20-27, 25:8-10; Ezekiel 20:23-25**).

Upon their return from the Babylonian captivity, when some of the folks in Judah became negligent in Sabbath-keeping, Nehemiah contended with the nobles and said, “What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath” (**Nehemiah 13:17, 18**).

The next period in Hebrew history which reveals their attitudes toward Sabbath-keeping is the Maccabean age. Under the reign of the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes, about 175-164 B.C., the Jews were greatly oppressed during a portion of that time. He wrote to this whole kingdom that all should be one people, and all should leave their laws in favor of his, with which all the heathens agreed. Even many of the Israelites consented to his religion, sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the Sabbath. But the greater part of the Jews remained faithful to their God, for which they were persecuted. Many lost their lives because they would not consent to profane the Sabbath. In fact, by that time they had already loaded the Sabbath with many rigorous and burdensome ordinances, so much so that they would not even defend themselves against their enemies on the Sabbath day (I Maccabees, chapters 1, 2, 9, and II Maccabees, chapters 5, 6, 8).

When in history we arrive at the conclusion of the Old Covenant and the ushering in of the New, we observe that the Jewish people were extremely strict in the matter of Sabbath-keeping and their various man-made traditions, which brought them into conflict with the One who arrived to be Israel’s Messiah.

### **History of the Sabbath in the Gospels**

During the centuries immediately preceding the Messiah’s first appearance, Sabbath-keeping had become a “mark” or “sign” of distinction between the Jews and the surrounding nations, which was a peculiar symbol of loyalty toward their God Yah. As previously mentioned, by the time the “Lord of the Sabbath” (**Mark 2:28**) arrived upon the scene of

outstanding episodes, the Sabbath had become a central figure of their formalism. The Pharisees had become the leaders of their traditions and commandments, which in many instances were in conflict with commandments of the Creator.

And since the Messiah came to restore primitive religious principles, and to remove formalistic rubbish, among other things, the Sabbath became a point of controversy. Not that He came to do away with the Law of God, or the Sabbath (**Matthew 5:17-20**), but He did teach and practice acts of mercy and works of necessity, no matter what day of the week (**Matthew 12:1-13; Luke 6:1-11**). He was a regular attendant at Sabbath services, and of the opening of His ministry, we read:

“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read” (**Luke 4:14-16**).

If we look at the prophetic Word as history foretold, we will notice that according to Isaiah, the gospel prophet, the new Gentile converts were to observe the New Covenant and to keep the Sabbath (**Isaiah, chapter 56**). This was to be in the time when the Father’s house was not considered for the Jews only (as was the case under the Old Covenant), but when His “house shall be called a house of prayer for *all* people.”

### **History of the Sabbath in the Acts of the Apostles**

The Book of Acts is the inspired source of apostolic church history. Therein we find that every congregation which is mentioned was founded by Sabbath-keeping apostolic missionaries. That the apostolic church did observe the Sabbath, as well as all the other precepts of the Law, and-tits of no doubt. The early Christians were not accused of violating the Sabbath. Acts, from the tenth chapter forward, is not the history of the Jewish converts only, but largely of Gentiles as well.

The thread of Sabbath history in the apostolic church is found mainly in the record of Paul’s missionary labors. In his first missionary journey, with his companion Barnabas, Paul came to Antioch in Pisidia, in A.D. 45,

and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. By invitation of the leaders, Paul delivered a message, proving that Jesus (Yahshua) is the Messiah. Of what followed immediately upon the conclusion of that service, we read:

“And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next Sabbath came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God” (**Acts 13:42-44**).

Here would have been a remarkable opportunity to mention that the Sabbath had been changed, and that Paul would preach to them the next day, Sunday. But this was not the case. There was a continued and habitual recognition and observance of the Sabbath by both the Jewish and Gentile worshippers.

About A.D. 51, the apostles assembled at Jerusalem to consider the question of circumcision. This was a subject apart from the Ten Commandment Law. Their decision was:

“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day” (**Acts 15:19-21**).

The reason for the proposed course was that the newly converted Gentiles could hear the preaching and receive further instructions in the synagogues “every Sabbath day.” In other words, the Gentiles did attend services on the seventh day of the week at that time.

When Paul and Silas received a call to come to Macedonia, and when they came to Philippi, they looked for a place to worship on the Sabbath day. They went out by a riverside and met with a group of women who held a prayer service at that place (**Acts 16:12, 13**).



“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures . . . And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few” (**Acts 17:1-4**).

This was the origin of the Thessalonian church. Besides the few Jews who received the gospel there through the preaching and teaching of the apostle Paul, there was a great multitude of Greeks (Gentiles) who met for services on the Sabbath day. This church became the followers of the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God in Judea (**I Thessalonians 2:14,1:7, 8**).

From Thessalonica Paul went to Berea, Athens and Corinth. At Corinth he found a certain Jew named Aquilla, with his wife, Priscilla, with whom he then lived and worked for a year and a half, and raised up the Corinthian Church of God, which was composed mainly of Greeks (Gentiles). “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (**Acts 18:1-4, 11**).

In one of His last prophetic discourses to His disciples, the Messiah told them to pray that their flight from Jerusalem and Judea would be neither “in the winter,” nor “on the Sabbath day” (**Matthew 24:15-20**). He had reference to the time when Jerusalem was to be destroyed by the Roman general Titus, in A.D. 70. In the fall of Jerusalem few, if any, Christians perished, because they followed the instructions of their Leader when they fled to the mountains beyond Jordan, to a place called Pella.

### **Sabbath History of the First and Second Centuries**

About ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the apostle Paul was accused by the Jewish leaders of being a “pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (**Acts 24:5**). Of those early Christian believers, including those who fled to Pella, the historian Hugh Smith says:

“The first Christian church established at Jerusalem by apostolic authority became in its doctrine and practice a model for the greater part of those founded in the first century. . . . These Judaizing Christians were first known by the outside world as ‘Nazarenes.’ . . . All Christians agreed in

celebrating the seventh day of the week in conformity to the Jewish converts” (*History of the Christian Church*, pp. 50, 51, 69).

The learned Gieseler explicitly testifies: “While the Jewish Christians of Palestine, who kept the whole Jewish law, celebrated of course all the Jewish festivals, the heathen converts observed only the Sabbath, and, in remembrance of the closing scenes of our Savior’s life, the Passover, though without the Jewish superstitions. Besides these, the Sunday, as the day of our Savior’s resurrection, was devoted to religious worship” (*Church History, Apostolic Age to A.D. 70, Section 29*)

“The Jewish converts, or, as they were afterwards called, the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church, soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes, that from all the various religions of polytheism enlisted under the banner of Christ . . . . The Nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem to a little town of Pella beyond Jordan, where that ancient church languished above sixty years in solitude and obscurity” (Gibbons’ *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Volume 1, chapter 15).

“For fifty years after St. Paul’s life, a curtain hangs over the church, through which we vainly strive to look; and when at last the curtain rises, about A.D. 120, with the writings of the earliest Church Fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul” (*The Story of the Christian Church*, p. 41, by Jesse L. Hurlbut).

It was during this interval of obscurity in the history of the early church, that the “falling away” from the apostolic faith commenced (**Acts 20:29, 30; II Thessalonians 2:1-7**). By the middle of the second century the church had altered its course and practices so much that it was hardly recognizable as the church founded by the Messiah and His apostles. Of this James Wharey says:

“. . . when the heathen converts were received in the church, it was natural they should bring with them some taint of their old philosophy, and former superstitions; and some fondness for the rites and ceremonies of their idolatrous worship . . . . Indeed we shall find, that when Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, and took the place of paganism, it assumed, in a great degree, the forms and rites of paganism,

and participated in no small measure of its spirit also. Christianity as it existed in the dark ages, might be termed, without much impropriety of language, *baptized paganism*” (*Sketches of Church History*, p. 23, Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1840).

In Justin Martyr’s time, less than fifty years from the apostolic age, the communion cup was mixed with water and a portion of the elements sent to the absent. The Lord’s Supper began to be administered to infants, and the sign of the cross was introduced. Among the many other elements that entered the picture was the commencement of observing, or at least holding services on, the first day of the week. Mosheim and others indicate that meetings were held on both days.

The Sabbath had been a prominent feature in the Jewish creed and practice, and since much bitter prejudice grew up between the pagan converts and the Jewish elements in the church, the heathen element gradually gained control, and succeeded in effacing much of what they considered Judaistic. The fact that Justin Martyr and others began to press their antinomian theories shows that the Sabbath was yet an institution which had a strong hold on the church, even on the Gentile converts. The Sabbath was not discarded during apostolic days.

“But if some, through weak-mindedness, wish to observe such institutions as were given by Moses (from which they expect some virtue, but which we believe were appointed by reason of the hardness of the people’s hearts), along with their hope in this Christ, and the eternal and natural acts of righteousness and piety, yet choose to live with the Christians and the faithful, as I said before, not inducing them either to be circumcised like themselves, or to keep the Sabbath, or to observe any other such ceremonies, then I hold that we ought to join ourselves to such, and associate with them in all things as kinsmen and brethren” (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter XLVII, p. 218, Volume 1, Clarke’s *Ante-Nicene Library*, or *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1953 edition).

Justin spoke these words of Sabbath-keeping Christians. He spoke of them as weak-minded believers, yet he would fellowship with them under certain conditions. Not all of the Church Fathers denied the Sabbath. Some of them bore positive testimony to the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments. Some also asserted the origin of the Sabbath at Creation.

Several of them bore witness to the existence of Sabbath-keepers all along, as we shall presently see.

In an old treatise on the “Morality of the Fourth Commandment,” William Twisse, D.D., says:

“Yet, for some hundred years in the primitive church, not the Lord’s-day only, but the seventh day also, was religiously observed, not by Ebion and Cerinthus only, but by pious Christians also, as Baronius writeth, and Gomarus confesseth, and Rivert also” (p. 9, London, 1641).

The “Apostolical Constitutions,” although not written in apostolic times, do furnish historical testimony on the early church practices:

“Have before thine eyes the fear of God, and always remember the ten commandments of God, - to love the one and only Lord God with all thy strength; to give no heed to idols, or any other beings, as being lifeless gods, or irrational beings or demons. Consider the manifold workmanship of God, which received its beginning through Christ. Thou shalt observe the Sabbath, on account of Him who ceased from His work of creation, but ceased not from His work of providence; it is a rest for meditation of the law, not for the idleness of the hands” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, p. 413, 1951 edition).

“This tendency on the part of the Christians to meet paganism half way was very early developed. Upright men tried to stem the tide; but despite all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the church, except a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan Superstition” (Hislop in *The Two Babylons*, p. 93, 1945 ed.).

“Before the second century was half gone, before the last of the apostles had been dead forty years, this apostate, this working of the ‘Mystery of Iniquity,’ had so largely spread over the east and the west, that it is literally true, that a large part of the Christian observances and institutions, even in this century, had the aspect of the pagan mysteries” (Mosheim, in *Ecclesiastical History*, Century 2, Part 2, Chapter 4, Paragraph 1).

## **Sabbath History of the Third and Fourth Centuries**

Novation, who wrote about A.D. 250, has been credited with the founding of a sect called Cathari, or Puritans. He wrote a treatise on the Sabbath, which is not extant. What he thought of the Moral Law is contained, in part, from what follows:

“How far, then must that law, which - as I have shown by the authority of the apostle - is spiritual, be spiritually received in order that the divine and sure idea of the law may be carried? First, we must believe that whatever was ordained by God is clean and purified by the very authority of His creation; . . . Finally, also, those Ten Commandments on the tables teach nothing new, but remind them of what had been obliterated that righteousness in them which had been put to sleep, might revive again as it were by the afflatus of the law, after the manner of a smothered fire. . .” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, p. 647, 1951).

The changeover from the keeping of the commandments of God to the traditions of men, did not happen overnight. Some of the Christians never did get away from the Creator’s precepts. We may well note here Philip Schaff’s testimony:

“The observance of the Sabbath among the Jewish Christians gradually ceased. Yet the Eastern Church to this day marks the seventh day of the week (excepting only the Easter Sabbath) by omitting fasting, and standing in prayer; the Latin Church, in direct opposition to Judaism, made Saturday a fast day. The controversy on this point began as early as the end of the second century” (*History of the Church*, p. 372, 1864 edition; p. 205, 1952 edition).

The ancient church known as the “Nazarenes,” to which we referred earlier, did not die out for a long time. In fact, there never was a time since apostolic days that there have not been Sabbath-keepers. Being stigmatized as “Judaizers,” they have also been known over the many centuries by many other designations, such as: Nazarenes, Cerinthians, Hypsistari, Vadois, Cathari, Toulousians, Petrobrussians, Passagians, Waldenses, etc. Much of their history has been destroyed, and what we do have left of them, in many instances, was written by their enemies, and naturally was much distorted. Here we are quoting some more concerning the “Nazarenes,” from a very popular source:

“Nazarenes, an obscure Jewish-Christian sect, existing at the time of Epiphanius (fl. A.D. 370) in Coele-Syria, Decapolis (Pella) and Basanitus (Cocabe). According to that authority, they dated their settlement in Pella from the time of the flight of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, immediately before the siege in A.D. 70; he characterizes them as neither more or less than Jews pure and simple, but adds that they recognized the new covenant as well as the old, and believed in the resurrection, and in the one God and His Son Jesus Christ.

“He cannot say whether their Christological views were identical with those of Cerinthus and his school, or whether they differed at all from his own. But Jerome (Ep. 79 to Augustine) says that they believed in’ Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again, but adds that, ‘desiring to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither the one nor the other.’

“They used the Aramaic recension of the Gospel to the Hebrews, but, while adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy as regarded . . . Sabbaths, foods, and the like, they did not refuse to recognize the apostolicity of Paul or the rights of (Gentile) Christians” (Jer., Comm. in Isaiah 9:1). (The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, Volume 19.)

The fourth century opened a new era in the history of the Christian church, as well as that of the Sabbath question. The believers from the Roman emperors Nero to Diocletian were generally severely persecuted. But when Constantine, early in his imperial reign, accepted, at least outwardly, the Christian faith, this intolerance toward the Christians changed. He placed Christianity on an equal footing with that of the pagan religions. Before long, however, he began to issue edicts which affected both the pagans and the Christians, and later he began to persecute the Christians, that is, those who were considered heretics from the Catholic faith.

One of Constantine’s acts as touching the new religion, of which we mentioned before, was that he recognized (in A.D. 321) “the day of the sun,” (i.e., Sunday) as the day of rest, forbidding ordinary work on that day; and the other concerned his calling a church council (in A.D. 325) at Nicaea in Asia Minor to settle the controversy between the Arians and the Athanasians respecting the nature of the Messiah.

It is a remarkable fact that the first instance upon record which shows that the bishop of Rome attempted to rule the entire Christian church was by an edict in behalf of Sunday (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*). It had been the custom of all the churches to celebrate the Passover, but with this difference: that while the eastern churches observed it upon the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month, no matter on what day of the week it might be, the western churches kept it upon the Sunday following that day, or rather, upon the Sunday following Good Friday. Victor, Bishop of Rome, in the year A.D. 196, took upon himself to impose the Roman custom upon all the churches, that is, to compel them to observe the Passover upon Sunday.

The aged Polycrates of Ephesus replied in the name of all the bishops of Asia Minor, appealed to the apostles Philip and John, to Polycarp (John's disciple), to Thrasesas, etc., all of whom had celebrated the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, and added that he himself had studied up the Scriptures, and would not be intimidated by Rome.

Constantine, at the great Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), backed up the claims of the western bishops, and urged the following reason for this measure:

“Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries. . . . Therefore this irregularity must be corrected, in order that we may no more have anything in common with the parricides and murderers of our Lord.”

The foregoing historical facts have been gleaned from Bower's *History of the Popes*; Dowling's *History of Romanism*; and Boyle's *Historical View of the Council of Nice*. Doctor Neander's *Church History* also verifies that “Opposition to Judaism introduced the particular festival of Sunday very early, indeed, into the place of the Sabbath.” Bishop Hefele in *History of the Councils*, also testified: “Christians ought not to Judaize, and to rest on the Sabbath, but preferring the Lord's day, should rest if possible as Christians. Wherefore if they shall be found to Judaize, let them be accursed from Christ.”

### **Sabbath History of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries**

The learned Joseph Bingham, M.A., speaks of Sabbath-keepers in the early centuries of the Christian era. Of the body of believers who fled from Judea in the fourth century, he says:

“There is another sect,. . . ‘Hypsistarians,’ that is, worshipers of the most high God, whom they worshiped as the Jews only in one person. And they observed their Sabbaths, and used distinction of their meats, clean and unclean, though they did not regard circumcision, as Gregory Nazianzen whose father was one of the sect, gives account of them” (*Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Book 16, Chapter 6, Section 2).

“We also find in ancient writers frequent mention made of religious assemblies on the Saturday, or seventh day of the week, which was the Jewish Sabbath [sic]. It is not easy to tell the original of this practice, nor the reasons for it . . . I consider it here only as a day of public divine service . . . Athanasius, who is one of the first that mentions it says: They met on the Sabbath, not that they were infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath . . . And Cassian takes notice of the Egyptian churches, that among them the service of the Lord’s day and the Sabbath, was always the same; . . . In another place he observes that in the monasteries of Egypt and Thebes, they had no public assemblies on other days, besides morning and evening, except upon Saturday and the Lord’s day, when they met at (three o’clock), that is, nine in the morning, to celebrate the Communion” (*Ibid.*, Book 13, Chapter 9, Section 3). Note: The Bible never calls the Sabbath “the Jewish Sabbath” (author).

Mention was made earlier of the Arians who were followers of Arius, a priest of Alexandria who was in conflict with another priest of the same city, namely, Athanasius. Their differences of opinions concerned the nature of the Messiah. The controversy waxed fierce and divided Christendom, which affected the Emperor Constantine and his political career. Accordingly, in A.D. 325, Constantine summoned all the principal clergy of his empire to a council meeting at Nicaea, in Asia Minor, to settle the dispute. Arius and Athanasius led in person the fierce debate. The majority of the bishops sided with Athanasius; Arius and his followers were banished and persecuted. Questions have been raised as to whether the Arians were seventh-day observers. For information on this we turn to Socrates:



“The Arians, as we have said, held their meetings without the city. As often, therefore, as the festal days occurred - I mean Saturday [Sabbath] and the Lord’s day - in each week, on which assemblies are usually held in the churches, they congregated within the city gates about the public squares, and sang responsive verses adapted to the Arian heresy. This they did during the greater part of the night and again in the morning, chanting the same songs which they called responsive, they paraded through the midst of the city, and so passed out of the gates to go to their places of assembly” (*Socrates’ Ecclesiastical History*, Book 6, Chapter 8, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, p. 144).

Sozomen, a contemporary of Socrates, wrote a little later, probably about A.D. 460, and says:

“Likewise some meet both upon the Sabbath and upon the day after the Sabbath, as at Constantinople, and among almost all others. At Rome and Alexandria they do not. Among the Egyptians, likewise, in many cities and villages, there is also a sacred custom among all of meeting on the evening of the Sabbath, when the sacred mysteries are partaken of” (*Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen*, in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Book 7, Chapter 19).

Sir William Domville, an anti-Sabbatarian writer, says:

“Centuries of the Christian era passed away before the Sunday was observed by the Christian church as the Sabbath. History does not furnish us with a single proof or indication that it was at any time so observed previous to the Sabbatical edict of Constantine in A.D. 321” (*Examination of the Six Texts*).

Of the Sabbath and first-day-of-the-week practices of those times, Coleman says:

“The last day of the week was strictly kept in connection with that of the first day for a long time after the overthrow of the temple and its worship. Down even to the fifth century the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was continued in the Christian church, but with a rigor and solemnity gradually diminishing” (*Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, Chapter 26, Section 2).

The opening of the sixth century witnessed the further development of the apostasy and the elevation of the bishop or pope of Rome to become the head of all the churches. Justinian, the restorer of the fallen Roman Empire in the west, in A.D. 531, decreed and enforced by arms the subjugation of the whole church east and west, to the Roman pope, and in about 532 bestowed upon him the title of *Rector Ecclesiae, or Lord of the Church* (*A Manual of Church History*, by A. H. Newman, 1933, p. 403).

Gross darkness prevailed generally in Christendom during and following the sixth century. It is difficult to trace the true believers in history; firstly, because most of their records were destroyed; secondly, because what we learn from them historically was written mostly by their enemies. Even so, we do find a small stream of dissenters existing by various names and designations all along.

Near the end of the sixth century Pope Gregory exhorted the people of Rome to “expiate on the day of our Lords resurrection what was remissly done for the six days before.” In this same epistle the Pope condemned a class of men at Rome who advocated the observance of both Sabbath and Sunday, styling them as preachers of Antichrist. Doctor Twisse, however, asserts that the Pope spoke of both seventh-day and first-day observers (Heylyn’s *History, Sabbath*, Part 2, Chapter 5, Section 1; see also -Morer’s *Dialogues on the Lord’s Day*, p. 282). This shows the intolerant feeling of the Papacy toward the Sabbath, even if joined with the observance of Sunday. It also shows that there were Sabbath-keepers even in Rome at that time.

Of the Christians of the British Isles, before the mission of St. Augustine to that country in about A.D. 596, we note that they had not been in subjection to Rome. When Augustine arrived he found the northern part well-nigh filled with Christians and Christian institutions.

Those Christians were the Culdees, whose chief seat was the island of Iona, on the western coast of Scotland. Their chief missionary leader was Colomba (born 543), and he was an observer of the seventh-day Sabbath. On this point we quote a standard Catholic author, Dr. Alvan Butler, who recorded some of Colomba’s dying words:

“Having continued his labors in Scotland thirty-four years, he clearly and openly foretold his death, and on Saturday the ninth of June said to his disciple Diermit: ‘This day is called the Sabbath, that is, the day of rest and such will it truly be for me; for it will put an end to my labors’,” (Butler’s *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Principle Saints*, Art. St. Colombo, A.D. 597).

### **Sabbath History Seventh Century to the Reformation**

Rome never succeeded in driving the Sabbath wholly from its dominions. We have reasons to believe that there have been Sabbath-keepers functioning in every century, some in the wildernesses, and some in and around the Alps. In their time they were known by such designations as Nazarenes, Cerinthians, Hysistari, and later as Vaudois, Cathari, Toulousians, Albigenses, Petrobrusians, Passagii and Waldenses.

In speaking of the Waldenses generally, we know that they believed that the Romish Church was the Antichrist, spoken of in the Bible. Many of them were able to say a great part of both the Old and the New Scriptures by heart. Although considered dangerous heretics, Rainer Sacho, a Dominican, says of the Waldenses that they are one of the most ancient sects and that there was no country where they did not gain a footing. He admitted that they lived morally good lives and believed nothing concerning God which was not good (Dean Waddington’s *Church History*, Chapter 22, Section 1).

Jones, in his history, in describing their confession of faith, says one of the members of the Waldenses stated that they 11 proffered the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and comprehended in the Apostles’ Creed, and admitted the sacraments instituted by Christ, and the ten commandments, etc . . . . They said they had received this doctrine from their ancestors, and that if they were in any error they were ready to receive instruction from the word of God . . .” (*Church History*, p.355, 1837 ed.).

That the Cathari of the twelfth century observed the ancient Sabbath is certified by a Roman writer, as quoted by Doctor Allix:

“He lays down also as one of their opinions, that the law of Moses is to be kept according to the letter, and that the keeping of the Sabbath, circumcision, and other legal observations, ought to take place. They hold also that Christ the Son of God is not equal with the Father, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, these three persons, are not one God and one substance; and as a surplus to these their errors, they judge and condemn all the doctors of the Church, and universally the whole Roman church” (*Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 168, 169. The author was a French Protestant, born 1641).

Another group during the twelfth century was known in some parts of France and Italy as Passaginian. Of these Mosheim has written the following:

“Like the other sects already mentioned, they had the utmost aversion to the dominion and discipline of the church of Rome; but they were, at the same time, distinguished by two religious tenets, which were peculiar to themselves. The first was a notion that the observation of the law of Moses, in everything except the offering of sacrifices, was obligatory upon Christians, in consequence of which they circumcised their followers, abstained from those meats, the use of which was prohibited under the Mosaic economy, and celebrated the Jewish Sabbath” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Volume 2, p. 273, 1860 edition).

As to the charge of their circumcising, Benedict thought that this may not have been true but was said because they observed the “Jewish Sabbath.”

There are at least three groups of eastern Christians that need to be considered in reference to this matter of Sabbath-keeping. Several historians indicate that for a long time the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) Christians were almost entirely shut out from the church of Europe. During the seventeenth century repeated and violent attempts were unsuccessfully made by the Jesuits, under the patronage of Portugal, to convert or subdue them. It is claimed by some, and by the Ethiopians themselves, that the gospel was brought to them by the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), together with the teaching of the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath.

A. H. Newman says of them:

B.

“Fasting periods are very numerous and about half of the days of the year, including the Jewish Sabbath and Sunday, are religiously observed. Indications of Jewish influence, besides Sabbath observance, are the practice of circumcision, and distinction between clean and unclean animals, etc.” (*A Manual of Church History*, Volume 1, p. 646, 1933 edition).

Claudius Buchanan, D.D., speaks of the Armenians in the following manner:

“The history of the Armenian church is very interesting. Of all the Christians in Central Asia, they have preserved themselves most free from Mohammedan and Papal corruptions . . . .”

“The Armenians in Hindoostan are our own subjects. They acknowledge our government in India, as they do that of Sophi in Persia, and they are entitled to our regard. They have preserved the Bible in its purity, and their doctrines are, as far as the author knows, the doctrines of the Bible. Besides, they maintain the solemn observance of Christian worship throughout our empire on the seventh day; and they have as many spires pointing to heaven among the Hindoos as ourselves. Are such people then entitled to no acknowledgement on our part, as fellow Christians? Are they forever to be ranked by us with the Jews, Mohammedans, and Hindoos?” (*Researches in Asia*, p. 206, et. seq.).

Arthur P. Stanley stated:

“The Chaldean Christians, called by their opponents Nestorians, are the most remote of these old ‘Separatists.’ . . . They trace their descent from the earliest of all Christian missions, the mission of Thaddaeus to Abgarus” (*History of the Eastern Church*, p. 91).

As to their beliefs about Sabbath-keeping, Coleman speaks:

“These eight festivals of our Lord they observe and we have many holy days and the Sabbath-day, on which we do not labor. . . . The Sabbath-day we reckon far - far above the others. . . . Incense is burned on the Sabbath and feast days” (*Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, p. 573).

Early tradition attributes the founding of Christian communities in the south western part of India (Malabar) to the apostle Thomas. The first notice of this ancient people is to be found in Portuguese histories, according to Claudius Buchannon, D.D. When the Portuguese arrived they found upwards of a hundred Christian churches, whom they tried to win to the Romish faith by the power of the Inquisition. Dellon, who escaped the bloody tribunal, wrote an account of the workings thereof. His arrest occurred in 1673. Witness the following from Dellon's *Account of the Inquisition at Goa*, 1684:

“But when the period of the Auto da Fe approaches, the Proctor waits upon him and declares, that he is charged by a great number of witnesses, of having Judaized; which means, having conformed to the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, such as not eating pork, hare, fish without scales, etc., of having attended the solemnization of the Sabbath, having eaten the Pascal Lamb, etc.”

Sabbath-keeping in China is of ancient origins. Some historians maintain that Christianity was implanted in China not long after apostolic days. We have previously noted the Nestorian Christians, considered by many as heretics, were observers of the seventh-day Sabbath. Gieseler says of them:

“The Nestorians not only maintained themselves in Persia, where they enjoyed the exclusive favor of the king, but spread doctrines on all sides, carrying them into Arabia and India, and it is said, in -the year 636, even as far as China” (*Church History, Second Period*, Chapter 6).

Speaking of the Chinese Puritan Reformation, in modern times, under the Ti-Pings, one missionary in Shanghai wrote:

But the question naturally arises: How came they to adopt the seventh day of the week instead of the first, as their Sabbath, since all their instructions from Christians was by those who taught that the first day is the Sabbath? This was a mystery to all who learned of the fact. But when they took Nan-King, the Europeans had opportunity to visit them, they were told that it was first, because the Bible taught it, and second, because their ancestors observed it as a day of worship.” These Chinese once observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.

## **Sabbath-keeping Since the Reformation**

Apparently most all of the church historians fell into the error of referring to the church, from early times to the Protestant Reformation, as being within the fold of the Holy Catholic Church. All, however, should have been aware of the fact that besides the mainstream of Catholicism, there was a separated and distinct group (or groups) of Christians throughout the entire period of the Dark Ages. Even the Bible made that clear prophetically (Revelation 12:6, 14). One of the church historians, however who recognized this fact was Hugh Smith, who bore this testimony:

“An attentive reader of the works of Luther and his associates will easily perceive, that their minds labored under somewhat similar mistake as to their own. It was not without surprise they learned that there were numbers around them, in every country for a reform. It may also be added that Protestants in every succeeding age have but too implicitly imbibed their error. The blessed Lord had never left Himself without witnesses in the world, even during the reign of Antichrist, a period of the most general and awful defection from the purity of His worship, He had reserved to Himself thousands and tens of thousands of such as kept His commandments and the faith of Jesus . . .” (*Church History*, p. 326, 1837 edition).

Several historians wrote about the Waldenses and their characteristics and practices of their earlier history, as well as of their history during the early part of the sixteenth century, or about the time immediately before the Protestant Reformation started. Jones gives us an account, of which we quote a short portion:

“Louis XII, king of France, being informed by the enemies of the Waldenses inhabiting a part of the province of Provence, that several heinous crimes were laid to their account, sent the Master of Requests, and a certain doctor of the Sorbonne; who was a confessor to His Majesty, to make inquiry into this matter. On their return, they reported that they had visited all the parishes where they dwelt, had inspected their places of worship, but that they had found there no images, nor signs of the ornaments which belong to the mass, nor any of the ceremonies of the

Romish Church; much less could they discover any traces of those crimes with which they had been charged.

“On the contrary, they kept the Sabbath day, observed the ordinance of baptism according to the primitive church, instructed their children in the articles of the Christian faith and the commandments of God. The king having heard the report of this commissioner, said with an oath that they were better men than himself or his people” (*Church History*, Volume II, Chapter V, Section 4).

Other things Jones had to say about the Waldenses follow: “Among them he had found one thing worthy of admiration, a thing unheard of in the popish church, that laying aside the doctrines of men, they meditated in the law of God day and night, and they were expert, and even well versed, in the knowledge of the Scriptures.”

“In A.D. 1530, one of the pastors of the Waldenses, George Morel, published a memoir of his church. He said there were then 800,000” (Idem, pp. 263, 440).

J. N. Andrews, in *History of the Sabbath* (1873, Steam Press of the S.D.A. Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan), says on page 460:

“When the Reformation had lifted the veil of darkness that covered the nations of Europe, Sabbath-keepers were found in Transylvania, Bohemia, Russia, Germany, Holland, France, and England. It was not the Reformation which gave existence to these Sabbatarians, for the leaders of the Reformation, as a body, were not friendly to such views. On the contrary, these observers of the Sabbath appear to be remnants of the ancient Sabbath-keeping churches that had witnessed for the truth during the Dark Ages.”

There were several, however, even among the Protestant Reformers who gave consideration to the matter of including Sabbath reform. In particular, we think of Carlstad, a university professor, and Cocceius, an eminent leader in the Reformed Church. At first Carlstad was a defender of Luther; later, because of their differences concerning the Lord’s Supper and the “authority of the Scriptures,” they parted ways. Doctor Sears alluded to Carlstad’s observance of the seventh day:



“Carlstad differed essentially from Luther in regard to the use made of the Old Testament. With him, the law of Moses was still binding. Luther, on the contrary, had a strong aversion to what he calls a legal and Judaizing religion. Carlstad held to the divine authority of the Sabbath from the Old Testament; Luther believed Christians were free to observe any day as a Sabbath, provided they be uniform in observing it,” (*Life of Luther*, p. 402).

And now we quote some of Luther’s own statements respecting Carlstad’s views:

“Indeed, if Carlstad were to write further about the Sabbath, Sunday would have to give way, and the Sabbath — that is to say, Saturday — must be kept holy; he would truly make us Jews in all things, and we should become circumcised; that that is true, and cannot be denied, that he who deems it necessary to keep one law of Moses, and keeps it as the law of Moses, must deem all necessary, and keep them all” (*Against the Celestial Prophets*, from the *Life of Martin Luther in Pictures*, p. 147).

As for Cocceius, he came about a century later, and his dominating thought was in reference to the divine covenant. He differed somewhat with the Reformed Church in the matter of predestination. He believed that man was responsible for his fall, and that since God provided salvation within the reach of all, it is the duty of man to receive God’s gracious provision, and is still bound to perfect obedience and faith. Besides this, his opposers considered his emphasis on obedience to the divine covenant, especially regarding the Sabbath, as being demoralizing.

“It was Cocceius’ application of his theory to the Sabbath that more than anything else aroused opposition. Placing the Sabbath commandment in the covenant of grace, he regarded it as a ‘demonstration of hope in Christ and a means of leading up to the denial of self-righteousness and dead works,’ and, so, as fulfilled in Christ. The New Testament requires the sanctification of the whole lifetime. The Sabbath controversy thereby precipitated was carried on for years with much bitterness” (A. H. Newman, in *A Manual of Church History*, 1933, p. 576).

From another source we read of still others who were scrupulous about Sabbath observance during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603).

“In the reign of Elizabeth, it occurred to many conscientious and independent thinkers (as it had previously done to some Protestants in Bohemia), that the fourth commandment required of them the observance, not of the first, but of the specified seventh day of the week, and a strict bodily rest, as a service then due to God; while others, though convinced that the day had been altered by divine authority, took up the same opinion as to the scriptural obligation to refrain from work. The former class became numerous enough to make a considerable figure for more than a century in England, under the title of ‘Sabbatarians’ — a word now exchanged for the less ambiguous appellation of ‘Seventh-day Baptists’,” (*Chambers’ Cyclopaedia*, Article, Sabbath, Volume 8, p. 402, London, 1867).

John Traske — also spelled Trasque — was one of the first to teach, and to suffer persecution, for the truth relative to the Sabbath, at about the time of King James 1. A Mr. Ephraim Paggitt, in his *Church Herisiography*, devoted many pages to the history of Traske and his wife, as well as to their followers. At his trial, Traske was charged on two main points, namely: one was that Christians are bound to abstain from those meats which the Jews were forbidden in Leviticus; the other, that they are bound to observe the Jewish Sabbath.

Several years after Traske’s works, Theophilus Brabourne of Norfolk published his first book, entitled, *A Discourse Upon the Sabbath-day*. Cox had this to say of Brabourne: “Brabourne is a much abler writer than Traske, and may be regarded as the founder in England of the sect at first known as Sabbatarians, but now calling themselves Seventh-day Baptists” (Cox’s *Sabbath Literature*, Volume 1, p. 157).

J. N. Andrews, quoted previously, also wrote: “In the seventeenth century, eleven churches of Sabbatarians flourished in England, while many scattered Sabbath-keepers were to be found in various parts of that kingdom” (*History of the Sabbath*, 1873, p. 491).

Chief Rabbi Kohn, of Budapest, Hungary, in a work entitled, *Sabbatarians in Transylvania*, p. 38, says of the Puritans:

“Several leaders and preachers of the Puritans have retransferred the rest day from Sunday to Saturday (1554).” And of the Bohemians and the

English he wrote: “In Bohemia Sabbatarians sprung up as early as 1520. Such Sabbatarians, or similar sects, we meet about 1545 among the Quakers in England” (1884 edition).

### **The Sabbath in America**

All who are familiar with American history remember that in A.D. 1620 the Puritans, or Pilgrims, landed at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, coming to the New World primarily to escape religious persecution which prevailed in Europe.

The Puritans had zealously endeavored to purify the Church of England, with the result that those who felt they could no longer remain with the established church went afterwards by such names as Non-Conformists and Separatists. Were any Sabbatarians on the Mayflower which brought the Pilgrims to America? This has been a much-disputed question for a long time, some asserting vehemently that there were no seventh-day observers among them, and others contending just as strongly that there were. The overwhelming evidence seems to be in favor of their presence in the Plymouth Colony.

In the month of December, 1934, Hugh Sprague, editor of the *St. Joseph Gazette* (Missouri), wrote an editorial on this very matter.

“Strange as it may seem in the early history of America there was an attempt at suppression of the Christmas spirit. The stern Puritans at Plymouth, imbued with the rigorous fervor of the Old Testament, abhorred the celebration of the orthodox holidays. Their worship was on the Sabbath (Saturday), rather than Sunday, and Christmas in particular they considered a pagan celebration. Later immigrants attempted to observe Christmas as a time of joy, but were suppressed. Governor Bradford, Elder Brewster, Miles Standish and other leaders were firm against the yuletide spirit as we know it today.”

In a private conversation between Elder A. N. Dugger and Editor Hugh Sprague, after this editorial appeared, the latter stated that the Pilgrims were his direct ancestors, and that he very well knew their religious beliefs and practices. And in addition, he stated that all his grandparents and great-

grandparents knew that the Pilgrims of the Mayflower days were strict Sabbath-keepers on the seventh day of the week instead of Sunday.

What does appear evident is that among the Puritans, first in England, and then in America, were conscientious Sabbatarians. The earliest Sabbath-keeping churches in America were not formally incorporated or organized into conferences, but merely local congregations going by various designations or names, such as: Sabbatarians, Church of God, Church of Christ, Seventh Day Baptists, and even Independents. The Seventh Day Baptists were among the earliest to effect a General Conference organization (1802). The Seventh-day Adventists effected theirs in 1863; and the Church of God (Seventh Day) effected theirs much later.

Arthur Elwell Main, D.D., in *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*, Volume 1, says that just when or how the Sabbath truth first came to America from England was not known, but that as early as 1646 it was the occasion of much earnest discussion in New England. This dates Sabbath agitation twenty-six years after the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, and about eighteen years prior to the London Seventh Day Baptists' sending of Stephen Mumford to America. Since Sunday observers would not have advocated seventh-day Sabbath observance, it appears evident that it came about by the Pilgrim descendants. The situations of those times may also be ascertained from Felt's *Ecclesiastical History of New England*, Volume 1, p. 593.

As far as historical records go, it appears that the first local organization of Sabbath-keeping Christians in America was that of the church at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1671. Mumford attended the first-day Baptist Church, and for several years taught the Sabbath truth among them. As a result, a number of them embraced the Sabbath in 1665 and in 1666, but the intention was not to sever their connection with the Baptist Church. They soon learned, however, that even in the church of Roger Williams, where liberty of conscience was supposed to prevail, it was not possible to have close communion on such drastic differences in beliefs as the Sabbath and Sunday brought about. Accordingly, the seventh-day observers left the Baptist Church on December 7, 1671, and sixteen days later, on the 23rd of December, they covenanted together in a church organization.

Other Sabbath-keeping centers established shortly after the Newport group was formed were the group near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, through the labors of Able Noble, who came from England about 1684; and the group at Piscataway, New Jersey. From these centers streams of Sabbatarian emigration flowed westward and southward until there were not less than twenty churches and settlements of Sabbath-keepers in nine of the ten colonies or states when the General Conference of Seventh Day Baptists was organized in 1802. Their headquarters is at Plainfield, New Jersey.

There also is in the state of Pennsylvania a small body of German Seventh Day Baptists, who have a very interesting Sabbath-keeping heritage. It dates approximately from 1728 when Conrad Beissel, a native of Germany, became the real leader of an independent Sabbath-keeping group established in the Ephrata community.

In those years it was largely a monastic movement, comprised of the “Brotherhood of Zion” and the “Spiritual Order of the Roses of Saron,” one of the most celebrated establishments of its kind in the country. Because of their unusual manner of life, and because it was feared that through their influence the whole state of Pennsylvania would be affected with their Sabbatarian teachings, they were at times persecuted. They also established and successfully maintained a Sabbath school at Ephrata, its headquarters, forty years before Robert Raikes of England introduced the system of Sunday schools.

Because of the circumstances of the times, the German Seventh Day Baptists had some associations with William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington. Franklin did some of Beissel’s printing. Peter Miller, a member of the colony, was a close friend of the Penn family. He was also personally acquainted with George Washington. When the Continental Congress sought a trustworthy and loyal man to conduct its diplomatic correspondence with the governments of Europe, it was this recluse of the Ephrata Community who translated the Declaration of Independence into seven different languages.

During the Revolutionary War the cloister was converted into a military hospital for the sick and wounded, shortly after the Battle of

Brandywine in 1777. Remember the Valley Forge miseries? A monument at Ephrata still marks the place of several hundred buried soldiers.

Between the years 1835 and 1844, William Miller, a student of prophecy, who received his license to preach from a Baptist church, stirred many thousands into believing that the Lord would return to earth on October 22, 1844. His conclusions were largely based on Daniel 8:13, 14, respecting the 2300 days (evenings and mornings), which he believed were symbolic and stood for years instead of literal days. He believed the earth was the sanctuary and that it would be cleansed by fire when Jesus returned. The disappointment was great and caused much consternation.

Miller, after this disappointment, honestly admitted that he had made a mistake, but there were some of those who had heard him preach who believed that he was right with his figures. Thereupon they made a special study of the sanctuary question, comparing the earthly with the heavenly, and decided that Jesus at His ascension to heaven did not sit down at the right hand of God in the Most Holy Place (apartment), but entered and remained in the Holy Place (first apartment) until 1844, when He entered the Most Holy Place, there to cleanse the sanctuary, blot out sins, make a final atonement, and start the investigative judgment. These still are, in general, the beliefs of those who afterwards became known as Seventh-day Adventists.

The Advent people of Washington, New Hampshire, at about that time, had the Sabbath first introduced to their attention by a faithful Seventh Day Baptist sister, Mrs. Rachel Preston. Nearly the entire church in that place, consisting of about forty members, became observers of the seventh-day Sabbath.

Elder Joseph Bates, who had acted a prominent part in the time-setting Advent Movement, also had the Sabbath brought to his attention, and in 1845 he took hold of this truth and began to set it before his fellowman. Elder and Mrs. James White accepted this light a little later, and they became the most prominent leaders of what later became known as the Seventh-day Adventists.

“An association was incorporated in the city of Battle Creek, Michigan, May 3, 1861, under the name of Seventh-day Adventist Association” (J. N.

Andrews in *History of the Sabbath*). According to the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (1975), the “denomination was organized May 21, 1863, with a constituency of 125 churches.” They are by far the most numerous and widely-known Sabbath-keepers in the world. Their headquarters is in Washington, D.C.

It is evident that many isolated groups of Sabbath-keepers, aside from the Seventh Day Baptists, had sprung up before the 1844 disappointment and immediately following the time of William Miller’s prediction of the end of the world. This may be readily ascertained from the fact that 125 groups did affiliate in 1863, but many of the Sabbath-keeping congregations refused to co-operate and unite because some opposed the alleged visions of Ellen G. White, some made the name of the “Church of God” a “bone of contention” and others believed in no general conference organization at all.

Subsequent church history shows that while many of the independent Sabbatarian groups aligned themselves neither with the Seventh-day Adventists nor with the Seventh Day Baptists, yet for logical reasons and a desire for fellowship and co-operation in order to more effectively propagate gospel truths as they saw them, they did form loose associations and eventually organized a general conference, going under the name of “Church of God.”

Elder Gilbert Cranmer (1814-1904), who saw the falling of the stars in 1833, wrote in his memoirs that he received his first light on the Sabbath in 1843 from an article in the *Midnight Cry*, a Millerite publication, written by J. C. Day of Ashburhan, Massachusetts. S. C. Handcock of Forestville, Connecticut, also advocated the doctrine in the same year. Cranmer heard the preaching of William Miller about that time. He believed the message, including the setting of the date for the Lord’s return in 1844. After the disappointment, he fully accepted the keeping of the Sabbath, and for a while worked with the Seventh-day Adventists, before they decided to go by the name of “Seventh-day, Adventists.”

According to Elder Cranmer’s own statements, he preached as the Spirit directed, got quite a following, which included a number of ministers, and he was instrumental in effecting an organization in the state of Michigan, in 1860, of which he was the first president. In 1863 the

group began publishing a periodical, and the contents of those papers show that at that time groups with similar beliefs existed in the New England states, in New York, in Pennsylvania, in Ohio, in Indiana, in Illinois, in Iowa, in Michigan, in Wisconsin, and even in Canada.

Although an organization of the churches in Michigan was effected in 1860, as well as in Iowa soon after, and in several other states, it was not until 1884 that a general conference was formed in the state of Michigan, and in 1889 this body was incorporated in Gentry County, Missouri, with headquarters being established at Stanberry. Presently, the General Conference headquarters of the Church of God (Seventh Day) is located in Denver, Colorado.

We have listed in this history of “the Sabbath in America” the major groups of Sabbatarians that were functioning before the turn of the century. These are the most prevalent groups: the Seventh-day Adventists, the Seventh Day Baptists, and the Church of God (Seventh Day). According to some handbooks of religious bodies in the United States, other lesser known Sabbath-keeping groups functioned also before the nineteenth century ended, and several impressive groups have developed since. The Bible Sabbath Association, Fairview, Oklahoma, has issued a *Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups*, which lists a long list of present Sabbatarian groups, not only in the United States, but world-wide.

However variant the historical origins, the doctrinal positions and the church policies may be, the one element that is common among all Sabbatarians is the keeping of the “commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”



## PART II

# SUNDAY HISTORY THROUGH THE AGES

The Gospels and the Book of Acts portray the most accurate history of the beliefs, practices, and forms of worship of the early apostolic church. During the apostolic period the church preserved, to a great extent, the purity of life and doctrine as taught by its Founder.

But immediately after the apostolic period, the historical records are rather meager and obscure. And when once more we pick up the characteristics of the church, we find a greatly changed situation. During the second century the inrush of ideas from other than Christian sources, brought over by heathen converts and pagan philosophers, show surprisingly little of the believers' stamp.

It had been predicted by the prophet Daniel and by the apostle Paul that during this period grievous wolves would enter the early church, not sparing the flock, and that there would be a falling away, as well as changes effected in the laws and precepts of the Most High (**Acts 20:28-31; II Thessalonians 2:1-7; Daniel 7:24, 25**).

In this compilation we propose to show from the Scriptures, as well as from secular and church history, that among the numerous changes made in the doctrines and practices of the apostolic church, the day of worship was included.

### **Corruption Rises Early in the Church**

“There is scarcely anything which strikes the mind of the careful student of ancient ecclesiastical history with greater surprise than the comparatively early period at which many of the corruptions of Christianity which are embodied in the Romish system took their rise” (Dr. Dowling in *History of Romanism*, Book 2, Chapter 1).

“This tendency on the part of Christians to meet paganism half way was very early developed. Upright men tried to stem the tide, but despite all their efforts, the apostasy went on till the church, except a small remnant, was submerged under pagan superstition” (Alexander Hislop in *The Two Babylons*, p. 93, 1945 ed.).

“The pagans had been accustomed to numerous and splendid ceremonies from their infancy, and they saw the new religion destitute of temples, altars, victims, priests, and all the pomp which the pagans supposed to be the essence of religion; for the unenlightened persons are prone to estimate religion by what meets the eyes. To silence this accusation, the Christian leaders thought they must introduce some of the rites and ceremonies which would strike the senses of the people. . . .

“Before the second century was half gone, before the last of the apostles had been dead forty years, this apostate, this working of the ‘Mystery of Iniquity,’ had so largely spread over the East and the West, that it is literally true that a large part of the Christian observances and institutions, even in this century, had the aspect of the pagan mysteries” (Mosheim in *Ecclesiastical History*, Century 2, part 2, chapter 4, paragraph 1).

The foregoing quotations from historians show how accurately Paul’s predictions were fulfilled. In the light of the “mystery of iniquity” coming to fruition, through compromising and sacrificing scriptural principles and truths, it is easy to see how the change of the divinely-instituted day of rest and worship came about. Many moderns are of the opinion that the writings of the so-called Church Fathers prove that the original apostles

changed the day of worship. We are now ready to consider some of these, besides other records, while we at the same time keep in mind the teachings of the Bible itself.

### **Sunday and the Church Fathers**

After the time of the apostles the foremost leaders in the church were the apostolic or so-called Church Fathers. They were supposed to have been students who had been taught personally by the original apostles. Later Church Fathers were supposed to have been students of some of the earlier ones. What are called the Ante-Nicene Fathers are those writers who flourished after the time of the apostles, and before the time of the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325.

There are those who accept the writings of the Church Fathers on an equal basis, or nearly so, with the inspired writers of the Bible. No doubt the Fathers left behind many historical elements worthy of our consideration, but doctrinally, in many instances, they went along with the times or trends of that day. The unreliable nature of the Fathers may be noticed by Dr. Adam Clark's testimony:

“We should take heed how we quote the Fathers in proof of the doctrines of the gospel; because he who knows them best, knows that on many of these subjects they blow hot and cold” (*Commentary on Proverbs* 8).

As we study some of the letters of the early Church Fathers, we learn that many forgeries abound. The apocryphal gospels and epistles were flourishing in those days. And it is from these writings that some try to prove that Sunday is the Lord's Day, claiming that the term can be traced back to the disciples of John, and in turn to John himself. So let us examine a few of these excerpts.

#### *Clement of Rome (ca. 30-100)*

About year A.D. 95 a serious disturbance is said to have occurred in the church at Corinth. Two years later, in 97, Clement, leading elder in the church at Rome, wrote his first epistle to the Corinthian church, which has been assigned the most prominent place among the writings of the apostolic Fathers in recent times because it is thought to be the earliest Christian writing apart from the books of the New Scriptures.

The passage which a few defenders of Sunday observance have referred to is from chapters 40 and 41. The passage, which with its contents in part is supposed to infer that offerings are to be taken up on Sunday, is as follows:

“Seeing then these things are manifest unto us, it will behoove us to take care that, looking into the depths of the divine knowledge, we do all things in order whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do; and particularly, that we perform our offerings and service to God at their appointed seasons for these he has commanded to be done, not by chance and disorderly, but at certain determinate times and hours; and therefore he has ordained, by His supreme will and authority, both where and by what persons, they are to be performed; so that all things being done piously unto him well-pleasing, they may be acceptable unto Him” (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Chapters 40, 41, Wake’s Translation, of Volume 1, p. 16, 1953 edition).

Obviously, there is nothing in the foregoing quotation which even remotely infers that Sunday was the determined time and hour when offerings were to be received.

#### *Polycarp to the Philippians*

Polycarp (ca. A.D. 70-155), who was a disciple of the apostle John and a bishop of Smyrna for many years, is said to have written his letter to the Philippians in answer to one from them, in about 110. He exhorted them to virtuous living, good works, and steadfastness, but is silent concerning Sunday.

#### *Ignatius of Antioch to Syria*

Ignatius (ca. 20-107) has been credited with about fifteen epistles, and the one written to the Magnesians is supposed to indicate a Sunday Lord’s Day. We quote from chapters VIII and IX:

“Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace.

“ . . . If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing

Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Wake's Translation, of Volume 1, p. 62, 1953 edition).

Facts relative to this quotation need to be considered: (1) The epistles of Ignatius are acknowledged by various writers to be spurious. (2) The epistle to the Magnesians would say nothing of a day, were it not that the word was fraudulently inserted. Dr. Killen speaks as follows concerning these epistles:

"In the sixteenth century, fifteen letters were brought out from beneath the mantle of a hoary antiquity, and offered to the world as the productions of the pastor of Antioch. Scholars refused to receive them on the terms required, and forthwith eight of them were admitted to be forgeries. In the seventeenth century, the seven remaining letters, in a somewhat altered form, again came forth from obscurity, and claimed to be the works of Ignatius. Again discerning critics refused to acknowledge their pretensions; but curiosity was aroused by this second apparition, and many expressed an earnest desire to obtain a light of the real epistles" (*Ancient Church*, Section 2, Chapter 3, pp. 413, 414).

### *Catholic Epistle of Barnabas*

In our previous writing we discussed the prophesied events of the degradation of the primitive church following the apostolic age, and we also discussed the writings of several of the early Church Fathers. Now we shall continue in the same vein regarding several more of these, beginning with the so-called Epistle of Barnabas.

This letter, or epistle, is often referred to as *Pseudo-Barnabas* because it was evidently written much later and by someone other than the Barnabas of the New Testament who was a companion of the apostle Paul. It is believed by some that it was written about A.D. 130 by someone from Alexandria, Egypt.

Whoever wrote it was trying to persuade his readers that the law of Moses should not be observed. He constantly allegorized in order to derive the meaning wanted to convey from the Old Testament Scriptures, which did much harm to sound interpretation of the Bible. The passage quoted in favor of Sunday observance reads as follows:

“ . . . Further, He says then, ‘Your new moons and your Sabbaths I cannot endure.’ Ye perceive how He speaks: ‘Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that is which I have made, [namely this] when, giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is a beginning of another world.’ Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead. And when He had manifested Himself, He ascended into the heavens” ( *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Chapter XV, p. 147, 1953 edition).

Neander the historian speaks thus of this epistle:

“It is impossible that we should acknowledge this epistle to belong to that Barnabas who was worthy to be the companion of the apostolic labors of St. Paul.”

And Eusebius, who was the earliest of the church historians, places this epistle in the catalogue of spurious writings.

“Among the spurious must be numbered both the books called, ‘The Acts of Paul,’ and that called, ‘Pastor,’ and ‘The Revelation of Peter.’ Besides these the books called ‘The Epistle of Barnabas,’ and what are called, ‘The Institutions of the Apostles’ ” ( *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III Chapter XXV).

#### *Pliny’s Letter to Trajan*

Pliny the Younger, then Roman governor of Bythinia, wrote to the Emperor Trajan early in the second century, asking advice as to how he should deal with the Christians. And he wrote about them, in part:

“They affirmed that the whole guilt of error was that they met on a certain stated day, before it was light, and addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ, as to some God, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then re-assemble to eat in common a harmless meal” (Coleman’s *Ancient Christianity*, pp. 35, 36).

This statement that they met “on a certain stated day” is evidence that those Christians kept a day as holy time, but it is not stated whether it was the last or the first of the week. If the saints or the elect were converts

through Peter's labors, as appears from **I Peter 1:1, 2**, then we may be assured that the "certain stated day" was the seventh of the week.

### *Justin Martyr*

Justin Martyr was the foremost apologist during the second century. Born of pagan parents near Shechem, he was brought up under pagan philosophies. It is said that he was the first of the Fathers who made a systematic reading of Christianity in terms of Greek culture and philosophy. Failing to find spiritual satisfaction in any of the systems, he studied the Christian system, and professed to have there found the true philosophy, which contained the essence of all truth.

During the middle of the second century he addressed his first apology to the Emperor Antoninus Pius and his adopted sons in behalf of the persecuted Christians. Apparently he sought to soften the fury of pagan persecutors by claiming a similarity between heathenism and Christianity. In him we find the first direct authentic reference to Sunday observance by Christians of that day. The passage usually referred to follows:

"And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country, gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. . . . But Sunday is -the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday), and on the day after Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration" (Clark's *Ante-Nicene Library*, Chapter LXVII, p. 185, 1953 edition).

### *Other Church Fathers*

Others among the list of early writers are Irenaeus, who lived during the last quarter of the second century; Tertullian, who was born in the later years of the second century; Clement of Alexandria, who died about the beginning of the third century; Origin, considered one of the most

distinguished, born, probably at Alexandria, about 182; and Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who died a martyr at Carthage in 258.

Irenaeus taught that to commemorate the resurrection, the knee must not be bent on Sunday, and mentions nothing else as essential to its honor.

The Sunday festival in Tertullian's time was essentially the German festival of Sunday, a day for worship and for recreation.

Clement of Alexandria treats of a mystical eighth day or Lord's Day. His reasons for Sunday observance are found outside the Scriptures.

Origin was a pupil of Clement, whose ideas exerted themselves concerning the question of Sunday observance.

Cyprian, who was influenced evidently by both Justinian's and Tertullian's ideas, contented himself with the idea that circumcision on the eighth day was a type of spiritual circumcision on the first day of the Sabbath, the Lord's Day.

Some of the early Church Fathers had been heathen philosophers, and unfortunately brought with them many of the old notions and practices. To have observed a different day after their conversion would evidently have seemed inconvenient. They hoped, no doubt, to facilitate the conversion of the Gentiles by keeping the same day they had observed, and by permitting them to continue in other pagan practices as well. Justin Martyr stands out as a prominent representative of anti-nomianism as regards the Sabbath.

### **Origin of Sunday Observance**

The festival of Sunday is much more ancient than the Christian religion. Baal worship is the same as sun worship. This practice can be traced to remote times - to the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and other ancient nations.

Even the Israelites at times went so far as to do the same as the heathens (II Kings 23:4, 5; Ezekiel 8:13-16). In Rome, also, the sun was being worshiped by many people. Constantine the emperor being one of them in the fourth century.



Webster's *Unabridged Dictionary* defines Sunday: "*Sunday*: so called because this day was anciently dedicated to the sun or to its worship. The first day of the week; the Christian Sabbath; a day consecrated to rest from secular employment, and to religious worship; the Lord's day."

"Sunday (Dies Solis of the Roman Calendar, the day of the sun; because dedicated to the sun), the first day of the week, was adopted by the early Christians as a day of worship. The 'Sun' of Latin adoration, they interpreted as the Sun of Righteousness" (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia*, old edition).

The Persian Mithras was one of the gods which were brought to Rome. Mithraism contested with Christianity for the religious hegemony of the Roman world. The Church Fathers were astounded at the resemblances. It is said that Roman roads were dotted with Mithraic sanctuaries, attested by inscriptions like *Soli invicto Mithrae*, "to the sun, invincible Mithra."

H.G. Wells says of this theocrasia: "It would seem the Christians adopted Sun-day as their chief day of worship instead of the Jewish Sabbath from the Mithraic cult" (*The Outline of History*, p. 543).

"Opposition to Judaism introduced the particular festival of Sunday very early indeed in place of the Sabbath. . . . The festival like all other festivals, was always only a human ordinance and it was far from the intention of the apostles to establish a divine command in this respect, far from them, and from the early apostolic church to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday. Perhaps by the end of the second century, a false application of this kind had begun to take place, for men appear by that time to have considered laboring on Sunday sin" (Neander's *Church History*, p. 168, old edition, translated by Rose).

### *Constantine's Sunday Legislation*

Soon after Constantine became a Roman Emperor (A.D. 306-337), he made the Christian "cross" his battle standard. He had been led to adopt this emblem when once he prayed to his sun-god about an impending battle, and there appeared a cross over the setting sun with this inscription above it: *In hoc signo vinces*, "In this sign conquer." Obedient to this celestial vision, Constantine and his soldiers marched to victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge.

This constituted a turning point in the history of the Roman Empire, as well as that of the church. Up until then a non-military spirit had characterized the followers of the lowly Nazarene, but all this was then changed (See Myer's *Ancient History*, 1904, pp. 524-527). Among the various edicts Constantine issued was that concerning Sunday, in A.D. 321, as follows:

“Let all the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades, rest on the venerable day of the sun; but let those who are situated in the country, freely and at full liberty, attend to the business of agriculture because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn and planting vines lest the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted them by heaven” (*Corpus Juris Civilis Cod.* Liv. 3, Tit. 12:30).

In the article “Sunday,” *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, seventh edition, 1842, says: “It was Constantine who first made a law of the proper observance of Sunday; and who, according to Eusebius, appointed that it should be regularly celebrated throughout the Roman Empire.”

This imperial law designated the day as a heathen festival, which it really was, but within four years after its enactment, Constantine (at the Council of Nicaea) had become not merely a professed Christian, but in many respects the practical head of the church, as the course of the proceedings at the council showed.

This pagan Sunday law was henceforth enforced in behalf of the day as a Christian festival. This law gave to the Sunday celebration a Sabbatic character for the first time. Eusebius, biographer and admirer of Constantine, in his *Commentary on The Psalms*, as quoted in Cox's *Sabbath Literature*, Volume 1, p. 361, indicates that from the time of Constantine's Sunday edict, the sanctity of the Sabbath was transferred to the first day of the week: “And all things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's Day, as more appropriately belong to it, because it has a precedence and is first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath.”

Since, admittedly, all the Church of God kept the seventh-day Sabbath in apostolic days and until about A.D. 140, when we perceive for the first time that *some* began to observe the first day of the week, the question

naturally arises: Why was this changeover accomplished? We have previously noted that some of the reasons given were because pagan converts, which included some of the early Church Fathers, brought some of their pagan beliefs and practice along, among which was Sunday observance. Other reasons given were that the Messiah was supposed to have been raised from the dead on the first day of the week, and the so-called “eighth day” played a role with some; another that we may note here is that of which Doctor Neander treats, as previously noted: “Opposition to Judaism introduced the particular festival of Sunday, very early indeed, into the place of the Sabbath.”

Another historian presented a similar reason for the change: “The best time for the Easter festival would have been the ancient day of the Jewish Passover. It was opposed merely by a whim of Constantine, because, as a Roman, he hated the nation which his country had long detested and persecuted, that is, the Jews.” He then quotes from a letter of Constantine to the bishops of the world who could not attend the Council of Nicaea. It was declared improper to follow the customs of the Jews in the celebration of this holy festival.

“Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries. . . . Therefore this irregularity must be corrected, in order that we may no more have anything in common with the parricides and murderers of our Lord” (Dean Dudley, in *History of the Council of Nice*, with a “Life of Constantine,” pp. 4, 5, 112).

The Catholic Church, too, subsequently made laws and regulations in the matter of Sunday observance. The following is a quotation from the Council of Laodicea, A.D. 364: “Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord’s Day, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizing, let him be anathema from Christ” (as quoted in *A History of the Church Councils*, by Charles J. Hefele, Volume 11, p. 316).

Catholic Priest T. Enright, one-time president of Redemptorist Father’s College (Kansas City), in one of his lectures, as published in the *Industrial American*, Harlan, Iowa, referred to this decision made at the Council of Laodicea in the following excerpt:

“My brethren, look about the various wrangling sects and denominations. Show me one that claims or possesses the power to make laws binding on the conscience. There is but one on the face of the earth — the Catholic Church — that has the power to make laws binding upon the conscience, binding before God, binding under the pain of hellfire. Take, for instance, the day we celebrate — Sunday. What right have the Protestant churches to observe that day? None whatever. You say it is to obey the commandment, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ But Sunday is not the Sabbath according to the Bible and the record of time.

“Everyone knows that Sunday is the first day of the week, while Saturday is the seventh day, and the Sabbath, the day consecrated as a day of rest. It is so recognized in all civilized nations. I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who will furnish proof from the Bible that Sunday is the day we are bound to keep, and no one has called for the money. If any person in this town will show any Scripture for it, I will tomorrow evening publicly acknowledge it and thank him for it. It was the Holy Catholic Church that changed the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday, the first day of the week. And it not only compelled all to keep Sunday, but at the Council of Laodicea, A.D. 364, anathematized those who kept the Sabbath and urged all persons to labor on the seventh day under penalty of anathema.

“Which church does the whole civilized world obey? Protestants call us every horrible name they can think of — anti-Christ, the scarlet-colored beast, Babylon, etc., and at the same time profess great reverence for the Bible, and yet by their solemn act of keeping Sunday, they acknowledge the power of the Catholic Church” (December 19, 1889).

We have previously noticed the relationship between the Roman Emperor Constantine and the Roman Catholic Church. A second great autocrat who also contributed the shaping upon the Catholic church a distinctly authoritative character, was Theodosius the Great, who ruled from A.D. 379 to 395.

“But near the Aquila on 6 September, 394, once more the Christian Laborum triumphed over the banner of the ancient gods; Theodosius entered Rome sole Master of the now finally Christian empire. Further

laws enforced the keeping of Sunday and the disabilities of Pagans, Jews, and heretics” (*The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Volume XIV, p. 479).

Chrysostom, Post-Nicene Church Father, Patriarch of Constantinople, who died about 402 A.D., in his commentary on **Galatians 2:17**, says:

“For though few are now circumcised, yet by fasting and observing the Sabbath of the Jew, they equally exclude themselves from grace . . . . Wherefore dost thou keep the Sabbath, and fast with the Jews? . . . A fear to omit the Sabbath plainly shows that you fear the law as still in force” (*Library of the Fathers*, Volume 6, p. 42, Oxford, 1840).

Thus we see that in the fifth century there were still Sabbath-keepers, but Chrysostom, Augustine, and others contended for the abolition of the Sabbath, and for the observance of the “Lord’s Day,” as Sunday was often called, incorrectly, of course. (The *true* Lord’s Day of *scriptural* authority is the seventh day, our Saturday, Sabbath. **See Isaiah 58:13, Mark 2:28.**)

### **Sunday During the Dark Ages**

The opening of the sixth century witnessed the further development of the apostasy and the elevation of the bishop or pope of Rome to be the head of all the churches. Justinian, the restorer of the fallen Roman Empire in the west, in A.D. 531, decreed and enforced by arms the subjugation of the whole church to the Roman Pope, and about 532 bestowed upon him the title of *Rector Ecclesiae*, or lord of the church (*A Manual of Church History*, by A. H. Newman, 1933, p. 403; *Justinian’s Code*, Book 1, Title 1, *Baronius’ Annals*).

Since ecclesiastical laws were a part of Justinian’s Code, the spiritual as well as the temporal power of the Papacy was strengthened. Ecclesiastical laws were enforced by the civil government. The final outcome of Justinian’s decrees and enforcement of cannon laws was the establishment of a totalitarian church. Thus the Roman Church began governing mankind after her own pretensions, under the idea of a “Holy Roman Empire,” though it was not officially called that until the crowning of Charlemagne the Great by the Pope in A.D. 800.

Hengstenbery, in his *The Lord’s Day*, p. 58, gives us an insight into the existing state of the Sunday festival:

“The third council of Orleans, A.D. 538, says in its twenty-ninth canon; ‘The opinion is spreading amongst the people, that it is wrong to ride, or drive, or cook, or do anything to the house, or the person on the Sunday. But since such opinions are more Jewish than Christian, that shall be lawful in the future, which has been so to the present time. On the other hand agricultural labor ought to be laid aside, in order that the people may not be prevented from attending church.’”

Near the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory exhorted the people of Rome to “expiate on the day of our Lord’s resurrection what was remissly done for the six days before” (Morer’s *Dialogues on the Lord’s Day*, p. 282). In the same epistle, according to Doctor Twisse, London, 1641, he gives Gregory’s words as follows:

“Revelation is made unto me that certain men of a perverse spirit, have sown among you some corrupt doctrines contrary to our holy faith; so as to forbid any work to be done on the Sabbath day; these men we may call the preachers of Antichrist.”

This shows the intolerant feeling of the Papacy toward the Sabbath, even when joined with the observance of Sunday. It also shows that there were Sabbath-keepers even in Rome at that time.

About the middle of the seventh century, at Chalons, a city in Burgundy, there was a provincial synod which confirmed what had been done by the third council of Toledo in Spain, which sat about A.D. 681, forbade the Jews to keep their own festivals, but decreed that they should observe the Lord’s Day as to do no manner of work on it (Morer’s *Dialogues on the Lord’s Day*).

We find Sunday appearing on the statute books in England during the last decade of the seventh century. Ina, king of the west Saxons, decreed in A.D. 692, “If a servant do any work on Sunday by his master’s order, he shall be free, and the master pay thirty shillings; but if he went to work on his own head, he shall be either beaten with stripes or ransom himself with a price. A freeman, if he works on this day, shall lose his freedom, or pay sixty shillings; if he be a priest, double” (Morer’s *Dialogues on the Lord’s Day*, p. 283).

During the eighth century a council of the English clergy, in 747, made a constitution, ordering that the Lord's Day be celebrated with due veneration. In 772 an ecclesiastical statute was enacted at Dingesolinum in Bavaria, which decreed, "If any man shall work his cart on this day, or do any such common business, his team shall be presently forfeited to the public use, and if the party persists in his folly, let him be sold for a bondman."

In A.D. 791, Charles the Great summoned the bishops to Friuli, Italy, where they decreed that all the people should, with due reverence and devotion, honor the Lord's Day (Morer's *Dialogues*).

During the ninth century Charlemagne called the councils of Mentz, Rheims, Tours, Chalons, and Arles. At the council of Chalons they entreated the help of secular power to provide for the strictest observation of Sunday. Pope Eugenius, in a council or synod held at Rome about A.D. 826, gave directions that the parish priest should admonish the offenders to go to church and say prayers, lest they bring some great calamity upon themselves (Morer's *Dialogues*).

In the eleventh century the Sunday festival gained a foothold also in Norway. In Spain, also, the work went forward. A council was held at Coy, A.D. 1050, under Ferdinand, king of Castile, in the days of Pope Leo IX, where it was decreed that the Lord's Day "was to be entirely consecrated to hearing of mass." In a council at Rome, A.D. 1070, Pope Gregory VII decreed that as the Sabbath had long been regarded as a fast day, those who desired to be Christians should on that day abstain from eating meat.

A crowning act of impious nonsense of the thirteenth century should be mentioned. Apparently Sunday sacredness had not been sufficiently established everywhere, so that it was promoted by a so-called divine warrant. Roger Hoveden, a historian of high repute, lived at the very time when this much-needed precept was furnished by the pope. We are informed that Eustace, the abbot of Flaye in Normandy, came to England in the year 1200 to preach the word of the Lord, and that his preaching was attended by many wonderful miracles. He inveighed against the desecration of Sunday, but was repulsed, so returned to Normandy from where he had come. In the following year, 1201, Eustace returned to

England, and in his preaching forbade any person to hold a market of goods on sale on the “Lord’s Day.” He claimed that he had received an underwritten commandment for the observance of the “Lord’s Day,” come down from heaven.

### **“The Holy Commandments as to the Lord’s Day”**

“Which came down from Heaven to Jerusalem, and was found upon the altar of Saint Simeon, in Golgath, where Christ was crucified for the sins of the world. The Lord sent down this epistle and after looking upon which, three days and three nights, some men fell upon the earth, imploring mercy of God. And after the third hour, the patriarch arose, and Acharias, the archbishop, and they opened the scroll, and received the holy epistle from God. And when they had taken the same they found this writing there:

“I am the Lord, who commanded you to observe the holy day of the Lord, and ye have not kept it, and have not repented of your sins, as I have said in my gospel, ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.’ . . . Once more, it is my will, that no one from the ninth hour on Saturday until sunrise on Monday, shall do any work except that which is good.

“And if any person shall do so, he shall with penance make amends for the same. And if you do not pay obedience to this command, verily, I say unto you, and I swear unto you, by my seat and by my throne, and by the cherubim who watch my holy seat, that I will give you many commands by no other epistle, but I will open the heavens, and for rain I will rain upon you stones, and wood, and hot water, in the night, that no one may take precautions against the same, and that so I may destroy all wicked men.

“This do I say unto you; for the Lord’s holy day, you shall die the death, and for the other festivals of my saints which you have not kept, I will send unto you beasts that have the heads of lions, the hair of women, the tails of camels, and they shall be so ravenous that they shall devour your flesh, and you shall long to flee to the tombs of the dead, and to hide yourselves for fear of the beasts. . . .



“Hear ye my voice, that ye may not perish in the land, for the holy day of the Lord. Depart from evil, and show repentance for your sins. For, if you do not do so, even as Sodom and Gomorrah shall you perish. Now, know ye, that you are saved by the prayers of my most holy Mother, Mary, and of my most holy angels, who pray for you daily. . . .

“I gave unto you a law in Mount Sinai, which you have not kept. I gave you a law with mine own hands, which you have not observed. For you I was born into the world, and my festive day ye knew not. Being wicked men, ye have not kept the Lord’s day of my resurrection. By my right hand I swear unto you, that if you do not observe the Lord’s Day, and the festival of my saints, I will send unto you the pagan nations, that they may slay you. And still do you attend to the business of others, and take no consideration of this? For this I will send against you still worse beasts, who shall devour the breasts of your women. I will curse those who on the Lord’s day have wrought evil” (Hoveden, Volume II, pp. 526-528).

We have quoted a part of the “heaven-sent” document to show what men will stoop to do in order to bolster up a doctrine or tradition for which they have no scriptural grounds. In such ridiculous forgeries did the Sunday rest of the Dark Ages culminate.

### **Sunday Since the Reformation**

The theory which had been held so long — that the Sabbath was for the Jews only — was accepted by the continental reformers with little questioning. Being prejudiced against anything Jewish and having hatred toward the Romish doctrines of church-appointed holy days left some of the reformers with a no-Sabbath platform. It ought not to surprise us that while they pretended to reject the authority of the church, they nevertheless retained many of the old practices of the Catholic church. What follows next is a statement by Martin Luther:

“As for the Sabbath or Sunday, there is no necessity for its observance, and if we do so, the reason ought to be, not because Moses commanded it, but because nature likewise teaches us to give ourselves, from time to time, a day’s rest, in order that man and beast may recruit their strength, and that we may go and hear the Word of God preached” (Michelet’s *Life of Luther*, Hazlitt’s translation, p. 271, London: 1846).

The twenty-eighth article of the Augsburg Confession, drawn up by Melancthon, and treating of the power of the church, takes up this question:

“Even such is the observance of the Lord’s day, of Easter, of Pentecost, and the like holy days, and rites. For they that judge that, by the authority of the Church, the observing of Sunday instead of the Sabbath-day, was ordained as a thing necessary, do greatly err. The Scripture permits and grants, that the keeping of the Sabbath-day is now free; for it teaches that the ceremonies of Moses’ law, since the revelation of the gospel, are not necessary. And yet, because it was needful to ordain a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the church did appoint Sunday, which day, as it appears, pleased them rather than the Sabbath day, even for this cause, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping and observance of either Saturday, or any other day, is not necessary” (*Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, Article 15, New York: 1850).

Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, has been quoted in the following words:

“The Sabbath, in so far forth as it is ceremonial, is abolished; and therefore, now we are not tied or bound to any certain times” (Brabourne, *On the Sabbath*, p. 277, London: 1630).

The *Confession* of the Swiss declared:

“The observance of the Lord’s day is founded not on any commandment of God, but on the authority of the church; and, that the church may alter the day at pleasure” (Cox’s *Sabbath Laws*, p. 287).

John Calvin, successor of Zwingli in his reformatory movements in Switzerland and France, also expressed his views regarding the Sabbath question in his writings:

“Sec. 34. However, the ancients have, not without sufficient reason, substituted what we call the Lord’s day in the room of the Sabbath. For since the resurrection of the Lord is the end and consummation of the true rest, which was adumbrated by the ancient Sabbath, the same day which put an end to the shadows admonishes Christians not to adhere to a shadowy ceremony. Yet I do not lay so much stress on the septenary

number that I would oblige the church to an invariable adherence to it; nor will I condemn those churches which have their solemn days for their assemblies, provided they keep at a distance from superstition” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1, Book 2, Chapter 8).

One of the most noted English reformers was William Tyndale, the translator. In this reply to Sir Thomas More, we find in part:

“And as for the Sabbath, a great matter, we be lords over the Sabbath, and may yet change it into the Monday, or any other day, as we see need; or may make every tenth day holy day, only if we see a cause why. We may make two every week, if it were expedient and one not enough to teach the people. Neither was there any cause to change it from the Saturday, than to put a difference between us and the Jews, and lest we should become servants of the day after their superstition. Neither needed we any holy day at all, if the people might be taught without it” (*Tyndale’s Answer to More*, Book 1, Chapter XXV).

The Puritan Party in England, who wanted a greater reformation of the Church of England than that established by Elizabeth, separated from the established church. Since all reforms generally find their first welcome among the masses, the Puritanic ideas found acceptance among them. The spirit of liberty demanded release from civil and ecclesiastical oppression. At first they pleaded for a better observance of Sunday as they continued to seek for a higher life of purity.

The established Church of England (the Episcopalians) required men to observe only Sunday and rejected the rest, because they were institutions of the church. Their inconsistency was pointed out, inasmuch as the same authority had ordained them all. Naturally, they would have to choose between giving up Sunday altogether or else maintain that divine appointment from God who separated it from the other festivals. They decided upon the latter. The Fourth Commandment enforces the observance of the seventh day from Creation to the Resurrection; since then a seventh-part-of-time theory replaced it.

Much of the Puritan theory concerning Sabbath and Sunday may be found in the writings of Nicholas Bounde in a book entitled, *Sabbathum Veteris et Novi Testamentie, or The Doctrine of the Sabbath Plainly Laid Forth and Soundly Proven*, 1595.

## Sunday in Colonial America

About the beginning of the seventeenth century, because of their plight in England, certain dissenters fled from England to Holland, and for various reasons returned to England, and from there to the New World. They reached America in 1620 and settled at New Plymouth. Others followed later and joined them. That was the establishment of New England and of Puritanism in America. The laws for the new colony were an outgrowth of their religion, apparently very much based on the theocracy of the Hebrews. The result was a sort of union of church and state.

In our former section on “The Sabbath in America,” we pointed out from historical data that among the Pilgrims were Sabbath-keepers. How they fared with their belief under strict Sunday laws is not known to this writer. Another thing, Sunday was generally referred to as the Sabbath and sometimes as the Lord’s Day. At that time they seemed to have transferred strict Sabbath-keeping rules onto Sunday. A short sketch of history concerning Sunday of the early colonists follows.

In 1650 a court enacted that “whosoever shall profane the Lord’s day by doing any servile work, or any such like abuse, shall forfeit for every such default ten shillings, or be whipped.” In 1658, the court decided that travelers were to be apprehended by the constable and be fined twenty shillings or else set in the stocks four hours, unless they gave sufficient reason for their so doing. Similar laws were enacted in regard to non-attendance at the meeting house on “the Lord’s Day,” for smoking on that day, and for jesting, sleeping, and the like (*Plymouth Colony Records*, Volume XI, pp. 56, 58, 100, 122, 137, 140, 204, 224, 225).

The Massachusetts Colony also had its own regulations after the Plymouth Colony became united to Massachusetts under a new charter. The first “general letter” from the governor and deputy of the company in England (1629) contained the following instructions:

“And to the end the Sabbath may be celebrated in a religious manner, we appoint that all that inhabit the plantation, both for the general and particular employments, may surcease their labor every Saturday

throughout the year, at three of the clock in the afternoon, and that they spend the rest of the day in catechizing, and preparations for the Sabbath, as the ministers may direct” (*Massachusetts Colony Records*, Volume 1, p. 395).

Among the “Answers of the Reverend Elders” to certain questions propounded to them, 1644, we find how strict they were: “The striking of a neighbor may be punished with some pecuniary mulct, when the striking of a father may be punished with death. So any sin committed with an high hand, as the gathering of sticks on the Sabbath-day, may be punished with death, when a lesser punishment might serve for gathering sticks privily, and in some need” (*Massachusetts Colony Records*, Volume 2, p. 93).

The history of Sunday laws in Connecticut shows that they were similar to those of Massachusetts. The penalties for the profanation of “the Lord’s Day” were all the way from the cutting off the offenders’ ears to their being put to death, “that all others may fear and shun such provoking, rebellious courses.”

One would expect no law enforcing Sunday observance in the land of Roger Williams, yet all work or play was prohibited. Rhode Island’s General Assembly, sitting at Newport (1673), enacted that although no one can be forced to worship God, or to keep holy or not to keep holy any day, yet to prevent “debaistness” they should be required not to do what is debasing, with penalties attached for disobedience (*Rhode Island Colonial Records*, Volume 2, pp. 503, 504).

The early settlers in what is now the state of New York the colony of the New Netherlands, as it was called — had no representative government, for it was administered by officers appointed in Holland. In 1647 Peter Stuyvesant was made leader of the colony. He was supposed to have been credited with making some rulings, as the following shows:

“Proclamations were immediately issued with a zeal and rapidity which promised to make a ‘thorough reformation.’ Sabbath-breaking, brawling, and drunkenness were forbidden. Publicans were restrained from selling liquors, except to travelers, before two o’clock in the evening” (*History of New Netherlands*, by Mr. Broadhead, first period, p. 466).

The early Sunday laws of Pennsylvania were less strict than those in the New England states. In 1700-1701 a general law was passed prohibiting servile work on Sunday, on pain of twenty shillings fine, but there were numerous exceptions under this provision. Various changes and modifications followed up to 1786, when the old laws were repealed and a new one enacted (*Laws of Pennsylvania*, Volume 2, Chapter 297, folio edition, 1792).

The early laws of Virginia had resemblances to those of the New England colonies. In 1614, the Cavaliers enacted a statute which provided that he who did not attend church on Sunday should pay a fine of two pounds of tobacco. This was the first law ever enacted in America, six years before the Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock (*Sabbath Doctrine* No. 45, p. 15, New York).

### **Current Sunday Observance**

Biblical history reveals that originally the first day of the week was a work day and the seventh day a Sabbath (**Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11**). It was still so considered while the Messiah lived here on earth (**Luke 4:16-19, 23:54-56**). The apostles and the early church were all Sabbath-keepers (**Luke 4:31-40; Acts 13:14, 42-44, 15:19-21, 16:11-13, 17:1-4, 18:1-4, 11**).

The departure from the Sabbath commandment appears about the middle of the second century, beginning with the so-called Church Fathers. The most ardent exponents of first-day festivities were converts from Grecian philosophy and paganism. The Sun's-day had been a leading weekly pagan festival for many centuries, and it naturally formed a common ground on which paganism and apostatizing Christianity could meet.

The gradual elevation of Sunday in place of the Sabbath was further enhanced by opposition to Judaism. The Emperor Constantine, who made his famous civil edict in A.D. 321 that men refrain from working on the first day of the week, the "venerable day of the Sun," declared at the Council of Nicaea (in A.D. 325): "Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries . . . . Therefore this irregularity must

be corrected, in order that we may no more have anything in common with the parricides and murderers of our Lord.”

Adding to this, the Roman Catholic Church at the 29th Canon of the Council of Laodicea (in A.D. 364) anathematized those who kept the Sabbath and urged all persons to labor on the seventh day of the week under penalty of a curse.

No wonder most of Christendom fell into the error of forsaking the Commandments of the Most High and accepting the traditions of men. Although there are several million Sabbatarians (besides the Jews) currently in the world, the fact remains that almost the entire world of professing Christians are either first-day or no-day religionists.

Some Sunday laws, or blue laws, which in recent years have not been well enforced, are still on the statute books in England and in America. Because of the laxness of Sunday observance in general, some movements have endeavored to bring about stricter legislation to *force* the public to observe Sunday as a day of rest and worship.

Friend, which day will *you* choose?

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## Appendix I

It has been pointed out (Butler’s *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Principle Saints*, Art. St. Colombo, A.D. 597) that there were Seventh-day Sabbath-keepers in Scotland during the sixth century.

That this practice was kept up until the eleventh century, is verified from the following:

“ST. MARGARET, Queen of Scotland, was born in Hungary about 1040, was a daughter of Edward the Atheling, son of Edward Ironside . . .

“Her religion, which was genuine and intense, was of the newest Roman style; and to her are attributed a number of reforms by which the Church of Scotland was considerably modified from the insular and primitive type which down to her time had exhibited.

“Among those expressly mentioned are a change in the manner of observing Lent, which thence forward began as elsewhere on Ash

Wednesday and not as previously on the following Monday, and the abolition of the old practice of observing Saturday (Sabbath), not Sunday, as the day of rest from labor.” (See Skene’s *Celtic Scotland*, book ii, chap. 8). Taken from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. XV, p. 537.

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