

Changing the Sabbath

The Scriptures tell us that the Sabbath is to be observed on the seventh day, which is Saturday. However, Protestants today cling to Sunday as their day of worship. The Catholic Church claims that they are responsible for the change of the Sabbath.

Author John Ley tells us that "From the apostles' time until the council of Laodicea, which was about the year 364, the holy observation of the Jew's Sabbath continued, as may be proved out of many authors: yea, notwithstanding the decree of the council against it."ⁱ

We must decide whether we will follow the Bible's teachings or tradition. Christ had some strong words on this matter:

Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition...Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition...But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:3,6,9).

Papal Authority and the Sabbath Change

The Sabbath is the commandment emphasizing the authority of the lawgiver (See The Royal Seal). A change in the Sabbath means a change in the authority of the lawgiver. When we choose another Sabbath, we give the authority to another entity. God is no longer the authority. Rather, the substitute—the counterfeit—grasps this position. Another god on Earth has attempted to replace the true God.

The Papacy claims to have changed the Sabbath, but behind papal authority is an even higher authority that wants to steal Christ's claim on our lives. Satan was worshiped in pagan traditions under the symbol of the sun. He was the hidden one, the god behind the scenes. Sunday was the day dedicated to sun worship, but Christianity still adopted Sunday as the holy day:

Sunday...so called because this day was anciently dedicated to the sun, or to its worship.ⁱⁱ

Sunday, so called because it was dedicated to the worship of the sun.ⁱⁱⁱ

Sunday (Dies Solis of the Roman calendar, 'Day of the sun,' being dedicated to the sun), the first Day of the week.^{iv}

Sabbath Change in New Testament Times

Through the influence of Mithraism (Persian sun worship) in the Roman Empire and the heathen festival of Sunday, the pure Church of Christ gradually fell into apostasy. Even in the days of the apostles the great apostasy had begun to develop. Paul

writes, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Paul also declares this:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).

A Theological Dictionary agrees with Paul. It states, “It must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first Day.”^v

Constantine and the Sabbath Change

Sunday actually made very little headway as a Christian day of rest until the time of Constantine in the fourth century. Constantine was emperor of Rome from AD 306 to 337. He was a sun worshiper during the first years of his reign.

Later, he professed conversion to Christianity, but at heart remained a devotee of the sun. Edward Gibbon says, “The Sun was universally celebrated as the invincible guide and protector of Constantine.”^{vi}

Constantine created the earliest Sunday law known to history in AD 321:

On the venerable Day of the sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits: because it often happens that another Day is not so suitable for grain sowing or for vine planting: lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.^{vii}

Chamber’s Encyclopedia says this:

Unquestionably the first law, either ecclesiastical or civil, by which the Sabbatical observance of that Day is known to have been ordained, is the edict of Constantine, 321 A.D.^{viii}

Following this initial legislation, both emperors and Popes in succeeding centuries added other laws to strengthen Sunday observance. What began as a pagan ordinance ended as a Christian regulation.

Close on the heels of the *Edict of Constantine* followed the Catholic Church Council of Laodicea (circa 364 AD):

Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday (Sabbath), but shall work on that Day: but the Lord’s Day, they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that Day. If however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ.^{ix}

Boasts of the Roman Church about Sunday

The Catholic Church claims responsibility for the change from seventh-day to first-day Sabbath. Here is an explanation from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* Section 2 Article 3 (1994):

Sunday – fulfillment of the Sabbath. Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath... The Sabbath, which represented the completion of the first creation, has been replaced by Sunday which recalls the new creation, has been replaced by Sunday which recalls the new creation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Christ... In respecting religious liberty and the common good of all, Christians should seek recognition of Sundays and the Church's holy days as legal holidays.

And here are various Catholic sources claiming the change was the doing of the Roman Catholic Church:

Cardinal James Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (Ayers Publishing, 1978): 108:

But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.

***The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (1957): 50:**

Q. Which is the Sabbath day? A. Saturday is the Sabbath day. Q. Why Do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.

Chancellor Albert Smith for Cardinal of Baltimore Archdiocese, letter dated February 10, 1920:

If Protestants would follow the Bible, they should worship God on the Sabbath day by God is Saturday. In keeping the Sunday, they are following a law of the Catholic Church.

Stephen Keenan, *Catholic—Doctrinal Catechism 3rd Edition*: 174:

Question: Have you any other way of proving the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?

Answer: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her, she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the 1st day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the 7th day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.^x

Our Sunday Visitor (February 5, 1950):

Practically everything Protestants regard as essential or important they have received from the Catholic Church... The Protestant mind does not seem to realize that in accepting the Bible and observing the Sunday, in keeping Christmas and Easter, they are accepting the authority of the spokesman for the church, the Pope.

Louis Gaston Segur, *Plain Talk about the Protestantism of To-Day* (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1874): 213:

Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is a homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the (Catholic) Church.

The Catholic Mirror (September 23, 1893):

The Catholic Church, for over 1000 years before the existence of a protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday... Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives: either Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday, or Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is impossible.

Sunday is therefore to this day the acknowledged offspring of the Catholic Church as spouse of the Holy Ghost, without a word of remonstrance from the Protestant world.

But the Protestant says: How can I receive the teachings of an apostate Church? How, we ask, have you managed to receive her teachings all your life, in direct opposition to your recognized teacher, the Bible, on the Sabbath question. ...those who follow the Bible as their guide, the Israelites and the Seventh-day Adventists have the exclusive weight of evidence on their side, whilst the Biblical Protestant has not a word in self-defence for the substitution of Sunday for Saturday.

The Adventists are the only body of Christians with the Bible as their teacher, who can find no warrant in its pages for the change of day from the seventh to the first. Hence their appellation, "Seventh-day Adventists."

Catholic Priest T. Enright, CSSR, Kansas City, MO:

It was the holy Catholic Church that changed the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday, the 1st day of the week. And it not only compelled all to keep Sunday, but at the Council of Laodicea, AD 364, anathematized those who kept the Sabbath and urged all persons to labor on the 7th day under penalty of anathema.

Catholic Priest T. Enright, CSSR, lecture at Hartford, KS, Feb 18, 1884:

I have repeatedly offered \$1000 to any one who can furnish any proof from the Bible that Sunday is the day we are bound to keep...The Bible says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," but the Catholic Church says, "No, keep the first day of the week,"

and the whole world bows in obedience.

Cardinal James Gibbon, *The Catholic Mirror* (December 23, 1893):

Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives: either Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday, or Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is impossible.

Cardinal John Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Basil Montague Pickering, 1878): 373:

The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons...are all of pagan origin and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.

***Catholic Record* (September 1, 1923):**

Sunday is our mark of authority...The [Catholic] Church is above the Bible, and this transference of the Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.

Pope Leo XIII, *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae (The Reunion of Christendom)*, June 20, 1894:

We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.

“Pope,” *Ferraris’ Ecclesiastic Dictionary*:

The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the vicar of God.

***Our Sunday Visitor* (April 18, 1915): 3:**

The letters inscribed in the Pope’s miter are these: VICARIUS FILLII DEI, which is the Latin for, “Vicar of the Son of God.”

Letter from C.F. Thomas, Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons on October 28, 1895:

Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act...And the act is a MARK of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.

***American Catholic Quarterly Review* (January 1883):**

Sunday...is purely a creation of the Catholic Church.

***Catholic American Sentinel* (June 1893):**

Sunday...It is a law of the Catholic Church alone...

S.C. Mosna, *Storia della Domenica* (1969): 366-367:

Not the Creator of the Universe in Genesis 2:1-3, but the Catholic Church "can claim the honor of having granted man a pause to his work every seven days."

"The Question Box," *The Catholic Universe Bulletin* (August 14, 1942): 4:

The (Catholic) Church changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday by right of the divine, infallible authority given to her by her Founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant claiming the Bible to be the only guide of faith, has no warrant for observing Sunday. In this matter, the Seventh-day Adventist is the only consistent Protestant.

Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1928): 145:

The Church made a sacred day of Sunday...largely because it was the weekly festival of the sun; for it was a definite Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and to give them a Christian significance.

John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions: the Credentials of the Catholic Religion Revised Edition* (Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 1974): 400-401:

But since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn't it curious that non-Catholics, who claim to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Yes, of course, it is inconsistent; but this change was made about fifteen centuries before Protestantism was born, and by that time the custom was universally observed. They have continued the custom even though it rests upon the authority of the Catholic Church and not upon and explicit text in the Bible. That observance remains as a reminder of the Mother Church from which the non-Catholic sects broke away—like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair.

This change from Saturday to Sunday Sabbath was prophesied about in Daniel 7. The great reformer Philipp Melanchton knew this truth five centuries ago. He wrote this:

He changeth the tymes and lawes that any of the sixe worke dayes commanded of God will make them unholy and idle dayes when he lyste, or of their owne holy dayes abolished make worke dayes agen, or when they changed ye Saterday into Sondag...They have changed God's lawes and turned them into their owne tradicions to be kept above God's precepts.^{xi}

i John Ley, *Sunday a Sabbath* (London: 1640): 163, as quoted on SundayLaw.net

ii "Sunday," *Webster's Dictionary*.

iii McClintock and Strong, "Sunday," *Biblical and Theological Encyclopedia*.

iv "Sunday," *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*.

v Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary* (Philadelphia, 1815): 463.

vi Edward Gibbon, *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* Volume 3 (London: 1838): 237.

vii Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Volume 3 (Edinburgh: 1884): 380, note.

viii "Sabbath," *Chamber's Encyclopedia* Volume 11 (1982): 401.

ix Rev. Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Church Councils from 326 to 429* Volume 2 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1896): 316.

X As quoted in *God's Answers to Your Questions* (Review and Herald Publishing, 1989): 50.

ii George Joye, *The exposition of Daniel the Prophete gathered oute of Philip Melanchton/ Johan Ecolampadius/ Conrade Pellicane andout of Johan Draconite, etc.* (1545): 119.

Appendix 1

Protestant Testimony of the Sabbath Change

Anglican

"And where are we told in the Scriptures that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh, but we are nowhere commanded to keep the first day...The reasons why we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, but because the [catholic] church has enjoined [ordered] it." —Isaac Williams, *Plain Sermons on the Catechism volume 1*: 334, 336.

"Many people think that Sunday is the Sabbath, but neither in the New Testament nor in the early church, is there anything to suggest that we have any right to transfer the observance of the seventh day of the week to the first. The Sabbath was and is Saturday and not Sunday." —Rev. Lionel Beere, *Church and People* (September 1, 1947).

Baptist

"There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but the Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will, however, be readily said, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, with all its duties, privileges and sanctions...Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament —absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week. ...What a pity that it [Sunday] comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun-god, then adopted and sanctified by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism." —Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, sermon at Baptist Ministers' Convention, Saratoga, NY, August 20, 1893, as quoted in Charlene R. Fortsch, *Daniel: Understanding the Dreams and Vision* (British Columbia: Prophecy Song, 2006): 363.

Congregationalist

"It is quite clear that however rigidly or devoutly we spend Sunday, we are not keeping the Sabbath...The Sabbath was founded on a specific Divine Command. We can plead no such command for the obligation to observe Sunday...There is not a single sentence in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday." —Robert William Dale, *The Ten Commandments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884): 100-101.

"The current notion that Christ and His apostles authoritatively substituted the first day for the seventh is absolutely without any authority in the New Testament." —Dr. Laymen Abbot, *Christian Union* (June 26, 1890).

Disciples of Christ

"There's no direct Scriptural authority for designating the first day 'the Lord's Day'." —Dr. D. H. Lucas, *Christian Oracle* (January 23, 1890).

Episcopalian

"We have made the change from the seventh day to the first day, from Saturday to Sunday, on the authority of the one holy catholic apostolic church." —Bishop Seymour as quoted in Kevin Morgan, *Sabbath Rest* (TEACH Services, 2002): 13.

"Is there any command in the New Testament to change the day of weekly rest from Saturday to Sunday? None." —*Manual of Christian Doctrine*: 127.

Lutheran

"The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals, was always only a human ordinance, and it was far from the intentions 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." —Augustus Neander and Henry John Rose, *The History of the Christian Religion and Church* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1848): 186.

"We have seen how gradually the impression of the Jewish [not exclusively Jewish, but given to all God's people] Sabbath faded from the mind of the Christian Church, and how completely the newer thought underlying observance of the first day took possession of the church. We have seen that the Christians of the first 3 centuries never confused one with the other." —*The Sunday Problem* (1923): 36.

Methodist

"It is true there is no positive command for infant baptism. Nor is there any for keeping holy the first day of the week. Many believe that Christ changed the Sabbath. But, from His own words, we see that He came for no such purpose." —Amos Binney, *Theological Compendium*: 180, 181.

"Take the matter of Sunday...there is no passage telling Christians to keep that day, or to transfer the Jewish Sabbath to that day." —Harris F. Rall, *Christian Advocate* (July 2, 1942): 26.

Presbyterian

Into the rest of Sunday, no Divine Law enters...The observance of Ash Wednesday, or Lent, stands exactly on the same footing as the observance of Sunday." —Canon Eyton, *The Ten Commandments*: 63, 65.

"A change of the day to be observed, from the last day of the week to the first. There is no record no express command, authorizing this change." —Nathan L. Rice et al., *The Christian Sabbath* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1863): 60.

Southern Baptist

"The sacred name of the seventh day is Sabbath. This fact is too clear to require argument...Not once did the disciples apply the Sabbath law to the first day of the week—that folly was left for later ages, nor did they pretend that the first day supplanted the seventh." —Joseph J. Taylor, *Sabbatic Question*: 14-17, 41.