

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 186
“SUNDAY SACREDNESS”
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UPDATE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

How is the Writing of *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?* Coming Along?

The research and writing of the new book *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* is coming along well, in spite of an unexpected snag. I promised to post in this newsletter chapter 5 entitled “Purgatory.” But what you are about to read is chapter 6 on “Sunday Sacredness.” What happened! The answer is embarrassing. I forgot a folder with all the material needed to finish the chapter in the glove compartment of the UNITED AIRLINE flight from Chicago to London.

If forgetfulness is a sign of old age, then it is evident that I am getting old. But, thank God that overall my mind seems to be sharper now than ever before. My analytical thinking seems to have improved over the years. Even my body is doing exceptionally well for my nearly 70 years of age. I seem to have more energy now than I had 30 years ago.

When I think that last February several oncologists from leading cancer centers told me that I had only a few months to live, because my liver was infested with a 3 pounds cancer, I can hardly believe that my cancer is practically gone. The last Pet/Cat scan of May 30th, shows that 98% of the cancer cells have been shut down. What can I say: THANK YOU GOD FOR GIVING ME A NEW LEASE ON LIFE. I AM READY TO SERVE YOU UNTIL THE LAST DAY OF MY LIFE

Since I am in England for two weeks to speak at three weekend rallies, I decided to write this chapter on “Sunday Sacredness” while waiting for copies of the material I left on the plane. I can hardly believe it that it took me only four days to write this lengthy 40 pages chapter. The reason is partly because I researched this subject for 15 years, writing four books and numerous articles on this subject, and partly because I am enjoying a peaceful retreat in the home of Gary and Araxi Keshishian.

I have stayed about 20 times with this lovely Adventist professional couple. They have adopted me as their son, though we are of the same age. If your travel plans call for a visit or a stop in London, feel free to contact Gary and Araxi. They will offer you an enjoyable Bed & Breakfast at a reasonable price. Their email is gary@advent.plus.com. For a picture of their home, garden, and accommodation, click at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

A copy of the material I left on the plane just arrived. Now by God’s grace I should be able to complete the chapter on “Purgatory” before I leave England on November 5. This means that 6 of the 10 chapters are written. Obviously there is still editorial cleaning to be done, but by God’s grace I hope to complete this project within the next four months by the end of February 2008.

Financing the Printing of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?*

In my previous newsletters I told you that some fellow believers have promised to raise funds for the printing of this book in order to make it available to churches and individual members FREE OF CHARGE.

This means that if sufficient funds are received to cover the editing and printing costs of *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?*, the book will be offered for only the cost of shipping and handling, that is, about \$2.00 to 3.00 a copy, instead of the regular price of \$25.00 for a book of this size. If the funds received cover only part of the printing costs, then the price will be adjusted accordingly.

So far we have received a few contributions. If you feel impressed to contribute to this project, feel free to contact me. I will tell you where to send your contribution, so that you can receive a tax deductible receipt.

A Renewed Sense of Purpose in my Life

As I am working on this new book an average of 15 hours a day, the conviction is developing within my heart that the Lord is prolonging my life for a purpose. He still wants to use me to make contributions to the mission of His church before I am laid to rest. One of the contributions is the writing of this timely book on *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?* This book may well prove to be my most important contribution to the mission of our Adventist Church.

There are million of people in our society who sincerely believe Satan’s deceptive teachings. We need to help them understand that they are sincere but sincerely wrong. They need to accept God’s saving truths before it is too late. There is no greater joy than calling people “out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

This is what the new book is all about. It is designed to help sincere people understand why some of their popular beliefs are unbiblical and why the Adventist beliefs are biblically sound and relevant to the times in which we live. This is the kind of book that hopefully you can give with confidence to anyone interested to know what is the difference between what they believe and what we Adventist believe.

The essay you are about to read on “Sunday Sacredness” is a good example of what this book is designed to accomplish. The popular belief of Sunday Sacredness shared in common by Catholics and Protestant, is widely accepted as biblical truth. Both Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI have been promoting aggressively with homilies and pastoral letters, Sunday sacredness by appealing to its alleged apostolic origin. As you read the chapter you will note that in a gracious way I expose the fallacies of their arguments, showing that Sunday observance has no biblical authority, meaning or experience.

Some readers have suggested that the previous chapters on “The Immortality of the Soul” and “Hell as Eternal Torment,” ought to be published as separate booklets of about 50 pages, because they address timely topics in a compelling way. This may be particularly of this chapter on “Sunday Sacredness.” Many have asked me to summarize my doctoral dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* in a small booklet that lay persons can understand. Well, this is exactly what I have attempted to accomplish in this chapter.

I have worked intensively to summarize my extensive research of several thousand pages in less than 50 pages. Perhaps someday this chapter could be published as a separate booklet. Such a booklet is desperately needed, because our current publications on the change of the Sabbath available at the ABC, are written by well-intentioned pastors who never had time to study and understand the historical process of the change of God's Holy Day.

After reading this lengthy chapter, feel free to tell me whether or not we should consider publishing the chapter as a booklet, after making the necessary editorial changes. Your comments are greatly appreciated.

New Project: Sharing the Good News of the Sabbath with Words and Songs

I sense that another reason the Lord has given me a new lease on life, is to enable me to proclaim the Sabbath in a more appealing way with the help of an outstanding lyric soprano, Cristina Piccardi. She came to Andrews University recently from Brazil with her husband who is a seminary student.

When I officially met Cristina Piccardi on October 6, 2007 after hearing her singing three times during the divine service at Andrews University Pioneer Memorial Church, I immediately sensed that the Lord is providentially bringing us together to proclaim our timely message in an appealing way through words and songs. Cristina shares my Italian cultural heritage and is by far the best Adventist lyric soprano I have ever heard in all my travels. Though she is only 25 years old, she has won international awards as an opera singer. In fact, she has sang as the leading soprano with several wellknown symphonic orchestra. But after five years of opera singing, she felt the call to sing sacred music that will touch the hearts of people with God's love.

You can enjoy a preview of Cristina's singing by clicking at this link ----- You can see and hear her singing one stanza of THE HOLY CITY.

We are both excited at the thought of ministering to God's people together with words and songs. Our first seminar together will be in three weeks on November 16-17, at the Avon Park SDA Church, a 900 members

congregation located near Orlando, Florida. We are both praying and preparing ourselves for this important event that will be video-recorded.

Cristina will sing for about half an hour before my Friday evening testimony and half an hour Sabbath morning before my meditation on how to keep the Sabbath to gain the greatest blessings out of it. Then on Sabbath afternoon she will give a one hour sacred concert from 4 to 5 p.m., before my final lecture entitled “The Sabbath Under Crossfire,” which deals with the latest Sabbath/Sunday developments.

If you live in the Orlando area, you do not want to miss this memorable opportunity to hear an outstanding Adventist Soprano, as well as some exciting news about the rediscovery of the Sabbath by ministers and congregations of different denominations. The rediscovery of the Sabbath is an unprecedented phenomenon of our time, which reminds us of Ellen White’s prediction that in this final hour of world history “the Sabbath will be proclaimed more fully” (*Early Writings*, p.33).

In fact, on December 21-22, 2007, both Cristina and myself have been invited to present the SABBATH SEMINAR with words and songs at the annual convention of the FRIENDS OF THE SABBATH, held this year in Lexington, Kentucky. The co-ordinator has informed me that for the past several years this annual convention has brought together between 500 to 700 non-SDA sabbatarians, belonging to different congregations that have recently accepted the Sabbath. We look forward to a blessed time together with sabbatarian friends of other churches.

Would you like us to Present a Seminar at your Church in 2008?

If your church wishes to explore the possibility of inviting Cristina and myself to present a seminar on the Sabbath, or Second Advent, or Christian lifestyle, feel free to contact me by phone (269) 471-2915 or by email <sbacchicchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will gladly mail you FREE OF CHARGE the video recording of the seminar to be taped in a few days at the Avon Park SDA Church, near Orlando, Florida. This DVD recording will give an opportunity to your church board to evaluate both Cristina’s singing and my preaching. Since seeing is believing, the best way to introduce the new format of my seminars, is to give you a chance to watch a video recording of both of us in action.

To receive you FREE DVD recording of our seminar, please email us your name, address, phone number, and church name. We will be glad to call you and give you the list of the open dates.

The cost of the seminar is very reasonable, consisting primarily of the refund of two airline tickets and two hotel rooms. We plan to design a new color flier and attractive posters, featuring the pictures of both of us. We will supply the fliers and the posters.

We have already received several invitations for 2008, but we still have several open weekends. If we hear from you in time, we will do our best to reserve a weekend for your church.

Properly promoted, the seminar can draw your community people, eager to hear Cristina singing so passionately about the love of God with her outstanding soprano voice. Her community Sacred Concerts are always well received.

SUNDAY SACREDNESS

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi

Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

Chapter 6 of forthcoming book

POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL

A most popular belief shared in common by Catholics and Protestants is Sunday sacredness. In both religious traditions Sunday is regarded as the "Lord's Day," established by Christ and the Apostles to commemorate Christ's resurrection.

The traditional view of Sunday sacredness is being challenged today by the alarming decline in Sunday observance. In Italy, where I come from, it is estimated that only 5% of Catholics attend Mass regularly on Sunday. About 95% of Catholics go to church three times in their lives: when they are hatched, matched, and dispatched.

The situation is essentially the same in most Western countries where church attendance runs below the 10% of the Christian population. The strikingly low church attendance is seen by church leaders as a threat to the survivals not only of their churches but also of Christianity itself. After all the essence of Christianity is a relationship with God and if Christians ignore the Lord on the day which they view as the Lord's Day, chances are that they will ignore the Lord every day of the week.

President Abraham Lincoln eloquently expressed the vital function of the Sabbath for the survival of Christianity in a speech delivered on November 13, 1862. There he emphasized: “As we keep or break the Sabbath day, we nobly save or meanly lose the last and the best hope by which mankind arises.”¹ Obviously, for Abraham Lincoln, the Sabbath meant Sunday. But this does not detract from the fact that one of America’s outstanding presidents recognized in the principle of Sabbathkeeping the best hope to renew and elevate human beings.

Keenly aware of the implications of the crisis of Sunday observance for the future of Christianity, church leaders and scholars are re-examining the history and theology of Sunday in an effort to promote more effectively Sunday sacredness.

Popes’ Passionate Pleas for a Revival of Sunday Observance

In their homilies and official pronouncements, both Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI, have made passionate pleas for a revival of Sunday observance. For example, on May 31, 1998, Pope John Paul II promulgated a lengthy Pastoral Letter, *Dies Domini—The Lord’s Day*, where he addresses the crisis of Sunday observance. He laments that the “strikingly low” attendance to the Sunday Mass indicates that “faith is weak” and “diminishing.”² He predicts that if this trend is not reversed it can threaten the future of the Catholic Church in the third millennium. He states: “The Lord’s Day has structured the history of the Church through two thousand years: how could we think that it will not continue to shape the future?”³

Benedict XVI has expressed the same concern in his homilies and pastoral letters. For example, on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council constitution on the sacred liturgy, called “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” Benedict XVI wrote a pastoral letter to Cardinal Francis Arinze, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. He said: “For the first Christians, participation in the Sunday celebrations was the natural expression of their belonging to Christ, of communion with his Mystical Body, in the joyful expectation of his glorious return. This belonging was expressed heroically in what happened to the martyrs of Abitene, who faced death exclaiming, ‘*Sine dominico non possumus*,’ without gathering together on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist, we cannot live.”⁴

The Pope continues saying: “How much more necessary it is today to reaffirm the sacredness of the Lord’s Day and the need to take part in Sunday

Mass! The cultural context in which we live, often marked by religious indifference and secularism that blot out the horizon of the transcendent, must not let us forget that the People of God, born from ‘Christ’s Passover-Sunday,’ should return to it as to an inexhaustible source, in order to understand better and better the features of their own identity and the reasons for their existence.”⁵

Sunday Sacredness Derives from its Apostolic Origin

The present “religious indifference and secularism,” manifested in the alarming neglect of Sunday observance, has convinced Benedict XVI that it is imperative “to reaffirm the sacredness of the Lord’s Day,” by returning to its “inexhaustible source” to be found in its “biblical” origin.

Benedict XVI states this belief with amazing clarity later on in the same pastoral letter to Cardinal Francis Arinze, saying: “Sunday was not chosen by the Christian community but by the Apostles, and indeed by Christ himself, who on that day, “the first day of the week,” rose and appeared to the disciples (cf. Mt 28:1; Mk 16: 9; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1,19; Acts 20:7; I Cor 16: 2), and appeared to them again “eight days later” (Jn 20:26).”⁶ Did Christ establish Sunday by resurrecting on that Day? This important question will be examined below in part 3 of this chapter.

John Paul II expresses the same conviction in his Pastoral Letter *Dies Domini—The Lord’s Day*, that the solution to the crisis of Sunday observance must be found in recovering of the “biblical” foundations of Sunday observance in order to keep the day holy. He wrote that today it is “more necessary than ever to recover the deep doctrinal foundations underlying the Church’s precept, so that the abiding value of Sunday in the Christian life will be clear to all the faithful.”⁶

The doctrinal foundations of Sunday observance are sought in its alleged “biblical” origin. This belief has led a host of Catholic and Protestant scholars in recent years to re-examine the origin of Sunday, in the hope of proving its biblical origin, authority and experience.⁷

A major question addressed in recent doctoral dissertations, books, and articles, is the relationship between the Sabbath and Sunday. Simply stated the question is, Did Sunday begin as the continuation of the Sabbath, thus inheriting the sacredness of the Sabbath? Or, Did Sunday begin as a new institution, radically different from the Sabbath, established by the church to celebrate Christ’s resurrection by means of the Lord’s Supper celebration?

To find an answer to this and other related questions, I spent five years at the Pontifical University in Rome, investigating for my doctoral dissertation how the change came about from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity. The findings of my investigation are presented in my book *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*, published in 1977 by the Pontifical Gregorian University press. This chapter represents a brief summary of the highlights of my dissertation.

Objectives of this Chapter

This chapter examines the popular belief of Sunday sacredness from a biblical and historical perspective. Attention will be given to the major biblical and historical arguments commonly used to defend the apostolic origin of Sunday observance.

The chapter divides in six major parts in accordance to the basic outline of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. This means that each part of this chapter represents a summary of the fuller discussion found in a chapter of my dissertation. The seven parts of this chapter are:

- 1) The Theological Connection between Sabbath and Sunday**
- 2) Jesus and the Origin of Sunday**
- 3) The Resurrection and the Origin of Sunday**
- 4) First Day Gatherings and the Origin of Sunday**
- 5) The Jerusalem Church and the Origin of Sunday**
- 6) The Church of Rome and the Origin of Sunday**
- 7) Sun worship and the Origin of Sunday**

PART 1

THE THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SABBATH AND SUNDAY

There are two major views today regarding the historical origin of Sunday and its relationship to the biblical Sabbath. The older, traditional view, which can be traced back to early Christianity, maintains that there is a radical discontinuity between the Sabbath and Sunday. Consequently Sunday is not the Sabbath. The two days differ in their origin, meaning, and experience.⁸

The more recent view, which is articulated by Pope John Paul II himself in his Pastoral Letter *Dies Domini—The Lord's Day*, maintains that

Sunday began as the embodiment and “full expression” of the Sabbath. Consequently the day is to be observed as a biblical imperative, rooted in the Sabbath commandment itself.⁹

Traditional View: Sunday was Established by the Catholic Church

According to the traditional view, which has been held by the Catholic Church and accepted by those Protestant denominations which follow the Lutheran tradition, the Sabbath was a temporary Mosaic institution given to the Jews, abrogated by Christ, and consequently no longer binding upon Christians today. Christians adopted Sunday observance, not as the continuation of the biblical Sabbath, but as a new institution established to celebrate Christ’s resurrection by means of the Lord’s Supper celebration.

This explanation virtually has been regarded as an established fact by Catholic theologians and historians. Thomas of Aquinas, for instance, makes this unambiguous statement: “In the New Law the observance of the Lord’s day took the place of the observance of the Sabbath not by virtue of the precept [Sabbath commandment] but by the institution of the Church and the custom of Christian people.”¹⁰

In his dissertation presented to the Catholic University of America, Vincent J. Kelly similarly affirms: “Some theologians have held that God likewise directly determined the Sunday as the day of worship in the New Law, that He Himself has explicitly substituted the Sunday for the Sabbath. But this theory is now entirely abandoned. It is now commonly held that God simply gave His Church the power to set aside whatever day or days she would deem suitable as Holy Days. The Church chose Sunday, the first day of the week, and in the course of time added other days, as holy days.”¹¹

Even the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) emphasizes the discontinuity between Sabbath and Sunday observance: “Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath.”¹²

Recent View: Sunday is the Continuation and “Full Expression” of the Sabbath

Recently there have been both Catholic and Protestant scholars who have argued for an apostolic origin of Sunday observance. According to

these scholars, the Apostles themselves chose the first day of the week as the new Christian Sabbath at the very beginning of Christianity in order to commemorate Christ's resurrection.

This view is defended at great length by Pope John Paul II in his Pastoral Letter, *Dies Domini—The Lord's Day*, which was promulgated on May 31, 1998. In this lengthy document (over 40 pages) the Pope makes a passionate plea for a revival of Sunday observance by appealing to the moral imperative of the Sabbath commandment. For the Pope Sunday is to be observed, not merely as an institution established by the Catholic Church, but primarily as a moral imperative of the Decalogue. The reason is that Sunday allegedly originated as the embodiment and "full expression" of the Sabbath and consequently should be observed as the biblical Sabbath.¹³

John Paul departs from the traditional Catholic position presumably because he wishes to challenge Christians to respect Sunday, not merely as an institution of the Catholic Church, but as a divine command. Furthermore, by rooting Sundaykeeping in the Sabbath commandment, the Pope offers the strongest moral reasons for urging Christians "to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy."¹⁴

The attempts made by the Pope and other Church leaders to ground Sunday observance on the Sabbath commandment, raises this important question: "If Christians are expected to observe Sunday as the Biblical Sabbath, why should not they observe the Sabbath in the first place?" What was wrong with the biblical Sabbath that needed to be changed to Sunday? To apply the Sabbath Commandment to the observance of the first day of the week, Sunday, can be confusing to say the least, because the Fourth Commandment enjoins the observance of the seventh day, not of the first day. This confusion may explain why many Christians do not take the observance of Sunday seriously.

John Paul speaks eloquently of the theological development of the Sabbath from the rest of creation (Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11) to the rest of redemption (Deut 5:12-15). He notes that in the Old Testament the Sabbath commandment is linked "not only with God's mysterious 'rest' after the days of creation (cf. Ex 20:8-11), but also with the salvation which he offers to Israel in the liberation from the slavery of Egypt (cf. Deut 5:12-15). The God who rests on the seventh day, rejoicing in His creation, is the same God who reveals his glory in liberating his children from Pharaoh's oppression."¹⁵

Being a memorial of creation and redemption, "the 'Sabbath' has therefore been interpreted evocatively as a determining element in the kind

of ‘sacred architecture’ of time which marks biblical revelation. It recalls that the universe and history belong to God; and without constant awareness of that truth, man cannot serve in the world as a co-worker of the Creator.”¹⁶

Sunday as the Embodiment of the Sabbath

In the light of these profound theological insights into the Sabbath as being a kind of “sacred architecture” of time that marks the unfolding of God’s creative and redemptive activity, and as the defining expression of our relationship with God, one wonders how does the Pope succeed in developing a theological justification for Sunday observance? He does this by making Sunday the embodiment and full expression of the biblical Sabbath.

For example, John Paul without hesitation applies to Sunday God’s blessing and sanctification of the Sabbath at creation. “Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day ‘blessed’ by God and ‘made holy’ by him, set apart from the other days to be, among them, ‘the Lord’s Day.’”¹⁷

More importantly, the Pope makes Sunday the “full expression” of the Sabbath by arguing that Sunday, as the Lord’s Day, fulfills the creative and redemptive functions of the Sabbath. These two functions, the Pope claims, “reveal the meaning of the ‘Lord’s Day’ within a single theological vision which fuses creation and salvation.”¹⁸

The Pope maintains that New Testament Christians “made the first day after the Sabbath a festive day” because they discovered that the creative and redemptive accomplishments celebrated by the Sabbath, found their “full-est expression in Christ’s Death and Resurrection, though its definitive fulfillment will not come until the Parousia, when Christ returns in glory.”¹⁹

The Pope’s attempt to make Sunday the “extension and full expression” of the creative and redemptive meanings of the Sabbath is very ingenious, but it lacks biblical and historical support. There are no indications in the New Testament that Christians ever interpreted Sunday to be the embodiment of the creative and redemptive meanings of the Sabbath. From a biblical and historical perspective, Sunday is not the Sabbath because the two days differ in authority, meaning, and experience.

Difference in Authority

The difference in authority lies in the fact that while Sabbathkeeping rests upon an explicit biblical command (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11; Mark 2:27-28; Heb 4:9), Sundaykeeping derives from an interplay of social, po-

litical, pagan, and religious factors. I have examined these factors at length in my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. The lack of a biblical authority for Sundaykeeping may well be a major contributing factor to the crisis of Sunday observance that John Paul rightly laments.

The vast majority of Christians, especially in the Western world, view their Sunday as a holiday to seek personal pleasure and profit rather than a holy day to seek divine presence and peace. I submit that a major contributing factor to the secularization of Sunday is the prevailing perception that there is no divine, biblical command to keep Sunday as a holy day.

The lack of a biblical conviction that Sunday should be observed as the holy Sabbath day may well explain why most Christians see nothing wrong in devoting their Sunday time to themselves rather than to the Lord. If there was a strong theological conviction that the principle of Sundaykeeping was divinely established at creation and later “inscribed” in the Decalogue, as the Pope attempts to prove, then Christians would feel compelled to act accordingly.

Difference in Meaning

John Paul recognizes the need to make Sundaykeeping a moral imperative and he tries to accomplish this by rooting the day in the Sabbath commandment itself. But this cannot be done because Sunday is not the Sabbath. The two days have a different meaning and function. While in Scripture the Sabbath memorializes God’s perfect creation, complete redemption, and final restoration, Sunday is justified in the earliest Patristic literature as the commemoration of the creation of light on the first day of the week, the cosmic-eschatological symbol of the new eternal world typified by the eighth day, and the memorial of Christ’s Sunday Resurrection.²³

None of the historical meanings attributed to Sunday require per se the observance of the day by resting and worshipping the Lord. For example, nowhere does Scripture suggest that the creation of light on the first day ought to be celebrated through a weekly Sunday rest and worship. Even the Resurrection event, as we shall see, does not require per se a weekly or annual Sunday celebration.

The attempt to transfer to Sunday the biblical authority and meaning of the Sabbath is doomed to fail because it is impossible to retain the same authority, meaning, and experience when the date of a festival is changed. For example, if a person or an organization should succeed in changing the date of the Declaration of Independence from the 4th July to the 5th of Sep-

tember, the new date could hardly be viewed as the legitimate celebration of Independence Day.

Similarly, if the festival of the Sabbath is changed from the seventh to the first day, the latter can hardly memorialize the divine acts of creation, redemption, and final restoration which are linked to the typology of the Sabbath. To invest Sunday with the theological meaning and function of the Sabbath means to adulterate a divine institution by making a holy day out of what God created to be a working day.

Difference in Experience

The difference between Sabbath and Sunday is also one of experience. While Sundaykeeping began and has remained largely the hour of worship, Sabbathkeeping is presented in Scriptures as twenty-four hours consecrated to God. In spite of the efforts made by Constantine, church councils, and the Puritans to make Sunday into a total day of rest and worship, the historical reality is that Sunday observance has been equated with church attendance. John Paul II acknowledges this historical reality in chapter 3 of the Pastoral Letter entitled “The Day of the Church. The Eucharistic Assembly: The Heart of Sunday.” The thrust of the chapter is that the heart of Sunday observance is the participation in the Mass. He cites the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which says: “The Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life.”²¹

The end of Sunday church services marks for most Christians also the termination of Sundaykeeping. After church, they go in good conscience to the shopping mall, a ball game, a dance hall, a theater, etc. It came as a surprise for me to discover that even in the “Bible Belt” many shops open for business as soon as the church services are over. The message is clear. The rest of Sunday is business as usual.

Sunday Hour of Worship Versus Sabbath Day of Rest and Worship

The recognition of this historical reality has led Christopher Kiesling, a distinguished Catholic Liturgist, to argue for the abandonment of the notion of Sunday as a day of rest and for the retention of Sunday as the hour of worship.²¹ His reasoning is that since Sunday has never been a day of total rest and worship, there is no hope to make it so today when most people want holidays, not holy days.

By contrast, celebrating the Sabbath means not merely attending church services but consecrating its twenty-four hours to the Lord. The

Sabbath commandment does not say, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy by attending church services.” What the commandment requires is to work six days and rest on the seventh day unto the Lord (Ex 20:8-10). This means that the essence of Sabbathkeeping is *the consecration of time*. *The act of resting unto the Lord makes all the Sabbath activities, whether they be formal worship or informal fellowship and recreation, an act of worship because all of them spring out of a heart which has decided to honor God.*

The act of resting on the Sabbath unto the Lord becomes the means through which the believer enters into God’s rest (Heb 4:10) by experiencing more fully and freely the awareness of God’s presence, peace, and rest. This unique experience of Sabbathkeeping is foreign to Sundaykeeping because the essence of the latter is not the consecration of time but rather church attendance, especially the partaking of the eucharist.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, we conclude that the Pope’s attempt to make Sunday the theological and existential embodiment of the Sabbath is doomed to fail, because the two days differ radically in their authority, meaning, and experience.

PART 2 JESUS AND THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY

A popular view defended recently by several scholars is that Christ paved the way for the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday keeping instead, by His messianic claims and His provocative method of Sabbath keeping, which caused considerable controversy with the religious leaders of His day.

A noteworthy example of this view is the symposium *From Sabbath to the Lord’s Day* (1982), produced by seven British/American scholars and sponsored by the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research in Cambridge, England. This symposium is generally regarded as the most scholarly defence of Sundaykeeping in our time. The authors maintain that Christ transcended the Sabbath law by His messianic claims. He acted against the prevailing Sabbath traditions in order to provide His followers with the freedom to reinterpret the Sabbath and to choose a new day of worship, better suited to express their new Christian faith.

The fundamental problem with this view is that it grossly misinterprets the intent of Christ’s controversial Sabbath activities and teachings, which were clearly designed, *not to nullify*, but *to clarify* the divine intent of the

Fourth Commandment. Christ acted deliberately against prevailing misconceptions of the Sabbath, not to terminate its observance, but to restore the day to God's intended purpose.

It should be noted that whenever accused of Sabbath breaking, Christ refuted such charge of Sabbath breaking by appealing to the Scriptures: "Have you not read . . ." (Matt 12:3-5). Christ never conceded to have broken the Sabbath commandment. On the contrary He defended Himself and His disciples from the charge of Sabbath breaking by appealing to the Scriptures.

The intent of Christ's provocative Sabbath teachings and activities was not to pave the way for the abandonment of the Sabbath and adoption of Sunday keeping, but rather to show the true meaning and function of the Sabbath, namely, a day "to do good" (Matt 12:8), "to save life" (Mark 3:4), to loose people from physical and spiritual bonds (Luke 13:16), and to show "mercy" rather than religiosity (Matt 12:7).

By showing these vital functions of the Sabbath, Christ proved that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Our Lord's choice of words in this text is significant. The verb "made—*ginomai*" alludes to the original "making" of the Sabbath and the word "man—*anthropos*" suggests its human function. Thus to establish the human and universal value of the Sabbath, Christ reverts to its very origin, right after the creation of man. Why? Because for the Lord the law of the beginning stands supreme.

This memorable affirmation alone suffices to refute the claim that Christ paved the way for the abandonment of the Sabbath and adoption of Sunday, because He established the permanent validity of the Sabbath by appealing to its original creation when God determined its intended function for the well-being of mankind.

The Sabbath and the Savior in Luke

To appreciate more fully the relationship between the Savior and the Sabbath, it is necessary to study the Sabbath material found in all the Gospels and in Hebrews. Since this is not possible within the limited scope of this chapter, we will briefly focus only on the Sabbath in Luke and in Hebrews. The complete study is found in chapter 4 "The Savior and the Sabbath" of my book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*.

Luke opens his account of Christ's ministry by describing Him as an habitual observer of the Sabbath: "On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as was his custom" (Luke 4:16;NIV). Apparently Luke intended

to set Christ before his readers as a model of Sabbathkeeping, because he speaks of Christ's customary Sabbathkeeping in the immediate context of His upbringing in Nazareth ("where he had been brought up"—v. 16). This suggests that the allusion is especially to the custom of Sabbath observance during Christ's youth.

The word "Sabbath" occurs in Luke's Gospel 21 times and 8 times in Acts.²² That is approximately twice as often as in any of the other three Gospels. This surely suggests that Luke attaches significance to the Sabbath. In fact, Luke not only begins but also closes the account of Christ's earthly ministry on a Sabbath by mentioning that His entombment took place on "the day of Preparation and the Sabbath was beginning" (Luke 23:54). A number of scholars recognize in this text Luke's concern to show that the Christian community observed the Sabbath.²³

Lastly, Luke expands his brief account of Christ's burial by stating emphatically that the women "rested on the sabbath in obedience to the commandment" (Luke 23:56b—NIV). Why does Luke present not only Christ but also His followers as habitual Sabbathkeepers? The answer is that Luke intended to set before his readers Christ as "a model of reverence for the Sabbath."²⁴ Such a model discredits Benedict XVI's claim that "Sunday was not chosen by the Christian community but by the Apostles, and indeed by Christ himself."

The Sabbath in Hebrews

The discussion of the Sabbath in Hebrews is crucial to our study because it shows the understanding and experience of the Sabbath by the New Testament church. The relationship between the Sabbath and the Savior is established by the author of Hebrews by linking together Genesis 2:2 with Psalm 95:7,11. By means of these two texts the writer of Hebrews explains that the Sabbath rest offered at creation (Heb 4:4) was not exhausted when the Israelites under Joshua found a resting place in Canaan, since God offered again His rest "long afterwards" through David (Heb 4:7; cf. Ps 95:7).

Consequently, God's promised Sabbath rest still awaited a fuller realization which has dawned with the coming of Christ (Heb 4:9). It is by believing in Jesus Christ that God's people can at last experience ("enter"—Heb 4:3,10,11) the "good news" of God's rest promised on the "seventh day" of creation (Heb 4:4).

Obsolete or Remaining?

Does Hebrews teach that the Sabbath, like the temple and its services, lived out its function with the coming of Christ? Or did the Sabbath acquire fresh meaning and function with His coming? Let us now look at what Hebrews has to say on this point.

There is no question that the author clearly teaches that Christ's coming has brought about a decisive discontinuity with the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant. In chapters 7 to 10, the writer of Hebrews explains at great length how Christ's atoning sacrifice and subsequent heavenly ministry have replaced completely the typological ("copy and shadow"—Heb 8 :5) function of the levitical priesthood and its Temple. These services Christ "abolished" (Heb 10:9). Thus they are "obsolete" and "ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:13).

But, does the writer of Hebrews place the Sabbath in the same category, viewing it as one of the "obsolete" Old Covenant institutions? This is indeed the conclusion drawn by people like Benedict XVI, who are eager to trace the origin of Sunday to Christ Himself, but a careful study of the passage proves otherwise.

The "*sabbatismos*—Sabbath rest" is explicitly and emphatically presented, not as being "obsolete" like the Temple and its services, but as being a divine benefit that still "remains" (Heb 4:9). The verb "remains—*apoleipe-tai*" is a present passive tense which literally translated means "has been left behind." Thus, literally translated, Hebrews 4:9 reads as follows: "So then a Sabbath-keeping has been left behind for the people of God."

Professor Andrew Lincoln, one of the contributors to the scholarly symposium *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day*, has established that the term *sabbatismos* was used both by pagans and Christians as a technical term for Sabbathkeeping. Examples can be found in the writings of Plutarch, Justin, Epiphanius, the Apostolic Constitutions, and the Martyrdom of Peter and Paul.²⁵ Lincoln found that in each of the above instances "the term denotes the observance or celebration of the Sabbath. This usage corresponds to the Septuagint usage of the cognate verb *sabbatizo* (cf. Ex 16:23; Lev 23:32; 26:34f.; 2 Chron 36:21) which also has reference to Sabbath observance. Thus the writer to the Hebrews is saying that since the time of Joshua an observance of Sabbath rest has been outstanding."²⁶

The fact that according to Hebrews 4:9, the observance of Sabbath "remains" for believers in Christ, compellingly discredit Benedict XVI's

claim that the first Christians showed their belonging to Christ by celebrating Sunday.

The Meaning of the Sabbath Rest

Is the author of Hebrews merely encouraging his readers to interrupt their secular activities on the Sabbath? Considering the concern of the writer to counteract the tendency of his readers to adopt Jewish liturgical customs as a means to gain access to God, he could hardly have emphasized solely the physical “cessation” aspect of Sabbathkeeping. This aspect yields only a negative idea of rest, one which would only serve to encourage existing Judaizing tendencies. Obviously then, the author attributes a deeper meaning to the resting on the Sabbath.

This deeper meaning can be seen in the antithesis the author makes between those who failed to enter into God’s rest because of “unbelief—*apeitheias*” (4:6, 11)—that is, faithlessness which results in disobedience—and those who enter it by “faith—*pistei*” (4:2, 3), that is, faithfulness that results in obedience.

The act of resting on the Sabbath for the author of Hebrews is not merely a routine ritual (cf. “sacrifice”—Matt 12:7), but rather a faith-response to God. Such a response entails not the hardening of one’s heart (4:7) but the making of oneself available to “hear his voice” (4:7). It means experiencing God’s salvation rest not by works but by faith, not by doing but by being saved through faith (4:2, 3, 11). On the Sabbath, as John Calvin aptly expresses it, believers are “to cease from their work to allow God to work in them.”²⁷ This expanded interpretation of Sabbathkeeping in the light of the Christ event, negates any attempt to make Sunday the continuation of the Sabbath, thus inheriting the sacredness of the Sabbath.

PART 3 THE RESURRECTION AND THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY

The most popular argument used to defend the apostolic origin of Sunday, is Christ’s Resurrection and Appearances on the first day of the week. In view of its popularity and importance, careful consideration must be given to this argument.

In his Pastoral Letter *Dies Domini—The Lord’s Day*, John Paul II affirms that the earliest Christians “made the first day after the Sabbath a

festive day, for that was the day on which the Lord rose from the dead.”²⁸ He argues that though Sunday is rooted in the creative and redemptive meaning of the Sabbath, the day finds its full expression in the Resurrection of Christ. “Although the Lord’s Day is rooted in the very work of creation and even more in the mystery of the Biblical [Sabbath] ‘rest’ of God, it is nonetheless to the Resurrection of Christ that we must look in order to understand fully the Lord’s Day.”²⁹

Vital Importance Attributed to Resurrection

Numerous scholars argue that the Resurrection and Appearance of Christ on the first day of the week constitute the fundamental biblical justification for the origin of Sunday worship.³⁰ Since John Paul II offers a concise summary of this argument, I will respond primarily to his comments.

In his Pastoral Letter John Paul II writes: “According to the common witness of the Gospels, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead took place on ‘the first day after the Sabbath’ (Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). On the same day, the Risen Lord appeared to the two disciples of Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35) and to the eleven Apostles gathered together (cf. Luke 24:36; John 20:19). A week later—as the Gospel of John recounts (cf. John 20:26)—the disciples were gathered together once again when Jesus appeared to them and made Himself known to Thomas by showing him the signs of His Passion. The day of Pentecost—the first day of the eighth week after the Jewish Passover (cf. Acts 2:1), when the promise made by Jesus to the Apostles after the Resurrection was fulfilled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5)—also fell on a Sunday. This was the day of the first proclamation and the first baptisms: Peter announced to the assembled crowd that Christ was risen and ‘those who received his word were baptized’ (Acts 2:41). This was the epiphany of the Church, revealed as the people into which are gathered in unity, beyond all their differences, the scattered children of God.”³¹

Numerous Catholic and Protestant scholars concur with John Paul in attributing to Christ’s Resurrection and appearances on the first day of the week the fundamental reason for the choice of Sunday by the Apostolic church. In his doctoral dissertation on the origin of Sunday, Corrado Mosna, a Jesuit student at the Pontifical Gregorian University who worked under Vincenzo Monachino, S. J. (the same professor who monitored my dissertation), concludes: “Therefore we can conclude with certainty that the event of the Resurrection has determined the choice of Sunday as the day of worship of the first Christian community.”³²

The same view is expressed by Cardinal Jean Daniélou: “The Lord’s Day is a purely Christian institution; its origin is to be found solely on the fact of the Resurrection of Christ on the day after the Sabbath.”³³ In a similar vein, Paul Jewett, a Protestant scholar, writes: “What, it might be asked, specifically motivated the primitive Jewish church to settle upon Sunday as a regular time of assembly? As we have observed before, it must have had something to do with the Resurrection which, according to the uniform witness of the Gospels, occurred on the first day of the week.”³⁴

In spite of its popularity, the alleged role of the Resurrection in the adoption of Sunday observance lacks both biblical and historical support. A careful study of all the references to the Resurrection reveals the incomparable importance of the event,³⁵ but it does not provide any indication regarding a special day to commemorate it.

Harold Riesenfeld notes, “In the accounts of the Resurrection in the Gospels, there are no sayings which direct that the great event of Christ’s Resurrection should be commemorated on the particular day of the week on which it occurred.”³⁶ Therefore, “to say that Sunday was observed because Jesus rose on that day,” as S. V. McCasland cogently states, “is really a *petitio principii* [begging the question], for such a celebration might just as well be monthly or annually and still be an observance of that particular day.”³⁷

Let me briefly mention seven major reasons which discredit the alleged role of Christ’s Resurrection in the adoption of Sunday observance.

(1) No Command of Christ or of the Apostles

There is no commandment of Christ or of the apostles regarding a weekly-Sunday or annual Easter-Sunday celebration of Christ’s resurrection. We have commands in the New Testament regarding baptism (Matt 28:19-20), the Lord’s Supper (Mark 14:24-25; 1 Cor 11:23-26) and foot-washing (John 13:14-15), but we find no commands or even suggestions to commemorate Christ’s Resurrection on a weekly Sunday or annual Easter-Sunday.

(2) Christ Made no Attempt to Establish a Memorial of His Resurrection

Had Jesus wanted to memorialize the day of His Resurrection, the ideal time to institute such a memorial would have been the actual day of His Resurrection. Important divine institutions like the Sabbath, baptism, Lord’s

Supper, all trace their origin to a divine act which marked their beginning. But on the day of His Resurrection Christ performed no act to institute a memorial of His Resurrection. He did not tell the women and the disciples: “Come apart and celebrate My Resurrection?” Instead He told the women “Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee” (Matt 28:10) and to the disciples “Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them” (Matt 28:19). None of the utterances of the risen Savior reveal an intent to memorialize His resurrection by making Sunday the new day of rest and worship.

The silence of the New Testament on this matter is very important since most of its books were written many years after Christ’s death and Resurrection. If by the latter half of the first century Sunday had come to be viewed as the memorial of the Resurrection which fulfilled the creation/redemption functions of the Old Testament Sabbath, as the Pope claims, we would expect to find in the New Testament some allusions to the religious meaning and observance of the weekly Sunday and/or annual Easter-Sunday.

The total absence of any such allusions indicates that such developments occurred in the post-apostolic period as a result of an interplay of political, social, and religious factors, which I have examined at length in my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*.

(3) There is no Easter-Sunday in the New Testament

The Pope’s claim that the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection on a weekly Sunday and annual Easter-Sunday “evolved from the early years after the Lord’s Resurrection”³⁸ is negated by the absence of Easter-Sunday in the New Testament. It is a known fact that for at least a century after Jesus’ death, Passover was observed not on Easter-Sunday, as a celebration of the Resurrection, but on the date of Nisan 14 (irrespective of the day of the week) as a celebration of the sufferings, atoning sacrifice, and Resurrection of Christ.

The repudiation of the biblical reckoning of Passover and the adoption of Easter-Sunday instead, is a post-apostolic development which is attributed, as Joachim Jeremias puts it, “to the inclination to break away from Judaism”³⁹ and to avoid, as J. B. Lightfoot explains, “even the semblance of Judaism.”⁴⁰

The introduction and promotion of Easter-Sunday by the Church of Rome in the second century caused the well-known Passover (Quartodeci-

man) controversy which eventually led Bishop Victor of Rome to excommunicate the Asian Christians (about A. D. 191) for refusing to adopt Easter-Sunday.⁴¹

Indications such as these suffice to show that Christ's Resurrection was not celebrated on a weekly Sunday and annual Easter-Sunday from the inception of Christianity. The social, political, and religious factors that contributed to the change from Sabbath to Sunday and Passover to Easter-Sunday are discussed at length in my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*.

(4) Sunday is Never Called "Day of the Resurrection"

Sunday is never called in the New Testament as "Day of the Resurrection." It is consistently called "First day of the week." The references to Sunday as day of the resurrection first appear in the early part of the fourth century.⁴² By that time Sunday had become associated with the resurrection and consequently was referred to as "Day of the Resurrection." But this development occurred several centuries after the beginning of Christianity.

(5) The Lord's Supper was not Celebrated on Sunday in Honor of the Resurrection

In his dissertation on *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church*, Willy Rordorf argues that Sunday became the *Lord's Day* because that was the day in which the *Lord's Supper* was celebrated. This view is accepted by many, but it lacks biblical and historical support.

Historically we know that Christians could not celebrate the Lord's Supper on a regular basis on Sunday evening, because such gatherings were prohibited by the Roman *hetariae* law — a law that outlawed all types of communal fellowship meals held in the evening.⁴³ The Roman government was afraid that such evening gatherings could become an occasion for political plotting.

To avoid the search of the Roman police, Christian changed the time and place of the Lord's Supper celebration. Eventually, they moved the service from the evening to the morning.⁴⁴ This explains why Paul is very specific on the *manner* of celebrating the Lord's Supper, but he is indefinite on the question of the *time* of the assembly. Note that *four times* he repeats the same phrase: "When you come together" (1 Cor 11:18, 20, 33, 34). The phrase implies indefinite time, most likely because there was no set day for the celebration of the Lord's Supper

(6) The Lord's Supper Commemorates Christ's Sacrifice, not His Resurrection

Many Christians today view their Lord's Supper as the core of Sunday worship in honor of Christ's resurrection. But, as we have seen, in the Apostolic Church the Lord's Supper was not celebrated on Sunday, and was not connected with the Resurrection. Paul, for instance, who claims to transmit what "he received from the Lord" (1 Cor 11:23), explicitly states that the rite commemorated not Christ's resurrection, but His *sacrifice* and *Second Coming* ("You proclaim the Lord's death till he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

(7) The Resurrection is not the Dominant Reason for Sundaykeeping in Earliest Documents

The earliest explicit references to Sundaykeeping are found in the writings of Barnabas (about 135 A.D.) and Justin Martyr (about 150 A.D.). Both writers do mention the resurrection as a basis for Sunday observance but only as the second of two reasons, important but not predominant.

Barnabas' first theological motivation for Sunday keeping is eschatological, namely, that Sunday as "the eighth day" represents "the beginning of another world."⁴⁵ Justin's first reason for the Christians' Sunday assembly is the inauguration of creation: "because it is the first day on which God, transforming the darkness and prime matter, created the world."⁴⁶

The seven reasons given above suffice to discredit the claim that Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week caused the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday. The truth is that initially the resurrection was celebrated *existentially* rather than *liturgically*, that is, by a victorious Christian living rather than by a special day of worship.

PART 4 FIRST DAY RELIGIOUS MEETINGS AND THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY

To support the claim that Sunday is a biblical institution that was observed by the Apostolic church, appeal is commonly made to the following three Bible texts: (1) 1 Corinthians 16:2, (2) Acts 20:7-12, and (3) Revelation 1:10. These passages are examined at great length in my dissertation.⁴⁷ In this context I limit myself to a few basic observations.

1 Corinthians 16:2: Christian Sunday Gatherings?

The first-day fund-raising plan recommended by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 is commonly cited to prove that Christians came together for worship on Sunday during apostolic times. For example, John Paul II affirms that “ever since Apostolic times, the Sunday gathering has in fact been for Christians a moment of fraternal sharing with the poor. ‘On the first day of the week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn’ (1 Cor 16:2), says Saint Paul in referring to the collection organized for the poor churches of Judaea.”⁴⁸

John Paul II sees in the first-day fund-raising plan recommended by Paul in this text a clear indication that the Christian Church gathered for worship on that day. This view is shared by numerous Catholic and Protestant scholars.⁴⁹ For example, in his dissertation Corrado Mosna argues that since Paul designates the “offering” in 2 Corinthians 9 :12 as “service–*leiturgia*,” the collection [of 1 Corinthians 16:2] must have been linked with the Sunday worship service of the Christian assembly.”⁵⁰

The various attempts to extrapolate from Paul’s fund-raising plan a regular pattern of Sunday observance reveal inventiveness and originality, but they rest on construed arguments and not on the actual information the text provides. Observe, first of all, that there is nothing in the text to suggest public assemblies inasmuch as the setting aside of funds was to be done “by himself–*par’heauto*.” The phrase suggests that the collection was to be done individually and in private.

If the Christian community was worshipping together on Sunday, it appears paradoxical that Paul should recommend laying aside at home one’s gift. Why should Christians deposit their offering at home on Sunday if on such a day they were gathering for worship? Should not the money have been brought to the Sunday service?

Purpose of the Fund-raising Plan

The purpose of the first-day fund-raising plan is clearly stated by the Apostle: “So that contributions need not be made when I come” (1 Cor 16:2). The plan then is proposed not to enhance Sunday worship by the offering of gifts, but to ensure a substantial and efficient collection upon his arrival. Four characteristics can be identified in the plan. The offering was to be laid aside *periodically* (“on the first day of every week” — v. 2), *personally* (“each

of you”—v. 2), *privately* (“by himself in store”—v. 2), and *proportionately* (“as he may prosper”—v. 2).

To the same community on another occasion, Paul thought it necessary to send brethren to “arrange in advance for the gift . . . promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift” (2 Cor 9:5). The Apostle desired to avoid embarrassing both to the givers and to the collectors when finding that they “were not ready” (2 Cor 9:4) for the offering. To avoid such problems in this instance, he recommends both a time—the first day of the week—and a place—one’s home.

Paul’s mention of the first day could be motivated more by practical than theological reasons. To wait until the end of the week or of the month to set aside one’s contributions or savings is contrary to sound budgetary practices, since by then one finds empty pockets and empty hands. On the other hand, if, on the first day of the week before planning any expenditures, believers set aside what they plan to give, the remaining funds will be so distributed as to meet all the basic necessities. The text, therefore, proposes a valuable weekly plan to ensure a substantial and orderly contribution on behalf of the poor brethren of Jerusalem—to extract more meaning from the text would distort it.

Acts 20:7-11: First-Day Troas Meeting

Fundamental importance is attributed to Acts 20:7-11 inasmuch as it contains the only explicit New Testament reference to a Christian gathering conducted “on the first day of the week . . . to break bread” (Acts 20:7). John Paul II assumes that the meeting was a customary Sunday assembly “upon which the faithful of Troas were gathered ‘for the breaking of the bread [that is, the Eucharistic celebration].’”⁵¹

Numerous scholars share the Pope’s view. F. F. Bruce, for example, affirms that this statement “is the earliest unambiguous evidence we have for the Christian practice of gathering together for worship on that day.”⁵² Paul Jewett similarly declares that “here is the earliest clear witness to Christian assembly for purposes of worship on the first day of the week.”⁵³ Statements like these could be multiplied.

These categorical conclusions rest mostly on the assumption that verse 7 represents “a fixed formula” which describes the habitual time (“On the first day of the week”) and the nature (“to break bread”) of the primitive Christian worship. Since, however, the meeting occurred in the evening and “the breaking of the bread” took place after midnight (vv. 7, 11) and Paul left

the believers at dawn, we need to ask: Was the time and nature of the Troas' gathering ordinary or extraordinary, occasioned perhaps by the departure of the Apostle?

Special Farewell Gathering.

The context clearly indicates that it was a special farewell gathering occasioned by the departure of Paul, and not a regular Sunday-worship custom. The meeting began on the evening of the first day, which, according to Jewish reckoning, was our Saturday night, and continued until early Sunday morning when Paul departed. Being a night meeting occasioned by the departure of the Apostle at dawn, it is hardly reflective of regular Sundaykeeping.

Paul would have observed with the believers only the night of Sunday and traveled during the day time. This was not allowed on the Sabbath and would not have set the best example of Sundaykeeping either. The passage suggests, as noted by F. J. Foakes-Jackson, that "Paul and his friends could not, as good Jews, start on a journey on a Sabbath; they did so as soon after it as was possible (verse 12) at dawn on the 'first day' —the Sabbath having ended at sunset."⁵⁴

The Breaking of the Bread.

The expression "to break bread—*klasai arton*" deserves closer attention. What does it actually mean in the context of the passage? Does it mean that the Christians came together for a fellowship meal or to celebrate the Lord's Supper? It should be noted that the breaking of bread was simply a customary and necessary part of the preparation for eating together. The act of breaking in pieces a loaf of bread by the host marked the opening action of a meal. In most European cultures, the same function is fulfilled by the host wishing "Buon appetito—Good Appetite" to the guest. This ritual gives permission to all to begin eating.

In the post-apostolic literature, the expression "breaking of bread" is used as a technical designation for the Lord's Supper. But this is not the common meaning or usage in the New Testament. In fact, the verb "to break—*klao*" followed by the noun "bread—*artos*" occurs fifteen times in the New Testament. Nine times it refers to Christ's act of breaking bread when feeding the multitude, when partaking of the Last Supper, and when eating with His disciples after His Resurrection (Matt 14:19; 15:36; 26:26; Mark

8:6; 9:19; 14:22; Luke 22:19; 24:30; 24:35); twice it describes Paul's commencing and partaking of a meal (Acts 20:11; 27:35); twice it describes the actual breaking of the bread of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:16; 11:24); and twice it is used as a general reference to the disciples' or believers' "breaking bread" together (Acts 2:46; 20:7).

In none of these instances is the Lord's Supper explicitly or technically designated as "the breaking of bread." Furthermore, the breaking of bread was followed by a meal "having eaten — *geusamenos*" (v. 11). The same verb is used by Luke in three other instances with the explicit meaning of satisfying hunger (Acts 10:10; 23:14; Luke 14:24). Undoubtedly, Paul was hungry after his prolonged speech and needed some food before he could continue his exhortation and start his journey.

However, if Paul partook of the Lord's Supper together with a regular meal, he would have acted contrary to his recent instruction to the Corinthians to whom he strongly recommended satisfying their hunger by eating at home before gathering to celebrate the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:2, 22, 34).

The New Testament, as noted earlier, does not offer any indication regarding a fixed day for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. While Paul recommends to the Corinthian believers a specific day on which to privately set aside their offerings, concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper he repeatedly says in the same epistle and to the same people, "When you come together" (1 Cor 11:18, 20, 33, 34), implying indeterminate times and days.

The simplest way to explain the passage is that Luke mentions the day of the meeting not because it was Sunday, but most likely because (1) Paul was "ready to depart" (Acts 20:7), (2) the extraordinary miracle of Eutychus occurred that night, and (3) the time reference provides an additional, significant, chronological reference to describe the unfolding of Paul's journey.

Revelation 1:10: "The Lord's Day"

The third crucial New Testament passage used to defend the apostolic origin of Sunday observance is found in the book of Revelation. John, exiled on the "island of Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 1 :9), writes: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day — *en te kuriake hemera*" (Rev 1:10).

John Paul II claims that this text "gives evidence of the practice of calling the first day of the week 'the Lord's Day' (Rev 1:10). This would now be a characteristic distinguishing Christians from the world around them. . .

. And when Christians spoke of the ‘Lord’s Day,’ they did so giving to this term the full sense of the Easter proclamation: ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’ (Phil 2:11; cf. Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 12:3).”⁵⁵

The implication of the Pope’s statement is that New Testament Christians not only called Sunday “The Lord’s Day,” but also expressed through such designation their faith in their Risen Savior. Numerous scholars share the same view. For example, Corrado Mosna emphatically writes: “By the phrase ‘Lord’s Day’ (Rev 1:10), John wishes to indicate specifically the day in which the community celebrates together the eucharistic liturgy.”⁵⁶ The phrase “eucharistic liturgy” is used by Catholics to describe the Lord’s Supper celebration in honor of the Risen Lord.

A detailed analysis of this text would take us beyond the limited scope of this chapter. In my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* I devoted twenty pages (pp. 111 to 131) to an examination of this verse. For the purpose of this chapter, I submit only two basic observations.

First, the equation of Sunday with the expression “Lord’s day” is not based on internal evidences of the book of Revelation or of the rest of the New Testament, but on three second-century patristic testimonies, namely, *Didache* 14:1, Ignatius’ *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:1, and the apocryphal *The Gospel of Peter* 35; 50. Of the three, however, only in the *Gospel of Peter*, written toward the end of the second century, is Sunday unmistakably designated by the technical term “Lord’s—*kuriake*.” In two different verses it reads: “Now in the night in which the Lord’s day (*He kuriake*) dawned . . . there rang out a loud voice in heaven” (v. 35); “Early in the morning of the Lord’s day (*tes kuriakes*) Mary Magdalene . . . came to the sepulchre” (v. 50, 51).

It is noteworthy that while in the genuine Gospels, Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the sepulchre “early on the first day of the week” (Mark 16:2; cf. Matt 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1), in the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* it says that they went “early in the morning of the Lord’s day.” The use of the new designation “Lord’s Day” instead of “first day of the week” clearly indicates that by the end of the second century Christians referred to Sunday as “the Lord’s Day.”

The latter usage, however, cannot be legitimately read back into Revelation 1:10. A major reason is that if Sunday had already received the new appellation “Lord’s day” by the end of the first century, when both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation were written, we would expect this new name for Sunday to be used consistently in both works, especially

since they were apparently produced by the same author at approximately the same time and in the same geographical area.

If the new designation “Lord’s day” already existed by the end of the first century, and expressed the meaning and nature of Christian Sunday worship, John would not have had reasons to use the Jewish phrase “first day of the week” in his Gospel. Therefore, the fact that the expression “Lord’s day” occurs in John’s apocalyptic book but not in his Gospel—where the first day is explicitly mentioned in conjunction with the Resurrection (John 20:1) and the appearances of Jesus (John 20:19, 26)—suggests that the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 can hardly refer to Sunday.

No Easter Sunday Observance in Asia Minor

A second important consideration that discredits the Pope’s claim that Sunday was called “Lord’s Day” in the “sense of the Easter proclamation” is the fact that the book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor who did not observe Easter-Sunday. Instead, they observed Passover by the biblical date of Nisan 14. Polycrates, Bishop of the province of Asia Minor, convened a council of the church leaders of Asia Minor (about A. D. 191) to discuss the summon received from Bishop Victor of Rome to adopt Easter-Sunday. The unanimous decision of the Asian bishops was to reject Easter-Sunday and to retain the Biblical dating of Passover.⁵⁷

In the light of these facts, it would be paradoxical if the Apostle John, who, according to Polycrates, kept Passover by the fixed date of Nisan 14 and who wrote to Christians in Asia Minor who like him did not observe Easter-Sunday, would have used the phrase “Lord’s Day” to express his Easter faith in the Risen Lord. Cardinal Jean Daniélou, a respected Catholic scholar, timidly acknowledges this fact when he writes: “In the Apocalypse (1:10), when Easter takes place on the 14 Nisan, the word [Lord’s Day] does not perhaps mean Sunday.”⁵⁸

The only day that John knew as the “Lord’s Day” by the end of the first century when he wrote the book of Revelation, is the Sabbath. This is the only day of which Christ proclaims Himself to be “Lord-*kupios*.” “For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12:8).

Eschatological Day of the Lord

The immediate context that precedes and follows Revelation 1:10 contains unmistakable references to the eschatological day of the Lord. This

suggests the possibility that the “Lord’s Day” on which John was transported in vision could have been a Sabbath day in which he saw the great day of Christ’s coming. What greater vision could have given courage to the aged Apostle in exile for his witness to Christ! Moreover, the Sabbath is closely linked eschatologically to the Second Advent. The meeting of the invisible Lord in time on the weekly Sabbath is a prelude to the meeting of the visible Lord in space on the final day of His coming.

Summing up, the attempts to find biblical support for Sunday worship in the New Testament references to the Resurrection (Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1), the first-day farewell night meeting at Troas (Acts 20:7-11), the first-day private deposit plan mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, and the reference to the “Lord’s Day” in Revelation 1:10, must be viewed as well meaning, but devoid of biblical support.

PART 5 JERUSALEM AND THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY

Closely related to the role of the alleged role of the Resurrection, is the popular view that the Jerusalem Church pioneered the abandonment of the Sabbath and adoption of Sunday. I devoted chapter 5 “Jerusalem and the Origin of Sunday” of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* to a close analysis of this view. My investigation shows that this popular view rests on three major faulty assumptions.

Sunday Began in Jerusalem because Christ Arose There

The first faulty assumption is that Jerusalem must be the birthplace of Sunday keeping, because that is the place where Jesus arose on the first day of the week. It is alleged that immediately after Christ’s resurrection, the Apostles “no longer felt at home in the Jewish Sabbath service.”⁵⁹ and consequently they proceeded to honor Christ’s Resurrection in a distinctive *Christian day, Sunday*, and in a *Christian place, the Church*.

This assumption lacks biblical and historical support, because in the Apostolic Church the Resurrection was seen as an *existential reality* experienced by living victoriously by the power of the Risen Savior, and not a *liturgical practice* associated with Sunday worship. We noted earlier that nothing in the New Testament prescribes or even suggests the commemoration of Jesus’ resurrection on Sunday. The very name “Day of the Resurrection”

does not appear in Christian literature until early in the fourth century.

If the primitive Jerusalem Church had pioneered and promoted Sunday keeping because they no longer felt at home with Jewish Sabbath keeping, we would expect to find in such a church an immediate break away from Jewish religious traditions and services. But the opposite is the case.

Both the book of Acts as well as several Judeo-Christian documents clearly reveal that the ethnic composition and the theological orientation of the Jerusalem Church were profoundly Jewish. Luke's characterization of the Jerusalem Church as "zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20), is an accurate description which hardly allows for the abandonment of a chief precept of the law, namely, the Sabbath.

Only the Jerusalem Church had the Authority to Change the Sabbath to Sunday

The second faulty assumption is that only the Jerusalem Church, which was the Mother Church of Christendom, commanded sufficient authority and respect to persuade all the Christian churches scattered through the Roman empire to change their weekly day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. Less influential churches could have never accomplished this change.

The problem with this assumption is the failure to recognize that the Jerusalem Church did have the *authority*, but not the *desire* to change the Sabbath to Sunday, simply because it was composed almost exclusively of Jewish Christians who were zealous in the observance of the law in general and of the Sabbath in particular.

Attachment to the Law. The attachment of the Jerusalem Church to the Mosaic Law is reflected in some of the decisions of the first Jerusalem Council held about 49-50 A.D. (See Acts 15). The exemption from circumcision is there granted *only* "to brethren who are of the Gentiles" (Acts 15:23). No concession is made for Jewish-Christians, who must continue to circumcise their children.

Moreover, of the four provisions made applicable by the Jerusalem Council to Gentiles, one is *moral* (abstention from "unchastity") but *three are ceremonial* (even Gentile Christians are ordered to abstain "from contact with idols and from [eating] what has been strangled and from [eating] blood" (Acts 15:20). This concern of the Jerusalem Council for ritual defilement and Jewish food laws reflects its continued attachment to Jewish ceremonial

law and its commands. It would be unthinkable that this Church at this early time would change the Sabbath to Sunday.

James' statement at the Jerusalem Council in support of his proposal to exempt Gentiles from circumcision but not from Mosaic laws in general, is also significant: "For generations past Moses has had spokesmen in every city; he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues" (Acts 15:21). Most interpreters recognize that both in his proposal and in its justification, James reaffirms the binding nature of the Mosaic Law which was customarily taught every Sabbath in the synagogue.

Paul's Last Visit to Jerusalem. Further insight is provided by Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. The Apostle was informed by James and the elders that thousand of converted Jews were "*all zealous for the Law*" (Acts 21:20). The same leaders then pressured Paul to prove to the people that he also "lived in observance of the law" (Acts 21-24), by undergoing a rite of purification at the Temple. In the light of this deep commitment to the observance of the Law, it is hardly conceivable that the Jerusalem Church would have abrogated one of its chief precepts—Sabbath keeping—and pioneered Sunday worship instead.

Paul Learned Sunday Observance from Apostolic Leaders

The third assumption is that Paul learned about Sunday observance from the apostolic leaders of the Jerusalem church and taught it to his Gentile converts. The reason given for this assumption is that Paul could hardly have pioneered the abandonment of the Sabbath and adoption of Sunday, without stirring up the opposition of the Jewish brethren.

The absence of any echo of controversy is taken to mean that Paul accepted Sunday observance as taught him by the Jewish brethren, and promoted this practice among the Gentile churches which he established.

In his book on *The Lord's Day*, Paul Jewett affirms, for example, "If Paul had introduced Sunday worship among the Gentiles, it seems likely that Jewish opposition would have accused his temerity in setting aside the law of the Sabbath, as was the case with reference to the rite of circumcision (Acts 21:21)."⁶⁰ The absence of such opposition is interpreted by Jewett and others as indicating that Paul accepted and promoted Sunday observance as taught him by the Jewish brethren.

This assumption is correct in maintaining that Paul could not have pioneered Sunday observance without stirring up the opposition of the Jew-

ish brethren, but it is incorrect in assuming that the Jewish Brethren taught Paul Sunday observance.

The truth is that Jewish Christians were deeply committed to the observance of the law in general and of the Sabbath in particular. The absence of any controversy between Paul and the Jewish brethren rather indicates that the Sabbath never became an issue in the Apostolic Church because it was faithfully observed by all Christians.

On the basis of the above considerations, we conclude that the Jerusalem Church could hardly have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, because of all the Christian Churches, it was both ethnically and theologically the closest and most loyal to Jewish religious traditions.

PART 6 ROME AND THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY

The birthplace of Sunday observance must be sought in an influential Gentile Church, with no significant Jewish roots. In the course of my investigation I found cumulative evidences pointing to the Church of Rome as the most likely birthplace of Sunday observance. There we find the social, religious and political conditions which permitted and encouraged the abandonment of Sabbathkeeping and the adoption of Sunday worship instead.

For the sake of brevity and clarity I will mention only seven major indications pointing to the church of Rome as the birthplace of Sunday observance.

(1) Predominance of Gentile Converts.

In the first place, the Church of Rome was composed predominantly of Gentile converts. Paul in his Epistle to the Roman Church explicitly affirms: "I am speaking to you Gentiles" (Romans 11:13). This means that while the Jerusalem Church was made up almost exclusively of Jewish Christians who were deeply committed to their religious traditions, like Sabbath keeping, the Church of Rome consisted mostly of Gentile converts who were influenced by such pagan practices as Sun Worship with its Sun Day.⁶¹

(2) Early Differentiation from the Jews

The predominant Gentile membership apparently contributed to an

early Christian differentiation from the Jews in Rome. This is indicated by the fact that in A.D. 64, Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome, though the Jewish district of Trastevere had not been touched by the fire.⁶²

This fact suggests that by A. D. 64 Christians in Rome were no longer perceived to be a Jewish sect by the Roman authorities, but a different religious movement. Most likely the reason is that by that time Christians in Rome no longer participated in the worship service of the synagogue, as they still did in Palestine.

(3) The Preeminence of the Bishop of Rome

A third important consideration is the “preeminent authority” exercised by the Bishop of Rome after the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Being the Bishop of the capital city of the Roman empire, the Bishop of Rome took over the leadership of the Christian communities at large. His leadership is acknowledged, for example, by Ignatius, Polycarp, Ireneaus, all of whom lived in the second century.⁶³

Tangible proofs of the leadership of the Bishop of Rome are his leadership role of the Bishop of Rome in pioneering and promoting the change from Sabbath feasting to Sabbath fasting, as well as the change from Passover to Easter Sunday. He was the only one who commanded sufficient authority to influence the majority of Christians to adopt new religious observances, such as weekly Sunday and annual Easter Sunday

(4) Repressive Anti-Jewish Measures

To appreciate why the Bishop of Rome would pioneer the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday, it is important to consider a fourth important factor, namely, the fiscal, military, political and religious repressive measures imposed by the Romans upon the Jews, beginning with the First Jewish Revolt against Rome in A. D. 66 and culminating with the Second Jewish Revolt in A. D. 135. These measures, which were introduced by the Roman government to punish the Jews on account of their violent uprisings in various places of the Empire, were especially felt in the city of Rome, which had a large Jewish population.

Fiscally, the Jews were subjected to a discriminatory tax (the *fiscus judaicus*) which was introduced by Vespasian and increased first by Domitian (A.D. 81-96) and later by Hadrian. This meant that the Jews had to pay a penalty tax simply for being Jews. Militarily, Vespasian and Titus crushed

the First Jewish Revolt (A. D. 66-70) and Hadrian, the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132-135). Religiously, Vespasian (69-79 A.D.) abolished the Sanhedrin and the office of the High Priest.⁶⁴ These repressive measures against the Jews were intensely felt in Rome, which had a large Jewish population.

(5) Anti-Jewish Propaganda

A fifth significant factor is the anti-Jewish propaganda by a host of Roman authors who began reviling the Jews racially and culturally, deriding especially Sabbathkeeping and circumcision as examples of Judaism's degrading superstitions. These authors especially derided Sabbathkeeping as an example of Jewish laziness. Contemptuous anti-Jewish literary comments can be found in the writings of Seneca (d. A.D. 65), Persius (A.D. 34-62), Petronius (ca. A.D. 66), Quintilian (ca. A.D. 35-100), Martial (ca. A.D. 40-104), Plutarch (ca. A.D. 46-119), Juvenal (A. D. 125) and Tacitus (ca. A.D. 55-120), all of whom lived in Rome most of their professional lives.

With Seneca (ca. 4 B.C.-A.D. 65) a new wave of literary anti-Semitism surged in the sixties, undoubtedly reflecting the new mood of the time against the Jews. This fervent stoic railed against the customs of this "accursed race—*sceleratissime gentis*," and especially their Sabbath-keeping: "By introducing one day of rest in every seven, they lose in idleness almost a seventh of their life, and by failing to act in times of urgency they often suffer loss."⁶⁵

(6) Hadrian's Anti-Sabbath Legislation

The sixth and most decisive factor which influenced the change of the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday, is the anti-Jewish and anti-Sabbath legislation promulgated by the Emperor Hadrian in A. D. 135. This repressive anti-Jewish legislation was promulgated by Hadrian after three years of bloody fighting (A. D. 132-135) to crush the Jewish revolt, known as the Barkokeba revolt. His Roman legions suffered many casualties.

When the Emperor finally captured Jerusalem, he decided to deal with the Jewish problem in a radical way. He slaughtered thousands of Jews, and took thousand of them as slaves to Rome. He made Jerusalem into a Roman colony, calling it *Aelia Capitolina*. He forbade Jews and Jewish Christians from ever entering the city. More important still for our investigation, Hadrian outlawed the practice of the Jewish religion in general and of Sabbathkeeping in particular throughout the empire.⁶⁶

At this critical time, for the sake of expediency many Christians followed the lead of the Bishop of Rome in changing the time and manner of observance of two institutions associated with Judaism, namely the Sabbath and Passover. The Sabbath was changed to Sunday and Passover to Easter Sunday in order to avoid even the semblance of Judaism.

(7) Christian Theology of Contempt for the Jews

To understand what contributed to these historical changes, we need to mention a seventh important factor, namely, the development of a Christian theology of contempt for the Jews. This is what happened. When the Jewish religion in general and the Sabbath in particular were outlawed by Roman government and derided by Roman writers, a whole body of *Adversus Judaeos* (“Against all Jews”) Christian literature began to appear. Following the lead of Roman writers, Christians authors developed a “Christian” theology of separation from and contempt toward the Jews. Characteristic Jewish customs such as circumcision and Sabbathkeeping were proclaimed to be signs of Jewish depravity.⁶⁷

The condemnation of Sabbathkeeping as a sign of Jewish wickedness, contributed to the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday observance, in order to clarify to the Roman authorities the Christian separation from Judaism and identification with Roman paganism.

Measures Taken by the Church of Rome

To appreciate how the Church of Rome went about to wean Christians away from Sabbathkeeping and to encourage Sunday worship instead, we shall mention briefly the theological, social and liturgical measures taken by the Church of Rome.

Theological Measures

Theologically, the Sabbath was reduced from a creational institution established by God for mankind, to a Mosaic institution given exclusively to the Jews as a trademark of their depravity. Justin Martyr writing from Rome by the middle of the second century, argues in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, that the observance of the Sabbath was a temporary Mosaic ordinance which God imposed exclusively on the Jews as “a mark to single them out for punishment they so well deserve for their infidelities.”⁶⁸

It is hard to comprehend how a church leaders like Justin, who became a martyr for the Christian faith, could reject the biblical meaning of the Sabbath as a sign of covenant commitment to God (Ex 31:16,17; Ez 20:12,20), and reduce it instead to a sign of Jewish depravity. What is even harder to accept is the absence of scholarly condemnations for such absurd and embarrassing theology of contempt for the Jews—a theology which blatantly misinterprets biblical institutions like the Sabbath, in order to give biblical sanction to the political and social repression of the Jews.

The sad lesson of history is that the need to be *politically correct* by supporting popular immoral policies such as the extermination of Jews, Moslems and heretics, or the perpetration of slavery, has caused some church leaders and theologians to become *biblically incorrect*. They fabricated unbiblical theologies which would sanction popular immoral practices. It is impossible to estimate the damage done by these theologies of expediency to our society and Christianity at large.

Social Measures

Socially, the negative reinterpretation of the Sabbath as a sign of Jewish wickedness led the Church of Rome to transform Sabbath observance from a day of feasting and joy into a day of fasting and sadness. The purpose of the Sabbath fast was not to enhance the spiritual observance of the Sabbath. Rather, as emphatically stated in the papal decretal of Pope Sylvester (A. D. 314-335), the Sabbath fasting was designed to show “contempt for the Jews” (*exacratione Judaeorum*) and for their Sabbath “feasting” (*destructione ciborum*).⁶⁹ The sadness and hunger resulting from the fast would enable Christians to avoid “appearing to observe the Sabbath with the Jews” and would encourage them to enter more eagerly and joyfully into the observance of Sunday.

Liturgical Measures

Liturgically, the Bishop of Rome decreed that no religious assemblies and eucharistic celebrations were to be held on Saturday. For example, Pope Innocent I (A. D. 402-417) declared that “as the tradition of the Church maintains, in these two days [Friday and Saturday] one should not absolutely celebrate the sacraments.”⁷⁰

Two contemporary church historians, Socrates and Sozomen, confirm Innocent I’s decretal. For example, Sozomen (about A. D. 440) tells us

that while “the people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, such custom is never observed at Rome and Alexandria.”⁷¹

Summing up, the historical evidences mentioned above indicate that the Church of Rome used theological, social, and liturgical measures to empty the Sabbath of any religious significance, and to promote Sunday observance instead. .

PART 7 SUN WORSHIP AND THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY

The social, political, and religious conditions mentioned above, explain why the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, but, they do not explain why Sunday rather than another day, such as Friday (the day of Christ’s passion) was chosen.

Sun Worship and Sunday

The influence of sun worship with its “Sun-day” provides the most plausible explanation. The cult of *Sol Invictus*—the Invincible Sun—as shown by Gaston H. Halsberghe in his dissertation, became “dominant in Rome and in other parts of the Empire from the early part of the second century A.D.”⁷² The Invincible Sun-god became the chief god of the Roman Pantheon and was worshipped especially on the *Dies Solis*, that is, “the Day of the Sun,” known in our calendar as “Sunday.”

Indirect Evidences

There are indirect and direct evidences on the influence of Sun-worship on the origin of Sunday. Indirectly, people who had worshipped the Sun-god in their pagan days, brought with them into the church various pagan practices. The existence of the problem is evidenced by the frequent rebukes by Church leaders to those Christians who venerated the Sun-god, especially on the Day of the Sun.⁷³

The sun is often used as a symbol to represent Christ.⁷⁴ The earliest pictorial representation of Christ (dated about A. D. 240), which was discovered under the confession of St. Peter’s Basilica excavated during a 1953-1957, is a mosaic that portrays Christ as the Sun God riding the quadriga

sun-chariot.⁷⁵ Sunrise also became the orientation for prayer and for Christian churches. The *dies natalis solis Invicti*, the birthday of the Invincible Sun, which the Romans celebrated on December 25, was adopted by the Christians to celebrate Christ's birth.⁷⁶

Direct Evidence

A more direct indication is provided by the use of the sun symbology to justify the actual observance of Sunday. The motifs of light and of the sun are frequently invoked by the Church Fathers to develop a theological justification for Sunday worship. God's creation of light on the first day and the resurrection of the Sun of Justice which occurred on the same day coincided with the day of the sun.

For example, in his *Commentary on Psalm 91*, Eusebius (263-339) writes: "The Logos has transferred by the New Alliance the celebration of the Sabbath to *the rising of the light*. He has given us a type of the true rest in the saving day of the Lord, *the first day of light*. ... *In this day of light, first day and true day of the sun*, when we gather after the interval of six days, we celebrate the holy and spiritual Sabbaths . . . All things whatsoever that were prescribed for the Sabbath, *we have transferred* them to the Lord's day, as being more authoritative and more highly regarded and first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath. In fact, it is on this day of the creation of the world that God said: '*Let there be light and there was light.*' It is also on this day that the Sun of Justice has risen for our souls."⁷⁷

This statement from Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea and regarded as the father of church history, is significant for two reasons. First, because it places the responsibility for the change from the Sabbath to Sunday upon the church: "All things whatsoever that were prescribed for the Sabbath, *we have transferred* them to the Lord's day. Second, because it appeals to the creation of the light on the first day of the week to justify the observance of Sunday observance.

On a similar vein Jerome (342-420), the translator of the Latin Vulgate, explains: "If it is called the day of the sun by the pagans, we most willingly acknowledge it as such, since it is on this day that *the light of the world appeared* and on this day the Sun of Justice has risen."⁷⁸

Conclusion

The conclusion of this investigation conducted over a period of five years at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome is as follows: The change from Sabbath to Sunday came about, not by the authority of Christ or the Apostles, but as a result of an interplay of social, political, pagan, and religious factors.

Anti-judaism influenced the abandonment the observance of the Sabbath at a time when the Jewish religion in general and Sabbathkeeping in particular were outlawed in the Roman empire. Sun-worship influenced the adoption of Sunday observance to show differentiations from the Jews and identification with the customs and cycles of the Roman empire.

The change from Sabbath to Sunday was not simply one of names or numbers, but of authority, meaning and experience. It was a change from a divinely established *Holy Day* to enable believers to experience more freely and more fully the awareness of divine presence and peace in our lives, into an ecclesiastical *Feast Day* which has become an occasion to seek for personal pleasure and profit.

This historical change has greatly affected the quality of Christian living of countless people who throughout the centuries have been deprived of the physical, moral and spiritual renewal the Sabbath is designed to provide. The change has also contributed to the alarming decline in church attendance which is threatening the survival of mainline churches in numerous Western countries.

At a time when concerted efforts are made by popes, church leaders, and scholars, to promote Sunday sacredness on the basis of its alleged apostolic origin, it is imperative to help Christians understand that Sunday observance is a post-apostolic development that lacks biblical authority, meaning and experience.

As we live today in a tension-filled, rushing, and restless culture, our lives cry out for the release, renewal and realignment that awaits God's people on His Holy Sabbath Day.

Sabbath observance in this cosmic age can well be for modern Christians the fitting expression of a cosmic faith, a faith which embraces and unites creation, redemption and final restoration; the past, the present and the future; man, nature and God; this world and the world to come; a faith that recognizes God's dominion over the whole creation and over human life by consecrating to Him a portion of time; a faith that fulfills the believer's true

destiny in time and eternity; a faith that would treat the Lord's day as God's *holy day* rather than as a *holiday*.

ENDNOTES

Due to the unusual length of this essay, I decided to leave out the 8 pages of endnotes. I will send the complete chapter with the endnotes in MW format to those who are editing the manuscript.

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Prof. Jon Paulien's DVD album on *SIMPLY REVELATION* was released few months ago. We have been **airmailing** the DVD album to church leaders, pastors, and lay Adventists in different part of the world. Several pastors have already shown the lectures to their congregations. They wrote to me saying that viewing the lectures was an enlightening experience for their members.

My wife and I viewed *Simply Revelation* on our TV on a Sabbath afternoon. Though I had already watched Prof. Paulien's lectures during the taping session, I was spellbound to hear him again offering so many refreshing insights into the most difficult book of the Bible. For me it is a thrilling experience listening to a scholar like Prof. Paulien, who knows what he is talking about.

Prof. Paulien is rightly regarded as a leading Adventist authority on the book of Revelation which he has taught at the Seminary for the past 25 years. His doctoral dissertation as well as several of his books deal specifically with the Book of Revelation.

The constant demand for Prof. Paulien's CD album with his publications and articles, led me to discuss with him the possibility of producing a live video recording of a mini Revelation Seminar, which he chose to call *Simply Revelation*. As suggested by its title, *Simply Revelation* aims to present simply the message of Revelation—not to read into Revelation sensational, but senseless views.

The preparation of this video recording took several months. The *Simply Revelation* seminar consists of **four one-hour live video lectures**, which have just been recorded in the studio of Andrews University. An impressive virtual studio provides the background of the lectures. Each lecture is delivered with about 50 powerpoint slides. This mini Revelation seminar will offer you and your congregation fresh insights into the Book of Revelation. Be sure to inform your pastor about the newly released *Simply Revelation*, if he is not aware of it.

You will be pleased to know that we have placed on a separate file all the powerpoint slides and the script of the live lecture. This means that if you are a pastor or a lay member who want to use Prof. Paulien's Simply Revelation Seminar, you can pick and choose the powerpoint slides that you like.

The file with the powerpoint slides is placed on Prof. Paulien's CD album containing all his publications and articles. The reason is that there was no memory left on the DVD disks. In spite of my pleas, Prof. Paulien was so full of the subject that he used the full 60 minutes of each lecture, leaving no space for the slides' file.

This has been a very expensive project, both in time and money. The regular price of the DVD album is \$100.00, but you can order it now **at the introductory price of only \$50.00**. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

If you have not ordered before **the CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications**, we will be glad to add it to your DVD order for only \$20.00, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. This means that you can order **both the DVD album with Prof. Paulien's four live video lectures on Simply Revelation and his CD album with all his publications and the powerpoint slides of *Simply Revelation*, for only \$70.00, instead of the regular price of \$160.00**.

As an additional incentive, I am offering you together with Prof. Paulien's DVD/CD albums, also my own popular **DVD album on The Mark and Number of the Beast, for an additional \$10.00, instead of the regular price of \$100.00**. This means that you can order **the DVD and CD albums by Prof, Paulien, together with my DVD album on The Mark and Number of the Beast, for only \$80.00, instead of the regular price of \$260.00**.

This research on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, was commissioned by Prof. Paulien himself. He asked me to trace historically the origin and use of the Pope's title Vicarius Filii Dei and of the number 666. I spent six months conducting this investigation which was professionally taped at the Andrews University Towers Auditorium. I use 200 powerpoint slides to deliver this informative two hours lecture which is warmly received by Adventist church leaders and pastors in many parts of the world. For a detailed description of this DVD album click: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Beast/BeastPromo>

Special Offer on Paulien/Bacchiocchi's Albums:

* **ONE DVD Album of Prof. Paulien's four video lectures on *Simply Revelation* at the introductory price of \$50.00**, instead of \$100.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

* **ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation* and ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications for only \$70.00**, instead of the regular price of \$160.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

* **ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation*, ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications, and ONE DVD Album with Bacchiocchi's two hours video lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast* for only \$80.00**, instead of the regular price of \$260.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

Four Ways to Order Paulien/Bacchiocchi's Albums:

(1) **Online:** By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/revelation/>

(2) **Phone:** By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) **Email:** By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) **Regular Mail:** By mailing a check to BIBLICALPERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

SERVICE: VIDEO RECORDING, DUPLICATION, AND DISTRIBUTION OF CD AND DVD ALBUMS

If you or your church are looking for a professional and reasonable Adventist to tape, edit, duplicate, and distribute video sermons, seminars, or lectures, I highly recommend to you my assistant, Eric Halder, who has served me with distinction these past five years.

He has been responsible for editing my video lectures, maintaining my website, uploading graphics and newsletters, designing the cover of my books, duplicating, packaging, and mailing all my CD/DVD albums and books.

He has earned a B. A. Degree in multimedia from Andrews University in 2003. He has worked for several years as video editor with Lighthouse Productions and REACH international.

If you feel that Eric Halder can assist you or your church in any video production or would like to donate to this ministry, feel free to contact him at (269) 277-1015 or email him at halder@preludefilms.com. For further information visit his website at <http://www.preludefilms.com/> The website will be online in a few days, so please check then.

HOW TO CONTACT THE CENTER FOR CANCER CARE

Last February 2007, I was told that I had only a few months to live, because my liver was infested with a three pounds cancer tumor that could not be removed surgically. I contacted several cancer centers, and the verdict of all the oncologists with whom I spoke, was essentially the same: You have a stage four terminal cancer that cannot be operated. We can only prolong your life of a few months with chemotherapy.

In a providential way the Lord lead me to the unique Center for Cancer Care, in Goshen, Indiana that offers clinical trials on different forms of cancer not readily available in most cancer centers. They use a combination of chemo and microspheres. After two treatments, over 80% of the cancer cells were shut down. And now over 98% of the cancer activity has been eliminated. I feel like a new man with a new lease on life.

To express my gratitude to God for His providential healing through the Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana, I decided to post the informa-

tion on how you can contact the Center. Over 150 Adventists have already contacted the Center. The Vice-President is Vladimir Radivojevic, who is a gracious and caring Adventist Christian gentleman. Feel free to contact his secretary by phone or email. This is the address:

Robyn R. Radford

Manager, Oncology Information Services

Center for Cancer Care at Goshen Health System

200 High Park Avenue

Goshen, IN 46526

Telephone: 574.535.2973

Toll Free: 866.491.HOPE

Fax: 574.535.2488

http://www.cancermidwest.com/news_info/contact_us.asp?id=210

If you or someone you know has cancer, feel free to contact Vladimir. He will talk with you personally, gather your information, and place you in contact with an oncologist who can examine your situation and give you a second opinion free of charge. Vladimir told me that he wants to help patients unable to come to their Center for Cancer Care, by asking physicians to evaluate the medical records free of charge to see if the current treatments are adequate or if one of their clinical trials programs could be of special help.

UPCOMING SEMINARS FOR THE MONTHS OF OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER

Gradually I am rescheduling some of the invitations I had to cancel because of liver-cancer treatments. Here is a list of the upcoming weekend seminars for the months of October and November:

OCTOBER 12-13: SUNNYSIDE SDA CHURCH, WA

Location: 1875 East Lincoln Avenue, Sunnyside, WA 98944.

For directions and information call Pastor Larry Mays at (509) 840 1932 or (509) 837 4233 or (509) 837 6411

OCTOBER 19-20: ENGLAND: EAST HAM & STRATFORD

Location: The East Ham SDA Church worships at Bryant Street Methodist Centre, Bryant Street, Stratford, London E14 4RU.

The Stratford SDA Church worships at 58 Janson Road (off Leytonstone Road) Stratford London E15 1TE.

For directions and information, call Pastor Leslie Ackie at 01279 427 558

OCTOBER 26-27: ENGLAND, LEEDS SDA CHURCH

Location: The Leeds SDA Church is located at 169 Meanwood Road corner of Oatland Place, Leeds LS7 1JW, Great Britain.

For directions and information call Pastor Ian Sweeney, 0114 286 9965.

NOVEMBER 2-3: BIRMINGHAM CAMP HILL SDA CHURCH

Location: Camp Hill Sparkbrook, Birmingham, West Midlands B12 OJP, Great Britain.

For directions and information call Pastor Jeffeth Nicholson at 01543 360253.

NOVEMBER 16-17: AVON PARK SDA CHURCH

Location: 1410 W. Avon Boulevard, Avon Park, Florida 33825.

For directions and information call Pastor Paul Boling at (863) 453-6641, or (863) 635-6769.

INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

HITACHI has just released the new CP-X400 3000 lumens projector, which replaces the CP-X444. The new projector has an impressive high resolution, low fan noise, and a wealth of connectivity options. The most impressive feature of this projector is the incredible price of only \$1395.00 to help especially our churches and schools in developing countries.

This is the special offer on the following three models:

CP-X260 HIGH RESOLUTION 2500 LUMENS - Only \$1095.00

Previous SDA price for the 2500 lumens was \$2395.00.

CP-X400 HIGH RESOLUTION 3000 LUMENS - Only \$1395.00

This is the lowest price for an HITACHI 3000 lumens projector.

CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS Only \$3795.00

Previous SDA price for the 4500 lumens was \$4900.00

WARRANTY: The above prices include a 3 years 24/7 replacement warranty worth about \$285.00.

You can order the HITACHI projectors online by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=24>

If you have a problem ordering online, call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. Your order will be processed immediately.

THE SMALLEST, MOST POWERFUL REMOTE PRESENTER

If you are looking for an outstanding REMOTE for your PowerPoint presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market.

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

You can order online the new POWERPOINT PRESENTER simply by clicking here: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=27&products_id=67

If you have a problem ordering online, simply call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. You can also email us your order at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>, giving us your address, credit card number, and expiration date.

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacture of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at about 30% discount.

The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

BED & BREAKFAST FACILITIES IN LONDON, ENGLAND

If your travel plans call for a stop in London, you will be pleased to learn about a most gracious Adventist couple that offer the best accommodation and breakfast I have ever enjoyed. It has become my home away from home when in London. See details at: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

TAGNET SPECIAL NEW WEB HOSTING OFFER FOR ADVENTIST CHURCHES AND MEMBERS

TAGNET is the largest Adventist networking organization, providing an incredible number of webhosting services to our Adventist churches and members. This newsletter comes to you through their gracious and efficient service. For detail information, visit their website at <http://www.netadventist.org> or <http://home.tagnet.org/> You may also call their office 800 - 9TAGNET. They are ready and eager to help you.