

# HISTORIANS AND CHURCH AUTHORITIES TELL US WHERE SUNDAY SACREDNESS CAME FROM

Why is Sunday kept as a sacred day of worship, when there is absolutely nothing about Sunday sacredness in the Bible?

About 300 years after the last book of the Bible was written, the changeover was made. Historians and leaders in the churches know the facts; you should too. Here they are—from the mouths of many religious and historical experts:

## ROMAN CATHOLIC LEADERS SPEAK

"Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claim to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles . . . From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first."—Catholic Press, Sydney, Australia, August, 1900.

"Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the [Roman Catholic] Church, has no good reason for its Sunday theory, and ought logically to keep Saturday as the Sabbath."—John Gilmary Shea, in the American Catholic Quarterly Review, January 1883.

"It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church."—Priest Brady, in an address, reported in the Elizabeth, N.J. News of March 18, 1903.

"Ques.—Have you any other way of proving that the [Catholic] Church has power to institute festivals of precept [to command holy days]?"

"Ans.—Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her: She could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority."—Stephen Keenan, Doctrinal Catechism, p. 176.

"Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these two alternatives: either Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday or Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is impossible."—The Catholic Mirror, December 23, 1893.

"God simply gave His [Catholic] 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."—Vincent J. Kelly, Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations, p. 2.

"Protestants . . . accept Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for public worship after the Catholic Church made the change . . . But the Protestant mind does not seem to realize that in accepting the Bible, in observing the Sunday, they are accepting the authority of the spokesman for the church, the Pope."—Our Sunday Visitor, February 5, 1950.

"We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."—Pope Leo XIII, in an Encyclical Letter, dated June 20, 1894.

"Not the Creator of Universe, in Genesis 2: 1-3,—but the Catholic Church can claim the honor of having granted man a pause to his work every seven days."—S. C. Mosna, *Storia della Domenica*, 1969, pp. 366-367.

"The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ, hidden under veil of flesh."—*The Catholic National*, July 1895.

"If Protestants would follow the Bible, they should worship God on the Sabbath Day. In keeping the Sunday they are following a law of the Catholic Church."—Albert Smith, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, replying for the Cardinal, in a letter dated February 10, 1920.

"We define that the Holy Apostolic See (the Vatican) and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy over the whole world."—A Decree of the Council of Trent, quoted in Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Cossart, *The Most Holy Councils*, col. 1167.

"It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has transferred this rest [from the Bible Sabbath] to the Sunday . . . Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church."—Monsignor Louis Segur, *Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today*, p. 213.

"We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."—Peter Geiermann, *CSSR, A Doctrinal Catechism*, 1957 edition, p. 50.

"We Catholics, then, have precisely the same authority for keeping Sunday holy instead of Saturday as we have for every other article of our creed, namely, the authority of the Church . . . whereas you who are Protestants have really no authority for it whatever; for there is no authority for it [Sunday sacredness] in the Bible, and you will not allow that there can be authority for it anywhere else."—*The Brotherhood of St. Paul*, "The Clifton tracts," Volume 4, tract 4, p. 15.

"The Church changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday by right of the divine, infallible authority given to her by her founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant, claiming the Bible to be the only guide of faith, has no warrant for observing Sunday. In this matter the Seventh-day Adventist is the only consistent Protestant."—*The Catholic Universe Bulletin*, August 14, 1942, p. 4.

The Bible is your only safe guide. Jesus can help you obey it. Trust God's Word more than man's traditions.

## **PROTESTANT LEADERS SPEAK**

**BAPTIST:** "There was and is a command to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will however be readily said, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, with all its duties, privileges and sanctions. Earnestly desiring information on this subject, which I have studied for many years, I ask, where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament—absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week."—Dr. E. T. Hiscox, author of the *Baptist Manual*.

**Congregationalist:** "It is quite clear that however rigidly or devotedly we may spend Sunday, we are not keeping the Sabbath . . . The Sabbath was founded on a specific divine command. We can plead no such command for the observance of Sunday . . . There is not a single line in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday."—Dr. R. W. Dale, *The Ten Commandments*, pp. 106-107.

**Protestant Episcopal:** "The day is now changed from the seventh to the first day . . . but as we meet with no Scriptural direction for the change, we may conclude it was done by the authority of the church."—"The Protestant Episcopal Explanation of the Catechism.

**Baptist:** "The Scriptures nowhere call the first day of the week the Sabbath . . . There is no Scriptural authority for so doing, nor of course, any Scriptural obligation."—*The Watchman*.

**Presbyterian:** "There is no word, no hint in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday. The observance of Ash Wednesday, or Lent, stands exactly on the same footing as the observance of Sunday. Into the rest of Sunday no Divine Law enters."—Canon Eyton, *Ten Commandments*.

**Anglican:** "And where are we told in the Scriptures that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are nowhere commanded to keep the first day."—Isaac Williams, *Plain Sermons on the Catechism*, pp. 334, 336.

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

**Episcopalian:** "We have made the change from the seventh to the first day, from Saturday to Sunday, on the authority of the one holy, catholic, apostolic church of Christ."—Bishop Seymour, *Why We Keep Sunday*.

**Southern Baptist:** "The sacred name of the seventh day is Sabbath. This fact is too clear to require argument [Exodus 20:10, quoted] . . . On this point the plain teaching of the Word has been admitted in all ages . . . Not once did the disciples apply the Sabbath law to the first day of the week,—that folly was left for a later age, nor did they pretend that the first day supplanted the seventh."—Joseph Judson Taylor, *The Sabbatic Question*, pp. 14-17, 41.

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

**Christian Church:** "Now there is no testimony in all the oracles of heaven that the Sabbath is changed, or that the Lord's Day came in the room of it."—Alexander Campbell, *Reporter*, October 8, 1921.

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

**Baptist:** "To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years' discussion with His disciples, often conversing upon the Sabbath question, discussing it in some of its various aspects, freeing it from its false [Jewish traditional] glosses, never alluded to any transference of the day; also, no such thing was intimated. Nor, so far as we know, did the Spirit, which was

given to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever that He had said unto them, deal with this question. Nor yet did the inspired apostles, in preaching the gospel, founding churches, counseling and instructing those founded, discuss or approach the subject.

"Of course I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history as a religious day, as we learn from the Christian Fathers and other sources. But what a pity that it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, then adopted and sanctified by the Papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism."—Dr. E. T. Hiscox, report of his sermon at the Baptist Minister's Convention, New York Examiner, November 16, 1893.

## **HISTORIANS SPEAK:**

### **HOW THE SABBATH WAS CHANGED TO SUNDAY**

"There is scarcely anything which strikes the mind of the careful student of ancient ecclesiastical history with greater surprise than the comparatively early period at which many of the corruptions of Christianity, which are embodied in the Roman system, took their rise; yet it is not to be supposed that when the first originators of many of these unscriptural notions and practices planted those germs of corruption, they anticipated or even imagined they would ever grow into such a vast and hideous system of superstition and error as is that of popery."—John Dowling, History of Romanism, 13th Edition, p. 65.

"It would be an error to attribute ['the sanctification of Sunday'] to a definite decision of the Apostles. There is no such decision mentioned the Apostolic documents [that is, the New Testament]."—Antoine Villien, A History of the Commandments of the Church, 1915, p. 23.

"It must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day."—McClintock and Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. 9, p. 196.

"Rites and ceremonies, of which neither Paul nor Peter ever heard, crept silently into use, and then claimed the rank of divine institutions. [Church] officers for whom the primitive disciples could have found no place, and titles which to them would have been altogether unintelligible, began to challenge attention, and to be named apostolic."—William D. Killen, The Ancient Church, p. xvi.

"Until well into the second century [a hundred years after Christ] we do not find the slightest indication in our sources that Christians marked Sunday by any kind of abstention from work."—W. Rordorf, Sunday, p. 157.

"The ancient Sabbath did remain and was observed . . . by the Christians of the Eastern Church [in the area near Palestine] above three hundred years after our Saviour's death."—A Learned Treatise of the Sabbath, p. 77.

"Modern Christians who talk of keeping Sunday as a 'holy' day, as in the still extant 'Blue Laws,' of colonial America, should know that as a 'holy' day of rest and cessation from labor and amusements Sunday was unknown to Jesus . . . It formed no tenant [teaching] of the primitive Church and became 'sacred' only in the course of time. Outside the church its observance was legalized for the Roman Empire through a series of decrees starting with the famous one of Constantine in 321, an edict due to his political and social ideas."—W. W. Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, 1946, p. 257.

"The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals was always only a human ordinance, and it was far from the intentions of the apostles to establish a Divine command in this respect, far from them, and from the early apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday."—Augustus Neander, *The History of the Christian Religion and Church*, 1843, p. 186.

"The [Catholic] Church took the pagan buckler of faith against the heathen. She took the pagan Roman Pantheon [the Roman], temple to all the gods, and made it sacred to all the martyrs; so it stands to this day. She took the pagan Sunday and made it the Christian Sunday . . . The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom. Balder the beautiful: the White God, the old Scandinavians called him. The sun has worshipers at this very hour in Persia and other lands . . . Hence the Church would seem to have said, 'Keep that old pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.' And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus. The sun is a fitting emblem of Jesus. The Fathers often compared Jesus to the sun; as they compared Mary to the moon."—William L. Gildea, "Paschale Gaudium," in *The Catholic World*, p. 58, March 1894.

"The Church made a sacred day of Sunday . . . largely because it was the weekly festival of the sun;—for it was a definite Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and give them a Christian significance."—Authur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity*, 1928, p. 145.

"Remains of the struggle [between the religion of Christianity and the religion of Mithraism] are found in two institutions adopted from its rival by Christianity in the fourth century, the two Mithraic sacred days: December 25, 'dies natalis solis' [birthday of the sun], as the birthday of Jesus,—and Sunday, 'the venerable day of the Sun,' as Constantine called it in his edict of 321."—Walter Woodburn Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire*, p. 60.

"It is not strange that Sunday is almost universally observed when the Sacred Writings do not endorse it? Satan, the great counterfeiter, worked through the 'mystery of iniquity' to introduce a counterfeit Sabbath to take the place of the true Sabbath. Sunday stands side by side with Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy (or Maundy) Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Whitsunday, Corpus Christi, Assumption Day, All Soul's Day, Christmas Day, and a host of other ecclesiastical feast days too numerous to mention. This array of Roman Catholic feasts and fast days are all man made. None of them bears the divine credentials of the Author of the Inspired Word."—M. E. Walsh.

"Sun worship was the earliest idolatry."—Fausset Bible Dictionary, p. 666.

"Sun worship was one of the oldest components of the Roman religion."—Gaston H. Halsberge, *The Cult of Sol Invictus*, 1972, p. 26.

" 'Babylon, the mother of harlots,' derived much of her teaching from pagan Rome and thence from Babylon. Sun worship—that led her to Sundaykeeping,—was one of those choice bits of paganism that sprang originally from the heathen lore of ancient Babylon: The solar theology of the 'Chaldeans' had a decisive effect upon the final development of Semitic paganism . . . [It led to their] seeing the sun the directing power of the cosmic system. All the Baals were thence forward turned into suns; the sun itself being the mover of the other stars—like it eternal and 'unconquerable' . . . Such was the final form reached by the religion of the pagan Semites, and following them, by that of the Romans . . . when they raised 'Sol Invictus' [the Invincible Sun] to the rank of supreme divinity in the empire."—Franz F. V. M. Cummont, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans*, p. 55.

"When Christianity conquered Rome, the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title and the vestments of the 'pontifex maximus,' the worship to the 'Great Mother' goddess and a

multitude of comforting divinities . . . the joy or solemnity of old festivals, and the pageantry of immemorial ceremony, passed like material blood into the new religion,—and captive Rome conquered her conqueror. The reins and skills of government were handed down by a dying empire to a virile papacy."—Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, p. 672.

"The power of the Ceasars lived again in the universal dominion of the popes."—H. G. Guinness, *Romanism and the Reformation*.

"Like two sacred rivers flowing from paradise, the Bible and divine Tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gems of revealed truth. Though these two divine streams are in themselves, on account of their divine origin, of equal sacredness, and are both full of revealed truths, still, of the two, Tradition [the sayings of popes and councils] is to us more clear and safe."—Di Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, p. 33.

"Unquestionably the first law, either ecclesiastical or civil, by which the Sabbatical observance of that day is known to have been ordained, is the edict of Constantine, A.D. 321."—Chamber's *Encyclopedia*, article, "Sabbath."

Here is the first Sunday law in history, a legal enactment by Constantine I (reigned 306-337): "On the Venerable Day of the Sun ["Venerable die Solis"—the sacred day of the Sun] let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost—given the 7th day of March [A.D. 321], Crispus and Constanstine being consuls each of them for the second time."—The First Sunday Law of Constantine I, in "Codex Justianianus," lib. 3, tit. 12,3; trans. in Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 380.

"This [Constantine's Sunday decree of March 321] is the 'parent' Sunday law making it a day of rest and release from labor. For from that time to the present there have been decrees about the observance of Sunday which have profoundly influenced European and American society. When the Church became a part of State under the Christian emperors, Sunday observance was enforced by civil statutes, and later when the Empire was past, the Church in the hands of the papacy enforced it by ecclesiastical and also by civil enactments."—Walter W. Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire*, 1946, p. 261.

"Constantine's decree marked the beginning of a long, though intermittent series of imperial decrees in support of Sunday rest."—Vincent J. Kelly, *Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations*, 1943, p. 29.

"Constantine labored at this time untiringly to unite the worshipers of the old and the new into one religion. All his laws and contrivances are aimed at promoting this amalgamation of means melt together a purified heathenism and a moderated Christianity . . . Of all his blending and melting together of Christianity and heathenism, none is more easy to see through than this making of his Sunday law: The Christians worshiped their Christ, the heathen their sun-god [so they should now be combined]."—H. G. Heggtveit, *Illustreret Kirkehistorie*, 1895, p. 202.

"If every Sunday is to be observed by Christians on account of the resurrection, then every Sabbath on account of the burial is to be regarded in execration [cursing] of the Jews."—Pope Sylvester, quoted by S. R. E. Humbert, "Adversus Graecorum Calumnias," in J. P. Migne, *Patrologie*, p. 143 [Sylvester (A.D. 314-337) was the pope at the time Constantine I was Emperor].



"All things whatsoever that were prescribed for the [Bible] 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."—Bishop Eusebius, quoted in J. P. Migne, "Patrologie," p. 23, 1169-1172 [Eusebius of Caesarea was a high-ranking Catholic leader during Constantine's lifetime].

"As we have already noted, excepting for the Roman and Alexandrian Christians, the majority of Christians were observing the seventh-day Sabbath at least as late as the middle of the fifth century [A.D. 450]. The Roman and Alexandrian Christians were among those converted from heathenism. They began observing Sunday as a merry religious festival in honor of the Lord's resurrection, about the latter half of the second century A.D. However, they did not try to teach that the Lord or His apostles commanded it. In fact, no ecclesiastical writer before Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century even suggested that either Christ or His apostles instituted the observance of the first day of the week.

"These Gentile Christians of Rome and Alexandria began calling the first day of the week 'the Lord's day.' This was not difficult for the pagans of the Roman Empire who were steeped in sun worship to accept, because they [the pagans] referred to their sun-god as their 'Lord.'"—E. M. Chalmers, *How Sunday Came into the Christian Church*, p. 3.

The following statement was made 100 years after Constantine's Sunday Law was passed: "Although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this."—Socrates Scholasticus, quoted in *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, chap. 22 [written shortly after A.D. 439].

"The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria."—Hermias Sozomen, quoted in *Ecclesiastical History*, vii, 19, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, p. 390 [written soon after A.D. 415].

"Down even to the fifth century the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was continued in the Christian church, but with a rigor and solemnity gradually diminishing until it was wholly discontinued."—Lyman Coleman, *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, chap. 26, sec. 2, p. 527.

"Constantine's [five Sunday Law] decrees marked the beginning of a long though intermittent series of imperial decrees in support of Sunday rest."—*A History of the Councils of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

"What began, however, as a pagan ordinance, ended as a Christian regulation; and a long series of imperial decrees, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth, centuries, enjoined with increasing stringency abstinence from labor on Sunday."—Hutton Webster, *Rest Days*, pp. 122-123, 270.

Here is the first Sunday Law decree of a Christian council, given about 16 years after Constantine's first Sunday Law of A.D. 321: "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday [in the original: 'sabbato'—shall not be idle on the Sabbath], but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out ['anathema,' excommunicated] from Christ."—Council of Laodicea, c. A.D. 337, Canon 29, quoted in C. J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

"The keeping of the Sunday rest arose from the custom of the people and the constitution of the [Catholic] Church . . . Tertullian was probably the first to refer to a cessation of affairs on the Sunday; the Council of Laodicea issued the first conciliar legislation for that day; Constantine I

issued the first civil legislation."—Priest Vincent J. Kelly, *Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations*, p. 203 [a thesis presented to the Catholic University of America].

"About 590, Pope Gregory, in a letter to the Roman people, denounced as the prophets of Antichrist those who maintained that work ought not to be done on the seventh day."—James T. Ringgold, *The Law of Sunday*, p. 267.

In the later centuries, persecution against believers in the Bible Sabbath intensified until very few were left alive. When the Reformation began, the true Sabbath was almost unknown.

"Now the [Catholic] Church . . . instituted, by God's authority, Sunday as the day of worship. The same Church, by the same divine authority, taught the doctrine of Purgatory . . . We have, therefore, the same authority for Purgatory as we have for Sunday."—Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked about*, 1927, p. 236.

"Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [of the Sabbath to Sunday] was her act . . . AND THE ACT IS A MARK of her ecclesiastical power."—From the office of Cardinal Gibbons, through Chancellor H. F. Thomas, November 11, 1895