

Since many of his subjects were pagans, and had been accustomed to pagan practices and pagan days of worship such as Sunday, it is only reasonable that Constantine would use his influence to make it easier for these pagans to become Christians. Thus he gave official sanction to Sunday and encouraged the practice of the Roman Church in keeping Sunday by passing the first legal Sunday law, stating that all should rest on the venerable day of the sun.

"On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed." Constantine, March 7, 321, Codex Justinianus lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**, Vol. 3, p. 380, note 1

Thus we see that as the early church apostatized from the truth, they introduced the day of the sun in place of the Lord's Sabbath. This was a gradual change, innocent in its beginnings, but devastating in its final results. The way was paved for its acceptance because of the anti-Jewish feeling, the Gnostic and Platonic thinking that influenced Roman Christianity, and the influence of pagan Mithraism and its observance of Sunday. With Christians and pagans keeping the same day, it was much easier for the pagans to come to the church. Rather than be converted, they brought their paganism with them, and Christianity was thus corrupted.



EXHIBIT 1

For Daniel Lesson 11

THE ATTEMPTED CHANGE OF THE SABBATH TO SUNDAY

God does not change. His law does not change. God specifies the seventh day, Saturday, as the Sabbath. The Bible gives no indication of any New Testament change in the day of worship. Let us open the pages of history after the Bible was written and discover when the attempt to change God's Sabbath to Sunday was made.

The New Testament is completely silent on any controversy over the Sabbath in the New Testament Church. The issue of circumcision nearly split the New Testament Church and entire books of the Bible (e.g. Galatians) were written over the issue of circumcision. Sabbath-keeping was more deeply rooted in Judaism than circumcision, yet we find no discussion over the Sabbath in Bible times. Likewise, for one hundred years after Christ, there is no discussion of the Sabbath question. However, in the second, third and fourth centuries, there is considerable discussion over this issue, which would indicate that this would be the time when men attempted to introduce a new day of worship.

Not only Daniel, but also the apostle Paul predicted that there would come a falling away, an apostasy (II Thessalonians 2). The predicted apostasy arose as changes were made in Christian practices 100-300 years after the early church arose. The change in the Sabbath was only one of the many changes in the practice of the early church that occurred during this time.

Sunday-keeping was introduced into the Christian church rather innocently, and its first advocates never dreamed that it would take the place of the seventh-day Sabbath of God. Sunday-keeping had its origin in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian in the second century.

Hadrian persecuted the Jews in Rome incessantly. In an attempt to separate themselves from the Jews and avoid being persecuted with them, these early Roman Christians began keeping Sunday in addition to the Sabbath. Later they gave as their reason Christ's resurrection on Sunday. Very gradually this practice of keeping Saturday as the Sabbath, and Sunday in honour of the resurrection, spread to other parts of the Christian world. To accentuate the importance of Sunday in honour of the resurrection, the Roman Church prescribed the keeping of one special Sunday in special memory of the resurrection — Easter. Many Christians wished to keep Easter on the same date each year, but Rome insisted that it be on Sunday, and Rome won.

Notice how many early Christian writers refer to the fact that in the third and fourth centuries AD both Saturday and Sunday were kept by the church.

"In some places no day is omitted, on which the Communion is not offered; in some [it is offered] only on the Sabbath and the Lord's day [Sunday], and in some only on the Lord's day." Augustine (died 430 AD). Letter 54 to Januarius, Chapter 2, in MPL, Vol. 33, Col. 200. "Keep the Sabbath, and the Lord's day festival; because the former is the memorial of creation, and the latter of the resurrection."

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Bk. 7, Sec. 2, Ch. 23, trans. in ANF, Vol. 7, p. 469.

"Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath day, the Lord's day, let them have leisure to go to church for instruction and piety." **Constitutions of the Holy Apostles**, Bk. 8, Sec. 4, Ch. 33, trans. in ANF, Vol. 7, p. 495.

"There are no public services among them in the day except on Saturday and Sunday, when they meet together at the third hour for the purpose of holy communion." John Cassian (died around 440 AD), **Institutes III**, Book 3, Ch. 2, trans. in NPNF 2nd series, Vol. 11, p. 213.

"With what kind of eyes do you see the Lord's Day [Sunday], you who dishonour the Sabbath? Do you not know that these days are

Gnostic and especially Platonic influence on Christian thinking was greater in Alexandria and in Rome. Thus here was further support for Sunday.

Another influence in the early Christian Church was Mithraism, an ancient Oriental cult of the sun. This cult came to Rome in the first century AD and became popular in the second and third centuries. The central feature of this cult was the worship of the sun upon the first day of the week. Historians have written concerning the influence of Mithraism on Christianity in this way:

"Aurelian ... created a new cult of the 'Invincible Son: Worshipped in a splendid temple, served by pontiffs who were raised to the level of the ancient pontiffs of Rome On establishing this new state cult, Aurelian in reality proclaimed the dethronement of the old Roman idolatry and the accession of Semitic Sun-Worship." Franz Cumont, **Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans**, p. 55, 56.

"The two opposed creeds [Christianity and Mithraism] moved in the same intellectual and moral sphere, and one could actually pass from one to the other without shock or interruption." Cumont, p. 210.

"The worshippers [of Mithra] held Sunday sacred and celebrated the birth of the Sun on the 25th of December." Franz Cumont, **The Mysteries of Mithra**, trans. by Thomas J. McCormack, p. 191.

"Our observance of Sunday as the Lord's day is apparently derived from Mithraism. The argument that has sometimes been used against this claim, namely, that Sunday was chosen because of the resurrection on that day, is not well supported." Gordon J. Laing, **Survivals of Roman Religion**, p. 148.

"As a solar festival, Sunday was the sacred day of Mithra; and it is interesting to notice that since Mithra was addressed as Dominus, 'Lord,' Sunday must have been the 'Lord's Day' long before the Christian times." A. Weigall, **The Paganism in Our Christianity**, p. 145.

When Constantine was converted to Christianity at the beginning of the fourth century, he attempted to unite his empire in the Christian faith.

The first reasons for the acceptance of Sunday was a strong anti-Jewish feeling that permeated the church in the early centuries. The Christian Church was attempting to do everything possible to be completely separate from the Jews, especially after the persecution of Hadrian began in A.D. 121-124. Thus any institution that was kept by both Jews and Christians became a target for change. Sunday-keeping may possibly have started simply as an attempt to show that Christians not only honoured the Sabbath, but also had another day that was kept in addition to the Sabbath. In this way they would be different from the Jews. In order to emphasize their hatred toward the Jews, doctrinal change took place; and these changes began, as we have seen, in Rome.

Anti-Jewish writers, such as Barnabas and Justin Martyr, first wrote against the Sabbath. Their arguments were that Christians should not keep the Sabbath, because the Sabbath is Jewish, and if they kept the Sabbath, they would be considered Jews. Then in the fourth century, the following decision was made:

"Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ." Oh. Y. Hefele, **A History of the Councils of the Church**, Vol. 2, p. 316.

Here it is noticed that one of the reasons why they were advocating Sunday-keeping was because the Sabbath was Jewish. But at the same time, notice that there was an admission that Christians were idle on Saturday. In other words, there were many Christians who were still keeping the Sabbath at this time, and the church at Rome was attempting to legislate a change.

Another influence that resulted in the acceptance of Sunday, was the spread of Gnosticism and Platonic philosophy. These were pagan philosophies that were attempting to gain control over the Christian Church in the early centuries.

The Gnostic day of worship was Sunday, the day consecrated to the sun, which was their god. Many of the early Christian writers who supported Sunday were influenced by Gnostic and Platonic philosophies. In fact,

sisters?" Gregory of Nyssa (331-396), **De Castigatione** ("On Reproof") in MPG, Vol. 46, col. 309. Greek

Thus we see that for several centuries the church kept both Saturday and Sunday. Gradually, however, the Sabbath became less and less important, and Sunday became more and more important. This change in emphasis was particularly noticeable at Rome.

To the early church, the Sabbath was a day of delight, a day that they looked forward to and really enjoyed. However, at Rome, the Sabbath was made a fast day, a day of gloom, and Sunday was the day of delight. Thus, individuals came to look forward to Sunday, but to dread the Sabbath. Eventually this paved the way for the Sabbath to be completely disregarded, and the people were already conditioned to accept Sunday. However, we do notice that other Christian churches did not immediately follow Rome's example:

"The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which is never observed at Rome, or at Alexandria." Sozomen, **Eccl. Hist. VII**, Ch. 19. (died 440 AD).

Thus, as late as four hundred years after Christ the historian testifies that almost all Christian churches in the world were still keeping the Sabbath, but at Rome things were different. They had ceased to keep the Sabbath and were now keeping Sunday only.

Evidently there was considerable discussion in the church over this substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath of the Bible. The discussions of many have been recorded and preserved for our benefit today. Notice a few of these:

"On Saturday the Gospels and other portions of the Scripture shall be read aloud." Council of Laodicea (A.D. 343-381), Charles Joseph Hefele, **A History of Christian Councils**, Vol. 2, trans. and ed. by H. N. Oxenham, p. 310, Can. 16.

"Although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath [i.e., Saturday] of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and Rome, on account of some ancient

tradition, have ceased to do this." Socrates Schutasticus, **Ecclesiastical History**, Bk. 5, ch. 22, trans. in NPNF, 2nd series, Vol. 2, p. 132.

"On the Sabbath day we gathered together, not being infected with Judaism, for we do not lay hold of false Sabbaths, but we come on the Sabbath to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath." Athanasius, *Homilia de Semente*, sec. 1, in MPG, Vol. 28, col. 144 Greek

Thus we see that there was considerable discussion of the Sabbath question during the latter part of the second, third and fourth centuries. The practice of keeping both Saturday and Sunday started at Rome. Then the practice of downgrading the Sabbath and uplifting Sunday also began in Rome. As Rome spread and began to exercise jurisdiction over other churches, Sunday worship spread with it. When the Roman Church attempted to take over the Celtic Church around A.D. 600, one of the issues over which the two churches differed, and one of the issues used by the Celtic Church in England to refuse to submit to Rome, was the Sabbath issue. Notice what the historian says:

"The Celts permitted their priests to marry, the Romans forbade it. The Celts held their own councils and enacted their own laws, independent of Rome ... The Celts used a Latin Bible unlike the Vulgate, and kept the day Saturday as a day of rest with special religious services on Sunday." Flick, **The Rise of the Medieval Church**, p. 237.

Thus Sabbath-keeping was so deeply rooted in the early N.T. church, that in spite of the attempts of the Roman Church to suppress it and exalt Sunday in its stead, true Sabbath-keeping remained in the church for over 600 years after the coming of Christ. It was only after the Roman Church attained full control of Christendom during the Middle Ages that the Sabbath was lost sight of.

Years later as the Roman Church looked back on these centuries when she had gradually changed the Sabbath into Sunday, she boldly declared that this was her act and proved that she has power to ordain feasts and festivals because all other churches eventually went along with Rome in the change of the Sabbath, and even Protestants today still submit to this law of the Roman Church to honour Sunday. Notice these claims:

Q. "What is the Third Commandment?"

A. The Third Commandment is: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." Peter Geierman, **The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine** (1951) p. 50.

Q. "How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holy days?"

A. By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church." Henry Tuberville, **An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrines**, 1833, p. 58.

It is hard to believe that the once pure Christian Church could so apostatize from the truth, even in six hundred years. But here is a solemn warning for all of us. Apostasy does not occur overnight. It occurs gradually and begins when one small principle is sacrificed. Once that is sacrificed, it is always easier to sacrifice another principle. And so the process goes, until apostasy has gone deep.

At the beginning of the second century the Church was still pure. But by the end of the second century, just one hundred years later, it was hardly recognizable as the same church. During the second century the seed was sown for most of the unbiblical teachings that sprang up in the centuries that followed. The seed of Sunday-keeping was one of those teachings that arose in the second century rather innocently, as we have seen, but fully mushroomed into a great departure from Bible truth in the centuries that followed. What was it that, paved the way for the apostasy on the Sabbath?