

Roman Catholic and Protestant Confessions about Sunday

The Bible Sabbath Association

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The vast majority of Christian churches today teach the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, as a time for rest and worship. Yet it is generally known and freely admitted that the early Christians observed the seventh day as the Sabbath. How did this change come about?

History reveals that it was decades after the death of the apostles that a politico-religious system repudiated the Sabbath of Scripture and substituted the observance of the first day of the week. The following quotations, all from Roman Catholic sources, freely acknowledge that there is no Biblical authority for the observance of Sunday, that it was the Roman Church that changed the Sabbath to the first day of the week.

In the second portion of this booklet are quotations from Protestants. Undoubtedly all of these noted clergymen, scholars, and writers kept Sunday, but they all frankly admit that there is no Biblical authority for a first-day sabbath.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CONFESSIONS

James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 88th ed., pp. 89.

“But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the relig-

ious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.”

Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism*, 3rd ed., p. 174.

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

“*Answer:* Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her—she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.”

John Laux, *A Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies* (1936), vol. 1, p. 51.

“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.”

Daniel Ferres, ed., *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (1916), p. 67.

“*Question:* How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holy days?”

“Answer: 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.”

James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore (1877-1921), in a signed letter.

“Is Saturday the seventh day according to the Bible and the Ten Commandments? I answer *yes*. Is Sunday the first day of the week and did the Church change the seventh day—Saturday—for Sunday, the first day? I answer *yes*. Did Christ change the day? I answer *no!*

“Faithfully yours, J. Card. Gibbons”

The Catholic Mirror, official publication of James Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 23, 1893.

“The Catholic Church, . . . by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.”

Catholic Virginian, Oct. 3, 1947, p. 9, art. “To Tell You the Truth.”

“For example, nowhere in the Bible do we find that Christ or the Apostles ordered that the Sabbath be changed from Saturday to Sunday. We have the commandment of God given to Moses to keep holy the Sabbath day, that is the 7th day of the week, Saturday. Today most Christians keep Sunday because it has been revealed to us by the [Roman Catholic] church outside the Bible.”

Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., *The Converts Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (1957), p. 50.

“*Question:* Which is the Sabbath day?

“*Answer:* Saturday is the Sabbath day.

“*Question:* Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

“*Answer:* We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”

Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About* (1927), p. 136.

“Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that worship should be changed from Saturday to Sunday Now the Church . . . instituted, by God’s authority, Sunday as the day of worship. This same Church, by the same divine authority, taught the doctrine of Purgatory long before the Bible was made. We have, therefore, the same authority for Purgatory as we have for Sunday.”

Peter R. Kraemer, *Catholic Church Extension Society* (1975), Chicago, Illinois.

“Regarding the change from the observance of the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday, I wish to draw your attention to the facts:

“1) That Protestants, who accept the Bible as the only rule of faith and religion, should by all means go back to the observance of the Sabbath. The fact that they do not, but on the contrary observe the Sunday, stultifies them in the eyes of every thinking man.

"2) We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith. Besides the Bible we have the living Church, the authority of the Church, as a rule to guide us. We say, this Church, instituted by Christ to teach and guide man through life, has the right to change the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament and hence, we accept her change of the Sabbath to Sunday. We frankly say, yes, the Church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws, for instance, the Friday abstinence, the unmarried priesthood, the laws concerning mixed marriages, the regulation of Catholic marriages and a thousand other laws.

"It is always somewhat laughable, to see the Protestant churches, in pulpit and legislation, demand the observance of Sunday, of which there is nothing in their Bible."

T. Enright, C.S.S.R., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, Feb. 18, 1884.

"I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' The Catholic Church says: 'No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week.' And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in a reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church."

PROTESTANT CONFESSIONS

Protestant theologians and preachers from a wide spectrum of denominations have been quite candid in admitting that there is no Biblical authority for observing Sunday as a sabbath.

Anglican/Episcopal

Isaac Williams, *Plain Sermons on the Catechism*, vol. 1, pp. 334, 336.

“And where are we told in the Scriptures that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are nowhere commanded to keep the first day The reason why we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, but because the church has enjoined it.”

Canon Eyton, *The Ten Commandments*, pp. 52, 63, 65.

“There is no word, no hint, in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday Into the rest of Sunday no divine law enters The observance of Ash Wednesday or Lent stands exactly on the same footing as the observance of Sunday.”

Bishop Seymour, *Why We Keep Sunday*.

“We have made the change from the seventh day to the first day, from Saturday to Sunday, on the authority of the one holy Catholic Church.”

Baptist

Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, a paper read before a New York ministers' conference, Nov. 13, 1893, reported in *New York Examiner*, Nov. 16, 1893.

"There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament—absolutely not.

"To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years' intercourse with His disciples, often conversing with them upon the Sabbath question . . . never alluded to any transference of the day; also, that during forty days of His resurrection life, no such thing was intimated.

"Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history But what a pity it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism!"

William Owen Carver, *The Lord's Day in Our Day*, p. 49.

"There was never any formal or authoritative change from the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath to the Christian first-day observance."

Congregationalist

Dr. R. W. Dale, *The Ten Commandments* (New York: Eaton & Mains), p. 127-129.

“ . . . 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 obligation to observe Sunday There is not a single sentence in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday.”

Timothy Dwight, *Theology: Explained and Defended* (1823), Ser. 107, vol. 3, p. 258.

“ . . . the Christian Sabbath [Sunday] is not in the Scriptures, and was not by the primitive Church called the Sabbath.”

Disciples of Christ

Alexander Campbell, *The Christian Baptist*, Feb. 2, 1824, vol. 1. no. 7, p. 164.

“‘But,’ say some, ‘it was changed from the seventh to the first day.’ Where? when? and by whom? No man can tell. No; it never was changed, nor could it be, unless creation was to be gone through again: for the reason assigned must be changed before the observance, or respect to the reason, can be changed! It is all old wives’ fables to talk of the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day. If it be changed, it was that august personage changed it who changes times and laws *ex officio*—I think his name is *Doctor Antichrist*.”

First Day Observance, pp. 17, 19.

"The first day of the week is commonly called the Sabbath. This is a mistake. The Sabbath of the Bible was the day just preceding the first day of the week. The first day of the week is never called the Sabbath anywhere in the entire Scriptures. It is also an error to talk about the change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. There is not in any place in the Bible any intimation of such a change."

Lutheran

The Sunday Problem, a study book of the United Lutheran Church (1923), p. 36.

"We have seen how gradually the impression of the Jewish sabbath faded from the mind of the Christian Church, and how completely the newer thought underlying the observance of the first day took possession of the church. We have seen that the Christians of the first three centuries never confused one with the other, but for a time celebrated both."

Augsburg Confession of Faith, art. 28; written by Melancthon, approved by Martin Luther, 1530; as published in *The Book of Concord of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Henry Jacobs, ed. (1911), p. 63.

"They [Roman Catholics] refer to the Sabbath Day, as having been changed into the Lord's Day, contrary to the Decalogue, as it seems. Neither is there any example whereof they make more than concerning the changing of the Sabbath Day. Great, say they, is the power of the Church, since it has dispensed with one of the Ten Commandments!"

Dr. Augustus Neander, *The History of the Christian Religion and Church*, Henry John Rose, tr. (1843), p. 186.

"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."

John Theodore Mueller, *Sabbath or Sunday*, pp. 15, 16.

"But they err in teaching that Sunday has taken the place of the Old Testament Sabbath and therefore must be kept as the seventh day had to be kept by the children of Israel These churches err in their teaching, for Scripture has in no way ordained the first day of the week in place of the Sabbath. There is simply no law in the New Testament to that effect."

Methodist

Harris Franklin Rall, *Christian Advocate*, July 2, 1942, p. 26.

"Take the matter of Sunday. There are indications in the New Testament as to how the church came to keep the first day of the week as its day of worship, but there is no passage telling Christians to keep that day, or to transfer the Jewish Sabbath to that day."

John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, John Emory, ed. (New York: Eaton & Mains), Sermon 25, vol. 1, p. 221.

"But, the moral law contained in the ten

commandments, and enforced by the prophets, he [Christ] did not take away. It was not the design of his coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other."

Dwight L. Moody

D. L. Moody, *Weighed and Wanting* (Fleming H. Revell Co.: New York), pp. 47, 48.

"The Sabbath was binding in Eden, and it has been in force ever since. This fourth commandment begins with the word 'remember,' showing that the Sabbath already existed when God wrote the law on the tables of stone at Sinai. How can men claim that this one commandment has been done away with when they will admit that the other nine are still binding?"

Presbyterian

T. C. Blake, D.D., *Theology Condensed*, pp. 474, 475.

"The Sabbath is a part of the decalogue—the Ten Commandments. This alone forever settles the question as to the perpetuity of the institution Until, therefore, it can be shown that the whole moral law has been repealed, the Sabbath will stand The teaching of Christ confirms the perpetuity of the Sabbath."

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by Dr. S. Bacchiocchi (372 pp.)

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- *promoting communication, understanding, and cooperation among all seventh-day Christians.*