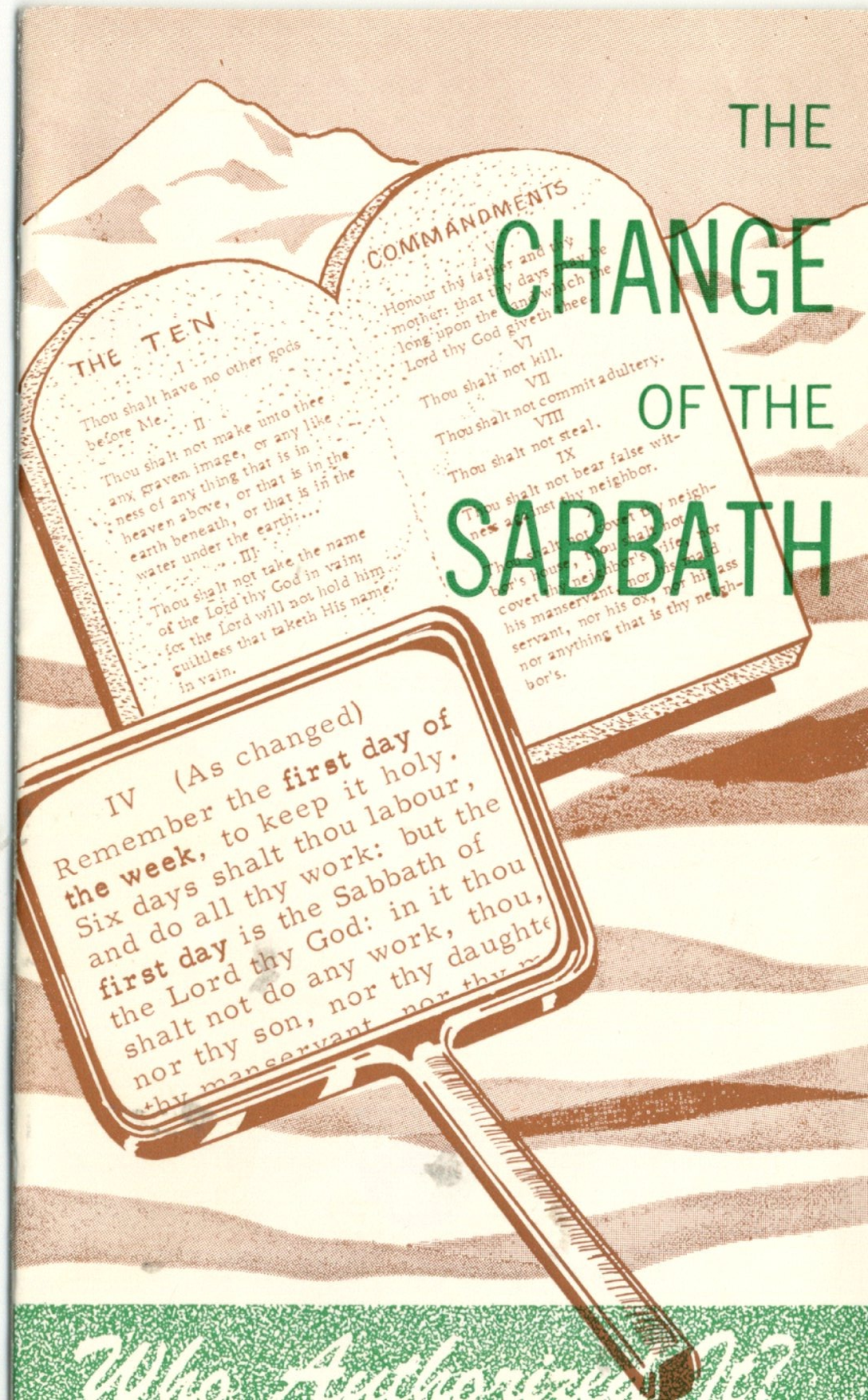
THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH



The Change of the Sabbath

A Study
Of the Word of God
In the Interest of Bible Truth

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THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH

Why do most Christian churches teach the observance of SUNDAY as the day of rest and worship of God when the Bible teaches the observance of SATURDAY, the SEVENTH DAY of the week?

This is the main question in this study.

A Great and Important Question

In this time so near the second advent of Christ, TRUE CHRISTIANS want to be found right in the sight of God. And the question as to the day of worship is one which we must study and on which we must find the *truth!* It is evident that at some time and some place there must have been a change made in the teaching of the day of rest. In all the Bible the only day ever mentioned as a day of worship and rest is the *Sabbath,* the seventh day of the week, now commonly known as *Saturday*. Yet, most churches observe Sunday the FIRST day of the week and call it the *Lord's Day* or the *Christian Sabbath.* Why? Why?

The Sabbath of the Bible

Now, let us see what the Bible teaches about a sabbath day. At the very beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis we find the origin of the seven-day week. God created the world in six literal days.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were

the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work. . . (Gen. 1:31—2:3).

Thus, we find the eternal Creator setting aside a special day as a blessed and holy day, SANCTIFIED AND BLESSED! The word *sanctify* means to set apart or make holy.

Israel Kept the Sabbath

The fact that the Sabbath was kept by the people of God in early times is shown in Exodus 16. Beginning with verse 21 we read of the gathering of the manna as God gave it to Israel:

And they gathered it every morning. . . . And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread . . . and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord. . . . Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none (Exodus 16:21-23, 26).

About two months later God gave the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. The following is the wording of the fourth commandment:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11).

God gave this commandment to ISRAEL who were the PEOPLE OF GOD. They observed it and kept the record of the time, preserving the weekly cycle throughout the ages.

Jesus Kept the Sabbath

During His life and ministry on earth Jesus observed the SEVENTH DAY SABBATH:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and as HIS CUSTOM WAS, he went into the synagogue on the SABBATH DAY, and stood up for to read (Luke 4:16; capital letters added for emphasis).

Jesus taught the TRUE WAY for people to keep the Sabbath. He showed that it was right to do good on the Sabbath, to relieve suffering, and to prepare and eat food. In Matthew 12:1-7 we find the Pharisees of the Jews condemning the disciples of Jesus for picking and eating grain. Jesus said they were

not guilty of breaking the Sabbath. He then proceeded to heal a man's hand on the Sabbath. And He said, "... it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days" (Matt. 12:12). In Mark 2:27 and 28 we find these words of Jesus:

> *... The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.*

Thus, Jesus taught the keeping of the Sabbath in the right way and declared that it was the day *of which He was Lord,* thus calling the seventh-day Sabbath, or SATURDAY, the "LORD'S DAY." Why, then, do many churches today call SUNDAY the *Lord's day?* We shall investigate this further on in our study.

Paul Kept and Taught the Sabbath

As Paul went about on his missionary journeys, he taught especially on the Sabbath day. On his first journey he

> *... came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down* (Acts 13:14).

Here was a meeting of the Jewish people who in this city of Asia Minor were still meeting on the *original* SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH which had been kept by the people of God for centuries. The Jews in this gathering did not approve Paul's message, but there were non-Jews, or Gentiles, present who asked for more of the message. Paul did not arrange to preach to them the next SUNDAY, but rather the next SABBATH.

> *And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God* (Acts 13:44).

Evidently Paul did *not* preach a *change* of the Sabbath when he carried the gospel to the world.

In Acts 18 we read of Paul and his work in the Greek city of Corinth. He stayed with a man and wife named Aquila and Priscilla and worked at tentmaking.

> *And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks* (Acts 18:4).

It would appear that Paul *worked* during the six days of the week, *including* the *first* day or Sunday, but that he *preached* on *Sabbath* to both JEWS and GREEKS. He held no special meeting for the Greeks although a strong church was soon raised up at Corinth. PAUL DID NOT CHANGE THE SABBATH!

The Great "Falling Away"

The question remains, *"Why do most churches keep Sunday instead of Sabbath?"* We will find that the only way to get an answer to this is to study history and compare it with the Bible. In 2 Thessalonians, chapter two, we have a prophecy of what was to take place in the early church after the ministry of Paul. Some thought that the second advent of Christ was to come at that time. To them Paul wrote,

> *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man*

of sin be revealed, the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:3).

That this *"falling away"* was to be from the TRUE TEACHINGS is shown by verse 10 in which he declares that those who will be deceived will perish

. . . because they receive not the love of the TRUTH that they might be saved.

He called upon the true Christians to "*. . . STAND FAST, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught . . .*" (2 Thess. 2:15). But let us see what actually happened!

The Church and the Roman Empire

Paul lived during the time of the power of the Roman Empire. He constantly warned against the heathen, pagan religion of the Romans,

Who changed the TRUTH OF GOD into a LIE, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen (Romans 1:25).

By definition, *paganism* is the worship of the material things such as the sun, moon, animals, trees, and forces of nature. Now what does HISTORY say happened as the early church developed? We quote from *Mediaeval and Modern History* by Myers, page 42, under the heading "The Paganizing of Christianity":

The subjects of the Roman Empire in adopting the new religion in exchange for their own, had mingled with it many of their heathen notions and rites. . . . The

result was that the mediaeval Church became very different from that of the primitive age of Christianity. . . . Many of our religious ideas, festivals, and ceremonies . . . may be traced back to an origin in the practices and beliefs of our heathen ancestors.

In the book *The Two Babylons*, by Hyslop we read:

This tendency on the part of Christians to meet Paganism half-way was very early developed; and we find Tertullian, even in his day, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect. . . . To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated. . . (pages 93, 105).

Sun-day in the Church

It was about A.D. 54 that the apostle Paul predicted there would come a falling away from the truth. In A.D. 60 he wrote to the Christians at Rome about the evil ways of paganism. One of the special days of the pagans was called the *"venerable day of the sun"* which was the first day of the week.

In the book, *History of the Sabbath* by Andrews, we read on page 263:

In the time of Justin Martyr, Sunday was a weekly festival widely celebrated by the heathen in honor of their god, the sun. And in presenting to the heathen

emperor of Rome an 'apology' for his brethren, Justin takes care to tell him thrice that the Christians held their assemblies on this day of general observance.

This was written in A. D. 140, about 90 years after the apostle Paul had predicted the falling away from the truth.

In the same *History of the Sabbath* we find this quotation from Bowers' *History of the Popes*:

> *Victor, Bishop of Rome, in the year 196, took upon him to impose the Roman custom upon all the church; that is to compel them to observe the passover upon Sunday* (page 276).

Thus, at this very early time the Bishop of Rome, later called the Pope, was already attempting to assert his authority and to require the observance of the first day of the week.

The First Sunday Law

We have seen that the falling away from God's truth had begun as early as A.D. 140. This continued but became much greater when the Roman emperor Constantine proclaimed his acceptance of Christianity as the Roman religion. In order to unite the people and strengthen his rule over them, this emperor attempted to unite them in religion. Pagan Rome was to become Christian, and PAGAN DAYS were given Christian significance. In *History of the Christian Church* by Schaff, Vol. III, page 379 we read:

> *Constantine is the founder, in part at least, of the civil observance of Sunday, by which alone the religious observance of it in the church could be made universal and could be properly secured.*

The following is the wording of the first Sunday law made by Emperor Constantine in A.D. 321:

> *On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting: lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.* (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* Vol. III, page 380).

Thus, in decreeing the observance of the heathen DAY OF THE SUN, the emperor not only changed the day but also, in part, the manner of observance. In God's law of the true Sabbath, ALL were to rest. It was especially mentioned to farmers,

> *. . . On the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest* (Exodus 34:21).

Sunday Established by Church and State

After Constantine, the Roman power continued to make decrees establishing and enforcing the observance of Sunday in place of the Sabbath. We read in the *Schaff-Herzog*

Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge:

> *Sixty-six years later, 387 A.D. in another Roman decree, Sunday is called 'The Lord's Day.' This constitutes legal recognition of the Christian name for the day. . . . In 392 A.D. another Roman decree forbade on that day all exhibitions that might turn away attendance from the mysteries of the Christian religion. The Sunday legislation of the Roman empire never went backward. . . . In the time of Justinian, 685 A.D., the laws of the empire on the subject were gathered into the codes, which contained the law of the Roman empire, and from the year* 800, *when Charlemagne was crowned, this code was of force and effect all over the 'Holy Roman Empire.' . . . During the Middle Ages there were decrees and canons of popes and of councils concerning the observance of Sunday, which though ecclesiastical, were of civil force because enforced by the civil power* (Vol. XI, page 147).

The crowning of Charlemagne as emperor by the Pope in A.D. 800 was the great act of uniting the power of the false church with the civil power. This created a great governing power in Europe with two heads—Pope and emperor. The Pope made the church laws and the emperor enforced them. Concerning the establishment of Sunday we again read in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*:

> *Not until the time of the Carolingians [the line of kings that began with Charlemagne] did the idea of substitution of Sunday for the Old-Testament Sabbath prevail in Christian Europe. Charlemagne's numerous, strict Sunday regulations were explicitly based upon the Old-Testament command to keep the Sabbath day holy.*

Here we see the attempt made to apply to Sunday, the law of God concerning the seventh-day Sabbath. But the FIRST day of the week is NOT the seventh, and God's law commands the observance of the seventh day which is SATURDAY. But by the foregoing quotations from history we see how the power of the *Roman Empire* and the *Pope* brought about the change during the Middle Ages.

Change by the Catholic Church

The Roman emperor Constantine made the first civil law for the observance of Sunday and this laid the foundation for laws making it a part of the worship of the Roman Catholic church which was then developing. Speaking of the Catholic church, we read in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

> *The church itself by provincial constitutions and other means declared the sanctity of the day and was strong enough to visit with its own censures those who failed to observe Sunday* (Vol. XXII, page 655).

Freely Admitted by Catholics

Roman Catholics have always been very free to admit that the change from Sabbath to Sunday was their work. In this they are

perfectly consistent for they believe that their church has the authority from God to establish such observances. They have many other special "holy days" which they consider in the same category as Sunday. Here are some quotations showing the Catholic position:

From *The Doctrinal Catechism*—

> *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 of the week—a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.*

From Cardinal Gibbons to a Mr. J. F. Snyder—

> *Dear Sir: Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. It could not have been otherwise, as not one in those days would have dared to act in anything spiritual and without her consent, and the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power in religious matters.*
>
> (signed) Yours truly,
> Wm. Redway
> Sec. to the Card.

From *Historia Ecclesiastia* by M. Ludovicum, Cent. 4, Chapt. 10, pages 739 and 240, Ed. Basilea, 1624—

> *Sylvester, bishop of Rome,* 314 *to* 337 *A.D., officially changed the title of the first day of the week, calling it the Lord's Day.*

A Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy

The change of the Sabbath to Sunday by authority of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the Bishop of Rome, or the Pope, is the head, is a direct fulfillment of a great prophecy of the Bible. The development of the Papacy is described in symbolic language in the book of Daniel. Speaking of this power which was to arise out of the Roman Empire, Daniel wrote,

> *And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to CHANGE TIMES AND LAWS* . . .(Dan. 7:25).

Notice this power would only THINK to make such changes for they would NOT be recognized by the TRUE people of God.

All through the centuries there have been many true Christians who have held to the truths of the Bible. The Ten Commandments have been held to be the great basic law of God. They are still the basis of true Christianity. Jesus kept His Father's Commandments, and He calls on us to keep those same commandments and to follow Him.

In these days most people profess to keep *all* of the Ten Commandments—*except the fourth* which calls for the observance of the *seventh-day Sabbath.* This then becomes a

great test of true keeping of God's commandments. It is no wonder then that the true Christians in the end of this age are pointed out thus:

> *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus* (Rev. 14:12).

In Revelation 12:17 Satan is the great dragon who is wroth or angry at the true Church, symbolized as a woman, and it is said that he goes out

> *. . . to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

DO YOU KEEP ALL OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS? Or do you keep the commandments of the Pope by observing Sunday?

God is calling,

> *. . . Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues* (Rev. 18:4).

Leave the great false religious systems and walk in the light of God's truth!

(Note: Many people have the mistaken belief that Christ rose on Sunday and that this makes it the Lord's Day to replace the Sabbath. For a study of the truth on this subject write the publishers for the tracts, "What Christians Should Know About Easter" and "Which Day Is the Lord's Day?")

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