

**A HISTORY OF THE
SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH
AMONG CHRISTIANS IN
ASIA
AFRICA
EUROPE
AND NORTH AMERICA**

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Preface

The Book of Acts is not completed. Christians in general, and Sabbath-keeping Christians in particular, want to know what happened to the Savior's disciples over the ages. This short study opens up the horizons from a geographical perspective.

When we see how God dealt with His people in various countries, we see His hand in preserving the Church against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail. The Truth of the Bible then becomes personal: am I going to hold fast and be encouraged by this cloud of witnesses?

The seventh-day Sabbath has been, and is now, a sign between God and His people. I encourage you to keep the Sabbath in Spirit and in Truth. The Bible Sabbath Association, a nondenominational organization dedicated to promoting the seventh-day Sabbath, is pleased to publish this book, along with much more material advocating the Sabbath.

May the peace of the Sabbath enrich your life!

Richard C. Nickels
President, The Bible Sabbath Association
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Introduction

The seventh-day Sabbath was observed in the early Christian era by Messianic believers. Sabbath observance continued to be celebrated as a Christian practice in various countries around the world by numerous believers during the Middle Ages and the Reformation era. Its observance survives into modern times.

While certain Christians observed the seventh-day Sabbath alone, others observed the Sabbath side by side with Sunday, or observed Sunday only.

The emphasis of this writing is to trace the history of seventh-day Sabbath-observing Christians, determine what they believed, and their reasons for those beliefs.

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CHAPTER 1

Syrian Christianity

Nazarene Beginnings

There is probably no Christianity as old as that which was established among the Syrians. It originated in the days of the Messiah Himself, as **Matthew 4:24** states, "And His fame went throughout all Syria . . ." (KJV).

The Apostle Paul made several missionary journeys into Syria and proclaimed the gospel throughout many of its regions. See **Acts 15:23, 40-41, 18:18, and 21:3**.

The Christians who followed Paul were called Nazarenes. Ananias, the high priest in **Acts 24:5**, called Paul, "A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."

The Christians in Syria Adopted the title "Nazarene." Even to this day Syrian Christians call themselves Nasrani (Nazarenes). They also call themselves Mesihaye (or followers of the Messiah).¹

Jerome (347-407) mentions that he knew the Nazareans in Borea, a city of Syria.² His testimony verifies that the name Nazarene was used early in Syria's history for Christians. This name continues to be used today among Syrian Christians. Syrian Christianity had its origins with the early Nazarenes.

Epiphanius (367-403) wrote that the Nazarenes originated at Jerusalem in the first century A.D.³ He also wrote, "The Nazarenes do not differ in any essential from them (i.e., Jews) since they practice the customs and doctrines prescribed by Jewish law, except they believe in Christ. They believe in the resurrection of the dead, and that the universe was created by God. They preach that God is one and that Jesus Christ is His son. They are very learned in the Hebrew language."⁴ He states, as well, that they observe "the Sabbath."⁵ Epiphanius maintained they circumcised too. However, this contradicts the statement of Bardesanes who, in A.D. 180, wrote that "Jewish Christians are not circumcised."⁶

The Nazarenes of Palestine, as Epiphanius mentioned, were well learned in the Hebrew language. Jerome testifies the same of the Syrian Nazarenes. Jerome states that they had the Gospel of Matthew written in the Hebrew tongue. He also states that the Hebrew Matthew was given to him "by the Nazarenes in Borea, a city of Syria, who use this work in which it is to be observed that whenever the evangelist, either in his own person or the person of the Lord and Saviour, uses testimonies of the Old Testament, he does not follow the authority of the Septuagint, but of the Hebrew."⁷

Not only was the Hebrew Matthew of the Nazarenes found in the Middle East in the early Christian era, but it was also found as far east as India. Irenaeus (130-200) wrote that Pantaenus (d. 190) "found that (in India) Bartholomew, one of the twelve Apostles, had preached the coming of the Lord Jesus according to the Gospel of Matthew, which, written in Hebrew letters, he brought with him when he returned to Alexandria" (De Vir. III.36).⁸ In Alexandria both Clement and Origen had access to the Hebrew Matthew and quoted from it.

It also appears that the Hebrew Matthew of the Nazarenes even made its way as far west as France. Origen and Jerome give a quote found in the Hebrew version of Matthew, but which is not found in the Greek version of Matthew. It concerns the appearance of the risen Christ to James. In this quote Jerome records Christ saying in the Hebrew Matthew, "My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep."⁹ Interestingly enough, French Bishop Gregory of Tours (538-594) recites the same text in his *History of the Franks*, where he mentions Christ saying, "Arise James, and eat, for now I am risen from the dead."¹⁰

So, knowledge of the Hebrew Matthew of the Nazarenes was spread from one end of Christendom to the other.

In Gregory of Tours' (538-594) time, there was a controversy in France about whether Christ rose on Saturday or on Sunday. Gregory of Tours wrote about this debate in his *History of the Franks*. He recorded, "Now in our belief the resurrection of the Lord was on the first day, and not on the seventh as many deem."¹¹ No doubt the controversy arose over differing interpretations of **Matthew 28:1**.

According to Jerome, the Hebrew Matthew "employed the significant word 'late' and not

'the evening' and that the Greek translator, lead into error by the ambiguity of the term, rendered it as evening instead of translating it as late."¹² The old Syriac appears to have followed the Greek and not the Hebrew, however, for the Syriac Matthew manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries read "Now in the evening on the Sabbath that was dawning into the first day of the week came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, that they might see the grave," (Matt. 28:1).¹³

Syrian Christianity and Rome

By the time of Constantine and the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) Christianity was unified under the Roman emperor and groups, like the original Nazarenes, found themselves, in the eyes of Rome, as heretical. Many Syrians found themselves in a quandary at this time. For example, at the Council of Nicea it was decided that Christ, the son, was "of the same substance" as the Father. Concerning this decision the Syrians were in agreement, even Audius, a Mesopotamian deacon from Edessa, Syria. However, Constantine made the bishops conform to the new Easter Sunday date decided upon at Nicea, as well, and condemned all Christians who observed the Nisan 14 date as Passover. Audius, who had always observed the Nisan 14 date, would not accept the new Easter date. Constantine eventually exiled Audius and his followers to Scythia where Audus "won Gothic Adherents"¹⁴

The Syrians and Goths tended to maintain a close bond afterwards, so much so that when King Theodoric, the Goth, controlled Northern Italy in the sixth century, he had for his chancellor Senator Cassiodorus who was of Syrian heritage.

After the Council of Nicea, the Syrians in Syria eventually gave way to Easter Sunday observance. In addition, while the old original Nazarenes celebrated the Sabbath alone, the Syrians eventually, due to Constantine's Sunday laws, observed Sunday along with the Sabbath. Most Syrians compromised with Constantine by observing both weekly and Easter Sundays. In A.D. 381 the Quartodecimans, who observed the Nisan 14th date, were ordered to be put to death by the Roman emperor by law. In the fifth century, Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, continued to persecute the Quartodecimans. As a result, the Nazarenes of the original faith ceased to be heard from after the fifth century.

Nestorius, who eventually found himself deposed and exiled after the Council of Ephesus for holding the views that Christ had two natures and that Mary should not be called the mother of God, found many followers in Syria. The Syrian Nestorians still exist today. "They shun pork. The Sabbath is to them a weekly festival, as well as Sunday. They have no auricular confession; they know nothing of purgatory. Their priests are allowed to marry."¹⁵

Jacob Baradaeus, a follower of Eutachus, rejected the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 553 and founded the Jacobites in Syria. The Jacobites differ from the Nestorians in that they believe Christ had one nature, will, and operation, and not two as the Nestorians believe. They also use only unleavened bread in the sacrament and not leavened like the Nestorians. In other beliefs the Jacobites and Nestorians have agreement such as: observing Sabbath and Sunday, allowing priests to marry, giving the sacrament in both kinds, and denying both auricular confession and purgatory.¹⁶

Another branch, the Maronites in Syria, once followed similar beliefs of the Jacobites and Nestorians, including observing Sabbath and Sunday.¹⁷ However, the Maronites, due to the Crusaders, eventually accepted the supremacy of the papacy.

In addition to rejecting purgatory, the early Mesopotamians and Syrians were firm believers in the resurrection of the dead. Jacob Aphraates (A.D. 290-350) of Mesopotamia wrote, "Our faith thus teaches that when men fall asleep, they sleep this slumber without knowing good from evil. And ... look not forward to their sentence of punishment, until, the Judge comes and separate those whose place is at His right hand from those whose place is at His left ... as yet no one has received his reward. For the righteous have not inherited the Kingdom, nor have the wicked gone into torment. The Shepherd has not yet divided His flock..." (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 12:381-383).

Concerning the Nestorians of St. Thomas, they hold that the righteous do not see the Lord until the final judgment.¹⁸ The Jacobites held that "just men's souls remain in the earth till the resurrection."¹⁹ Even the early Maronites "excluded the blessed souls from heaven, till the resurrection."²⁰

From the above views given concerning Nestorian, Jacobite, and early Maronite beliefs, one

can discern just how different their religion was from that of Rome. Even though the simple faith of the early Nazarenes was eventually Adversely attacked by Rome and, to a certain extent, the Syrians capitulated through making certain compromises; much of modern Syrian Christianity still retains many of the original tenants of early Christianity.²¹

Today the Nestorians and Jacobites number a little over half a million members. Most of the members, ironically, can be found in one of its earliest missionary posts in India which, according to the Indians, was founded in the days of Christ's disciples.

In the fourth century, Syrian Christianity spread to Scythia through the efforts of Audius. Syrian Christianity entered China at least by the fifth century and existed there for over 1,000 years, but later disappeared. Syrian Christianity flourished greatly under the Mongols and was even accepted among many high-ranking Mongol officials during Mongolian rule.

In the west, Syrian Christians were found in France at least in the fourth and fifth centuries and in Italy in the fifth and sixth centuries.²² The Syrians made their impact in missions throughout the Christian realm from East to West. Their Christian witness, which began with the early Nazarenes in Syria, has stood for nearly two millennia in Syria and continues today.

CHAPTER 2

Christianity In Arabia

The Arabians were recorded to have first heard the gospel in their own tongue by the apostles at Pentecost (**Acts 2:11**). It is recorded that "the ancient Arabians observed a Sabbath before the era of Mohammed."¹ The first Christians in Arabia were apparently believers in Yahweh and continued to observe Sabbath till the eclipse by Mohammedanism.

Eusebius mentions that there were third century Arab Christians who "asserted that the human soul, as long as the present state of the world existed, perished at death and died with the body, but that it would be raised again with the body at the time of the resurrection."² Eusebius says, however, that Origen helped to change the views of the Arabians concerning the state of the dead and to accept the immortality of the soul.³

A third century Caesar of Rome, Philip of Arabia, is said to have been a Christian during the age of Origen. "It is said that, as a Christian, on the day of the last vigil of the Passover he (Philip) wished to share with the multitude in the prayers of the church..."⁴

Gibbon writes that Origen "Addressed several edifying letters to Philip, to his wife, and to his mother; and as soon as that prince who was born in the neighborhood of Palestine, had usurped the imperial scepter, the Christians acquired a friend and a protector."⁵ Dionysus of Alexandria also mentions Philip and his family as being Christians.⁶ It appears that Arabian Christians certainly held important posts, even that of Caesar, in the third century.

In the fifth and sixth centuries Nestorians and Jacobites were well established in Arabia.⁷ However, in the seventh century, Islam arose. In the following centuries, Christianity, along with the Sabbath, was virtually displaced in Arabia by the religion of Islam.

CHAPTER 3

Christianity and the Sabbath in China and Mongolia

Christianity appears to have entered China, according to Arnobius, around the year A.D. 300.¹ The Syrians, apparently, were well-established in China in the fifth century, since Isaac, the patriarch of the Assyrian church, ordained a metropolitan for China in A.D. 411.² The Syrians were Sabbath observers, so it is a fact that the early Chinese Christians were Sabbatarians as well.

In A.D. 781 a monument was set up, written in Syriac and Chinese, including these words, "at the command of Emperor Tae-Tsung, to honor the arrival of a Syrian missionary and his companions to the capitol in the year A.D. 635 from Ta Tsin or Judea..." One of the passages reads: "On the Seventh Day we offer sacrifices after having purified our hearts, and received

absolution from our sins. This religion, so perfect and so excellent, is difficult to name, but it enlightens darkness by its brilliant precept.”³

The inscription also reads: “In the year 1092 of the Greeks (A.D. 781) my lord Yesbuzid, Priest and Char-episcopos of Kumdan, the Royal city, son of the departed Milis, Priest from Balkh, a city of Tehuristan, erected this monument, wherein is written a law of Him, our Saviour, the preaching of our forefathers, to the Rulers of the Chinese.”⁴

The idea of a Sabbath was not foreign to the ancient Chinese. Confucius, writing about 500 B.C., recognizes a seven-day cycle culminating with a cessation of work. He wrote in his *Book of Changes*, “this rule goes and returns; in seven days it comes again....”⁵ “The ancient kings on this culminating day (i.e., the Sabbath) closed their gates, the merchants did not travel, and the princes did not inspect their domains.”⁶

The Syriac Christians introduced the Chinese to the Lord of the Sabbath. Theodose (A.D. 852-858) wrote of archbishops in China.⁷

It was not only among the Chinese that there were Christians of the Syrian type. The Mongols, also, came to be influenced by the spread of Syriac Christianity. Concerning the Mongol rulers, the Khans were very tolerant, as a rule, toward the Syrian Christians. Ghenghis Khan’s son, Ogotai, had three nephews, Mangu, Kublai, and Hulagu. Mangu was known as “a follower and defender of the religion of Jesus.”⁸

In the thirteenth century Marco Polo and other travelers to China and Mongolia came across numerous Syrian Christians churches there which included Nestorians and Jacobites.

Tamerlane (1333-1405) was a Turk who conquered much of Mongolia and made sure that Syrian Christianity disappeared there.⁹ Syrian Christianity disappeared in China for other reasons.

The Sabbath was revived in China in the early nineteenth century under Hong Xiuquan in 1837. He raised up the Ti-Ping movement. The Ti-Pings claimed to observe the seventh-day Sabbath, “first because the Bible taught it, and second because their ancestors observed this day of worship.”¹⁰ The Ti-Pings practiced baptism, shunned alcohol, tobacco, and opium. They were believers in Jesus Christ. Their belief in abolishing and destroying images enraged both Buddhists and Catholics. Their opposition to opium threatened the opium trade of the British in China. French, British, and Manchurian forces quickly destroyed the Ti-Pings.

Seventh Day Baptist missionaries established a church with seven members in Shanghai in 1850.¹¹ The Seventh Day Baptists also had a medical work in China. In the year 1886 Dr. Swinney “reported 8122 patients. She treated coolies, mandarins, and soldiers, and even the commander-in-chief of the imperial forces, who came in disguise and who, when cured, returned with a vast retinue of gilt and splendor and took her to the emperor.”¹²

Seventh-day Adventists came to China in 1896, but like the SDBs, the SDA influence was not very large.¹³

However, the indigenous True Jesus Church of China, which began in China in 1917, was a very successful Sabbatarian Christian Pentecostal-type church. It had about 5 million Sabbath observers in the year 2000.

CHAPTER 4

Sabbath Observance and Belief in Egypt

The Sabbath has always been an important part of Egyptian Christianity. Seventh-day Sabbath observance has a long history in Egypt. In fact, it was kept there by the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ Himself, along with Joseph and Mary, who fled from Herod to Egypt and dwelt there a number of years (**Matthew 2:13-14**).

Early church tradition in Egypt records Mark as the first apostle to Egypt.¹ In the second and third centuries Egypt contained a number of flourishing Christian communities.

The Christians’ (in Egypt) concern for the Sabbath is revealed in an early Papyrus. It was written between the years A.D. 200 and 250 and found at Oxyrynchus. It contains a supposed saying of Christ outside of the canon which states, “Except ye make the Sabbath a real Sabbath (Greek: sabbatize the Sabbath), ye shall not see the Father.” (*The Oxyrynchus Papyrii*, part 1, page 3, Logion 2, verso 4-11, London: Office of Egyptian Exploration Fund, 1898)²

In the third century, Egyptian Christianity had its own unique practices. But, Roman practices rivaled the native Egyptian practices. Some of the Egyptians held to Roman beliefs and practices while others did not. According to Bishop Dionysus of Alexandria, who wrote that some Egyptians believed that Christ arose from the grave in the "evening of the Sabbath" while others believed Christ rose in a "late hour in the night." He explains, concerning **Matthew 28:1**, the Greek term *ὄψε* (*opse*) and the two interpretations of the Egyptians thus: "Now this phrase 'in the end' will be thought by some to signify, according to the common usage of the word, the evening of the Sabbath; while others... will say that it does not indicate that, but a late hour in the night, as the phrase 'in the end' denotes slowness and length of time" (p. 95, Dionysus, PNF).

These two divergent interpretations led to different vigil practices. Dionysus explains to Bishop Balisades, "for you say that there are some of the Brethren who hold it should be done at cockcrow and others who hold it should be done at nightfall, for the brethren in Rome, as they say, wait for the cock; whereas regarding these here, you told that they would have it earlier" (p. 94, Dionysus, PNF).

These differences led to divergent practices concerning the time of communion in Egypt between those who held it only on Sabbath evenings and those who followed Rome and held it both on Sabbath and Sunday mornings. Dionysus himself followed Rome's injunction as given by Hippolytus. Bishop Hippolytus (d. 236), of Rome, commanded that communion should be celebrated on Sabbath and Sunday. He wrote "On Saturday and Sunday the Bishop shall wherever possible give the people the bread with his own hands while the deacons break it."³ Many Egyptians followed Rome's injunction of celebrating communion on Sabbath and Sunday. The fourth century Canons of Athanasius stated "None of the priests or Christians shall be neglectful of the sacraments on the Sabbath and Sunday."⁴ Timothy I (c. 381), archbishop of Alexandria, and Palladius (363-425) mentioned communion took place on Sabbath and Sundays. John Cassian (c. 360-433) mentioned that "the monks of Egypt met on Saturday and Sunday... at the third hour for the purpose of Holy Communion." Even though he adds some monks only partook of Communion once a year.⁵

The Egyptians who followed Rome in the third and fourth centuries celebrated communion on both Saturday and Sunday mornings. However, there was a change in Rome's policy concerning communion in the early fifth century. Innocent I (401-417), of Rome, established that on Friday and Saturday "one should not absolutely celebrate the sacraments" (A.D. Decretum 25. 4. 7 PL 20:555).

Likewise, in the fifth century, one finds the Alexandrians, who had previously observed Sabbath communion, following Rome's new policy and omitting Sabbath communion. Socrates (c. 430), a fifth century church historian, wrote concerning the communion practices of the Egyptians in the fifth century, "for although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this."⁷ Sozomon (c. 440), another fifth century church historian, wrote, "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."⁸

However, outside of Alexandria itself, there were Egyptians who ignored Rome's usages and followed the old Egyptian practices already in vogue in Dionysus' time. Socrates wrote, "The Egyptians in the neighborhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebes, hold religious assemblies on the Sabbath, but do not participate of the mysteries in the manner usual among Christians in general: for after having eaten and satisfied themselves with food of all kinds, in the evening making their offerings (of bread and wine) they partake of the mysteries."⁹

Sozomon also writes "There are several cities and villages in Egypt where, contrary to the usage established elsewhere, the people meet together on Sabbath evenings, and although they have dined previously, partake of the mysteries."¹⁰

These Egyptians, who differed with Alexandria and Rome, must have been following those ancient traditions, with which Dionysus and Rome differed in the third century, who believed Christ rose in "the evening of the Sabbath" and celebrated communion at the time they believed Christ rose in the evening. These Egyptians, who practiced the Sabbath evening communion, may have ignored Sunday, for Alexander Ross, writing in the seventeenth century, said that the Egyptians Christian Copts kept "no Lord's day, nor feasts except in cities."¹¹

However, among the Copts in Alexandria today Sabbath is not entirely forgotten, although it is somewhat watered down.

According to the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, "In the east Saturday is still, as in early times, treated as a festal day except in regard to the cessation of work."¹²

The seventh-day Sabbath in the Egyptian Christian Church has, for nearly two millennia, held an immovable place in its doctrine and practice. Sabbath activities varied at times in the cities, but were more consistent in other parts of Egypt.

CHAPTER 5 The Sabbath In North Africa

In North Africa there were Sabbath observers among the early Christians. Tertullian of Carthage (A.D. 160-240) was one of those Christians who respected the seventh-day Sabbath. Tertullian believed that the seventh-day "Sabbath" was "the day on which God's creation was completed" and that "the number seven" was "a symbol of the Resurrection, of rest, and the kingdom."¹

Tertullian taught that Christ did not abolish the Sabbath, but that He enhanced its holiness. Tertullian wrote, "Thus Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the law thereof ... while imparting to the Sabbath-day itself, which from the beginning had been consecrated by the benediction of the Father, an additional sanctity by His own beneficent action Christ introduced nothing new, which was not after the example, the gentleness, the mercy, and the prediction also of the Creator."²

Tertullian believed that one should not fast on the Sabbath, for he wrote concerning fasting, "Two weeks of xerophagies in the year (and not the whole of these the Sabbaths, to wit, and the Lord's days being excepted) we offer to God"³ Tertullian opposed those Christians who followed Rome's practice of fasting on the Sabbath. Tertullian wrote, "you sometimes continue your station even over the Sabbath – a day never to be kept as a fast except for the Passover season...."⁴

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, (A.D. 200-258) was one who abandoned Sabbath observance and followed Rome's custom. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) was another who followed Rome's lead in abandoning the Sabbath. However, in A.D. 429, the Vandals conquered North Africa. Since the Vandals were of the same faith as the Goths, who observed the seventh-day Sabbath, the Vandals would have observed the Sabbath as well.

In A.D. 534 the Vandals were overthrown in North Africa by the armies of the Byzantine Emperor. These Byzantine Christians were also respecters of the Sabbath.

In A.D. 698 Carthage fell to the Muslims, and Christianity, along with the Sabbath, in North Africa was replaced by Islam and its religious practices.

CHAPTER 6 The Ethiopian Church and Sabbath Observance

Christianity among the Ethiopians dates to Apostolic times. The first convert among the Ethiopians is mentioned in **Acts chapter 7** where Philip baptized an Ethiopian who came to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh.

Christianity became the state religion of Ethiopia in A.D. 340 when King Ezana was converted to Christianity.

The Alexandrians, from the fourth century, ordained bishops for Ethiopia. The practice of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath was generally observed by the Ethiopians.

During the Middle Ages the Alexandrians tried to discourage the Ethiopians from observing the Sabbath. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Portuguese priests influenced certain Ethiopian Monarchs to ban Sabbath observance. But, in spite of these attempts to abolish Sabbatarianism, the general populace of Ethiopia persisted in Sabbath observance and from the late seventeenth century onwards the monarchs of Ethiopia supported

Sabbath observance.¹

Though Sabbath and Sunday were usually observed together and were both celebrated officially, in some regions, such as around Susa, Sabbath (Saturday) was kept only (to the exclusion of Sunday).²

Most Ethiopians today observe Saturday and Sunday together. Their reason for doing so is found in the Ethiopic 'Disascalialia' which says, "He hath commanded us to rest every Sabbath day, because on the Sabbath day our Lord rested from all His work And greater than all those is (the day of) His holy resurrection."³

Besides Sabbath observance, the Ethiopian Church observes the Levitical prohibitions concerning unclean animals. The Ethiopian Church also prohibits images and has no belief in purgatory.

Today the Ethiopian Church is the largest Sabbatarian church in the world.

CHAPTER 7

Armenian Christianity with Sabbath Emphasis

Armenian Christianity has always held a unique place in the Christian world and history. Armenia has the distinction of being the first country that made Christianity the state religion. This act took place in A.D. 301 under Troadates III after years of persecution of Christians in Armenia. By A.D. 387 the country of Armenia was divided between Rome and Persia. Beginning in A.D. 429, Persia controlled all of Armenia for nearly 200 years.

Despite being under the Persians, with exposure to all of Persia's sun and fire rituals, the Armenians maintained a strong belief in the Sabbath. Alexander Ross wrote that many of the Armenians of the seventh century believed that Christ rose from the dead on Sabbath and not on Sunday. Ross, a believer in the Sunday resurrection, said of the Armenians of the 600s that the Armenians maintained "that Christ rose from the dead on the Sabbath day; whereas scripture tells us plainly that He arose the third day."¹ It must be concluded that there were early Armenians who ignored Sunday and kept Sabbath only. Also, many Armenians of the late sixth and early seventh centuries ignored Easter Sunday as established by Rome and observed Easter at the time of the Jewish Passover.²

In general, the early Armenians had a great disdain for the sun festivals of the Persians and Romans. Concerning the December 25 date, the Armenians from the earliest time rejected it, believing it to be invented by the disciples of Cerynthus, calling it Roman idolatry and sun worship.³ Some scholars believe that Sunday observance was observed by some Armenians since Roman times, but exactly how early or when Sunday observance took its place along side of the Sabbath in Armenia is difficult to determine. However, it is a fact that weekly Sunday observance and Easter Sunday were certainly celebrated by the time Heraclius of Byzantium took control in A.D. 624.⁴ By A.D. 728, at the Council of Manazkert, it was declared that, "Saturday, as well as Sunday, made a day of feasting and synaxis."⁵

By the 630s Armenia had been under Muslim rule. Armenian rule by Muslims would be followed by the rule of the Bagratids, the Byzantines, then the Turks, and Russians. Over the centuries some Armenian doctrines underwent changes while others remained unchanged or unique to Armenian Christianity.

One doctrine that changed was that which concerned the dead. The Armenians of the 600s "denied prayers for the dead, and the eternity of hellfire. And that souls were not in bliss till the resurrection."⁶ Over the centuries the Armenians eventually began to pray to departed saints. However, the belief that souls are not in bliss till the resurrection is still maintained.

Armenians retained the belief in making a distinction of clean and unclean meats, and of offering sacrifices.

The Sabbath celebration was also one of those beliefs that remained. The Armenian Didascalialia, the church order of Armenia, in manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries declared that "the Apostles ordered and firmly established that on the Sabbath day there should be a feast and worship in all the world: there should also be a memorial for all martyrs. On that day the priests should offer the Eucharist and recite the

Psalms joyfully, for they announce the coming of the Great King. It behooves all saints to rejoice in the presence of Christ.”⁷

The Armenians of today still celebrate according to the Didascalia the command to celebrate the Eucharist on Sabbath (Saturday) as well as Sunday.⁸

CHAPTER 8

Two Millennia of Christianity in Ukraine & Russia

Christianity among the Scythians and Goths in Scythia and Crimea

Christianity was preached among the Scythians very early in the first Christian century. Paul wrote concerning the Scythians that “...there is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all,” **Colossians 3:11**. Eusebius, early church historian of the fourth century, wrote that one of Christ’s disciples, Andrew, made the first Christian voyage to Scythia.¹

Scythia included the Ukraine and Don Country and extended from the Danube to the Volga. Gradually the fierce Scythian tribes exchanged the bloody rites of human sacrifice to pagan deities for the pure worship of Christ. Tertullian (A.D. 160-230) mentions that many of the Scythians accepted Christianity.

By the time of Tertullian, the Scythians were gradually becoming subjugated by the Goths who conquered most of the Ukraine in the early 200s. About this time the Goths were also receiving Christianity. The Goths originally were a Germanic people from southern Sweden but, by A.D. 250, they established a firm colony at Crim (Crimea) in southern Ukraine.²

Writing prior to the Council of Nicea, in the early fourth century, Athanasius mentions that both Scythians and Goths were converted to the cause of Christ.³

At the Council of Nicea (325) there was present both a Scythian bishop and a Gothic bishop. The Scythian bishop, Cadmeus, came from the Bosphorus, and the Gothic bishop, Theophilus, came from the Crimea. Thus it was that the Ukraine was represented at the first Council convened by Constantine. These two bishops gave consent to the Nicene Creed concerning Christ’s deity.

The Nicene Council discussed and voted on, among other things, the date of Easter. Many of the bishops from ancient practice celebrated Nisan 14 as the time of the Passover. Constantine, who thought this practice seemed too Jewish, wanted all the bishops to celebrate Easter at a time other than at Passover so that the Christians would no longer celebrate at the same time as the Jews. Most bishops complied with this new rule which Constantine favored, but not all liked the idea, however.

A certain deacon by the name of Audius from Edessa, originally from Mesopotamia, believed in Christ’s deity as the creed stated, but rejected (according to Epiphanius) the Nicene date for Easter, believing that Nisan 14 should be observed as he had always observed it as Passover.

Constantine was much displeased with Audius and eventually exiled Audius and his followers from Edessa to Scythia where Audius “won Gothic Adherents.”⁴ Thus many Goths in Scythia during the fourth century were observers of the Nisan 14 celebration under the leadership of Audius.

The Goths were also observers of the Seventh-Day Sabbath. When a number of the Goths came from the east to the west, the fact of Sabbath observance among the Goths was noticed by the bishops in the west.

Sidonius Apollinarius, (431-482) bishop of Claremont and the son-in-law of Emperor Avitus, wrote, “It is a fact that formerly those who dwelt in the east were accustomed as a church to sanctify the Sabbath in the same manner as the Lord’s day, and to hold sacred assemblies; whereas Asterius, bishop of Amasia in Pontus, in a homily on compatibility called “Sabbath and Sunday a Beautiful Span”, and Gregory of Nyssa, in a certain sermon, calls these brethren ... while on the other hand, the people of the west, contending for the Lord’s day, have neglected the celebration of the Sabbath as being peculiar to the Jews...It is therefore possible

for the Goths to have thought, as pupils of the discipline of the Greeks, that they should sanctify the Sabbath after the manner of the Greeks."⁵

While the Romans in the West fasted on Saturdays, Sidonius noted that the Goths feasted on the Sabbath. He wrote concerning the Gothic King Theodoric, that "on common days his dinner is not different from the repast of a private citizen; but every Saturday many honorable guests are invited to the royal table, which, on these occasions is served with the elegance of Greece, the plenty of Gaul, and the order and diligence of Italy."⁶

Gibbon also mentions that the Goths "spent the Sabbath-day in peace and devotions."⁷

As long as the Goths remained true to the Orthodox faith, the Goths never wavered from the recognition of the Sabbath. Many orthodox Goths remained in Crimea century after century. Historian Alfred Rambaud mentioned the existence of the Goths in the Crimea even in the early 20th century.⁸

Russian Christianity

After the early conversions of the Scythians and the Goths there were other people, such as the Mengralians of the Caucasus, who were converted to Christianity. The Mengralians were first converted in the sixth century under Justinian and remain Orthodox Christians today.

Christianity, however, did not make great inroads into the larger population of Russia until the 9th century under the Varangians or Rus.

The Viking Rus ruled Novgorod and Kiev in the ninth century. The Rus made contacts with Constantinople which often involved war. However, some Christian converts were made among the Rus.

The Patriarch of Constantinople, Photius, wrote in 866 that the Russians renounced "their pagan superstitions and professed the faith of Jesus Christ," and adds "that he has sent them a bishop and priests."⁹

A year later in 867, Askold, prince of Kiev, was baptized and became the first Christian Rus prince.¹⁰

About the same time the Rus were coming to accept the Orthodox Christianity of Photius, Photius himself was involved in a schism with Nicholas I of Rome.

Photius charged the Roman church with five heresies. He declared:

"That the Roman Church erroneously fasted on the Sabbath, or seventh day of the week.

That in the first week of Lent it wrongfully permitted the use of milk and food prepared from milk.

That, contrary to Scripture, it prohibited priests from marrying, and separated from their wives such as were married when they took orders.

That it uncanonically authorized bishops only to anoint baptized persons with the Holy Chrism, withholding that authority from presbyters.

That it sacrilegiously interpolated the word 'filoque' in the creed of the Council of Constantinople, and held the heretical doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son and from the Father."¹¹

Rome, on the other hand, had its own grievences against Photius. Among Rome's condemnations of Photius included that he "denied the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son, and held that there was no reward for the good or bad, til the general judgment; that there was no purgatory; he condemned second marriages, and prayers for the dead..."¹²

Photius' differences were never resolved between Rome and Constantinople and many of the differences continued to divide East and West until the final rupture, or the great schism of 1054. East and West were still divided in 1054 over matters such as the 'filoque', celibacy of priests, the use of unleavened bread in the mass, papal supremacy, and the Sabbath fast.

The Orthodox had always condemned Rome for the Sabbath fast and Rome always saw the Orthodox's attachment to the Sabbath as being Jewish.

At the church of Hagia Sophia, in Constantinople in 1054, Roman Catholic legate Cardinal Humbert criticized the Orthodox Christians for carrying on "an observance of the Sabbath similar to that of the Jews." In his treatise the Cardinal recited a statement..., attributed to Pope Sylvester I of the time of Constantine, in which the Pope said that every Sabbath day (on account) of the burial (of Christ) is to be estimated in execration of the Jews."

On the other hand, Patriarch Michael Cerularius, principal priest of the Greek Orthodox Church, went so far, on behalf of the Greek Christians, as to say that "we are commanded also to honor the Sabbath equally with the Lord's day (Sunday), and keep (it) and not work on it."¹³

Just as the Russians gave special regard to the Sabbath in Photius' time during the first schism, so did they continue to follow the Greek observance of the Sabbath after the Great Schism.

Even after the fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church still continued to give special honor to the Sabbath as is evidenced by the Council of Stoglav in 1551 where in Canon No. 95 it "prescribes keeping of the Sabbath, no less than of Sunday, as a holy day or feast, in accordance with the so-called Canons of the Apostles."¹⁴

Though Askold, Prince of Kiev in 867, was the first prince of Rus to become a Christian, and was among the many Christians made among the Russian people in the late ninth century, Askold was murdered and replaced with a succession of pagan princes. This, however, did not stop the growth of Christianity in Kiev. Eventually, in the late tenth century, Prince Vladimir in A.D. 988, who at one time slew two Christian Varangians at the altar of the sun god Peroun, rejected paganism and accepted Christianity. He had the entire Russian nation converted to Christianity and subject to the orthodox faith of Constantinople.

One practical reason for Vladimir's acceptance of Christianity was the fact the he had married the sister of the Byzantine emperor.¹⁵ Many pagan Kievans were forcibly baptized. Not long after the Kievan conversion, in the north at Novgorod the Christian conversions were made with the sword.¹⁶ However, by the fourteenth century Christianity was well established at Novgorod, but was somewhat corrupt. The clergy began to be ordained for high sums of money, and payment for services were also high. This led to a reform movement, by people called the Strigolniks, who considered the act of securing clerical positions for high sums of money as simony and thus invalid. The Strigolniks formed separate communities and their ministers accepted no payment for their services. The Strigolniks, like Photius of the older Orthodox belief, held that prayers for the dead should be condemned. They also advised against violence and bloodshed.

Patriarch Nilus of Constantinople nevertheless wrote against the Strigolniks, and in 1375 the Strigolnik's main leaders, Nicetas and Karp, were executed at Novgorod.¹⁷

The Strigolnik movement was suppressed in Novgorod and Pskov, and many Strigolniks fled to Galacia.

In the next century, at Novgorod, another movement arose called the "Judaizers."

Russian scholars are divided in their views concerning the doctrine of the Judaizers.¹⁸ However what is certainly known about them is that they observed the Sabbath and the feast days found in the books of Moses, but had no regard for circumcision. They rejected the fasts and festivals invented by the Church, rejected saint worship, icons, and relic veneration.¹⁹

Main leaders of the Judaizers at Novgorod included Alexis, Dionysius, and Gabriel, the Dean of St. Sophia of Novgorod.²⁰

In 1479 Grand Duke Ivan III "abolished the republican constitution of Novgorod and incorporated that country into Muscovy."²¹ Ivan III was so impressed with the learning of Alexis and Dionysius that he invited them to Moscow where Alexis was made dean of the Primatial Church of Russia; and Dionysius became a priest of the Collegiate Church of Saint Michael.²²

In Moscow, among the converts to the "Judaizers", were "Archmandrite Zosima of Simonovsky monastery, the future Russian primate, and Theodore Kuritsyn, the Chancellor of the grand duke."²³ Even Princess Helen, daughter-in-law of Grand Duke Ivan III was converted by the "Judaizers."²⁴

The Judaizers were well tolerated until Chancellor Kuritsyn died. After that, in 1504, a Church Council in Moscow denounced the Judaizers. The Council was split concerning the death penalty as punishment, but the death penalty nevertheless was inflicted on many Judaizers. Others were imprisoned. This was not the end of the Judaizers, however. They "reappeared several decades later with Theodosius the Squint, then again in the Seventeenth Century during the Times of Troubles and before the Raskol. In the Eighteenth Century they spread still farther."²⁵

The Eighteenth Century French writer, Voltaire, who held close correspondence with Catherine II of Russia, identified the Judaizers or the Sabbatarians of Russia with the Vaudois. "Of the sect called Sabbaton, who reside in Russia," says Voltaire, "some say one thing and

some another. It is evident however," he continues, "that they originated from the Vaudois who fled before the Crusaders into Germany, Bohemia, and Poland, and thence into the imperial territories. They pay great attention to the Bible, and but little to the priests, for which reason, probably, they have been so hated by the latter."²⁶ Many of the Sabbaton were still found along the Polish border in Russia a century after Voltaire.²⁷

In the late Eighteenth century Catherine II at Moscow demolished the churches of the Sabbatarians, broke up their congregations, and put their leaders to death.²⁸

Many Sabbatarians were exiled to Siberia.²⁹

In the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, some Sabbatarians could be found in the remote areas of Russian America (now Alaska).³⁰ J.S. Green of the American Board of Foreign Missions discovered a Russian Sabbatarian church of fifty on the northwest coast of Russian America in 1829.³¹

Due to Catherine II's repressive regime, many Sabbatarians fled from Moscow to Voronezh Province, where in 1796, six villages were established as Sabbatarian villages.

The Orthodox priests scoffed at these Sabbatarians, calling them circumcisers. But Count Ruschkeloff Bozborodko, on whose estates the Sabbatarians lived in Voronezh, denied that the Sabbatarians practiced circumcision.³²

Nevertheless, in 1829, the government in Russia forced the Sabbatarians of Voronezh to either join the Orthodox Church or move to the Caucasus or the Crimea. Most Sabbatarians chose to move to the Caucasus or Crimea.

Prior to 1800, some "Spiritual Christians" of Saratov were converted to Sabbath observance by the old Sabbatarians.

The Orthodox nicknamed them Molokans (Milkdrinkers) because they drank milk during Lent; but the Molokans called themselves "true" or "Spiritual Christians."

These Spiritual Christians were originally converted to Protestantism in the days of Ivan the Terrible in the 1500s by an English physician.

The Spiritual Christians believed in salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. They also believed that the Bible was their sole authority. They took no oaths, were pacifists, and celebrated the Lord's Supper once a year. They condemned images, icons, and the sign of the cross. They believed in obeying secular law when it did not conflict with divine law, and they believed that the true Church existed until the fourth century when pagan philosophy entered the Church and the Councils diluted the pure word. They also believed in the resurrection of the dead at Christ's second coming.

Between 1840 and 1862 most Spiritual Christians were exiled by the Czar to the Caucasus. This would have included all Spiritual Christians, Sunday-keeping or Sabbatarian. Most Spiritual Christians eventually would become absorbed by the "Evangelical Christian" movement begun by Ivan Prokanov.

Ivan Prokanov was the son of Sunday-keeping Spiritual Christian parents who were driven from Saratov to Caucasia in 1862.

Ivan moved to St. Petersburg in 1888. He later took training at the Universities of Berlin and Paris, and also took schooling at the Bristol Baptist College in England. He became an acquaintance of Leo Tolstoy of Russia.

When Ivan returned to Russia he founded the "Union of Evangelical Christians" in 1908.

Ivan's beliefs were solidly within the Molokan tradition concerning abstaining from oaths and the practice of pacifism.

The Evangelical Christians were very missionary minded and the movement spread quickly among Russians, Ukrainians, Bohemians, Poles, and Germans. However the risk was high for proselytizing because it was against Russian law to convert anyone from one faith to another, especially if it was from the Orthodox Church. Punishment for violating this law meant exile to Siberia for a number of years. Many ministers of the Evangelical Christians suffered this fate.

My great-grandfather, Gottlieb Schmidtke, a former Lutheran minister, was a minister after WWI for the Evangelical Christians in Poland and Russia.³³ My grandfather, Michael Neumann, was also an Evangelical Christian minister who, in addition, became a believer in the Sabbath. However my grandfather narrowly escaped martyrdom from a mob of club-wielding Lutherans, members of the Lutheran church from which he had converted and made many converts.

In 1945 all Sabbath observing Spiritual Christians were formally invited, along with many other Russian dissidents, to join the Evangelical Christians, an offer gladly accepted by the

Sabbatarians.³⁴ Today many Sabbatarians are found under the banner of Evangelical Christians.

Sabbatarian Evangelical Christians in Russia observe the Seventh-Day Sabbath, abstain from pork, and many observe Biblical feast days and shun Christmas and Saints Days. They proclaim Christ's saving atonement at Calvary into which faith they are baptized, and they look forward to the second coming of Christ and His glorious reign.

For nearly two millenia, Christians in the Ukraine and Russia have borne witness to the Lord of the Sabbath and the Sabbath of the Lord.

CHAPTER 9

Germanic Christianity

As the heathen Germanic tribes came into contact with the Roman Empire, they soon came into contact with a new religion as well, that is, Christianity.

The early Germanic tribes worshipped a number of heathen gods such as Njorder, Woden, Nertha, Freyr, Freya, Balder, Guth or Gaut, Hel or Halja, Loki, Tivas, etc.

Most of the Germanic tribes originated in the north in Scandinavia and the Schleiswig areas. The first term of "German" was used by the Romans in 90 B.C.

One of the first Germanic tribes to migrate to mainland Europe from southern Sweden was the Goths. They controlled most of the Ukraine in the 200s A.D. and established a Gothic settlement in the Crimea area in Roman territory in the middle of the third century. Also, in the third century, certain Goths could be found in Thrace. The Goths, who were becoming interspersed in Roman territory, came to have great political influence, such as Emperor Maximinus who ruled the empire of Rome from A.D. 235-238. Maximinus' father was Gothic and his mother was Alani. Emperor Maximinus was a huge man, over eight feet tall. He was unrivaled and unbeatable as a wrestler due to his great strength and skill. He was known to pull a loaded wagon by himself, uproot small trees, and break horses' legs with his fists. He ate thirty to forty pounds of meat a day, and could out drink anyone. Unfortunately, as a heathen emperor, he persecuted Christians. Nevertheless, it was during the third century, as well, that many Goths who encountered Christianity became Christians themselves.

About A.D. 264 Gothic raiders in Cappadocia carried off Cappadocian slaves, some of whom were Christians. Through these Christian slaves, some of whom also intermarried with the Goths, Christianity took root among the Gothic peoples.

The grandparents of Wulfilas, a Gothic bishop, who translated the first Germanic Bible into the Gothic tongue from Greek, were among the slaves who were captured in Cappadocia. His Bible was translated in the 300s. Wulfilas used the heathen names of the Gothic deities in his Bible translation, such as Guth, Frauja, and Halja. Guth or Goth were names used for the supreme deity in Gothic, Old Norse, and Old Icelandic.¹ The Goths were also known as Gauts.² The tribe Gaut was named after Gaut, the Scandinavian god of war.³ Thus Guth was most likely the Gothic name for the war god. Frauja (or Freyar) was the deity of love and fertility. Halja (or Hel) was the goddess of the underworld. The English translation uses God where the Gothic has Guth, it has Lord where the Gothic uses Frauja, and the English has hell where the Gothic uses Halja.

Wulfila's Bible was instrumental in spreading the Christian message to the entire Gothic peoples. Portions of Wulfila's Bible translation still exist today in Sweden.

By the time Constantine called the Nicene Council together in A.D. 325 a Gothic bishop, Theophilus, from the Crimea, was present. Theophilus was a subscriber to the Nicene Creed concerning Christ's deity.

The Goths in the east were Christianized not only by Greco-Roman influences, but also by Syrian influences.

Presbyter Audius, of Edessa, was exiled by Constantine after the Council of Nicea to Scythia where Audius and his followers converted many Goths to Audius' Syrian Christian practice of celebrating Easter at the same time as the Jewish Passover.⁴ Audius rejected the Easter Sunday date endorsed by Constantine at the Nicene Council even though he accepted the decision concerning Christ's deity.

The Goths eventually could be found in many parts of Europe from east to west. While some Goths never left Sweden, others could be found in Scythia, Ukraine, Crimea, Moesia (Bulgaria) (where, incidentally, many Goths are still found), Italy, France, Spain, and parts of former Yugoslavia.

The Goths who were converted by the time of Constantine believed in the Nicene Creed concerning Christ being of the same substance as the Father. These Goths were in Crimea and Scythia. They held to the Orthodox belief concerning Christ's deity. Many of the Goths crossed the Danube River in A.D. 376 under Fritigern. By 419 the Goths quickly conquered southern France which they ruled until 507. Goths also conquered and ruled Spain from 466 until 711, and ruled Italy from 493 until 553.

The Goths observed the seventh-day Sabbath. This fact was noticed, when the Goths ruled France, by Bishop Sidonius Appellinaris of Claremont (431-482). Sidonius wrote, "It is a fact that formerly those who dwelt in the east were accustomed as a church to sanctify the Sabbath in the same manner as the Lord's Day.... It is therefore possible for the Goths to have thought, as pupils of the discipline of the Greeks, that they should sanctify the Sabbath after the manner of the Greeks."⁵ Sidonius also noted that the Goths feasted on Saturdays more than any other day of the week.⁶ Likewise, the Goths in Spain in their early reign "spent the Sabbath-day in peace and devotion."⁷

The reign of the Goths in France and Italy was characteristically tolerant. Jews, Goths, Romans, and Syrians all could practice their religion unmolested. Theodoric, Gothic ruler of Italy, wrote in A.D. 524, "To pretend to dominion over the conscience, is to usurp the prerogative of God. By the nature of things, the power of sovereigns is confined to political government. They have no right of punishment but over those who disturb the public peace. The most dangerous heresy is that of a sovereign who separates himself from the part of his subjects, because they believe not according to his belief."⁸

Theodoric gave special protection to Jews whom some of the Catholics of Italy tried to persecute. Theodoric also gave Jews guarantees of religious freedom. He wrote to the Jews of Genoa, "We therefore gladly accede to your request that all privileges which the foresight of antiquity conferred upon Jewish customs shall be renewed to you. For in truth it is our grand desire that the laws of the ancients shall be kept in force to secure the reverence due to us."⁹

In Spain religious toleration was practiced among the Goths until the Goths in Spain converted to Catholicism in A.D. 586 under King Rekared. Jews began to be persecuted by Catholic Goths and the death penalty was used against "Christians who practiced Jewish rituals."¹⁰

The Goths were the first Germanic tribe to accept Christianity and they were the ones who were instrumental in spreading Christianity to other Germanic tribes such as the Suevi, Heruli, Burgundians, and Vandals.¹¹ This Christianity was not of the Roman Catholic type but of the Eastern Christian type.

When the Goths and the Vandals ruled various parts of the Western Roman Empire, Salvanus, a Roman-Gallic priest, Admired the high morals of the Goths and Vandals. Salvanus wrote, "Whose wickedness is as great as that of the Romans? There is none of that kind found among the Vandals, none among the Goths. Who can help but Admire their tribes who, although entering the richest cities, concerned themselves with the pleasures of the corrupt only in so far as they scorned the moral corruption, and Adopted only their good qualities? Among the Goths there are no unchaste people but Romans, and among the Vandals not even Romans; not that they alone are chaste but to relate something new, incredible, and almost unheard of, they have made even the Romans chaste."¹²

Eventually, the Germanic kingdoms of the Goths, Burgundians, Suevians, Herulians, Vandals, and Lombards succumbed to others and most of the Germanic peoples were forced to accept the rule of Roman Catholic rulers.

The old Germanic Christian observance virtually disappeared in the west due to Catholic oppression. Only the Goths in the east in Crimea under Orthodox rule escaped the anti-Sabbath sentiments held by the Western Catholic rulers. Goths in Crimea lived under Christian rule from the fourth century until the beginning of the twentieth century.

At times, however, Sabbath observance appeared to persist in certain areas in the west which had succumbed to Roman Catholicism. For example, in Northern Italy, which was once ruled by Goths and Lombards, Sabbath observance was still in existence over a century and a half

after the Lombards changed from Sabbatarian Eastern Christianity to Catholicism. At the Council of Frioul (A.D. 796) the Council mentioned that the Sabbath day was still "observed by Jews and our rustics."¹³

Strong's Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, p. 660 mentions, "Traces of Sabbath-keepers are found in the times of Gregory I, Gregory VII, and in the twelfth century in Lombardy."¹⁴ Thus the old kingdom of the Lombards still contained Sabbatarian centuries after the Sabbatarian Lombard kings had disappeared in the early seventh century.

Waldenses began to appear in the twelfth century as well in France, Belgium, Picardy, Germany, and Bohemia. Was there a Gothic connection with the Waldensian movement? It is possible. One interesting interrogation of A.D. 1391 in Bohemia mentions a "Witness Goth, one of the archheretics."¹⁵ Some Waldenses did observe the seventh-day Sabbath for the "Summarium impiae at phasisaicae picarderum religionis" document states that of the Waldenses of Bohemia "some celebrate the Sabbath with the Jews."¹⁶

In the late Middle Ages, in the far northern regions of Norway, Sabbatarianism appeared in the fifteenth century. At the Councils of Bergen (A.D. 1435) and Oslo (Christiana) in A.D. 1436, the Roman Catholic Church of Norway condemned the Sabbatarian practice. Once the reformation took root in Norway in the 1500s, Sabbatarianism continued to observe the Sabbath and in 1544 they were condemned by the Lord of Bergen, Stavanger, and Vardoc. In 1554, in Sweden, King Gustarus I Vasa condemned Finnish Sabbatarianism. Sabbatarianism in Sweden was still found in the late 1600s.¹⁷

Sabbatarianism appeared at the reformation in Germany itself in the 1500s, according to Alexander Ross.¹⁸ Luther himself wrote of Sabbatarianism in Moravia and Austria.

One convert from Lutheranism to Sabbatarianism was Oswald Glait of Germany. He led a Sabbatarian Anabaptist movement in Bohemia. He himself was martyred in A.D. 1545 in the Danube River. However, Glait's movement survived. Historian A. N. Rogers, of the Seventh Day Baptists, wrote that Glait's church was still in existence in the 1930s in East Germany. Rogers wrote, "H. Stuermer, minister of a group of Sabbath-keeping Baptists in East Germany stemming from a group established 400 years earlier by Oswald Glait, wrote asking for fellowship."¹⁹

Another former Lutheran who accepted the Sabbath was Count Zinzendorf. When the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren found refuge at his estates in Germany, Zinzendorf became their bishop and began Sabbath observance. In 1738 Zinzendorf wrote of himself concerning Sabbath keeping. "That I have employed the Sabbath for rest many years already, and our Sunday for the proclamation of the gospel."²⁰

It was through Zinzendorf's influence that Moravians in early eighteenth century Pennsylvania "set Saturday aside as a day of rest and prayer."²¹

Another eighteenth century German was Tennhardt of Nuremburg who advocated the Sabbath. However, he went further than Zinzendorf in proclaiming that the Anti-Christ changed the day from Sabbath to Sunday bringing in apostasy.²²

The Reformation not only produced Sabbatarianism in Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Moravia, etc., but in Holland as well. According to Lebo, the Spanish Inquisitor who accompanied Duke of Alva to the Low Countries said, "Of all heretics, none were more incorrigible than a certain sect, who were quite numerous, who refused to pay any regard to the festivals of the church. But persisted in Judaizing, and openly declared that the Mosaic ritual was still binding."²³

A Catholic historian of the sixteenth century mentioned that the Anabaptists of Holland "all unanimously rejected the holy sacraments of the church, and refused to obey its ordinances, a certain sect were for going back to Moses for a Sabbath in which matter, they went so far as to form congregations, and hold meetings on the seventh day."²⁴

Sabbatarianism in Holland was ruthlessly persecuted by the Spanish. However, once religious toleration was accepted after the overthrow of the Spanish, Sabbatarianism could be found in the seventeenth century in Holland. A Seventh Day Baptist minister, Bampffield of London, wrote to the Sabbatarianism of Holland in the seventeenth century and extended to them the hand of fellowship. Also, a number of early Sabbatarian books circulated in England, but condemned by the English government, were originally printed in Holland.

Today most Germanic Sabbatarianism are to be found in Seventh Day Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, and S.D.A. offshoot congregations. The Goths still exist in pockets of Eastern

Europe. It is to the credit of the Goths, the earliest Germanic Christians, that the Sabbath took root and flourished among the Germanic peoples.

CHAPTER 10

A History of Sabbatarian Christianity In Italy

As regards the choosing of Sabbath or Sunday and other days of worship in early Italian history in the Common Era, there are a few elements which tended to have had an impact on the decision of the early Christian church in Italy.

First of all, there existed in the first few centuries the widespread worship of Mithras, the sun, and the popularity of observing Sunday, the day of Mithras, among pagan idolaters.

Evidence of the popularity of Mithraism is supported by many archeological finds of Mithraic places of worship. For instance, Cambden M. Cobern wrote that "in 1915 there was opened under the Church of St. Clement at Rome, and made accessible to visitors, the foundations of a temple of Mithras built during the reign of Augustus. The sacred font was found, also a part of the altar and the remains of ancient sacrifices which proved to be wild boars. (See C.R. Acad. Enscri., 1915, pp 203-31)."¹ Wherever the Roman legions went, altars to Mithras were erected, such as the archaeological finds of Mithraic altars in Britain revealed.² The Mithraic altars in Britain were dated to the first and second centuries of the Common Era.

The Roman emperors favored the worship of Mithras the sun. "The Emperor Antonius Pius (A.D. 138-161) erected a temple to Mithras at Ostra, the seaport city a few miles below the Roman capital."³

Emperors of the late second century, Commodus and Septimus Severus, were avid sun worshippers. Commodus Adopted Mithraism as an imperial cult.⁴ "Septimus Severus ensured that all his subjects recognized that Sol Invictus (the unconquerable sun) was the supreme deity of the empire."⁵

Secondly, after the Jewish revolt of the early second century, Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135 proscribed Judaism on pain of death. Celebrating Sabbath and other festivals, which the Jews also practiced, found the wrathful frown of Rome.

The early Christians of the second century seemed to be divided in Rome over whether to follow the festivals which the Jews also celebrated or whether to Adopt the festivals encouraged by the pagan Romans and the emperors.

In second century Rome there appeared a division over whether Christians should celebrate Easter on a fixed Sunday, or whether the death and resurrection of the Saviour should continue to be celebrated at Passover time on Nisan 14, whatever day of the week Nisan 14 may happen to fall, in accordance with the Jewish calendar.

It was about the early second century when Easter Sunday was introduced in Rome.⁶ Although Ireneus dated the Easter beginnings to Bishop Sixtus (c. A.D. 115 – c. A.D. 125) of Rome, not all Roman bishops agreed with the Easter Sunday date. Bishop Blastus of Rome, during the time of Elentherius (174-189), contended for the Passover Nisan 14th celebration instead. A presbyter opposed to Bishop Blastus wrote that Blastus "says the Passover [Pascha] is not to be kept otherwise than according to the Law of Moses, on the fourteenth day of the month."⁷

So, there was tension between the bishops of Rome over whether to Adopt Easter Sunday or continue the Nisan 14 Passover date of Apostolic times.

Finally, Victor, Bishop of Rome (189-199), decided in favor of the Easter Sunday date and decided to excommunicate those who celebrated Nisan 14. Nevertheless, the Nisan 14 observers continued to observe that date in the third century and ignore Easter Sunday as Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome (d. 236), stated. He said that the Quartodeciman Christians of his time believed "that Easter [Pascha] should be kept on the fourteenth day of the first month, according to the commandment of the law, on whatsoever day of the week it should occur in other respects, however, those (Quartodecimans) consent to all the traditions delivered to the church by the Apostles."⁸

By the time of Hippolytus the Quartodecimans were already on the outs with the "official"

Church of Rome and Easter Sunday was then well established. However, a compromise was made to accomplish a celebration of both Sabbath and Sunday. Bishop Hippolytus commanded that "On Saturday and Sunday the Bishop shall, wherever possible, give the people the bread with his own hands while the deacons break it."⁹ However, in Hippolytus' day, fasting was starting to come into practice on Saturdays, a practice which Hippolytus condemned. He wrote, "Even today some ... order fasting on the Sabbath [a practice] of which Christ has not spoken, dishonoring the gospel of Christ."¹⁰

It was the Gnostics, who were anti-Old Testament, and anti-Jewish, who introduced Saturday fasts in order to heap scorn on the God of the Jews. Epiphanius writes that the Gnostic leader, Marcion, when he was at Rome, "proclaimed a fast on the Sabbath in opposition to the God of the Jews who created this evil world of matter, because God rested on the seventh day."¹¹

Ironically, the anti-Jewish Gnostic doctrine of the Sabbath quickly took a foothold in the Church of Rome. Roman bishops began to institute Sabbath fasts, such as third century Bishop Callistus, who made seasonal Sabbath fasts, and Bishop Sylvester I (314 -335), who advocated a weekly Sabbath fast and also declared that the "rest of the Sabbath should be transferred rather to the Lord's day (Sunday)."¹²

So, by the fourth century, seventh-day Sabbath observance was replaced by a Sabbath fast in the city of Rome; but in northern Italy, the Sabbath was still observed and not fasted upon.

Bishop Ambrose (340 - 397), of Milan in north Italy, wrote, "When I come to Rome, I fast upon the Sabbath. When I am here I do not fast."¹³

In the fourth century in Italy certain other doctrines were being introduced and challenged. For example, the belief that Mary was perpetually a virgin was being propagated widely. Helvidius (300 - 360) challenged this belief holding that "the Lord's 'brethren' were sons of Mary and Joseph."¹⁴

Jovian of Verona also believed that Mary ceased to be a virgin after bringing forth Christ. In addition, he believed that degrees of future blessedness did not depend upon the merits of works and taught that celibacy was not higher than marriage and fastings were not required. In 338 Jovianism was condemned both at Rome and at Milan, and later Honorius exiled Jovian to the island of Boa.

The Church of Rome could no longer tolerate dissenters and used a heavy hand on them. The right to punish dissenters from Rome was emphasized by Bishop Leo I, of Rome, (440 - 461) who advocated the death penalty for heresy against Rome's teachings, and he taught that he not only is invested "with a priestly office" but that "by the Holy Spirit he is preserved from all doctrinal error."¹⁵

However, the intolerance in the Church of Rome advocated by Leo I was curbed by the Germanic Goths who conquered Italy in A.D. 488. The Goths were believers in religious toleration, not only to Christians of different stripes, but they also tolerated and protected Jews and their beliefs. King Theodoric of the Goths wrote in 524, "To pretend to dominion over the conscience, is to usurp the prerogative of God. By nature of things, the power of sovereigns is confined to political government. They have no right of punishment but over those who disturb public peace. The most dangerous heresy is that of a sovereign who separates himself from part of his subjects, because they believe not according to his belief."¹⁶

The Goths, contrary to the Church of Rome, observed the Sabbath on Saturday. Bishop Sidonius wrote that the Goths, "sanctify the Sabbath after the manner of the Greeks"¹⁷ and instead of fasting on Saturdays, the Goths were feasting.¹⁸

In 553 Gothic rule in Italy was broken by the Byzantines, but in 568 northern Italy was invaded and ruled by the Lombards who held to the same Christian beliefs as the Goths.

It was during the rule of the Lombards that the Bishop of Rome, Gregory I (590-664), complained about Sabbatarian observance. He stated, "It has come to my ears that certain men of perverse spirit have disseminated among you things depraved and opposed to the holy faith, so that they forbid anything to be done on the day of the Sabbath. What shall I call them except preachers of anti-Christ?" (Epistles, b. 13:1)¹⁹

Under Lombard King Rothari (636-652) the Lombards converted to Roman Catholicism. Yet, even a century and a half later in Northern Italy, it was recorded of the Synod of Frioul (796) that the Sabbath day was still "observed by the Jews and other rustics."²⁰

The Byzantines, who drove the Goths out of Italy in 553, controlled southern Italy for over

500 years. They observed the seventh-day Sabbath there during all of that time. Those years also saw skirmishes between Rome and the Byzantines regarding Rome's use of images. But, there occurred, in 1054, a final schism between Rome and the Byzantines over Papal supremacy, the filoque, celibacy, use of unleavened bread in mass, and Sabbath fasting. As far as the Sabbath was concerned, Rome's legate, Cardinal Humbert, accused the Byzantines of carrying on "an observance of the Sabbath similar to that of the Jews." However, Patriarch Michael Cerularius said that according to the Byzantine belief "we are commanded to honor the Sabbath equally with the Lord's Day [Sunday] and to keep [it] and not to work on it."²¹

The Byzantines rejected the Sabbath fast, in addition to Papal supremacy, use of the filoque, mandatory celibacy for the priests, and the use of unleavened bread in the mass. On July 16, 1054, at the Church of Hagia Sophia, the schism between Rome and the Byzantines was complete.

In the eleventh century the Roman Catholic Normans chased the Byzantines out of southern Italy along with their Sabbatarian practices.

Even though the Sabbatarians disappeared in southern Italy by the end of the eleventh century, in northern Italy they were found living in the mountains throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They were known as Passagians.

The Passagians were Christians who observed the laws given in the Old Testament, including Sabbath observance and making a distinction of clean and unclean meats.²² The name, Passagii, appears to be a reference to the places where they lived – that is, the "passes" of the mountains.

About the same time as the Passagii, there arose in North Italy, in Lombardy, a Christian group called the 'Poor of Lombardy'. These were affiliated with the 'Poor of Lyons' and were commonly known as Waldenses, named after Peter Waldo of Lyons.

Writer R.C. Stephen, of Bourbon, wrote in 1225 concerning the origin of the Waldenses. He said that Waldo's poor men were "afterwards in the land of Provence and Lombardy, mingling themselves with other heretics and imbibing and sowing their error."²³

One of the so-called "errors" that must have made its way into the Waldensian camp must have included the seventh-day Sabbath, because some were known to have observed the seventh-day Sabbath. This fact is verified by the Waldenses of Bohemia. Waldo, himself, after being forced to leave Lyons, was persecuted from one region to the next, going to various places such as Dauphine, Belgium, Picardy, and Germany. Finally, he settled in Bohemia. The Bohemian Waldenses, according to a document entitled 'Summarium impiae at pharisaicae puicardorum religionis' mostly observed Sunday, but stated also that "some celebrate Sabbath with the Jews."²⁴

Sabbath observance was kept at Rome in reformation times. "Binius says that in 1555 there were Christians in Rome who kept the Sabbath, and were therefore called Sabbatarii, and they are represented as differing in other respects from the Romanists."²⁵ The Counter Reformation must have done much to curtail the Sabbatarians, for one hears little more of Sabbatarians in Italy, especially in Rome, in post-reformation times.

Some scholars have contended that Sabbatarianism still existed among the Waldenses in North Italy, and there is possible evidence for this assumption. For example, at the Synod of Waldenses at San Germano, February 1745, there were prohibitions listed for both Saturdays and Sundays. The "rule that announcements of engagements or celebrations of marriages should not be made on Saturdays" could be interpreted as a Sabbath prohibition, but this evidence probably can not be considered conclusive enough to consider later Waldensian Sabbath observance a fact.²⁶

Nevertheless, Tamar Davis, writing in the early nineteenth century, relates a quote from a Vaudois elder near Turin which appears to indicate a continued reverence by some Waldenses for the Sabbath in the early nineteenth century. In 1823 she wrote that, according to the Vaudois elder, Mr. Peyromi of Perosa, "in the summer, when these pastoral people are tending their cattle at a distance from the valleys, and occupying their chalets, or temporary cabins, upon the summits of the mountains, the clearness of the atmosphere allows the sound of the Sabbath bells to reach them, calling them to worship the Creator beneath the canopy of heaven. They assemble in a convenient place on the green turf to listen to the exhortations of their minister, who follows them on every seventh day to their remotest pasturings."²⁷

It is still an open question as to whether any of the north Italian mountain people still

observe the seventh-day Sabbath today. But, what is clear is that the majority of churches in Italy are still deeply committed to Sunday observance, just like the old Mithraic Adherents were of the first centuries of the Common Era in Italy.

CHAPTER 11

The Sabbath in French Church History

Christianity became established in France, according to historian Guizot, "as early as the first half of the second century There is a tradition ... that St. Pothinus, the first Bishop of Lyons, was sent thither from the east by the Bishop of Smyrna, St. Polycarp, himself a disciple of St. John."¹

Christians who came from Eastern Christendom to Gaul observed the seventh-day Sabbath, such as the Goths, who conquered southern France in 419. The Goths ruled the area called the Kingdom of Toulousia in southern France until A.D. 507.

Sidonius Apollinaris (431-482), Bishop of Clermont, wrote concerning the Goths that "it is therefore possible for the Goths to have thought, as pupils of the discipline of the Greeks, that they should sanctify the Sabbath after the manner of the Greeks."² On the other hand, Sidonius also wrote of Catholics of the west who "have neglected the celebration of the Sabbath."³

However, even after the Goths were ousted by the Franks who were Catholic, there appeared to be Christians in France who gave credence only to the seventh-day Sabbath and ignored Sunday altogether. This in part was probably due to a belief in sixth century France that Jesus Christ rose from the grave on the seventh-day of the week and not on the first.

Catholic Bishop, Gregory of Tours (538-594), was against the Sabbath resurrection belief and defended a Sunday resurrection belief. He wrote, "Now in our belief the resurrection of the Lord was on the first day and not on the seventh as many deem."⁴

Under Gothic rule in Gaul, whether one was a Goth, Roman, Greek, Syrian, or Jew, all had freedom of conscience to follow their own faith unmolested.⁵ However, the Catholic Franks sought to impose laws on all to conform to the Catholic belief regarding Sunday observance and freedom of conscience, once granted by the Goths, was suppressed. For example, at the Council of Narbonne in 589 it was decreed that "all whether child or slave, Goth or Roman, or Syrian, or Greek, or Jew must cease from work on the Day of the Lord."⁶ If this Sunday law was violated, "the freeborn were fined six solidi, and the slave was to receive one hundred blows."⁷

The iron rule of the Franks effectively resisted all dissent from Catholicism. On December 24, A.D. 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor. His empire was to promote only one Roman Catholic faith in the Holy Roman Empire.

Nevertheless, in the twelfth century the evangelical faith of Sabbatarians was revived despite the greatest of perils, under the leadership of Peter de Bruys (1110-1126) in Dauphine, Provence, and Languedoc during the time of Bernard.⁸

Peter de Bruys and his followers, the Petrobrussians, taught, in addition to seventh-day Sabbath observance, that only believing Adults should be baptized and that baptism was of no use to infants, since infants did not have faith. The Petrobrussians rejected transubstantiation since they believed that Christ was only "spiritually present in the sacrament."⁹ They also rejected purgatory belief, prayers and alms for the dead, and invocation of saints. They maintained that "the Church is not made of cemented stones, but of believing men."¹⁰

Peter de Bruys was opposed to holy days instituted by the Roman Church. He also opposed mandatory celibacy for ministers, and mandatory fasts. He opposed the use of images, relics, crosses, and crucifixes. When Peter de Bruys built a bonfire to burn a number of crosses, he was seized by an outraged populace and "burned to death on a heap of crosses which he had lighted."¹¹

Roman Catholic clergyman, Bernard, who was angry with the dissidents who denied transubstantiation and Catholic penance, and refused infant baptism, declared, "men die in their sins without being reconciled by penance or Admitted to the holy communion ... the grace of baptism is refused to little children; those to whom the Lord said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me' do not obtain the means of coming to salvation. Is it because of a belief that these little children have no need of a Saviour inasmuch as they are little?"¹²

Some Sabbatarians could be found among the followers of Peter Waldo, who became head of an evangelical movement at Lyons. The followers were called Waldenses. They were also known as Vaudois. Some Vaudois claimed that they existed long before Waldo. The doctrines of the Waldenses tended to resemble those of Peter de Bruys. Like the Petrobrussians, the Waldenses were against images, relics, invocation of saints, prayers for the dead, purgatory, veneration of the cross, and believed that the church was not a building, but made up of true believers. Some Waldenses denied child baptism in favor of Adult baptism.¹³

Waldo, himself, was exiled by the Archbishop of Lyons in 1184 and moved to Dauphine, but was persecuted there too, causing him to move next to Belgium, then Picardy, then Germany, finally settling "in Bohemia where he died."¹⁴

In Bohemia the Waldenses were known as Leonists or Picards. The Bohemian Waldenses despised Candlemas, Palm Sunday, Easter, all Saints days, and worked on them.¹⁵

According to the document "Summarium impiae et Pharisaeicae picardorum religionis" it stated that at least "some celebrated the Sabbath with the Jews."¹⁶

The Bohemian Waldenses were on good terms with the Hussites of the 1400s. A Waldensian bishop, named Stephen, ordained the leader of the Hussite Bohemian Brethren in 1467.¹⁷ It is of more than passing interest that when the Bohemian Brethren found refuge against Catholic persecution on the estates of Count Zinzendorf in 1727 and consequently made Zinzendorf their bishop, Zinzendorf began to observe the seventh-day Sabbath at his estates and soon thereafter brought Sabbath observance with him to Pennsylvania, U.S.A. in the mid-eighteenth century. This observance he held the rest of his life.¹⁸

The Sabbatarians who stayed in France during the late Middle Ages suffered greatly. For example, in 1420 about eighteen Sabbatarians were arrested in northern France near Douai for having "disrespect of the sacraments: for denial of the perpetual virginity of Mary, for keeping Saturday as their Sabbath: and for stating that the masses for the dead have no value whatsoever."¹⁹ Also, pastors Hennequin of Langle and Bertrol Thurin were executed for keeping Saturday as the Sabbath among other differences of faith with Catholicism.²⁰

Another account of Sabbatarian suffering is given by Philip de Mornay. Mornay's inquisition account took place on September 14, 1492 where thirty people were imprisoned at Toulouse, being charged with Judaism. "Of these, the most eminent was Anthony Ferrar, who had been a pastor or teacher in the Sabbatarian church of that city. After remaining in prison ten days, he received a visit from an Italian Monk named Gregory, to whom his examination had been committed. He was accompanied by two other monks who were to act as witnesses. After a long conference touching his age, property, manner of living, associates, relations, and similar subjects, Gregory at last came to the matter in question.

Gregory – But, Anthony, you must be a liar and a deceiver for I have been credibly informed that yourself and all your friends were of the cursed race of Israel.

Anthony – It is false; we are all honest Frenchmen, and Christians. Followers of Jesus.

Gregory – Nay! But you were Jews, for instead of baptizing your infant children, you have all the males circumcised.

Anthony – You do very wrong to accuse us of that practice; for it is something of which we are entirely innocent.

Gregory – Hey! Do you then baptize your children?

Anthony – We do not, neither do we circumcise them.

Gregory – Nevertheless, you must be Jews since you say that the Law of Moses is still binding.

Anthony – We say that the Ten Commandments are still binding.

Gregory – Yes, and instead of observing the festivals of the Church, and honoring the holyday of the Lord, on which He arose from the dead, you were accustomed to meet for worship upon the old Sabbath, or Saturday.

Anthony – We did, indeed, rest and attend to divine worship upon the seventh-day as God commanded."²¹

Anthony and his associates were burned to death because of their faith.

Prior to reformation times, Louis XII (1498-1515), King of France, sought to investigate the Waldenses of Province. The Master of Requests and a doctor of Sorbonne made an inquiry for Louis. "On their return they reported that they had visited all the parishes, but could not discover any of those crimes with which they were charged. On the contrary, they kept the

Sabbath day, observed the ordinance of baptism, according to the primitive church, instructed their children in the articles of Christian faith and the commandments of God. The king, having heard the report of his commissioners, said with an oath that they were better men than himself or his people."²²

The Reformation upheaval brought increased persecution for Waldensian or Vaudois Christians, as well as Protestants of France called Huguenots, in the 1500s and 1600s.

Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux (ca. 1690s), thought that the Waldenses' claims for following only the Bible were more consistent than most Protestants, particularly in regards to their keeping the Sabbath day. Bossuet wrote, "I conceive that the old Waldenses who rejected all the festivals of the church, and went back to the original Sabbath were more consistent with themselves, than these gentlemen, the modern Protestants, who though they discard all the others, still retain the Dominical day."²³

However, at least one seventeenth-century Protestant by the name of M. de la Roque saw validity in Sabbath observance. He wrote Bossuet of Meaux concerning the Sabbath that the true church of Christ "observed that day for many ages; we of consequence, are also obliged to keep it."²⁴

Due to severe persecution many Huguenots fled to England. One Sabbatarian Huguenot church was established in London. They called themselves 'Seventh day people.' French writer Henri Misson wrote of these Sabbatarians in his 'Memoires', when he visited England in 1698. He mentions that these Sabbatarians baptized Adults only and were millenarian. He also stated that "the major part of them will eat neither pork, nor things strangled...."²⁵

One famous Huguenot that came to Sabbatarian convictions in England was Dr. Peter Chamberlen who was personal physician to three kings and queens of England – King James and Queen Anne; King Charles I and Queen Mary; and King Charles II and Queen Catherine.²⁶

One Huguenot, Dr. Gillette, who was an observer of the Sabbath, fled France in the late 1600s and came to America where he apparently influenced some Keithian Quakers, which later became known as Seventh Day Baptists, to observe the seventh-day Sabbath.²⁷

The persecutions against the Waldenses and Huguenots basically emptied France of its Sabbatarians and other dissenters leaving practically a monolithic Roman Catholic state in France. Nonetheless, the seeds of French Sabbatarianism spread to other areas of the world, which influence remains today.

CHAPTER 12

Christianity in the British Isles

Christianity entered the British Isles at least by the dawn of the third century. Tertullian of Carthage, in his treatise 'Against the Jews' which he wrote ca., A.D. 200, stated that "parts of Britain, inaccessible to the legions [had been] conquered for Christ."¹ The Roman Empire had only been able to conquer a portion of southern Britain, but stopped with Hadrian's Wall. However, Tertullian confirms that Christianity had spread far beyond in Britain, outside the confines of the Roman territory by A.D. 200. Third century writers Origen of Alexandria and Hippolytus of Rome also testify that Christianity was to be found in Britain.²

By A.D. 314 Britons were in attendance at the Council of Arles.

In 431 Bishop Palladius of Auxerre, France, found Christians in Ireland in the east from Wiclow and South Antrim. However, within a year's time, Palladius was dead and the next year another missionary to Ireland took his place by the name of Patrick.

Son of a British deacon, Calpurnius, and grandson of a priest, Potitus, Patrick was captured by the Irish in 405 and enslaved. But, after six years, Patrick escaped to Gaul. Patrick returned to the Isles in 432 to be a missionary to Ireland.

In the biographical accounts of Patrick, the seventh-day of the week is always mentioned with special significance. His biographer, Mirichu, stated that "The angel was want to come to him [Patrick] on every seventh day of the week."⁴ Mirichu also mentions "Patrick as a man who was visited by God every seventh day...."⁵ Mirichu mentions as well that Victricius, Bishop of Rouen, when he came to Britain, fellowshipped with Patrick "every Seventh day of the week."⁶

Author Leslie Hardinge says that "In the Senchus Mor, ancient Irish laws believed to have been framed with the help of Patrick ... 'every Seventh day of the year'" was to be devoted to the Lord's service.⁷

Apparently the seventh day of the week was of special significance to Patrick.

The Welsh rule of David, of the sixth century, says that "From the eve of the Sabbath, until the light shines in the first hour, after the break of day on the Sabbath, they employ themselves in watchings, prayers, and genuflections, except one hour after morning service on the Sabbath; they make known their thoughts to the Father, and obtain his leave with respect to what was asked."⁸ It is evident that the early Welsh held Sabbath observance too.

The Picts of Scotland were Christianized by Columba, an Irishman, in 563. The Picts took the gospel to the Faroe Islands and Iceland. Yet, the Roman Catholic writers accused the Picts of "adhering to Judaism."⁹

When Roman Catholic missionaries first arrived in Britain under Augustine in 597, differences were noted between the Celtic and Roman Catholic practices and beliefs.

For one, the Celts didn't accept Papal Supremacy according to the Roman Catholic claims for Peter as the first Pope. The Celts reply to such a claim was "What the Lord said to Peter he replied unto all."¹⁰

The Roman Catholics also noticed the Celts had no practice of auricular confession. The Roman Catholics remarked, "None of the laity are willing to make their confession to priests."¹¹ Most bothersome to the Roman Catholics was the Celtic practice of observing the Pascha on the fourteenth of Nisan no matter which day of the week it fell, instead of observing Easter Sunday.

In 628 Pope Honorius I of Rome (625-638) excommunicated Ireland for failing to conform to Roman Easter Sunday observance. Pope John (640-642) wrote that the Celtic Christians "ignorantly refuse to observe our Easter on which Christ was sacrificed, arguing that it should be observed with the Hebrew Passover on the fourteenth of the moon."¹²

In 664, at the Council of Whitby, King Wilfred enforced the usage of Easter on the Britains and condemned Nisan 14 observance.

In Ireland the Quartodecimans were suppressed at the beginning of the eighth century. The annalist for Erin recorded in the year 704, "In this year the men of Erin consented to receive one jurisdiction and one rule from Adamnan, respecting the celebration of Easter, on Sunday, the fourteenth of the moon of April ... for there had been great dissension in Erin up to that time; i.e., some of the clergy of Erin celebrated Easter on the Sunday [next after] the fourteenth of the moon of April ... but others, following the example of Columbkille, celebrated Easter on the fourteenth of the moon of April, on whatever day of the week the fourteenth should happen to fall ... a third party did not agree ... so that the clergy of Erin used to hold many synods, and these clergy used to come to the synods accompanied by the laity, so that battles and deaths occurred among them ... They were thus for a long time, i.e., to the time of Adamnan, who was the ninth abbot that took (the government of) Ia after Columbkille."¹³

Ireland eventually gave way, after much bloodshed, to Roman Easter observance. The final recorded opposition to the Roman Easter reckoning by the Celts appeared in Wales in 809 when a great tumult occurred over Easter when Edbodug, Bishop of Bangor, died.¹⁴ Here too, in Wales, the Quartodecimans eventually lost out to the Roman Easter observers.

Scotland was one of the last refuges for ancient Celtic observances, such as the Sabbath, and was the least Romanized for hundreds of years until the days of Queen Margaret.

Queen Margaret, born in Hungary, came to Scotland in 1068 after the Norman conquest and married Malcom Canmore in 1069. To her astonishment she found that "(a)mong the 'peculiarities' of the Scots was that they work on Sunday, but keep Saturday in a Sabbatical manner." Also that "They are accustomed to neglect reverence for the Lord's days (Sundays); and thus to continue upon them as upon other days all the labours of earthly work."¹⁵

However, Margaret made sure the old practices would change by enforcing Sunday observance. The *American People's Encyclopedia* says of Margaret of Scotland (1045-1093), "Margaret did much to civilize Scotland by introducing various religious customs, the observance of Sunday, and stricter marriage laws..."¹⁶ Thus Sunday observance took a stronghold in eleventh century Scotland. By 1203, William, King of Scotland, decreed that Saturday from the twelfth hour at noon, should be holy, that they should do no profane work, and that this they should observe until Monday."¹⁷

In Britain Sunday laws were being enforced in the thirteenth century as well. In the reign of

King John, markets which were previously held on the first day of the week were then forced to be moved to be held on other days of the week.¹⁸

Despite the strong Sunday laws entrenched by Catholicism, dissenters who observed Saturday Sabbath still emerged.

In 1405 certain individuals in London were found to be observing the seventh-day Sabbath.¹⁹ However, it wasn't until reformation times that Sabbatarians began to take a foothold in the 1500s, especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

It was in the seventeenth century that the seventh-day Sabbath became a deeply debated subject among Anglicans and Baptists. Among the Baptists who accepted the Sabbath in the seventeenth century, Seventh Day Baptists still exist today in England.

CHAPTER 13

Sabbatarians In American History

The Seventh Day Baptists

The first seventh-day Sabbatarian Christian on record in America was Stephen Mumford who came from England to Rhode Island in 1664. According to a letter from Pastor John Cowell, dated fourteenth day, seventh month, 1671, to Mumford it appears that Mumford was from the Sabbath observing Tewksbury Baptist Church in Gloucestershire and that both Stephen and Ann Mumford were church members of the Tewksbury Church.¹ Later that year, on December 7, 1671, Mumford witnessed the founding of the first seventh day, Sabbath-observing Baptist church in America. It consisted of seven charter members with Pastor William Hiscox as the first pastor in Newport, Rhode Island.

In 1675 Stephen Mumford, Jr., returned to England for a short visit and came back to America with Elder William Gibson from the Seventh Day Baptist Bell Lane Church in London to serve as the second pastor of the Newport Seventh Day Baptist Church.

William Gibson was originally from Warwickshire and received at Oxford a classical education. Back in England, as a student, he once witnessed a public whipping of a woman "for nonconformity as it respected infant baptism."² This spectacle led him to inquire into the Sabbath and Adult baptism beliefs and he was thus converted to the Seventh Day Baptist cause.

Not long after the Seventh Day Baptist Church became established in Newport, Rhode Island, there arose interest in the Sabbath cause in New London, Connecticut, and other areas of New England. While in Rhode Island Sabbatarians enjoyed religious tolerance; in New England Sabbatarians were much persecuted. Tamar Davis wrote that a work published in 1698 in Baltimore states, "no less than ten Sabbatarians were mutilated, imprisoned, and subjected to cruel scourging by their Puritanical brethren. Of these, John Rodgers, a member of the Church at Newport, but a resident in New London, was fined, imprisoned, and sentenced to sit a certain time upon the gallows with a rope about his neck. Another, named Philip Rodney, who was a Seventh Day Baptist in sentiments, although not a member of the church, was scourged, and then deprived of one of his ears. Sometimes their meetings would be broken up by the lawless violence of a mob. Other times they would be fined, imprisoned, or mutilated for pursuing any ordinary business or labor upon the first day of the week."³

One prominent preacher of the Sabbath in Connecticut, Long Island, and New Jersey was Dr. William Gillette. Dr. Gillette was a Huguenot minister and a physician in France. He fled the Huguenot persecutions by moving to America in the late 1600s. It is assumed that Able Noble, who became introduced to Sabbatarian views in 1696 in either New Jersey or Long Island, received Sabbatarian views from Dr. Gillette.⁴

In 1696 Able Noble carried the Sabbatarian doctrine to the Keithian Quakers of Pennsylvania and baptized many Quakers into the Sabbatarian Baptist faith. Soon, due to the Sabbatarian influence of Able Noble, Germans in Pennsylvania began Sabbath observance. One Lutheran minister, Jonas Auren, preached the seventh-day Sabbath message in his Lutheran Church and had to appear before the governor in 1700. By 1725 the Sabbath message was accepted by many Dunkards (German Brethren, who became known as German Seventh Day

Baptists.) A remnant still exists today.

William Davis was a Quaker who came to be converted to Sabbatarian Baptist views through Able Noble around the turn of the eighteenth century. William Davis eventually found himself at Rhode Island. However, because of his background, he found himself at odds theologically with many of the Rhode Island Seventh Day Baptists over the doctrine of the state of the dead. Many of the old, established Rhode Island Seventh Day Baptist families originated with the Independents (Congregationalists) of New England, which believed in conditional immortality. Alexander Ross in 1655 wrote that the Independents of New England believed "that the soul dyeth with the body."⁵ This is apparently what many Seventh Day Baptists of Rhode Island were still believing in the early 1700s, a fact which offended William Davis who believed in the immortality of the soul. William Davis wrote in 1724, concerning the conflict which he had with the Seventh Day Baptists of Rhode Island who taught conditional immortality, "Now all this enmity among seventh-day men arose against me originally from a noted seventh-day man and soul sleeper in this country, who above twenty years ago opposed me about my principles of immortality of human souls, and afterward proceeded to differ with me about my faith in Christ and the Trinity, who, having poisoned several other seventh-day men with mortal and atheistical notion, and set them against me, he secretly conveyed this drench over to Westerly to the persons before named, who complying with him in their judgments in the Socinian and Anti-Trinitarian error, drank it greedily down before I came to them, which was the cause of their enmity against me."⁶ Most of the names he gives as those opposing immortality of souls were descendants of the early Independent (Congregationalist) families.

Unfortunately, the Seventh Day Baptists were not able to resolve their difference over the doctrine of the immortality of souls and the Godhead. Eventually these differences continued to cause a rift until a break was made, led by the Cottrells, an SDB family name which could be found on the Newport Seventh Day Baptist church rolls since 1692 (the church rolls from 1671 to 1691 were lost). While some Cottrells stayed with the main church of the Seventh Day Baptists espousing the immortality of souls, those Cottrells which espoused conditional immortality became known as "Seventh Day Christians" according to W.A. Spicer who said, "A good sized group grew up - a mixed church the members who were sometimes called 'Cottrellites'."⁷

It appears that the majority of Seventh Day Baptists in America today believe in the immortality of the soul, although, as a denomination, they have no creed or specific doctrine on this topic.

The Seventh-day Adventists

In the early 1800s an American Sabbatarian movement that emphasized the second coming originated in a church of the "Christian" denomination in the eastern United States. The "Christian" church was a denomination which had its founding in the year 1803. From its start it observed Sunday, usually baptized Adults by immersion, and held a widespread view that the soul was not immortal, but that the wicked would be annihilated and that the righteous would receive eternal life at the resurrection which would take place at Christ's second coming.⁸

In the year 1841, a Seventh Day Baptist, Rachel Oakes, joined herself to the "Christian" church and by 1844 convinced several of the members of the "Christian" Church to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. These Sabbath-observing "Christian" church members of Washington, New Hampshire eventually found themselves forced out of the "Christian" denomination on account of their Sabbath observance, so these Sabbatarians started a church that was later to become known as Seventh-day Adventism.

Some former members of the "Christian" church who accepted the Sabbath and became pioneers in the Seventh-day Adventist church included Joseph Bates, James White, and Gilbert Cranmer. Gilbert Cranmer eventually left the Seventh-day Adventists and founded the Church of Christ which in turn became known as the Church of God (Seventh Day). Cranmer did not agree with the visions of James White's wife, Ellen, concerning the 1844 sanctuary doctrine.

The Seventh-day Adventist church remains one of the largest Sabbath-observing Christian churches in the world. Its membership worldwide numbers in the millions and is second in membership numbers only to the Ethiopian Christian Church which is the largest Sabbath

observing denomination in the world. The Church of God (Seventh Day) remains very small in membership and has a number of offshoots such as the Worldwide Church of God [which has recently abandoned the Sabbath] and the Assemblies of Yahweh which began in the late 1930s.

The Sabbath seed was originally planted in the Christian community in America by Seventh Day Baptists, however, it was Seventh day Adventists who had the greatest impact of promoting the Sabbath doctrine in America and the world, and continues to do so.

CHAPTER 14

Christian Sabbatarians in Canada

The first Sabbath-observers in Canada were captive German Seventh Day Baptists (Dunkards). These German Sabbatarians were brought to Quebec against their will. The German Sabbatarians were pacifistic fur traders in the Shenandoah Valley. In March 1757 a French priest led a party of Indians to attack the German Sabbatarians. The cabins of the German Seventh Day Baptists were pillaged and burned by the Indians. A dozen horses were loaded with stolen goods but the rest of the horses were killed. Most of the German Seventh Day Baptists were killed and scalped. Only three Germans were taken as prisoners – Israel and Gabriel Eckerlin, and Johann Schilling. Schilling eventually escaped his captors, but Israel and Gabriel Eckerlin were taken to Fort Duquesne where the French gave the Eckerlins a mock baptism ceremony, stripping them of their clothing, throwing them into the water, and stoned them until they were dragged unconscious out of the water. Gabriel was then scalped. The French priests then sent the two brothers to Montreal, Quebec, in care of Jesuits where they “suffered greatly from hunger, confinement, and disease.” They eventually were sent to France. Some reports say they died at sea while others say they died in a monastery.¹

Thus, the first Sabbatarians in Canada found a very harrowing experience of persecution and bigotry.

The first Sabbatarian in Canada from the British Isles was Donald MacArthur, a Scot from Port Bannatyne, Isle of Bute, Scotland. He was born a Presbyterian, but eventually converted to the Seventh Day Baptists in 1802. On October 20, 1805, “while preaching on the shore of Colintrave, Mr. MacArthur was seized by a colonel and three constables and ‘pressed’ for the Navy.... Through the efforts of friends, who employed eminent attorneys, MacArthur was released November 27, 1805.”² In 1811 he emigrated to Canada where he farmed. He died in 1850.³

An American Seventh Day Baptist who lived briefly in Canada was Joel Jones. He moved to Upper Canada in 1862 where he converted his wife’s mother, sister, and two brothers to the Sabbath.⁴

In the early 1850s Seventh Day Baptists made Sabbatarian converts such as Mr. Lambert from Catholicism in Quebec.⁵

The first seventh-day Christian in New Brunswick was George W. McCready of Moncton around the 1880s. He was a Seventh Day Baptist. His nephew, Charles Price, was the first Seventh Day Baptist in Western Canada, coming to Stony Plain, Alberta in 1906 where he lived till just short of his ninety-sixth birthday.

The Seventh Day Baptists, though they were the first Sabbatarians in Canada, were always very few in number. However, Seventh-day Adventists had, and continue to have, a greater impact concerning numbers of members in Canada.

The Seventh-day Adventists, which had their beginnings in the 1840s in U.S.A., began to make converts in Quebec and Ontario in the early 1850s through the efforts of Joseph Bates, Hiram Edson, and James and Ellen White.⁶ The first church was established in 1883, South Stukely, Quebec.

Soon Seventh-day Adventist conferences were established all over Canada such as Quebec (1880), Ontario (1899), Newfoundland (1895), British Columbia (1902), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (1903), Maritime Provinces (1902), and Alberta (1906).

Seventh-day Adventists have established many schools throughout the provinces which continue to run, and that includes elementary, junior high, and high schools and a university.

Seventh-day Adventists have always been successful in spreading their message through the means of colporteurs (book sellers), and they also, in more recent years, try to reach the public through radio and television media. The Seventh-day Adventist Church remains the largest Sabbatarian church in Canada.

A Sabbatarian movement which sprung up on Canadian soil in the mid 1880s was an indigenous movement, and short-lived. It was led by the famous political *metis* (mixed blood) leader, Louis Riel. He was of mixed aboriginal and French ancestry and raised a Roman Catholic. He came to reject many of the religious views, which he learned in the Catholic system. One day he accepted that the seventh day of the week (Saturday) was the true Sabbath. Louis Riel maintained that "The Sabbath was no longer to be held on Sunday, but on Saturday as determined by Your Holy Spirit in the person of Moses Your Servant."⁷

Other differences Riel held with Catholicism were that:

"1. We believe that all true believers constitute the true church. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are Christians, and all Christians make the church holy, catholic, and vital.

2. We do not believe in the infallibility of the pope.

3. We believe in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and the right of every man to read and learn the truths they contain.

4. We believe in a regular ordained ministry. We would accept ministers of all denominations, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists in our ministry without re-ordaining. We would be somewhat doubtful about the Baptists....

5. We believe in a form of church government. We prefer the Episcopate. We would like (to) see a head bishop for the Dominion or for the new world, which would be independent of Rome.

6. We believe there is one God. We believe in the Trinity, though not in the ordinary sense.

7. We pray to God, to Christ, to Mary, and to the saints. God the Father is perfect and highest. God the Son is perfect and Saviour. Mary is pure but not perfect, and in her dwells the Holy Ghost. The saints are our friends who have access to the persons who are powerful.

8. We believe in the final salvation of all men."⁸

In 1855 Riel helped the *metis* of Saskatchewan set up a provisional government. The Ottawa government in Canada sent troops to crush the *Metis* government and put Riel to death on account of a charge of treason. This put a great rift between English and French Canadians (the French favored Riel). Riel's religion received a great devastating blow since Riel was its leader.

The Seventh-day Adventist church in the U.S. spawned some offshoot churches, some of which made their way to Canada as well.

Around the turn of the twentieth century a Sabbatarian group, formerly associated with the Seventh-day Adventists, called "Gemeinde Gottes" (Church of God) came from Java, South Dakota, to southern Alberta at Josephburg (near Medicine Hat).⁹

Coming from the Adventist Movement, the Church of God (formerly based in Stanberry, Missouri), evangelized among the German people in Saskatchewan in the 1920s and in Alberta in the 1930s. This church exists today in a few small Church of God congregations sprinkled throughout Canada. The Worldwide Church of God was an offshoot of the Church of God and was more successful in gaining members than its parent church in Canada. Today many Worldwide churches have been established with itself having many break-off or offshoot congregations.

In the middle of the twentieth century the Sacred Name movement took root and continues in small congregations in Canada today.

Despite the obstacles which the early Canadian Sabbatarians faced, Sabbatarianism continues as an important feature in certain Canadian churches today.

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