

devotion, with holy acts and meditation, with abstinence from secular work and duties, and with an entire consecration of it to the Lord. The care with which God legislated for the Jewish Sabbath proves how jealous He was of its sacred character. In it they were to do no manner of work, "you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:10). No burdens were to be borne on that day. No fire was to be kindled on that day. In the time of planting or in the time of harvest they were to rest on that day. Buying and selling on that day were unlawful, and whoever did any work on that day was to be put to death; and a case of this sort is recorded in the Book of Numbers, where a man found gathering sticks on the Sabbath was by the express command of God stoned to death outside the camp.

As if to give greater solemnity to this day, additional sacrifices were offered on it, and holy convocations, or assemblies for public worship, were to be held, especially when the Sabbath was a high day, as at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The Jewish rabbis had gradually so overlaid the law of the Sabbath with false traditions that our Savior truly stigmatized them as "teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt 15:9). Thus, according to the Jerusalem Gemara, 1 "they must not blow the fire with a pair of bellows, because that was too much like the labor of smiths, but they might blow it through a hollow cane." They might make a fire and set on their pot, but they must not lay on their wood like the structure of a house. They might wash their feet, but not their whole body. Other rabbinical writers say that it is not lawful to roast an apple, nor to climb a tree lest they break a bough, nor to sing a lullaby to a crying baby. He who took corn from his field to the quantity of a fig was deemed guilty, and he who plucked up anything growing was regarded as reaping, and consequently guilty. These, with many other trivial and senseless additions, had been affixed to the observance of the Sabbath, by which, so far from hallowing it, they desecrated it, and made it a bondage and a hardship rather than a delight.

Our blessed Lord swept away many of these false traditions and misunderstandings, both by his word and his example, and restored the Sabbath to its legitimate end when he declared that "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28), and he exercised his Lordship, not only by reclaiming it from Jewish

traditions under which it lay smothered and distorted, but by showing us in his life how we should regard the day—with what works of love and mercy we should occupy its sacred hours. As he kept the Sabbath holy by meeting with the congregation for holy worship by offices of holy benevolence and mercy; by seasons of holy meditation and devotion; by abstaining from all secular pursuits, and by honoring the day with the reverence, which it claimed, so should we. Then, like the beloved disciple, shall we be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and thus fulfill the command, Hallow the Sabbath day.

1. A commentary on the Mishnah forming the second part of the Talmud (the authoritative body of Jewish tradition).

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Pamphlet 059

# **The Change of the Day from the Seventh to the First!**

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"In the first place, then, we should explain generally the meaning of these words: *Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day.*

"Sabbath is a Hebrew word which signifies cessation. To keep the Sabbath, therefore, means to cease from labor and to rest. In this sense the seventh day was called the Sabbath, because God, having finished the creation of the world, rested on that day from all the work which He had done.

"The word *remember* is appropriately made use of at the beginning of the Commandment to signify that the sanctification of that particular day belonged to the ceremonial law. Of this it would seem to have been necessary to remind the people; for, although the law of nature commands us to devote a certain portion of time to the external worship to God, it fixes no particular day for the performance of this duty.

"The true and proper meaning, therefore, of this Commandment tends to this, that we take special care to set apart some fixed time, when, disengaged from bodily labor and worldly affairs, we may devote our whole being, soul and body, to the religious veneration of God" (*Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Part Three, The Decalogue, Third Commandment).

The change of the day of the Sabbath from the *seventh* day, observed by the Jews, to the *first*, kept by the Christians, does not affect the binding authority of the command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," if it can be shown, that the change was made by competent authority, for sufficient reasons, and without destroying or infringing the two principles at the root of the command to give one-seventh of our time to God, and to keep this one-seventh portion holy to his name. A change was made. The Christian world, with few exceptions, keeps as sacred the first day of the week, and we have to ask, if the change made by competent authority?

The only competent authority would be Christ and his apostles. Christ as supreme head of the Church, which is his body, commissioned the apostles, with

Peter His prime minister, to set in order the affairs of His kingdom on earth; and hence the Church of the living God is said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone" (Eph 2:20). Whatever ordinances we find established by Christ and his apostles, we hold to be binding on us, as being established directly or indirectly by competent authority. Now, we know that there was no express command to change the day from the seventh to the first, but the absence of an express command does not invalidate the change. Although the commandment reads, Remember the *seventh* day, to keep it holy, the essence of the law lay in the setting apart a day of *holy rest*, which essence is still untouched. It was not necessary to make any formal legislation about a day which is, in its very nature, a variable thing, changing with the shifting longitudes of earth, i.e., Sunday in Australia is Saturday in the United States.

God, by raising Christ from the dead on the first day of the week, set His seal to the change of the day. Christ, by rising on Sunday, and by twice especially meeting with his disciples on that Sunday, by imparting to them that day His "Peace," by breathing on them that day and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22), and by giving to them that Sunday their marvelous commission as heralds of the cross, set His seal to the change of day.

The Holy Spirit, by descending on that day of Pentecost in tongue-like flames, and with a rushing mighty wind, imparting to the apostles the promised power of the Spirit, giving to them the gift of tongues (Acts 2:1-4), converting three thousand souls (Acts 2:41), as the first fruits of the Gospel message, set His seal to the change of day.

The apostles instituted the first day of the week as their day of meeting. They established Sunday as the one on which to celebrate the Lord's Supper, ordered it as a day for the special setting apart of charitable contributions, and so filled its hours with holy memories of Jesus and holy acts for Jesus, as to set *their* seal to the change of day.

The Church, acting upon apostolic precept and example, established its most solemn and permanent Holy Mass on the first day of the week, and thus set *its* seal to the change of the day. While the Jews formed so large a part of the Church, it did not ignore altogether the seventh day, because the shock would have been too great to Jewish prejudices, but it gave pre-eminence to the first day, as we learn from Ignatius, Pliny, Justin

Martyr, the Apostolic Constitutions, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth and other early writers. When, by the expansion of the Church among the Gentiles, the Jewish element and Jewish observances grew less and less, and when, after the lapse of three centuries, the Christian element had permeated and molded the political world, the observance of "the first day" was enforced by the imperial edicts of Constantine, Theodosius, Valentinian and Honorius, and by the synodal decrees of the Councils of Carthage, Illiberis, Sardica, Trullo and Laodicea.

There was, therefore, every reason why there should be a change of day from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation, as the Bible leads us to believe that there was from the Patriarchal to the Mosaic. Nor was the change of day all that marked the introduction of the gospel. It has been well said that the whole state of the Church of God underwent a revolution. Almost everything was changed in some way and to some extent. The Mediator was changed from Moses to Christ. The priesthood was changed from the Aaronic to the Apostolic. The law was changed from the Levitical to the Evangelical. The worship was changed from the ritual and bloody sacrifices of the Temple, to the splendor of Holy Mass. The sacraments were changed from the Passover to the Lord's Supper, and Circumcision to Baptism. Additional sacraments were instituted by Jesus. With all these changes, then, with everything thus made new, is it logical that the day of the Sabbath was also changed. It would have been surprising if the day had not been changed. When we remember how the Jewish Sabbath, like Jewish worship, had become gradually encrusted with the traditions of the elders, so that it was perverted from its original intent of mercy, and void of its original end of holiness, we see the correctness of laying it and the temple sacrifices aside? The new wine of the gospel had to be poured, not into the old skins, cracked and shriveled in the smoke of Jewish sacrifices and traditions, but into the new skins of the Christian Church and the new Christian Sabbath, untainted by superstition, uncorrupted by false and perverse rabbinical interpretations, and better fitted for the Church established by Christ, making the Christian rest-day a Sabbath, a Lord's day for all nations, whom the Lord has redeemed.

Had there been no change from the seventh to the first day, the Christian Church would have kept its weekly festival on the day when Christ lay buried in the tomb, that day of sadness and sorrow for all the Lord's

disciples—that day of darkness and death, wherein we should have contemplated death's power over Christ, rather than Christ's power over death; death's victim in His shroud, rather than death's Victor in His resurrection robes; and have passed over (or else kept two days holy) the day of days, which commemorates Christ's rising from the tomb as the conqueror of death and hell, King of kings and Lord of lords.

To this weight of testimony and authority, which cannot be reasonably disputed, add the remarkable fact that the Church of Christ has kept this first day of the week as the Lord's Day for almost two thousand years. This Church, which Christ has promised to be with till the end of the age (Matt 28:20), far from reproving or condemning the setting aside of the seventh day, and the introduction of the first as the Christian Sabbath, has more specially blessed that day. Jesus, more especially present with his people on that day, has made it more than any other, the birthday of souls into spiritual life. These blessings have been granted, not only to the Church on this day, but to the persons, the families, the communities, the nations who have kept this day sanctified. Does it not give to the first day of the week the full sanction, as it has ever been marked with the full blessing of God?

Do we need further evidence that the day was changed—changed by competent authority, changed for justifiable and appropriate circumstances, changed without infringing upon the letter or spirit of the Mosaic law, and yet so changed, that the two essential elements of the original Sabbath in Eden and the Sabbath of the Decalogue are strictly preserved—the giving of one-seventh of our time to God and the keeping of this one-seventh time holy to the Lord?

This is the day, called "Sabbath," because the word means *rest*, termed in the Christian dispensation "The Lord's day," because especially consecrated by and devoted to Christ, of which God says, "Hallow the Sabbath day." To hallow a thing is to sanctify or make it holy, or to treat it as a holy thing and to give it reverence and devotion. It is in this latter way that we are to hallow God's name—a name holy in itself as expressive of the essence and attributes of a Holy God, but a name which we are ever to treat as hallowed, and toward which we are ever to conduct ourselves with reverence and devotion. But the Sabbath is a day that we can hallow or profane as we choose, and hence, when we are called upon to hallow it, it is enjoined upon us to make it holy by hallowing it with public worship, with private