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of Divine Origin?, by John E. Remsburg**

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Author: John E. Remsburg

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH: IS IT OF DIVINE ORIGIN?

**THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH
IS IT OF DIVINE ORIGIN?**

By J. B. Remsburg

Is the Christian Sabbath of divine origin? I propose to show that it is not—that there is no more divinity attached to Sunday than to any other day. I propose to show that the oft-repeated claim that it superseded the Jewish Sabbath by divine authority is false; I propose to show that it was originally a heathen holiday, borrowed from the pagan world—the *venerabile die solis* a day once consecrated to the orb of light, but which has been obscured by the thick clouds of theological gloom, that in the darkness Superstition's bats and owls may the more easily secure their prey; I propose to show that this Puritanical institution, whose decrepit form, supported by the crutches of state laws, still lingers in our midst, is one of the most despicable frauds that a tyrannical priesthood ever imposed upon credulous humanity. I propose to show that he who deals in pious cant about "Sabbath desecration" is a knave, or else

"Most ignorant of what he's most assured."

The testimony that I bring is not the testimony of the enemies of Christianity, but of its friends—of its most learned, most loyal, and most honorable defenders. My witnesses include the great apostle, Paul; the most eminent of the Christian fathers; the Protestant reformers; and many more of the church's greatest scholars and divines.

ST. PAUL.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. xiv, 5).

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days" (Colossians ii. 16).

JUSTIN MARTYR.

"You, because you are idle for one day, suppose you are pious.... Our God is not pleased with such observances" (Dialogues, chap. xii).

"You see that the heavens are not idle, nor do they observe the Sabbath" (Ibid, chap, xxiii).

IRENÆUS.

"These things [circumcision and Sabbath observance], therefore, which were given for bondage, and for a sign to them, he [Christ] canceled by the new covenant of liberty" (Against Heresies).

TERTULLIAN.

"The observance of the Sabbath is demonstrated to have been temporary" (Answer to Jews).

"By us [Christians], to whom Sabbaths are strange" (On Idolatry).

EUSEBIUS.

"They [the patriarchs] did not therefore regard circumcision nor observe the Sabbath, neither do we" (Ecclesiastical History, Book I., chap. iv).

ST. CYRIL.

"Jesus Christ hath redeemed thee. Henceforth reject all observance of Sabbaths" (Savage's Sunday Observance).

ST. EPIPHANIUS.

"God regardeth not outward cessation from works more upon one day than another" (Taylor's Works, Vol. XII).

ST. JEROME.

"Considered in a purely Christian point of view all days are alike" (Neander's Church History, Vol. III.).

"As soon as they [certain devout Christian women] returned home on the Lord's day, they sat down severally to their work, and made clothes for themselves and others" (Heylyn's History of the Sabbath, Part II., chap. iii).

LUTHER.

"As regards the Sabbath, or Sunday, there is no necessity for keeping it" (Michelet's Life of Luther, Book IV., chap. ii).

"Paul and the apostles, after the gospel began to be preached and spread over the world, clearly released the people from the observance of the Sabbath" (Luther's Works, Vol. III., p. 73).

"If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake—if anywhere any one sets up its observance upon a Jewish foundation—then I order you to work on it, to dance on it, to ride on it, to feast on it—to do anything that shall reprove this encroachment on the Christian spirit of liberty" (Table Talk).

MELANCTHON.

"The scripture allows that the observance of the Sabbath has now become void, for it teaches that the Mosaic ceremonies are not needful after the revelation of the gospel" (Augsburg Confession).

"The observance neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary" (Ibid).

BUCER.

"It is not only a superstition, but an apostasy from Christ, to think that working on the Lord's day, in itself considered, is a sinful thing" (Cox's Sabbath Laws, p. 289).

ZWINGLE.

"It is lawful on the Lord's day, after divine service, for any man to pursue his labors" (Ibid, p. 287).

BEZA.

"No cessation of work on the Lord's day is required of Christians" (Ibid, p. 286).

ERASMUS.

"It is meet, therefore, that the keeping of the Sabbath day give place to the commodity and profit of man" (Paraphrase on Mark).

CALVIN.

"The Fathers frequently call the command for the Sabbath a shadowy commandment, because it contains the external observance of the day, which was abolished with the rest of the figures at the advent of Christ.... The same day which put an end to the shadows admonishes Christians not to adhere to a shadowy ceremony" (Institutes, Book II., chap. viii). "Christians, therefore, should have nothing to do with a superstitious observance of days" (Ibid).

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER.

"The Jews were commanded to keep the Sabbath day, but we Christians are not bound to such commandments of Moses's law" (Cranmer's Catechism).

WILLIAM TYNDALE.

"We be lords over the Sabbath, and may yet change it into Monday, or into any other day as we see need, or may make every tenth day holy" (Answer to More, Book I., chap. xxv).

JOHN FRITH.

"We are in manner as superstitious in the Sunday as they [the Jews] are in the Saturday; yea, are we much madder; for the Jews have the word for their Saturday, since it is the seventh day, and they are commanded to keep the seventh day solemn; and we have not the word of God for us, but rather against us, for we keep not the seventh day as the Jews do, but the first, which is not commanded by God's law" (Declaration of Baptism).

COLERIDGE.

"The English Reformers took the same view of the day as Luther and the early church" (Comments on Luther's Table Talk).

DR. HESSEY.

"The Reformers were nearly unanimous on this point. Sabbatarianism of every phase was expressly

repudiated by the chief reformers in almost every country" (Bampton Lectures).

JOHN MILTON.

"The law of the Sabbath being thus repealed, that no particular day of worship has been appointed in its place [by divine authority] is evident" (Christian Doctrines, Book II., chap. vii).

GROTIUS.

"These things refute those who suppose that the first day of the week was substituted in place of the Sabbath, for no mention is ever made of such a thing by Christ or his apostles" (Annotations on Exodus).

ARCHBISHOP PALEY.

"The observance of the Sabbath was not one of the articles enjoined by the apostles" (Moral Philosophy, Book V., chap. vii).

"The opinion that Christ and his apostles meant to retain the duties of the Jewish Sabbath, shifting only the day from the seventh to the first, seems to prevail without sufficient reasons" (Ibid). "The resting on that day from our employments, longer than we are detained from them by attendance upon these assemblies, is, to Christians, an ordinance of human institution" (Ibid).

ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

"It is not merely that the apostles left us no command perpetuating the observance of the Sabbath, and transferring the day from the seventh to the first.... There is not even any tradition of their having made such a change; nay, more, it is even abundantly plain that they made no such change" (Notes on Paul).

JEREMY TAYLOR.

"The Lord's day did not succeed in the place of the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was wholly abrogated" (Taylor's Works, Vol. XII). "The primitive Christians did all manner of works upon the Lord's day, even in times of persecution, when they were the strictest observers of all the divine commandments" (Ductor Dubitantium, Book II., chap. ii).

BISHOP WHITE.

"In St. Jerome's days, and in the very place where he was residing, the devoutest Christians did ordinarily work upon the Lord's day, when the service of the church was ended" (Dialogues on the Lord's Day, p. 236).

BISHOP WARBURTON.

"The observance of the Sabbath is no more a natural duty than circumcision" (Divine Legation, Book IV., sec. 6).

WILLIAM PENN.

"To call any day of the week a Christian Sabbath is not Christian, but Jewish" (Penn's Works).

CANON BARRY.

"The notion of a formal substitution, by apostolic authority, of the Lord's day for the Jewish Sabbath... has no basis whatever in holy scripture or in Christian antiquity" (Lecture on Sabbath).

REV. JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

"Scholars are now generally agreed that the Sabbath obligation was not transferred by Christ or his apostles to the first day; that there is not in the Christian scriptures [New Testament] a single command to keep the Sabbath in any form or on any day" (North American Review).

ANDREWS.

"The festival of Sunday is more ancient than the Christian religion, its origin being lost in remote antiquity. It did not originate, however, from any divine command nor from piety toward God; on the contrary, it was set apart as a sacred day by the heathen world in honor of their chief god, the sun" (History of the Sabbath, p. 258).

VERSTEGAN.

"Unto the day dedicated unto the especial adoration of the idol of the sun, they [the pagans] gave the name of Sunday, as much as to say the sun's day or the day of the sun. This idol was placed in a temple, and there adored and sacrificed unto" (Antiquities, p. 68).

MORER.

"Sunday being the day on which the gentiles solemnly adored that planet, and called it Sunday,... the Christians thought fit to keep the same day and the same name of it, that they might not appear causelessly peevish, and by that means hinder the conversion of the gentiles" (Dialogues on the Lord's Day, p. 22).

DEAN MILMAN.

"The day of the sun would be willingly hallowed by almost all of the pagan world" (History of Christianity, Book III., chap. iv).

DOMVILLE.

"Centuries of the Christian era passed away before the Sunday was observed by the Christian church as a Sabbath. History does not furnish us with a single proof or indication that it was at any time so observed previous to the Sabbatical edict of Constantine in a.d. 321" (Six Texts, p. 241).

"Not any ecclesiastical writer of the first three centuries attributed the origin of Sunday observance either to Christ or to his apostles" (Six Texts, supplement).

KITTO.

"Though in later times we find considerable reference to a sort of consecration of the day [Sunday], it does not seem at any period of the ancient church to have assumed the form of such an observance as some modern religious communities have contended for. Nor do these writers in any instance pretend to allege any divine command, or even apostolic practice, in support of it" (Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature, Art. Lord's Day).

COX.

"There is no evidence, however, that either at this, or at a period much later, the observance was viewed as deriving any obligation from the Fourth Commandment; it seems to have been regarded as an institution corresponding in nature with Christmas, Good Friday, and other festivals of the church" (Sabbath Laws, p. 281).

NEANDER.

"The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals, was always only a human ordinance" (Church History, Rose's translation, p. 186).

DR. HENGSTENBERG.

"The opinion that the Sabbath was transferred to Sunday was first broached in its perfect form, and with all its consequences, in the controversy which was carried on in England between the Episcopalians and Presbyterians [about the close of the sixteenth century]. The Presbyterians were now in a position which compelled them either to give up the observance of the Sunday, or to maintain that a divine appointment from God separated it from the other festivals. The first they could not do.... They therefore decided upon the latter" (Lord's Day, p. 66).

DR. HEYLYN.

"The brethren had tried many ways to suppress them [church festivals] formerly, as having too much in them of the superstitions of the church of Rome, but they had found no way successful till they fell on this, which was to set on foot some new Sabbath doctrine, and, by advancing the authority of the Lord's-day Sabbath, to cry down the rest" (History of the Sabbath). "Though Jewish and Rabbinical this doctrine was, it carried a fair show of piety, at the least, in the opinion of the common people, and such as did not stand to examine the true grounds thereof, but took it upon the appearance; such as did judge, not by the workmanship of the stuff, but the gloss and color, in which it is not strange to see how suddenly men were induced, not only to give way unto it, but without more ado to abet the same, till in the end, and in very little time, it grew the most bewitching error and most popular infatuation that ever was infused into the people of England" (Ibid).

REV. J. N. WAGGONER.

"Read your Bible through a hundred times with reference to this subject, and you will each time become more and more convinced of the truthfulness of the following notable facts: 1. There is no divine command for Sunday observance. 2. There is not the least hint of a Sunday institution. 3. Christ never changed God's Sabbath to Sunday. 4. He never observed Sunday as the Sabbath. 5. The apostles never kept Sunday for the Sabbath. 6. There is no prophecy that Sunday would ever take the place of the Sabbath. 7. Neither God, Christ, angels, nor inspired men have ever said one word in favor of Sunday as a holy day" (The Truth Found).

CARDINAL GIBBONS.

"Read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday as a Sabbath" (Faith of Our Fathers).

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL.

"There is no precept or command in the New Testament to compel by civil law any man who is not a Christian to pay regard to the Lord's day. It is without authority of the Christian religion. I write this from principle. I have but one object in view—the suppression of an anti-rational, anti-constitutional, and anti-scriptural confederation, that I conscientiously believe to be dangerous to the community, and inimical to civil and religious liberty; and while I am able to wield pen, I will oppose every such encroachment on human right*" (Washington, Pa., Reporter, 1821).

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in Congress, June 22, 1874, said: "The divorce between the church and the state ought to be absolute. It ought to be so absolute that no church property, anywhere in any state, or in the nation, should be exempted from equal taxation; for if you exempt the property of any church organization, to that extent you impose a church tax upon the whole community."

The census of 1890 gave the United States church property worth \$679,426,489. The 1906 census showed \$1,257,575,867. The value had nearly doubled in 16 years. Although church property doubles in 16 years, church membership would not double in 70 years, for the 36,000,000 members in 1911 gained but a half million in 1912. Church progress, then, is not counted in converts, but in dollars accumulated through an exemption which in New York equals the cost of caring for all the city's poor.

PRESIDENT GRANT

in his annual message of 1875 said: "In a growing country, where real estate enhances so rapidly with time as in the United States, there is scarcely a limit to the wealth that may be acquired by corporations, religious or otherwise, if allowed to retain real estate without taxation. The contemplation of so vast a property as here alluded to, without taxation, may lead to sequestration without constitutional authority, and through blood. I would suggest the taxation of all property equally."

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