

How Did Sunday Become the First Day of the Week?

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Abbreviations

AE – L'Année Épigraphique

CIL – Corpus Inscriptorum Latinarum

CIMRM – Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum
Religionis Mithriacae

CJ – Codex Justinus

CT – Codex Theodosianus

E –Emile Esperandieu

D – Hermann Dessau

ICUR – Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae

IG— Inscriptiones Graecae

PL—Patrologia Latina

PG—Patrologia Graeca

Introduction

In the first century AD, there were two seven-day weekly cycles. The first one was established by God in the Tanakh or Old Testament. In this system, the first six days of this week were numbered first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth. The seventh day was named Sabbath or *Shabbat* by God. The second seven-day cycle was called the planetary week. Unlike the Bible, it named every day of the week based upon the Greek/Roman conception of the seven planets. In Latin, the order of this week was as follows: Saturn-day, Sun-day, Luna-day, Mars-day, Mercury-day, Jupiter-day, and Venus-day.

The earliest Christian writings mostly continued the weekly pattern established by the Tanakh. Only the Sabbath was named. All the early Christians continued to observe the Sabbath. This began to change in the late second century; Christian writings begin to use the planetary names for the days of the week. A concurrent development was Sun-day gatherings among some Christians. They called it the first day of the week, even though the name Sun-day was understood in Roman culture to be the second day of the week

The first Roman law which mentions Sunday as the first day of the week was enacted in 425 AD. During the previous nearly one-hundred years, there were twelve imperial laws that mentioned the Day of the Sun. None of them call it the first day of the week.

How did the first day of the week, which was unnamed in the Bible, come to be called Sunday in the Christian community? This leads to another question—how did one reckoning of the seven-day week become more popular than the other? In this work, we will examine the Bible, archeology, and history to learn how Sun-day became commonly accepted as the first day of the week.

Our exploration of this subject matter will produce understanding for other topics of importance in early church history.

Chapter 1

The Biblical Week

In the very beginning of the Bible, we learn about creation and the establishment of the seven-day week. During the first six days, God worked to fashion creation. On the seventh day He rested; the day was blessed and set apart from the other six days.

Genesis 2:1-3 reads: “1 And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.”

Knowledge of the seven-day weekly cycle continued after that time. It was understood in the days of Noah as explained in Genesis chapter 8.

“10 And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; 11 and the dove came in to him at eventide; and, lo, in her mouth an olive-leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. 12 And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she returned not again unto him any more” (Gen 8:10-12).

Many years later a man named Abraham gave birth to Isaac who then beget Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons and they eventually moved down to Egypt. After dwelling there for centuries, they must have lost the knowledge of the seventh-day Sabbath. Historical records show that the Egyptians had a ten-day weekly cycle (Fagan, p 476). One of God’s first acts when they left Egypt was to re-establish the original seven-day cycle from creation.

In Exodus chapter 16, we learn about a narrative familiar to many Jewish people and Christians – the story of the manna. What many do not realize is that the main goal of the manna was to teach the Israelites which day of the week was the Sabbath. He restored to them the knowledge of His original seven-day cycle.

“4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. 5 And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.... 22 And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath spoken, Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and all that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning... 26 Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none...” (Ex. 16:4-5, 22-23, 26).

Notice in this passage that God never ascribed a name to any day of the week except the Sabbath. This is one practice that helped the children of Israel maintain the understanding of the original seven-day week throughout the centuries. The first six days of the week are as follows: first day, second day, third day, fourth day, fifth day, and sixth day. The seventh day of the week is named Sabbath or in Hebrew *shabbat*.

The Sabbath was one of the chief ways time was reckoned in the Bible. This day is mentioned in dozens of verses in the Old Testament. It is the weekly regular of time (Ex. 20:8-11, 23:12, 2 Kings 11:5-9) and has special blessings for all people (Is. 56:1-7, 66:22-23).

Outside of the creation week (in which all seven days are mentioned), other days of the week only receive a sparse mention in the Old Testament. The first day of the week is inferred in the giving of the manna (Ex. 16:11-21). It is also alluded to in three other verses (Lev. 23:11, 15-16). It is simply called “the day after the Sabbath.” The sixth day is mentioned in the story of the giving of the manna (Ex. 16:5, 22, 29). There may be some other days of the week inferred from the context of various Scriptures. However, the other days of the week are many times directly referenced in relationship to the Sabbath (the weekly regulator). They remind us of the count towards the Sabbath. They are unnamed.

How else was time reckoned in this sacred book? Two other ways in which time was reckoned was as follows: how many days from an event and the day of a month that an event occurs.

Here are some examples of time as reckoned by the number of days from some event. The day of the week on which these events occurred is not mentioned. We have some examples below:

Genesis 24:55 – “Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten...”

Genesis 34:25 – “And it came to pass on the third day...”

Ex. 10:22 – “And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.”

Ex. 15:22 – “...And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

Ex. 24:18 – “And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights...”

Num. 10:33 – “And they set forward from the mount of the LORD three days’ journey; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days’ journey, to seek out a resting-place for them.

Joshua 9:16 – “And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them...”

Judges 19:4 – “...and he abode with him three days...”

2 Sam. 24:8 – “So when they had gone to and fro through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days....”

One can see that outside of Sabbath, the days of the week on which events occurred were not considered that important. Another reckoning of time is the day of the month on which an event occurs. We have some examples below:

Gen. 7:11 – “...in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day...”

Gen. 8:4 – “...And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat....”

Exodus 40:2 – “On the first day of the first month shalt thou rear

up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting”

Deut. 1:3 – “And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them”

I Sam. 20:27 – “it came to pass on the morrow after the new moon, which was the second day...”

Ezra 8:31 – “Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month...”

Esther 3:13 – “even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month...”

Jeremiah 52:6 – “In the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month...”

Ezekiel 8:1 – “And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month...”

Haggai 1:15 – “in the four and twentieth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king”

This method of reckoning time was especially important for the annual appointed times, which were to be held on specific days of specific months throughout the year (see Leviticus chapter 23). As these days were also referred to by their respective names, such as Passover, Unleavened Bread, and so forth (see Deut. 16:1-17).

In the New Testament, these patterns were continued. The number of days that certain events occur over or from continued were discussed. Days of the month are not mentioned, but the annual feast days are mentioned throughout the New Testament. This means the day and month in which they occurred are inferred. Once again, the day of the week was not named.*

Mark 1:12-13 – Jesus is recorded as being in the wilderness forty

*By the first century AD, the Jewish people began to call the sixth day preparation day because on it they prepared for the Sabbath (and by inference the day before an Annual Sabbath). This is recorded in Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 16.6.2). We find several references to this in the New Testament (Matt. 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54, John 19:14, 31, 42). Preparation day only had significance as it related to the Sabbath or an Annual Sabbath.

days, yet the days of the week in which he started and finished were never mentioned.

Mark 8:2 – “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat”

Luke 2:46 – “And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple...”

John 11:17 – “So when Jesus came, he found that he had been in the tomb four days already...”

Acts 1:3 – “...appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

Acts 9:9 – “And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink”

Galatians 1:18 – “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days.”

Some references to the annual appointed times in the New Testament: Matthew 26:2, Luke 2:41, John 7:1-2, Acts 20:6, Acts 20:35, I Cor 5:6-8, I Cor. 16:8, Col. 2:16-17.

Outside of the Sabbath (which is mentioned dozens of times), the first day of the week is mentioned in some New Testament passages. However, it is not mentioned in the way that one might think. There are seven definite verses in the New Testament translated with the phrase “first day of the week” (I did not include Mark 16:9 because its authenticity is disputed). We will look at these verses below. I will place the Greek words translated as ‘first day of the week’ beside each reference.

Matthew 28:1 – “Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week (*mian sabbaton*)...”

Mark 16:1a, 2a – “And when the sabbath was past... And very early on the first day of the week (*te mia ton sabbaton*)...”

Luke 23:56b, Luke 24:1 – “And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. And on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.... But on the first day of the week (*mia ton sabbaton*)...”

John 20:1 – “Now on the first day of the week (*mia ton sabbaton*) cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark...”

John 20:19 – “When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week (*te mia sabbaton*)...”

Acts 20:7 – “And upon the first day of the week (*mia ton sabbaton*)...”

I Cor. 16:2 – “Upon the first day of the week (*mian sabbaton*)...”

(Note: all Greek references taken from The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament by Brown and Comfort)

In each of these verses, the Greek word for day, *hamera* or *hamerou*, is absent from the text. Instead, the ordinal word *mia* or *mian* is used, meaning one. Also the plural form of Sabbath is used: *sabbaton*. It can refer to the Sabbath or the week. In this context, *mia sabbaton* or ‘one of the week’ refers to the first day of the week. Notice that it is never called Sunday.

These details confirm that the first day of the week mostly has significance because of its nearness to the Sabbath (the weekly regulator). As mentioned earlier, days of the week are reckoned only from the Sabbath. In three of the seven references above, the Sabbath was clearly mentioned in context.

Other days of the week are reckoned from context, but they would be measured from the Sabbath. For instance, Luke 18:12 (speaking about the Pharisees) records: “I fast twice in the week...” (Greek: *dis tou sabbatou*). The Jewish people fasted two days during the seven-day cycle – day two and four (Monday and Thursday by our reckoning). So literally, it can read “two in the week” or “two in the Sabbath.” These two days of the week are mentioned in reference to the Sabbath. Other days might be inferred in the New Testament; this is just one example.

Contrary to popular opinion, there is no evidence supporting a first day of the week “Sabbath” from the verses presented above. There were no weekly gatherings on it. In Acts 20:7, the meeting only happened once because Paul intended to leave the next day. We do not see this occur before or after this event. In I Cor. 16, the Apostle Paul did not tell the people to gather on the first day of the week but to individually collect their offerings at their own

households (“let each one of you lay by him in store...”).

If the first day of every week held some indisputable significance for the early disciples, then we would find consistent, undeniable evidence of that in the book of Acts. It does not exist. The New Testament believers in Jesus inherited values from the Jewish people, which included the Biblical seven-day week and a reverence for the Sabbath. This continued in the book of Acts. Throughout the Bible, the Sabbath is mentioned in approximately 140 verses.

After reviewing the evidence from the Bible, several questions remain to be answered. How did the days of the week come to have names? Specifically, how did the first day of the week receive the name Sun-day? (especially since it is not called such in the New Testament). The answers to these questions may help us understand how this day became so important among certain sub groups of Christianity starting in the second century.

Chapter 2

The Planetary Week

Many ancient cultures kept records of time in a manner similar to the Israelite people. They kept track of events as they related to days of the months in which they occurred. This was also true for their feast days. For a great example of this in the ancient Roman culture, see Ovid's work *Fasti*.

Outside of the Bible, other concepts of a week (as a periodic sub-unit of time less than a month) developed in the ancient world. I have found at least four of these in the ancient world.

As mentioned in the last chapter, the Egyptians had ten-day weeks. Another ancient culture with a concept of the week was the Babylonians. They kept a sort of lunar week with periodic sabbaths every seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty first, and twenty eighth days of the month (Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments*, p 74). The ancient record indicates that names for days might have been important to these two cultures.

The Ancient Babylonian records reveal that they dedicated each day of the month to a specific deity (Sayce, *Records of the Past*, pp 157-170). However, it does not appear that these dedications had a connection to the lunar week. Concerning the Egyptians, Herodotus wrote that they named their days after specific deities. It is not clear if these names were connected to days of the month or week. They tried to predict a person's life based upon the deity which was revered on their birthday.

“Of the Egyptians it is farther memorable that they first imagined what month or day was to be consecrated to each deity; they also, from observing the days of the nativity (birth), venture to predict the particular circumstances of a man's life and death: this is done by the poets of Greece; but the Egyptians have certainly discovered more things that are wonderful than all the rest of mankind....” (*The Histories*, 2.82).

The ancient Romans kept an eight-day week called the *nundinae*,

which means ninth. The Romans included the previous *nundinae* as part of the count; this means by our reckoning it fell every eighth day. They likely inherited this practice from the Etruscans. It may have been the original basis for their year. Unlike the Egyptians and Babylonians, the *nundinae* week was a periodic unit of time that existed independently from their original lunar months.

At some point in the centuries before Christ, a fourth concept of the week emerged. It was a seven-day week not tied to the lunar month. Every day of this week was named after a heavenly body, which were also deities in ancient cultures. Moreover, it had a different order than the Biblical week. This calendar could have been impacted by the Egyptian and Babylonian practice of naming days in a month.

This fourth ancient week had the greatest impact upon Christianity. We will learn more about this weekly cycle through the rest of this chapter and its impact upon the Biblical week.

Some ancient cultures considered there to be seven *planetes*, which means wanderers in Greek. This is much different than our modern conception of a planet. Below, I have three quotes from Roman authors to give us understanding as to the seven *planetes*.

“She is also called Diana Omnivaga (wide-wandering), not *avenando*, from hunting, but because she is reckoned one of the seven stars that seem to wander...” (Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 2.27).

“Between this body and the heavens there are suspended, in this aerial spirit, seven stars, separated by determinate spaces, which, on account of their motion, we call wandering, although, in reality, none are less so” (Pliny, *Natural History*, 2.4).

“In it are fixed those stars which revolve with never varying courses. Below this are seven other spheres, which revolve in a contrary direction to that of the heavens. One of these is occupied by the globe which on earth they call Saturn. Next to that is the star of Jupiter, so benign and salutary to mankind. The third in order, is that fiery and terrible planet called Mars. Below this again, almost in the middle region is the Sun, - the leader, gover-

nor, and prince of the other luminaries; the soul of the world, which it regulates and illumines, being of such vast size that it pervades and gives light to all places. Then follow Venus and Mercury, which attend, as it were, on the Sun. Lastly, the Moon, which shines only in the reflected beams of the Sun, moves in the lowest sphere of all..." (Cicero, *The Republic*, 6.17).

Cicero listed the seven planets in the following order: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. In ancient times, the heavenly bodies were worshipped. So the names ascribed to each of the seven days of this week were also attached to the pantheon of ancient gods.

The ancient Greek author Plutarch wrote about this subject. A title in one of his works read, "Why are the days named after the planets reckoned in a different order from the actual order?" However, the original work has been lost and only the title remains (Colson, 31-32). This excerpt helps us understand that the order of the seven planets given by Cicero and others was not the common order given to them for the purposes of the week.

Despite some evidence being lost, we have enough historical writings and archeology to confirm that the planetary week existed and its most common order. We will start with the Roman writers who confirm which day of the planetary week in which the Jewish people rested. This will help us connect the Biblical week to the planetary week (emphasis mine throughout).

Frontinus (lived 30-103 AD)

"The deified Vespasian Augustus attacked the Jews on their Sabbath (**Latin: Iudaeos Saturni die**), a day on which it is sinful for them to do any business, and so defeated them" (*Stratagems*, 2.1.17).

Tacitus (wrote about 117 AD)

"To ensure his future hold over the people, Moses introduced a new cult, which was the opposite of all other religions. All that we hold sacred they held profane, and allowed practices which we abominate...They are said to have devoted the seventh day to rest, because that day brought an end to their troubles. Later, finding idleness alluring, they gave up the seventh year as well to sloth. **Others maintain that they do this in honour of Saturn;**

either because their religious principles are derived from the Idaeï, who are supposed to have been driven out with Saturn and become the ancestors of the Jewish people; or else because, of the seven constellations which govern the lives of men, **the star of Saturn moves in the topmost orbit and exercises peculiar influence, and also because most of the heavenly bodies move round their courses in multiples of seven...**” (*The Histories*, 5:4-5).

Cassius Dio (Lived 155-235 AD)

(describing Pompey’s conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BC) “16 Most of the city, to be sure, he took without any trouble, as he was received by the party of Hyrcanus; but the temple itself, which the other party had occupied, he captured only with difficulty. 2 For it was on high ground and was fortified by a wall of its own, and if they had continued defending it on all days alike, he could not have got possession of it. As it was, they made an exception of what are called **the days of Saturn (Greek: tou Kronou de onomas), and by doing no work at all on those days** afforded the Romans an opportunity in this interval to batter down the wall. 3 The latter, on learning of this superstitious awe of theirs, made no serious attempts the rest of the time, but on those days, when they came round in succession, assaulted most vigorously. 4 Thus **the defenders were captured on the day of Saturn (Greek: tou Kronou hamera),** without making any defence, and all the wealth was plundered... 3 They build to him a temple that was extremely large and beautiful, except in so far as it was open and roofless, and **likewise dedicated to him the day called the day of Saturn (Greek: hameran ten tou Kronou),** on which, among many other most peculiar observances, they undertake no serious occupation” (*Roman History*, 37.16.1-4, 17.3).

(describing the Roman conquest of Jerusalem under Herod in 37 BC) “The Jews, indeed, had done much injury to the Romans, for the race is very bitter when aroused to anger, but they suffered far more themselves. The first of them to be captures were those who were fighting for the precinct of their god, and then the rest on the day even then called **the day of Saturn (Greek: tou Kronou kai tote hamera...)**. 5 And so excessive were they in their devotion to religion that the first set of prisoners, those who has been captured along with the temple, obtained leave from Sosius, **when the day of Saturn (Greek: hamera authis he tou Kronou)**

came round again, and went up into the temple and there performed all the customary rites, together with the rest of the people..." (ibid, 49.22.4-5).

(concerning Vespasian's conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD) "Yet even under these conditions many captives were taken, among them Bargiora, their leader; and he was the only one to be executed in connexion with the triumphal celebration. 2 Thus was Jerusalem destroyed **on the very day of Saturn (Greek: tou Kronou hamera), the day which even now the Jews reverence most...**" (ibid, 65.7.1-2).

In these passages, we find references which identify which day of the planetary week that the Jewish people called the Sabbath. Frontinus, writing in Latin, used the phrase *Iudaeos Saturni die*, which means the "Jew's day of Saturn." Tacitus also made the same reference. Cassius Dio made multiple references to *tou Kronou hamera*, or the day of Kronos in Greek. Saturn and Kronos are the same deity; one is Roman the other is Greek. This is our initial evidence that the planetary week existed in the first few centuries AD. The Romans apparently kept track of the specific day of the planetary week in which certain events occurred (regardless of the day of the month).

Several authors in the Roman world also identify the Jewish Sabbath as the seventh day of the week (see McDonald, *Prevalence of the Sabbath in the Early Roman Empire*, pp 14-21). However, this does not mean that they regarded it as **their** seventh day; rather it was the seventh day for the Jewish people. Tacitus, while identifying the Sabbath as the seventh day of the week, also goes on to identify Saturn as the first and topmost planet in the orbit of the heavenly bodies. He also said that the planets rotated in sevens from that point.

At some point in the time before the first century AD, the custom of naming the days of the week after these planets became more common. In his work *Roman History*, Dio Cassius attempted to explain the origin of this practice (emphasis mine throughout).

"18 1 The custom, however, of referring the days to the seven stars called planets was instituted by the Egyptians, but is now found among all mankind, though its adoption has been

comparatively recent; at any rate the ancient Greeks never understood it, so far as I am aware. 2 But since it is now quite the fashion with mankind generally and even with the Romans themselves, I wish to write briefly of it, telling how and in what way it has been so arranged. I have heard two explanations, which are not difficult of comprehension, it is true, though they involve certain theories. 3 For if you apply the so-called "principle of the tetrachord" (which is believed to constitute the basis of music) to these stars, by which the whole universe of heaven is divided into regular intervals, in the order in which each of them revolves, and **beginning at the outer orbit assigned to Saturn (Krono)**, 4 then omitting the next two name the lord of the fourth, and after this passing over two others reach the seventh, **and you then go back and repeat the process with the orbits and their presiding divinities in this same manner, assigning them to the several days**, you will find all the days to be in a kind of musical connection with the arrangement of the heavens.

19 1 This is one of the explanations given; the other is as follows. **If you begin at the first hour to count the hours of the day and of the night, assigning the first to Saturn (Krono), the next to Jupiter (Dii), the third to Mars (Arie), the fourth to the Sun (helio), the fifth to Venus (Aphrodite), the sixth to Mercury (Hermes), and the seventh to the Moon (selene)**, 2 according to the order of the cycles which the Egyptians observe, and if you repeat the process, you will find that the **first hour of the following day (hermas) comes to the Sun (heliou)**. 3 **And if you carry on the operation throughout the next twenty-four hours in the same manner as with the others, you will dedicate the first hour of the third day to the Moon (selene), and if you proceed similarly through the rest, each day will receive its appropriate god. This, then, is the tradition"** (*Roman History*, 37:18:1-4, 19:1-3).

He seemed to think that the custom was relatively recent and derived from Egypt. Herodotus discussed a similar practice, though he could have referenced the naming of days of the month after certain deities. As we will soon review, naming days of a seven-day week after the seven planets does not appear very much before the first century BC. That does not mean it did not exist or was not practiced before that time, but it was probably not popu-

lar.

Dio then continued to say that the custom of naming days of the week originated with the custom of dedicating each hour to a specific planet. There are 168 hours in a seven-day week or 24 hours for each day. The counting of hours started with Saturn. Since the first hour was dedicated to him, the first day was also dedicated to Saturn. The succession of hours then followed as: Saturn (Kronos), Jupiter (Zeus), Mars (Aries), Sun (Helios), Venus (Aphrodite), Mercury (Hermes), and Moon (Selene). This is the same order of the seven planets given earlier by Cicero.

The 25th hour would be dedicated to the Sun. Since the first hour of the second day was dedicated to the sun, then the entire second day was deemed under the Sun's influence. This pattern continued so that the days of the week continue as follows: Saturn Day, Sun Day, Luna Day, Mars Day, Mercury Day, Jupiter Day, and Venus Day. In Greek, these names would be Kronos, Helios, Selenes or Diana, Ares, Hermes, Zeus (also called Dios or Dii), and Aphrodite.

Using our vernacular, the planetary week started with Saturday and ended with Friday. This explains why Frontinus wrote that Jerusalem was besieged on the 'Jew's Day of Saturn.' He had to differentiate the common Roman practice from the Jewish one. The day of Saturn was the first day of the week in the Roman world; it was the seventh day for Jewish people. There was also a different religious focus for each group on that day.

There were at least two calendars from ancient times to confirm that the seven-day week was established before and during the first century BC.

Fasti Sabini is an ancient calendar that dates to the late first century BC. It is only partially complete. However, it shows events from the months of September and October from that year. It also has the days of the week for the eight-day Roman week (called *nundinae*) and the seven-day week. Each day of each month is marked letters A through H for the eight-day week and A through G for the planetary week. The names for the days of the week are not listed (CIL 9: 4769). The early imperial *Fasti Nolani* also depicts the *nundinae* and planetary weeks in the same manner (AE

1959: 253).

Another ancient writer, Lucius Ampelius, writing in a similar time as Tacitus listed the seven ‘planets’ in a particular order. He started with Saturn. He then proceeded with the Sun (Sol), Moon (Luna), and continues until he finishes with Venus. This is the order of the planetary week. Below, we have an excerpt from his work in Latin:

“Stellae potentissimae in caelo sunt septem: **Saturnus, Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercurius, Iuppiter, Venus**, quae a Graecis planetae, a nobis erraticae dicuntur, quia ad arbitrium suum vagantur et motu suo hominum fata moderantur: item adverso cursus contra caelum feruntur” (Woelfflin, p 4 – emphasis mine).

Other inscriptions from the ancient world confirm the prevalence of the seven-day week.

Approximately mid-first century AD

In Pompeii, a cosmopolitan Roman city, an inscription was found on a wall which listed the deities over each day in the planetary week. It was written in Greek and the title reads: “Days of the Gods.” It lists them in the same order as other sources we have reviewed (original found in CIL 4: 5202).

THEON HAMERAS

Kronou

Heliou

Selenes

Areos

Hermou

Dios

Aphrodeites

Two more inscriptions were found near Pompeii. They were written Latin and showed a list of the gods in the order of the days of the planetary week, as mentioned below (CIL 4: 6779).

SATVRNI

SOLIS

LVNAII

MARTIS

IOVIS
VENERIS

(One name missing: Mercury. The name is supplied by other findings).

Another inscription lists the days of the planetary week in shorthand (*Notizie degli Scavi*, p 98 and CIL 4: 8863).

DIES
SAT
SOL
LVN
MAR
MERC
IOV
VEN

In the third or fourth century a passage from a writing attributed to Dositheus also confirms the evidence presented thus far. The title of the work is *Ars Grammatica*. It was a Latin grammar guide for Greeks and compared the two languages. The passage is sometimes attributed to the year 207 AD; while that may be disputed, it is likely not later than the fourth century. In the section relating to this subject, the author listed the twelve main gods in the pantheon in order (Goetz, p 58, lines 10-22). Next, the days of the week are listed in both Greek and Latin (*ibid*, lines 24-30). Translated in English, the title reads “Seven Zodiac Days” or “Seven Zone Days”

Heptazodion Hemerai – Septe Zodiidies
Kronou – Saturni
Heluou – Solis
Celenes – Lune
Areos – Martis
Hermou – Mercuris
Dios – Iovis
Aphradites – Veneris

In the late third or early fourth century, the planetary deities were still depicted in the usual order on common items such as bracelets and vases (Duruy, pp 488-489). Sometimes the goddess for-

tune was added before the seven *planetes*.

There are also a number of pillars in France that were documented in the early twentieth century. They date to about the third century or a little later. Some are called Jupiter Pillars or Jupiter Columns. They are large pillars of stone that proclaim the supremacy of Jupiter (or Zeus) over all other deities. However, they often depicted either the faces or full likeness of the seven planetary deities. Other similar monuments were found in the order of the planetary week.

In the early 20th century, Emile Esperandieu found many of the ancient monuments that relate to this subject. I was able to find at least 13 of these ‘Jupiter Columns’ or similar monuments. Of them, 9 depicted the deities in the order described by the sources above (Saturn through Venus). Two of them depict the seven planetary deities starting with Sol and ending with Saturn. One of them listed only six of the planetary deities starting with Sol and ending with Venus; Saturn was missing. The last one listed the deities in a different order altogether. To read more about these findings, please see **Appendix A – Esperandieu’s Findings**.

To see ancient inscriptions from both pagan and Christian sources which identified the days of the week according to the planetary deities, please see **Appendix B: Inscriptions Referring to the Planetary Week**.

The planetary week continued in this fashion for many years. In 354, the Calendar of Philocali was written. It recorded the reckoning of time in Roman culture. It kept track of the *nundinae* week as well as the planetary week using the same methods as the *Fasti Sabini* and *Fasti Nolani* (Letters A-H and A-G). These can be viewed in CIL 1: XXI, XXII; Mommsen and Migne also have good renderings that are referenced in the Bibliography.

In it, there are also pictures of the deities attributed to each day of the week. Some of the original pages have been misplaced or moved, but the first one listed is Saturn. This indicates that the traditional planetary order was still maintained by a significant number of Romans (Salzman, pp 30-31).

It is clear that the planetary week certainly existed in the first few

centuries AD. To those who observed and revered the seven-day planetary week, the most common order of deities was as follows: Saturn, Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus. The Day of Venus was the seventh day of the week.

Christian Writings and the Planetary Week

As discussed in the last chapter, the New Testament did not mention names for the days of the week outside of preparation day and Sabbath. What about the post-Apostolic writers? Did they utilize these names?

The immediate post-Apostolic writers, such as Ignatius and Polycarp, do not mention the days of the week outside of Sabbath (in their authentic works). The first indisputable reference to the days of the week comes from the Epistle of Barnabas, which likely dates to about 130 AD. In it, he presented the theology of Christ rising on the ‘eighth’ day.

“You perceive how He speaks: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to Me, but that is which I have made, [namely this,] when, giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world. Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead. And when He had manifested Himself, He ascended into the heavens” (idem, ch. 15).

As a whole, the Epistle of Barnabas has serious inconsistencies with the rest of the New Testament. It comes across as anti-Jewish and promotes an early form of replacement theology. When it comes to the days of the week, it also has strange deviations.

The author does not call the day that Jesus appeared to the disciples the first day of the week (as the New Testament does), but instead refers to it as the eighth day. He does not quote any verses to support this belief (as he does for other beliefs in the letter). The eighth day does not receive a name. The Sabbath is discussed in the text by name (albeit derisively). The New Testament text never makes an allusion to an eight-day week.

Nevertheless, the author does not tell us what ‘keeping’ the eighth day means and certainly does not clarify if this reference is alle-

gorical or literal. The rest of the work does employ serious allegory. A clearer reference to the days of the week that also utilizes the planetary names might be from Justin the Martyr about 150 AD. He wrote an Apology (which means defense) of Christianity to the Roman Emperor Antonius Pius. In it, he discussed the practice of some Roman Christians (emphasis might throughout).

“And on the day called Sunday (**Greek: heliou legomene hemera**), all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday (**Greek: heliou hemeran**) is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (**Greek: Kroniches**); and on the day after that of Saturn (**Greek: Kronichen**), which is the day of the Sun (**Greek: heliou hemera**), having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration” (idem, 67; PG 6: 429-432).

This passage appears to provide clear references to the days of the week by their planetary names. However, it has issues. Modern critical research of this section of *The Apology* has yielded the conclusion that it is likely a latter interpolation (See William H. Shea, “Justin Martyr’s Sunday Worship Statement: A Forged Appendix”). Indeed, the language and theology presented in this section of the Apology contradicts other teachings and eye-witness

testimony from him (see *Dialogue with Trypho* 33-34, 41 and *The Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs*).

In another writing, which is not disputed, Justin discussed the days of the week. However, he did not use the planetary names for them. He did not mention gatherings on the first day of the week.

“The command of circumcision, again, bidding [them] always circumcise the children on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision, by which we are circumcised from deceit and iniquity through Him who rose from the dead on the first day after the Sabbath, [namely through] our Lord Jesus Christ. For the first day after the Sabbath, remaining the first of all the days, is called, however, the eighth, according to the number of all the days of the cycle, and [yet] remains the first” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 41).

This work was composed to defend Christianity from a Jewish man named Trypho. In it, he did not mention Sunday, but rather the first day of the week. The Sabbath is appropriately named. However, he incorporated this idea of the ‘eighth day’ in the manner of the Epistle of Barnabas. This seems to suggest that this line of reasoning was being used as a theological construct among Christians.

Theophilus was the Bishop of Antioch in the 160s-180s and the sixth Bishop of the city since the time of the Apostles. He referenced the days of the week and the Sabbath in his work *To Autolytus*.

Most of chapter 11 is a quote from Genesis chapter 1, which describes creation week. In chapter 12, he began to explain the importance of each day of the week. He then followed with a chapter devoted to each day of the week. Concerning the Sabbath, he wrote:

“Moreover, [they spoke] concerning the seventh day, which all men acknowledge; but the most know not that what among the Hebrews is called the “Sabbath,” is translated into Greek the “Seventh” (ebdomas), a name which is adopted by every nation, although they know not the reason of the appellation” (*To Autolytus*, 2.12).

As he discussed each day of the week, he made spiritual parallels between the natural events of creation on that day and their corresponding spiritual meaning. About the fourth day, he said:

“Wherefore also on the fourth day the lights were made. The disposition of the stars, too, contains a type of the arrangement and order of the righteous and pious, and of those who keep the law and commandments of God. For the brilliant and bright stars are an imitation of the prophets, and therefore they remain fixed, not declining, nor passing from place to place. And those which hold the second place in brightness, are types of the people of the righteous. And those, again,, which change their position, and flee from place to place, which also are cared planets, they too are a type of the men who have wandered from God, abandoning His law and commandments” (*To Autolyucus*, 2.15).

His writings contain no references to the names for the days in the planetary week. He used the Biblical names of first day, second day, third day, and so forth. He spoke very positively about the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments (see above and *To Autolyucus*, 3.9). Theophilus was not ignorant of paganism, for he gives discourse about such things in all three books of the same work. He was likely not ignorant of the planetary week; it appears more that he chose to stay with the Biblical reckoning of the week.

Clement of Alexandria, who lived in the late second century, mentioned the planetary week in his writings.

“He knows also the enigmas of the fasting of those days — I mean **the Fourth and the Preparation**. For the one has its name **from Hermes, and the other from Aphrodite**. He fasts in his life, in respect of covetousness and voluptuousness, from which all the vices grow. For we have already often shown above the three kinds of fornication according to the apostle: love of pleasure, love of money and idolatry...He fasts, then, according to the law, from bad deeds, and according to the perfection of the gospel, from evil thoughts. He undergoes temptations, not for his purification, but as we have said, for the good of his neighbors...” (*Stromata*, 7.12 [emphasis mine throughout]).

He started this passage with a reference to the days of the week

that are used in the New Testament – fourth day and the preparation (for Sabbath). Some Christians were known to fast on these days at that time. He then acknowledged that these days of the week were commonly named after Hermes and Aphrodite (or in Latin Mercury and Venus, respectively). This means Clement desired to maintain the Biblical order of the week, but did not shy away from referring to their planetary names. He also incorporated some language familiar to those who would know about these deities. He encouraged fasting from greed and love of money as well as fornication. Hermes was the god of commerce and Aphrodite was the goddess of beauty and love.

In two other passages from the same work, Clement directly discussed the seven planets.

“And the Lord’s day Plato prophetically speaks of in the tenth book of the Republic, in these words: And when seven days have passed to each of them in the meadow, on the eighth they are to set out and arrive in four days. By the meadow is to be understood the fixed sphere, as being a mild and genial spot, and the locality of the pious; **and by the seven days each motion of the seven planets**, and the whole practical art which speeds to the end of rest. But after the wandering orbs the journey leads to heaven, that is, to the eighth motion and day. And he says that souls are gone on the fourth day, pointing out the passage through the four elements.” (ibid, 5.14)

“Now the high priest’s robe is the symbol of the world of sense. **The seven planets are represented by the five stones and the two carbuncles, for Saturn and the Moon.** The former is southern, and moist, and earthy, and heavy; the latter aerial, whence she is called by some Artemis, as if *Ærotomos* (cutting the air); and the air is cloudy. And cooperating as they did in the production of things here below, those that **by Divine Providence are set over the planets are rightly represented as placed on the breast and shoulders; and by them was the work of creation, the first week.** And the breast is the seat of the heart and soul” (ibid, 5.6 [emphasis is mine]).

In the first passage, we find what is among the first references to the Lord’s Day in Christian literature (and possibly the first). He referenced the eighth day in a manner similar to Justin and Barna-

bas before him; this shows a continuity of teaching about that subject. However, he also referenced the seven-day week and the seven-planets associated with them.

In the second passage, he tried to Christianize the seven *planetes*. He allegorized the high priests' garment from the Old Testament as a foreshadowing of the seven planets. He then tried to claim that the planetary names of the days of the week go back to the first week of Creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Besides being archeologically and historically inaccurate, this statement is also far from Biblical.

Clement clearly had knowledgeable of the planetary week (being in Alexandria, this would be expected). He tried to merge the Biblical and Planetary weeks, though the orders were different. He may have been the writer to start this trend, which would popularly continue for the next two centuries or so.

Tertullian, who lived in the late second and early third century, mentioned the Sabbath and the first day of the week using the planetary names for the days of the week in two separate works (emphasis mine).

“Others, with greater regard to good manners, it must be confessed, suppose that the sun is the god of the Christians, because it is a well-known fact that we pray towards the east, or because we make Sunday a day (Latin: *precationem vel die solis, laetitiam curare*) of festivity. What then? Do you do less than this? Do not many among you, with an affectation of sometimes worshipping the heavenly bodies likewise, move your lips in the direction of the sunrise? It is you, at all events, who have even admitted the sun into the calendar of the week; and you have selected its day, in preference to the preceding day as the most suitable in the week for either an entire abstinence from the bath, or for its postponement until the evening, or for taking rest and for banqueting. By resorting to these customs, you deliberately deviate from your own religious rites to those of strangers. For the Jewish feasts on the Sabbath (**sabbata**) and the Purification, and Jewish also are the ceremonies of the lamps, and the fasts of unleavened bread, and the littoral prayers, all which institutions and practices are of course foreign from your gods. Wherefore, that I may return from this digression, you who reproach us with the sun and Sunday

(**solem et deum**) should consider your proximity to us. We are not far off from your Saturn (**Saturno**) and your Sabbath (**sabbatis**)” (*Against the Nations*, 1.13; Latin from PL, 1:579).

“Others, again, certainly with more information and greater verisimilitude, believe that the sun (Latin: **solem**) is our god. We shall be counted Persians perhaps, though we do not worship the orb of day painted on a piece of linen cloth, having himself everywhere in his own disk. The idea no doubt has originated from our being known to turn to the east in prayer. But you, many of you, also under pretence sometimes of worshipping the heavenly bodies, move your lips in the direction of the sunrise. In the same way, if we devote Sun-day (**diem solis**) to rejoicing (**laetitiae indulgemus**), from a far different reason than Sun-worship (**religione solis**), we have some resemblance to those of you who devote the day of Saturn (**diem Saturni**) to ease and luxury, though they too go far away from Jewish ways, of which indeed they are ignorant” (*Apology*, 1.16; Latin from PL, 1:368-372).

In these quotes, we find some unique statements that contribute to this topic. First of all, Tertullian referenced Saturn in reference to the Sabbath (in a manner similar to Roman writers previously reviewed in this chapter); he also referenced Sun-day. Secondly, Tertullian is the first Christian writer to defend Christianity from accusations of sun worship. This accusation came about through two practices: praying towards the sun and Sunday gatherings. He also acknowledged that Sunday (or *die solis*) was celebrated by those who worship the sun. Third, he explained that they added this day to the week (because the original seven-day week of the Bible wasn't named after the planets). As mentioned before, the Bible does not prescribe any form of rest or recurring religious activity on the first day of the week and definitely does not call the first day of the week Sunday.

During the time that the Epistle of Barnabas was written, references to the days of the week by their planetary names does not seem vogue within the Christian community. Justin may have done so, but likely not. His genuine writings continue the language used in the Epistle of Barnabas.

Theophilus, who is also considered an important second-century

figure, did not use the planetary names (though he discussed paganism). Clement used the planetary names for the days of the week and even described some of the superstitions attached with them. Tertullian continued to use these names as well.

At the very least, it seems that Christians in certain areas used the planetary names for the days of the week in the late second century. For those groups that began to utilize the planetary names for the days of the week, we are left wondering why they would engage in such language. Clement's work *Stromata* may provide some clues.

Clement tried to Christianize the pagan names for the days of the week. However, he tried to Christianize many things that were non-Biblical and pagan (some of which we will review in the next chapter). Christians for at least the next two or three centuries in the West continued to use the planetary names for the days of the week on inscriptions such as gravestones (see Appendix B for some inscriptions on this subject, especially ICUR references). Did they do such things to better appeal to their mostly pagan audience? Were they simply inundated by culture around them? Were there other reasons? These questions would have to be fully answered in another work – but perhaps the next chapter will provide more insight.

In the next chapter we will review historical developments that contributed to Sunday becoming the first day of the week and the preferred day of convocation for some Christian groups. The use of planetary names of the week in Christianity became more popular as time passed. As we will see, the adaptation of these planetary week to the Biblical week did not come without problems for the Christian community.

Chapter 3

How Did Sunday Become the First Day of the Week? (Part 1)

How did the day of the sun, or *dies solis* in Latin and *hameras heliou* in Greek, become commonly known as the first day of the week in Roman culture?

The ancient Greek astrologer Vettius Valens gives us some insight into this subject. He wrote a work called *Anthology* about 150-175 AD. In it, he discussed how time was reckoned. Book 1, section 10 was a discussion about the days of the week as it relates to the Sabbath. The title of this section reads: “*peri heptazon hetoï sabbatiches hameras* (concerning the seven-zones and the Sabbath day...)” The first line says: “...*peri de tes hebomados and sabbatiches hameras*” (concerning the week and the sabbath day).

He wrote that the order of the days of the week for the stars and the Sabbath were as follows: Helios (Sun-day), Selene (Monday), Aries (Tuesday), Hermes (Wednesday), Zeus (Thursday), Aphrodite (Friday), Kronos (Saturday) (*Anthologies*, Book I, section 10, lines 15-18).

As discussed in a prior work, there was only one Sabbath day known in the Roman world: the Biblical seventh-day Sabbath (see *Prevalence of the Sabbath in the Early Roman Empire*). Knowledge of it was widespread in the Roman world. This helps us understand why Vettius placed Helios-day or Sun-day first in the list. While Saturday through Friday was the common usage in the ancient world for the planetary week, Sunday though Saturday was still recognized as the proper sequence to determine the Sabbath. Vettius acknowledged this seven-day week.

In the last chapter, we reviewed the primary sources that confirmed the planetary day of the week upon which the Sabbath occurred. Frontinus, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius confirmed this for us. When we combined their accounts with Vettius Valens, it helps us understand that the spread of Judaism carried with it the promulgation of an alternative arrangement for the planetary week

(even if the Jewish people never used the planetary names themselves, others took notice). As Frontinus said, the “Jew’s day of Saturn.”

The spread of Christianity would also contribute to this phenomenon. The vast majority of Christians kept the Sabbath into the fifth century. As discussed in the last chapter, some Christians began to use the astrological names for the days of the week no later than the last quarter of the second century (especially in commercial/cultural centers like Alexandria). As they used the planetary names for the days of the week with the Judeo-Christian order for the days, it spread the alternative order for the planetary week.

The expansion of Judaism and Christianity certainly helped spread a planetary week ordered from Sun-day through Saturn-day. Might there be any other factors that contributed to this development?

One must keep in mind that the days of the planetary week were named to honor or commemorate each of the seven *planetes*. These were not just heavenly bodies, but deities to ancient Greeks and Romans. The repetition of the names and deities provided an opportunity for them to influence daily behavior, such as activities that venerated a certain deity on a certain day of the week.

Early Roman writers only provide a small sample of such activities. For instance, Tibullus said that he abstained from travel on the day of Saturn; Horace mentioned fasting on Jupiter’s day (see Appendix B for references). Later in the Empire, this became much more developed. The fourth century writer Ausonius described how even daily habits, such as cutting hair or trimming nails, were affected by the deity over a particular day of the week (see the end of chapter 4 for more information). Several writers after him describe similar behaviors. Since this is the case, there must have been people who honored the sun on sun-day.

Christian sources attest to this as well. The two strongest references are Tertullian and Augustine. Tertullian referenced those who honored the sun on sun-day (see quotes at the end of last chapter). He had to defend Sun-day gatherings from the accusation of sun worship. In the fifth century, Augustine made the

same observation (*Contra Faustum*, 18.5).

“It is a silly and unmeaning expression, which occurred to you only because **you are in the habit of worshipping the sun on what you call Sunday**. What you call Sunday we call the Lord’s day, **and on it we do not worship the sun**, but the Lord’s resurrection...The Gentiles, of whom the apostle says that they “worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator” gave the names of their gods to the days of the week. And so far you do the same, except that you worship only the two brightest luminaries, and not the rest of the stars, as the Gentiles did. Besides, the Gentiles gave the names of their gods to the months...” (*Contra Faustum*, 18.5; emphasis mine).

Consider the similarities between Tertullian and Augustine in their arguments. Both of them acknowledged that sun worship was practiced by some on Sun-day. At the same time, they both had to defend their own practices against the accusations of sun worship. Though nearly two centuries apart, these writers attest to the practice’s longevity at a time when Christianity was also increasing. They also confirm that the practice did not die out just because Christianity expanded.

In another work, Augustine, wrote that there were many people who thought Christ was the literal sun! He declared them heretics (*Tractate on John*, 34:2). Among them were a man named Faustus, who thought the power of the Son of God was in the sun and moon (*Contra Faustum*, 6.20). Sun-day gatherings and other connections to the sun within Christianity caused confusion into at least into the fifth century.

Of the seven *planetes*, the sun gradually rose to the highest echelon of pagan worship during the first several centuries AD. Veneration for the sun proliferated across the Roman world at the same time that Judaism and Christianity were expanding across the same territory. It had enough influence on Christianity to cause confusion in the eyes of outsiders for multiple centuries (we will discuss the sun’s influence on Christianity later in this chapter and in the next chapter). Thus, veneration of the sun is another factor that must be explored.

The Romans expanded their military efforts eastward during the

first century BC (chiefly by Pompey and Antony). One immediate and long-term consequence of these expeditions was the western spread of Eastern religious practices. This resulted in sun veneration becoming more popular. An eastern religious system called Mithraism contributed greatly to this movement.

The religion has characteristics which are still debated, but key components are known. Mithras was the chief figure; he was typically depicted in full garb. He was portrayed as a brave soldier often slaying a bull. Reliefs with his image nearly always include homage to the sun, called Sol, and the moon as Luna. While Mithras and Sol were technically separate entities, the two were linked. In the third century, Sol became the prominent figure.

The Greek gods Helios and Apollo (both relating to worship of the Sun and its light, respectively) gradually became merged in the figure of Sol by the Romans. The evidence in the last chapter helped us make this connection to some degree, but more evidence is available. As a simple example, consider the following:

In Greece, Apollo was often depicted as riding a chariot with four horses pulling it. These horses are commonly called *quadriga* (Greek meaning four horses). As Mithraism spread in the Roman Empire, Sol became depicted in the same way. He was commonly called Sol Invictus, or the invincible sun.

In the last chapter, we reviewed some archeology and primary source findings to link Helios and Sol. Two quotes from the ancient world help us to identify Apollo and Helios with Sol and Mithraism (Diana or Luna was associated with the moon).

“Apollo, a Greek name, is called Sol, the sun; and Diana, Luna the moon; The sun is so named either because he is solus, alone, so eminent above the stars; or because he obscures all the stars and appears alone, as soon as he rises. Luna, the moon, is so called a lucendo, from shining; she bears the name also of Lucina” (Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 2.27).

“But the Persian customs are the same as those of these peoples and the Medes and several other peoples; and while several writers have made statements about all these peoples, I too must tell what is suitable to my purpose. Now the Persians do not erect

statues or altars, but offer sacrifice on a high place, regarding the heavens as Zeus; and they also worship Helios, whom they call Mithras...” (Strabo, *Geography*, 15.3.13).

Archeology of Mithraism

In 1956, M.J. Vermaseren released the *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religiōinis Mithriacae* (referenced as CIMRM). It is a compendium of all known inscriptions, monuments, altars, and other archeological finds connected to the Mithras religion. It was a revision (with new findings) from the monumental work by Belgian scholar Franz Cumont. It was issued in two volumes. I presently only have access to volume one.

The first volume documents the known inscriptions of Mithras from Asia, Middle East, Asia Minor, North Africa (including Egypt), Italy, Rome, Spain, France, and Britain. In the quote above, Strabo pointed out that the Persians did not (to his knowledge) seem to erect statues and altars as part of Mithras worship. This is confirmed in part by the findings in CIMRM from Asia proper, which were coins. As one travels farther west into Asia Minor and then Europe, the inscriptions become more numerous. This included altars and statues.

The overwhelming majority of inscriptions relating to Mithras and Sol were found in Italy and Rome (approximately 600). There were about 40 in Spain, 70 in Britain, and over 100 in France.

The dates on these inscriptions are also important. Of those items which are datable, there are relatively few before the second century AD. From the mid-second century through the latter part of the fourth century, the numbers are much higher. Many Roman Emperors were involved with and/or acknowledged this cult. These hundreds of items testify to the prevalence and significance of this cult; sun worship was a major feature of it.

A Brief History of Sun Worship in the Roman Empire

In this section of the chapter, we will provide a brief history of sun worship in Rome, utilizing both Mithraic and non-Mithraic influences. We will then pick up with the sun in Christian history.

The Romans worshiped many deities, like the Etruscans and the Greeks. As time passed, the Roman pantheon became narrowed

down to a handful of favored gods/goddesses. As the influence of Mithraism increased in the Empire, the sun or Sol gradually became part of that upper echelon.

Marcus Varro noted that one of the early kings of Rome, Tatius, dedicated an altar to the sun (*On the Latin Language*, 5.74). Archaeological findings testify to this statement. According to Platner, the first temple of Apollo in Rome was dedicated in the campus Martius in 433 BC (idem, p 15). It was restored in 32 BC by Sosius, who was the consul and governor of Syria. Sosius' restoration occurred at the same time Mithraism was spreading westward into Europe.

Cicero (106-43 BC) noted the influence of the sun and even called it the leader and governor of the other luminaries. "Below this again, almost in the middle region is the Sun, - the leader, governor, and prince of the other luminaries; the soul of the world, which it regulates and illumines, being of such vast size that it pervades and gives light to all places..." (*The Republic*, 6.17).

Altars to Sol Invictus have been found in Rome that date to as early as the time of Julius Caesar. Two of them read: "IVLIUS CAESAR DEO SOLI INVICTO ALTARE." Another one reads: "DEO SOLI INVICTO ARAM. C. IVLIVS CAESAR D.D" (Gruterus, p XXXV, Figures 9-10). The Roman political figure and military leader Antony spent much of his later years in the East. He also depicted the radiating head of the sun or Sol on some of his coins (*Dictionary of Roman Coins*, p 754).

Julius Caesar's nephew Octavian defeated Antony for control of the entire Roman world at the battle of Actium (about 31 BC). He credited the sun for this victory. The ancient historian Dio Cassius wrote that Octavian dedicated a temple to Apollo in commemoration of the event.

"...and consequently the years of his reign are properly reckoned from that day. In honour of the day he dedicated to Apollo of Actium from the total number of the captured vessels a trireme, a quadrireme, and the other ships in order up to one of ten banks of oars; and he built a larger temple. He also instituted a quadrennial musical and gymnastic contest, including horse-racing, — a

“sacred” festival, as they call those in connection with which there is a distribution of food, — and entitled it Actia. Furthermore, he founded a city on the site of his camp by gathering together some of the neighbouring peoples and dispossessing others, and he named it Nicopolis. On the spot where he had had his tent, he laid a foundation of square stones, adorned it with the captured beaks, and erected on it, open to the sky, a shrine of Apollo” (*Roman History*, 51.1).

This Temple to Apollo in Rome was built on the palatine (Platner, pp 15-16). Propertius, who lived from about 50 to 15 BC, wrote that there were two chariots of the sun (*solis*) on top of this Temple (*Elegies*, 2.31). Octavian’s dedication to the sun did not stop with this monument.

He also took two obelisks from Egypt and brought them to Rome. One went in the circus maximus (where chariot races were held) and the other in the Campus Martius. On them is an inscription which described their dedication to the sun. “Soli Donum Dedit” is the inscription at the bottom, which means “gift given to the sun” (CIL 6: 702; Platner, pp 366-367). These findings allow us to connect veneration for the sun with Apollo in the time of Augustus. As aforementioned, the two were syncretized by the Romans into the person of Sol.

During this time, about 57 different inscriptions are found dedicated to the sun in Rome in the early Imperial period (CIL 6: 699-756). These monuments to the sun were reminders of Rome’s glory for centuries to come. That is to say, they served as staples for Roman culture. But other emperors and other important figures also honored the sun and had ties to Mithraism to one degree or another. We have a brief review of these below.

Caligula (37-41 AD) had an obelisk erected at the Circus Gai et Neronis (Platner, p 370). It is commonly called the Obeliscus Vaticanus (CIL 6: 882).

Nero (59-68) was visited by a king from Armenia who worshiped him as Mithras. It is possible that he was initiated into the rites of Mithras (see Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 63.5; Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.6). He once rode a victory chariot to the Temple of Apollo at the center of the Circus Maximus (Seutonius, *Nero*, 25).

Nero was then acclaimed as Apollo's equal in music and Sol's equal in chariot driving (ibid, 53). Sometimes he was depicted as Sol in art; Dio recorded that the people once proclaimed "Hail Nero Apollo!" as he drove in his chariot (*idem*, 63.6, 63.20).

After Nero's death, Tacitus described an old temple devoted to the sun in the circus maximus. Special honors were held there. "Gifts and thanksgivings to the gods were then decreed, with special honours to the Sun, whose ancient temple stands in the Circus where the deed was to have been done, and whose divine rays had disclosed the secret of the plot" (*Annals*, 15.74).

During the reign of Vespasian (69-79), a gigantic statue previously erected by Nero had its head refurbished to honor the Sun. This is recorded by ancient authors, including Martial (*Epigrams*, 1.70) and Pliny (*Nat. hist.*, 34.18). Vespasian also minted coins with the image of the radiating sun (Dictionary of Roman Coins, p 753).

At this same period, Tacitus recorded that the third legion saluted the rising sun after the Syrian practice. They served in Syria and were exposed to this eastern custom. "To the Third he spoke at greater length, reminding them of their victories both old and new. Had they not under Mark Antony defeated the Parthians and the Armenians under Corbulo? Had they not but lately crushed the Sarmatians?... These words aroused cheers on all sides, and the Third [legion], following the Syrian custom, saluted the rising sun" (*The Histories*, 3.24).

Pliny, who lived in the first century, described the importance of the sun as the ruler of the other seven wanderers: "Between this body and the heavens there are suspended, in this aerial spirit, seven stars, separated by determinate spaces, which, on account of their motion, we call wandering, although, in reality, none are less so. The sun is carried along in the midst of these, a body of great size and power, the ruler, not only of the seasons and of the different climates, but also of the stars themselves and of the heavens. When we consider his operations, we must regard him as the life, or rather the mind of the universe, the chief regulator and the God of nature; he also lends his light to the other stars. He is most illustrious and excellent, beholding all things and hearing all things, which, I perceive, is ascribed to him exclusively by the

prince of poets, Homer” (*Natural History*, 2.4).

Aelius Spartianus, the historian of Emperor Hadrian (117-138), claimed that he was the one to replace Nero’s features on a large statue with those of the sun (instead of Vespasian). “With the aid of the architect Decrianus he raised the Colossus and, keeping it in an upright position, moved it away from the place in which the Temple of Rome is now...This statue he then consecrated to the Sun, after removing the features of Nero, to whom it had previously been dedicated, and he also planned, with the assistance of the architect Apollodorus, to make a similar one for the Moon” (chapter 19). Hadrian also erected an obelisk (Platner, p 366).

In the third century, the movement to elevate the sun gained great momentum. About the year 219 AD, the Roman Emperor Heliogabalus tried to establish the sun god Elagabalus as the chief deity in the pantheon, going even above Jupiter (who was considered the highest deity). This caused his assassination. Despite the adverse reaction to this policy, many emperors after him placed images of Sol Invictus on their coins (Dictionary of Roman Coins, p 753).

A concurrent development in the third century was the centralization of power into the hands of the army. Sol worship was already strong among this sub-group; their ties increased more so in this century. During this tumultuous era, emperors were often chosen or deposed by soldiers. This resulted in a rapid changeover of emperors until the time of Diocletian (286). Approximately 26 Emperors ruled from 201-285. This was more than the previous two centuries combined (21).

The coinage of Sol changes during this century and after it. Coins depicting Sol by earlier rulers (Antony, Vespasian, Trajan, etc.) usually depicted the bust of Sol with the rays of the sun exuding from his head. In the third century, Emperors begin to depict Sol with a captive in front (sometimes with his foot on the captive), with a battle bow, or holding the whole world. The Latin phrase “*Oriens Avg*” appears on coins, meaning the sun rises on the Emperor (Dictionary of Roman Coins, p 753-755).

In the early 270s, the Emperor Aurelian reconquered some prov-

inces in Asia Minor that had been lost. He dedicated his victories to the sun and elevated the worship of the sun to the chief place in the Empire around 273/274. He built a temple to the sun with a statue of himself inside of it; this temple was allowed priests devoted to serving Sol (Platner, pp 491-493). He minted coins that declared Sol the Lord of the Roman Empire (Dictionary of Roman Coins, pp 754-755).

Furthermore, he instituted games to the sun. The most likely dates for these games are June 6, August 28, October 19-22, and possibly December 25 (Salzman, pp 150-151; December 25 was an important day in Roman culture going back to at least the first century BC. See McDonald, *Ancient Roman Celebrations*, pp 30-34). Emperors for the next fifty years after Aurelian continued to honor Sol and place him in the upper echelon of the gods/goddesses.

As political authority became more centralized into the hands of the Emperor, the older institutions of Rome, such as the Senate, lessened in importance. This also paved the way for religious change through this new imperial power. The sun became elevated to an elite status in the Roman cultus.

At this point in the chapter, we will pause our analysis of Sol in the Empire. We will pick it up when we discuss Constantine in the next chapter. It is necessary to now explore how Sol impacted Christianity.

At the time when Mithras inscriptions begin to significantly increase (mid-second century), references to the sun and practices revering the sun also become numerous in Christian literature.

In the mid to late second century, Christian doctrine and practice were syncretized with Greek philosophies and certain practices connected to one degree or another with sun. These practices are absent in writings from the immediate post-Apostolic period, such as that of Ignatius and Polycarp. In the mid-second century onwards, a shift occurred in Christian literature. Suddenly, volumes were written condemning heretics and describing teachings and practices not found among the first disciples. References to the sun significantly increase.

Theophilus of Antioch was discussed in the last chapter as one of the second century Church writers to abstain from using planetary names for the days of the week. At the same time, he made a statement about the sun in a manner uncharacteristic with the Bible.

“For the sun is a type of God, and the moon of man. And as the sun far surpasses the moon in power and glory, so far does God surpass man. And as the sun remains ever full, never becoming less, so does God always abide perfect, being full of all power, and understanding, and wisdom, and immortality, and all good...” (*To Autolycus*, 2.15).

This statement seems more reminiscent of Cicero than it does any writing of the New Testament. However, my current research shows that this is the only statement of Theophilus which described the sun in this manner.

Not long after him, Clement of Alexandria (180s AD) made clear references to other worldviews and religions that influenced Christianity. He welcomed them and became a major source of syncretism in the second century. In the last chapter, we gave some examples of how he syncretized the planetary week into Biblical writings and incorporated them into his own. We have some more quotes from him below.

“Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration...Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring the Hellenic mind, as the law, the Hebrews, to Christ. Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ” (*Stromata*, 1:5).

“And He gave the sun, and the moon, and the stars to be worshipped; which God, the Law says, made for the nations, that they might not become altogether atheistical, and so utterly perish” (*ibid*, 6:14).

“And since the dawn is an image of the day of birth, and from that point the light which has shone forth at first from the darkness increases, there has also dawned on those involved in darkness a day of the knowledge of truth. In correspondence with the manner of the sun's rising, prayers are made looking towards the sunrise in the east. Whence also the most ancient temples looked towards the west, that people might be taught to turn to the east when facing the images” (ibid, 7:7).

Clement made statements that clearly contradicted the rest of the Scriptures. In the first quote, he claimed that God gave the Greeks philosophy for righteousness and as a type of schoolmaster until Christ came. The Apostle Paul clearly said that the law was righteous (Romans 7:12-14) and the school master (Gal. 3:22-25). Clement was also a self-proclaimed Gnostic (6.10, 6.18, 7.7). This religious view held many tenets contrary to Scripture. Paul combated this philosophy in his writings (I Cor. 3; I Tim. 4:20).

Moreover, Clement claimed that the sun, moon and stars were originally given as objects of worship. This clearly contradicts the Bible, especially Deut. 4:19. In the last of these three quotes, he discussed praying in the direction of the sun. This practice was never encouraged in the Bible and even was condemned (Ezekiel 8:15-17).

Clement was among the first Christian writers to appropriate pagan practices and cultural influences and re-label them as Christian. Origen, who was a pupil of Clement, discussed Christians in his time who looked to the sun, moon, and stars to determine the course of their lives.

“As regards the lights of the heaven having been created for signs, to speak precisely, the sun, moon, and stars, this is a subject which we are bound to discuss; for not only do many nations, strangers to the Faith of Christ, err in the matter of fate, inasmuch as they think that all things happen, both earthly events in general and the incidents of every human life, and perhaps what befalls the irrational creatures, through the relation of the planets to the constellations of the Zodiac; but besides this, many who are supposed to have embraced the faith are distracted at the thought that human affairs may be governed by necessity, and cannot possibly be otherwise than is ruled by the stars in their different groupings.

And a consequence of this opinion is the complete destruction of Free Will; and a further result is that praise and blame are unmeaning, and the distinction between acceptable conduct and conduct deserving of blame is lost..." (*Philocalia*, 23:1).

Origen came dangerously close to promoting sun adoration. Celsus was a philosopher who lived in the second century and strongly criticized Christianity. In the work *Against Celsus*, Origen quoted Celsus and then refuted him. He noted the confusion that arose from certain Christian practices, such as praise to the sun.

"Again, however, from ignorance of our principles, and in entire confusion of thought, he says: 'But if any one commands you to celebrate the sun, or to sing a joyful triumphal song in praise of Minerva, you will by celebrating their praises seem to render the higher praise to God; for piety, in extending to all things, becomes more perfect.' To this our answer is, that we do not wait for any command to celebrate the praises of the sun; for we have been taught to speak well not only of those creatures that are obedient to the will of God, but even of our enemies. We therefore praise the sun as the glorious workmanship of God, which obeys His laws" (*Against Celsus*, 8:66).

These types of references became more common place as time passed. Among the writers who contributed to this topic was Tertullian. He was the first writer (that I can find) to defend Christianity from the accusation of sun worship (he wrote years before Origen). The two practices that he defended were praying towards the sun (first discussed by Clement) and Sun-day gatherings, which were practiced among some Christians, especially in Rome and Alexandria. The quotes for these practices are found at the end of chapter two of this work (*Against the Nations*, 1.13, *Apology* 1.16). In another writing, he attested that many Christians he knew celebrated pagan festivals, including those dedicated to the sun.

"Who will think that these things are befitting to a Christian master, unless it be he who shall think them suitable likewise to one who is not a master?... But when a believer learns these things, if he is already capable of understanding what idolatry is, he neither receives nor allows them... Therefore he will reject those things,

and will not receive them; and will be as safe as one who from one who knows it not, knowingly accepts poison, but does not drink it...But, however, **the majority** (of Christians) **have by this time induced the belief in their mind that it is pardonable if at any time they do what the heathen do, for fear “that the name be blasphemed”**... But if we have no right of communion in matters of this kind with strangers, how far more wicked to celebrate them among brethren! Who can maintain or defend this?... the Saturnalia and New Year’s and Midwinter’s festivals [Latin: *brumae*] and *Matronalia* are frequented – presents come and go – New year’s gifts – games join their noise – banquets join their din! Oh better fidelity of the nations to their own sect, which claims no solemnity of the Christians for itself!” (*On Idolatry*, ch. 10, 14 [emphasis mine]; Latin taken from Migne, PL 1:674, 682.).

Unfortunately, syncretism was rife in Tertullian’s day. *Brumae* was connected to the winter solstice in ancient Rome; it was the day of the new sun or *novus solis*. The New Year (Jan 1) came just after it.

Starting at the end of the second/beginning of the third century, buildings for Christian convocation began to face the East to align with the light of the sun. Tertullian also wrote about this: “Of our dove, however, how simple is the very home! Always in high and open places, and facing the light! As the symbol of the Holy Spirit, it loves the (radiant) East, that figure of Christ...” (*Against the Valentinians*, chapter 3). The *Apostolic Constitutions* also mentions this arrangement, which was likely written in the third and fourth centuries (*idem*, 2.7; see also Catholic Encyclopedia: Orientation of Churches).

Cyprian, who wrote in the mid-third century, tried to connect times of prayer to different phases of the sun during the day.

“For we must also pray in the morning, that the Lord’s resurrection may be celebrated by morning prayer...Also at the sunset and at the decline of day, of necessity we must pray again. For Christ is the true sun and the true day, as the worldly sun and worldly day depart, when we pray and ask that light may return to us again, we pray for the advent of Christ, which shall give us the grace of everlasting light...”

He then quoted Malachi 4:2 and connected Jesus with the 'sun of righteousness.' He continued by stating: "But if in the Holy Scriptures the true sun and the true day is Christ, there is no hour expected for Christians wherein God ought not frequently and always to be worshipped; so that we who are in Christ – that is in the true Sun and True Day – should be instant throughout the entire day in petitions, and should pray... [he then has a section explaining that it is acceptable to pray at night]...For when is he without light who has light in his heart? Or when has not he the sun and the day whose sun and day is Christ?" (*Treatise*, 4:35).

In this writing, he tried to state that all times were appropriate for prayer. However, his emphasis on the sun cannot be denied. There are only a few references to Christ and the sun in the New Testament; his comments are obviously obsessive. Cyprian also introduced a major theological concept that would be widely used and developed in the fourth century: the idea of Christ as the 'True Sun' and 'True Day'. He initiated an entire train of thought that connected Christ and the literal sun on the basis of Malachi 4:2.

The art of Christianity was also influenced by sun worship. In pre-Christian art, Helios and Mithras were often depicted with sun rays or halos (called a nimbus) around their heads. In the early fourth century this iconography was applied to Jesus; it lasted for centuries in the future. The nimbus was added to images of Jesus even when he was being crucified and/or depicted as a lamb (Catholic Encyclopedia: Nimbus, Archaeology of the Cross and the Crucifix; the Lamb; Encyclopedia Britannica: Aureole).

At least three major authors within a century of each other referenced praying in the direction of the sun or in relation to its rising (Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Cyprian). This mirrored a practice cited from Tacitus earlier in this chapter; Roman soldiers saluted the sun after the Syrian custom. This practice is not found in the Bible, but it imitates the practices of sun worshipers (as aforementioned, it is clearly reprimanded in Ezekiel 8:14-17). Origen discussed praising the sun (but not intrinsically).

During the reign of Constantine, the intermixing of sun adoration with Christ intersected with the elevation of Sol Invictus in the

Empire. His reign marks a new epoch in both Christian and Roman history. It also opens a new chapter for sun worship. We will continue our discussion of this subject in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

How Did Sunday Become the First Day of the Week? (Part 2)

The reign of Constantine is of utmost importance to the study of early Church history and this subject. He started trends that would have lasting impact on both Empire and Christianity. Among them was the merger of Roman Church and Roman State.

The difficulty of studying his reign is to weigh out his decisions in terms of two main perspectives: the first as emperor and the second as Pontifex Maximus. The first viewpoint is through the eyes of his administration as chief political ruler. The second viewpoint is through the eyes of chief religious leader.

The title Pontifex Maximus is an ancient title that dates to possibly the early days of Rome. Originally, Rome's religious policy was formed by a college of priests called pontiffs. The chief pontiff was called the pontifex maximus. Among their duties was to regulate sacred law and the religious calendar. Julius Caesar had this title at the time he was Consul of Rome. At the beginning of the Imperial period, Emperors took on this title. They utilized it to make changes to the calendar. As we look at Constantine's reign and his actions regarding Christianity, it is difficult to separate them from his authority as Pontifex.

As discussed in the last chapter, sun adoration affected both Empire and Christianity. These two influences converge during his reign. He was influenced by sun veneration before becoming Emperor. He also was a major contributor to Christian history.

In 312 AD, Constantine defeated Maxentius to become master of the Western Roman Empire. Just before the battle, he supposedly had a vision where he saw a cross in the sun with the Greek letters *chi-rho* on it. Two pro-Roman Catholic writers, Lactantius and Eusebius, claimed that Constantine viewed this vision as being from Jesus. They attributed it as a sign of his conversion. From that time to now, many people have assumed that Constantine attributed his victory in 312 (and the vision that preceded it) to come from direct intervention by Christ. How can we know for sure?

Archeology helps us clear away the confusion. Within a few years of his victory, Constantine devoted a special commemorative Arch to honor the victory over Maxentius. On it, we find no symbols carved anywhere on the arch that reflect Christian influence. No honor is given to Jesus Christ or the God of the Bible. The inscription on it does not mention anything of the sort. However, there are carved medallions on each end of this monument. One end depicts Apollo (or Sol Invictus) while the other end depicts Diana, in honor of the moon (Frothingham, pp 368-389; Planter, pp 36-38). As discussed earlier in the chapter, it was common among Mithras worshipers to depict both the sun and the moon.

In 313, he and his brother-in-law Licinius issued a decree called the Edict of Milan. It gave Christians and other religions freedom to worship without persecution (many people forget that other religions were included in this law). This ended about 250 years of off and on persecution by Roman magistrates or Emperors. Also in Rome an inscription dating to the same year was dedicated to Mithras (CIMRM 1:523).

In 321, Constantine passed the first two weekly Sunday laws perhaps in history. They are recorded in annals of Roman law. A third law, of unknown date, is recorded on a bath house in Pannonia (northwestern Balkans). The first of these edicts was issued on March 7.

“All Judges and city people and the craftsmen shall rest upon the venerable Day of the Sun. Country people, however, may freely attend to the cultivation of the fields, because it frequently happens that no other days are better adapted for planting the grain in the furrows or the vines in trenches. So that the advantage given by heavenly providence may not for the occasion of a short time perish” (CJ 3.12.3 [some list as 3.12.2]; *Ayers*, 284-285).

In the Latin manuscript of this law, the phrase translated as “venerable day of the sun” is *venerabilis dies solis* (Krueger, p 127). Constantine’s decree was based upon veneration for the celestial body we call the sun. The decree did not honor the Hebrew God or Jesus Christ. Notice that no worship of God/Christ was mentioned in the law. It declared a day of rest (except for farmers). No punishments were mentioned for those who transgress it.

The second law was passed just a few months later on July 3.

“Just as it appears to Us most unseemly that the Day of the Sun (*diem solis* – Sunday), which is celebrated on account of its own veneration, should be occupied with legal altercations and with noxious controversies of the litigation of contending parties, so it is pleasant and fitting that those acts which are especially desired shall be accomplished on that day. 1. Therefore all men shall have the right to emancipate and to manumit on this festive day, and the legal formalities thereof are not forbidden” (CT: 2.8.1; English from Pharr, p 44; Latin from Haenel, p 207).

This Sunday law required freedom from legalities except those which granted freedom to slaves. Once again, this law has no Christian meaning to it. It was common for the ancient Romans to suspend legal proceedings during their celebrations. Constantine used his authority as pontifex to establish Sunday as a weekly celebration on the same level as other Roman annual celebrations. To learn more about this particular subject, read **Appendix C – Constantine’s Sunday Laws and the Title Pontifex Maximus**

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The third Sunday law, found in the northwest Balkans, was inscribed on an ancient bathhouse. From it, we learn that Constantine also adjusted the ancient Roman *nundinae* or market day so that it would occur every *dies solis* instead of every eighth day (Orellius, 140; also D 704). By relegating the *nundinae* to the *dies solis*, he placed the more recent veneration of the sun (on *dies solis*) within the old framework of *nundinae*. In this way he again utilized his role as Pontifex Maximus (this is also discussed in Appendix C).

Notice that Constantine never referred to *dies solis* as the first day of the week. However, his laws show the knowledge of the planetary week was known to Emperors. Sun-day was the only planetary day of the week referenced in his laws. It also was set apart from the other days of the week with the special treatment these laws attributed to it. This was another way the day was elevated above the other days of the planetary week.

To many pagans, Sunday remained the second day of the week (as seen by the Calendar Philocali). Constantine’s *nundinae* ruling

may have caused some people to view it as the last day of the week (seventh day or by inclusive reckoning the eighth day). However, this is not stated plainly in the law. Constantine's elevation of sun-day was consistent with his other actions honoring the sun.

As discussed in the last chapter, Sol Invictus was elevated to the upper echelons of worship in the Roman world. Constantine's father was among his followers; he struck coins with Sol on them (see Sear, pp 233-264). During much of his political career, Constantine followed the same example. While he minted other deities on coins, such as Mars and Jupiter, there are over one hundred coin variations from his reign that depict Sol (Sear, pp 363-491).

Two types of Sol Invictus coinage struck between 320 and 325 AD are instructive on this subject. One depicted Sol giving Constantine the world (with the goddess victory standing on top of the world). The second depicted Sol crowning Constantine Emperor. Some of these coins were struck in 321—the same year that he issued two of the sun-day laws. The latest coin with Sol Invictus crowning him is dated to about 324/325. In that year he consolidated his power as ruler over the entire Roman Empire. Coins which depict Sol imagery decrease after 325, but honor for the sun (and other deities) did not.

In 330 AD, Constantine dedicated Constantinople, which he viewed as the second Rome, using pagan and Christian customs. He even placed a chariot to the sun god in the city. Sozomen (mid-fifth century) and Zosimus (late fifth/early sixth century) wrote about the city's dedication.

“The brazen images which were skillfully wrought were carried to the city, named after the emperor, and placed there as objects of embellishment, where they may still be seen in public places, as in the streets, the hippodrome, and the palaces. **Amongst them was the statue of Apollo** which was in the seat of the oracle of the Pythoness, and likewise the statues of the Muses from Helicon, the tripods from Delphos, and the much-extolled Pan” (*Church History*, 2.5).

“Having thus enlarged the city, he built a palace little inferior to

that of Rome, and very much embellished the hippodrome, or horse-course, taking into it the temple of Castor and Pollux, whose statues are still standing in the porticos of the hippodrome. **He placed on one side of it the tripod that belonged to the Delphian Apollo, on which stood an image of the deity...**he erected two temples; in one of which was placed the statue of Rhea, the mother of the gods...In the other temple he placed the statue of the Fortune of Rome. He afterwards built convenient dwellings for the senators who followed him from Rome..." (Zosimus, *History*, 2.31.1-3).

Constantine had an Egyptian obelisk (which was dedicated to the sun) brought down the Nile so that it could be placed in Rome. He died before it was transferred, but his Son Constantius completed the task in 357 AD. As to be expected, it was placed in the circus maximus (Platner, pp 367-368).

Another way that Roman Emperors venerated the sun was through the chariot races in the circus maximus. As discussed previously, this monumental structure was devoted to the sun. The early Christian writer Tertullian recorded this detail; he rebuked Christians for going to the event because of the pagan images which stood in it (as a side note, his claims are confirmed that archeological findings discussed in the last chapter).

"The two kinds of public games, then, have one origin; and they have common names, as owning the same parentage. So, too, as they are equally tainted with the sin of idolatry...anything of idolatry whatever, whether meanly arrayed or modestly rich and gorgeous, taints it in its origin...**To follow out my plan in regard to places: the circus is chiefly consecrated to the Sun, whose temple stands in the middle of it, and whose image shines forth from its temple summit;** for they have not thought it proper to pay sacred honours underneath a roof to an object they have itself in open space. **Those who assert that the first spectacle was exhibited by Circe, and in honour of the Sun her father, as they will have it, maintain also the name of circus was derived from her....The huge Obelisk, as Hermeteles affirms, is set up in public to the Sun; its inscription, like its origin, belongs to Egyptian superstition.** See, Christian, how many impure names have taken possession of the circus! You have nothing to do with a sacred place which is tenanted by such multitudes

of diabolic spirits...The polluted things pollute us” (*De Spectaculis*, 7, 8; emphasis mine).

The circus maximus continued to have chariot races under Constantine and decades afterwards. The Calendar Philocali recorded the days throughout the year in which chariot races were held in the circus maximus. 60 days throughout the year were marked for circus races. Some days had more races than others. The second and third most number of races were dedicated solely to the sun (36 races to the sun were held on Oct. 22 and 30 races to Sol Invictus on Dec. 25). Obviously, these celebrations were established years beforehand. The exact date of their inception is unknown, but it is possible they were established as early as Aurelian.

This calendar is proof that sun veneration retained a strong foothold in the Roman Empire in the mid-fourth century and even later. Not long after this calendar was composed, Julian became Emperor (about 361). While his reign was brief, he heavily promoted pagan practices. Among them was veneration to the sun, which he extolled on December 25. He wrote an oration to the sun, which we have quoted below:

“But our ancestors, from the time of that most religious King Numa, paying special honour to the god in question, cast aside the common practice, and as they were of superior understanding, they recognized this deity, and settled to hold the New Year’s festival in the present season, at what time the Sun returns to us, leaving the extreme distance of the meridian, and bending his course around Capricorn as his goal, moves from the South towards the North; being about to give us our share of his annual blessings. And that they have thus fixed the time of the New Year’s festival out of an accurate understanding of the case, may be easily discerned from the following circumstance---they did not fix the festival upon the actual day when the Sun makes the turn [but on the day] when it is apparent to all that he is making his progress from the South towards the North. For not yet known to them was the subtlety of those rules which the Chaldaeans and Egyptians invented, but which Hipparchus and Ptolemy brought to perfection; but they trusted to their senses, and followed the guidance of natural phenomena. And in this way, as I have said, the matter was discovered to be of such a nature by those who

came after them. Immediately after the last month, which is Saturn's, and previous to the festival in question, we celebrate the most solemn of our Games, dedicating it to the honour of the 'Invincible Sun,' during which it is not lawful for anything cruel (although necessary), which the previous month presented in its Shows, should be perpetrated on this occasion. The Saturnalia, being the concluding festival, are closely followed in cyclic order by the Festival of the Sun; the which I hope that the Powers above will grant me frequently to chaunt, and to celebrate; and above all others may the Sovereign Sun, lord of the universe!" (*Upon the Sovereign Sun. Addressed to Sallust*)

Other laws relating to Sunday were enacted in the fourth and fifth centuries. If we include Constantine's three Sunday decrees, there were at least twelve references to Sunday (*diem solis* or *dies solis*) in Imperial laws from 321 to 409 AD. None of them refer to it as the first day of the week. (see CT: 8.8.1, 11.7.10, 11.7.13, 2.8.1, 2.8.18, 8.8.3, 15.5.2, 2.8.19, 2.8.20, 2.8.25; CJ: 3.12.2; D 704. To read about these laws with commentary on them, see *Sabbath and Sunday Laws in the Roman Empire* by McDonald.)

Among these twelve laws, Sun-day was never called *sacra* (sacred or set apart for the divine). It was never called a Sabbath. Two of the laws, CT: 8.8.1, 11.7.10, refer to Sunday as *faustus* (Haenel, pp 754, 1070). In Appendix A of *Sabbath and Sunday Laws*, we discuss that *faustus* referred to those things which were considered lucky or fortunate. It does not have to carry any religious meaning; it was mostly used to refer to a good omen.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Constantine began the process of merging Church and State affairs; Theodosius brought the process to a greater completion. He issued the first Sunday laws in history which linked *dies solis* with the concept of the Lord's Day from the Roman Catholic Church. This started a pattern of supposed Christian emphasis among Sun-day laws in the year 386. We have included the first of these laws below:

"The same Augustuses (Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius Augustuses) to Principius, Praetorian Prefect On the Day of the Sun (*solis die*), which our ancestors rightly called the Lord's Day*, the prosecution of all litigation and actions shall entirely cease. No person shall demand payment of either a public or pri-

vate debt. There shall be no cognizance of any contention, even before arbitrators, whether these arbitrators be demanded in court of voluntarily chosen. If any person should turn aside from the inspiration and ritual of holy religion, he shall be adjudged not only infamous but also sacrilegious” (Nov. 3, 386) (CT: 11.7.13; English from: Pharr, pp 300; Latin from: Haemel, 1071).

*The latin translated as “our ancestors rightly called the Lord’s Day” is *quem dominicum rite dixere maiores*. *Dominicum* was known as ‘Lord’s Day’ by that time. *Rite* means a duty according to religious observance. *Dixere* means called or said and *maiores* means ancestors or forefathers. The use of the term *maiores* does not indicate length of time – thus the translation of ‘ancestors’ in this law does not mean ancient.

Notice that they attributed the usage of the term ‘Lord’s Day’ to their forefathers, not God or the Bible. This law, among the others that were passed after it, continued to exalt *dies solis* in the weekly calendar. Among these twelve Sunday laws, two others labeled the day ‘the Lord’s Day’ without reference to *dies solis* (CT: 2.8.23 [399]; CT: 9.3.7 [409]). *Dies solis* was connected again with the Lord’s Day in a separate law from 409 (CT: 2.8.25).

Contests in the circus maximus were suspended on Sunday starting in 392, except when the anniversary of the Imperial reign fell on Sunday. In 399, they were suspended again except when the birthday of the Emperor fell on that day (along with other celebrations). Competition in various other venues separate from the circus maximus continued into the fifth century.

On February 1, 425 AD, the first known Imperial law to uphold Sunday as the first day of the week was issued. It is enumerated below:

“The same Augustus and Valentinian Caesar to Asclepiodotus, Praetorian Prefect.

On the following occasions all amusements of the theaters and the circuses shall be denied throughout all cities to the people thereof, and the minds of Christians and of the faithful shall be wholly occupied in the worship of God: namely, **on the Lord’s Day, which is the first day of the whole week*** (Latin: *Dominico, qui septimanae totius primus est dies*), on the Natal Day and Epipha-

ny of Christ, and on the day of Easter (paschae) and of Pentecost, as long as the vestalments that imitate the light of the celestial font attest to the new light of holy (sancti) baptism; at the time also when the commemoration of the Apostolic Passion, the teacher of all Christianity, is fully celebrated by everyone. If any persons even now are enslaved by the madness of the Jewish impiety or the error and insanity of stupid paganism, they must know that there is a time for prayer and a time for pleasure. No man shall suppose that in the case of spectacles in honor of our Divine Majesty he is, as it were, under some major compulsion by reason of the necessity in his duty to the Emperor, and that he will incur for himself the displeasure of Our Serenity unless he should neglect the divine religion and should give attention to such spectacles and if he should show less devotion to Us than customary. Let no one doubt that then especially is devotion paid to our Clemency by humankind, when the reverence of the whole earth is paid to the virtues and merits of the omnipotent God.

Given on the kalends of February at Constantinople in the year of the eleventh consulship of Theodosius Augustus and the first consulship of Valentinian Caesar” (CT: 15.5.5; English from Pharr, 433; Latin from Haenel, p 1454).

This law gives us a more definite time frame in which Sunday was accepted as the first day of the week among Roman Emperors. Such a law also indicates that the transition of Sunday to the first day of the week must have also taken place among many common people. Otherwise its issuance would be hindered and not as effective. The merger of Roman Church and Roman State assisted the progress of Sunday becoming the first day of the week. Thus, it becomes a fourth factor in this discussion.

By this time, there were some pagans who viewed the planetary week as Sunday through Saturday. As discussed in Appendix A, Esperandieu found at least two monuments in France where the seven planetary deities were listed as Sol through Saturn (E 7: 5736, 5865); a third was listed as Sol through Venus (E 11: 8594). This viewpoint affected common items as well. Victor Duruy explained that a vase from the mid-fourth century depicted the seven planetary deities starting with Sol (*History of Rome*, 7.2, pp 487-488).

Mithraism included the seven planetes in their theology (*Against*

Celsus, 6.21-22). Among the Monuments to Mithras, many of them depict the sun, the sun's rays, or Sol Invictus in a prominent position (see Vermaseren, pp 350-351). I have found at least one that displays the seven planetary deities (found in Bologna, Italy). They are depicted in the following order: Sol, Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, Mercurius, Mars, Luna (CIMRM 1: 693). Notice that Sol is given the prominent position – although the others are not in the order usually attributed to the planetary week. The order was likely attributed to the cult's initiation rituals.

The archeological findings which illustrated a Sunday through Saturday planetary week among pagans are limited (at this time). However, our small sample size does provide evidence that at least some pagans ordered it this way. These monuments were constructed during a time when the sun was being exalted in the Roman Empire.

We must return to the influence of the sun in Christianity, as it remained strong. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, Christian writers compared Christ to the light of the sun, the sun rise, and the sun of righteousness with greater frequency. This was continuing the theological development begun by earlier writers such as Cyprian. We will review a smattering of these examples below.

Eusebius (lived from 265-339) called upon all Christians to worship the Lord at every Sunday sunrise and labeled Christ the true sun (*Commentary on the Psalms* 59 and 92 [from Odom 289, 292]). Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) compared Christ to the sun and light (*Oration on the Day of the Nativity of Christ*). Gregory of Nazienzen (325-389) called Christ the sun of righteousness and the sunset (*Oration* 45.13, 16). Maximus of Turin (380-465) called Christ the rising Sol and the new sun (*novus solis*); he agreed that the pagans also used this term for their own purposes (*Sermons* 62, 63).

In particular, Maximus' admission is striking. He and other writers contributed to a movement within Christianity during the fourth century which adopted December 25 as the birth of Christ. This day was also connected to the sun. After the Julian Calendar reform in the 40s BC, December 25 was the day of the new sun or *novus solis* (also called *bruma*) among the ancient Romans. It was considered their winter solstice. As Christ was increasingly com-

pared to light, day, sunrise, and the sun it became more convenient to adopt other Roman days connected with the sun such as December 25 (side note: March 25 and June 24, the Roman spring equinox and the summer solstice, were also adapted as Roman Church celebrations).

In the fifth century, Paulinus of Nola wrote poems about Christ. In poem 14, he called Christ the *novus solis*. Prudentius did the same in his work “Hymn for the VIII Kalends of January” (which is December 25).

The syncretism of Christianity with the sun did not come without problems. Augustine, who also wrote in the fourth century, stated that there were many people who thought Christ was the literal sun! He declared them heretics (*Tractate on John*, 34:2). Among them were a man named Faustus, who thought the power of the Son of God was in the sun and moon (*Contra Faustum*, 6.20). As much as Augustine wanted to separate himself from the sun worshiping heretics, his theology was very similar to theirs. For instance, comparisons to Christ and the day, sun, and light are recorded in Augustine’s defense of Christians celebrating December 25 as the birth of Christ (Sermon 190). This is just one of many examples we could use.

Pope Leo I (440-460 AD) decried some people who worshipped the sun on the steps of the Church of Rome before attending church services on Dec. 25 (*Sermons* 22, 26, 27). Eusebius of Alexandria, who was a contemporary of Pope Leo I, lamented the same problem (*Sermon* 22). A special hymn was composed not long after their time that saluted Christ as the sun (New Catholic Dictionary 1910: “O Sol Salutis”).

To learn more about how December 25 and other Roman days became assimilated into the Roman Catholic Church, see *Ancient Roman Celebrations and Their Adaptation by Early Christianity* by McDonald.

In Sicily, an tombstone inscription for a child was found which likely dates to the late fourth century. It discussed the day of the deceased child’s birth as occurring on the day of Saturn. His death was recorded as occurring on the “Lord’s day of heliou”. It is unclear who is labeled the Lord in this inscription; Helios or

Jesus? With competing ideologies of whether one should worship the sun or just worship Christ as the sun of righteousness, one cannot be surprised. The date of death on the inscription reads: “Hamera heliou kuriake...” (IG 14: 525).

The planetary name ‘sun-day’ was used as a justification by some Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries to meet on Sunday.

In the early fourth century, Eusebius wrote: “...transferred the sabbath to the rising of the light...On which day, being the first day of light, and of the true Sun...All things whatsoever it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s (day) [Sunday], as more appropriately belonging to it, the chief, and first, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath. For on this same (day), in the creation of the world, God said: ‘Let there be light, and there was light’: and on it the Sun of righteousness rose [to shine] upon our souls....Wherefore it also has been handed down by tradition to us to assemble ourselves together on this (day), and it is required that we do [on it] the things which have been commanded by this psalm” (*Exposition on Psalm 93*, Odom p 292).

Jerome, who was a contemporary of Augustine, wrote: “If the pagans call it the ‘day of the sun’, we willingly agree, for today the light of the world is raised. Today is revealed the sun of justice with healing in his rays.”

Sun-day was not just the first day of the week for the Roman Church. It was the focal point of the Roman Church’s theology and praxis. To them it was the day Jesus resurrected and the day of weekly gathering. To them Jesus was the true sun, true light, sunrise, sunset, and the sun of righteousness. The planetary name Sun-day was incorporated into this theme and used to justify the practice of Sunday gatherings.

What Ever Happened to the Planetary Week?

In Eastern Europe, the planetary week gradually faded away by the fifth century. However, the planetary week remained popular for centuries in Western Europe. By the fourth century, the question was raised: should a Christian even pronounce the days of the week using planetary names?

To combat this controversy, the Roman Catholic Church adopted a mostly Biblical reckoning of time for the days of the week for ecclesiastical purposes (fourth and fifth centuries). They named the first day of the week *dominica*, meaning Lord's day, then called the following five days by the numbers two, three, four, five, and sixth in the Biblical manner. The seventh day was appropriately named *Sabbatum*, which is Latin for Sabbath. However, many common people and even some church leaders still used the planetary names.

Writers such as Augustine did not seem to have a problem using the planetary names for the days of the week. He employed them in *Exposition on Psalm 93* and *Contra Faustum* 18.2.5. At other times, he employed the numeric system for the days of the week used by the Roman Church (*Exposition on Psalm 93*).

Other writers would take a much harder stance. Philaster of Brescia, writing about 384, condemned the mere use of them in speech as a heresy (Smith's Dictionary, p 352). Why might some writers take issue with the use of these names and others not have such an issue?

One reason is obvious; the planetary names related to deities in the pagan Roman/Greek religious cultus. Some were concerned even the use of these names gave a degree of reverence to those deities. The fourth century writer Ausonius provides insight into this area. He composed a work about pagan topics called the *Eclogae*. He described people that clipped their nails on the day of Mercury, trimmed hair on Jupiter's day, and cut hair on Venus' day (idem, 7.26). These behaviors were connected by pagans to the respective deity over that day of the week.

This development must have been more recent because the classical Roman writers such as Cicero, Varro, Pliny, Tacitus, and others omit these practices from their writings/ Tibullus and Horace statements are the closest writings we have to something of this nature (see Appendix B). It very well could be that these practices developed as the planetary week became more popular. The practices described by Ausonius as well as other daily activities are described by authors into the sixth century.

Caesarius of Arles (470-542 AD) described even more common activities that people relegated to planetary deities throughout the week, such as resting on Thursday. He condemned the practice of naming certain days of the week after the gods. He declared that those who engaged in activities connected to the planetary days of the week would face the fires of hell (see *Sermons* 19.4, 52.2. 193.4). Martin of Braga (520-580) followed the same line of reasoning as Caesarius. He condemned people for even saying the planetary names for the days of the week (see *On the Correction of Peasants*, 9-18).

Despite the rigorous opposition to the pagan names for the days of the week, the practice became normalized in Western Europe. It has lasted down to our present time in certain countries, such as Germany, France and England. Over time, some Germanic deities were incorporated into the names of the days of the week so that we have the present Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday arrangement in many countries today.

Conclusion

In the Bible, the Sabbath was the only day of the week God named. The rest of the days were numbered one, two, three, four, five, and six. By the first century AD, the Jewish people developed the practice of naming Friday preparation day because the people were preparing to keep the Sabbath. The first day of the week is mentioned in several places in the New Testament, but its importance is mainly because of its proximity to the Sabbath.

By the first century BC, an alternative seven-day week developed. It labeled each day of the week after one of the seven planets. The Greek order of the week was as follows: Kronos-day, Helios-day, Selene-day, Ares-day, Hermes-day, Zeus-day, and Aphrodite-day. The corresponding Latin names for the days of the week were: Saturn-day, Sun-day, Luna-day, Mars-day, Mercury-day, Jupiter-day, and Venus-day.

While the original disciples of Christ followed the Biblical reckoning of the week, later generations made modifications. In the late second century, Christians began to use the planetary names for the days of the week. They retained the Biblical order, which corresponded to Sun-day through Saturn-day. This was a merger of the two seven-week systems in the Mediterranean world.

Starting in the first century BC, sun worship spread westward through Europe. For the first several centuries AD, it influenced polytheistic Romans at the highest levels of society, including Emperors. The sun, in the form of Sol Invictus, gradually ascended to the highest echelon of deities. At times, it was the highest deity, such as in the reign of Aurelian. Some pagans re-arranged the planetary week to start with Sol and end with Saturn.

The spread of sun worship also influenced Christianity. Christians adopted various practices which derive from and imitate those who worship the sun. Among these practices included: praying towards the sun, churches that face the sun's rising, art that imitated sun-deities, and sun-day gatherings. The theology of Christianity was greatly influenced as well; Christ was called the True Sun, the True Day, the sunset, sunrise, and the sun of righteousness. Various other teachings connecting Christ and the sun developed using these concepts.

During the reign of Constantine, the Church and State become gradually merged. Church practices become codified as laws. Simultaneously, Emperors are consulted about ecclesiastical matters and in some cases asked to adjudicate them. Constantine was an admirer of the sun and exalted *dies solis* or sun-day in Imperial laws above the other planetary days of the week. He set it apart in the manner of a Roman holiday.

These factors come together in the fifth century AD as Sun-day became accepted as the first day of the week. The compromise Christianity made with the sun did not come without controversy. Some worshiped Christ as the sun; others thought He was the literal sun; and others still worshiped the sun and Christ separately but not viewing them as mutually exclusive practices. As Roman days connected to the sun were adapted into the mainstream practice, such as December 25, this became more commonplace.

In the west, the planetary week remained influential into at least the sixth century. Simultaneously, Sunday became stronger and more entrenched in Roman Christianity. The pagan name sun-day became a justification for some Roman Catholic teachers, like Eusebius and Jerome, to support Christian gatherings on the day. The planetary week made it easier to accommodate sun-day as the day of gathering. A developed theology comparing Christ to the sun greatly contributed to this subject. Sun-day became baked into Christianity.

The ultimate conclusion of this work, as it pertains to Sunday, is that four factors influenced its transition from the second to the first day of the week. 1) the spread of Christianity and 2) the spread of Judaism in the Roman world; 3) the influence of sun worship on Christianity and within the Roman world; and 4) the

merger of Roman Church and State. The evidence in the last two chapters of this work bring the last two factors to light. There can be no doubt that the journey of Sunday to the first day of the week went through the elevation of the sun.

However, this work also contributes to the subject of the seventh-day Sabbath. Concerning the Sabbath, a divergence occurred between Western and Eastern Churches. The planetary week assisted this occurrence.

Both Latin and Greek have a word for Sabbath in their language (*sabbatum* and *sabbaton*, respectively). However the name *sabbatum* was not used by common people in the West; the planetary name Saturn-day was primary. Latin was mainly used for ecclesiastical purposes. In the East, *sabbaton* was the chief Greek word for the seventh day of the week in ecclesiastical usage and among many common people. The Greek word for Friday was (and still is) *paraskevi*, which means preparation. This reinforced the importance of Sabbath.

The Sabbath has no linguistic connection to the planetary names for the days of the week. This contributed to the gradual decrease of Sabbath observance faded in Western Europe from the fifth century onward. Scattered pockets of Sabbatarians are found in Western Europe until the time of the Reformation (when large numbers appear again). In the East, a different outcome occurred. The planetary week faded out much faster. However, the Sabbath retained importance for many centuries into the future and contributed to the separation between the Western and Eastern Churches in the ninth and eleventh centuries.

My conclusion on this subject as it pertains to the Sabbath is as follows: the planetary week, combined with influence of sun worship on Christianity, affected the prevalence of the Sabbath. Saturn-day was the common vernacular for the seventh day in the West. The use of the planetary name Sun-day in the West combined with a theological connection between Christ and the sun reinforced Sunday gatherings. It diverted attention from the Sabbath. Thus, the effect of the planetary week on the Sabbath in the west was adverse.

In the East, the lack of the planetary week had a positive affect on the Sabbath for centuries. Linguistically, the sixth day was reinforced as the preparation day for Sabbath. *Sabbaton* was the common name for the seventh day of the week, which allowed it to be reinforced both in name and in practice.

Appendix A

Esperandieu's Findings

Between 1907-1938, Emile Esperandieu found many ancient monuments in France from the Roman period. Among them were those which depicted the planetary deities in a certain order. Most of them list the traditional order of Saturn through Venus, but there are some variations. We have the findings and references listed below:

13 total monuments

1 – Lists the planetary deities in a different order (Diane through Venus and then Saturn and Apollo; though this does not depart too far from the traditional order).

9 – Saturn through Venus (traditional order; 1 monument lists them backwards, but it was likely made to be read that way).

2 – The order is Sol through Saturn.

1 – Depicts only six of the planetary deities (Sol through Venus).

Volume 1

A Jupiter Column. Seven divinities listed in order: Diane, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, the Emperor, Saturn, and Apollo.

Inscription reads: IOVI – OPTIMO – MAXIMO – E CAETERIS, DIS DEABUSQ IMMORTALIBUS – PRO SALVTE IMPERATOR SEPTIMI SEVERI ET M AURELL ANTON (E 1: 412).

Volume 3

A rectangular block with a depiction of the seven planetary deities from left to right: Saturn, Sol, Lune, Mars, Mercure, Jupiter, Venus. (E 3: 2336).

A column with the planetary deities: Saturn, Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus (E 3: 2337).

Volume 5

Jupiter Column – It has a depiction of each of the seven deities full body. From left to right, they are listed as the following: Saturn, Apollo, Diane, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus. Inscription reads: I O M. This is shorthand for I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) (E 5: 4414).

Volume 7

Faces of the seven divinities over the week. The difference on this one is that the Sun is listed first. They read: Sol, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn

Inscription: I(ovi), o(ptimo), m(aximo) et Serveria Lupula, coni (ux) in suo (E 7: 5736; also CIL 13: 6728).

Bust of each of the seven deities of the week. Saturn, Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus (E 7: 5821).

Large monument. Planetary deities in the following order: Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn (E 7: 5865).

Volume 8

A column with the gods on them in planetary order and one additional deity. It has four sides with two of them paired together on each side. 1) Saturn and Sol, 2) Luna and Mars, 3) Mercury and Jupiter, 4) Venus and Fortune (E 8: 5916).

Monument that exalts Jupiter as the highest deity, but includes the other six. The following inscription is found: I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(axiom)...Iunoni [Re]gimae, Cas[s]i(i) (duo) Victorinus [et] Urbicus (ibentes) p(osuerunt). Busts of the deities in the following order: Saturn and Sol together; Luna, Mars, and Mercury together; Jupiter, and Venus together. Some of the busts are damaged, but they can be reasonably recognized (E 8: 5927).

Monument with inscription: I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(axiom); atto, Sen-nae[I fili]us, ...Senn[ii?] Primanu[s et] Ibernus...de suo po[s(uerunt)]. The bust of each of the seven planets is found in the following order: Saturn, Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercure, Jupiter, and Venus (E 8: 5996).

Volume 9

He displays a decoration of the busts of each of the seven planetary deities. Saturn, Sol (Apollo), Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus (E 9: 7155).

Volume 10

Columns full figure of each deity. Order was Venus, Jupiter, Mer-

cury, Lune, Sol, and Saturn. This is the same deities in order (E 10: 5856).

Volume 11

A Hexagonal block with only six of the planetary deities on them: Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus (E 11: 8594).

Appendix B

Inscriptions Referring to the Planetary Week

References to the planetary names for the days of the week can be found on both Christian and non-Christian monuments. The inscriptions below generally date from the first through fifth centuries AD. I have two references in the BC period from Roman writers (Tibullus and Horace).

A significant number of Christian tombstones can be recognized with the *chi-rho* symbol and/or use of the Greek letters alpha and omega on them. This helps us to pinpoint their dating as the *chi-rho* was not used in Christianity until the mid-fourth century.

Author's note: Some of these inscriptions are typed in all caps because it was easier on my eyes to re-read the content and double check it with the original source. In each quote, the emphasis mine throughout.

Day of Saturn

Tibullus (55-19 BC)

“Either birds or words of evil omen were my pretexts, or there was the **holy day of Saturn** to detain me” (*Elegies*, 1.3.17-18). Latin: “Aut ego sum causatus aves aut omina dira, **Saturni sacram me tenuisse diem.**”

Pompei, first century

Ive n | illa || nata | **diie Satv** | Ora secv | v IIII Non AV (CIL 4: 294)

Cuma, second or third century

d.m. | Saturnae | **die Saturni** | nata, **diem Satur|ni diem** functam, | vix. annis III | m. V d. XX. (D: 8526)

Rome, second century

(corvus inter duas protomas) d.m. | Blastione (sic) vix. An. VI | mensib. VIII dieb. XIII hora I | natus V k Septembres | hora diei VI **die Lunae**, | defunctus III idus Iunias | hor. prim. diei die

Saturni, | item matri eius, quae vixit | annis XX dieb. XXX hors X, | reliquit eum mens XII d XX. | Blastus pater filio piissimo | fecit. (CIL 4: 13602; D: 8528)

Rome, third century

d.m. | Erotis alumno | duicissimo et pammuso | gymnico Valentines | filies mees, vixit annos | XVI, | defunctus est idibus | Iunis **die Saturni** | ora nona (corona, palma) (CIL 6: 10159; 5168b)

Rome, early third century (from worshiper of Mithras)

Natus prima luce / duobus augg. co(n)s(ulibus) / Severo et Anton [ino] / XII k(alendas) decem[bres] / **dies Saturni** / luna XVIII (CIMRM 1: 498)

Dies Solis

Pompei, mid-first century

IX K IVNIAS INPIIRATOR / **DI II S FVIT SOLIS** (AE 1908: 223)

Pompei, mid-first century

NIIRONII CAISARII AVGVSTO COSSO LENTVL COSSI
FIL COS VIII IDVS FEBRARIAS **DIIS SOLIS** LVNA XIII IIX
NVN CVMIS V NVN POMPIIIS (AE 1897: 24)

Pannonia, early fourth century

IMP. CAES. FL. VAL. CONSTANTIVS | Felix. Maximus | AQ-
UAS IASAS. OLIM. VI. IGNIS. CONSUMATAS | CVM POR-
TICIBUS ET OMNIBUS ORNAMENTIS | AD PRISTINAM
FACIEM RESTITUIT | PROVISIONE. ETIAM. PIETATIS
SUAE NUNDINAS. **DIE SOLIS.** | PERPETI. ANNO CONSTI-
TUIT | CURANTE VAL CATULLINO V.P.P.P.PP SUPER. (vir
perfectissimus, Praepositus, Pannoniae superioris) (D: 704)

Rome, late fourth century

(natu)S Honorio (n. p. et fl. evodio) VC CONSS. (X kal. sept. **di**)
E SOLIS. (lu)NA XII SIGNO (capricor)NVS (qui vixit annos) II
DES XXX (horas? vigin)TI SIPTIMV (kalend) BAGET IN
PACE TERVS (AE 1905: 79)

Day of Luna (Monday)

Roman Empire, first few centuries

in h. d. d. | deo Mercu|rio, Fortun. Re|d. sacr., | M. Vir. | Marcellus DE|CIAL. I. F. S. A. sing. cos. p. p. k. III d. s. l. | l. m. **d. L. X. K. IVN. L. V.***” (D: 2525)

*The last line, which is in bold, is abbreviated for Die Lvnae, X kalendas Ivniās, lvna qvinte”

Verona, first few centuries

L Helvidio Thallo natvs Amast[r] Pont **d Lunae** vixit ann LXX d VII L Helvidius Marcianus frater (CIL 5: 3467)

Rome, second century

(corvus inter duas protomas) d.m. | Blastione (sic) vix. An. VI | mensib. VIII dieb. XIII hora I | natus V k Septembres | hora diei VI **die Lunae**, | defunctus III idus Iunias | hor. prim. diei die Saturni, | item matri eius, quae vixit | annis XX dieb. XXX hors X, | reliquit eum mens XII d XX. | Blastus pater filio piissimo | fecit (CIL 4: 13602; D: 8528)

For another reference to this day of the week, see AE 1982:985.

Day of Mars (Tuesday)

Lyon, third century

(ascia) d.m. | et memoriae aetern[ae] | Vitalini Felicis vet. Leg. [I] | M. homini sapientissim[o] | et fidelissimo, negotia[tor]i Lugdunensi artis cr[e]tariae, qui vixit annis [L]VIII m. V d. X, natus est **d[ie] Martis, die Martis prob[a]tus, die Martis** missione[m] | percepit, **die Martis** def[un]ctus est, faciendum c[ur] | Vitalin Felicissimus fi[li]us et Iulia Nice coni| unx et sub ascia dedi|caverunt (D: 7531)

Rome, mid-fourth century

Balentinano et balenti Itervni qvi vixit annos vi m xi D xvi EST VxcAL Dec **D Martis*** Merenti in Pace. Balerivs Depositvs Bene (ICUR 1: 208) *the D is short for dies.

Rome, mid-fifth century

MEMORIAM ARCELLI RECES SIT DIE MARTIS LVNA XXI

IDVS AVG VSTAS AP CCCCXLI (AE 1893: 62)

For more references for this day of the week, see CIL 9: 21550;
AE 2003: 223; ICUR 1: 3455.

Day of Mercury (Wednesday)

Rome, first few centuries

L. Caecilius L. l. Syrus | natus mense Maio | hora noctis VI | **die Mercuri** | vixit ann. VI dies XXXXIII | mortuus est III K (alendas) Iulias | hora X | elatus est h. III frequentia maxima (CIL 6: 13782; D: 8529)

Rome, fourth or fifth century

[dp...no]na[s [...**di**]e **Mercuris** [qui vix ann]us XXXVII me [ses...di]es V trebunus [equitum] Promotorum (D: 9212)

Rome, mid fifth century

HIC IACET NOMINE MATRONA C(LARISSIMA) F(EMINA) IN PACE | UXOR CORNELI PRIMICERI(I) CENARIORUM | FILIA PORFORI PRIMICERI(I) MONETARIO|RUM QU(A)E VIXIT PL(US) M(INUS) AN(NOS) XXIII QU(A)E RECESSIT | **DIE MERCURIS** (H)ORA VIII ET DEPOSITA DIE | IOVIS IDUUM MAIARUM INCONTRA | COLMNA VII CONS (ULATU) FL(AVI) HERCULANI V(IRI) C(LARISSIMI) || D (IS) M(ANIBUS) (CIL 6: 8460)

For more references to this day of the week, see AE 1968: 197;
CIL 5: 4850.

Day of Jupiter (Thursday)

Horace (65-8 BC)

“O Jupiter, who givest and takest away sore afflictions, cries the mother of a child that for five long months has been ill abed, if the quartan chills leave my child, then on the morning of the day of the week which thou appointest a fast, he shall stand naked in the Tiber” (*Satires*, 2.3.288-290).

Dacia, early third century

I. o. m. | C. Sentius | Anicetus | dec. col. Sar. | Patron. col. | Fabr. |

Prim. | Mun. Sept. Apul. | v. s. l. m. | Augg. [n]nn. imp. Ant. II
et.... Cos. | X k. Iun., lun. XVIII, **die Iovis** (D: 7144)

Faleria, first few centuries

Dvlcissimo. Felisioni. Fecit. Virginia V. Eivs benemeriti. Qui.
Vixit. Plvs. Minvs. Annos. XLV / Mesis. VI. Dies. XXXII.
Depositvs. Est. Pos. / V. Kalendas Ivnijs. **Die. Iovis** / Des. Ora.
Secvnda (CIL 11: 7539)

Aquileia, first few centuries

Bonememorivs / Severvs Kalendis / Avgvstis recisit / **die Iovis**
abvit / ann V mesis VII d XXII / parentes fecerunt / [inf]
elicissimo (CIL 5: 1707)

Day of Venus (Friday)

Aquileia, first few centuries

AVRELIA EVSTOCIA VIXIT ANN II MENS X DIES XVII
CVIVS PATER K SAEPVLTVRAE TRADIDIT NATA EST
DIE VENERIS ORA XI EO DIE DEFUNCTA EST ORA
SECVNDA **DIE VENERIS** ISBIOVINA QI VIXIT ANNOS M
IOVINVS AIIAXIIMIIIIIII D VI REQVIESCIT III (CIL 5: 1634)

Rome, late fourth century

Benemerenti in Pace...Que Vixit Annus Quartur[menses]... Mor
Filiae DVI CISSIMAE Deposita[e in pace] Septimum Kalendas
Septembris **Die Veneris** [post] Consvlatv DN Harchadi IIII ET
Evty Chiani VC ConS (ICUR 1: 473)

Rome, mid-fifth century

Pastoribeneme Renti deposito XIII Kal NOV Valentin[iano VI
CONS.] **Die Veneris** Qvivixit An[no] [mens]esV XC[I] (ICUR 1:
730)

Appendix C

Constantine's Sunday Laws and the Title Pontifex Maximus

In 321 AD, Constantine issued two Sunday laws. These are discussed in chapter 3. In the past, I (along with others) have tended to view Constantine's Sunday laws from the perspective of Church history. This has left me and others making the assumption that his rulings on this subject were supporting the Roman Catholic Church's view on Sunday rest.

Upon further review, I have found no Christian meaning in these laws (which are listed in chapter four). We also cannot assume that there would be any such meaning intended. He venerated the sun in several ways, which we discussed in chapter four and will discuss some more in this Appendix section. Moreover, the Roman Church did not have a developed theology about Sunday rest in 321 AD. The first Roman Church Council to discuss Sunday rest does not occur until about 364 (Laodicea). How then should we view his Sunday laws?

At the time these laws were issued, Constantine was Western Roman Emperor. He also held the title pontifex maximus, which carried with it certain responsibilities that impact this subject matter.

The Romans had established religious traditions that spanned many centuries prior to his reign. For instance, the early Roman religion was governed by a college of priests called pontiffs; the head of it was titled pontifex maximus. Their duties included regulation of the sacred calendar of festivals. They announced when they occurred in the year (especially the pontifex maximus). Another duty was to regulate sacred laws involving worship of the pantheon of gods.

In the 40s BC, Julius Caesar wielded the religious title of the pontifex maximus in addition to having the political titles of Consul and Dictator. Using his religious authority, he made major changes to the calendar. The first Emperor Octavian Augustus took on the position of pontifex maximus. Future Emperors held this title until sometime in the 370s/380s AD. Though they did not always

follow the pontifical regulations with precision, they often used it properly to change the length of festivals or institute new ones. This is the perspective through which we can view Constantine's Sun-day laws.

Since Constantine held the title *pontifex maximus*, it means that he would be responsible for making certain decisions to govern the ancient religious traditions of the Roman people. One clear instance of this occurred on December 17, 320. He issued a law which permitted and defined the behavior of the pagan *haruspices*; it was received on the day after his first Sunday law (March 8, 321; CT: 16.10.1). Tacitus, writing a couple of centuries earlier, mentioned that pontiffs were involved with overseeing the *haruspices* (*Annals*, 11.15).

While the pontifical authority is important, religious tradition was also a serious concern to the Romans. Cicero, who lived from approximately 106 to 43 BC, was a major contributor to Roman thought as a statesman and lawyer. In his work *On Law*, he described special characteristics of the ancient Roman celebrations.

“Next, our provision for holidays and festivals* ordains rest from lawsuits and controversies for free men, and from labour and toil for slaves. Whoever plans the official year ought to arrange that these festivals shall come at the completion of the various labours of the farm...” (idem, 2.12[29]). *The latin reads: “feriarum festorumque dierum.”

The principles described by Cicero continued to be applied to Roman festivals during the Imperial period. This included the *Saturnalia* (Dec 17-24) and the *Kalends* of January (Jan 1-3). To read more about how these Roman religious concepts were applied to these festivals, read the attachment at the end of this appendix.

Constantine's 321 Sunday laws matched the anticipated patterns for festivals described by Cicero and other Roman authors. The issues of work and agricultural toils were addressed in the first law (March 7). While farmers were not granted rest on the day, their appropriate behavior was discussed to be consistent with other festivals. Many annual Roman festivals related in some way to the harvest cycle. It was not logical to allow farmers off on Sunday since there was not a weekly connection to the harvest. In

the second law, most legal proceedings were suspended and freedom for slaves were addressed (July 3). The Latin word *festo* was employed in this law.

Another factor to be considered with this topic is the prevalence of sun worship. In the century leading up to Constantine's reign, the Empire experienced the elevation of sun worship in the entity of Sol Invictus. At times, Sol was the highest object of worship (as discussed in chapter three). By the time Constantine became Western Emperor (312), reverence for Sol Invictus was an imperial heritage (albeit nuanced). He honored Sol on monuments and coins.

When we review the information presented thus far in the article, Constantine's Sunday laws become better understood. The Christian influence is absent. Instead, Constantine simultaneously merged two Roman ideals; one was older and the other newer.

He utilized the old title *pontifex maximus* to establish a festival on Sunday. Between the two laws, he discussed the necessary subjects according to ancient custom: labor, agricultural, and courts. At the same time, the focus of the law was the sun or Sol, which was a more recent development. This continued the newer trend.

There are two other examples that exemplify his use of *pontifex*. In an inscription found in the Balkans region, we learn that Constantine adjusted the ancient Roman *nundinae* or market day so that it would occur every *dies solis* instead of every eighth day (Orellius, p 140). This was hardly a move to support any sort of Sabbath-rest on the day. This act reinforced his pontifical merger of the older and newer systems. Later in his life, he utilized pontifical authority to order a temple to be built and a priesthood established for the worship of his family lineage. This continued the Imperial cult which started with Octavian Augustus (*Roman Civilization: Selected Readings*, pp 579-580).

Constantine's Sun-day laws were qualitatively different than other Roman celebrations in that they established and regulated a weekly festival. The name Sun-day was a common name for this day of the week among pagans who adhered to the astrological planetary week (as discussed in chapter two). Neither of the 321

laws labeled Sunday the first day of the week or the Lord's day, which would be expected if Roman Church influence were present. Also, there was no mention of congregational gatherings. *Dies solis* was the second day of the week in the planetary weekly cycle.

We will briefly discuss how this analysis influences our view of contemporary Christian writers. Starting with Eusebius, Christian writers (especially from the Pro-Roman Church perspective) tried to attach Christian meaning to the 321 Sunday laws. This started with his work the *Life of Constantine*, which was composed about sixteen years later (idem, 4.18). In it, Eusebius misrepresented the content of the Sunday laws and added Christian meaning to them.

This was an anachronistic touch on his part. In his earlier work, *Church History*, he did not reference them at all. Keep in mind that he was the first Christian-affiliated writer to propose the idea of transferring the Biblical Sabbath to Sunday in about 330 AD (*Commentary on Psalms 92*; Odom, pp 291-292).

While many Christians who study this subject assume Constantine was influenced by Christians like Eusebius, it was the opposite. Eusebius likely derived his views on Sunday rest at least in part from the 321 Sunday laws rather than the other way around. In other words, he used these laws as an opportunity to further his transference agenda. Nearly 16 years later, He added details to the description of these laws that would fit his viewpoint.

The Emperor never ascribed Christian meaning to these laws. He did not even try to make Sunday an imitation day of the Biblical Sabbath because key elements, such as requiring rest for all people and closing markets, are absent. The necessary elements from Roman tradition were addressed. Furthermore, Constantine upheld protections for Biblical Sabbath observance (which we have discussed in another work: *Sabbath and Sunday Laws*, Appendix B). This means he was not involved in the 'Sabbath transference' theology of Eusebius.

Eusebius established a precedent which would be followed by future Christian historians (see Sozomen, *Church History*, 1.8). The tone was set for centuries to come. People ascribed meaning

to these laws that cannot be derived from the language used in them or the example of the person who enacted them.

After this analysis we are left with the conclusion that Constantine was not inspired by the Bible or any Christian leader to enact Sunday laws. He exercised the authority of the pontifex maximus to establish Sunday as the weekly festival. In doing so, he considered ancient traditions regarding *festus*. Additionally, he incorporated the newly popularized adoration of Sol. Though the issue of Sunday rest was not settled in the Roman Catholic Church for centuries later, Christian authors used his laws to their advantage to push for Sunday observance as a replacement for the Biblical Sabbath.

Viewing these Sun-day laws through the perspective of Roman history is fascinating. I think a paradigm is established to interpret them with more historical accuracy.

Appendix Attachment

Constantine's Sunday law mirrors other ancient Roman celebrations such as Saturnalia and the Kalends of January.

Lucian of Samosata, who lived (125-180 AD), wrote about the celebration of Saturnalia (it started December 17). At times, this celebration was held for just a few days. In later years it was extended for up to seven days. Saturn was the main deity remembered during this time, but others were also extolled. Lucian commented on the freedom from work and business were granted to the people during it.

“To begin with, it only lasts a week; that over, I am a private person, just a man in the street. Secondly, during my week the serious is barred; no business allowed. Drinking and being drunk, noise and games and dice, appointing of kings and feasting of slaves, singing naked, clapping of tremulous hands, an occasional ducking of corked faces in icy water – such are the functions over which I preside... therefore the merry noise on every side, the son and the games; therefore the slave and the free as one... All business, be it public or private is forbidden during the feast days... all men shall be equal, slave and free, rich and poor, one with another

er...” ((*Saturnalia*, sections 2, 7; *Chronosolon*, sections 13-14).

Marcobius wrote about the issue of legal proceedings. It seems that at times lawsuits were barred just on a few days during this seven-day extravaganza (*Saturnalia*, 1.10.4-5).

Libianus, who lived from 314 to 394 AD, described the widespread celebration of the Kalends of January. Paganism was still strong in the Roman world of that time. This celebration was held from January 1 through 3. He wrote:

“The festival of the Kalends, is celebrated everywhere as far as the limits of the Roman Empire extend ... A stream of presents pours itself out on all sides ... The highroads and footpaths are covered with whole processions of laden men and beasts ... As the thousand flowers which burst forth everywhere are the adornment of Spring, so are the thousand presents poured out on all sides, the decorations of the Kalends feast. It may justly be said that it is the fairest time of the year.... The Kalends festival banishes all that is connected with toil, and allows men to give themselves up to undisturbed enjoyment. From the minds of young people it removes two kinds of dread: the dread of the schoolmaster and the dread of the stern pedagogue. The slave also it allows, as far as possible, to breathe the air of freedom...” (quoted from Miles, 168–9).

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All early Christians kept the Sabbath. However, in the late second century, some Christians begin to meet on the first day of the week; they named it Sunday. This day was known to most pagans as the second day of the week. The Roman Imperial government did not recognize Sunday as the first day of the week until 425 AD.

How did Sunday come to be known as the first day of the week? In this work, you will learn about the history of the seven-day weekly cycle in the Roman Empire. This study will also reveal insight into early Church history.



Kelly McDonald, Jr. is President of the Bible Sabbath Association (BSA). He is also an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries. He has written a combined total of over 40 books and booklets on pursuing Jesus Christ and Biblical history.