

Changeling: The Metamorphosis of Christian into Pagan

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The pagan names of the planetary week have been perpetuated in the calendar in use among the so-called Christian nations. Every time we look at the calendar we have before us a constant reminder of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity that took place as a result of the great religious apostasy – that “falling away” foretold by the apostle Paul, which occurred in the early centuries of the Christian church and made the modern Babel of conflicting sects and creeds which profess the name of Christ.¹

It is understandable, though unfortunate, that modern Christians assume the week as it is known today has cycled continuously and without interruption ever since Creation: the entire world has been united in using the Gregorian calendar for 60 years while different parts of the western world accepted the Julian calendar almost 2,000 years ago! However, *ignorance* of truth does not change what *is* truth; as God sadly observed in Hosea 4:6: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” It is the responsibility of every individual to search out for themselves what is truth and live their lives by that knowledge.

The amalgamation of Christianity with paganism in the form of Mithraism was a process that took several hundred years. Once the process was complete, the true Sabbath of the fourth commandment was lost under the assumption that the modern form of the planetary week had come down unchanged since Creation. While references to new Christians still clinging to pagan practices can be found in the New Testament, the biggest change crept in over calendation methods. The solar Julian calendar with its continuous weekly cycle was very different from the luni-solar calendar used by the Jews and apostolic Christians. Conducting business with a society that used a different method of tracking time was difficult. As early as the last part of the

¹ R. L. Odom, *Sunday in Roman Paganism*, (New York: TEACH Services, Inc., 2003), p. 202.

first century, Ignatius “pioneered the movement toward substituting the Sunday observance for the Sabbath observance.”²

The Christians in Rome were among the first to begin worshipping by the Julian rather than the Biblical calendar. This created confusion among the pagans. Around A.D. 175-178, Celsus, a Roman philosopher and Stoic, wrote *On the True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christians*.³ This was a powerful denunciation of Christianity. While his writing “exhibits comparatively little of the bitterness which characterized [most pagans’] attacks”⁴ he nevertheless mocked Christians for copying the heathen. “The result of his work was to place the Christian in a very unfavorable light in the eyes of the Romans and their rulers.”⁵

While no copies of Celsus’ work still exist, much of it was quoted in a massive work by Origen, *Contra Celsum*. One quote particularly is fascinating because it refers to Mithraism and the planetary gods.⁶ It is interesting to note, too, that Origen did not try to refute any parallels Celsus drew between Christianity and Mithraism, but instead simply sought to evade the charges.⁷

The extent to which some Christians were embracing pagan practices confused many of the pagan Romans. Tertullian (c. 160-225), an early Christian writer, wrote a defense of Christians which reveals the process then taking place with some Christians worshipping on Sunday, others on Saturday, still others clinging to the Biblical (lunar calculated) Sabbath. His statements clearly reveal that Christians *had* been mistaken for Mithraists:

Others, certainly more cultured, think the Sun is the god of the Christians, because it is known that we pray toward the east and make a festivity upon the day of the Sun. Do you do less? Do not most of you, in affectation of worshipping the heavenly bodies, at times move your lips toward the sun rising. You certainly are the ones who also received the Sun into the register of the seven days, and from among the days preferred it⁸

² Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 22; Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1956, James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts, eds.), Vol. 1, pp. 59-65.

³ See *On the True Doctrine*, translated by R. Joseph Hoffmann, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁴ “Celsus the Platonist,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, NewAdvent.org.

⁵ Odom, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁶ Origen, *Against Celsus*, book 6, chapter 22 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), Vol. 4, p. 583.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, Book 1, Chapter 13 in J. P. Migne, *Patrologiæ Latinæ Cursus Completus*, (Paris, 1844-1855), Volume 1, columns 369-372.

It is easy to see how Christians worshipping on Sunday would be confused with pagans. The similarities between Christ and Mithra include:

- Both claimed to be mankind's savior
- Virgin birth, attended by shepherds
- Traveling teacher; taught morality
- Twelve followers
- Miracles
- Birthdate on December 25⁹
- Sacrificed self for world peace
- Buried in a tomb; resurrected the third day
- Mankind's savior
- Known as the Good Shepherd and Light of the World; considered the Way, the Truth and the Life
- Believers promised immortality

When Christians also adopted the Julian calendar for worship, the pagans could see little difference between Christianity and their own Mithraism, other than the Christian refusal to burn incense to the emperor, which was viewed as treason. Another quote by Tertullian is very significant, again revealing the differing practices among Christians, with some worshipping on Sunday, others on Saturday which he shows to be a *deviation* from Jewish practice (the apostolic Christians at this time were still keeping the Sabbath by the Biblical calendar):

We shall be taken for Persians [Mithraists], perhaps . . . The reason for this, I suppose, is that it is known that we pray towards the east . . . Likewise, if we devote the day of the Sun to festivity (from a far different reason from Sun worship), we are in a second place from those who devote the day of Saturn, *themselves also deviating by way of a Jewish custom of which they are ignorant.*¹⁰

This quote affirms that worship on Saturday was itself a deviation from the Jewish custom of worship on the seventh-day of the original calendar.

Do not assume that because *some* Christians accepted pagan calendation and practices that the change occurred without protest from other Christians. Apostolic Christians, those who strictly adhered to the teachings of the apostles and their immediate spiritual descendants, were greatly upset at what they saw as pagan apostasy creeping into the church. The prejudice against

⁹ While Christ was not born on Dec. 25, it remains modern Christendom's "official" birthday for the Messiah.

¹⁰ Tertullian, *Apologia*, chap. 16, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologiæ Latinæ*, Vol. 1, cols. 369-372; standard English translation in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), Vol. 3, p. 31.

Christians was extreme. In fact, the main thrust of Tertullian's work, the *Apologeticum*, was to defend Christianity against the unreasonable treatment of Christians by the pagans.

Tertullian, gifted with a biting wit and with great relish for irony, points out the inconsistent treatment of Christians versus common criminals by the magistrates.¹¹ Whereas a common criminal was tortured until he *confessed* to a crime, Christians who confessed to being "Christian" were tortured until they *denied* it. While Christians were accused of ritual incest and eating babies, such charges had never been proven. Furthermore, Tertullian wryly observed, the pagans (who *did* abandon unwanted children) were so licentious that incest for them was an inevitable if unknown occurrence!

It is not for Christians today to judge those who lived through extreme persecution in the past. However, it should be understood that paganism made inroads into Christendom only under extreme protest and through the blood of martyrs. Those who refused to drop a pinch of incense in honor of the "divine" emperor would often be forced to hold a handful of incense mixed with burning coals. If the burning mixture was dropped out of reflex or if it fell only after the fingers were burned off, the pagans would rejoice that proper honor had been given the emperor.¹²

Christians were also expected to offer a pinch of incense to the other Roman gods. "Prayer to the planets on their respective days was a part of the worship of the heavenly bodies."¹³ Some modern theologians acknowledge, "Yes, when the seventh-day Sabbath is calculated by the Biblical calendar, it will fall differently; *but* all God requires of us is to keep the seventh-day Sabbath by whatever calendar society uses." Such a belief reveals a tragic lack of knowledge of the issues at stake. The planetary week with the seven astrological gods was clearly seen by apostolic Christians to be linked to demon worship. Scripture is adamant that the rites of paganism are nothing but devil worship: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles [pagans] sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."¹⁴

¹¹ For further research, see www.tertullian.org.

¹² Antonio Gallonio, *De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus*, 1591. Published in English: *Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs*, A. R. Allinson, trans., (London: Fortune Press, 1903), p. 143. The intent of the book was the "edification of the faithful" and published with the approval of the Roman Catholic Church.

¹³ Odom, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

¹⁴ I Corinthians 10:20

The illustration¹⁵ below, found in *Tortures and Torments of Christian Martyrs*, shows a martyr,



figure A, being forced to hold a handful of burning coals.¹⁶ The caption reads: “Martyr whose hand is filled with incense mingled with live coals, and who being constrained by the pain to scatter the incense, is said to have made sacrifice to the idol.” The cluster of thunderbolts in the customary shape of an X with a thick bisecting bolt, reveal the idol to be the planetary god, Jupiter.¹⁷ No true Christian, to save his life, would offer a pinch of incense to that day’s planetary god, not even Saturn – *even if* the seventh-day Sabbath on that lunation happened to coincide with Saturn’s day. To do so would acknowledge Saturn as “god” of that day.

Calendation encompasses much larger issues than has been understood. The day on which one worships reveals which God/god is being worshipped. The early Christians knew well that to worship by a pagan calendar was to give homage to a

pagan god. By worshipping on the Creator’s luni-solar calendar, they were declaring their allegiance to the God of Heaven.

Christianity’s acceptance of pagan calendation did not happen overnight. Some Christians compromised on one point, others on another. Some adhered strictly to the luni-solar calendar, while others kept the lunar Sabbath, but also acknowledged Sunday. Still others kept both Saturday and Sunday, while some worshipped only on Sunday. The compromises of one generation were taken a little further by the next.

At every step in the course of the apostasy, at every step taken in adopting the forms of sun worship, and against the adoption and the observance of Sunday itself, there had been constant protest by all real Christians. Those who remained

¹⁵ This illustration was a copper-plate engraving done by Antonio Tempesta of Firenza (Florence) taken after the designs of Giovanni de Guerra of Modena, painter to Pope Sixtus V.

¹⁶ Gallonio, *Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs*, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁷ Jupiter’s Day, *dies Jovis*, corresponds to the modern Thursday.

faithful to Christ and to the truth of the pure word of God observed the Sabbath of the Lord according to the commandment, and according to the word of God which sets forth the Sabbath as the sign by which the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is distinguished from all other gods. These accordingly protested against every phase and form of sun worship. Others compromised, especially in the East, by observing both Sabbath and Sunday. But in the west under Roman influences and under the leadership of the church and the bishopric of Rome, Sunday alone was adopted and observed.¹⁸

Because the calendars were so different, every area of life was necessarily affected. Those who did not have a heart-commitment to pure doctrine found it easy to excuse away their compromise. Scholars believe that Eusebius of Caesarea was the first ecclesiastical writer to spiritualize the pagan name of “Sunday” to make it more palatable for Christians. He said of *dies Solis*, Sunday: “on it to our souls the Sun of Righteousness rose.”¹⁹ He further wrote of seeing “the face of the glory of Christ, and to behold the day of His light.”²⁰

A record of the Christian transition to pagan calendation has been preserved in various sepulchral inscriptions. One Christian inscription refers to *dies Mercurii* (day of Mercury) in its text. The epitaph’s date is believed to be either A.D. 291 or 302.²¹ Another Christian inscription, one of the oldest dated ones to be discovered in Rome, refers to *dies Veneris* (day of Venus). What sets this particular inscription apart is that it lists both the Julian date *and* the luni-solar date! Dated A.D. 269, it states:

In the consulship of Claudius and Paternus, on the Nones of November, on the day of Venus, and on the 24th day of the lunar month, Leuces placed [this memorial] to her very dear daughter Severa, and to Thy Holy Spirit. She died [at the age] of 55 years, and 11 months [and] 10 days.²²

The “Nones” of November is November 5 which fell on the day of Venus, Friday. On that lunation this corresponded with the 24th day of the lunar month, or “Second Day” on the Biblical week.

This slow metamorphosis from pure, apostolic Christianity, to a Christianity intertwined with pagan calendation principles is largely responsible for the lack of knowledge existing today regarding the true calendar of the Creator. The pagan continuous weekly cycle reaches so far

¹⁸ A. T. Jones, *The Two Republics*, (Ithaca, Michigan: A. B. Publishing, Inc., n.d.), pp. 320-321.

¹⁹ Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms, Psalm 91* (Psalm 92 in A.V.), in J. P. Migne, *Patrologiæ Græccæ Cursus Completus*, (Paris, 1856-1866), Volume 23, column 1169.

²⁰ Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, Book 4, chapter 16, translated by W. J. Ferrar, Vol. 1, p. 207 as quoted in *ibid.*

²¹ E. Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinæ Christianæ Veteres*, (Berolini, 1925), Vol. 2, p. 118, #3033.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 193, #3391. See also, G. B. de Rossi, *Inscriptiones Christianæ Urbis Romæ*, Vol. 1, part 1, p. 18, #11.

back in history, it is assumed that a continuous weekly cycle has always existed. The historical facts of the Julian calendar have been forgotten and circular reasoning has been used to “prove” that Saturday is the Bible Sabbath: *i.e.*, the modern Gregorian week has continuously cycling seven-day weeks therefore weeks have always cycled continuously. Saturday, then, *must* be the “seventh-day Sabbath” of the fourth commandment.

Catholics and Protestants worshipping on Sunday, the first day of the Gregorian week, has been taken as further “proof” that Saturday is the seventh-day Sabbath of the Bible. After all, “If Saturday is not the true Sabbath, why would Satan bother with having people worship on Sunday?” This double deception has affirmed Saturday sabbatarians in their assumption that Saturday is the Bible Sabbath. However, the facts of history shine light through the darkness of error and tradition to reveal the pagan origins of both modern days of worship, Sunday and Saturday.