

# Changing the Calendar: Papal Sign of Authority

---

By eLaine Vornholt  
Laura Lee Vornholt-Jones

**T**he Catholic Church has always been very open about her role in changing the calendar. Modern sabbatarians have *assumed* that Saturday was the Bible Sabbath, but the Catholic Church herself has never denied the role she played in rejecting the luni-solar Sabbath of the Bible and promoting instead worship on *dies Solis*, the day of the Sun.

The decision of the Council of Nicæa to set aside Biblical calendation was merely confirmed by Constantine in royal edict. The bishops wanted to destroy any ties to Judaism. Anti-semitism played a role, as can be seen in the previously quoted statement by Constantine: “Let us have nothing in common with this odious people [the Jews] . . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Patrick Madrid, in a radio interview on January 5, 2006, made a point of this:

There was a distinct break between the Old Testament requirements: the rituals and Mosaic covenant demands dealing with the Sabbath worship and animal sacrifices, and that sort of thing. And they wanted to show that Christianity was distinct from Judaism. It *came* from Judaism, but it was *distinct* from it.<sup>2</sup>

In endeavoring to show this distinction, not only was the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath transferred to the Julian Sunday, but all of the annual feasts which, up until that time were still observed, were replaced with popular pagan festivals, giving them a Christian slant and incorporating Christian names.

To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and, *by a complicated but skilful adjustment of the calendar*, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Christianity – now far sunk in idolatry . . . to shake hands.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1893), Vol. II, pp. 563-564.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Madrid, comments on “Open Line,” EWTN, Global Catholic Radio Network, January 5, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, (New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959), p.105, emphasis supplied.

T. Enright, Bishop of St. Alphonsus Church, clearly states:

It was the Catholic Church which made the law obliging us to keep Sunday holy. The church made this law long after the Bible was written. Hence said law is not in the Bible. The Cath. [sic.] Church abolished not only the Sabbath, *but all the other Jewish festivals.*<sup>4</sup>

In this same letter, Enright offers \$1000 “to any one who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound, under grievous sin, to keep Sunday holy.” There is no denying that the Catholic Church is responsible for the change:

The Commandments, or Decalogue . . . Written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, this Divine code was received from the Almighty by Moses amid the thunders of Mount Sinai . . . Christ resumed these Commandments in the double precept of charity – love of God and of neighbor; He proclaimed them as binding under the New Law in Matt., xix and in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt., v). He also amplified or interpreted them, . . . *The Church, on the other hand, after changing the day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, to the first, made the Third Commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord’s Day.* The Council of Trent (Sess. VI, can. Xix) condemns those who deny that the Ten Commandments are binding on Christians.<sup>5</sup>

It is not really fair to accuse Roman Catholics of dishonesty when all along they have said that their church changed the day of worship to Sunday. Following is a sampling of the numerous statements made by Catholics honestly stating that they are responsible for the calendar change that transferred worship to *dies Solis*:

- “The Sunday...is purely a creation of the Catholic Church.” *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, January 1883.
- “Sunday...is the law of the Catholic Church alone...” *American Sentinel (Catholic)*, June 1893.
- “Sunday is a Catholic institution and its claim to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles...From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first.” *Catholic Press*, Sydney, Australia, August 1900.

---

<sup>4</sup> Letter by T. Enright, Bishop of St. Alphonsus Church, St. Louis, Missouri, June, 1905, emphasis supplied.

<sup>5</sup> Charles George Herbermann, Knights of Columbus Catholic Truth Committee, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (Harvard University: Encyclopedia Press, 1908), p. 153, emphasis supplied.

- “They [the Protestants] deem it their duty to keep the Sunday holy. Why? Because the Catholic Church tells them to do so. They have no other reason . . .The observance of Sunday thus comes to be an ecclesiastical law entirely distinct from the divine law of Sabbath observance . . . The author of the Sunday law . . . is the Catholic Church.” *Ecclesiastical Review*, February 1914.

Because this change occurred so long ago, people today have forgotten the facts of history. It is impossible to find the Biblical Sabbath via a pagan calendar; therefore, Saturday cannot be the true Sabbath. Not knowing this, Saturday sabbatarians have assumed that Saturday is the Sabbath from which worship was removed. It is true that there are plenty of quotes from Catholic writers that refer to Saturday as “Sabbath”:

- “Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change (Saturday Sabbath to Sunday) was her act...And the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things.” H. F. Thomas, Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons.
- “Sunday is founded, not of scripture, but on tradition, and is distinctly a Catholic institution. As there is no scripture for the transfer of the day of rest from the last to the first day of the week, Protestants ought to keep their Sabbath on Saturday and thus leave Catholics in full possession of Sunday.” *Catholic Record*, September 17, 1893.
- “Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the [Roman Catholic] Church, has no good reasons for its Sunday theory, and ought logically to keep Saturday as the Sabbath.” John Gilmary Shea, *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, January 1883.
- “Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the Church ever did, happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. ‘The day of the Lord’ was chosen, not from any direction noted in the Scriptures, but from the Church’s sense of its own power...People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority, should logically become 7th Day [*sic.*] Adventists, and keep Saturday holy.” *St. Catherine Church Sentinel*, Algonac, Michigan, May 21, 1995.
- “Is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and to abstain on that day from unnecessary servile work? Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.” James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (1917 edition), p. 72-73 (16th Edition, p. 111; 88th Edition, p. 89).

The facts of history having been forgotten by most people, many Catholic writers have used planetary week terminology (i.e., “Saturday”), which could be considered deceptive. It is also

likely that many of the Catholic writers themselves were unaware of the full history behind the modern week. Catholic scholars have always known the truth, though. As conservative Catholic scholar and apologist Patrick Madrid stated:

[The] calendar that we follow, including Seventh-day Adventists, is not only a calendar that was devised by the Catholic Church, but also it is a calendar that's based upon the solar year, not the lunar year. And the Jewish calendar that was observed in the time of Christ . . . follows a lunar calendar, which is several days short of the solar year. So the great irony is that even the Seventh-day Adventists themselves are not worshipping on exactly the same Sabbath day as the Jews of the time of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Over the centuries, as the facts of history have been forgotten, Saturday has been assumed to be the Biblical seventh-day Sabbath. However, when the Julian calendar was being enforced upon Christians for ecclesiastical use, no one at the time confused *dies Saturni* with *Sabbato*. All knew that they were two different days by *two distinct calendar systems*. An excellent example of “Saturday” being knowingly or unknowingly substituted for “Sabbath” is found in the canons of the Council of Laodicea.

After the edict of Nicæa, apostolic Christians continued to worship by the luni-solar calendar. The Council of Laodicea was convened approximately 40 years later to enforce the acceptance of “the Lord’s Day” in place of the lunar Sabbath.

In order, therefore, to the accomplishment of her original purpose, it now became necessary for the church to secure legislation extinguishing all exemption, and prohibiting the observance of the Sabbath so as to quench that powerful protest [against worship on Sunday]. And now . . . the “truly divine command” of Constantine and the council of Nicæa that “nothing” should be held “in common with the Jews,” was made the basis and the authority for legislation, utterly *to crush out the observance of the Sabbath* of the Lord, and to *establish the observance of Sunday only in its stead*.<sup>7</sup>

Canon 29 of the Council of Laodicea demanded:

---

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Madrid on “Open Line,” EWTN, Global Catholic Radio Network, January 5, 2006. To read or hear Madrid’s comments in their entirety, please visit: [4angelspublications.com/articles/catholic\\_scholar.php](http://4angelspublications.com/articles/catholic_scholar.php).

<sup>7</sup> A. T. Jones, *The Two Republics*, (Ithaca, Michigan: A. B. Publishing, Inc., n.d.), p. 321, emphasis supplied.

Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ.

Roman Catholic bishop, Karl Josef von Hefele (1809-1893), states that the word "Saturday" is supplied in modern translations. Von Hefele is a very credible authority on the original word choice used at the Council of Laodicea. A German scholar, theologian and professor of Church history, he was educated at Tübingen University. One of his greatest works was *History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents*. As a bishop and theologian, he certainly had access to original documents in the Vatican archives!

According to von Hefele, the original word used in both the Greek and the Latin was actually "Sabbath." The word "anathema" (accursed) was used in place of "shut out." The Latin version clearly does not contain any reference to *dies Saturni* (Saturday) but instead uses *Sabbato*, or "Sabbath":

*Quod non oportet Christianos Judaizare et otiare in Sabbato, sed operari in eodem die. Preferentes autem in veneratione Dominicum diem si vacre voluerint, ut Christiani hoc faciat; quod si reperti fuerint Judaizare Anathema sint a Christo.*

It bears repeating: Christians at the time of the calendar change *were not confused over Saturday being the Sabbath*. Everyone knew that *dies Saturni* had recently been moved from the first day of the pagan week to the last day of the pagan week, while *Sabbato* was the seventh day of the Jewish luni-solar calendar with which no one in power wished to be associated. Again, *these were two different days on two distinct calendar systems*.

Eusebius of Caesarea, a church historian contemporary with Constantine and his frequent flatterer, is often quoted regarding the Sunday legislation of the time. It is generally believed that he was the priest that finally baptized Constantine shortly before his death. At the opening ceremonies of the Council of Nicæa, Eusebius sat to the right of Constantine and gave the opening address.<sup>8</sup> Eusebius was very clear that the exaltation of *dies Solis* was over the Jewish *Sabbato* and not over the pagan *dies Saturni*.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Eusebius of Caesarea," [www.NewAdvent.org](http://www.NewAdvent.org).

All things whatsoever it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's day, as being more appropriate, and chief, and first, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath.<sup>9</sup>

It was at this time that Sylvester I, Bishop of Rome during the Council of Nicæa, attempted to rename the days of the pagan week by the Biblical week-day names. "This was the era of Constantine the Great, when the public position of the Church so greatly improved, a change which must certainly have been very noticeable at Rome."<sup>10</sup>

Catholics, knowing full well that there is no Biblical reason to worship on Sunday, have seen how inconsistent Protestants are.

- "It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians, that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church." Priest Brady, in an address reported in *The News*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, March 18, 1903.
- **"Who Do We Reverence and Pay Homage to by Keeping Sunday Holy?"** From this we may understand how great is the authority of the church in interpreting or explaining to us the commandments of God – an authority which is acknowledged by the universal practice of the whole Christian world, even of those sects which profess to take the holy Scriptures as their sole rule of faith, since they observe as the day of rest not the seventh day of the week demanded by the Bible, but the first day. Which we know is to be kept holy, only from the tradition and teaching of the Catholic church." Henry Gibson, *Catechism Made Easy*, #2, 9th edition, vol. 1, pp. 341-342.
- "It was the Catholic church which...has transferred this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Roman Catholic] church." Monsignor Louis Segur, *Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today*, 1868, p. 213.
- "Protestants...accept Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for public worship after the Catholic Church made the change...But the Protestant mind does not seem to realize

---

<sup>9</sup> Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms, Psalm 91* (Psalm 92 in the A.V.), in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 23, column 1172, author's translation, as quoted in R. L. Odom, *Sunday Sacredness in Roman Paganism*, Review & Herald Publ. Assoc., 1944, p. 141.

<sup>10</sup> "Pope Sylvester I" (d. December 31, 335), Catholic Encyclopedia, [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org).

that...in observing the Sunday, they are accepting the authority of the spokesman for the church, the Pope.” *Our Sunday Visitor*, February 15, 1950.

- “The [Roman Catholic] Church changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday by right of the divine, infallible authority given to her by her founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant claiming the Bible to be the only guide of faith, has no warrant for observing Sunday.” *The Catholic Universe Bulletin*, August 14, 1942, p. 4.

A Catholic who believes that Christ was resurrected on Sunday is far more consistent than a Sunday-keeping Protestant who claims to base all of his belief on the Bible and the Bible only. Catholics place tradition and the decrees of their popes ahead of the Bible, so there is no inconsistency for them in believing that Sunday is the day of the resurrection. For them, truth is whatever tradition and their pope decree it to be.

However, for a Protestant to denounce the Catholics for following tradition rather than the Bible, and yet still worship on Sunday, is inconsistent in the extreme. Furthermore, for Jews and Saturday sabbatarians to insist that The Precise, Correct Day *does* matter to God, and then keep the seventh-day by the pagan, planetary calendar is even *more* inconsistent! If it is important to worship on the true Sabbath day, then the original calendar, established by God at creation, needs to be used to calculate when that Sabbath comes.

When the historical facts of the Julian calendar are understood, it is clearly established that Sunday is not the only worship day founded upon pagan calendation. Saturday, *dies Saturni*, the original first day of the planetary week is a counterfeit of the true seventh-day Sabbath day of the Bible.

An ancient proverb claimed: “He who controls the calendar, controls the world.” Who controls you? The day on which you worship, calculated by which calendar you use, reveals which God/god you are worshipping.