Who Changed the Sabbath?

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God."

Generally Admitted Facts

(1) THAT the Sabbath, the seventh day, was instituted on the closing day of the first Bible week (Genesis 2:1-3); (2) that this same Sabbath for the same reasons was enjoined in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:8-11); (3) that the same day was observed by Jesus and His disciples; (4) that, contrary to the above, the great majority of professed Christians are observing, with varied devotion, Sunday, the first day of the week; (5) that which day is the Sabbath is not a settled question, but a most widely agitated one in religious, municipal, state, and national legislative bodies; (6) that these facts have led many thousands of earnest souls to examine anew the evidences on which Sabbath and Sunday observances are based. Hence these questions:

"Who changed the Sabbath?"

"Was it not changed by Christ at His crucifixion or resurrection?"

"Did not the apostles change the Sabbath?"

"By what power was it changed?"

These questions we hope this little tract will answer, drawing its evidence from the Bible and reliable historical sources. What the Scriptures reveal every sincere Christian Protestant will accept. A counterfeit coin is no nearer genuine because of having been so considered by honest men for many years; and he would be a foe to the government and law who would continue its circulation after he knew it to be spurious. Neither is error any less error by having been considered as truth by the good of past generations. What does the Bible say? Let us inquire (1) what the prophets said Christ's attitude would be toward that law of which the Sabbath is a part; and (2) how these prophecies were fulfilled by Christ in His teaching and example.

I. What did the Prophets Say?

1. Through Moses God declares of Christ: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." Deuteronomy 18:18, 19.

2. The Lord tells us through Isaiah how Jesus Christ would regard His law: "The Lord [Jehovah] is well pleased for His [Christ's] righteousness' sake; He [Christ] will magnify the law, and make it honorable." Isaiah 42:21.

That this refers to Christ, see verse 19 of the same chapter.

3. The Spirit of Christ spoke through the prophets. (1 Peter 1:10, 11.) Christ, speaking by that Spirit through David, His great

ancestor, said of Himself at His first advent: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:7, 8.

In Hebrews 10:5-10, this scripture is applied directly and specifically to Christ.

II. Christ's Teaching and Example

1. Our Lord, by His own mouth, declares again and again that He came not to give a new law, but to teach God's will, or law. Note the following among many: "I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." John 12:49. See also John 8:28; 7:16, 17.

2. Seven centuries before the Son of God was manifest in the flesh, it was predicted that, through Him, the Father would "magnify the law, and make it honorable." Isaiah 42:21. Therefore "hear ye Him": "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I *came not to destroy,* but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, *one jot or one tittle* shall in nowise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-19, A. R. V.

It is difficult to see how language could be stronger. The Son of God came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill. To fulfill a law is to obey it perfectly, or fully. See Galatians 6:2. He goes even further than this: He declares, in the clearest possible language, that He did *not* come to *change* it, even to the extent of a jot, or *yod,* the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, or to a tittle, a little point that serves to distinguish one letter from another.

Certainly the fourth commandment, which declares that "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God," and gives the reason therefor, could not be changed to read, "The first day is the Sabbath," with the requisite reason, without changing many jots and tittles. The first day of the week, in the very nature of the case, could not be the rest day of God, for the Creator never rested on that day.

In Luke 16:17, Jesus thus shows the impossibility of changing that law: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Why? — Because heaven and earth might pass, and God could create another heaven and earth in their place without affecting His deity, but if His law should fail, or be shown to be imperfect, His government would be impeached, and the very integrity of His character would be shattered. For His commandments are an expression of His righteous character (Psalm 119:172), and His "righteousness shall not be abolished" (Isaiah 51:6).

In fact, the first day of the week, in the very nature of the case, could not be the rest day of God, for the Creator never rested on that day.

Christ further shows how far-reaching is that law. Its righteousness extends not alone to the outward act, but to the very heart motives which prompt the act, so that cherished hatred is a transgression of

the sixth commandment, and cherished lust, of the seventh. (Matthew 5:20-22, 27, 28.) Truly, He magnified the law, and made it honorable.

3. He came to do God's will; God's law was in His heart. Did He keep the law? Hear Him: "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." John 15:10. "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, *as His custom was,* He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Luke 4:16.

When reproved by the Pharisees for breaking the Sabbath in healing the sick, He defended Himself by an appeal to their own practice, and concluded by saying, "Wherefore it is *lawful* to do well on the Sabbath days." "Law-ful" means according to law. His work was therefore according to the law of the Sabbath, the fourth commandment, and is a positive proof that He observed it according to that law.

4. Christ died to save men from sin. (Matthew 1:21; Titus 2:14.) But "sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. Christ, therefore, died to save men from transgressing the law. The law was so holy as to demand the death of the Son of God in order to release man from its penalty. The law was honored before heaven and earth in the death on the cross of the spotless Lamb of God, who died that man might live, and that living he might, through faith, render obedience to the law of God. Thus in teaching, in life, in death, He magnified the law, and made it honorable.

Of followers of Christ it is said that they "rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Luke 23:56.

"If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point,* he is guilty of all. For He that said [margin, "that law which said"], Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:8-12. See also Romans 3:31; 8:4-7; Psalm 119:97, 98; 1 John 5:3.

From the above (and much more testimony might be given), it is clearly evident that neither Christ nor His apostles abrogated or changed God's law, or any part of it. They taught its absolute integrity and perpetuity. Christ, our great and only Example, kept it; and we are commanded to follow Him (John 21:22), to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6).

I. The Prediction of the Crime and the Criminal

The Sabbath has never been changed by divine authority. It remains forever the same. Who, then, sought to make the change from the seventh to the first day of the week? Do the Scriptures reveal this? Yes, most clearly. As far back as five centuries before Christ, the prophet Daniel pointed out the power that should think to lay its hand upon the law of Jehovah. We also have the confession of the power itself that it has done this deed. Note the evidence:

1. Daniel the prophet predicted: "And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and

he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time." Daniel 7:25, A. R. V.

Here are given three points of identification: (1) He shall speak words against the Most High; (2) he shall wear out the saints of the Most High; (3) he shall *think* to change the times and the law, evidently of the Most High. We have space to treat only of the third specification. "The law" which this power "thinks" to change does not refer to human law, which every human power has a right to change within proper limits, but to a law which this power could *not really* change, but only *think* to change. This must be God's law. The Douay Bible reads, "He shall think himself able" to do this; Wintle and Spurrell read, "Shall presume to change the appointed times and the law."

This little-horn power opposes and exalts itself above God in presuming to change that very law which even God or His Son, in the very nature of the case, can not change, but which man blasphemously assumes to change.

2. The apostle Paul predicted: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come,* except there come a falling away first, and that *man of sin* be revealed, the son of perdition; who *opposeth* and *exalteth himself above all that is called God,* or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple [or church, see 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:20-22] of God, showing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

The great head of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22, 23), and the law of the church is the word of God, which came through Christ. Now the only way for a power to *oppose* God is to enact laws contrary to God's law, and to demand obedience thereto. The only way in which it could exalt itself *above* God is to demand that its law shall be obeyed in preference to God's law. The same law promulgated by two rival powers in the same territory would be an impossibility, and would show no distinction between the adherents of the two powers. There must be a difference in the laws, and therefore this power must seek to change God's law, and this change or difference between the law of God and the law of this usurping power must be the very mark of opposition to God and exaltation above Him.

II. The Avowal of the Guilty

1. Eusebius, a Catholic "father," the deifier of Constantine, says: "All things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these *we* [Constantine, Pope Sylvester, and such bishops as himself] have transferred to the Lord's day," by which he means Sunday.

2. The "Doctrinal Catechism," pages 101, 174, 351-355, offers proof that Protestants are not guided by Scripture. We present two of the questions and answers:

"*Ques.*— Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept?

"*Ans.*— Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; — she could not have

substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which *there is no Scriptural authority.*

"*Ques.*— When Protestants do profane work on Saturday, or the seventh day of the week, do they follow the Scripture as the only rule of faith? — do they find this permission clearly laid down in the Sacred Volume?

"*Ans.*— On the contrary, they have *only the authority of tradition* for this practice. In profaning Saturday, they violate one of God's commandments, which He has never clearly abrogated,—"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day."

3. In another Catholic work, called "An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine," the Catholic Church asserts its power to change the law, in the following manner:

"*Ques.*— How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holy days?

"*Ans.*— By *the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday,* which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church."

4. We give one more testimony from Roman Catholic sources; namely, a letter from Cardinal Gibbons to Mr. John R. Ashley, of Rock Hall, Maryland:

"CARDINAL'S RESIDENCE, Baltimore, Maryland,
February 25, 1892.

"JOHN R. ASHLEY, ESQ.— *Dear Sir:* In answer to your first question, directed by the cardinal to reply to your letter, I will say:

" '1. Who changed the Sabbath?'

"*Ans.*— The holy Catholic Church.

" '2. Are Protestants following the Bible or the holy Catholic Church in keeping Sunday?'

"*Ans.*— The Protestants are following the custom introduced by the holy Catholic Church.

"3. The Protestants do contradict themselves by keeping Sunday, and at the same time profess to be guided by the Bible only.

"I am faithfully yours,
"C. F. THOMAS, *Chancellor.*"

Such witnesses could be greatly multiplied.

III. Confirmatory Witnesses

These statements and claims of representative men of the Roman Catholic Church are really of great value to the jury of public opinion, and are entitled to great weight in determining the guilt of the accused, especially so, as her avowal is free and voluntary, given without any pressure whatever. But we are not dependent upon the confession of the criminal in proving that the Church of Rome sought to change the law of God in respect to the day to be observed as the Sabbath, for the testimony of history proves that this change was effected through the influence and power of that church, as foretold by the prophecy.

The following testimony from historical and non-Catholic writers shows that the change occurred gradually, taking centuries to consummate it, and therefore the change could not have been made by Christ or His apostles. Note also that the testimony of the non-Catholic and Protestant writers which follows is not from observers or friends of the seventh-day Sabbath, but of the Sunday. Sir Wm. Domville says:

"Centuries of the Christian era passed away before the Sunday was observed as a Sabbath. History does not furnish us with a single proof or indication that it was at any time so observed previous to the Sabbatical edict of Constantine in A. D. 321."—*"The Sabbath; or an Examination of the Six Texts," page 291.*

Chambers' Encyclopedia, to which we can safely appeal as being free from any bias in favor of the ancient Sabbath, says:

"By none of the Fathers before the fourth century is it [the first day of the week] identified with the Sabbath; nor is the duty of observing it grounded by them either on the fourth commandment or on the precept or example of Jesus or His apostles. Unquestionably the first law, either ecclesiastical or civil, by which the Sabbatical observance of that day is known to have been ordained, is the edict of Constantine 321 A. D., of which the following is a translation:

" 'Let all judges, inhabitants of the cities, and artificers, rest on the venerable Sunday. But in the country, husbandmen may freely and lawfully apply to the business of agriculture; since it often happens that the sowing of corn and planting of vines can not be so advantageously performed on any other day; lest, by neglecting the opportunity, they should lose the benefits which the divine bounty bestows on us.' "

Dr. Peter Heylyn, a Church of England historian, says of the use of the term "Sabbath," by the writers of the ancient church:

"The Saturday is called amongst them by no other name than that which formerly it had, the *Sabbath.* So that whenever, for a thousand years and upwards, we meet with *Sabbatum* in any writer of what name soever, it must be understood of no day but *Saturday."—"History of the Sabbath," part 2, chapter 2, section 12.*

He also states, in part 2, chapter 5, section 13, of the same work, that Petrus Alfonsus, in the twelfth century, was the first one who called Sunday the Christian Sabbath.

Neander, the great church historian, says: "Opposition to Judaism introduced the particular festival of Sunday very early, indeed, into the place of the Sabbath. . . . The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals, was always only a human ordinance, and it was *far from the intentions of the apostles* to establish a divine command in this respect, far from them, and from the early apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday."—*"The History of the Christian Religion and Church," Neander, page 186, translated by Henry John Rose, B. D. See also the first German edition, Hamburg, 1826, volume 1, part 2, page 339.*

The Confession of the Swiss churches declares: "The observance of the Lord's day [Sunday] is founded not on any commandment of

God, but on the authority of the church."—*"Cox's Sabbath Manual," part 2, section 10.*

The Protestant Episcopal Church says: "The day is now changed from the seventh to the first day, . . . but as we meet with *no Scriptural direction* for the change, we may conclude it was done by the authority of the church."—*Explanation of Catechism.*

The *Christian at Work,* in its issue of January 8, 1885, says: "The selection of Sunday, thus changing the particular day designated in the fourth commandment, was brought about by the gradual concurrence of the early Christian church, and on this basis, *and none other,* does the Christian sabbath, the first day of the week, rightly rest."

The Methodist Episcopal "Theological Compend" (page 180) says: "It is true there is no positive command for infant baptism. . . . Nor is there any for keeping holy the first day of the week."

Bishop Seymour (Protestant Episcopal), quoted in "Why We Keep Sunday," declares: "We have made the change from the seventh day to the first day, from Saturday to Sunday, on the authority of the one holy catholic and apostolic church of Christ."

For fuller quotations see "The Lord's Day, the Test of the Ages," pages 83-100; and Andrews' "History of the Sabbath."

Let us briefly sum up the argument:

1. The Scriptures foretell the work of Christ and His relation to the divine law, both in His teaching and His practice. He would magnify the law and make it honorable, delight in it, and have it in His heart.

2. This was fulfilled in His life and teaching, as proved by the New Testament writers.

3. The Scriptures foretell the work of the Church of Rome and its relation to the law of God. It would, in addition to other offenses, think to change times and the law; hence it is designated by Paul as the *man of sin,* who opposes and exalts himself above God.

4. This has been fulfilled by the papacy, as abundantly proved by the confessions of the accused and the concurrent testimony of the eminent historians and writers herein quoted. Shall we charge Christ or His apostles with the crime which the word of God and the testimony of history lay at the door of the Roman Catholic Church, and which that church acknowledges to be her own?

This important fact should be noted: We do not base our faith or our argument on this question upon the testimony of history, but upon the inspired word of God, and its fulfillment as proved by the testimony of accredited historians. It is proper to go to history to show the fulfillment of God's word, but it is quite a different thing to go there to learn our duty to God, or to find something which will justify us in doing that for which there is no warrant in the Scriptures. The latter is to abandon the Protestant doctrine, the Bible and the Bible alone as our rule of faith and practice, and adopt the papal doctrine of tradition instead of the Bible. This is really to reject the Bible and its Author, and accept of Rome and her traditions, which make void the word of God.

In conclusion, we would call attention to two important points:

Vital Considerations

1. The origin of Sunday observance: Let it be remembered that Sunday as a subject of prophecy is Sunday as related to Christianity. The question, then, is, What power or influence established this observance in the Christian church? It was brought in by the working of that influence which finally resulted in the establishment of the papacy. The papacy existed in embryo long before Constantine's time. The corrupting of the church, the substitution of tradition for the word of God, worked even in Paul's day (2 Thessalonians 2:7), waiting only until the restraining power of God's Spirit was removed from a backsliding church, when apostasy in its full strength would be revealed. The root of this mighty system of evil runs far back into the centuries before its open development, like the tree that sends its taproot deep down into the earth beyond the sight of the observer. Through that root the Sunday has found its way into the professed church of Christ; and on that tree it appears as one of the most characteristic fruits. As an institution, Sunday is both pagan and papal; as a rival of the Sabbath of the Lord, it is wholly papal.

2. The law, being an expression of the divine mind and will, must be as unchangeable as the Lord Himself; and He changes not. The Sabbath also involves an historical event, and hence can not be changed; for the facts of history admit no possibility of change.

Sabbath means rest. The Sabbath of the Lord is the Lord's rest day. "He rested on the seventh day." Genesis 2:2. Can it ever be true that He rested on the first day, or on any other day of the week? Nay, verily. Therefore when the fourth commandment says that "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:10), it states an unchangeable and an eternal fact; hence to call the first day, or Sunday, the Sabbath, or rest day of the Lord, is to state what is not true, and never can be true, because God's word declares that the seventh day is the Sabbath, or rest day, of the Lord. God can not change the day of His rest, or Sabbath, for He can not deny Himself or His own Word, which would be the same thing.

Dear reader, what power shall we obey? What path shall we choose? Whose Sabbath shall we keep? Shall we obey the word of God, or hold to the traditions of men? Shall we follow truth or error? Shall we observe the Sabbath of the Lord, or the rival sabbath of the "man of sin"? Shall we, through grace, obey the law of God as it came from the Lawgiver, and observe the Bible Sabbath? or shall we obey the law as changed by the papacy, and observe the Roman Sunday? The Saviour says: "In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:9. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

For a further study of this important subject, read—"The Christian Sabbath; Is It Saturday or Sunday?" Price, 25 cents, postpaid.

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