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Sabbath and Sunday among the First Christians

David W. T. Brattston

Introduction

Since the nineteenth century there have been sincere but firm differences of conviction as to whether God wishes Saturday or Sunday to be the main weekly day of Christian assembling and worship. There are many pamphlets, magazine articles, audiotapes, television programmes and compact disks promoting the idea of a Saturday day of worship. The following article presents the opposite view, i.e. that Sunday, the Lord's Day, was always the chief day of the Christian week, from the time of the apostles. Like so many religious issues, both sides of the debate appeal to the Bible; then, when arguments based on it fail to convince, they look to the practice of the earliest Christians. For instance, some adherents of a Saturday Sabbath day of worship allege that Sunday did not become the chief day of the Christian week until the time of the Roman emperor Constantine in the early fourth century AD, and he changed it from Saturday to win over non-Christian sun worshippers. The following will evaluate such assertions.

Sources used

Consulting early Christian practices and customs is highly recommended because they record how believers lived their faith when the unwritten teachings and Bible interpretations of Christ and the apostles were still fresh in Christian memories, reveal the consensus of Christian conviction on various matters before they became issues in dispute, preserved ways of doing things passed down through overlapping generations, and manifest how the church conducted itself at a time most Christians today believe the Holy Spirit was still directly guiding it.

The sources cited in this article wrote while the oral teachings, interpretations and practices of Jesus and the apostles were still fresh in Christian minds. These minds included both the writers themselves and other Christians who could spot errors in their works and suggest emendations to them or that the books no longer be circulated.

We must measure all statements and interpretations by this evidence, and challenge the makers of contrary statements and interpretations as to the

sources of their information and ideas. It is not enough to flatly state that early Christians held public worship only on Saturday. The onus is on the speaker to point to specific early sources, just as this article has done for ancient Sunday worship. All assertions of fact must be affirmatively proved from the best evidence available. Otherwise, any sort of statement can be made about anything, and that which can prove anything proves nothing.

Nor is a nineteenth- or twentieth-century Bible commentary an admissible source of evidence. Because long-lost documents from ancient Christian times are being discovered every two decades or so, we in the twenty-first century know more about the earliest period than did the near-modern commentators. Not even fourth- and fifth-century church historians are reliable when they tender opinions of earlier Christian practices unless they actually excerpt from the documents of the period under discussion.

The present article therefore distills the five hundred (more or less) Christian writings that have come down to us since before the devastating epidemic and mass apostasy of AD 249-251 in order to determine which day(s) the first heirs of the gospel observed and what kinds of activities they believed God permits and what he forbids on the main day(s) of the Christian week.

Unfortunately, there were divisions of opinion even in Christian antiquity as to which day(s) was to be observed, how they were to be observed, whether the Old Testament rules for the Sabbath were still binding, whether Sunday replaced the Saturday Sabbath, and which kinds of activities they should pursue and which not on the chief day(s) of the Christian week. The following will explore these issues and will note where there was agreement and where different early Christians practised different behaviours.

One thing is certain and was uncontroversial

One thing is certain and was uncontroversial: the main day of the week for early Christians to gather and worship was not the seventh-day Sabbath, but Sunday, which they sometimes called ‘the first day’ or ‘the eighth day’, or ‘the Lord’s Day’. We have inklings of this in apostolic times: (1) in Acts 20.7 Christians celebrated Holy Communion and listened to a sermon ‘upon the first day of the week’, and (2) in 1 Corinthians 16.2 they are exhorted to donate to the church ‘upon the first day of the week’. In opposition to Sabbath-keeping, the *Letter of Barnabas* 15.9

sometime between AD 70 and 132 records of Christians that ‘we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead.’

Abundant evidence of Sunday as the weekly day of Christian worship comes from the middle of the second century. In *The Letter of the Apostles* 17, Jesus himself is depicted as calling the eighth day ‘the Lord’s day’. Originating in Asia Minor or Egypt, this *Letter* purports to be the revelation of Christ to the apostles. Despite denials that this *Letter* is inspired or scripture or even apostolic, it does witness to an early date for Christians observing Sunday.

Next in time came a description of a typical Christian Sunday worship service in Justin’s *First Apology* 67:

on the day called Sunday, 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.... Sunday 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.

Justin was a Christian teacher at Rome who was martyred for the Faith around AD 165.

From the eastern Mediterranean a little later in the second century, sometime between AD 180 and 200, the *Acts of Peter* begins: ‘On the first day of the week, that is, on the Lord’s day’ and describes the Apostle Peter conducting a healing service.¹

Tertullian’s *On Idolatry* marks the transition from the second to the third century because it could have been written anytime in his earlier, ‘catholic’ period, when he was a member of the mainline or ‘Great Church’. After noting of Christians that ‘by us, to whom Sabbaths are strange’ and mentioning ‘the Lord’s day’, Tertullian wrote that it was already well-known by pagans that Christians ‘have

a festive day every eighth day'.² Tertullian had been a prominent lawyer in the City of Rome before converting and being ordained in Tunisia, where he became the father of Latin Christian literature.

The *Didascalia* is a long comprehensive manual for church practice composed in Syria in the first three decades of the third century. In contrast to Jewish Sabbath customs, the first paragraph of Chapter 21 notes that 'on Sundays' Christians rejoice and make good cheer, and in the last paragraph exhorts that all Christians should make good cheer 'on the first day of the week'.

Prominent at the Syrian court before AD 223 was the studious Christian Bardesan. He disapprovingly pointed out contradictions in the laws and customs of secular states and contrasted them with Christian unity in behaviour and ethics. One example was that Christians everywhere assemble on the first day of the week.³

Origen was the foremost Bible scholar, teacher and preacher of the first half of the third century. Until AD 230 his work was centred in Egypt, thereafter in Palestine. Usually half or more of the citations and quotations in my articles come from Origen, due to the larger mass of his writings that have survived, far more than any other ancient Christian author. However, the present article makes relatively little use of him because of the great number of other authors that wrote about the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. His sole contribution as to which is the main weekly day of Christian worship is in *Homilies on Isaiah* 5.2 (between AD 239 and 242). The best translation is that Christians celebrate the resurrection of the Lord every Sunday, not only once a year.

The Lord's Day a postponed Sabbath?

Was this new Lord's Day merely a one-day adjournment of the old seventh-day Sabbath, for which rest was still mandated? Not according to *Barnabas* 15, the *Acts of Peter*, or Tertullian's *On Idolatry* 14, although Tertullian is not clear in his other treatises. It certainly was not for Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria, who was martyred in AD 107. His *Letter* to the Christians at Magnesia in western Turkey mentions as common ground between him and them that life in Christ implies 'no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in observance of the Lord's Day'.⁴ Here we see a bishop, writing less than a decade after the death of the last apostle and who doubtless worked with some apostles, distinguishing

between the Jewish Sabbath on the one hand and the first day of the week on the other as that of Christian worship. Legend of doubtful reliability even holds that the young Ignatius was the little child whom Jesus said we must be like in order to inherit the Kingdom.

Justin's debate with a Jew reveals a treasure of information about the differences between the two peoples of God in the second century, both from the Christian and from the Jewish point of view. Trypho the Jew faulted Christians of his era because they did not keep the Law of Moses nor Sabbaths, festivals or circumcision.⁵ Justin conceded that Christians do not practise circumcision nor ritual washings, and they even heat water on the seventh day. The last-mentioned is still forbidden under Jewish law. Remember that circumcision was one of the crucial differences between the two religions in the Lukan Acts and Paul's letters.

Abounding in statements elaborating Christian differences from Jews, the *Didascalia* in whole and in part is clear that the first day of the week and the Sabbath are not the same.

As he gradually drifted away from mainstream Christianity, Tertullian moved more and more towards the rigours of Sabbath-keeping, as can be expected from the general strictness of the cult he later joined. His early *Answer to the Jews* 4 speaks of the Sabbath, like circumcision, as having been a merely temporary provision, binding only in the Mosaic age, and is not nor should not be devoted to the resting that Moses had commanded: 'we Christians understand that we still more ought to observe a sabbath from all "servile work" always, and not only every seventh day, but through all time.' Almost as early, his *On Idolatry* 14 states that to Christians 'Sabbaths are strange', as noted above.

'Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath' and 'He did not utterly destroy it' asserts his later *Against Marcion* 4.12, which denies that Jesus annulled it, although Tertullian still maintained the proper way of observing it to be different from that in pharisaic-rabbinic Judaism. For instance, Tertullian wrote that it is to be 'free from gloom rather than free from work'. Yet in publicity for his new sect he unmistakably indicated in *On Fasting* that the Sabbath and the Lord's Day are two separate days of the week, on neither of which must Christians fast.⁶ However, this does not necessitate all Sabbath-keeping, for *On Fasting* deals only with various forms and rules of abstinence from food and beverages.

Much later, in the 240s, Origen appeared to have been of the conviction that Sunday is a kind of Sabbath. *Homilies on Numbers* 23.4 favours observing a day of rest—or more precisely, a day of abstinence from worldly activities and temporal affairs—so that Christians will have the leisure to devote themselves more completely to spiritual exercises, such as attending church and listening to the Bible readings and the sermon—activities that other authors describe as usual for the Lord’s Day, or first day of the week. Nevertheless, Origen taught that the Sabbath is but a shadow or symbol of good things to come, as did other ancient Christian writers, e.g. Paul in Colossians 2.17. More clearly, in AD 249 or 250 Origen preached that a distinctive mark of Christians is that they do observe the Sabbath, but not by resting from the enjoyments of everyday life but only from indulging in sin.⁷

The Sabbath abolished?

With three dissenting voices, Christian authors before AD 249-251 believed that Jesus abolished the Sabbath completely. According to *The Acts of Peter* 1 in the late second century, Christ abolished Sabbaths, holy-days, circumcision, and the other Jewish ordinances.⁸ The same is implied in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* 10. In the late second century or early third century, the *Letter to Diognetus* 4.1 characterized as ‘utterly ridiculous’, ‘unworthy of notice’ and ‘superstition’ the Jewish concerns for sabbaths and circumcision. Some scholars attribute this *Letter* to a former tutor of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 121-180).

In his catholic period Tertullian’s *Answer to the Jews* 2.10 taught that the Sabbath and circumcision were not eternal precepts valid for all time and all peoples but were confined to Jews under the Law of Moses and were abolished for the Christian (the present) dispensation. Chapter 4.1 is bolder: ‘the Sabbath is demonstrated to have been temporary’ and any references to it in Christian Scriptures denotes the permanent rest at the end of time, a common belief among early Christian writers. In the 220s Origen wrote that all Christians believe that neither circumcision nor Sabbath rest nor animal sacrifices in the Bible are to be understood literally nor practised since the time of Jesus.⁹ In *Homilies on Genesis* 5.5 Origen dismissively preached that ‘there is nothing great’ in observing circumcision and the Sabbath. The *Didascalia* 26 also denied that the Saturday Sabbath has any validity or binding force outside the period from Moses to Jesus and ridiculed the custom of being idle one whole day in seven.

Although obscure, there was support for the belief that the Sabbath obligations continue for Christians. In his *Letter to Flora* in the middle of the second century, the Gnostic Ptolemy discussed the various components of divine law and said that God wants us to keep the Sabbath by refraining from doing evil, and to fast in the sense of abstaining from sin.¹⁰ God has not so much abolished the Sabbath, wrote Ptolemy, as transformed it. He added that even Christians (or his sect of them) observe ‘the external practice of fasting’ providing it is done for the proper motives,¹¹ but mentioned no similar provision for abstaining from all work on the Sabbath. Another Gnostic book, the famous *Gospel of Thomas* 27, in the second half of the second century or earlier, also inculcated ‘fasting as to the world’ and ‘keeping the Sabbath as Sabbath’, but is unclear as to whether this fasting is only from sin and as to whether this Sabbath is the first or seventh day of the week. There is no context to help tease out a clearer meaning of how this Sabbath is to be kept, because the *Gospel of Thomas* consists only of unsystematically-arranged short isolated sayings unconnected with those neighbouring them.

Marcion held doctrines similar to the Gnostics, the most important of which was that there is one god of the Old Testament and a totally different god of Jesus and the New Testament. The two deities are in conflict with each other and require different kinds of behaviours from people. One argument Marcion employed in support of this doctrine was that the god of the Old Testament commands Sabbath observance while that of the New does not. To prove that there is only one deity, Tertullian’s *Against Marcion* defended the continuity of the Bible and its single God. As for the Sabbath, Tertullian said that Christ did not rescind, annul or destroy it, although confining its prohibitions to human works for one’s own benefit as distinct from healing, restoring, and other ‘divine’ work. He defended the Sabbath as ‘a day which is to be free from gloom rather than from work’.¹²

About AD 233 Origen preached that the gospel allowed ‘work on the Sabbath, except work for profit’ on the same principle that it permits ‘food, unless it is spoiled’.¹³ One of the marks of Christians, said Origen (as mentioned above), was that they observe the Sabbath, not in the sense of resting from everyday life, but resting from sin.¹⁴

Sabbath-keeping forbidden

Some authors actually prohibited Sabbath-keeping. Justin wrote that it was not the practice of the Great Church—the majority, mainstream Christians—to be

circumcised or to observe the Sabbath or other Jewish institutions, but added that they were practised by sectarians who warped the true faith. He considered it a sin for them to try to persuade other Christians to keep the Sabbath.¹⁵ In a less ecumenical age than our own, Tertullian forbade any attendance of Christians at pagan or Jewish festivities or observing their holidays. Keep the eighth day, he said, but not the Sabbath—which he described as alien to Christians.¹⁶

Commenting about the Sabbath, *Didascalia* 26 proclaims: ‘every day is the Lord’s, for the Scripture says “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof: the world and they that dwell therein.”’ In his defence of the Faith against pagan taunts, Origen in the late 240s replied:

we ourselves are accustomed to observe certain days, as for example, the Lord’s day, the Preparation, the Passover, or Pentecost. I have to answer, that to the perfect Christian, who is ever in his thoughts, words, and deeds serving his natural Lord, God the Word, all days are the Lord’s, and he is always keeping the Lord’s day.¹⁷

Was ‘the Preparation’ the new Christian name for the old Jewish Sabbath? In *Homilies on Exodus* 7.5 Origen indicated that it is Friday, the sixth day, that Christians called ‘the Day of Preparation’ while the Sabbath is the seventh day, and clearly distinguished between the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day. In the AD 190s, Clement of Alexandria, Origen’s predecessor as the dean of the world’s most prominent educational institution, wrote that the seventh day is to be a day of rest or ‘abstraction from ills—preparing for the Primal Day’.¹⁸ The context is ambiguous as to whether this Primal Day is the Lord’s Day that follows every Sabbath or the era of our reward at the end of time.

How to keep the Sabbath

So far, we have established that the Sabbath (Saturday) and the Lord’s Day (Sunday) are markedly different from each other in the Christian week. Christian literature before AD 249-251 reveals that each had its own behavioural precepts, both as to what believers should do and what they should not do on the respective days. The present heading sets forth what is properly done on the Sabbath.

Barnabas 15.7 states that the Sabbath is observed by sanctifying oneself, purity of heart, and ‘properly resting’, which only beg the question. More particularized were Ptolemy, who mandated resting from sin,¹⁹ and Clement, who prescribed resting from ‘abstraction from ills’ in preparation for the Lord’s Day the next day.²⁰ Tertullian would permit religious functions, healing, preserving, saving life, doing good, gentleness, mercy, and working for the benefit of any soul.²¹ Origen would have Christians attend church, listen to the Bible readings and sermon there, meditate on heavenly things and the Day of Judgment, and other spiritual exercises,²² and abstain from the work of sin.²³ He would permit working, but not for profit.²⁴

As for what was forbidden on the Sabbath, the most common was fasting, as witness Tertullian *On Fasting* 15 and *Didascalia* 21. This is also attested by a Jewish source commenting on Christians: Taanith 27b in the *Babylonian Talmud* (early third century AD). Tertullian forbade attending a Jewish synagogue,²⁵ gloom, destroying life, working at one’s usual vocation²⁶ and ‘servile work’, which he would prohibit on other days as well.²⁷ As noted above, Origen discountenanced work for profit on Saturday.²⁸ In the late 240s he preached against other temporal works, devotion to worldly activities, and the mundane on the Sabbath²⁹ and against abstaining from the joys of everyday life that were not works of sin.³⁰

How to observe Sunday

Activities mandatory or encouraged for Sunday, the Lord’s Day, were: attending church, as said Acts 20.7-11, Justin *1 Apology* 67, Bardesan, and *Didascalia* 13, and also Chapter 14.1 of the *Didache*, a church manual written while many apostles were alive, and probably before the Gospel of Matthew. Acts 20.7-11, Justin Martyr, *Didache* and Bardesan contemplated that Holy Communion would be celebrated at church every Sunday. Acts 20, Justin *1 Apology* 67, and *Didascalia* 13 included listening to the Bible readings and homilies there. The *Didache* 14 would add confession of sins before Communion. Paul and Justin recorded contributing to the relief of less fortunate Christians as a regular Sunday activity.³¹ Christians should be joyful on the Lord’s Day, according to *Barnabas* 15.9, Tertullian *Apologeticum* 16 and *Didascalia* 21. Curiously, *Didascalia* 21 exhorts to both fear and trembling and also good cheer on the same day. Origen has nothing to say about Christian duties for Sunday except celebrating Christ’s Resurrection,³² striving at self-control of the body, and ‘abstaining from the pleasures of this life which lead astray so many’.³³

Origen's otherwise lack of particulars for Sunday observance and his contrasting abundance of details for the Sabbath lead me to conclude either that he considered or treated the Lord's Day like a Sabbath or meant 'Sunday' when he said 'the Sabbath'. For instance, he prescribed attendance at church and listening to the Scripture readings and sermon for Saturday³⁴ but he made no such provision for Sunday, which six authors before him indicated was the main weekly day of Christian assemblies for public worship and he himself had stated was the day Christians commemorate Jesus' Resurrection. I invite *Churchman* readers that can clarify this to e-mail me their solutions at dwtbrattston@hotmail.com.

Less fulsome were early Christian particulars as to what was forbidden on the Lord's Day. Tertullian forbade fasting and kneeling,³⁵ guard duty for soldiers,³⁶ and ease and luxury.³⁷ Chapter 13 of the *Didascalia* was against idleness, idolatry, attendance at pagan assemblies, at the theatre and at fairs and festivals for idols, as well as absenting oneself from a Christian assembly and using worldly business as an excuse for not attending it, and Chapter 21 discountenanced levity, telling jokes, singing pagan songs, afflicting oneself, and (again) pagan assemblies.

The Sabbath: the unimportant commandment

Before the devastating epidemic and mass apostasy of A.D. 249 to 251, Christians regarded the Fourth Commandment as unimportant, and perhaps no longer binding under the New Covenant. This is the injunction in the Ten Commandments to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. When Christians in this foundational period recited or summarized the Ten or gave examples of its contents, they always, always, omitted the Fourth one.

Sometimes various early Christian authors partially enumerated the Ten Commandments as still binding, sometimes as good rules of conduct evident from nature in human beings, sometimes as binding only on Jews, and sometimes as proof of how wise and beneficent a lawgiver God is. While in some instances the Christians were quoting from memory, off the tops of their heads, the omission of the Sabbath commandment also occurs in works that originated only in writing, with the author possessing the luxury of suspending his activity to research a point or obtain a full quotation. Whether the form was originally oral or written, early Christian sources consistently omitted the Sabbath when summarizing or giving examples of God's law.

How many Commandments were stated, and which ones, varied from author to author and book to book. Most of them included the prohibitions against murder, theft and adultery. These are the only ones cited by Bishop Hippolytus in his early-third century *Refutation of All Heresies* 13.9. Idolatry is also included in Romans 2.21-22, and in *Paedagogus* 3.12 by Clement of Alexandria, and in Theophilus' *To Autolytus* 5.15. Theophilus was bishop of Antioch in the third quarter of the second century. Theophilus and Romans 13.9 detail the commandment against coveting also. False witness was added to the list as forbidden, and honouring one's mother and father as mandatory, by Clement, by Theophilus, and in Origen's *On First Principles* 4.19 and *Commentary on Romans* 2.9.1, both of which originated in writing. His other mentions are in *Commentary on Romans* 9.31.1 in writing, and *Homilies on Numbers* 11.1.8 in oral preaching. In writing of days Christians observe, he mentioned as examples 'the Lord's day, the Preparation, the Passover, or Pentecost', but significantly omitted the Sabbath.³⁸ Travelling as an expert on Christianity at the request of local bishops throughout the eastern Mediterranean, Origen possessed the best first-hand knowledge of general and widespread church practice.

The only exception, a list or summary that included the Sabbath, was Tertullian's *On Modesty* 5. This was in a violent attack against the orthodox, mainstream, church after Tertullian joined a narrow, rigorous, sect.

Clement in Egypt, Theophilus in Syria, Hippolytus in Italy, Paul mostly in Turkey and Greece, and Origen in Egypt and Palestine, show that omitting or minimizing the Sabbath Commandment was not a personal peculiarity or a local custom. A bishop in central Italy and once a rival bishop of Rome, Hippolytus in AD 217 compiled *The Apostolic Tradition*, not to exhibit his original ideas but to codify existing church practice as it had descended from the apostles. The early dates of the omissions in the lists indicate that the insignificance of the Sabbath was not a later corruption of the original gospel. They could have originated only in one common source and at the earliest time in the Christian era.

Jesus was notorious to the scribes and Pharisees for what was considered nonchalance about the Sabbath. His attitude is illustrated in Matthew 19.18-19, Mark 10.19 and Luke 18.20. Mark and Luke record Christ as beginning with 'Thou knowest the commandments' and enumerating murder, theft, adultery, honour to parents, and false witness. Like the Apostle Paul, and his

other followers for two centuries, Jesus omitted the Sabbath. Thus, even ‘the Lord of the Sabbath’ considered it as unimportant, no longer in force, or not immediate in mind when listing the Ten.

Worship the Lord every day

In practice, the distinction between the Sabbath and Sunday in early Christian times was not as all-encompassing as in our secularized world today. Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition* 35.1f assumes that local congregations hold services—especially Bible study, instruction and prayer—every morning of the week in order to equip Christians to overcome the evils of the day. Good Christians attended these services every day of the week,³⁹ thus rendering Saturday and Sunday less of a contrast than in our culture. Remember also from Origen that Christians also observed Fridays, called ‘the Preparation’, and Pentecost. Tertullian corroborates Pentecost observance.⁴⁰

Saint Paul the Apostle took a broad-minded view as to the separation and respective modes of observing (or not observing) the Sabbath and Lord’s Day. In discussing differences in practice arising from matters of principle between groups within a congregation, Romans 14.5f in the middle of the first century dismissed the matter as indifferent:

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.

In Galatians 4.9 to 11 Paul expressed alarm that local Christians were reverting to their previous Judaic observances, from which he said Christ had liberated them. Paul negatively criticized these believers because ‘Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years’ (v. 10), which Paul considered contrary to the true gospel. Colossians 2.16 provides a mechanism for enforcing this indifferentist principle: a Christian is not to allow anyone to judge him or her ‘in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days’.

Is the day of rest necessarily the day of worship?

All Christian writers who commented about weekends prior to the middle of the third century agreed that Christians are to hold our main assemblies and

celebration on Sunday, the first day of the week. They were divided about the seventh-day Sabbath, with a variety of opinions and practices for Saturday. Contrary to an assumption in our own day, keeping both the Sabbath and the Lord's Day are not mutually exclusive, nor does the chief day for public worship necessarily have to also be the day of rest. These are sheer assumptions, probably fallen into without reflection. One can think of good reasons for resting and worshipping on different days. A Seventh-day Adventist once tried to explain 1 Corinthians 16.2 by stating that Christians were forbidden to carry money on the (Saturday) Sabbath, hence a collection on the following day. According to Justin, 'on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place'.⁴¹ If the distances from some of the distant homes to the meeting-place were too far, any Christians that kept the Mosaic Law would be forbidden from walking more than 'a Sabbath's day journey' and thus could not attend church, while Jewish law contains no such constraint for other days of the week. One Scottish-based denomination does not admit to Communion anyone who rides the bus to church, on the grounds that doing so forces bus drivers to work for money on the day of rest. Presumably this would be different if the day of rest and the day of public worship were not the same.

And so let us not allow ourselves to heed televangelists and others who would make us worship on Saturday and ignore the Lord's Day based on assertions about early Christian practice that cannot be substantiated by a scintilla of genuine proof from Christian antiquity, and fly in the face of indisputable evidence.

Dr. DAVID BRATTSTON's articles on ancient and contemporary Christianity have been published by a wide variety of denominations in every major English-speaking country

ENDNOTES

1. Coptic Fragment.
2. *Idolatry* 14.
3. *De fato*.
4. *Letter to the Magnesians* 9.1.
5. *Dialogue with Trypho* 10.
6. *On Fasting* 15.
7. *Homilies on Joshua* 2.1.

8. Vercelli manuscript.
9. *De Principiis* 2.7.2.
10. *Letter to Flora* 5.12.
11. *Letter to Flora* 5.13.
12. *Against Marcion* 4.12.
13. *Homilies on Luke Rauer's Fragment* 107.
14. *Homilies on Joshua* 2.1.
15. *Dialogue with Trypho* 47.
16. *On Idolatry* 14.
17. *Against Celsus* 8.22.
18. Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 6.16.
19. *Letter to Flora* 5.12.
20. *Stromata* 6.16.
21. *Against Marcion* 4.12.
22. *Homilies on Numbers* 23.4.
23. *Homilies on Joshua* 2.1.
24. *Homilies on Luke Rauer's Fragment* 107.
25. *On Idolatry* 14.
26. *Against Marcion* 4.12.
27. *Answer to the Jews* 4.
28. *Homilies on Luke Rauer's Fragment* 107.
29. *Homilies on Numbers* 23.4.
30. *Homilies on Joshua* 2.1.
31. 1 Corinthians 16.2, 1 *Apology* 67.
32. *Homilies on Isaiah* 5.2.
33. *Against Celsus* 8.22.
34. *Homilies on Numbers* 23.4.
35. *De Corona* 3.
36. *De Corona* 11.
37. *Apologeticum* 16.
38. *Against Celsus* 8.22.
39. *Apostolic Tradition* 36.1.
40. *Idolatry* 14.
41. 1 *Apology* 67.