

ARTICLE III.

THE SABBATH: THE CHANGE OF OBSERVANCE FROM
THE SEVENTH TO THE LORD'S DAY: TESTIMONY OF
THE FATHERS.

BY REV. WILLIAM DELOSS LOVE, D.D., SOUTH HADLEY, MASS.

THE proposition we are now seeking to establish is this: The first or Lord's day in the new dispensation was the chief of all days with the apostles and early Christians, and was their special day for rest and religious worship. In adducing evidence to sustain this proposition, we have devoted our last two Articles on the Sabbath to a consideration of, First, The Lord's Day during the Apostolic Age. We now consider:

Secondly, The Lord's day during the Four Centuries next subsequent to the Era of the Apostles. In prosecuting this investigation, we expect to find evidence that overthrows the peculiar tenets on this subject of the following classes: the Seventh-day Sabbatarians, who hold that the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath was a corruption that came into the church not until some time after the earliest of the fathers who succeeded the apostles; the non-Sabbath Lord's-day men, who hold that we cannot find the observance of the Lord's day on the fourth commandment, and hence that it is abrogated; the large class who believe that the sacred observance of the Lord's day was not established during the apostolic period, but by the church subsequently; and the Christian Sabbatarians, who fail to reinforce their own arguments for a Christian Sabbath from the passage in Col. ii. 16—holding, as they do, that the word "sabbaths" there does not refer to the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath.

If the testimony of the early fathers is really at variance with the peculiar sabbatic views of all the foregoing classes,

then the way of faith on the Sabbath question is made very clear; and if that way shall obtain general credence in the church, it will certainly lead to a far better observance of the Lord's day than now exists. Such understanding of the patristic testimony, if it can be confirmed, fully sustains the view heretofore taken in these Articles concerning the Lord's day during the apostolic age.

The early fathers — those nearly or quite contemporary with, and those soon succeeding, the apostles — speak definitely of the first or Lord's day as religiously kept by themselves and their fellow-Christians. Respecting their testimony, it is not here claimed that it is exceedingly valuable in doctrine or wisdom, but that it has peculiar importance in respect to the history of customs and practices in the religious life of the early Christians. As Dr. Hesse says, "Those whose exegesis of Scripture is indifferent may be admitted as witnesses to matter of fact."¹ It is not of chief consequence to know that these patristical writings were by the authors whose names they bear, but that they date in the early Christian era, and are historically trustworthy.

The Epistle of Barnabas, though probably not written by Paul's noted companion of that name, was certainly in existence in the early part of the second century — Hilgenfeld says at the close of the first,² — and therefore dated in the apostle John's time, or at least within twenty or thirty years of his death. Writing in behalf of Christians, the author of that epistle says: "We keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead."³ The first day the patristic writers sometimes called the eighth, because it comes next after the seventh. We see that the eighth was the first, because it commemorated the resurrection of Christ. This positive declaration of the keeping of Jesus' resurrection day, made while the apostle John yet lived, or within a few years after his decease, would in that early time have been contradicted if it were untrue. But no such denial appears. If Christians

¹ Sunday, p. 41.² Ante Nicene Library, Vol. i. p. 100.³ Ibid., p. 128.

had been divided in respect to keeping the first day, Barnabas's declaration would not have been so universal.

Objection: This epistle was not written by the Barnabas of Scripture, and is therefore a forgery and fraud.¹ *Reply:* It may have been written by another Barnabas, or by one who from respect to that name assumed it as a *nom de plume*. In either case, it is not a forgery. It has won historic confidence by being found carefully preserved with the Codex Sinaiticus of the Scriptures; and that copy of the epistle restored the first four and a half chapters of the Greek text, which part was previously known to the learned only in an ancient Latin version. It were folly now, after the most eminent scholars in patristic lore have scanned and accepted this epistle, to deny its genuineness, or the force of this passage concerning Christ's resurrection day.

The Epistle to the Magnesians (shorter recension), ascribed to Ignatius, contemporary of the apostle John, is now by the more reliable scholars regarded as genuine. Even Professor J. B. Lightfoot, who held that the three epistles in Syriac discovered by Dr. Cureton were only an abstract of the genuine,² has changed his opinion, and now accepts the shorter recension of the Greek. He holds that this epistle to the Magnesians, even if it were not actually written by Ignatius, may be safely regarded as having been composed by some competent and authoritative person as early as the middle of the second century.³ It has been found in the early Greek, Armenian, and Latin. The shorter recension has the following: "If, therefore, those that were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's day; on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death."⁴ The word "day" is in question, some supposing it should be "life" — Lord's life. Drs.

¹ Andrews, *Hist. Sab.*, pp. 211, 242; Littlejohn, *Constitutional Amendment*, p. 248.

² *Ant. Nic. Lib.*, Vol. i. p. 142.

³ *Apostolic Fathers* (Jackson and Prof. G. P. Fisher eds.), pp. 68, 69.

⁴ *Ant. Nic. Lib.*, Vol. i. p. 180.

Roberts and Donaldson, the latest English editors, accept the word "day"; and Zahn, editor of the latest edition of the Ignatian epistles, says *σαββατίζοντες* in the preceding clause determines that *ἡμέραν* should follow *κυριακῆν*,¹ making it read "Lord's day."

Pliny the younger, contemporary of the earliest Fathers, as governor of Pontus and Bithynia, where persecution of the Christians had arisen, about A.D. 112, reports thus: "The Christians affirm the whole of their guilt or error to be, that they were accustomed to assemble together on a stated day, before it was light, and to sing hymns to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by a *sacramentum*, not for any wicked purpose, but never to commit fraud, theft, or adultery; never to break their word, or to refuse, when called upon, to deliver up any trust; after which it was their custom to separate, and to assemble again to take a meal, but a general one, and without guilty purpose."² Andrews — with Böhmer and Gesner supporting — says, because the first day is not mentioned by Pliny, he "furnishes no support for Sunday observance."³ But Pliny's stated day, hymns to Christ, *sacramentum*, and a meal together, are so similar to Luke's "first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread," and "Paul preached to them" (Acts xx. 7), that the two days will be regarded by nearly all as identical, especially in connection with other testimony now to be given. The Christians had no other such day besides the first.

Justin Martyr unconsciously defines the phrase "stated day," about thirty or forty years later than Pliny's letter, when, speaking of Christians, he says, "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

¹ *Patrum Apostolicorum, Opera*, Vol. ii. p. 37. NOTE. — The numerous quotations we make from the fathers, we have verified by reference to the original Greek or Latin. But we make references here chiefly to the Antiochene Library, as far as that extends, because that is most accessible to the majority of our readers, and was so to us during the chief part of our examination of this subject.

² Hessey on Sunday, p. 42.

³ *Hist. Sab.*, p. 236.

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 succors 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 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 [Saturday]; and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”¹ This seems to imply, among other things, that Jesus taught his apostles and disciples to hold their religious services and observe the Lord’s supper on the first day, called Sunday. It at least shows that such services were held each first day of the week. Think of this whole passage as having been written by a noted man of the church and the times, at least only thirty or forty years after the death of the last of the apostles, and as having then no contradiction, but much confirmation. Thus early in the patristic age we find incontrovertible evidence that the first day of the week was regarded by the Christians as sacred to reli-

¹ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. ii. pp. 65, 66; also, *Apostolic Fathers* (Jackson and Prof. Fisher eds.), p. 179.

gious services. The custom of so observing it could not have arisen in so short a time subsequent to the days of the apostles, if contrary to their instructions and example.

Objection : Many writings ascribed to Justin are spurious.¹

Reply : The above testimony is from Justin's First Apology, well-known to be genuine.

Objection Second : Justin did not mean the Lord's day, for he speaks of Sunday ; and Lord's day may, therefore, mean the seventh, and not the first day.² *Reply* : The services he describes show that he meant the first day ; and he says it was the day on which Christ " rose from the dead." Addressing the Roman emperor and senate, he naturally called the day by its secular name — Sunday — established by usage before Hadrian's death, which occurred A.D. 138. The name *Lord's day* might have aroused Augustus's suspicions of Justin's loyalty. The Lord's day and Sunday are known to have been identical, as we shall soon see.

Some thirty or forty years later, Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, A.D. 170, in a letter to the church at Rome, says : " To-day we have passed the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your epistle." ³

Objection : Dionysius does not identify the Lord's day with the first day, and it may therefore have been the Sabbath.⁴

Reply : The epistle must have been read to a Christian assembly, such assemblies customarily met on the first day, or Sunday, Justin Martyr a short time previous described the assemblies of Sunday ; on that day the latter was undoubtedly read, and these facts nearly identify Sunday with Lord's day.

Melito, bishop of Sardis, about A.D. 170, is credited by Eusebius with writing, among other works, one " On the Lord's-day." ⁵ The work itself is lost.

Objection : The discourse may have been about our Lord's life, the word *ἡμέρα*, day, not being in the Greek text.⁶

Reply : Melito probably had the full title, and Eusebius

¹ Andrews, *Hist. Sab.*, p. 266.

² Euseb. *Ecl. Hist.*, Bk. iv. chap. 23.

³ Euseb. *Ecl. Hist.*, Bk. iv. chap. 26.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁵ Andrews, *Hist. Sab.*, p. 214.

⁶ Andrews, *Hist. Sab.*, p. 216.

omitted a part because *ἡμέρα* was so often understood after *κυριακή*. The latter word occurs only twice in the New Testament, — Lord's supper (1 Cor. xi. 20), Lord's day (Rev. i. 10). It is a peculiar adjective form, originated, like some other adjectives, by the apostles,¹ and used here as a noun in the possessive. The word for Lord in general use is *κύριος*. But the Fathers so often used *κυριακή* followed by *ἡμέρα*, that the latter was sometimes omitted, because the former suggested it. In Heb. iv. 4, the adjective for *seventh* has the word for day understood.² Sophocles' Greek Lexicon gives examples of *κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ* in the Apocalypse (i. 10), and in the writings of Ignatius, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and of others. This adjective form for the name of our Lord is not nearly so much followed by any other word as by that for *day*. Hence, *κυριακή* suggests *ἡμέρα*. All noted students of the patristical writings give the title in full — "Lord's day" — to Melito's production now in question, — as Routh, Laemmer, Hessey, Means, in Smith's Dictionary, *Patrologiae Graecae*. Moreover, a modern discovery, that of the manuscript in the Syrian convent in the desert of Nitria in the year 1843, has furnished the *Syriac* of Eusebius's list of Melito's works, and there this title is, "On the first day of the week," showing how the early translators into the *Syriac* understood the title.³ Melito was contemporary with Dionysius; doubtless they understood the meaning of "Lord's day" alike, and both as Justin did, and he as being identical with *first day* or Sunday.

Irenaeus, a martyr, bishop of Lyons A.D. 178, is quoted by an early subsequent writer as saying: "This [custom] of not bending the knee upon Sunday is a symbol of the resurrection, through which we have been set free, by the grace of Christ, from our sins and from death, and took its rise from apostolic times."⁴ The writer speaks definitely of "the Lord's day" as the Sunday spoken of by Irenaeus, and

¹ Winer's New Testament Grammar, p. 236.

² *Ibid.*, p. 590.

³ *Spicilegium Syriacum*, Cureton, p. 57. See also, *Apostolic Fathers* (Jackson and Prof. Fisher eds.), p. 190.

⁴ *Ant. Nic. Lib.*, Vol. ix. pp. 162, 163.

he undoubtedly knew the bishop's meaning. A question early arose whether the close of the paschal fast should be on the fourteenth day of the moon, whatever day of the week it came, or on the Lord's day alone. The former was the practice of many Eastern churches, and the latter of the Western. The bishops of various districts issued epistles on the subject. Eusebius says that Irenaeus presided over the churches in Gaul, and the bishops there, as in other parts, unanimously communicated "that the mystery of our Lord's resurrection should be celebrated on no other day than the Lord's day; and that on this day alone we should observe the close of the paschal fasts."¹ Andrews twice says there is no instance where the term Lord's day is found in Irenaeus's works.² The above is an instance reported by Eusebius.

Clement, made presbyter of the church at Alexandria about A.D. 189, quotes from Plato, where he says the philosopher all but predicts the economy of salvation, and also where he fancifully supposes Plato prophesies of the "Lord's day," under the name of "the eighth."³ Andrews admits that Clement employs the term "Lord's day," but says it is not certain that he means a *natural day*.⁴ Yet, in the same paragraph Clement makes other quotations; four from Homer, one from Hesiod, and two from Callimachus, where the seventh day is named, plainly a natural day; and Clement therefore must have meant the literal Lord's day, a natural day, the first of the week. But if any doubt remains about this reference, another makes his testimony clear, where he speaks of the true Gnostic, by which he means the real Christian, as keeping "Lord's day" in commemoration of the "Lord's resurrection."⁵

An important testimony — in a work quoted from by Eusebius, but discovered in full by Dr. Cureton, among the Nitrian mss. in 1843, — is that of Bardesanes, who flourished near

¹ Eccl. Hist., Vol. ii. p. 236.

² Hist. Sab., pp. 217, 273.

³ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xii. pp. 284, 285.

⁴ Hist. Sab., p. 219.

⁵ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xii. p. 461.

the close of the second century. Drs. Cureton and Hessey put the time about the middle of the second century; but they are doubtless in error as to the conquest of Arabia by the Romans to which Bardesanes refers as then recent. There were three such wars: one waged by Avidius Cassius, about A.D. 162-5; another by Septimius Severus in A.D. 195-6, and a third by Macrinus, A.D. 217-18.¹ The second was the greatest, and probably the one referred to by Bardesanes. He discourses first of Jewish Sabbath observance, and then says: "Wherever we be, all of us are called by the one name of the Messiah — Christians; and upon one day, which is the first of the week, we assemble ourselves together, and on the appointed days we abstain from food."² This evidence is indisputable.

Tertullian, reputed to have been converted to Christianity A.D. 185, speaks of "the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church,"³ distinctly implying that there was such a day, and that it was religiously observed. In one place he says: "We count fasting or kneeling in worship on the Lord's day to be unlawful";⁴ and in another: "We, however (just as we have received), only on the day of the Lord's resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling," etc.⁵ The two passages together show that by the Lord's day he meant the day of Christ's resurrection, and that day they kept joyfully, and not with fasting or other austerities; and the latter passage shows that they had received directions in regard to observing the Lord's day from those who had gone before them. In two passages he repels the charge of opposers that the Christians worshipped the sun; in one, saying: "We devote Sunday to rejoicing from a far different reason than sun-worship";⁶ and in the other, charging upon the pagans the naming of the first day of the week by the term Sunday, he says: "It is you, at all events, who have even admitted the sun into the calendar of the week."⁷ In connection

¹ Smith's Dic. Biog., Vol. i. p. 257.

² Spicilegium Syriacum, p. 32.

³ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xv. p. 428.

⁴ Ibid., Vol. xi. p. 336.

⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

⁶ Ibid., p. 85.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 449, 450.

with this last passage he says: "We make Sunday a day of festivity," by which he meant religious joy, not secular festivity. In his essay on idolatry he speaks of the Christians as having "a festive day every eighth day," and of that as the Lord's day.¹ In his discourse on prayer he speaks of what is appropriate "on the day of the Lord's resurrection," and says, "Deferring even our business, lest we give any place to the devil"²; by which he implies that business on the Lord's day ought to be and was suspended. Neander regards this passage as "indicative of the transfer of the law of the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday," and of Tertullian's belief that attending to any business on Sunday is sinful.³ Notice that in respect to some part of the keeping of the Lord's day Tertullian speaks of having received instruction from those who had gone before. Probably he had also in respect to omitting business. Mr. Andrews, the seventh-day Sabbatarian, implies that Tertullian uses the term "Lord's day" in only three instances of any moment.⁴ We have given five, including two where it is called by the more explicit phrase "the day of the Lord's resurrection"; and seven, including two more where the term "Sunday" is used as equivalent to Lord's day. Another seventh-day author,⁵ claiming Neander for authority, professedly quotes from him (Rose's translation): "The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals, *was always only a human ordinance*; and it was far from the intention of the apostles to establish a divine command in this respect." If any such language ever escaped from Neander's pen, the seventh-day writers ought not to be allowed now to suppose that any such idea as it conveys was that historian's latest testimony. On the contrary, in the records which had his seal at his death, he cites Acts xx. 7 and Rev. i. 10 as apostolic intimations of a change among the early Christians from the seventh to the first day of the week; which latter, following the apostle

¹ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xi. pp. 162, 163.

² Ibid., p. 199.

³ Church History, Vol. i. pp. 295, 296.

⁴ Hist. Sab., p. 222.

⁵ W. H. Fahnestock, M. D. "Bible Sabbath."

John, he terms the "Lord's day." He also cites Barnabas and Ignatius, whom we have already quoted, as giving evidence to the same fact of change. He held, further, that the early churches "composed of Jewish Christians, though they admitted with the rest the festival of Sunday, yet retained also that of the Sabbath."¹ We have, then, Neander's sanction to our main deduction from not only Tertullian's testimony, but from that of Barnabas and Ignatius also.

It is certain that Tertullian used the names "Lord's day" and "Sunday" as equivalent. Undoubtedly, then, Justin by the word Sunday meant Lord's day; and Dionysius by Lord's day meant Sunday; and Melito, Irenæus, Clement, and others before and after, used these names interchangeably. Seventh-day Sabbatarian authors have positively declared that there is no early evidence that the term "Lord's day" meant the first day. But when we find from the distinguished Tertullian that they did in his time mean the same, and find no evidence of any other usage, we may well conclude that the apostle John by the term "Lord's day" meant the first day of the week, which commemorated our Lord's resurrection, and that the meaning which he gave was ever after continued. So, also, we may well conclude that the sacredness ascribed to the Lord's day by Tertullian had from the first been known in the Christian church. Much evidence tends to that conclusion; no real evidence tends to the contrary. Shall we find this view corroborated by testimonies of later dates?

Minucius Felix, author of *Octavius*, about A.D. 166 or 198, said of the Christians, "On a solemn day they assemble at the feast."² The speaker in the dialogue from which this is taken refers to the Lord's day and supper. The character of the latter he misrepresents; but that does not weaken this evidence of the day's observance.

We have reviewed, up to this point, the first century after

¹ Church History, Vol. i. (Torrey's translation), pp. 295, 296.

² Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xiii. p. 464.

the apostle John's death, and we find in that time *eleven* thoroughly credible witnesses concurring in the fact that the Christians of that era regarded and observed the first or Lord's day as the *chief* of all days; and we find no contemporary testimony to the contrary.

Cyprian, raised to the rank of presbyter A.D. 247,—one of the martyrs in Africa,—speaks of the Lord's day as sacred, and as at once the first and the eighth; and, by a play upon the ordinal, he recalls the fact of "the observance of the *eighth* day in the Jewish circumcision of the flesh."¹

Origen, in his Commentary on Exodus, says the Lord's day is superior to the Jewish Sabbath;² and in his noted work against Celsus, the epicurean philosopher (A.D. 244–249), he acknowledges that he kept the Lord's day, and says, "The perfect Christian is always keeping the Lord's day."³ Origen was one of the most learned men of his time, and must have known the views of the earlier Fathers; and had he disagreed with them and their fellow-Christians respecting the Lord's day, it would somewhere appear.

Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea, A.D. 270, whom Eusebius ranks as superior to all of his time in science and learning,⁴ in his Paschal Canon, speaks of the Lord's day by name at least ten different times. He says the Lord's resurrection took place upon it, and that "on the Lord's day was it that light was shown to us in the beginning, and now also in the end the comforts of all present and the tokens of all future blessings."⁵

Victorinus, martyr, bishop of Petabio, A.D. 270–290, speaks of the Lord's day as one of joy and thanksgiving.⁶

The Apostolic Constitutions, attributed to Clement of Rome, for the most part dating at least between A.D. 150 and 350, placed by Bunsen in the second or third century, and certainly referred to by Epiphanius, who died A.D. 402,—contains this: "On the day of the resurrection of the Lord,

¹ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. viii. p. 198.

² Patrologiae, Tom. xii. p. 345.

³ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xxiii. p. 509.

⁴ Eccl. Hist., Bk. vii. chap. 32.

⁵ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xiv. pp. 420, 425.

⁶ Ibid., Vol. xviii. p. 390.

that is, the Lord's day, assemble yourselves together, without fail, giving thanks to God, and praising him for those mercies God has bestowed upon you through Christ." ¹

Peter, a martyr and a bishop of Alexandria, A.D. 306, in a sermon on penitence, said: "The Lord's day we celebrate as a day of joy, because on it he rose again; on which day we have received it for a custom not even to bow the knee. . . . On the Lord's day we ought not to fast, for it is a day of joy for the resurrection of our Lord." ²

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea A.D. 315 (dying previous to 340), besides stating that Irenaeus (bishop of Lyons A.D. 178) wrote an epistle on celebrating the mystery of Christ's resurrection on the day of the Lord only, ³ states twice that Constantine appointed the first and chief of all days, the day of the Lord, for prayer, ⁴ — not, however, that he originated it, — and says that he commanded all to assemble on the Lord's day for refreshment to the body, and for comfort and invigoration to the soul by divine precepts. ⁵ In his commentary on the ninety-second Psalm Eusebius speaks of the "saving Lord's day, . . . in which the Saviour of the world . . . obtained the victory over death." ⁶ Constantine's edict concerning the Lord's day, A.D. 321, would never have been issued, if previously the day had not long been observed by the Christians.

The Nicene Council, A.D. 325, assumed the existence and the customary observance by the Christians of the Lord's day, in their decision that as a rule prayer on that day should be offered standing, and not kneeling, ⁷ and that Easter should be celebrated on that day. ⁸

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, A.D. 326, recognizes the Lord's day so much as to suppose that in the phrase

¹ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xvii. p. 189.

² Ibid., Vol. xiv. p. 322.

³ Eccl. Hist., Bk. v. chap. xxiv. p. 239.

⁴ Life Const., Bk. iv. chap. xviii. p. 189; Orat. Praise Const., chap. ix. p. 328.

⁵ Ibid., chap. xvii. p. 378.

⁶ Patrologiae Graecae, Tom. xxiii. p. 1170.

⁷ Christian Councils, Hefele, p. 434.

⁸ Canon xx. of Council; Schaff's Hist. Ch., p. 376; also, Ch. Hist., Vol. ii. p. 383.

“upon Sheminith,” — upon the *eighth*, — in the title of the sixth Psalm, there is a reference to that day;¹ and as to say, in comments on the phrase “This is the day which the Lord hath made,” in Ps. cxvii. 24 (cxviii. our version), “The phrase signifies the resurrection-day of our Saviour, which is named from him, to wit, the Lord’s day.” Elsewhere he speaks of the persecutions suffered by the Christians while they were at prayer on the Lord’s day.²

Epiphanius, bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, A.D. 367, a man of extensive reading, speaks of the Lord’s day *as established by the apostles*;³ and if in his time that were not a conceded fact, we should probably find it contradicted.

Basil, bishop of Caesarea, A.D. 370, exalts the day on which Christ arose and believers rose with him.⁴

Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, A.D. 372, magnifies the Lord’s day as *the day the Lord hath made*, and as commemorating Christ’s resurrection and the beginning of creation.⁵

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, A.D. 374, speaks of the celebration of the Lord’s day, implying that it was the day of his resurrection.⁶

Jerome, ordained presbyter A.D. 379, speaks often of the Lord’s day, of its sacredness to Christians, of church attendance upon it, and of its distinction from Jewish sacred days.⁷

Gregory of Nazianzus, made bishop of Constantinople A.D. 380, refers often to the Lord’s day and to the memory of his resurrection.⁸

Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, A.D. 385, discourses of the Christians as honoring the Lord’s day because of the blessing of his resurrection.⁹

Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia, A.D. 387, calls the first the

¹ Opera, Tom. i. folio, Pars ii. p. 1014.

² Lib. of Fath., Hist. Tracts, p. 192.

³ Opera, folio, Tom. i. p. 1104, chap. xxii. Exp. Fid. Cathol.

⁴ Opera (Paris ed.), Tom. ii. p. 123.

⁵ In Christ. Res., Opera, fol. Colon. Agrip., p. 454.

⁶ Opera, fol. Tom. ii. p. 883, C. Epist.

⁷ Opera, Tom. iv. p. 272, in Epist. Gal. iv. 10.

⁸ Comm. Opera, fol. Tom. ii. p. 1094; Orat. xlii.

⁹ Biblioth. Veterum Patrum, Vol. v. p. 860.

Lord's day, and identifies it as that of his resurrection, and of the beginning of creation.¹

Augustine, ordained bishop of Hippo A.D. 395, expresses his view of the Lord's day by saying to Faustus the Manichæan, "What you call Sunday, we call the Lord's day; and on it we do not worship the sun, but commemorate the Lord's resurrection."²

Chrysostom, elected archbishop of Constantinople A.D. 397, speaking of the Lord's day, says, "All the unutterable blessings, and that which is the root and the beginning of our life, took place on this day."³

Cyril, made bishop of Alexandria A.D. 412, in discoursing on the purposes of the Sabbath of the old dispensation, assumes often that the Lord's day is to be honored.⁴

Theodoret, made bishop of Cyrus A.D. 420 or 423, speaks of the Jews as observing the Sabbath, and of the Christians as keeping sacred the Lord's day.⁵

Socrates, the historian who flourished about A.D. 420, speaks of the Lord's day and of the Sabbath as occurring weekly.⁶

Sozomen, also an historian, and contemporary with Socrates, speaks of the Lord's day as that which the Jews called the first day of the week, and of Constantine's honoring the day because on it Christ arose from the dead.⁷ His language implies that it was not made the Lord's day by Constantine, but that it was such before his edict.

Sedulius, presbyter and poet, who flourished about A.D. 450, in his Paschal Song, gives high honor to the Lord's day.⁸

Leo the Great, bishop of Rome A.D. 440-461, speaks of

¹ Biblioth. Veterum Patrum, p. 945, De Paschæ, Tract. I.

² Manichean Heresy (Edinburgh ed. 1872), p. 324.

³ Homil. 1 Cor. xvi. 2, Lib. Fathers (Oxford ed.), p. 606.

⁴ De Adorat. in Spir. et Verit., Opera, fol., Vol. i. pp. 619, 620; de Fest. Paschal., Tom. vi. p. 82.

⁵ De Fabulis Haer., Tom. iv. p. 219.

⁶ Greek Eccl. Hist., Vol. iii. p. 436, Bk. vi. chap. viii.

⁷ Ibid., Vol. iv. p. 16, Bk. 1, chap. viii.

⁸ Biblioth. Vet. Patr., Tom. vi. p. 470, H. Lib. iv.

the day of our Lord's resurrection as sacred, and gives a summary of the reasons that make it so conspicuous.¹

The Council of Eliberis, or Elvira (Hefele), A.D. 305 or 306, threatened with church suspension any one, living in town or city, who should absent himself from church three Lord's days.²

The Council of Laodicea, A.D. 363, voted that Christians should rest from labor on the Lord's day if they were able;³ seeming to imply, as Dr. Heurtley suggests, that some of had not always the command of their own time.⁴

The Council of Antioch, A.D. 340, ordained that refusal to partake of the communion, which was observed each Lord's them day, should be visited with excommunication.⁵

The Council of Sardica, A.D. 347, adopted the action of the Council of Eliberis.⁶

The Council of Gangra, about the middle of the fourth century, condemned those who contemned the house of God.⁷

The First Council of Toledo, A.D. 400, decreed that those who refused to partake of the communion which was observed each Lord's day, should be excommunicated.⁸

The Fourth Council of Carthage, A.D. 436, added to the foregoing that if one left the church while the minister was preaching he should be anathematized.⁹ In the case of each Council there is indicated a previous knowledge of the Lord's day and the church services on that day.

When Christianity came to assume control of *national* affairs, civil action was often taken in favor of the Lord's day. Constantine, A.D. 321, commanded the general ob-

¹ Schaff's Hist. Christ. Church, Vol. ii. p. 385 ; Leon Epist. ix. ad Dioscurum Alex. Episc., chap. 1.

² Conc. Elib. Canon xxi. Labbi, Tom. ii. col. 9, p. 376.

³ Conc. Laod. Canon xxix. Labbi, Tom. ii. col. 570 ; Neander's Church Hist., Vol. ii. p. 300.

⁴ Hessey, Sunday, p. 316.

⁵ Conc. Antioch, Canon ii. Labbi, Tom. ii. col. 1309.

⁶ Conc. Sardica, Canon xi. Labbi, Tom. iii. col. 20.

⁷ Conc. Gangra, Canon v. Labbi, Tom. ii. col. 1101.

⁸ Conc. Toledo, i. Canon xiii. Labbi, Tom. iii. col. 1000.

⁹ Conc. Carthag. iv. Canon xxiv. Labbi, Tom. iii. col. 953.

servance of the Lord's day ; granting to Christians leisure for religious services, and enjoining upon pagan soldiers prayer to God on that day ;¹ also ordering the suspension of suits and courts of justice, yet granting civil action, on Sunday, for the emancipation of slaves.² Under Valentinian and Valens, A.D. 368, a law was enacted forbidding the exaction of taxes and collection of other dues on Sunday.³ Theodosius I., A.D. 379 and 386, forbade civil proceedings and pagan spectacles or theatrical performances ; and the latter Theodosius II. forbade, A. D. 425.⁴ Leo and Anthemius, A.D. 469, forbade other secular amusements, and granted to Christians other immunities from civil annoyances and proceedings on the Lord's day.⁵

Such is the course of history through about four centuries succeeding the death of most of the apostles. From beginning to end it shows an unbroken chain of evidence that the Christians sacredly observed the Lord's day. No testimony to the contrary, or reference to it, anywhere appears. The proofs are doubled, and often more than quadrupled, all along the line ; the earlier life of some witnesses continually overlapping the later of others. The seed of testimony, which we discover in the apostolic and earlier patristic days, develops into the lofty tree with wide-spreading branches after a few centuries have passed by. This universal observance of the Lord's day among the early Christians is proof that they regarded such observance an obligation as well as privilege, and that they believed the obligation had been imposed by divine authority. Such belief on the part of the apostles was equal to inspiration. Suppose the pilgrims had crossed the Atlantic to Plymouth Rock in the ship Neptune, and not in the Mayflower. Could subsequent history, through four hundred years, possibly state, repeat, and reiterate that they came in the Mayflower, with not the least dispute, or even allusion, to the contrary ? Impossible ! Suppose the Lord's

¹ Life Const , Bk. iv. chaps. 18, 19. ² Neander's Ch. Hist., Vol. ii. p. 300.

³ Schaff's Church Hist , Vol. ii. p. 381 ; Hesse, Sunday, pp. 83, 84.

⁴ Ibid., also Robertson's Church Hist., Vol. i. p. 248 ; Hesse, Sunday, p. 83.

⁵ Cod. Theod. xv. 5, 2, a 386 ; Hesse, Sunday, pp. 83, 84.

day were *not* sacred and chief with the apostles and early Christians, could all subsequent history, through four centuries, represent and reiterate that it *was* sacred and chief, with no statement to the contrary? Equally impossible!

Objection: First-day authors rely on the phrase *Dominicum servasti?* "Hast thou kept the Lord's day?" as a genuine question, put by the persecutors to the Christians in the primitive era, and as therefore showing that the first day was then kept sacred. We deny its genuineness, and the validity of the inference from it.¹ *Reply:* So far as appears to the present writer this objection is well founded. And the phrase in question has been so often adduced in the first-day argument as to justify calling attention to its probable lack of authority. Dr. Justin Edwards,² Gurney, the English author,³ President Appleton of Bowdoin college,⁴ Rev. A. A. Phelps,⁵ Henry Wilkinson,⁶ Gilfillan,⁷ and the recently issued volume, "Sabbath Essays,"⁸ all quote this language as reliable. In the ancient Christian writings *Dominicum* sometimes stands for Lord's supper, and for Lord's day and Lord's house; the word for supper, day, and house being understood, and inferable from the connection. McClintock and Strong cite a passage from Cyprian where they say *Dominicum* means both Lord's supper and Lord's house in the same paragraph.⁹ But their translation would not be accepted by many, is certainly not necessitated, and is contrary to that given by the Ante Nicene Library, which renders the word "Lord's supper" in both instances.¹⁰ The sufferings of many early Christians led to a volume entitled "*Acta Martyrum*," of which there have been several editions, Ruinart's being apparently the most valuable, and in it the word *Dominicum* often occurs. But, so far as we learn, no one has found it there joined to the word *servasti*, with *diem* either expressed or

¹ Andrews, Hist. Sab., chap. xv.

² Sabbath Manual, p. 120.

³ Hist., Authen., and Use, Sab., pp. 87, 88.

⁴ Works, Vol. ii. p. 219.

⁵ Perpet. Sab., 141.

⁶ Formerly Principal Magdalen Hall, Oxford, quoted by Pres. Appleton.

⁷ The Sabbath, p. 7.

⁸ Sabbath Essays, p. 249.

⁹ Bib. Theo. Eccl. Cyc., Vol. ii. p. 859.

¹⁰ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xiii. p. 11.

understood. Bishop Andrewes, of Winchester, born A.D. 1555, seems to have first given this quotation from the *Acta Martyrum*, and he gave it erroneously, probably by some mistake of memory or copying. From him the error, if it be such, has come down through centuries, no first-day Sabbatarian author taking pains to verify the quotation, or to attempt it. But no dependence need be placed on the dialogue introduced by the question, *Dominicum servasti?* The verified quotations from the Fathers are of themselves sufficient to show that the early Christians observed the first day of the week as the most sacred of the seven.

We now consider :

Thirdly, how the *seventh* day was regarded by the Christians during the three centuries next succeeding the apostles. If we find evidence that it was as strictly observed by them as by themselves and their fathers before the new dispensation commenced, then we must conclude that the primitive Christians kept equally sacred two days in the week, and that the Lord's day was not intended to take the place of the seventh-day Sabbath.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, at least, the Christians began to omit more than ever the observance of the seventh day, and to regard it as no longer binding. The temple destroyed, the sacrifices having ceased, the holy place no more, — then, if not before, began to dawn upon the common Christian mind the fact that the Jewish economy was abrogated, and that Judaic rites and ceremonies were no longer required by the Lord. Yielding the seventh day was one of the last steps in breaking off from the old order of things, and Judaizing Christians continued long to observe both the seventh day and the first. But, as might have been expected, the observance of the two days by Christians in general was not permanently practised. The earlier Gentile Christians embraced their new faith in connection with worship in Jewish synagogues; and therefore, probably, with the Jews, more or less observed the seventh day for a season. But we know not when the observance of the first day of the week

was commenced, unless as early as the day of pentecost, or earlier. And doubtless quite early many Gentile and many Jewish Christians began to avail themselves of the apostolic privilege of omitting the strict religious observance of the seventh day — a privilege embraced in such sayings as that of Paul: "Let no man therefore judge you in respect of the sabbath-days" (Col. ii. 16).

Yet the historical part of the New Testament is too early to give much light respecting the omission to keep the seventh day sacred. Appeal must be made again to the early fathers, whose views doubtless were directly, in some cases, in most indirectly, received from the apostles. Here we are at issue with the Sabbatarians, who advocate the seventh day as still the Sabbath. They contend that the fathers of the second century at least did not sanction the neglect to keep holy the seventh day. We maintain that while they did not deem it sinful to keep both days, and regarded it as impossible for a Christian to neglect the first day, they strenuously opposed binding the consciences of believers to the observance of the seventh.

Ignatius, contemporary of the apostle John, by the shorter recension, speaks of Christians as "no longer observing the Sabbath" — seventh day; and, by the longer recension, exhorts to the spiritual observance of the seventh, but deprecates the "Jewish" formal method.¹ The epistle of Barnabas, while commending the eighth (first) day, speaks of the Lord as abolishing Jewish sacrifices, new moons, and Sabbaths;² and as saying, "Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me."³ Justin Martyr implies that the Christians did not feel obligated to keep the seventh day, by saying, "We, too, would observe the fleshly circumcision, and the Sabbaths, and, in short, all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined you." Also, "How is it, Trypho, that we would not observe those rites which do not harm us, — I speak of fleshly circumcisions, and Sabbaths, and feasts."⁴ Irenaeus treating of symbolic signs,

¹ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. i. p. 150.

² Ibid., p. 103.

³ Ibid., p. 128.

⁴ Ibid., Vol. ii. p. 109.

says that sacrifices suggested the "true sacrifice," "circumcision after the flesh typified that after the spirit," and "Sabbaths taught that we should continue day by day in God's service," implying that all these had passed away.¹ Be it observed that the fathers did not regard the seventh-day Sabbath as the whole of the fourth commandment. Not once can we find in their writings the statement that the fourth commandment is abolished. But we do find there the strongest affirmations that the decalogue is unrepealed and yet in force, and even also that the fourth commandment is not abolished. Those specific testimonies we consider hereafter.

Tertullian, exhorting Christians not to mingle in heathen festivals, since they would not in the Jewish, says, "By us, to whom Sabbaths are strange, and the new moons, and festivals formerly beloved of God."² More explicitly he says, "The observance of the Sabbath is being demonstrated to have been temporary."³ Bardesanes contrasts the observance of the seventh day by the Jews with that of the first by the Christians, implying that the latter did not regard the seventh as sacred.⁴ Origen gives a list of the sacred days he was accustomed to observe, without including the Sabbath,⁵ and speaks of the Lord of the Sabbath as having changed it.⁶ Victorinus says, "Lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews, which Christ himself, the Lord of the Sabbath, says by his prophets that his soul hateth, which Sabbath he in his body abolished."⁷ Anatolius, A. D. 270, speaks often of the Lord's day and its celebration, but not of the seventh as having any honor in comparison with the first.⁸ Eusebius speaks of the Sabbath, meaning the seventh day, as a Mosaic institution, and of the Lord's day as "more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath."⁹ Athanasius speaks emphatically of the Sabbath, seventh day, as having passed.¹⁰

¹ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. v. pp. 427, 422.

² Ibid., Vol. xi. p. 162.

³ Ibid., xviii. p. 211.

⁴ Spicilegium Syriacum, pp. 31, 32.

⁵ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xxiii. p. 509.

⁶ Com. in Matt. Opera, Tom. iii. 543 E.

⁷ Ant. Nic. Lib., Vol. xviii. p. 390.

⁸ Ibid., xiv. p. 425.

⁹ Comm. on Ps. xcii.

¹⁰ De Sab. et Cir. Opera, Tom. ii. fol. p. 55.

Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem, elected presbyter A.D. 345, says, "Nor throw thyself into the assemblies of the heathen spectacles. . . . And fall not into Judaism. . . . Abstain from all observance of Sabbaths, and from calling any indifferent meat common or unclean."¹ Hilary, elected Bishop of Poitiers, about A.D. 350, speaks of the first day as much superior to the seventh, and as the one observed by Christians.² Epiphanius speaks of the great Sabbath, rest, in Christ, to which the smaller or original one was introductory.³ Ambrose speaks of the Lord's day as preferred over other divine works,⁴ and of the Sabbath, seventh day, as secondary to it.⁵ Gregory of Nyssa speaks of the Sabbath, seventh day, as though it pertained to the former Jewish institutions.⁶ Jerome, contrasting Jewish with Christian institutions, places the Sabbath with the former.⁷ Augustine says, "The rest of the Sabbath we consider no longer binding as an observance."⁸

Thus we find a stream of evidence adverse to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath among Christians, running through three centuries, and having its source among the Fathers nearest the apostles, and among the apostles themselves. Paul condemns binding the conscience to Sabbaths; Ignatius says, Christians no longer observe that day as chief, but the Lord's day; and, three centuries after, Augustine says, Christians consider Sabbath-keeping no longer binding. But note should be taken that when the Fathers taught that the seventh day need not be observed, they also taught that the first should be observed; that when the seventh lost its sacredness, the first received a sacredness in the universal Christian esteem. Nearly every patristic writer who teaches that it is not a duty to observe the seventh day teaches equally that it is the duty, or practice, of Christians to observe the

¹ Lib. of Fathers, Cyril, p. 51; Lec. iv. sec. 37.

² ProL. in Lib. Psal. Opera, col. 8. ³ Adv. Haer. Opera, fol. Tom. i. p. 159.

⁴ Enarratio in Ps. xliii., Opera, fol. Tom. i. col. 887 E.

⁵ Enar. in Ps. xlvii. Opera, Tom. i. col. 936 D.

⁶ In Chris. Resur., Opera, fol. p. 456. ⁷ Expl. Ps. cxviii.; Hessey, Sun., p. 306.

⁸ Reply to Faustus, Bk. vi. sec. 4. p. 172.

Lord's day. The two days were not observed in exactly the same manner. Sunday had nothing of the sacrifices, or shew-bread, or fasts of the seventh day ; and it had the Lord's supper, and rejoicing over Christ's resurrection, and its glorious assurances, which the seventh day had only in symbols. Yet, both days had convocations, Scripture reading, praise, prayer, and omission of the usual secular duties ; as though the Lord's day had absorbed all the moral elements of the original Sabbath, and left the positive, to most of which the Judaizers still clung with much tenacity. This review of the patristic writings confirms the testimony and impressions given by the New Testament in various respects. It shows that the first day of the week was celebrated by the apostles and early Christians in commemoration of Christ's resurrection ; that it was the distinctive Christian day for sacred regard ; that the chief and regular Christian assemblies were held upon it ; that no evidence appears in the patristic writings, as none does in the New Testament, of Christians assembling as such on the seventh day, as the chief of all days ; that the early fathers certainly used the term " Lord's day " as synonymous with " first day," and doubtless in imitation of the apostle John's language ; that according to apostolic authority, Christians are released from the obligation to observe the seventh day, and are bound to observe the first ; that the statement of Roman Catholic writers that Protestants are indebted to that church for authority to keep the Lord's day¹ is unfounded, since we trace the observance to the apostles ; and that we ought to accept inspired example and instruction, though without express command, as authority for change of observance from the seventh to the first day, or else, in consistency, continue sacrifices, circumcision, and the passover, since they are revoked in the new dispensation by example and instruction rather than by command. The testimony of the fathers is utterly irreconcilable with any theory of New Testament teaching on this subject, except that the apostles and contemporary Christians regarded the first day of the

¹ Bib. Sac., Vol. xxxvi. p. 731.

week as the chief of all days, held on it their chief religious services, and believed it to be sacred.

And according to this showing from Scripture and the early patristic writings, those who observe the seventh day as now the chief day in the week, to be carefully kept sacred, have no basis for their peculiar theory and practice. It follows that the reason for their increase of numbers during these later years has been the misinformation on this subject disseminated by their publications and living teachers. We have shown from the Scriptures that it is at least highly probable that the apostles and early Christians observed the first or Lord's day as chief and sacred. We have commenced with the fathers contemporary with and immediately succeeding the last of the apostles, and traced their testimony through the next succeeding four centuries. And we find in that space a long line of nearly fifty human witnesses, whose united testimony concentrates upon this, that the religious observance of the Lord's day was begun in the days of the apostles, and under their sanction. There arises no one note of dissonance in the whole troop of men, nor anywhere around them. This would not and could not be true unless our main proposition were true, that the Lord's day in all that time were first and chief. Nor is there simply a single utterance from each of these many witnesses, but some seventy-five different passages give their concurrent voice, and still more could be cited. And yet, in this long lapse of nearly fifteen hundred years, the writings of these fifty men have nearly all perished. And in the three centuries next succeeding the apostle John we have found and named nearly twenty men who directly, or indirectly, testify that in all that time the seventh-day Sabbath took a quite inferior place, at least in the Christian heart, as compared with the Lord's day. And their number, and the number of their testimonies, could both be much increased. This concurrent testimony respecting the first and seventh days is just what might be expected. The Lord's day coming forward to the chief place, the seventh day would retire to a quite inferior one. And yet all

this is proved to be the fruit of apostolic instruction and example, and therefore the result of the word and act of Jesus Christ, who by it all is the more glorified.

In view of the facts ascertained or collected in this discussion, we see no occasion for any first day-Sabbatarians to "confess to a consciousness of obscurity" in regard to the "authoritative change" from the seventh to the Lord's day, whether the latter be strictly a Sabbath or not; nor even for any to affirm that the change is a "difficult point to establish."¹ We have not precisely mathematical demonstration for the change, but we have the highest probabilities that our Lord in some way has given the first day of the week to be kept sacred in the new dispensation. And on the highest probabilities in all moral questions men are at liberty, and are bound, to believe and to act.

For equally strong, or stronger, reasons there is no real basis for what Dr. Hesse^y calls the "ecclesiastical theory" respecting the Lord's day:² the view that the sacred observance of the first day has no authority except in the history of the church since the apostolic era. For we obtain New Testament evidence that in the apostles' time the first day was religiously observed, and the obligations to keep holy the seventh day were cancelled. Further, we get evidence from the fathers, beginning with those contemporary with the last of the apostles, that they understood the apostles to authorize the keeping of the first day sacred, and to release from keeping the seventh as the Sabbath, and that the apostles authoritatively acted in this under instruction from their divine Master.

And again, according to this discussion, the view of some even American evangelical ministers, that the early Christians were disagreed on the question of keeping the first day in a religious manner, is entirely wrong. Not the least evidence of such disagreement appears in the New Testament, and positive evidence of agreement on that point appears in the patristic writings.

¹ Sabbath Essays; Mass. Sab. Conventions, p. 149. ² Sunday, pp. 8, 192.

(To be continued.)