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The Lord's Day

A full and accurate statement of the true Sunday observance Compiled from Catholic sources.

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In view of the present agitation about running the street cars on Sunday, it may be well to state a few facts on the observance of the Lord's Day. Advisedly we Catholics habitually refrain from calling Sunday the Sabbath; for to apply this term to the first day of the week is an historical solecism. The Hebrew Sabbath was the weekly day of rest with which the week ended; the Christian Sunday is the day of divine worship with which the week begins. The Catholic Church, "the pillar and ground of truth," has changed the day of rest and worship. With her credentials as the Living Interpreter of God's Will, she has a perfect right to effect that change. On the contrary those who maintain that no practice should be introduced that is not explicitly confirmed by Holy Scripture, cannot logically defend their present observance of the first day of the week.

Inaccuracy.

Some of the Protestant clergymen who spoke last Sunday on this question asserted, with their usual carelessness about facts, that the Sabbath was instituted before the Mosaic legislation,—one said "before the fall," another "long before the Jewish nation had appeared." We should be curious to see how they prove this assertion. There is not the slightest trace in Scripture of the observance of the Sabbath among the Hebrews before the time of Moses. True, in Genesis ii, 3, we read that "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it," but it is nowhere said that He told men in the pre-Mosaic period to do so likewise, and evidently the sacred writers knew nothing of a Sabbath kept by the Patriarchs. All that can be deduced from this text of Genesis is that God then laid the foundation of his future law concerning the Sabbath, not that he then and there promulgated that law.

One Great Contrast

between the Hebrew Sabbath and our Sunday, is that the former was primarily a day of rest and only secondarily and by consequence a day of prayer, whereas, on the other hand, the Christian Sunday is primarily a day of prayer and only secondarily and by consequence a day of rest. Although the morning and evening sacrifices were doubled on the Sabbath, this was merely a ceremonial prescription that concerned the priests and levites, and which the people were not commanded to be present at; no law of Sabbatical worship was imposed on the ordinary Israelite. Gradually, however, attendance on the prophets, and afterwards on the synagogue arose naturally out of the cessation of work. But the central purpose of the Sabbath was rest in memory of the creation and of God's resting after the creation; it was a formal dedication of that day in a negative manner by ceasing to work. Hence the stringency of the Jewish law of rest, which admitted of no exception. Conversely, the central purpose of the Sunday observance is worshipful gladness over the redem-

tion, manifested in the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which we call the Mass; and the law of rest grew out of this as a protection to the law of worship. When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, it became necessary to pass some law of rest, otherwise a Christian who kept Sunday might obviously suffer inconvenience from being summoned to court, to military exercise, etc., or even from the competition of his heathen rivals in trade. Hence Constantine, as Eusebius relates in his life of that emperor (IV, 18), required his subjects to rest on the feasts of our Lord—and what we say of Sunday applies to all Catholic feast-days, for Sunday is simply the weekly feast—and on Sundays the Christian soldiers were exempted from work that they might have leisure to pray. But it was always understood that, for an urgent reason, an exception might be made to the law of rest. Thus there never was any difficulty in allowing the people to gather in their harvest on a Sunday, when any delay would expose it to be ruined by a storm, provided permission thus to work were asked of the proper authority.

The Puritan Sabbath,

which seems to be fashionable among the Protestant ministers of this city, is a perversion and exaggeration of the Jewish Sabbath. The latter does not exclude recreation. In the Bible not a word is said against recreation on the Sabbath. The Pharisees themselves, though they multiplied rules against servile work, though they forbade, for instance, climbing a tree lest a twig should break, never prohibited pleasure as such. Even a chief Pharisee did not scruple to entertain on Sabbath (Luke XIV. 1). Contrast this with the Puritan view of the Sabbath, which makes the avoidance of the most legitimate pleasure the primary object of the Sabbath. The only text that affords the faintest excuse for this view is Is. lviii, 13, according to the Protestant Bible: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable, and shalt honor it, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, etc." But the whole context shows that the word "pleasure" here means "will," as it is translated in the Catholic English version: "from doing thy own will," "and thy own will is not found;" which has absolutely nothing to do with recreation. Besides, the best modern Hebraists say that the Hebrew word 'hafaséba' (translated above by "pleasure," and "will") really means "affairs," "business," as elsewhere in later Hebrew.

Our Lord Did Not Abrogate

the Sabbath during his earthly life. To do so would have been inconsistent with his position as one "made under law" and with his own express teaching (Matt. xxiii, 3). But he did expose the inconsistency and hypocrisy of men who loosed an ox or ass on the Sabbath and were shocked when Christ on the same day "loosed a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound." He, however, enunciated two great principles. The one was then, perhaps, part of the better Rabbinical teaching: "The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Man is made to

fulfil the law of Love. Not so with regard to the Sabbath, which is simply enforced for man's own good. The other great principle was: "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath," foreshadowing how His Church would one day transfigure and elevate the Sabbath. Just as the Sabbath law must give way before the natural needs of man, so, and much more, before the requirement of Him who is the head and representative of mankind (Mark ii, 23-28). Accordingly, the precept of observing the Sabbath

Was Completely Abrogated

by the Apostles. They still, indeed, allowed its observance; but as a dead letter, though they tolerated it, as they tolerated circumcision in order to bury the Old Law with becoming honor. In the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read (v 28, 29) that, having met in council at Jerusalem, they decided "to lay no further burden upon" the Christians than abstinence from four things there enumerated, among which no mention is made of labor on the Sabbath. St. Paul is more explicit: "Let no man judge you," he writes to the Colossians (ii. 16), "in eating and drinking or in the matter of a fast or a new moon or a Sabbath day; which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is Christ's." Christians are not to be taken to task on such things, which are shadows of the substance that is now come, the substance or body of Christ's gospel. From this abrogation of the Sabbath to its ultimate condemnation by the Church was an easy step. The old legislation which, in the transitional period of the Church's infancy, was merely a dead letter, gradually became a deadly observance; so that the Synod of Laodicea (between 343 and 381) threatens with excommunication those who Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but exhorts Christians to rest on Sunday "if they can." And in point of fact, be it said in all charity toward Seventh Day Protestants (Baptists, Adventists, etc.), whoever goes back to the Saturday is, whatever he may call himself, not a Christian but a Jew; he stops at the old Testament and does not understand the New. This is one of the many quagmires into which the shibboleth of "The Bible and nothing but the Bible" plunges its victims. They know the sacred Book by heart, but they know nothing of its spirit; they fasten on isolated, mutilated texts and neglect some of the most obvious teachings of Scripture. Once only does the New Testament refer to a Christian Sabbath. "There is left therefore a Sabbath-keeping—

Sabbatismos

—for the people of God" (Heb. vi. 9). The reference, however, is to no earthly Sabbath, but to that eternal rest of which the Sabbath was a type. The word "Sabbath" is kept in the Greek and the Latin of the Church to denote Saturday, a day which is rather a day of fast than a festival among Christians.

The Day was Changed

in commemoration of Christ's resurrection and of the Descent of the Holy Ghost. These fundamental events took place on Sunday; on the one is the whole Christian faith built, by the other was the Church of Christ established. The observance of Sunday does not rest on the natural law, which does indeed require us to give some time to the worship of God, but

not a whole day rather than parts of several days, much less any particular day; nor again does this observance rest on any positive divine law, of which there is no trace. Sunday is merely of ecclesiastical institution, dating however from the time of the Apostles, as we may gather from the following texts. In a single passage of the New Testament, Apoc. (Rev.) i, 10, we find a special name for the first day of the week, "the Lord's day" (en tē Kuriakē hēmera, —very different from hē tou Kuriou hēmera, "the day of the Lord"). In Acts xx, 7 we are told that St. Paul abode seven days at Troas, and that on the

First Day of the Week

the disciples came together 'to break bread.' The same Apostle writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor., xvi, 1): "Every first day of the week let each of you lay up at home and collect whatever profit he has had," words which do not, indeed, directly imply that there was public service on Sunday, but which seem to indicate that Sunday was already a sacred day, on which deeds of love (collections for the poor) were specially suitable. Heb. x. 25 shows this much, that the Christians, when the epistle was written, had regular days of assembly. These Scriptural references clearly suggest that the observance of Sunday had begun in the Apostolic age; but the only witness that makes this observance obligatory is the witness of tradition. The earliest Fathers, such as Barnabas, Ignatius of Antioch, and Justin, speak of Sunday—which they call the "Lord's Day," "The Day of the Lord's Resurrection," and sometimes, but only in addressing the heathen, the "Day of the Sun"—as a day of sacred joy and prayer. This, as we remarked above, is the central idea of the Sunday, a day of cheerful worship. We know of only one passage in any Ante-Nicene Father which alludes to the Sunday rest. Tertullian, after mentioning the ritual usage according to which Christians on Sunday prayed standing, not kneeling, adds that on that day business was set aside, that the soul might be left free for God's service. In later ages the law of rest became more stringent, but never so much so as the Hebrew law. The Church obliges the faithful above all to hear Mass on Sunday and secondarily to rest from servile work, i.e., work done with the hands rather than with the head. But custom permits certain servile work even when not required by necessity or mercy, such as cooking food, and ecclesiastical authority may dispense from the law.

This sketch of the origin of the Sunday observance shows that the universal Christian practice of the Lord's Day is mainly due to the

Influence of the Catholic Church.

As she holds from her founder and Invisible Head the charter to teach in his name, she has an equal right both to appoint the day that shall be consecrated to the Lord and to indicate how that consecration should be performed, in other words, she alone has a divine right to say how the Sunday should be observed. Since France as a nation revolted against God by the French Revolution and profaned the Lord's Day, the Church in France, and in fact in every other country, has never ceased to protest against the profanation of Sunday by manual labor and unedifying

recreation. On the other hand, that same infallible Church has no sympathy with the pharisaical observance of a spurious, Judaizing Sabbath, which makes the Sunday a day of dismal gloom instead of a day of grateful joy.

League of Sacred Heart St. Mary's Church.

On Passion Sunday, the 25th anniversary of the Dedication of Ireland to the Sacred Heart, His Grace Archbishop Langevin presided at the Ceremony of blessing and granting crosses to new promoters of the League.

His Grace was assisted by Rev. Father Guillet, P. P., and Rev. Father McCarthy, local director, and in a very stirring discourse congratulated the promoters on the great results attained by the League in this parish since its establishment in 89.

He exhorted and encouraged them to continue their zeal and devotedness in this work so fruitful of purity and blessings to all who share in it. The League of the Sacred Heart is appropriate for women, as the gospel informs us they especially lamented and sympathized with our Redeemer in His better passion. His Grace further said it was the first and most important association to which ladies should belong, as being the main spring, and source of that charity and generosity which distinguish them in other works.

The act of consecration was then read by Mrs. John Egan, president, when His Grace blessed and conferred the diplomas and Crosses on the officers and promoters, who with the president are: Mesdames Cass, Lussier, A. Kennedy, Monchamp, Hastings, Blais, Sutton, Conway, Lésperance, Stack, R. J. Smith, Brennan, Kilgour, J. McLroy, Fréchette.

The young lady promoters are the Misses Brownrigg, K. McPhillips, L. Powers, Coyle, Golden, Sharkey, Fréchette, Bonneau, Grès, Stevens, Guillemette, Byrne, M. Sullivan, A. Sullivan, A. Flanagan, M. McLroy, A. Johnston, Fletcher, Bissonette, Biggins, Torrey, Madigan, and McNary.

His Grace also highly commended and encouraged the project of forming a Circle of the League for the young men of the parish, which he had no doubt would prosper, and be productive of great good.

The ceremony closed by the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament given by the Archbishop.

It is generally conceded by those who were present at the Manitoba College Alumni dinner last Thursday that the most graceful and amusing speech of the evening was made by the representative from St. Boniface College, Mr. Lucien Dubuc.

The latest story told of Mr. William O'Brien, ex-M.P., has its amusing side. It appears he ordered for a batch of friends a lot of '98 brooches ornamented with pikeheads from a Dublin jeweller. The order having been finished, a message was transmitted to the effect that the "pikes were now ready." This came to the notice of an emissary of Scotland Yard. He was alarmed at the dangerous import of his news, and gave the alarm to his colleagues. After serious and searching inquiries the news that the pikes were harmless suddenly transpired on their astonished senses.—London Universe.