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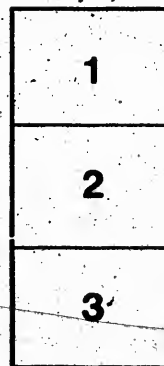
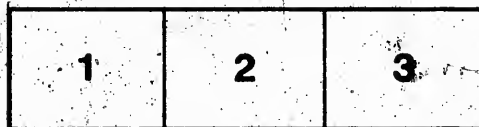
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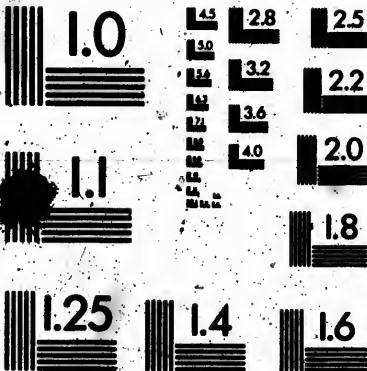
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SCRIPTURAL REASONS

For Observing The Lord's Day As The Christian Sabbath

By REV. W. G. HANNA, B.A.

"The Sabbath was made for man"—*Mark 2:27*.
"The Lord's Day"—*Rev. 1:10*.

The Sabbath was one of the first institutions that God established for the human race. His own example furnished the rule for its observance (Gen. 2:3). The seven-day division of time in the patriarchal period may have been associated with its observance.

When God chose a special people to be the custodians and disseminators of His revelation, one of the first requirements was the observance of the Sabbath (Ex. 16:21-30). Later, when He entrusted them with the permanent moral code for the human race, He set the command safeguarding the day at its centre (Ex. 20:8-11), thus showing the significance He attached to it. Then He incorporated the requirement of its observance, in the ceremonial law specially intended for the Hebrew people.

In the lapse of time the Hebrew people allowed the moral significance of the Sabbath to be overshadowed by the burdensome ceremonial with which they surrounded it. Hence our Lord lifted into the place of appropriate emphasis its moral significance, as a day of special blessing for all mankind (Mark 2:27).

As the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), He endowed it with new richness of meaning and associated its manifold blessings with the day that was to bear His own name ever after.

- (1) By rising from the tomb on the first day of the week and bestowing upon men the assurance of completed redemption.
- (2) By appearing as risen to His disciples, at different places, thus opening up a new hope for them (Mark 16:9-11, 12, 13; Matt. 28:8-10; Luke 24:34; John 20:19-23).

- (3) By putting upon the lips of men the enheartening message, "The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:34).
- (4) By bestowing the gift of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples (John 20:21-22), and first commissioning them to preach the gospel to all the world (John 20:21, with Mark 16:9-15).
- (5) By appearing in their midst at their first devotional meeting and bestowing His benediction upon them (John 20:19-23).

Besides, there is no record of Jesus appearing on the following Jewish Sabbath, but on the day after, on the second Lord's Day when the disciples were met as on the first, He appeared in their midst again, to lead Thomas back to faith and to accept his worship (John 20:26-29). Thus we are shown the importance our Lord attached to His own day from its beginning, and the place He assigned to it, in the life of His Church. He deliberately passed by the Jewish Sabbath and set this day as the weekly memorial of His redemptive mission to the world, the day to be associated with the worship of Himself.

Moreover, many believe that the descent of the Spirit (Acts 2) took place on the Lord's Day, the first day of the eighth week after the Resurrection. This is also the tradition of the early Church.

The Apostles claimed to have the mind of Christ, and were under the direction of the Holy Spirit enabling them to understand the will of the Master. What was the effect of these things upon them?

1. They were men of strong Jewish associations, and could not easily drop the Jewish Sabbath out of sight. But they observed the Lord's Day with special regard, very early in their ministry.

2. About 57 A.D. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (Cor. 16:1-2), the direction which he states he had previously given to the Galatians, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." It is here taken for granted that the Lord's Day is a day distinguished from other days by its religious use, and that it was not an occasional, but a regular recurring arrangement.

3. About three years later, *i.e.*, A.D. 60, it is evident that the first and not the seventh day of the week was observed as the day of worship. We learn from Acts 20:6-7, that for seven days Paul waited at Troas to meet with the brethren there, on their *day of public worship*, which would seem to have been of

weekly occurrence, and to have just passed when he arrived. During the interval the Jewish Sabbath must have passed also, yet the fact that no mention is made of it, shows that it was not the day on which Christians met for public worship. Nor should it be overlooked that at that meeting Paul preached and the Lord's Supper was observed (verse 7).

Thus early in the history of the Christian Church, we find that the Lord's Day was the time chosen for (1) a public assembly of the Church, (2) a sermon, (3) the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and (4) the giving of an offering. These with prayers (which characterized all gatherings of the disciples) are the essentials of worship and clearly establish that the observance of the first, rather than the seventh day of the week, as the day of worship, was sanctioned by the conduct of the Apostle Paul; so the permanent and moral obligation of the Sabbath resting upon all men is distinctly associated with the Lord's Day.

But as Judaizers in the early Church required circumcision, so they insisted on the observance of the Jewish ceremonial Sabbath by Christian converts. Paul met this error in Colossians 2:16-17, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ's." This appears to be the fulfilment of Hosea 2:1. When the words are examined in the light of Num. 28:3-4, 9-10, 11-16; I. Chron. 23:30-31; II. Chron. 2:4, 8, 13; Neh. 13:33; and Ezek. 45:17, the meaning of the Apostle is unmistakable. It is that the Jewish dispensation including the seventh day Sabbath as a shadow, has given place to the Christian including the Lord's Day. Very clearly the distinctly Jewish characteristics of the Sabbath have passed away.

So in Galatians 4:10-11, the Apostle writes to the victims of the Judaizing spirit, "Ye observe days, and months and seasons and years. I am afraid of you lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain." They were bound up with ceremonialism. They had not learned that Judaism had served its preparatory purposes. They would bind the yoke of the Jewish ceremonial upon the shoulders of Christians. Therefore, the Apostle expresses fear lest they have failed to grasp the meaning of the gospel. It is fair to believe that this would be his answer to modern Judaizers who would require the observance of the Jewish ceremonial Sabbath instead of the Lord's Day in the Christian Church.

It is to be noted that the gospels refer frequently to the Jewish Sabbath until after the resurrection of Christ. The Acts of the Apostles bring the first day of the week into view prominently as a day of worship. The Epistles mention the Jewish Sabbath but seldom, and then chiefly to furnish an argument for its abolition.

The Apostles gave no rules for its observance. They did not denounce its violation as did the Hebrew prophets, nor did they include the breaking of it in any list of offences.

Special importance is to be attached to the fact that in the last, the prophetic book of the New Testament, projecting thought into the future of the Church, the Lord's Day alone is mentioned (Rev. 1:10). It is very significant too that while for "the day of the Lord," we find uniformly "*He hemera Kurious*," here we have *Kuriake hemera*, an entirely new term. The new term coined to express the thought in this connection obviously indicates that the Lord's Day is to be the day of rest and worship, the Sabbath of the Christian Church.

It is sometimes urged that there is no specific command requiring the change of days. The answer is, this is not necessary in view of the acts of Christ on the first and second Lord's Days, the Apostles' statement that the distinctly Jewish Sabbath has passed away with the Jewish Ceremonial, and the frequent mention of the first day of the week observed as a day of worship with the sanction of the Apostles who were taught and directed by the Holy Spirit. It is upon this ground that the greater part of the New Testament is accepted as true, directive and obligatory. There is the best authority, therefore, for observing the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath, which God requires us to remember and keep holy.

The Lord's Day Alliance of Canada

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