

Saturday Rest: Embracing the Christian Sabbath in Orthodox Faith

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Demonstrating the continuity of the Christian 7th Day Sabbath, as kept by
the Faithful in the Orthodox Church (East and West)

40+ Early Church Fathers are quoted herein as advocating the Saturday
Sabbath festivals

Saturday Traditions that substantiate the facts that the Christian Nations
of God know “His day” so that a remnant can keep “His day”.

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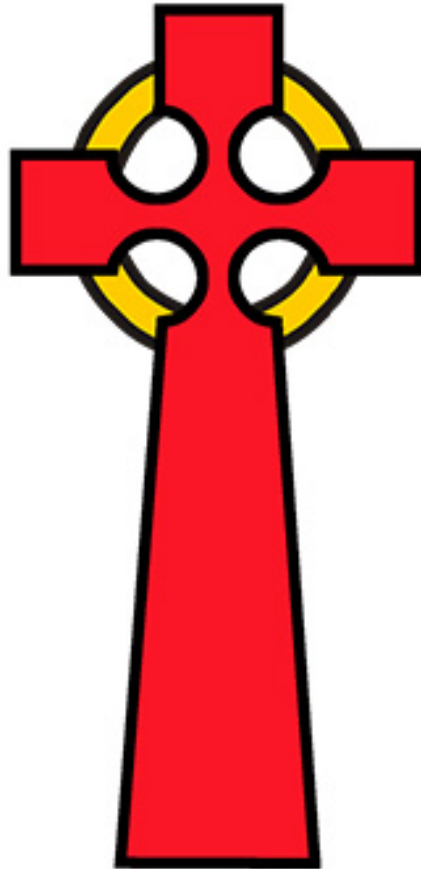


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FOREWORD

There is a popular doctrine circulating that claims the Christian nations of God (and His one holy Apostolic Church) once completely forgot the Sabbath of God. Therefore, it may be supposed that the national covenants to the true Israel of God were negated. Since the Sabbath is called a sign that we are His people forever—even though only the curses and punishments for disobedience were removed by Christ—some have gone a step further by asserting that all good deeds are no longer commanded for eternity. When some take the argument further, they reject much of Scripture—often because its political and nationalistic elements do not fit their narrative. The Sabbath is a signpost that no one can ignore, and so it was the first target of attack. Those who oppose Christian civilization have created myths to claim that the Church lost its way for some 1700 years, with only a few rediscovering the Sabbath in recent times. However, after reading this book, you will see that this popular doctrine is false, and you will understand that the true Biblical Orthodox Sabbath (known as Saturday) has been honored, preserved, and retained chiefly among the Christian nations of the East and West. Although the 7th Day (Saturday) Sabbath has been somewhat concealed or attacked, it has always remained a stable practice within these nations. The evidence laid out in this book should remove any doubts in this area.

While the official Christian Orthodox doctrine has remained—that the Saturday Sabbath must be kept holy—it has not been as popular among the masses. Unfortunately, popular demand has yielded to the availability of ministers to serve on Sabbaths in the main body of churches. This trend was precipitated by recent overthrows of Christendom, which occurred for larger geopolitical reasons (namely Protestantism in the West and Bolshevism in the East), sweeping away the more robust academic establishments that had supported strong avenues of Sabbath observance. As foundational institutions were removed, churches reduced their daily services to a more limited form dictated by their circumstances. Under harsher economic and political situations, advanced services for the truly faithful diminished. In destroyed areas and churches, only the most basic Sunday and annual holidays were maintained—occasions on which at least Christ’s victory is remembered (if not fully celebrated).

We are at a time when believers must restore the ancient paths, reclaiming our heritage in the orthodox and true Israel faith of Christendom. In light of our rich historical and liturgical heritage, it becomes evident that a revival of these practices is not only desirable but necessary. Let us explore how this revival is both a return to our roots and a call to action in today’s world. We are in a generation that demands closing off access to the devil. The laxity in our faith has produced an evil fruit—so much so that even the most egregious departures from traditional practice are now promoted as the norm in many modern churches. When you open the door even a little to the devil, much more may enter. Most of all, these trends have discarded the most essential elements of the faith in Christ. Others have grown spiritually complacent, allowing the devil to infiltrate even the newest versions of churches. Today, not even the most basic catechisms or a minimal sinner’s prayer are used in so-called conversions to Christianity. Many churches have become mere propaganda outlets dominated by the worst influences of the last generation—where that which is good is labeled as evil and vice versa. Woe to such people.

It remains true that “there is no private interpretation of His word,” and in every generation the vast majority have correctly understood that the Sabbath is Saturday. The basic theology

texts of every denomination still agree on these facts. Only recently have people been taught very simplistically. At least before, people were taught about salvation through Christ and the need to turn away from sin. Now, sin isn't even mentioned. Nonetheless, the basic truths are still understood in some form everywhere.

So much has been done to distance people from the essential "study requirements" of the faith. When you receive Christ, it is not called the end but the beginning of a transformation process in which the believer is renewed by the renewing of their mind. The scholarly aspect of the faith has been diminished. However, we may find encouragement in the scholarly practices of the Celtic Church. At the height of Christendom, there was much to admire in the schools of Celtic Orthodoxy, where every church was associated with university-level studies of God's Word. These institutions were maintained by essential teachers and scholars known as Culdees, who kept the common people well-informed about the great orthodox teachings.

It was once well known that the Sabbath was a sign that we are His people. It was celebrated in both the East and West in official canons, commanding the true Israel nation to "remember it, and keep it holy." The victory remains: the Saturday Sabbath of God is still taught as a major requirement within the teachings of each branch of the Orthodox Christian faith. It is at least agreed that a remnant of this covenant people will continue to keep it. Such belief has been preserved in various historic and orthodox liturgies, the teachings of the holy fathers, traditions, basic doctrines, and other official writings of God's true Orthodox Church.

While it is acknowledged which day is the Sabbath, very few churches have continued to keep it holy. Many Orthodox jurisdictions even declare in weekly collects that Saturday is the day to cease work and worship Him, yet their practice is rather lax.

A few groups observe it more correctly, and these are mainly under the umbrella of the greater "true Orthodox Church." These groups stem from the pre-1960s era of true Orthodoxy, before the World Council of Churches claimed the title of Orthodoxy. Many such true Orthodox communities have maintained the canonical marks of Orthodoxy. This includes several Protestant spheres that are compliant with various requirements established for identifying as orthodox, as agreed worldwide.

Among those who properly observe it, these "remnant Sabbatarians" appear under various names—even among some Anglicans. They are found within the Celtic (or Anglican) Orthodox tradition. In the West, there are unique offshoots of the English and Protestant iterations of standard Orthodoxy that remain foundational in the Eastern autonomous jurisdictions of Orthodoxy. For example, in Russia, when the Moscow princes defied the majority of Russian Orthodox who protected the Saturday Sabbath, they founded what is known as the Molokan Russian Orthodox. Similarly, pivotal moments in England created the Seventh Day Baptist movements. In both the East and West, there have been denominations established by Anglican Orthodox clergy who refused to water down Sabbath observances as dictated by the Monarch. Several examples are provided in this book. Likewise, groups such as the Mennonites, the Orthodox Congregationalists, various branches of the Church of God, and several jurisdictions of the True Orthodox (for instance, the autonomous sees of ancient ethnic groups such as the Metropolitanate of Gothia or Church of the Goths, various Celtic or Orthodox Churches of the Culdees, the Russian Catacomb Church, etc.) have upheld these traditions. Some may object to the inclusion of various Protestants, and for that reason we have inserted a chapter on "The Orthodox Identity of the British Church and Anglicanism" to offer clarification. We believe Orthodoxy has been preserved more robustly in these

jurisdictions over the centuries. This book can hopefully help bring unity among all faithful Christians—whether they are increasing their Sabbath observance or are already fully integrated. While we agree that the Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways, we acknowledge the foundational truth that we are one body through the Gospel message of faith in Jesus Christ Himself. In this book, we primarily disclose the 7th Day Orthodox Church practices, as handed down through the ages.

The most pivotal doctrine of our faith is the Gospel—that is, the belief in Christ's life, death, burial, Resurrection (1 Cor 15:3), and His ultimate return to bring the Kingdom into full operation in the new heavens and new earth. This leading belief unites us all as one body of Christians in Christ. We become one when we act on that faith—turning from sin, dedicating our lives to Him, being baptized, and partaking in the Communion Sacraments as our King commanded. Foundational orthodox doctrines such as these are laid out in the Nicene (or Apostles') Creeds. These creeds unite all Christians worldwide in one sense and demonstrate that heresies have long been overcome. Let us celebrate and build bridges on this single, most important part of our doctrine—the faith in Jesus (Yahshua) the Christ. For now, by and through Christ, the Holy Spirit can work and set us free from the bondage of sin.

In this book, you will learn about several historic, foundational texts of the Church that prescribe the proper keeping of the Sabbath. The Apostles' Didascalia is one such text that is regarded as canonical by several branches of the Church. The Didascalia even goes so far as to prescribe Saturday practices in greater detail than those for Sunday. Actual Saturday Sabbath liturgy from the Didascalia itself is quoted in Chapter 9 of this book.

It must be remembered that this teaching is not exclusive to the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The Culdean Scots guarded Saturday—keeping it holy—while designating Sunday as a workday. These quotations are provided throughout the book in fine detail.

As I quote from numerous authoritative sources, you will find that at the heart of the Great Schism was the issue of the 7th Day (Saturday) Sabbath. Even within the Latin Church jurisdictions, Saturday Sabbath observance continued unhindered, and the Sunday laws were largely ignored. To most, the Roman pope was seen as just another bishop—not held above the rest. Many of the early Ecumenical Church Councils did not even invite Rome to attend.

Today, there remain numerous Orthodox rites based on the Didascalia, where the 7th Day Sabbath is codified in all liturgical guidance. These are mostly associated with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Western Orthodox texts of the Anglican and Episcopal Churches (confirmed as canonical by several Eastern Patriarchs) not only retain a communion service for Sabbaths but also include a prayer called “the Saturday Collect.” This liturgy was core to the British Orthodox legacy of maintaining independence from Rome. For instance, the introduction to the Book of Common Prayer instructs local bishops to include as many feasts as possible (given the availability of ministers). This text and the liturgy of the B.C.P. were maintained across all subsequent branches of the Church—even by the most nonconformist and dissenting groups—from 1549 until the 1960s in a spirit of unity.

Countless points such as these have been forgotten. In this work, we aim to bring them back to light and celebrate them. The issues are not only to be demonstrated but also to be put into practice in our daily lives, just as our forefathers did. In doing so, we move forward as our

King Jesus instructed. In any case, we should all rejoice that we have a God who keeps covenant with His people and praise Him greatly, as Scripture directs in these grand themes of His kingdom governance on earth as in heaven. We should pray and hope that churches and communities will advance in faith, rekindling the first-century evangelistic fire of the God of Israel working in His covenant body and bride.

This booklet is intended as an encouragement for any Christian who already keeps the Sabbath and may also help those still uncertain about making the complete switch to an Orthodox Sabbath observance. It demonstrates that for many centuries the Sabbath was celebrated more fully on Saturday. The Seventh Day Sabbath was known and practiced in nearly every city and home of Christendom.

Herein you will see it remains a victorious truth that in many assemblies today the Orthodox Clergy continually teach that every home should observe the Sabbath along with all the commandments. It is expected that we turn away from sin and live in accordance with His laws. This expectation is recited several times daily in homes that possess the common prayer books. These points are fundamental to the catechism and conversion texts recited at baptism and confirmation—not only as part of the conversion process but as a daily means of growing in sanctification by turning away from all sin, including one of the gravest—Sabbath breaking. For numerous reasons, God embedded the Sabbath into the nature of Creation for our benefit and blessing. As it is written, “The Sabbath was made for man” (emphasizing man’s benefit), and nothing about it is detrimental. In fact, “...if you call the Sabbath a delight and turn your foot from your own fleshly pleasures on His holy day, then you will have the highest blessings on earth.”

Today, many nonbelievers and apostates are unaware that we have such prayers to renounce sin—and that is to their own shame. We are not to concern ourselves with what outsiders believe, except to know how to pray for them, for only the Holy Spirit can enlighten their eyes. However, within the obedient Church of God, even the newest converts are well informed about these great victories for our homes and communities in Christ. All truly Orthodox priests have protocols to ensure that new converts are guided through the stages of growth necessary to become faithful members. For visitors joining assemblies where they were not baptized, a reference or proof from a Godparent—someone “established as one of the faithful”—is required before they can partake in Communion. Without such proof that the visitor has understood all the conversion teachings of the faith, they will be carefully excluded from certain parts of the services and/or Eucharist. Surely, most of our grandparents handed down the command to keep the commandments. This ensures that the original faith is present in the life of each new congregant. These are just some of the prerequisites that are fundamental to nearly any church claiming to follow the original Orthodox faith. Guarding the communion table is a practice observed by all branches of Christianity to ensure that sins have been confessed and repented; otherwise, the entire assembly might be held accountable. Yet today, too much reliance is placed on parents, elders, and even misguided government leaders to properly instruct the younger generations in God’s commandments.

God has provided ample evidence to support Sabbath keeping on a national scale. It is the norm in every Christian nation that Saturday is part of the weekend rather than a workday. In any ceremony, repentance from all sin—including Sabbath breaking—is emphasized. The Ten Commandments are recited at the Eucharist in most liturgies.

In every Orthodox service, we pledge to observe the Sabbath more fully from that day forward. Some have maintained a dormant form of Christianity until now. This booklet is written for the edification and hope that the Sabbath will become the ultimate fulfillment of Christ's work of salvation in your life. Christ is called the Sovereign of the Sabbath, and He is the Almighty God who changeth not. The "New Testament" represents the same laws of God now written on our hearts (or, more precisely, the delight and joy in obeying them).

The Saturday Sabbath may not be as popular as it once was, but it is prophesied to make a comeback among Orthodox Christians. The adherence to His Kingdom laws will reach heights once only dreamed of in the First Century. He is coming back for a Church without spot or wrinkle, and for a "bride who hath made herself ready" for the wedding.

INTRODUCTION

In previous articles on the Sabbath-keeping remnant, I highlighted various modern examples of Sabbatarian fundamentalism—such as among the Waldenses, Mennonites, and Seventh Day Baptists. However, this book is primarily dedicated to showing how the rest of the Orthodox have continued upholding the Sabbath in various ways. Even several mainstream Orthodox congregations declare that it behooves the faithful to gather on the Sabbath and observe it fully. Herein, it is demonstrated that the Seventh Day—Saturday—was the norm at many epicenters of the Orthodox faith and has continued to be a prominent teaching to this day.

In this booklet, I also draw from several current local and mainstream Orthodox Church publications that officially declare Saturday (the 7th Day Sabbath) as a holy festival day above the other days of the week.

To bridge historical and contemporary perspectives, we are also addressing many of the loopholes that have arisen in the discussion of Sabbath observance. For example, some Protestants have misquoted the small local church council of Laodicea, mistakenly assuming that this little-known council was the authority used by Catholics to change the Sabbath to Sunday. This is a careless assumption. A simple check confirms that the Laodicean council was never universally accepted among Roman Western Catholics or the Eastern Orthodox; it is not even included as one of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Held during a time of war and political upheaval, the local Laodicean council, within its canons, specifies and endorses Saturday Sabbath observance. We should not selectively quote only those parts of the council that forbid a particular form of Saturday keeping—specifically, when it is done in a Judaizing manner. (We will quote some of those canons later in this book.) In addition, we cover several other canons from larger councils and present concrete Orthodox theologies that promote the Sabbath.

Most Orthodox do not even embrace five out of the seven ecumenical councils; much of the Orthodox world typically claims adherence to only three of them. Thus, even if one of the so-called “big seven” councils had, in fact, disregarded the Sabbath entirely, I’m sure that number would. However, that never happened. Even if it had, all the texts clearly place the responsibility on local Bishops and their Dioceses to keep the Saturday services running as long as they have available priests. This is evident in many established liturgies—such as the Liturgy of Saint Basil (including that of Saint James the Holy Apostle), the Western Sarum Missal (or the English Liturgy, BCP), and the numerous Celtic Collects (liturgical prayers)—all of which assume that Saturday is observed in a sabbatical way. We will discuss these further in this book. For instance, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil contains major declarations of the blessings on the Holy Sabbath of God on Saturday (the 7th day of the week). While the English BCP includes Collects for Saturday that explicitly outline our adherence to the Sabbath, its Preface notes that many festal celebrations are not included in the book. These may differ per congregation, depending on the availability of ministers, so one is advised to check with the local Bishop or Archbishop if further clarification is needed regarding additional services. There is always significant autonomy and responsibility assumed by each local Diocese that administers the Sacraments, ensuring that they strive to grow the feasts.

You’re going to see the arguments some have mis-used from the church councils. You’ll find there are no major ecumenical councils that rejected the Sabbath. Even the minor councils have stopped short—citing that Sabbath should be kept with the Saturday liturgies, just not in

a purely Jewish manner. Yet, in this book, you will find that some of the most important jurisdictions were labeled as Judaizing or as being ignorant of Sunday and other non-Hebrew days. Even the Seventh Ecumenical Council never attacked the Sabbath. Instead, it reiterated that those secretly practicing Jewish traditions (in addition to the normal Saturday services) should be pushed back completely into Judaism and excluded from Christian church services. Still, the council regarded the Sabbath as a holy day, admonishing all to keep it in the Christian way. The canon called for full communion among its members—not a partial observance. In that council, it was highlighted that new converts who were visibly not fully transformed in heart—even after being baptized in the Orthodox Church—retained several distinguishing practices of Judaism. The council simply stated that, in such cases, they should return fully to their former religion and be openly Jewish. This reiterated the position of earlier councils, which also admonished Christians to observe Saturday as a day of rest, worship, hearing the Scriptures in church, and, of course, mandatory feasting. (It should be noted, however, that this particular council was not widely accepted and did not reach our Orthodox Celtic jurisdictions.)

Those who claim that Rome changed the Sabbath for the whole world are totally misinformed. For proof, simply read the canons of the Council of Trullo. In that council, five canons (four directly) confirm that the Sabbath (Saturday) remained a feast day for the Church.

Trullo was no minor Church Council. Emperor Justinian convoked it, and 211 Bishops attended. Among them, the principal were the four Patriarchs: Paul of Constantinople, Peter of Alexandria, Anastasius of Jerusalem, and George of Antioch. Following these were names such as John of Justinianopolis, Cyriacus of Cesarea in Cappadocia, and Basil of Gortyna in Crete.

One may also observe that the liturgical services on the Saturday Sabbath are exhaustive enough to demonstrate that the full Sabbath was—and continues to be—kept both in the East and in the West. The Byzantine and Syriac rites of Orthodoxy claim the “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles (Didascalia)” as the basis of their liturgy. I will quote the Saturday Sabbath references from these texts, which serve as numerous affirmations that Sabbath keeping has remained integral to the Orthodox Church overall (East and West). See Chapter 9 of this book for full liturgical citations.

Most of the Orthodox faithful claim to follow the fundamental principles of Sabbath keeping in one way or another on Saturday.

Yet many others have embraced anti-Semitism as a basis for rejecting the Sabbath—simply because they do not want what is perceived as Jewish. Such zeal leads them to refuse scholarly engagement on the topic, an approach that would be at least irresponsible for any Christian.

We find in the Scriptures and history that the Christian nations fulfill all the definitions, prophecies, and identifications of God’s true Israel. Thus, it becomes a moot point to reject the Sabbath on the basis of anti-Semitism, when, in fact, we are all, by heritage, Semitic (sons of Abraham through Isaac)! The true Israel has always had a remnant who keep the Sabbath. God foretold that He would preserve the Sabbath as a national sign that we are His people throughout every generation (Exodus 31:13).

One way God has preserved this sign among His true Israel nations is found in the freedom we have to rest on weekends. Not all countries are so prosperous or sophisticated as to have weekends, but all blessings come from God through Christ—especially in those European Christian nations where His laws are followed, His national holidays are observed, and He is declared the King of kings and lords. We all know that weekends are not typical workdays (with the exception of a few professions, the agreement is nearly universal). However, the word “weekday” in many European languages simply means “workday,” excluding the weekend. This serves to show that God has kept His promise of this national sign for His people. We all enjoy the national prosperity and freedom to observe it. As Saint Paul wrote, the Sabbath rest has remained for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

Thousands of books on Israel identity are widely available that prove the descendants of the true Israel of God are the people known as the European (and British) Christian nations. This is demonstrated historically, genetically, and by numerous proofs of the royal, covenantal, and spiritual promises of God that are fulfilled only among the Christian nations. Please subscribe to the Anglo Israel Book Club for more information on True Israel by writing to marshalofsalem@yahoo.com or info@st-andrewsocc.org.

Chapter 1: THE EARLY ORTHODOX CHURCH KEPT THE SABBATH

As we embark on this journey through the history of the early Orthodox Church, we find a striking continuity in the observance of the Sabbath—Saturday was not merely a relic of the past but remained a vibrant and essential day of worship and assembly. Even in countries where Sunday was celebrated as the festival of the Resurrection, the Saturday Sabbath was maintained as a mandatory day of assembly and celebration.

William Cave wrote “... the Sabbath or ‘Saturday’ (for so the word sabbatum is constantly used in the writings of the fathers, when speaking of it as it relates to Christians) was held by them in great veneration, and especially in the Eastern parts honoured with all the public solemnities of religion. This is plain, not only from some passages in Ignatius and Clemens’s Constitutions, but from writers of more unquestionable credit and authority. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, tells us that they assembled on Saturdays... to worship Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath.”

More than 40 Early Church Fathers are cited throughout this book for their staunch advocacy of a literal observance of the 7th Day—Saturday—as the Sabbath.

In the 5th century, renowned historians such as Sozomen and Socrates Scholasticus record that “on the Sabbath the churches of the whole world meet together for communion,” while noting that “only in Rome and Alexandria have they ceased to do this.” The whole world recognized the Sabbath as a day of worship, yet in these two provinces it had become a lesser feast by that time. We will explore these remarkable historical facts in this chapter.

It is widely agreed that “there is no private interpretation of the word of God”—indeed, the core doctrines were universally known. The Saturday Sabbath was always recognized throughout the world as the one day that God Himself sanctified, blessed, and commanded to be kept holy. God reiterated the necessity of the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments; on the tablets given to Moses at Mt. Sinai, He wrote to “REMEMBER the Sabbath” (the day He sanctified at Creation) and “to keep it holy.” Later, He declared it a sign that we are His people and commanded that the people be assembled (convocated) on it forever (see Leviticus 23, Exodus 31:13, etc.). It is even prophesied that after the new heavens and new earth are established, not only will His people gather, but “all flesh” will worship before Him “from one Sabbath to another and from one new moon to another” (Isaiah 66:23, KJV).

The first-century historian Josephus, in his *Against Apion*, wrote:

“There is not one city inside or outside of Greece that does not know our custom of keeping the 7th Day Sabbath.”

The unanimous opinion is that the early church did not ban or limit the Saturday Sabbath in any way—even up through the Seven Ecumenical Councils (with only some aspects of Jewish practices being limited by the Seventh Ecumenical Council). There is no record of banning the regular communion or worship on the Saturday Sabbath (although it is noted that Rome and Alexandria sometimes ceased to observe it).

While certain practices on the Sabbath may have been restricted in some councils—local or ecumenical—the day remained one of assembly and worship. Authentic copies of the

Apostle's *Didascalia* confirm that Saturday was a mandatory day for gathering for worship throughout the church.

A later debate arose in Rome, urging that people fast rather than feast on the Biblical Saturday Sabbath. Rome pressured several jurisdictions to adopt this fasting practice and even protested when some regions continued to feast on the Sabbath during Lent. Nevertheless, many jurisdictions maintained the tradition of feasting on the Sabbath, in obedience to God's command that it be a day of celebration. We will present numerous strong quotations that attest to this position.

Having examined these general historical points, we now turn to the testimonies of key Early Church Fathers who upheld the Saturday Sabbath.

Numerous writings by Early Church Fathers attest to the popularity of Sabbath keeping during the peak of the Eastern church. Their testimonies consistently support the position recorded in the *Didascalia*: that the 7th Day Sabbath is an official day of worship. Throughout this period—and for several centuries thereafter—no theologian claimed that God's Sabbath was ever abolished, although many gave greater precedence to Sunday. Most of the Orthodox merely argued to “include” Sunday as an additional day, not to replace the 7th Day. In fact, the theology maintained that Christ rose on the 7th Day—not on Sunday—even though it is agreed that He assembled with His Apostles on the first day and later closed the doors out of fear of the Jews (John 20:19).

It was understood to be a period of three whole days and three whole nights, in keeping with Christ's statement that He would be dead for 72 hours (cf. John 11:9, noting the division of day and night into twelve hours each). Thus, the Friday preparation for the Sabbath feast was not merely a precursor to Good Friday, as some have claimed without sufficient explanation. (A more detailed discussion on this matter is provided in another chapter.) When one counts the hours as described by Christ, a Friday crucifixion would imply a 72-hour period culminating in a Monday 3 PM Resurrection—consistent with the Biblical account of the hour of His death and His promise “as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth.”

Nevertheless, while the Good Friday tradition is a relatively newer development, it remains important to gather daily for the Holy Communion. The Good Friday observance serves as a commemoration of Christ's death—a remembrance we uphold as often as possible through the Sacrament of Communion.

Below are several examples of quotes from Early Church Fathers who remained consistent with the Apostolic Doctrine of keeping the Sabbath holy:

Bishop St. James, the Holy Apostle and First Bishop of Jerusalem

Traditionally associated with the oldest liturgy of the church (St. Basil's), his liturgy states:

“For this is the blessed Sabbath, this is the day of rest.”

(Tone 6: “And God blessed the seventh day.”)

Note: Byzantine hymnology studies reveal that the Orthodox understanding is that Christ

created the heavens and the earth, gave the Law to Moses, and was the first to bless the Sabbath at Creation.

The liturgy continues:

“For this is the blessed Sabbath, this is the day of rest on which the Only-Begotten Son of God rested from all His works. Having suffered death in accordance with the plans of salvation, He kept the Sabbath in the flesh; and by His Resurrection, He has granted us eternal life, for He alone is good and loves mankind.”

(Liturgy of Saint James and Saint Basil)

Bishop St. Aristobulus, the First Bishop of Britain and Assistant to St. Andrew the Apostle

He advanced doctrines regarding the Holy Day Sabbath, promoting it for both the House of Judah and for the dispersed Scythian and Gothic (Sicambrian etc) Israelites. St. Andrew is quoted as saying:

“Homer and Hesiod let us know, from our books, that the seventh day was a holy day... The seventh day is also illuminated by the sun, and all things were made in sevens in the starry heavens, circling through the years.”

(Eusebius’s Praep. Evang. 13:12-13, c. 313 A.D.)

+Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, honored widely among the Orthodox with his date of Martyrdom in 157A.D., with his arrest as happening “on the Sabbath” and martyred “on the Great Sabbath”. This coupled with other evidence of his letters defending the Hebrew Passover and Feasts, alludes to the fact Sabbath keeping was commonplace across the regions of the Anatolian church where he held a senior rank.

(Smyrnaean letter, Martyrdom of Polycarp)

Bishop St. Irenaeus (2nd century), Bishop of Lyons

In 178 A.D., he taught that the Biblical Sabbath would be observed in the future Kingdom:

“These [promised things] are to occur in the times of the kingdom, that is, on the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all His works of creation—the true Sabbath, during which no earthly labor shall be performed.”

He noted that the church of his time was widespread—especially in Germany, Spain, Gaul, and Britain—and added, “There is no difference of faith or tradition among these countries.”

(Irenaeus Against Heresies, Book 5, Chapter 33, Section 2)

St. Origen (c. 184/185 – 253/254), Early Church Father

He advocated Sabbath keeping in his homilies, stating:

“After the festival of the unceasing sacrifice [the crucifixion] comes the second festival of the Sabbath, and it is fitting for every righteous saint to keep also the festival of the Sabbath. Thus, there remains a sabbatism—a keeping of the Sabbath—for the people of God [Hebrews 4:9].”

(Homily on Numbers 23, para. 4, in Migne, Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 12, cols. 749-750)

He also wrote:

“...the Sabbath—the day of God’s rest following the completion of creation—lasts throughout the duration of the world, and on it all may celebrate the festival with God, who completed His works in six days.”

(Origen Against Celsus, Book 6, Chapter 61)

Tertullian (2nd century), Early Latin Church Father

He wrote extensively in defense of the Saturday Sabbath:

“Thus Christ did not rescind the Sabbath; He observed the Law and, through His works—providing food for the hungry and healing the withered hand—demonstrated that He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it. In doing so, He imparted an additional sanctity to the Sabbath through His beneficent actions. He established divine safeguards for this day, safeguards that even His adversary would have repurposed for other days, to avoid honoring the Creator's Sabbath. For, as the prophet Elisha restored life on the Sabbath, it was proper for the Creator's Sabbaths to be employed for good—to save life rather than destroy it. In this example, Christ introduced nothing new that was not in accordance with the Creator's gentleness, mercy, and prophetic promise: ‘The weak hands are strengthened,’ as well as ‘the feeble knees’ in those afflicted by palsy.”

(Tertullian)

Later Frankish scholars and Bishop Sidonius of France echoed Tertullian's views. Sidonius noted that while the Eastern churches sanctified the Sabbath similarly to the Lord's Day and held sacred assemblies, the West—contending for the Lord's Day—neglected the celebration of the Sabbath, considering it peculiar to the Jews. Tertullian is quoted in his apology: “We are only next to those who see the Sabbath as a day solely for rest and relaxation.” He cited Bishop Asterius of Pontus, as well as Bishop of Gregory of Nyssa saying about the same.

We should include the wider quote of Sidonius, as to show the French Visigothic influence, as Ostrogoths of Italy, as upholding the Sabbath with full sacred services:

"It is a fact that formerly those who dwelt in the east were accustomed as a church to sanctify the Sabbath in the same manner as the Lord's day, and to hold sacred assemblies; wherefore +Asterius, Bishop of Amasia in Pontus, in a homily on incompatibility called Sabbath and Sunday a beautiful span, and +Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa in a certain sermon calls these days brethren and therefore censures the luxury and the Sabbatarian pleasures; while on the other hand, the people of the west, contending for the Lord's day, have neglected the celebration of the Sabbath, as being peculiar to the Jews. Whence Tertullian in his apology: "We are only next to those who see in the Sabbath a day only for rest and relaxation." It is, therefore, possible for the Goths to have thought, as pupils of the discipline of the Greeks, that they should sanctify the Sabbath after the manner of the Greeks."

Bishop St. Theophilus of Antioch (170 A.D.)

Confirmed by Jerome and Eusebius, he wrote in Book II, Chapter 12:

“They speak also of the day that all men call the seventh day, whose origin is unknown to them; what the Hebrews call the Sabbath is known as the seventh day among all peoples, though its reason remains a mystery.”

In Book III, he referred to “King David, our ancestor” and “Abraham, our forefather,” thereby affirming the ancient roots of Sabbath observance.

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 194 A.D.)

He wrote:

“And the fourth word intimates that the world was created by God, and He gave us the seventh day as a day of rest, on account of the burdens of life. For God is incapable of weariness or suffering; we, who bear flesh, need rest. Therefore, the seventh day is proclaimed a day of rest—a cessation from worldly ills—preparing us for our true rest.”
(*Clement’s Miscellanies*, Book 6, Chapter 16)

Bishop St. Gregory of Nazianzen (4th century)

A renowned theologian and Doctor of the Church, though raised in the Hysistarian sect, he never rejected the Sabbath. In his Oration No. 41 “On Pentecost,” he declared:

“Thus the veneration of the number seven gave rise also to the veneration of Pentecost; for seven multiplied by seven yields fifty all but one day, which we borrow from the world to come—a merging of the Eighth and the first, or rather the indestructible one. The present sabbatism of our souls finds its cessation there, so that a portion may be given to both seven and eight.”

(*Interpretations of Solomon’s passages vary, but this reflects the early view.*)

Bishop St. Irenaeus of Lyons (2nd century) further explained:

“The Lord did not void the law but fulfilled it by performing the duties of the high priest—justifying His disciples by the words of the law and showing that it was lawful for the priests to act freely (cf. Matthew 12:5). For David was appointed a priest by God, despite the persecution by Saul. All the righteous possess the sacerdotal rank, and all of the apostles of the Lord are priests. The Sabbath teaches that we should continually serve God, minister to our faith, abstain from avarice, and not accumulate earthly treasures. Moreover, the Sabbath of God—the kingdom—is signified by creation itself; in this kingdom, the man who perseveres in serving God shall, in a state of rest, partake of His table.”

St. Pseudo-Macarius of Syria (4th century), in his *Fifty Spiritual Homilies* (No. 35), wrote:

“For the soul deemed worthy, free from shameful and foul reflections, keeps the Sabbath a true Sabbath and enjoys a true rest. To all souls that obey, He gives rest from these impure reflections, thereby keeping the Sabbath a true Sabbath.”

The Apostolic Constitutions (Didascalia, c. 250 A.D.)

These clearly state that both the Sabbath (7th day) and Sunday (1st day) were festal days during which no fasting or work should occur, but rather days of joyful assembly. Ancient copies in several languages confirm this practice.

St. Polycarp (2nd century), Bishop of Smyrna

He taught the regular observance of the Hebrew feast days and the Sabbath. Documented in the *Vita Polycarpi* (3rd century), the Christian community of Polycarp’s time kept the Saturday Sabbath much as the Jews did—gathering for Biblical instruction and celebrating the Sabbath as a feast day in fellowship. St. Polycarp advocated keeping the Biblical seventh-day Sabbath, Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Bishop St. Polycrates of Ephesus (2nd century)

As spokesman for Asia Minor, he defended the literal celebration of the Hebrew festivals in his letter to the Roman Bishop Victor. In this letter, he urged observance of Passover—including the removal of leaven from the home—and affirmed his succession as the 8th Bishop since the founding by the Holy Apostle St. John. His defiant letter, originally copied by

St. Eusebius and preserved in *The History of the Church* (Book V, Chapter XXIV, Verses 2-7, translated by A. Cushman McGiffert), enraged Pope Victor and led to the excommunication of him and all Bishops of Asia Minor. Nonetheless, history shows that Asia Minor continued to follow the Hebrew festivals rather than Rome's re-arranged festival days.

Bishop St. Methodius of Olympus (3rd century) declared:

“For since in six days God made the heavens and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works—blessing and sanctifying that day—so, by a figure in the seventh month, the great Resurrection Day is signified. It is commanded that the Feast of our Tabernacles be celebrated to the Lord.”

(Methodius, Banquet of the Ten Virgins, Discourse 9, Chapter 1)

Bishop St. Eusebius of Caesarea noted that the Ebionites observed the Sabbath and other Jewish ceremonies, yet on Sunday they celebrated rites similar to our own in commemoration of the Saviour's Resurrection.

(Eusebius, Commentary on the Psalms, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 23, cols. 1171-1172)

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that St. Eusebius himself—and indeed all Western and Eastern Orthodox—continued to observe the Saturday Sabbath in the Christian ceremonial.

It should be noted that these specific Jewish-style prayers on Saturday were not attacked until about 400 years later at the Seventh Ecumenical Council. In those cases, the legislation stated that converts who continued to observe such practices should be recognized openly as Hebrew if they could not fully renounce their former ways. The council banned the secret retention of Jewish practices by new converts attending both Saturday and Sunday services.

St. Eusebius's commentary on Psalm 92 has been misquoted and taken out of context by some to suggest that the Sabbath was replaced by Sunday. However, he makes no such claim. He asserts that on Resurrection Day, we should gather very early—before dawn—to perform the ceremonies as prescribed by the Law. This service, often referred to as the “remembrance offering” or “the bread of God,” is to be observed with due reverence. St. Paul similarly noted that such services were held as frequently as the Hebrews practiced them, though with the caution that only the worthy should partake, lest they bring sickness or punishment upon the congregation.

In Malachi, it is written that “every morning” in “every place” a pure offering and incense should be given.

St. Eusebius (c. 324 A.D.) also stated:

“I think that he [the Psalmist] describes the morning assemblies in which we are accustomed to gather throughout the world.”

This prophetic description signifies the service performed early on Resurrection Day across the globe.

(Sabbath Manual, p. 126)

Philo (c. 20 B.C.), in his treatise *De Vita Moysis* (Book 2, Section 4), wrote:

“For who has not honored that holy seventh day—a remission from labor and a relief to himself and to his neighbors?”

Socrates Scholasticus (5th century) claimed:

“Although almost all churches around the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath, the Christians of Alexandria and Rome, owing to some ancient tradition, have ceased to do so.”

St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (2nd century), promoted Sabbath keeping but cautioned against observing it in a purely Judaistic manner. He wrote:

“Therefore, let us no longer observe the Sabbath in a judaistic way, rejoicing in idleness; rather, each of you should observe the Sabbath in a spiritual manner, rejoicing in the study of the law. And after keeping the Sabbath, let every lover of Christ celebrate the festival of the Lord’s Day—the Resurrection day, the royal day, the most excellent of all days.”

Sozomen (5th century) similarly acknowledged:

“Assemblies are not held in all churches at the same time or in the same manner. The people of Constantinople—and almost everywhere—gather on the Sabbath as well as on the first day of the week, a custom that is never observed in Rome or Alexandria.”

St. Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, also wrote in favor of observing the Biblical Hebrew festival dates rather than the re-instituted Roman or pagan days.

St. Photios the Great remarked,

“The first error of the Westerners is their fasting on Saturdays.”

This statement is significant, as St. Photios is recognized as a forerunner of the Great Schism (the Photian Schism).

Patriarch St. Michael I Cerularius, concluding the Great Schism of 1054, declared:

“We are commanded to honor the Sabbath, to keep it, and not to work on it.”
(*Migne, Patrologia Latina, Vol. 143*)

St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, recorded in *De Castigone* that:

“With what face wilt thou look upon the Lord’s Day, which has dishonored the Sabbath? Know that these days are sisters, and whoever despises one affronts the other.”
(*History of the Sabbath, p. 427*)

St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, stated:

“We do not fast on Sabbaths in Milan.”

He noted that the Church of Milan held Saturday in fair esteem—often joining it with Sunday. He wrote:

“Crastino die & Sabbato, & dominico de orationis ordine dicemus,”
suggesting that the observance of Saturday was integrated with Sunday services in certain respects.
(*History of the Sabbath, p. 427*)

Chapter 2: THE PREVALENCE OF SABBATH KEEPING IN THE 4TH CENTURY

The 4th century is often revered in Orthodoxy because it was a time when essential doctrines were solidified, providing a lasting framework for faith and practice. In this period, the established traditions of the church, including the observance of the Sabbath, became deeply interwoven with the core tenets of the faith—a legacy that continues to influence Orthodox practice today.

A breakthrough discovery from the critically edited *Life of Constantine* by Eusebius—translated by Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall—has corrected a long-standing mistranslation that distorted the emperor's stance toward the Sabbath. The original Greek reads plainly: “...they should honor the days of the Sabbath,” confirming that Constantine decreed Sabbath observance should be respected. This refutes the 19th-century alteration that misleadingly inserted the word “before,” implying Friday observance. Instead, Constantine's position aligned with earlier Roman emperors like Augustus and Claudius, who upheld Sabbath protections. Meanwhile, his oft-cited Sunday law of 321 AD, far from banning Sabbath or mandating universal Sunday worship, was narrowly directed at civil workers in urban centers. The decree states: “*All judges, city dwellers, skill workers, and the offices of all should honor the venerable day of the sun and rest. However, those placed in the country freely serve the fields of culture...*” (CJ.3.12.2, trans. Ayer). Far from creating a new religion, Constantine effectively **required** rural laborers to continue working on Sunday. The misuse of this decree by some modern Sabbatarian groups—suggesting that Constantine outlawed Sabbath and created Sunday worship—has been one of the greatest falsehoods to obscure the enduring testimony of the faithful remnant.

The prevalence of Sabbath keeping in the 4th century was not limited to strongholds in the Western Celtic areas or the Latin regions such as Milan and Spain. These traditions were also clearly maintained in the Eastern Orthodox areas. As early as the 2nd century, Saint Irenaeus remarked that “Spain, Gaul, Germany, and Britain had no difference of faith or tradition in any of these countries.” It is important to remind the reader that this tradition was also prevalent in Constantinople and throughout the Orthodox world in the 4th century.

The Orthodox Church today often looks to 4th-century Constantinople as a model for its Christian tradition. We have many good examples of the Hebrew festival traditions being preserved independently of Rome's newly instituted festivals.

The early leaders of the True Orthodox resisted Latin Rome's attempts to impose new feasts and alter Sabbath practices. For example, Bishop Polycarp, Bishop Polycrates, and Bishop Anatolius upheld the ancient tradition—a legacy passed down from the Apostle John. This tradition was also central to the Celtic world, including the churches of Lyon, Gaul, and beyond. The well-known Celtic Bishops of Ireland, England, and Scotland long maintained these practices. They frequently quoted the Apostle John and Anatolius of Alexandria (Laodicea), asserting, for example, that “Passover ought to be celebrated from the 14th unto the 20th day of the moon” (cf. Leviticus 23:6).

It is noteworthy that Glastonbury was, at one time, a much larger church than Constantinople and was recognized for upholding the older Orthodox traditions, which remained uncorrupted by secular influences. Later in this book, you will encounter evidence regarding the seniority of the Glastonbury (English) church, supported by several dedicated works on the subject.

Nevertheless, numerous historical sources demonstrate that Sabbath keeping continued to dominate in both the East and the West during the 4th century. For instance, one source states:

“Likewise some meet both upon the Sabbath and upon the day after the Sabbath, as at Constantinople, and among almost all others [i.e., the Celtic Church]. At Rome and Alexandria they do not.” (*Ecclesiastical History, in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Book 7, Chapter 19*)

Another source explains:

“Christians were very careful in the observation of Saturday, or the seventh day, which was the ancient Jewish Sabbath... In the Eastern church it was ever observed as a festival... From hence it is plain that all the Oriental [Eastern] churches—and the greatest part of the world—observed the Sabbath as a festival. The Greek writers are unanimous in their testimony. The author of the Constitutions, who describes the customs chiefly of the Oriental church, frequently speaks of it... Athanasius likewise tells us that they held religious assemblies on the Sabbath, not because they were infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath. Epiphanius says the same—that it was a day of public assembly in many churches, meaning the Oriental churches, where it was kept as a festival.” (*Bingham J. Origines Ecclesiasticæ, 1856, pp. 1137–1138*)

In Egypt, the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (circa 200–250 A.D.) clearly express:

“Except ye make the Sabbath a real Sabbath [sabbatize the Sabbath, Greek], ye shall not see the father.” (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Logion 2, verse 4–11; London: Offices of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898*)

In Spain, Canon 26 of the Council of Elvira (c. 305 A.D.) reveals that the Church of Spain at that time observed Saturday as the seventh day. It declares:

“As to fasting every Sabbath: Resolved, that the error be corrected of fasting every Sabbath.” This resolution stands in direct opposition to the Roman policy, which had mandated that the Sabbath be observed as a fast day, a measure intended to demean it and render it repugnant to the people.

Saint Aphrahat (3rd–4th century), a Syriac Christian theologian, wrote in his Homilies:

“...it is permissible to break the Sabbath, for instance in time of war—as in the cases of Joshua and the Maccabees. Furthermore, Jews should not take pride in its observance; it does not confer any merits upon them. However, the institution is nevertheless good and desired by God. If He rested, how much more should we! The Sabbath should be observed in God’s way, and for failure to do so properly, the Jews were scattered abroad.” (*Thirteenth Homily of Aphrahat, lines 336–345*)

Bishop St. Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c. 393–458 A.D.) noted regarding a trial of the heretic Arius that both Emperor Constantine and Bishop Alexander “waited until after the Sabbath to admit Arius” to hear his plea. On the Ebionites, he wrote:

“They conduct their lives according to the law of Moses; they confess that the Saviour and Lord was born of a virgin; they use only the Gospel according to Matthew; they honour the Sabbath according to the law of the Jews, and celebrate the Lord’s Day in a manner very similar to us.” (*Theodoret, Books IV and II*)

Bishop St. Asterius of Amasea of Pontus (c. 400 A.D.) stated in one of his homilies:

“It is beautiful to Christians and to the industrious that the team of these two days comes together; I speak of the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day, which, as time courses by, come together each week. Like mothers and nurses of the church, they gather the people, appoint priests as instructors, and lead both disciples and teachers in the care of souls.” (*Asterius of Amasea, Homily 5 on Matthew 19:3, MPG, Vol. 40, col. 225, Greek*)

Saint Jerome (4th–5th century), the renowned Latin theologian and Doctor of the Church, demonstrated in his Homily No. 21 on Psalm 92 that Sabbath observance (on the 7th day, Saturday) was an expected practice in his time. He wrote:

“The Ninety-first Psalm is inscribed with the title: ‘A psalm; a song for the Sabbath day.’ There can be no Sabbath day without six preceding days. We work for six days, and on the seventh day we rest. We cannot sing to the Lord, therefore, except on the Sabbath. As long as we are engaged in the works of the world for six days, we cannot sing to the Lord. Leviticus says: ‘On the Sabbath day you shall do no servile work.’ No one, therefore, on the day of the Sabbath or the day of the Lord’s rest, may perform worldly labor; rather, they should do only the work that belongs to the Sabbath.” (*Homilies of Saint Jerome, Volume 1, pp. 1–59 on the Psalms*)

Around 404 A.D., St. Jerome also noted:

“...the believing Jews do well in observing the precepts of the law—that is, keeping the Jewish Sabbath... there exists a sect among the synagogues of the East, called the sect of the Minei, which is even now condemned by the Pharisees. The adherents of this sect, known commonly as Nazarenes, believe in Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, and affirm that He who suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose again is the same in whom we believe.” (*Jerome, Letter 75 or 112, as found in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series One, Volume 1, edited by Philip Schaff*)

Efforts to write against Sabbath keeping well after the 4th century indicate that it remained popular in the Eastern church. In the Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (circa A.D. 350), for instance, the Sabbath is treated as a common doctrine—even if he counsels a less rigid approach. Cyril exhorts:

“If ever thou hear any heretic speaking evil of the Law or the Prophets, answer with the sound of the Saviour’s voice, saying, ‘Jesus came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.’ ... Keep away from all sabbathical observances.” (*Note: The Greek term used for “observances” here, paratēreō, is always found in a negative context in Scripture, often referring to fault-finding or plotting against Jesus.*)
(*From Catechetical Lectures, iv. 33–37; see also Bagatti & Bellarmino, translated by Eugene Hoade*)

Patriarch John Chrysostom, in his “Eight Homilies Against the Jews,” remarked that many in his ranks observed the Hebrew feasts and Sabbaths alongside their Christian practices. He declared:

“Though thou shouldest go to the ocean to the British Isles, there thou shouldest hear all men everywhere discoursing matters out of the Scriptures with one voice, united in faith.”
(*Chrysostom, Oratio de Theos Xristos*)

This area of British church history is vital; although some have chosen to ignore it, we will devote an entire chapter to it later. It is clear, however, from numerous church histories, that the Saturday Sabbath was not only expected but celebrated in ancient times. One general history states:

“The observance of the Sabbath among the Jewish Christians gradually ceased. Yet the Eastern Church to this day marks the seventh day of the week (except only the Easter Sabbath) by omitting fasting and standing in prayer; whereas the Latin Church, in direct opposition to Judaism, made Saturday a fast day. The controversy on this point began as early as the end of the second century.” (*History of the Church*, 1864 edition, p. 372; 1952 edition, p. 205)

Even the Seventh Ecumenical Council addressed issues concerning new Hebrew converts who did not fully convert from the heart; it was made clear that admission to the church required wholehearted commitment, not grudging adherence. In this context, the council did not ban Sabbath keeping or Jewish customs outright—it highlighted the need for a sincere conversion.

Another 4th-century Alexandrian Bishop, St. Athanasius, explained that religious assemblies on Saturday were held “not because they were infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath.” His successor, Bishop St. Timotheus of Alexandria, also stated that both the Saturday Sabbath and Sunday were observed. In 381 A.D., measures were taken to preserve the sanctity of communion, with marriages banned on both Saturday and Sunday to maintain purity in worship.

Bishop St. Palladius of Galatia (4th–5th century), in his *Historia Lausiaca* (419–420 A.D.), described the dawn of the Sabbath as “agape Saturday,” during which the communion bread was offered—a practice still expected in ministry. He recounted that the most pious believers regularly partook in communion on both the Sabbath and Sunday, demonstrating that Saturday Sabbath observance remained vital even after later attacks on Jewish influences by figures such as St. Chrysostom.

Bishop St. Epiphanius of Salamis (4th century) wrote:

“Assemblies for Communion were appointed by the apostles to be held on the fourth day, on Sabbath eve, and on the Lord’s Day.” (*Panarion* 3.22, as quoted in *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 385)

Even as some regions began to incorporate Sunday as a Christian holy day, the original Saturday Sabbath was preserved from the time of St. Joseph—as we will demonstrate further in this book. In Scotland and much of Britain, the concept of Sunday did not even exist until Queen Margaret decreed it in the 11th century. The Celtic Orthodox church, in particular, maintained the original Sabbath tradition, a tradition that traces back to St. John the Holy Apostle, whose teachings excluded Sunday or the new Roman festivals. He decreed that we should always keep the Sabbaths and Feasts of YAHWEH, in accordance with the Holy Bible. This second witness, along with many others—from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries via bishops of Lyon and other Celtic provinces—was transmitted through figures like St. Polycrates of Ephesus and St. Polycarp of Smyrna.

CHAPTER 3: “THE GREAT SCHISM OF 1054 AD” BETWEEN THE EASTERN ORTHODOX AND THE WESTERN PAPISTS

Many have been kept ignorant of the actual schism texts that marked the purposes of the final split between the Eastern and Western churches. The largest, longest-debated, and primary issue of the schism texts has been the topic of keeping the Sabbath holy. This had remained an issue for about 1,000 years. The Council of Trullo confirmed in five canons, four directly, that the Sabbath (Saturday) remained a feast day, as it says in the Constitutions of the Apostles (Didascalia). The issue of the Sabbath was nothing new, but it had remained an issue of importance in the Orthodox church.

The three main Schism letters from the Patriarch of Constantinople, and his representative Archbishop Leo of Achrida, were focused primarily on keeping the Sabbath holy and not turning it into a day of fasting or work. These letters included the decrees of earlier church councils stating that we shouldn't fast on Sabbaths which occur during Lent.

There were several replies by Pope Leo IX, primarily reverting to slander against Constantinople and exerting the primacy of Rome (which the East never fully recognized). He claimed he had the right to enforce fasting on the Sabbath across all the lands of Christendom (East and West). However, the Eastern (Orthodox) church maintained the same position in all of the replies. Before, during, and after the breakup, the church affirmed that they could not and would not relent on the Sabbath commandment to appease Rome. Rome had long been trying to introduce breaking the Sabbath concerning keeping Lent (when it lands on the Sabbath). However, again the Eastern Church reiterated its claim since the first century, and in every century, the official doctrine to not fast on the Sabbath.

I recommend a detailed analysis demonstrating that Sabbath keeping was the reason for the Great Schism, from the Seminary of Newbold College UK, and published by Andrews University Seminary Studies, Vol. 49, No. 2, 337-352. You can find a link to this study in our archive at: <http://Orthodoxchurch.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Fasting-Sabbath-great-schism-controversy-ENGLISH.pdf>

Highlights from this analysis are as follows:

- In 1042, Monomachos was inaugurated as King of Byzantium, and in 1043 as Patriarch of the Eastern church. At that time in Rome, Pope Leo IX believed that he inherited absolute power over all Christian people and institutions from Peter himself.
- The Great Schism began with an open letter written by Bishops Leo and Michael Cerularius of the Eastern church, to Bishop John of Trani of the Western church in southern Italy. It was addressed, received, and replied to several times by several Bishops. The letter, as originally written by Eastern-aligned Bishops and Archbishops, addressed the Pope as “brother” rather than “most holy father” or “reverend Pope.”
- The two biggest issues in the letter were the Sabbath not being a day of fasting but a festal day, and Rome's use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist.
- Pope Leo IX, in his letter, accused Constantinople of historically being the source of heresy. He claimed emphatically that the Bishop of Rome held primacy even over Constantinople. However, the response of Patriarch Michael of Constantinople in 1054 initiated the events that followed because Constantinople claimed the title “ecumenical Patriarch.” Patriarch Michael addressed Pope Leo as “brother” rather

than “father.” Pope Leo IX sent Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida on a legatine mission to treat with the Patriarch. Cerularius refused to meet with Cardinal Humbert and kept him waiting with no audience for months.

- Thus, Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida delivered a notice of excommunication against Patriarch Michael on July 16, 1054, despite the death of Pope Leo three months prior, rendering the excommunication invalid. Patriarch Michael Cerularius, in turn, excommunicated the Cardinal and the Pope and subsequently removed the Pope’s name from the diptychs, starting the East-West Schism. Technically, while the East didn’t issue an “anathema” against Rome first, the East formally excommunicated the West first.
- While the Pope’s responses were about his authority, Constantinople wanted to follow the word of God. In the exchanges, Pope Leo XI said that a donation of the Patriarch of Constantinople proved that “the Holy See possessed both an earthly and a heavenly imperium, the royal priesthood”. He said that “only the apostolic successor to Peter possessed primacy in the Church.” These can be read in the Migne, Patrologia Latina, vol. 143, pgs. 744-769. However, the Eastern church primarily claims to be successors of Saint Andrew (the first Apostle) and of Saint John, of which there is much tradition. Our great God of Israel provided that the Pope died before his anathema could be read, and the more righteous Patriarch Michael lived to have his read and declared. Let us look at this text.
- There was a triumph for truth as Patriarch Michael in 1054, reaffirmed his stance with the following declaration, that Christians are **“commanded to honor the Sabbath . . . to keep [it] and not to work on it.”** We hope this information encourages a return to this true spirit of Orthodoxy, and not to become relaxed on issues so big as the Ten Commandments.

We also read in the “The Schism Between the Oriental and Western Churches”, by Theologian George Howard of St Johns College, Cambridge Published 1892 that the original letter of Cerularius was clearly to establish closer ties with the Western Church. However, the mentioning how the Roman church different from the Greek church primarily in the Western use of unleavened bread at the Eucharist, the seasonal fasting on the Sabbath (Saturday), the prohibition of clerical marriage, and the Dogma of the Procession from the Son. However, it evoked a response of rage rather than of doctrine. The anathema of Rome was declared against Cerularius, not for unOrthodox doctrine, but for audacity in resisting the Petrine claims. (Pgs 34 and 37)

The document continues with further details, historical references, and theological arguments that solidify the importance of the Sabbath and the stance of the Orthodox Church during the Great Schism. The full analysis is available in the appendix of this book, providing a thorough examination of the events and doctrinal disputes that led to this historic split between the Eastern Orthodox and Western Papist churches.

The breaking of the Lenten fasting to keep the weekly Sabbath had long been an issue of Christendom. As we had shown previously, there was no real fasting on Saturdays outside of

Rome. Even +**St Ambrose** of Milan Italy recorded when he was right next-door they did not do any fasting on Saturdays. +**St. Photios** the Great had said ***“The first error of Westerners is their fasting on Saturdays.”*** This is a very important statement, as he is well known as the forerunner for the “Great Schism.” His schism was dubbed “Photian schism”. (Excerpt from The Encyclical Letter of Saint Photius (867))

It wasn’t only Easterners who were keeping Saturday. Western churches so close to Rome, such as Milan still kept it holy. As we read about +St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan:

“Ambrose, when questioned on this point, replied that at Rome he was accustomed to fast on the Sabbath, but in Milan that he did not. Augustin rightly applies the rules given by Paul in the fourteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, to this diversity of practice. He complains that weak minds were disturbed by the controversial obstinacy or the superstitious scruples of many who would insist on that practice as being the only right one, for which they supposed they had found certain reasons, no matter how weak, or which they had brought with them as the ecclesiastical usage of their own country, or which they had seen in foreign lands, although neither the holy Scriptures nor the universal tradition of the church decided anything as to the point[like seasonal fasting at Lent etc], and although it was a matter of perfect indifference as to any practical advantage. But that rigid hierarchical spirit of the Roman church, which from a very early period required uniformity in things unessential..”

(Cassian. institut. cenobial. 1. III. c. 9 et 10. Hieronym. ep. 71 ad Lucinium, s. 6. As quoted by Neander in his “General History of the Christian Religion and Church the German” Page 442.)

In the West it wasn’t only the well known Celtic Orthodox churches who rejected Rome’s Sabbath fasting Mandate. Very quickly after they had made that law in Rome, all over the world, the orthodox councils were showing they believed the opposite, and would not submit to this new tradition of Rome.

For example,

In Spain, Canon 26 of the Council of Elvira (c. 305A.D.) reveals that the Church of Spain at that time kept Saturday, the seventh day. ***“As to fasting every Sabbath: Resolved, that the error be corrected of fasting every Sabbath.”*** This resolution of the council is in direct opposition to the policy the church at Rome had inaugurated, that of commanding Sabbath as a fast day in order to humiliate it and make it repugnant to the people.

From the time of the Apostles Didascalia to the time of St Ambrose, to the most strongest opposition by the Culdees (Celtic True Orthodox), we see that the whole Orthodox Church-world considered fasting on Saturdays to be a heresy. However out of respect, there were those who fasted when visiting Rome. It may also be more contentious as a traveler, visiting Rome, where there was no food served, no Sacraments, etc, to actually go against the local authorities to serve food and Sacrament. As guest travelers to Rome (like St. Ambrose) it may even be more in accordance with keeping the peace on Sabbath, to “when in Rome, do as Rome” as Paul had admonished.

CHAPTER 4: THE ORTHODOX IDENTITY OF THE BRITISH CHURCH AND ANGLICANISM

Why look to the British Orthodox? While the Eastern Orthodox universally understand there are Saturday liturgies upheld in all generations, the British church had some recent struggles as it related to Rome. It was often one step forward and one step backward. Mainstream history shows us that the Celtic areas didn't even know of Sunday for over 1,000 years, all-the-while practicing Saturday alone in the greatest universities of Christendom (the Culdees). Such Sabbath practices continued unscathed till well after the protestant reformation (or return to Orthodoxy in the Western Celtic jurisdictions). Therefore these more compliant Orthodox jurisdictions of the Celts stands for one of the greatest witnesses of fidelity to God's law, particularly the Sabbath. This great witness was rivaled only by Russia's Subotnik movement, which was a futile move by the royal family who sought to de-legitimize Sabbath, albeit unsuccessfully. The Celtic church—being more widely documented, serves as a nice standard for believers to be admonished in.

This chapter explores the foundational argument that the British Church and Anglicanism are inherently Orthodox—rooted in apostolic continuity, doctrinal integrity, and liturgical validity. Rather than seeking external recognition, the British Church reasserts its historical and theological identity as an Orthodox jurisdiction, a heritage that extends back to the earliest centuries. Historical and theological evidence clearly demonstrates that Anglicanism not only meets the traditional Orthodox criteria but, in many respects, surpasses recent efforts to narrow the definition of Orthodoxy.

Historical and Apostolic Foundations

Apostolic Succession in Britain

The British Church traces its origins directly to apostolic times. Early figures serve as enduring markers of this sacred continuity:

- **St. Aristobulus, the First Bishop of Britain:**
Consecrated by St. Andrew, he is credited with bringing Christianity to the Isles. His commemoration on March 16 is recognized by both Eastern and Western traditions, underscoring Britain's deep apostolic roots.
- **St. Joseph of Arimathea:**
Traditionally consecrated by St. Philip around 60 AD, St. Joseph is associated with establishing the Church in Glastonbury—a revered site of early Christian worship and pilgrimage. (See *Catholic Encyclopedia* for additional details.)
- **St. Simon Zelotes and St. Lazarus of Bethany:**
St. Simon is recorded as having preached and been martyred in Britain, further solidifying its link to apostolic authority. St. Lazarus's missionary endeavors, connecting Britain to Gaul and Avalon, attest to the widespread activity of the early apostles among the Celtic peoples.
- **St. James the Just and St. David of Wales:**
St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, is closely associated with early Celtic Christian communities—records suggest his presence in Avalon (Glastonbury) as early as 48 AD. Similarly, St. David of Wales, consecrated by the Archbishop of Jerusalem, reinforces the liturgical and spiritual bonds that tie the British Church to the early patriarchates.

These apostolic connections are not merely historical footnotes—they continue to inform the deep theological self-understanding of the British Church.

Early Patriarchates and Apostolic Connections

The foundational patriarchates of Jerusalem, Rome, and Antioch maintain direct ties with the early British Church through their first bishops:

- **Jerusalem:**
Figures such as St. James the Just and St. Simon Zelotes forged enduring links between Jerusalem and Britain.
- **Rome:**
Both St. Peter and St. Linus are connected with Britain; notably, St. Linus is said to have been the grandson of King Bran the Blessed, a distinguished figure in British royal history.
- **Gaul:**
St. Lazarus of Bethany, who later returned to Gaul from Britain, illustrates the interwoven missions of the early Celtic and apostolic traditions.

These connections serve as a reminder that the British Church's identity is deeply embedded in the universal tradition of early Christianity.

Early Councils and British Orthodoxy

The participation of British leaders in early ecumenical councils—such as the Synod of Arles (314)—demonstrates Britain's integral role in shaping the universal Church. Arles, regarded as an early patriarchal seat, hosted Christian leaders from across the Roman Empire, including representatives from Britain. Constantine the Great's close ties with British royalty further attest to the legitimacy of Britain's apostolic and Orthodox foundations.

In this way, the historical narrative of British Orthodoxy is woven seamlessly into the fabric of early ecumenical Christianity.

Liturgical Validity

The Sarum Missal and the Book of Common Prayer

Anglican liturgical practice, deeply rooted in the traditions of the Sarum Missal, preserves many elements of ancient Orthodox worship:

- **Epiclesis:**
The invocation of the Holy Spirit during the Eucharist aligns with Eastern Orthodox liturgical standards—a practice that emphasizes the transformative power of the Spirit.
- **Prayer of Oblation:**
This prayer, which highlights the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, reflects a central tenet of Orthodox theology.
- **Mixed Chalice:**
The restoration of the ancient practice of mixing water and wine in the Eucharist underscores continuity with early Christian ritual.

- **Prayers for the Dead:**

These prayers resonate with the Orthodox understanding of the communion of saints and the efficacy of intercessory prayer.

These liturgical elements not only preserve tradition but also enrich the spiritual experience of the faithful.

Recognition by Moscow and Constantinople

The integrity of Anglican liturgical practice is further affirmed by recognition from key Orthodox jurisdictions:

- **Moscow Synod (1904–1907):**

Under Bishop Tikhon (later Patriarch of Moscow), the English liturgy was reviewed and recognized as canonically Orthodox—rooted in the venerable tradition of the Sarum Missal.

- **Constantinople (1882):**

The Patriarch and Synod conditionally approved the Western Liturgy and Offices specifically for use in the British Isles, acknowledging its Orthodox essence.

- **Scottish Episcopal Church (1868):**

Dialogue with Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow led to the approval of a revised Western Rite liturgy, thereby affirming its compatibility with Orthodox worship.

These recognitions highlight a cross-tradition appreciation that transcends regional differences.

Theological Alignment

Shared Doctrinal Foundations

Anglicanism aligns with Orthodox theology on several core doctrinal points:

- **Trinitarian Doctrine:**

Anglicanism upholds the Nicene Creed without the addition of the Filioque clause. (This is consistent with the traditional Eastern understanding of the Trinity—without overstating what is already well known.)

- **Christology:**

Both traditions affirm the Chalcedonian definition of Christ’s two natures—fully human and fully divine—ensuring that the mystery of the Incarnation is preserved.

- **Rejection of Papal Supremacy:**

Anglicanism rejects claims of universal jurisdiction by the Bishop of Rome, embracing instead the Orthodox principle of conciliarity—a model of shared authority among bishops.

These shared beliefs provide the theological bedrock for the British Church’s identity as Orthodox.

Recognition of Sacraments

Anglican sacramental practice is acknowledged by both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox bodies:

- **Roman Catholic Recognition:**
Canon 844.3 of the Code of Canon Law allows for the administration of sacraments to Anglicans, thus affirming the validity of Anglican orders and sacramental rites.
- **Eastern Orthodox Practice:**
The Moscow Synod's recognition of the English liturgy implicitly affirms the validity of Anglican sacraments, underscoring their unity in sacramental theology.

Historical Recognition of Independence

The independence of the British Church from Rome has been established early and consistently recognized by Orthodox Patriarchates:

- **St. Peter's Ministry in Britain:**
Records of St. Peter's visits and the consecration of Linus by British clergy underscore the profound apostolic connections that continue to define British Orthodoxy.
- **Constantine the Great:**
His close ties with British royalty and the establishment of the Synod of Arles affirm Britain's integral role in early ecumenical Christianity.

These historical markers reinforce the self-understanding of the British Church as an enduring Orthodox institution.

Broader Ecumenical Context

Orthodox Unity Before the Schism

The British Church's deep connections with Eastern Orthodoxy prior to the Great Schism (1054) are well documented:

- **St. James the Just:**
His missionary work in Britain reflects the longstanding bonds between Jerusalem and the Celtic Church.
- **St. Philip and St. Joseph of Arimathea:**
Their contributions established an enduring apostolic presence in Britain, which maintained a consistent Orthodox identity.

Recent Challenges to Orthodoxy

Modern political movements, such as those associated with the World Council of Churches, have attempted to narrow the definition of Orthodoxy for geopolitical reasons. These efforts do not, however, diminish the historical reality that Anglicanism and the British Church have always met the criteria for true Orthodoxy:

- **Acceptance of Any Ecumenical Councils**
- **Apostolic Succession**
- **Liturgical Validity**
- **Communion with the Broader Church**

The robust historical evidence leaves little doubt that the British Church's identity is firmly rooted in Orthodox tradition.

Conclusion

The British Church and Anglicanism are inherently Orthodox—not by virtue of external recognition, but through deep historical, theological, and liturgical roots. Their shared apostolic foundations, enduring liturgical practices, and unwavering doctrinal commitments affirm this Orthodoxy beyond doubt. Recent politically motivated efforts to delegitimize Anglicanism fail to account for this robust heritage. The British Church stands as a testament to the enduring, universal nature of Orthodoxy—a tradition that remains unbroken from the apostolic mission to the present day.

CHAPTER 5: CHURCH PRECEDENCE AND UNITY CAME FROM APOSTOLIC BRITAIN

Regarding Britain's ancient See of Glastonbury alone, it has been known the world over by a multitude of exalted titles:

"the most hallowed ground on earth", "The Sacred Isle", "The Motherland", "the Old Church", "the Mother of Saints", "the Second Rome", "the Cradle of Christianity", "Built by the Hands of God Himself", "House of God", "Secret of the Lord", "the fountain and origin of all religion", "built by the hands of Christ Himself" (– Augustine's own admission).

The authenticity of these statements has been confirmed repeatedly through the ages, with many documents from the 4th century onward corroborating this enduring legacy.

Remnants of this prestigious heritage appear in the decisions of at least five church councils (Pisa 1409; Constance 1417; Sens 1418; Sienna 1424; and Basil 1434), where it was substantiated that the British Church is the oldest church outside the Biblical lands. In particular, the Council of Basil in 1434 declared:

"The Churches of France and Spain must yield in points of antiquity and precedence to that of Britain, as the latter Church was founded by St. Joseph of Arimathea immediately after the passion of Christ."

The Anglican Orthodoxy was held in the highest esteem by Patriarch Celarius of Constantinople—a sentiment not uncommon in the centuries past. On numerous occasions, British armies were called upon to aid the Eastern Orthodox, and they heeded that call. For instance, the family of the last Saxon King, Herold Harefoot, was celebrated as "Orthodox" and spent considerable time in the Holy Land and in service at the Eastern court in Constantinople. Today, Eastern Orthodoxy continues to honor all the pre-Norman Monarchs as "Orthodox Kings" of England.

It is important to understand that the Anglican Church did not emerge as a new break from Rome; rather, it represents the restoration of the original jurisdictions that were never truly under Roman control. Scholars such as Bishop Usher and others have written extensively on the supremacy and independence of the British Church.

A notable example is found in Archbishop Parker's letter during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In his correspondence with Calvin concerning a proposed union among Protestants, Parker promised that the Church of England would "retain her Episcopacy; but not as from Pope Gregory, who sent Augustine the monk hither, but from Joseph of Arimathea."

In earlier centuries, Britain's ecclesiastical precedence was even more evident. When the Church around the world was forced underground during the Diocletian persecutions, hostile jurisdictions dominated by Rome left Britain as the only place where the Church could operate openly. Legend holds that King Avirigus granted 12 hides of land to St. Joseph in Glastonbury (c. 37 AD), establishing a sanctuary for the Church that would set the standard for centuries to come. A great percentage of early Church leaders were commissioned and sent from Britain, underscoring its central role in the spread of Christianity.

While previous chapters have made these points abundantly clear, let us now examine a few additional quotes that further evidence these facts:

Archbishop St. Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople (347–407 AD), declared:

"Though thou shouldest go to the ocean to the British Isles, there thou shouldest hear all men everywhere discoursing matters out of the Scriptures with another voice but not another

faith.”

(Chrysostom, Orat O Theos Xristos)

If you thought I had already exhausted the Church Fathers’ testimonies on keeping the Sabbath, think again. Numerous authentic quotes have been cited in previous chapters, and more remain to be heard. Prepare yourself prayerfully to receive further insights, for we are called to unity and growth in Christ. Even as the Sabbath was the norm, the universal Church expressed a profound unity in its observance of this sacred day. These unshakable standards have not only endured since ancient times but continue to serve as the foundation for the Church as a whole.

The original early faith was clearly planted in Britain, as numerous authors affirm, and this standard of faith once prevailed throughout the world. Not only did St. Chrysostom acknowledge this, but many others have testified to this remarkable phenomenon—a subject that will be explored further in subsequent chapters. As we have earlier quoted from Socrates and Sozomen (5th century), there was great unity in the observance of the Sabbath throughout the world. Let us now turn to a few Early Church Fathers who took this commitment a step further.

Bishop St. Irenaeus (c. 178 AD) stated:

“The Church in my time is spread throughout the world; and especially, the churches in Germany, Spain, Gaul, and Britain show no difference of faith or tradition.”

He also connected the origin of the Sabbath with the sanctification of the seventh day:

“These [things promised] are to take place in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all his works of creation—the true Sabbath, during which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation.”

Bishop St. Clement of Rome (circa 70 AD), in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, wrote:

That Paul was successful in preaching the Gospel “at the utmost bounds of the West.”

(A common phrase, “farthest West,” referred to Britain, where the Roman Legion was then stationed under Vespianus. It is recorded that Joseph of Arimathea was attributed with converting Vespianus, who later exacted vengeance on the Judeans in Jerusalem for rejecting the Messiah.)

Tertullian (c. 155–222 AD), the early theologian, wrote:

“The extremities of Spain, the various parts of Gaul, the regions of Britain which have never been penetrated by Roman arms have received the religion of Christ.”

(Tertullian, Defence of the Faith, p. 179)

Britain’s sanctuary, free from the domination of Rome, became the refuge where nearly all the Apostles are said to have gone. As Saint Eusebius, the great Church Historian (260–340 AD), related:

“The Apostles passed beyond the ocean to the Isles called the Britannic Isles.”

(De Demonstratione Evangelii)

Likewise, Saint Dorotheus, Bishop of Tyre (303 AD), wrote:

“Aristobulus, whom Paul saluted in his letter to the Romans (Romans 16:10), was Bishop of Britain.”

(Synopsis De Apostol)

Today, the Orthodox around the world continue to celebrate the legacy of the First Century Bishop of Britain—St. Aristobulus.

The unity of these Early Church Fathers on the British Church's origins is paramount for understanding the true nature of Orthodoxy. Their consensus then must inform our unity now.

Bishop St. Venantius Fortunatus (AD 560) said:

“St. Paul passed over the ocean to the Island of Britain, and to Thule, the extremity of the earth.”

(even to Ireland!)

The credit for introducing Christianity into Britain has been claimed not only for St. Paul and Aristobulus, but also for St. Peter, Philip, John, Simon Zelotes, and Joseph of Arimathea. The biography of Saint Augustine makes it clear. Arriving from Rome in AD 596 to convert the “heathen Saxons,” he found the people of Britain immersed in grievous heresies—“being given to Judaizing, but ignorant of the holy sacraments and festivals of the Church.” In other words, they kept the Biblical Sabbath and remained unaware of the Roman “Sunday-festival.”

(Mrs. Tamar Davis, “History of Sabbatarian Churches,” p. 108, Philadelphia 1851)

As we have shown, only Rome and Alexandria had diverged by embracing Sunday rather than the Biblical Sabbath. Even secular historians such as Sozomen did not know from whence the Sunday tradition originated, as it was not observed in the remainder of the Hebrew Christian world.

For the emissary of the Bishop of Rome, St. Augustine, to label the British as “Judaizers” regarding sacraments and holy days attests to how truly Orthodox the British Church has remained. This occurred not long after Rome excommunicated the entirety of Asia for adhering to the tradition of St. John in keeping the Biblical feasts. The Culdees of Britain, as well as the Sabbatarian Celts of Lyon, France, have continually maintained their tradition—tracing their lineage back to the Holy Apostle St. John.

In Early Church Councils, Britain had ample representation. At the Council of Arles in 314, five British Christians (including three bishops—Eborius of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelfius of Lincoln, though with some uncertainty regarding the latter's title) were present, along with a priest and a deacon.

(cf. “General Distribution of the Sabbath-keeping Churches” No. 122)

The Pope of Rome in the 7th century slandered the Orthodox British by calling their Orthodoxy “Judaic” for refusing to abandon the holy day observances that Christ, His Apostles, and the early Church had always kept. John Price, in *The Ancient British Church* (pp. 90, 94), wrote:

“The original difference (about Easter) was that the Western Church, followed by the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, observed Good Friday either on the 14th of the month Nisan (if it fell on Friday) or, if not, on the next Friday; and Easter on the following Sunday. The Eastern Church did not do that way.”

He adds, “There is, however, an unfair insinuation that the British Christians were Judaic in their observance of Easter day, as seen in a letter of Pope-elect John (AD 634) to the Scoti; and in Aldhelm's Epistle to Geruntius.”

This “insinuation” is not only fair but a strong testament to the Orthodoxy of the true Church, which upholds the laws of our Creator God. The Apostles' Didascalia, which dates the

beginning of the first month (Nisan) for the calculation of Pasach/Easter by the first visible crescent after the equinox, further confirms these true Hebrew practices—practices that modern Jews no longer strictly observe and that newer versions of the Didascalia have sometimes omitted.

Saint Columba is cited in the authentic work *Adomnan's Life of Columba* as having taught that the 7th day of the week—Saturday—was the day of rest.

In Thomas Nelson's *Medieval Texts* (1961, pp. 25–26), we read:

“Adomnan's use of *sabbatum* for Saturday, the seventh day of the week, is clear indication from ‘Columba's mouth’ that ‘Sabbath was not Sunday.’ Sunday, the first day of the week, is ‘Lord's day.’”

Adomnan's attitude toward Sunday is crucial, for he wrote during a time of controversy over whether the Biblical Sabbath was to be transferred to the Christian Lord's-day. His editors further note:

“The Old Testament required seventh-day Sabbath observance and, since the New Testament nowhere repealed the fourth commandment, the seventh day was observed by all early Christians. The evidence suggests that no real confusion between Sunday and ‘the Sabbath’ occurred until the early sixth century, and then only in the writings of the rather obscure Caesarius of Arles.”

Moreover, the Roman movement to supersede the Celtic Sabbath with Sunday culminated in the production of an (apocryphal) “Letter of Jesus” (or “Letter of Lord's Day”), purportedly found on the altar of Peter in Rome and said to have been brought to Ireland by a pilgrim around 886. Laws based on this document imposed heavy penalties for violating Sunday regulations derived from Jewish prohibitions of the Sabbath. Yet, there is no historical evidence that Ninian, Patrick, Columba, or any of their contemporaries in Ireland ever kept Sunday as a Sabbath.

In an out-of-print work on Celtic Traditions, David Currie quotes:

“One letter by Colambanus stated, ‘We are bidden to work on six days, but on the seventh, which is the Sabbath, we are restrained from every servile work. By the number six the completeness of our work is meant, since it was in six days that the Lord made heaven and earth. Yet on the Sabbath we are forbidden to labour in any servile work—that is sin.’”

The context reveals that the writer firmly believed that Saturday was the Sabbath. Later, Roman influence introduced Sunday observance, but that is a separate matter.

In Scotland, many Celts observed the Sabbath from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday until the 13th century. It is recorded that David of Wales kept the Sabbath from sunset to sunset—beginning his sabbatic devotion at Friday sunset. Miurchu noted that “Patrick and Victricius met every seventh day of the week for prayer and spiritual conversation,” a practice firmly rooted in Scripture.

These observations are gleaned without any bias. There is no reason for any of the scholars to conclude in favor of Sabbath, and yet it has been the opinion that this is the correct and accurate translation.

For example, Arthur Wade-Evans' 1923 publication, *Life of St. David*, is a scholarly translation and analysis of the medieval Latin text *Vita Sancti Davidis*, attributed to Rhygyfarch (also spelled Ricemarch), a cleric from the late 11th century. In it he wrote (regarding chapter 27 of the *Life of St David*): “27. “sabbath, that is, of course, Saturday. The monks of St. Davids did

not confuse the sabbath the Lord's Day. These devotions, therefore incredible as it may sound, extended from Friday evening till dawn on Sunday with the exception of one hour after matins on Saturday."

The Chapter text is: "27. "From the even of the sabbath until after dawn light shall have begun in the first hour of the Lord's Day they apply themselves to watchings, prayers, and genuflexions, one hour then excepted after the matins of the sabbath."

However, note, St David was attributed with forming the early Irish Mass, which long made services relaxed on Sabbaths, not kneeling etc. Therefore, this scholar Wade-Evans misses part of the point, which may have affected his translation. This topic is continued in the Appendix Section **Saint David of Wales, the Culdees, and the True Meaning of the 'Lord's Way': A Defense of Celtic Sabbath Observance**

A Legacy of Learning and Sanctity in Britain

The following is an excerpt from an article on the Celtic Church, reproduced with permission from St Andrew's Celtic Press.

Druidic Foundations and the Early Culdee Universities

The Druidic schools of Greater Britain represent one of the earliest forms of monasticism known in Europe. Renowned for their wisdom, theology, and philosophy, these institutions of learning were highly respected globally. Even Roman emperors and leaders across the continent sought education and training within their esteemed halls.

Writing in the 1st century AD, Roman author Pomponius Mela referred to the Druids as "teaching wisdom" (Pomponius Mela III), while the 3rd-century theologian Hippolytus described them as "philosophers and theologians" (Philosoph I). These observations underline the intellectual and spiritual depth of the Druidic tradition, which laid the groundwork for a sophisticated educational and monastic system.

The Origins of Druidism

R. W. Morgan, in *St. Paul in Britain*, traces Druidism back to its supposed founder, Gwyddon Ganhebon, whom he identifies with Seth of the Mosaic genealogy. According to Morgan:

"Druidism was founded by Gwyddon Ganhebon, supposed to be the Seth of the Mosaic genealogy, in Asia, in the year when the equinox occurred in the first point of Taurus... When the Druid system was founded, the equinox, on the 1st May, occurred in the first point of Taurus... 3903 years before the Christian era. From Asia, Druidism was brought into Britain by Hu Gadarn, or the Mighty, its first colonizer, a contemporary of the Patriarch Abraham. Under his successors, Plennydd, Goron, Alawn, and Rhivon, it assumed its complete organization, becoming both the ecclesiastical and civil constitution of the island."

Britain as a Global Centre of Learning

The Druidic colleges of Britain were celebrated for their advanced educational systems. Julius Caesar himself observed that the Gauls sent their youth to study in Britain. Some accounts suggest that figures such as Pontius Pilate may have been educated in these institutions, lending weight to their reputation as premier centers of learning.

Caesar commended that the Gauls sent their youth to Britain to be educated. One notable instance, mentioned by J. O. Kinnaman, D.D., in his work on Archaeology, states: "Pilate was not a Roman by nationality, but by citizenship. He was born a Spaniard and educated in Spain as far as the schools of that country could take him. Then he went to Britain to study in the universities of that country under the administration of the Druids. How long he studied in England is not now known; it was Pilate's ambition to become a Roman lawyer and the future governor of Palestine. He studied long enough in Britain to achieve not only this ambition but to absorb the Druidic philosophy rather than the Greek and Roman. 'Vide' Pilate's question to our Lord as they were walking out of the Praetorium, 'What is Truth?'"

R. W. Morgan notes:

"Westward of Italy, embracing Hispania, Gallia and the Renish frontiers, portions of Germany and Scandinavia, with its headquarters and great seats of learning in Britain, extended the Druidic religion. There can be no question that this was the primitive religion of mankind, covering at one period in various forms the whole surface of the ancient world."

Isabel Hill Elder highlights the scale of Druidic education:

"There were at the time of the Roman invasion forty Druidic centres of learning... the students of these colleges numbered at times sixty thousand of the youth and young nobility of Britain and Gaul."

"Concerning the educational facilities available to the so-called barbarous people of these islands, there were at the time of the Roman invasion forty Druidic centres of learning which were also the capitals of the forty tribes; of these forty known centres nine have entirely disappeared. These forty colleges were each presided over by a Chief Druid."

The three principal seats of the Archdruids in Britain were located in York, London, and Caerleon-on-Usk. These cities were significant centers of Druidic learning and religious practice. Each served as a capital for a tribe and was a hub for Druidic education and ceremonies.

The British Kymry, an 1857 work by Rev. R. W. Morgan, lists these cities as the seats of the three Arch-Druids of Britain:

- **Caer Troia/Caer Lud:** London
- **Caer Evroc:** York
- **Caer Lleon:** Caerleon

This source also mentions that Britain had thirty-one chief seats of education, each being a "Cyfaith" or city, serving as the capital of a tribe. (Llangynfelyn)

As noted in previous chapters, these three seats were those of the three Bishops sent to the First Council of Arles in AD 314 (also called the First Ecumenical Council), the Council of Sardica in 347, and the Council of Ariminum (Italy) in 359 AD. Although better documented than the Council of Nicaea, it is also believed that the British Bishops attended the latter.

The records of the Church Council of Arles confirm these facts. The Archbishop Restitutus of London, Archbishop Eborius of York, and Archbishop Adelphinus of Caerleon attended as chief representatives of the British Church. Representatives of these same archbishops were present again at the Council of Sardica in Illyria in 347 and at the Council of Ariminum

(in Italy) in AD 359.

Jowett in his 'Drama of the Lost Disciples' had some of the most interesting observations. We include one quote from pg 56:

"The religious habits, customs and characteristics that so definitely marked the Kymri and the Saxons from the rest of the peoples of the earth cannot be charged to mere coincidence with the ancient patriarchal law. They are too deeply significant. Regardless of how the Keltic-Saxon people may have deviated from full adherence to the Law, in their wanderings, the Covenants were the core of their spiritual life, directing their material policies. The Covenant meaning name, British, would never have been conferred upon them by other peoples if they had not been more than duly impressed by their religious observances. As one studies the Druidic Triads, a greater association with the Covenant Law is shown with startling clarity. Considering these Hebraic religious customs and the acquisition of interpretative names, one can readily realize how simply and effectively the wedding between the old Druidic religion and the new Covenant of 'The Way' took place, providing a fertile field and a safe sanctuary for Joseph of Arimathea and his companions."

Continuing the Historical Narrative

The British Church's storied history is further enriched by its extraordinary legacy of saints and its central role in the early spread of Christianity. The Orthodox tradition recognizes over 50 British Saints from the First Century and more than 1,000 Celtic British Saints who flourished long before St. Augustine's arrival in 597 AD. These numerous testimonies reveal a vibrant and autonomous Christian tradition that set a high standard for ecclesiastical integrity and learning across the Western Church.

For example, Early Church Fathers consistently attest to the unbroken lineage and unity of British Christianity.

- Bishop St. Irenaeus (c. 178 AD) declared that the Church in his time was "spread throughout the World;" notably, the churches in Germany, Spain, Gaul, and Britain showed no difference of faith or tradition. He clearly connected the origin of the Sabbath with the sanctification of the seventh day, asserting that it was "the true Sabbath."
- Bishop St. Clement of Rome (circa 70 AD), in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, noted that Paul was successful in preaching the Gospel "at the utmost bounds of the West" – a phrase that, in its original context, referred to Britain.
- Tertullian (c. 155–222 AD) stated, "The extremities of Spain, the various parts of Gaul, the regions of Britain which have never been penetrated by Roman arms have received the religion of Christ."

These historical attestations affirm that Britain was not only a sanctuary during times of persecution but also a beacon of true, apostolic Christianity—one that preserved the sacred traditions passed down from the Apostles.

In the early Church Councils, Britain had ample representation. At the Council of Arles in 314, five British Christians, including bishops from York, London, and possibly Lincoln, participated as chief representatives of the British Church. Even in later centuries, the Pope of Rome in the 7th century slandered the British Church by calling its Orthodoxy “Judaic” for refusing to abandon its ancient holy day observances. Scholars such as John Price have noted that accusations of Judaic practice in British Christian observance are, in fact, a testament to the unwavering adherence to the true Biblical Sabbath.

Saint Columba, as recorded in *Adomnan’s Life of Columba*, taught that Saturday was the day of rest, and medieval texts such as those compiled by Thomas Nelson further confirm that “Sabbath was not Sunday.” These writings, along with other evidence from Early Church Fathers and secular historians, clearly demonstrate that the original faith was planted in Britain—a standard of Orthodoxy that has influenced the Church worldwide.

Final Thoughts

The evidence is overwhelming: Britain’s early Church is steeped in a heritage that upholds the Biblical Sabbath and reflects a unique synthesis of apostolic tradition, indigenous learning, and enduring sanctity. The ancient See of Glastonbury and the many venerable titles bestowed upon it are not mere legends; they are substantiated by numerous historical records and the testimonies of Early Church Fathers. From steadfast adherence to the Sabbath to the remarkable continuity of both apostolic and Druidic educational traditions, the British Church stands as a beacon of true Orthodoxy.

This legacy of unity, learning, and sanctity continues to inspire the Church today. The enduring influence of British saints, the apostolic mission in the Isles, and the historical affirmations from church councils all reinforce the vital truth that the original early faith was planted in Britain—a standard that has shaped the Church worldwide.

CHAPTER 6: THE BRITISH ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Celtic Church (and today's branches) are Hebrew and Orthodox. Over the next several sub-chapters, we will cover the roots of the Church in great length. From the First Century, Britain has maintained strong claims to being its own Orthodox Patriarchate—a claim widely acknowledged around the world. You will read more about that in great detail later in this book.

Saint Joseph founded the British Patriarchate at Glastonbury, which gave this British ecclesiastical headquarters its revered names: "the Fountain and Origin of All Religion", "the Holiest Ground on Earth", and "the Second Rome".

The Culdees' Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Today it is most widely accepted that it was at least from the time of Saint David (6th century) forward, that the British Church was visibly in communion with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. However, the most celebrated and traditional foundations go back to the time of Saint Andrew the Holy Apostle, his assistant Saint Aristobulus, and Saint Joseph of Arimathea. Unfortunately, today's new version of world Orthodoxy—established in the 1960s—is becoming increasingly detached from these basic, established foundations of the Orthodox Church.

Most experts agree that the British Orthodox Church was under the Patriarch of Jerusalem (not Rome) at least until the time of the Norman invasion. Several books document these facts for those who are uninformed. The British Orthodox Church communion was re-established with the East in the early 19th century. Before the new definitions of "world Orthodoxy" in the 1960s, numerous wide-ranging agreements affirmed that the British Church was absolutely Orthodox. Several covenants were made with the Eastern Orthodox—with full seals of approval by the Patriarchs themselves—confirming that the British Apostolic Church was, at times, autonomous and at other times part of the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

A notable example appears in a book published in 1845, entitled *A History of the Nonjurors: Their Controversies and Writings; with Remarks on Some of the Rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer* by Thomas Lathbury. While it does not cover many advancements since then, it provides a good record of the British Orthodox Church re-establishing itself within the broader Orthodox Communion. For example, several concrete agreements were reached—so much so that even the Russian Czar codified these British Orthodox agreements and distributed seals of approval from every Orthodox Patriarch of his time, including numerous bishops. The major agreements with the British Orthodox (the non-Juring Bishops) were advanced within the four Orthodox Patriarchates, with official seals of approval from the Patriarchs.

The Ongoing Orthodox Tradition

The Orthodox Church of the Culdees has continued in its progress of unity, with ministers consecrated into the Russian True Orthodox Church (or Catacomb Church). The True Orthodox Church of Russia maintains the pillars of Orthodoxy, including the authority of church councils and the existence of numerous autonomous jurisdictions.

The Celtic Church (or Culdees) of ancient times occupied Ireland, Scotland, and Britain, and even founded several of the first monasteries in Germany. For the most part, the Church in these regions used the Syriac (Byzantine) Scriptures rather than the Latin Vulgate of Rome.

Together with the Waldenses and the Eastern Empire, the Celtic Church strictly kept the seventh-day Sabbath.

The hundreds of pre-schism Orthodox Saints of Great Britain bear the strongest testimony to these facts. Today, the Eastern churches still venerate many of these saints. For Britain alone, 130 official Saints of England who pre-dated Augustine have been cataloged. An example of some of the most popular pre-schism Orthodox Saints of England can be found online at http://www.oodegr.co/english/istorika/britain/British_Saints.htm, and our list of the 130 English Saints before Augustine is available in the OCC library at <http://www.OrthodoxChurch.nl>.

The Orthodox Order of Saint Benedict

It is true that in various institutions the Culdees allowed the Orthodox Benedictines to co-minister. Wherever they went, the Benedictines were built on the foundations laid by the Culdees. The Benedictines give due credit to the Celtic Culdees as the earliest founders of such monasteries. Throughout Europe, the Culdees are reputed as trailblazers, pioneering into heathen lands. For example, Saint Gall's in Switzerland bears witness to the early beginnings of Irish missionary work under Columbanus. The illuminated manuscripts produced in the centers of learning maintained by Benedictines give further credit to these unshakable truths.

Though Benedictines were eventually fully accepted into ministry, in the beginning that was an exception to the rule. The primary rule was that of Saint Columbanus. As the Benedictine Order was established long before the Great Schism, it is still considered a Western Orthodox order today, with a pronounced proclivity toward Sabbath observance.

Hebrew Celtic Law

Not only did the Celtic Church use a Syriac Byzantine Bible, but it was also more successful in guarding the whole law of YAHWEH. One example of this is the *Ex Lieber Moisi*. The *Liber ex Lege Moisi*, distributed by Saint Patrick and his successors at every Celtic Church in England, Scotland, or Ireland, includes a summary of its contents:

1. The seventh-day Sabbath
2. Slavery and the relationship of master to servants
3. Various capital offences
4. Compensation in money of "kind" for different crimes
5. Animals' offences against person and property
6. Regulations concerning animals used as food, distinguishing between clean and unclean, and rules for slaughtering
7. Rules regarding sex and marriage
8. Guidelines for feminine hygiene
9. Tithes, first-fruits, vows, and offerings of all kinds
10. (Additional topics covering justice, bribery, witnesses, traduction, and usury)

11. Cities of refuge, asylum, and hospitality
12. Prohibitions against wizards, necromancy, and human sacrifices
13. Inheritance laws, Sabbatical and Jubilee years, and debts
14. Recognitions of a true prophet
15. Cursing and blessing

These regulations formed the basis of the beliefs held by Celtic Christians. For example, the regulations of Adamnan permitted the consumption of unclean swine if they were lean, while the dietary habits of Columba are recorded as abstaining from meat and ale (see *Old-Irish Life of Columba* or *Amhra Chulimb Chille*).

Foundational Testimonies of British Saints and Monastic Rules

St. Joseph of Arimathea Evidence on this Most Senior Hebrew Saint of Israel's Sanhedrin, and Founder of the Christianity of Britain, will be laid out in the following chapter.

Saint Columba, the Culdee, following in the footsteps of his compatriots St. Patrick and St. Bride, made Glastonbury his headquarters for a period of time (according to Malmesbury). His influence on Glastonbury is evident in the two chapels in the vicinity—named after him (or his successor Columbanus). As a priest of Celtic descent with royal lineage, and regarded as an Apostle to Europe, it is evident that his headquarters was at Glastonbury before relocating to Iona. At his deathbed, his last words were solely a plea to respect and honor the Sabbath of YAHWEH on Saturday. In his dying moments, he reiterated that Saturday, the seventh day of the week, was the Sabbath—a fact recorded by numerous sources.

The Rule of the Céile Dé (St Maelruan 8th Cent.)

The Rule of the Céile Dé outlines that during the Sabbaths, they don't kneel as on other days. A copy of the metrical rule is found as the last page of this book.

The Rule of Saint David, Archbishop of Menevia Wales

The well known Celtic Saint David of Wales had required Sabbath observance in explicit detail. He required everyone at his monastical establishment to do special prayers at Sabbath eve (Friday at Sundown). He required special prayers at Saturday morning, from dawn through to the Sabbath matins service. After the Saturday morning service was finished it was especially noted that everyone must rest for an hour. See Appendix section 6.

The Rule of Saint Columbanus

The Monastic Rule of St. Columbanus contains several mentions of the Sabbath as an ordinary part of the liturgy. It states that on most holy days—such as “the Lord's day” and “The Sabbath”—three times as many Psalms are sung. In the tenth chapter of his rule, concerning the perfection of the monk, it declares:

“If any wishes, let him prepare the offering of the Lord's Day on the day of the Sabbath; when the ablutions are over, the priests are to change, if it is possible, but let the deacons perform their proper service either before or after the exhortation.”

This means that if any wish, the ordinary Christian services of the Lord's Day are celebrated on the Saturday Sabbath.

Historical Account on Culdee "Primitive" Christians

In *Dialogue on the Lord's Day* (p. 189, London: 1701) by Dr. T.H. Morer (Church of England), it is stated:

"The primitive Christians had a great veneration for the Sabbath and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be undoubted but they derived this practice from the Apostles themselves, as appears by several Scriptures to that purpose."

Saint David, Bishop of Wales, is among those noted. St. David, the Bishop of Menevia in Wales, was consecrated by John III, Bishop of Jerusalem, and was the first to augment the Church at Glastonbury after the original wattle church built by Jesus. Rhygyfarch's *Life of Saint David* (c. 1090 AD) of Wales states Saint David (c. 550 AD) was anointed as an archbishop by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, a position confirmed at the Synod of Llanddewi Brefi by popular acclaim.

Early Patriarchates

The Culdee's lineage of successors followed the footsteps of St. James and the Bishops of Jerusalem, reflecting the deep connection with the apostolic tradition. The *Popular History of Ireland* agrees with the most astute, that the Holy Apostle St James had ministered at Ireland and Britain. Saint Joseph of Arimathea was a great priestly leader of Jerusalem who made Glastonbury his refuge and final resting place.

Flavius Dexter, quoting the ecclesiastical Benedictine historian, Cressy, in his "Church History of Brittany," stated: "In the one and fortieth year of Christ (A.D.41) St. James, returning out of Spain, visited Gaule and Britain."

Other records confirm this date of his first visit to Britain, and some records claim he was present at the death of Mary at Avalon (Glastonbury), A.D.48. James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, calling together the first Apostolic Church there. This is the first Church Council of the appointed-on record. Comm. Oct 23.

The first Bishop of Jerusalem was St. James the Just, the Holy Apostle was made the first Bishop of Jerusalem, as recognized by all the Apostles (see Acts 14:12 and 19). The Church has maintained its connection with Jerusalem, which has long been considered a Celtic Patriarchate, as affirmed by St. David of Wales. Nothing is more distinctly Celtic than the Welsh, whose rich cultural heritage is preserved in the Welsh Triads and their detailed genealogies of Saints. Welsh priests have carefully recorded their genealogies for millennia, demonstrating that they stem from the Levites; native Welsh need no translations when reading original Hebrew texts, as the languages are remarkably similar.

The second Bishop of Jerusalem was St. Simon Zelotes the Holy Apostle, "...traversed all Mauritania, and the regions of the Africans, preaching Christ. He was at last crucified, slain, and buried in Britain (St. Dorotheus, Synod. The Seventy Apostles; "the Synopsis" ad Sim Zelot.) One Menology assigns the martyrologies of Zelotes to Persia in Asia, but others agree in stating he was martyred in Britain. Cardinal Baronius and Hippolytus, as well as Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Byzantine historian, A.D.758-829 corroborated the facts around St Simon's first visit to Britain. St. Dorotheus, Bishop of Tyre(300 CE) when

writing of St. Simon's Martyrdom, was referring to his second visit to Britain. He is identified as the second Bishop of Jerusalem. Comm. Oct. 28.

The First Bishop of Britian, St Aristobulus, was consecrated by the Apostle St Andrew. Aristobulus was one of the 70 Galilean Elders in the upper room at the birthday of the church (Pentecost). Comm Mar 16.

The Second Bishop of Britain, St Joseph of Arimathea, was consecrated by the Apostle St Philip in 60AD. (see the Catholic Encyclopedia, under the heading of Glastonbury <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06579a.htm>). Comm. Aug 31.

The Third Bishop of Britain, ArchDruid King Bran the Blessed, who long had Aristobulus as his confessor and Spiritual instructor (periglor), was Consecrated by St Paul.

Background info: St Philip was an Apostle of the Celts. Most specifically he was martyred at Heiropolis, Phrygia. Phrygia was within the greater region known as "Galatia" at the time of St Paul's letters.

Gaul, Galatians, Gael, Galileans, all the same people.

Cardinal Baronius wrote:

"We have said in our notes to the Roman Martyrology that, 'to the Galatians' must be corrected in the place of 'to the Gauls'[the Celts which spanned Galilee-Israel, Galatia-Anatolia, Gaul-France, Gaels-British Isles]." Emphasizing the established Orthodox church history, that the First Century Galilean Saints were concentrated in their Celtic Kindred lands.

The First Bishop of Gaul, St Lazarus of Bethany (Marseilles), Lazarus' life is identified at Avalon (Glastonbury) in the Celtic MSS, known as The Triads (Laws) of Lazarus. (Capgrave, De Sancto Joseph ab Arimathea, quoting ancient manuscript and the Book of the Holy Grail, quoted in Jowett 163) "And it was from here that Lazarus, returned to Gaul, the area of Provence, France with Mary and Martha." In the ancient church records of Lyon it states, 'Lazarus returned to Gaul from Britain to Marseilles, taking with him Mary Magdalene and Martha. He was the first appointed bishop. He died there seven years later.' (Jowett, George F. The Drama of the Lost Disciples, Covenant Publ., Co, 8 Blades Court, Deodar Road, London SW15 2NU, 1961, 1993, pg 164) Comm. Jul. 29

The Second Bishop of Gaul, St. Trophimus was sent to Gaul by St Joseph and, under the direction of Philip, replaced Martha at Arles. He was consecrated the first Bishop of Arles and there performed an outstanding service. He was energetic, practical and an intelligent organizer. His Christianizing endeavours embraced a large area which formed the district of Narbonne. He became the first Metropolitan of the Narbonne, with Arles as his Bishopric. For centuries it continued to be a prominent stronghold of the Chrisian faith in Gaul. (Catholic tradition being unanimous, also was echoed by Gregory of Trous, Pope Zosimus in 417AD, Martyrology Romanum etc.)

St. Philip the Holy Apostle, brought and sent many missionaries to and from Britain, from his base in Gaul(France). He also was active in the greater borders of the Roman province of Galatia, namely at Heiropolis and Phrygia. He was banished from his native land together

with Lazarus, James, and Joseph on boats, eventually landing at Marseilles where now lay the tombs of St. Mary, Margaret and Lazarus. He consecrated Joseph of Arimathea as Bishop of Britain, upon the death of Aristobulus.

The First Bishop of Rome, St. Peter the Holy Apostle, is recorded in histories of at least three visits to Britain. On his last visit St. Peter appeared on the very spot where once stood the old British church of Lambeth (St. Peter's), where stands the present Abbey of St. Peter, Westminster. The legends on public display at St. Peter's at Cornhill relate to us the historic founding of the church by King Lucius in honour of Peter's ministry efforts at Britain. Peter was expelled from Rome by Claudius in 40AD, where he returned to his family and fellow exiles in Great Britain. Comm. June 29.

The Second Bishop of Rome, St. Linus, was a son of Cardoc, and Grandson of King Bran the Blessed. Linus, the Prince of the Silures, opted to stay in Rome after his father's parole ended. The Scriptures record him with Paul in Rome. He was consecrated by St. Paul and St. Peter as the first Bishop of Rome. Comm. Sept. 23.

Constantine the Great, great-grandson of King Coel of Britain, called together his first ecumenical church council at Arles, Gaul. Also called the Synod of Arles. Augustine of Hippo called it an Ecumenical Council.

Continuing the Historical Narrative

The British Church's storied history is further enriched by its extraordinary legacy of saints and its central role in the early spread of Christianity. The Orthodox tradition recognizes over 50 British Saints from the First Century and more than 1,000 Celtic British Saints who flourished long before St. Augustine's arrival in 597 AD. These numerous testimonies reveal a vibrant and autonomous Christian tradition that set a high standard for ecclesiastical integrity and learning across the Western Church.

For example, Early Church Fathers consistently attest to the unbroken lineage and unity of British Christianity.

- **Bishop St. Irenaeus (c. 178 AD)** declared that the Church in his time was "spread throughout the World;" notably, the churches in Germany, Spain, Gaul, and Britain showed no difference of faith or tradition. He clearly connected the origin of the Sabbath with the sanctification of the seventh day, asserting that it was "the true Sabbath."
- **Bishop St. Clement of Rome (circa 70 AD)**, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, noted that Paul was successful in preaching the Gospel "at the utmost bounds of the West"—a phrase that, in its original context, referred to Britain.
- **Tertullian (c. 155–222 AD)** stated, "The extremities of Spain, the various parts of Gaul, the regions of Britain which have never been penetrated by Roman arms have received the religion of Christ."

These historical attestations affirm that Britain was not only a sanctuary during times of persecution but also a beacon of true, apostolic Christianity—one that preserved the sacred traditions passed down from the Apostles.

In the Early Church Councils, Britain had ample representation. At the Council of Arles in 314, five British Christians—including bishops from York, London, and possibly Lincoln—participated as chief representatives of the British Church. Even in later centuries, the Pope of Rome in the 7th century slandered the British Church by calling its Orthodoxy “Judaic” for refusing to abandon its ancient holy day observances. Scholars such as John Price have noted that accusations of Judaic practice in British Christian observance are, in fact, a testament to the unwavering adherence to the true Biblical Sabbath.

Saint Columba, as recorded in *Adomnan’s Life of Columba*, taught that Saturday was the day of rest, and medieval texts such as those compiled by Thomas Nelson further confirm that “Sabbath was not Sunday.” These writings, along with other evidence from Early Church Fathers and secular historians, clearly demonstrate that the original faith was planted in Britain—a standard of Orthodoxy that has influenced the Church worldwide.

Further Historical Evidence from Medieval Sources

In Thomas Nelson’s *Medieval Texts* (1961, pp. 25–26), we read:

“Adomnan’s use of *sabbatum* for Saturday, the seventh day of the week, is clear indication from ‘Columba’s mouth’ that ‘Sabbath was not Sunday.’ Sunday, the first day of the week, is ‘Lord’s day.’”

Adomnan’s attitude toward Sunday is crucial, for he wrote at a time when controversy abounded over whether the Biblical Sabbath should be transferred to the Christian Lord’s-day. His editors further note:

“The Old Testament required seventh-day Sabbath observance and, according to Adomnan’s editors, since the New Testament nowhere repealed the fourth commandment, the seventh day was observed by all early Christians. The evidence they adduce suggests that no real confusion between Sunday and ‘the Sabbath’ occurred until the early sixth century, and then only in the writings of the rather obscure Caesarius of Arles.”

“The Roman ‘movement’ to supersede the Celtic Sabbath with Sunday culminated in the production of an (apocryphal) ‘Letter of Jesus’, or ‘Letter of Lord’s day’, alleged to have been found on the altar of Peter in Rome; and is said in the annals to have been brought to Ireland by a pilgrim (c. 886). Upon this basis, laws were promulgated imposing heavy penalties for those that violated Sunday regulations derived from Jewish prohibitions for the Sabbath. There is, however, no historical evidence that Ninian, or Patrick, or Columba, or any of their contemporaries in Ireland kept Sunday as a Sabbath.”

(*Celtic Sabbath-Keeping Study No. 264, Cherith Chronicle, April–June 1998, pp. 46–47. Available at: <http://www.giveshare.org/BibleStudy/264.celtic-sabbath-keeping.html>, accessed 6/24/06.*)

In an out-of-print book on Celtic Traditions, quoted by David Currie, it is written:

“One letter by Colambanus stated, ‘We are bidden to work on six days, but on the seventh, which is the Sabbath, we are restrained from every servile work. Now by the number six the completeness of our work is meant, since it was in six days that the Lord made heaven and

earth. Yet on the Sabbath we are forbidden to labour at any servile work—that is sin.”” This passage reveals that the writer firmly believed that Saturday was the Sabbath. Later, Roman influence introduced Sunday observance, but that is another matter.

In Scotland, many Celts observed the Sabbath from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday until the 13th century. It is recorded that David of Wales kept the Sabbath from sunset to sunset, beginning his “sabbatic devotion at Friday sunset”—the eve of the Sabbath. Miurchu recorded that “Patrick and Victricius met every seventh day of the week for prayer and spiritual conversation.” This practice, deeply rooted in Scripture, exemplifies the Bible-based approach to Sabbath observance.

Final Thoughts

The evidence is overwhelming: Britain’s early Church is steeped in a heritage that upholds the Biblical Sabbath and reflects a unique synthesis of apostolic tradition, indigenous learning, and enduring sanctity. The ancient See of Glastonbury and its many venerable titles are not mere legends; they are substantiated by numerous historical records and the testimonies of Early Church Fathers. From the steadfast adherence to the Sabbath to the remarkable continuity of both apostolic and Celtic traditions—including the contributions of the Culdees, Benedictines, and guardians of Hebrew Celtic Law—the British Church stands as a beacon of true Orthodoxy.

This legacy of unity, learning, and sanctity continues to inspire the Church today. The enduring influence of British saints, the apostolic mission in the Isles, and the historical affirmations from church councils all reinforce the vital truth that the original early faith was planted in Britain—a standard that has shaped the Church worldwide.

CHAPTER 7: ST. JOSEPH OF ARIMATEA AND THE FOUNDING OF THE BRITISH HEBREW PRIESTHOOD (36 AD)

While this work is intended for all who cherish Orthodox tradition, the ministry behind this publication takes special pride in presenting compelling evidence from our founding saints. In this chapter, we offer a detailed biographical account of Saint Joseph of Arimathea—one of several foundational figures whose legacy is central to our Celtic Orthodox heritage. Please note that this chapter is but one part of a broader collection of studies; for those interested, we also have extensive works on Saint Andrew and Saint James. In our studies on Saint James, for example, we document His ministry in Ireland—a land historically and biblically linked to both Britain and Spain, as attested by the apostle Paul and by records of the British Royal family. Furthermore, our comprehensive list of over 1,000 Saints predating St. Augustine’s arrival in 597 AD is available on request. The following article on Saint Joseph of Arimathea is just one of several that illustrate the enduring legacy of our first-century saints in the British Celtic lands.

The First Culdee at Glastonbury

Saint Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and played a crucial role in biblical history. Beyond his role in burying Christ, he is also recognized as the holder of the Twelve Hides at Glastonbury, establishing the earliest Christian presence in Britain. In the First Century, he is said to have mounted his Hebrew staff of authority into the ground, where it blossomed into a tree. For at least a thousand years, and even today, this holy thorn tree has remained recognized as an enduring symbol of Hebrew law and Christian heritage in England. Some have viewed the blossoming of the staff somewhat like Aaron’s rod that budded. Nevertheless, he represented both the Royal Davidic and Levitical houses as next in line of succession. Through his Levitical (Zadokian) lineage, Joseph passed this priestly authority onward, culminating in Yahshua Ha Machiac (Jesus the Christ), the ultimate High Priest in the order of Melchizedek (both Royal and Priestly).

There are thousands of historical writings that document in detail that Joseph of Arimathea was the founder of the First Century Church at Glastonbury. Yet, despite overwhelming evidence, some revisionist historians have attempted to dismiss this reality, claiming that the association of St. Joseph with Glastonbury originated only in the 12th Century through Templar Grail legends. This assertion is not only false, but it deliberately ignores centuries of written testimony affirming Joseph’s presence in Britain.

Historical Evidence for Joseph of Arimathea in Britain

True scholars rely on extensive historical sources—dating back centuries before the medieval era—that document Joseph’s presence in Britain. Below is a collection of key sources that corroborate this historical reality:

1. The Pseudo-Gospel of Nicodemus (Evangelium Nicodemi)

Also known as the *Acts of Pilate*, this text is authenticated to at least the 4th Century, though some scholars, such as Tischendorf, argue for an early 2nd Century origin. This document provides some of the earliest recorded accounts of Joseph’s evangelistic mission.

2. The Melchini Fragmentum (5th Century)

Written by the Welsh bard Myrddin (Melkinus Avalonius/Maelgwyn of Llandaff), a Lord of Anglesey and Snowdonia, and the uncle of St. David of Wales, this document states:

"Joseph of Arimathea, the noble decurion, entered his perpetual sleep with his eleven Companions in the Isle of Avalon."

3. De Origine Ecclesiae Britannicae

Written by Elvan of Avalon in A.D. 180, this work confirms that he was educated in the School of Joseph of Arimathea at Avalon. His scholarship is referenced by esteemed Roman Catholic ecclesiastics such as Pitsaeus and Cardinal Baronius.

4. Gildas Albanicus (6th Century)

The renowned British historian Gildas provides a date for the conversion of the British nation that aligns with St. Joseph's arrival. His works *De Excidio Britanniae* (On the Ruin of Britain) and *Victory of Aurelius Ambrosius* (c. 550 AD) confirm that Britain received Christianity during the Apostolic Age.

5. Maelgwyn of Avalon's Account (6th Century)

Maelgwyn of Avalon recorded the location of St. Joseph's grave in his *Historia de Rebus Britannicis* (c. 540 AD), stating:

"The Isle of Avalon, greedy of burials ... received thousands of sleepers, among whom Joseph de Marmore from Arimathea by name, entered his perpetual sleep. And he lies in a bifurcated line next to the southern angle of the oratory made of circular wattles by thirteen inhabitants of the place over the powerful adorable Virgin."

6. Saint David's Monuments (546 AD)

St. David of Wales' memorial pillar and brass tablet at Glastonbury, which stood until the destruction by King Henry VIII, bore an inscription recorded by Sir Henry Spelman in *Concilia*:

"The first ground of God, the first ground of the saints in Britain, the rise and foundation of all religion in Britain, and the burial place of the Saints."

7. Ancient Vatican Manuscripts (16th Century)

Baronius, in his *Annales Ecclesiastici* (AD 35, sec. 5), documents that Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and Martha accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to Britain.

8. Roman Texts on Vespasian (1st Century)

First-century Roman records discuss Vespasian, leader of the British Foreign Legion, freeing Joseph from prison. Scholars have used these records to trace his establishment of the church in Glastonbury.

9. The 11th–13th Century Historians

Many historians from the 11th to 13th Centuries—including John of Glastonbury, William of Malmesbury, and John de Boron—affirm that Joseph of Arimathea founded the Glastonbury church. William of Malmesbury cited primary sources such as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which was regarded as near-canonical in some regions.

10. The Domesday Survey of 1088 AD

The land records agreeing with the decrees of several other kings: *"The Domus Dei, in the great monastery of Glastonbury, called the secret of the Lord. This Glastonbury church possesses, in its own villa, twelve hides of land which have never paid tax."*

11. The 601 AD Letter of St. Augustine to Pope Gregory I

St. Augustine described a sacred temple in Britain, which, he states, "was built not by human

hands, but divinely constructed by Christ Himself." This matches longstanding traditions regarding Glastonbury.

12. The Ancient Annals of Ireland

Irish sources such as the *Annals of the Four Masters*, *Lebor na hUidre*, and *The Yellow Book of Lecan* reference the First Century King of Ireland, Conor MacNessa, and his warrior Conall Cernach, who traveled to Jerusalem and witnessed the Crucifixion. These records state that Conor later sent his Druids to Glastonbury to codify the Divine Laws for Ireland.

13. The Glastonbury Charter of King Ine and Pope Gregory II of 725 AD

The charter granting numerous privileges of the Glastonbury church jurisdiction.

14. Charters of King Edgar (963 AD) and King Edmund (971 AD) recognizing the privileges of Glastonbury upheld since King Ine, and expanding them.

15. Charter of King Henry II

Abbot Henry of Blois (1098/9 8 August 1171) [son of William the Conquerors daughter] procured from the successive kings and popes whom he had outlived, confirmations of all the possessions and privileges of Glastonbury ; these confirmations were made by the Popes Innocent II., Alexander III., and by the three kings, Henry I., Stephen, and Henry II. In the charter granted by Henry II (1185) for rebuilding Glastonbury, he styled it:

“the mother and burying-place of the saints, founded by the very disciples of our Lord.”

The Glastonbury Church and Its Recognition in Church Councils

Several early and later church councils acknowledged Britain’s apostolic heritage. In several Western councils, the Council of Pisa (1409), the Council of Constance (1417), the Council of Siena (1424), and at the Council of Basel (1434) it reaffirmed this status with the following decision: “The Churches of France and Spain must yield in points of antiquity and precedence to that of Britain, as the latter Church was founded by St. Joseph of Arimathea immediately after the passion of Christ.” (text from the Council of Basel, 1434).

Even Queen Elizabeth I, despite being a Protestant rival of her Catholic predecessor Queen Mary, upheld the doctrine that Joseph of Arimathea established the English Church. In a formal response to Roman Catholic bishops in 1559, she asserted that the Church of England predated the Roman Church in Britain.

The enduring recognition of Joseph’s role in Glastonbury continued well into the modern era. The Domesday Book (1088 AD) refers to Glastonbury Abbey as *Domus Dei* ("House of God") and *Secretum Domini* ("Secret of our Lord"), confirming its unique status.

In AD 314, the records of the Church Council of Arles (called the first Ecumenical Church Council by Augustine of Hippo) confirmed that Archbishop Restitutus of London, Archbishop Eborius of York, and Archbishop Adelphinus of Caerleon attended as chief representatives of the British Church. These same archbishoprics (built upon the sees of Archdruids and as master descendants of the Royal Arimathean family) were again represented at the Council of Sardica in Illyria in 347 and at the Council of Ariminum in Italy in AD 359.

In the biography of Augustine, who came from Rome in AD 596 to convert the heathen Saxons, it is recorded that he found the people of Britain in grievous heresy—"being given to Judaizing, but ignorant of the holy sacraments and festivals of the Church." That is, they kept the Biblical Sabbath and were unaware of the Roman "Sunday-festival."
(Mrs. Tamar Davis, *"History of Sabbatarian Churches,"* p. 108, Philadelphia 1851.)

The Culdees and Their Sabbath Observance

The early Culdee Christian communities, which traced their origins to Joseph of Arimathea, maintained Hebrew practices, including Sabbath observance on Saturday. St. Columba of Iona, a direct successor to the Culdee tradition, famously upheld Sabbath observance until his death. His monastic rule, *The Rule of Saint Columbanus*, mandates the chanting of triple the number of Psalms on both *the Lord's Day* (Sunday) and *the Sabbath* (Saturday).

Further, medieval records confirm that the Culdees operated independently from Rome, maintaining hereditary ecclesiastical leadership rather than adhering to the Roman system of celibate clergy.

Conclusion

Joseph of Arimathea's legacy in Britain is far from a mere medieval legend—it is a deeply rooted historical reality confirmed by centuries of evidence. Despite modern skepticism, the overwhelming historical documentation—from Roman records, British chronicles, church councils, and monastic writings—demonstrates that the British Church was founded by St. Joseph in the First Century.

This recognition is vital for understanding the true apostolic and Hebrew roots of British Christianity and, by extension, the enduring Sabbath traditions upheld by the Culdee and Orthodox Christian communities.

CHAPTER 8: ORTHODOX CULDEES, INDEPENDENT OF ROME, PROTECTED THE SABBATH

By any account, it was six hundred years after Augustine the Roman came, that the British (or Celtic) church was subdued to the traditions of Rome in preference to the established Orthodoxy. The marker in time for this transition was not till St Margaret overthrew the Culdees (as carefully documented). A central issue being the Sabbath. As shown in the appendix, this was also central to the great schism which happened about the same time together with the Norman invasion enforcing this final conversion.

Sir Francis Bacon, writing in "Government of England", said:
'The Britons told Augustine(597AD) they would not be subject to him, nor let him pervert the ancient laws of their Church. This was their resolution, and they were as good as their word, for they maintained the liberty of their Church five hundred years after this time, and were the last of all the Churches of Europe that gave up their power to the Roman Beast, and in the person of Henry VIII, that came of their blood by Owen Tudor, the first that took that power away again.'

People in the British Isles, including Ireland, may be shocked to learn this, but the First day of the week (Sunday) was not practiced in most of the Culdee lands. This didn't change until Queen Margaret in the eleventh century began ridiculing the Culdees for keeping the Biblical 7th Day Saturday and neglecting the first day.

Only Saturday was kept by the Scottish (and most of the English) until Queen Margaret married Malcom III King of the Scots. She tried to force Sunday upon her husband's subjects. It's debatable how much of that stuck. This is well laid out in Chapter XIII of "History of the Scottish Nation" **QUEEN MARGARET-CONFERENCE WITH THE CULDEE PASTORS**, showing how she [rigorously opposed the Culdees' Sabbath keeping](#). In this history, Wylie quotes Turgot's "Life of Saint Margaret" thusly,

"The Queen next charged the Culdees with having fallen into grievous heterodoxy in the matter of the Lenten fast. "Our Lord fasted forty days," Margaret urged, "so does the Roman Church; but the Scots by refusing to fast on the Sabbaths in Lent, shorten their fast to thirty-six days." Margaret told them that they sinned in so abbreviating this fast. Margaret, if any one, had a right to call the Culdees to repent of this heinous transgression, seeing she herself was so very exemplary in the observance of the duty of fasting. According to Turgot, the pastors professed penitence and promised to amend their practice."

However, we very much doubt the accuracy of Turgot's statement on this point. The historic presumption, based on our understanding of the ancient Celtic piety, is that the Culdee pastors were not likely to profess penitence or promise amendment in a matter for which they stood fully acquitted in the eyes of their Church. It is important to observe

that the Scottish Church, following Eastern usage for fasts and festivals, adhered strictly to ordinances that prohibited fasting on both the Sabbath (Saturday) and the Lord's Day (Sunday). Moreover, "fasting" was not regarded by the Culdees as the supreme religious observance—as it was by Queen Margaret. Even if they were unable to take full advantage of the Gospel's liberty regarding bodily mortification and ceremonial observances, they would not have burdened their consciences with a day more or less of fasting, nor would they have deemed themselves excluded from the kingdom of heaven for fasting thirty-six days instead of forty during Lent."

Another contentious issue arose regarding Culdee observance—or rather, the alleged neglect—of the Lord's Day. Turgot claims:

"It was another custom of theirs to neglect the reverence due to the Lord's Day by devoting themselves to every kind of worldly business upon it, just as they did upon other days."

He continued in dismay, stating, "It startles one to hear that the Columban clergy had sunk so low on this vital point. If they had turned the day of sacred rest into a day of ordinary labour—if they yoked the plough, worked the scythe, carried home the harvest, and did all their work on that day, as Turgot's words imply—they would verily deserve the sharpest censure which Margaret could administer. The matter, however, is susceptible of a satisfactory explanation."

It is unfortunate that this Celtic historian (Wylie, quoting Turgot) appears ignorant of the true piety of the Culdees in honoring the true Sabbath, as Orthodox have always done. His evident love for Sunday and for Rome has blinded him to the fact that the Biblical Sabbath is, by definition, "for ever a sign that we are His people" (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12). In contrast, Sunday—though celebrated as the day of the Resurrection—cannot claim the same eternal signification for those who follow the Eastern tradition.

Without considering the Celtic (or Culdee) Church, one may not easily discover the fidelity to Sabbath keeping found all over Europe where the Celtic church had influence. While the Western Latin Church increasingly embraced Sunday, often under imperial pressure, the Eastern Church maintained Saturday as the Sabbath. In many regions, the local practice was to observe Saturday as the day of rest and worship—even though they also celebrated Sunday with hymns and Divine services.

Indeed, Britain (including Scotland) received its first evangelization from the East, and it generally followed Eastern usages. Historian Socrates, speaking of the public assembly of the Eastern Church, referred to the Sabbath and the Lord's Day—Saturday and Sunday—as the weekly festivals when the congregation met for divine services. Early traces of this custom are also found in the history of the Irish Church, where Saturday was observed as the day of weekly rest and worship.

A well-known instance is that of Columba, as related by Adamnan. Being come to his last day, he said this day is named the Sabbath, which means rest; and this day I shall enter into my rest. He died as he had foretold, On Saturday, at midnight. This aspect of the matter completely exonerates the Columban clergy from the rather serious accusation, for which it seems at the first blush, which Turgot preferred against them, and emphasizes that the Culdees claimed an ancient, pre-Roman heritage.

The Roman Church, in contrast, observed Sunday—the day of Resurrection—as the day of rest and worship. Queen Margaret, in her efforts to conform the Scottish Church to Roman practice, sought to abolish Saturday observance. Noted theologian James Moffat reported that in the early Celtic churches of Ireland and Scotland, Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath) was kept as a day of rest from labor, with Sunday reserved for rejoicing and public worship in keeping with the fourth commandment. In one account, the Queen insisted upon the strict observance of Sunday, and while many people and clergy submitted, they did so without entirely abandoning their reverence for Saturday, which then became a half-holy day preparing for Sunday.

Further Historical Witnesses on Sabbath Keeping in the Celtic Lands

Notable voices in history have attested to the enduring practice of Sabbath observance among the Celts:

D., of Princeton, stated, “It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor, and Sunday, commemorative of the Lord’s Resurrection, as one of rejoicing, with exercises of public worship. In that case they obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week...”

“The Queen insisted upon the single and strict observance of the Lord’s Day. People and clergy alike submitted, but without entirely giving up their reverence for Saturday, which subsequently sank into a half-holy day preparatory for Sunday” (Moffat, James Clement. *The Church in Scotland: A History of Its Antecedents, its Conflicts, and Its Advocates, from the Earliest Recorded Times to the First Assembly of the Reformed Church*. Published by Presbyterian Board of Education, 1882. Original from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Digitized Mar 13, 2008, p. 140).

The Queen mentioned above was Margaret who died in 1093. Margaret (who was technically “the Queen consort of Malcolm III”) was canonized a Roman Catholic saint in the year 1250 by Pope Innocent IV. Thus, once again political power was used to try to stop people from following the Biblical practices of early Christianity.

Thomas Bampfield contended that the seventh day had been kept in England in unbroken succession until the thirteenth century (Ball B. *Seventh Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800*, 2nd edition. James Clark & Co., 2009, p. 21).

It should be noted that because of practices of a few of the Lollards in the British Isles, some Sabbath-keeping would have apparently occurred from the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries (Ball, pp. 30-31), so it would have been unbroken for even more centuries that Thomas Bampfield contended about

I came across an interesting notice that in 1719 England, John Ozell, a non-Sabbath-keeper wrote the following about some of the Sabbath-keepers: *“...People, who go by the name Sabbatarian make Profession of expecting a Reign of a Thousand Years...These Sabbatarians are so called, because they will not remove the Day of Rest from Saturday to Sunday...They administer Baptism only to adult people...The major part of them will not eat Pork, nor blood...their outward conduct is pious and Christian-like”* (Ozell J. M. *Mission Observations in His Travels over England*. 1719. As cited in Ball, p. 9).

The Culdees had been long connected with the French Gauls (older Celts). Christ's own tribe called the Celtic Galileans were part of a French Celtic colony.

The Albignese in France were condemned by various councils. And one, the Council of Albi (sometimes spelled Alby) in 1254 apparently stated: ***"They savour of Judaism...they observe the Jewish sabbath, but say that the holy Dominical day is no better than any other day; let them be accursed.."*** (Quoted in Davis, Tamar. A General History of the Sabbatarian Churches. 1851; Reprinted 1995 by Commonwealth Publishing, Salt Lake City, p. 64).

Others in France were also later subject to the inquisitors. Notice the following account. Notice those convicted denied having any relation to Jews, but just that they believe as Christians that the laws of God are still binding:

"On the 14th of September, 1492, about thirty persons were committed to the inquisitional dungeons of Toulouse upon a charge of Judaism...Of there was Anthony Ferrar, who had been a pastor or teacher in the Sabbatarian church of that city. After remaining in prison ten days, he received a visit from an Italian monk named Gregory...

Greg.-But Anthony, you must be a liar and a deceiver, for I have been credibly informed that yourself, and all of your friends, were of the cursed race of Israel.

An.-It is false, we were honest Frenchmen, and Christians, followers of Jesus...

An.-We say that the ten commandments are still binding.

Greg.-Yes, and instead of observing the festivals of the Holy Church, and honouring the holy day of the Lord, on which he rose from the dead, you were accustomed to meet for worship upon the old Sabbath, or Saturday.

An.-We did, indeed, rest and attend divine worship upon the seventh day, even as God commanded" (Quoted in Davis, Tamar. A General History of the Sabbatarian Churches. 1851; Reprinted 1995 by Commonwealth Publishing, Salt Lake City, pp. 87-88).

Culdee Franciscan Professors of Oxford and Glastonbury

The Franciscan Chancellor Grosseteste, at Oxford elaborated in his letter "Mon. Franciscana" that our only true foundation is the Mosaic law (the rest are frauds), as he wrote:

"the foundation stones of the building of which you are the architects – and no one can find others or set others in the foundation – are the books of the prophets, amongst whom we must count Moses, the law-giver, and the books of the Apostles and Evangelists. These foundation stones you place and set in the foundation of your building, when by the gift of discerning spirits you expound these books to your hearers according to the mind of the writers. Take heed therefore with all diligence not to put among the foundation stones, nor to

use as foundation stones what are not such, lest the strength of your building, made to rest upon what is no true foundation, is first shaken and then falls to ruin”

The Lead Cleric(Proctor) of Glastonbury, Professor Roger Bacon, of the 13th Century Orthodox Celtic Church, had said this of Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln and Chancellor of Oxford, writing in Brewer, Mon. Franciscana, i, pp. lxxx,:

“Grosseteste, the founder of this renowned body of teachers, cannot have failed to impress upon the mind of Roger Bacon his own veneration and love of Holy Scripture. Frequently, says Eccleston, the Bishop of Lincoln urged the friars to study and sedulously to occupy themselves in working at the Holy Bible.”

Nor were his exhortations confined to the circle of his immediate pupils among the Franciscans. As Chancellor of the University he addressed his letters to the teachers in the theological schools of Oxford, urging them to make the Bible the foundation of all their lectures.

“The skilful builder,” he says, “sees carefully that all the stones put into a foundation are really proper for the purpose; namely, that they are such as by their solidity are fit and useful to support the building to be raised upon them. You are the builders of the house of God, raising it upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, etc.; and the foundation-stones of the building of which you are the architects — and no one can find others or set others in the foundation — are the books of the Prophets, amongst whom we must count Moses, the law-giver, and the books of the Apostles and Evangelists. These foundation-stones you place and set in the foundation of your building, when by the gift of discerning spirits you expound these books to your hearers according to the mind of the writers. Take heed therefore with all diligence not to put among the foundation stones, nor to use as foundation stones what are not such, lest the strength of your building, made to rest upon what is no true foundation, is first shaken and then falls to ruin. The most proper time, moreover, for placing and setting the said stones in the foundation (for there is a fitting time for laying the foundation and one for raising the building) is the morning hour when you commonly read your lectures. It is proper, therefore, that all your lectures be taken especially at that time, from the books of the Old or New Testament, lest otherwise what are not really foundation stones be laid as if they were.” Cf. Brewer, Mon. Franciscana, i, p. 64.

Numerous other successors of Bacon and Grosseteste at Oxford were also by definition the same rank of educators within the then Celto-Saxon order of Culdees (successors of St Patrick there), for example Gilbert of Bytham.

More Historical Witnesses on Sabbath keeping in the Celtic Lands

In Blair’s translation of the Catholic historian, Bellesheim, we read:

“We seem to see here an allusion to the custom, observed in the early monastic Church of Ireland, of keeping the day of rest on Saturday, or the Sabbath”

and

"the Scots in this matter had no doubt kept up the traditional practice of the ancient monastic Church of Ireland, which observed Saturday rather than Sunday as a day of rest." (Alphons Bellesheim, "History of the Catholic Church in Scotland", Edinburg 1887, Vol. I, p. 86 and p. 250.)

Professor James C. Moffatt, D. D. Professor of Church History at Princeton, says: “It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week.” (The Church in Scotland, p. 140. Philadelphia: 1882.)

Prof. Andrew Lang, a prolific Scottish historian, translator, journalist, poet, writer, teacher, biographer and anthropologist, said:

“The Scottish Church, then, when Malcolm wedded the sainted English Margaret, was Celtic, and presented peculiarities odious to the English lady, strongly attached to the establishment as she knew it at home The Celtic priests must have disliked the interference of an Englishwoman. “First there was a difference in keeping Lent. The Kelts did not begin it on Ash Wednesday They worked on Sunday, but kept Saturday in a sabbatical manner” (“History of Scotland,” Vol. I, p. 96. Edinburgh: David Douglas, printer, 1877)

William F. Skene, a major historian and lawyer who published many great works on the Scottish Celtic history, had commented:

“Her (Margret's) next point was that they did not duly reverence the Lord's day, but in this latter instance they seem to have followed a custom of which we find traces in the early Monastic Church of Ireland, by which they held Saturday to be the Sabbath on which they rested from all their labours.”

and

“They held that Saturday was properly the Sabbath on which they abstained from work.” (“Celtic Scotland”, Vol. II, p. 349. Edinburgh: David Douglas, printer, 1877.)

Another great Celtic historian, Michael Herren wrote: “...the Culdees not only kept the Sabbath on Saturday but they kept it in accordance with the Mosaic law.” (“Christ in Celtic Christianity”, p. 37.)

The Historian Wayne Lawrence wrote: “The Celtic Sabbath (‘day of repose’) was celebrated on a Saturday, the last day of the week and Hebrew holy day.” (“The Celtic Memory – Gaeldom Revisited”)

The Theologian Leslie Hardinge wrote "The Sabbath was held to be a day of blessing in Wales as well as in Ireland and other Celtic lands"

He also republished copies of the "The Liber ex Lege Moisi" (condensed version of the law of Moses), in his book, asserting that it was distributed by Saint Patrick and his successors at

every Celtic church, whether in England, Scotland or Ireland. The texts included the Seventh Day (Saturday) Sabbath. ("The Celtic Church in Britain" p. 82 and p. 209)

Flick said that: "The Celts used a Latin Bible unlike the Vulgate (R.C.) and kept Saturday as a day of rest, with special religious services on Sunday." ("The Rise of the Medieval Church", p. 237)

The Historian Andrew Lang, wrote: "In Scotland until the tenth and eleventh centuries it was asserted that: They worked on Sunday but kept Saturday in a Sabbatical manner ... These things Margaret abolished." ("A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation", Vol. I, p. 96)

[Author's note: She didn't abolish Sabbath, as all the records merely say she had added awareness of Sunday as a day of celebration alongside the Saturday/Sabbath. Before she became Queen, the Scottish nation, while fully aware of the teachings across the Christian world, chose retain independence and had rejected Sunday.]

More on the Independence from Rome

In agreement with the sources cited on the First Century Church of Glastonbury, the Queen of England, Elisabeth I, had affirmed these established matters. The ancient Glastonbury libraries were available in her day, and she contended that Joseph's presence in Britain was a matter of fact. In 1559, she gave a formal reply to the Roman Catholic Bishops, citing Joseph's missionary work in England and claiming that the Church of England pre-dated the Roman Church in England.

The early English historian Gildas recorded, circa 550 AD:

"We certainly know that Christ, the true Son, afforded His light, the knowledge of His precepts, to our Island in the last year of Tiberius Caesar."
(*De Excidio Britanniae or On the Ruin of Britain*)

Thomas Fuller, in his *Church History of Britain, from the Birth of Jesus Christ...*, stated:

"... this [Celtic Culdee] Church without competition was senior to all Christian churches in the world."

Bishop Usher, in his *Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates*, wrote:

"The British National Church was founded A.D. 36—160 years before heathen Rome confessed Christianity."

Sir William Blackstone, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765–1769, Vol. IV, p. 105), similarly wrote:

"The ancient British Church, by whomsoever planted, was a stranger to the Bishop of Rome and all his pretended authorities."

Theodore Martin of Ivan, in his work *Disputoilis super Dignitatem Anglis it Gallioe in Concilio Constantiano* (AD 1517), noted:

"Three times the antiquity of the British Church was affirmed in Ecclesiastical Councils. The Council of Pisa (AD 141), the Council of Constance (AD 1419), and the Council of Siena (AD

1423) stating that the British Church took precedence over all other Churches, being founded by Joseph of Arimathea immediately after the passion of Christ.”

Early church councils confirmed that the Bishops of Britain maintained their seniority. In AD 314, the records of the Church Council of Arles confirm that Archbishop Restitutus of London, Archbishop Eborius of York, and Archbishop Adelphinus of Caerleon attended as chief representatives of the British Church. These same archbishops were again represented at the Council of Sardica in Illyria in 347 and at the Council of Ariminum in Italy in AD 359.

In the biography of Augustine, who came from Rome in AD 596 to convert the heathen Saxons, it is recorded that he found the people of Britain in grievous heresy—“being given to Judaizing, but ignorant of the holy sacraments and festivals of the Church.” That is, they kept the Biblical Sabbath and were unaware of the Roman “Sunday-festival.”

(Mrs. Tamar Davis, “History of Sabbatarian Churches,” p. 108, Philadelphia 1851.)

Another testament to the distinctiveness of the Culdee ministers is their mode of genealogical inheritance of abbacies and priestly jurisdictions—a fact well documented in the “Welsh Genealogies of Saints.” The Culdees have produced some of the best documentation of Levitical ancestry, affirming that native Welsh priests trace their lineage to the Levites. Their own records, maintained over millennia, require little translation when reading original Hebrew texts, as the languages share remarkable similarities.

Members of the British Church never hesitated to distance themselves from external authorities. In AD 359, at the Council of Ariminum in Italy—convened by Constantinus, the son of Constantine, to address the Arian controversy—Sulpitius Severus noted that while 400 bishops of the Western Church were assembled and offered imperial support, the Aquitans, Gauls, and Britons refused such contributions, preferring to bear the expense themselves. Only three British bishops, out of necessity, made use of the public gift after rejecting the imperial offer, thereby demonstrating their firm commitment to independence.

These evidences, along with numerous historical documents and scholarly accounts, strongly confirm that St. Joseph of Arimathea founded the First Century Church at Glastonbury. His legacy endures in the many authoritative records from the 1st to the 4th centuries, as well as in the testimony of medieval historians and official church councils. The narrative of Joseph’s establishment of Glastonbury is not a mere Templar legend but a firmly established historical fact that underpins the true origins of the British Church.

CHAPTER 9: LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS OF SABBATH IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

While much of the church world has forgotten it, the Orthodox liturgies continue to preserve the truth of the Sabbath. Although all Orthodox Christians claim to observe the Saturday Sabbath, many among the younger generation are unaware of its full significance. In an era when the church has become increasingly relaxed and inclined toward populism rather than the uncompromising spiritual truth of God's law kept in pure love, we must remember that true freedom is found in the ability to keep His laws in peace and without fear. For us, the Sabbath—and indeed all of God's law—is called the “true freedom,” for only sin is bondage.

In this chapter, we present canonical Orthodox liturgies and fundamental teachings from across the Orthodox world. These texts not only prove that the Saturday Sabbath is still the way but also demonstrate that it is formally taught and practiced by Orthodox Christians worldwide. As God's laws are the truth that sets us free, it behooves us to clear away modern ambiguity and embrace the liberating realities of His word. We quote from mainstream Orthodox churches and refer to numerous Bible study articles with the hope of awakening both the faithful and the inquirers alike. True freedom is realized when we operate in the fullness of the design that the Creator intended for us. Unfortunately, many churches prefer simplicity and ambiguity, which can allow darkness to remain—a channel through which the enemy brings suffering and scatters God's children. It is my sincere hope that all who read these liberating truths will embrace the Sabbath as the key to our Godly identity, for Christ is Lord of the Sabbath.

Orthodox Liturgies in Use Today

The Didascalia and the Apostolic Constitutions

In many sectors of Orthodoxy the Didascalia is used with its actual text for liturgical celebrations. The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, also known as the “Didascalia,” have been considered part of the canon of Scripture by some. For most Orthodox, it remains apocryphal; however, its teachings continue to be fundamental to Orthodox belief. Here is one such prayer:

- **XXXVI:**
“O Lord Almighty, Thou hast created the world by Christ, and hast appointed the Sabbath in memory thereof, because on that day Thou didst make us rest from our works, for the meditation upon Thy laws... Thou didst give them the Law, the Decalogue, which was pronounced by Thy voice and written with Thy hand. Thou didst enjoin the observance of the Sabbath, not to grant an occasion for idleness, but to offer an opportunity for piety and knowledge of Thy power; and in doing so, for the rejoicing upon the seventh period... On this account, He permitted men every Sabbath to rest, that no one might speak a word in anger on that day.”
(*Apostolic Constitutions – Didascalia Apostolorum, Book VII, Section II*)

Its canons are recognized as authoritative throughout orthodoxy. The understanding of when services are done are continued throughout the texts. The main services done on Sunday are also done on Saturdays.

- **XXIII:**
“But keep the Sabbath, and the Lord's day festival; because the former is the

memorial of the Creation, and the latter of the Resurrection.”

(Apostolic Constitutions – Didascalia Apostolorum, Book VII, Section II; cf. Andrews J.N., History of the Sabbath, 3rd ed., 1887; reprint, Teach Services, Brushton, NY, 1998, p. 329; and ANF, Vol. 7, 1885, p. 469)

- **XXXIII:**

“Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath-day and the Lord’s day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety. We have said that the Sabbath is on account of the Creation, and the Lord’s day of the Resurrection.”

(Apostolic Constitutions – Didascalia Apostolorum, Book VIII, Section IV)

As demonstrated in previous chapters, the Holy Communion is the liturgy most frequently carried over into Saturday Sabbath celebrations.

(Note: A prerequisite for Communion has always been the opportunity for confession and repentance. Typically, on Friday night, communicants attend a Vespers (sunset) prayer service, ensuring they are not living in open sin. This service also serves as an opportunity for renewal and for declaring the intent to take Communion. Various forms of the Sabbath liturgy are observed in different Orthodox communities.)

It is an established liturgical practice across the Orthodox Church that the faithful promote and maintain Saturday as the Sabbath. The Apostles’ Didascalia, for example, is recognized by the Byzantine, Coptic, Syriac, Greek, Russian, and some Western Orthodox rites as a basis for their liturgical practice. While some churches keep it in their libraries as canonical Scripture (or at least apocryphal), all agree that the Sabbath is a day of rest and holiness for God’s Church.

Some may ask: Why don’t people speak of Saturday services just as much as Sunday these days? Any priest will tell you that Orthodoxy has liturgy for Saturdays just as it does for Sunday. We will get into such basic quotes of modern churches in the upcoming chapter. In many jurisdictions, the scheduling of worship services has been dictated not by the intrinsic validity of the liturgical practice but by the availability of ministers. In several areas, local secular authorities mandated a minimal Sunday service for pragmatic or political reasons—even though the underlying tradition clearly emphasizes that Saturday is the day set apart by God. This practical reality, where service provision sometimes depends on ministerial availability rather than doctrinal fidelity, does not detract from the liturgical texts that highlight the necessity and sanctity of the Saturday Sabbath.

Within the Didascalia, there are four unmistakable sections that directly decree all people (including slaves) to cease work on the Sabbath. It boldly proclaims Saturday as the day of rest—a day for hearing lessons from God’s Word, gathering for prayer and worship, and observing two weekly mandatory days for Communion: the 7th day (Sabbath) and the 1st day (Lord’s Day).

While many among the uneducated or uninformed may overlook these details, they do not diminish the inescapable liberating realities available to His elect, the firstfruits and Saints. As Jesus taught, “if you know the truth, the truth will set you free.” It is my hope that the reader will be set free by these liberating realities, finding in them the core truth of God’s Covenant—a truth that calls us to operate as Kingdom people under His eternal laws. True freedom comes from obedience, as exemplified by King David and Solomon, who delighted in

God's law. There is no new definition of liberty; only the ever-present power that God gives us to obey.

Israel Christendom Liturgical Declarations

Throughout the liturgies of the Christian world, there are bold declarations that the Church is the True Israel of God—specifically, the Orthodox Church rather than the Roman Church. In the Anglican tradition (including pre-Reformation), for instance, many liturgies have, for over 1,900 years, included the call “SHAMA” (“Hear, O Israel”) as a liturgical declaration before the recitation of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments). Some of these liturgical texts will exactly say, “Hear, O Israel, What Christ Says.” Such proclamations praise God for the reality of the Christian nations being Israel and underscore that the Sabbath is a sign of His covenant with His people.

Canonical Hours and Liturgical Prayer

In all Orthodox rites, Saturday evening's service is known as “Sunday Vespers 1.” This unique nomenclature—a carry-over from a time when Saturday and Sunday were observed with equal reverence—reflects the early Church's practice of meeting on both days. A commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict, in the section on “Canonical Hours,” by Bishop Brian J. Kennedy (O.S.B., H.T.C.O.C) of Toledo, Ohio, notes:

“Vespers for Saturday is called Vespers 1 of Sunday to show continuity of worship with the Sabbath Day.”

For nearly 600 years, the faithful met for worship on the Sabbath (remember, keep holy the Sabbath) and also on Sunday (the Lord's Day), as recorded by the Apostles.

Main Liturgical Prayers from the Apostles' Didascalia

The Apostles' Didascalia provides clear liturgical texts that emphasize gratitude for the Sabbath. For example, an introductory section to the prayer reciting the Ten Commandments reads:

Didascalia, Book 2 – The Recital of the Ten Commandments, and After What Manner They Prescribe for Us:

XXXVI.

“Have before your eyes the fear of God, and always remember the Ten Commandments of God—to love the one and only Lord God with all your strength; to give no heed to idols, or any other beings as lifeless gods, or irrational beings or dæmons. Consider the manifold workmanship of God, which began through Christ. You shall observe the Sabbath on account of Him who ceased from His work of creation, not for idleness but for meditation upon His laws. Reject every unlawful lust and all things destructive to man. Honour your parents, love your neighbour as yourself, and provide for the needy. Avoid false oaths, and do not squander your free-will offerings. Remember, the Lord said: ‘Honour the Lord with the fruit of your labours’ (Proverbs 3:9). Lay up for yourself heavenly treasure, which neither moth nor thief can destroy, for as Jesus declared, not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law.”

A commemorative prayer for the Incarnation and the providence given to the Saints follows in a similar style, affirming that the Sabbath is the day when God's work of creation ceases, offering believers an opportunity for piety rather than idleness.

A Collect for Saturdays is also found in the Episcopal and Anglican Book of Common Prayer:

"Almighty God, who after the creation of the world rested from all Your works and sanctified a day of rest for all Your creatures: Grant that we, putting aside all earthly anxieties, may be duly prepared for the service of Your sanctuary, and that our rest on earth may be a preparation for the eternal rest promised to Your people in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Additional Liturgical Celebrations

Beyond the requirements and established canons to hold equal services of Sunday on Sabbath, we can also glean insights of the attitude and understanding of Sabbath throughout other services.

Liturgy of Saint James:

The Liturgy of Saint James, regarded as the oldest in the world and favored among the True Orthodox Church, is traditionally attributed to St. James the Just—the first Bishop of Jerusalem. It is sometimes known as the Liturgy of St. Basil. On the great holy Sabbath, the liturgy declares:

"For this is the blessed Sabbath, this is the day of rest."

(In Tone 6: "Glory... And God blessed the seventh day.")

"For this is the blessed Sabbath, this is the day of rest, on which the Only-Begotten Son of God rested from all His works. Suffering death in accordance with the plans of salvation, He kept the Sabbath in the flesh; and returning to His former state through His Resurrection, He has granted us eternal life, for He alone is good and loves mankind."

The Fourth Ode of Orthros:

The fourth ode of the canon of Holy Friday Evening—really the service for Saturday morning—declares:

"You sanctified the seventh day, which in old times You blessed by resting from Your works; for You bring all things into being and renew them as You keep the Sabbath rest, O Savior, and restore Your strength."

This hymn is repeated at the Vespereal Divine Liturgy on Holy Saturday morning.

The Clementine Liturgy Portion of the Apostles' Didascalia:

In the Clementine Liturgy (Section II, 57), it states:

"On the Sabbath the Gospel shall be read after the other lections."

Throughout the Clementine Liturgy (including Book VIII of the Didascalia), Saturday is celebrated as a feast day and a day of rest—when the faithful attend church for worship, study God's laws, hear the Gospels read, and participate in the Eucharist.

Closing Liturgical Evidence

A careful examination of the original manuscripts reveals that in some instances the terms used to denote days of worship do not strictly equate to “the Lord’s Day” as understood in modern translations. In many ancient texts—particularly those from Celtic lands that did not have a concept of Sunday—the language is more neutral. Rather than explicitly using “the Lord’s Day,” the originals often refer to what might be more accurately translated as “the Lord’s way” or simply as the days commanded by God.

Although the most revered Orthodox text—the Apostles’ Didascalia, considered by many to be part of the Biblical canon—describes both the Saturday and Sunday services as equal in worship requirements, this teaching is further echoed in official canons such as the Stoglav declarations of Moscow (1556). One section of the Stoglav states:

“By the Authority of Peter and Paul, we command to the people to work during the week. But on Subota (Sabbath) and on Nedelja (Sunday) let them worship in the Church and pray, and let them learn something for the sake of good faith. The Subota is the image of the whole Creation, while the Nedelja is the day of the Resurrection.”

As we had highlighted, shortly after the above period there was a rivalry within the Royal family which led to a split in Russian Orthodoxy, where the official sect of Subotnik Christians came about. However, any good priest continued to teach the foundational Sabbath truth, regardless of the greater political upheavals.

Final Thoughts

The enduring practice of keeping the Sabbath in the Orthodox Church is not an outdated ritual but a vibrant expression of God’s liberating truth. In every liturgical celebration—from the canonical hours to the detailed prayers of the Apostles’ Didascalia, the Liturgy of Saint James, the Fourth Ode of Orthros, and the Clementine Liturgy—we find a consistent witness to the fact that the Sabbath is a day of rest and divine freedom. Although modern trends have obscured this truth, the Orthodox Church continues to proclaim that true liberty is found in obedience to God’s law—a law that sets us free from sin and empowers us to live in His grace.

A careful study of the ancient manuscripts reveals that the term “Lord’s Day” was not uniformly used in its modern sense; many texts employ a more neutral phrase—such as “the Lord’s way”—to denote the holy days commanded by God. This serves as a powerful reminder that the sacred observances of the early Church included not only the well-known celebration of Sunday but also a profound commitment to the seventh-day Sabbath, a teaching that remains central to Orthodox liturgical practice.

It is my sincere hope that this chapter will open the eyes of the faithful and inquirers alike to the enduring, sacred observance of the Sabbath. As we continue to honor this holy day, we stand united as God’s people, ever mindful that our freedom is found not in worldly conventions but in the eternal, liberating truth of His commandments.

CHAPTER 10: CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX OBSERVING THE SABBATH

Prefatory Note (2019):

While this isn't news to much of the Orthodox world, some Protestant circles and 7th Day Adventists may be pleased to come together and hear that Sabbath is practiced in Eastern (and Western) Orthodoxy. The quotations and references are just taking a few statements of local Orthodox ministries which practice services and give theological comments about the same days. Subsequent online research continues to reveal additional examples of Orthodox churches actively promoting observance of the Saturday Sabbath, at least in the existing orthodox liturgical practice.

ORTHODOX CHURCHES TODAY TEACHING SABBATH-KEEPING ON SATURDAY

Let's review a few churches today that teach the Saturday Sabbath in their publications and other communications.

[Prefatory Note: As highlighted in the chapter on the Orthodox Identity of the British Church and Anglicanism, the Western churches of God typically fulfill the agreed requirements to bear the name Orthodox as being in succession from the Apostolic church. These realities are widely recognized in the East as well as all established Patriarchates who aren't directly under dominance of various geopolitical struggles, ie the expanding Bolshevik leadership installed by Stalin and monopolized the name at the World Council of churches. Otherwise per one Royal head of the church in one jurisdiction or another would require emphasis be placed on one aspect of worship over another. Some even went as far as to require sports be read in the churches. There were often splits, however this was not required. For example, the Crown Act of the 1600s required minimal Sunday services, it did not forbid Saturday services, however the great majority of those thousands of dissenter priests who left were strict Sabbatharians. This launched an entire 7th Day Baptist movement—whose influence once led Rhode Island to be recognized as a 7th Day Baptist State in America—was formed by former Orthodox Anglican clergy. In the aftermath of these overarching reforms from the Monarch, numerous theology books were written by these dissenter Sabbatharians, many of which were addressed directly to the King. This tells us much about the overall importance of the Sabbath in England. Similarly, in Russia, splits within the Russian Orthodox Church eventually gave rise to groups known as the Subotniks and Molokan Orthodox, who also valiantly defended Sabbath observance at all levels of church and society. These groups, though later labelled as sects, were wholly Orthodox in their origins. Additional congregations, even when separated from the state church, have maintained the traditional Orthodox liturgies. More details on this topic are available in our articles on the "Succession of our English Liturgy" at OrthodoxChurch.nl or St-Andrewsocc.org.]

There was no real secular enforcement in England mandating Sunday to replace the Sabbath until some interpreted that in the "Act of Uniformity" of 1662. Until then, England maintained Saturday observance much like the official Latin jurisdictions in Spain and Italy—even after these regions had officially refused Rome's orders to fast on Saturdays. In Germany, the most important churches are even named after Saint Andrew, indicating their reliance on Orthodox jurisdictions rather than Rome's claim of supremacy through Saint Peter. Historical records also show that Scotland did not observe Sunday at all until Saint Margaret married the King, a change imposed upon a people who had long maintained their ancient practice. Our ministry

St Andrew's OCC has an article highlighting this topic the claims of Saint Andrew and the Orthodox rivalry of many sovereign states dedicated to his ministry as the first-called.

In Russia, the shift to Sunday worship was driven more by secular political pressure than by a true change in ecclesiastical teaching. For example, in the Stoglav—a key manuscript of the Russian Orthodox Church dated to 1556, during the reign of Ivan IV—it is stated:

“By the Authority of Peter and Paul, we command to the people to work during the week. But on Subota (Sabbath) and on Nedelja (Sunday) let them worship in the Church and pray, and let them learn something for the sake of good faith. The Subota is the image of the whole Creation, while the Nedelja is the day of the Resurrection.”

Today, many Orthodox churches continue to teach the Saturday Sabbath even when, in practice, scheduling of services is sometimes based solely on the availability of ministers. In several jurisdictions, local secular authorities mandated minimal Sunday services for pragmatic or political reasons. Nevertheless, the underlying liturgical tradition remains steadfast: the sacred texts and canonical practices clearly emphasize the importance of Saturday as the Biblical Sabbath.

Statements of Contemporary Orthodox Assemblies

- **Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Father Alkivia dis Calivas):**
"In the tradition of our Church, Saturday, like Sunday, is considered a festal day. Even during Great Lent, the rules of fasting are relaxed on both days."
- **Russian Orthodox Diocese of Houston (Archpriest John Whiteford):**
In his tract "Sabbath or Sunday," he wrote:
"Saturday retains its significance as the day of Creation, and liturgically we never fast strictly on Saturdays. Even during Great Lent, a liturgy is always appointed for both Saturday and Sunday. For Christians, Sunday—the Lord's Day—is the day of the New Creation and the Resurrection."
- **All-Merciful Saviour Monastery:**
Russian Orthodox Abbot Tryphon wrote:
"..And, although Sunday is our day of worship, we Orthodox also keep the day of rest, which is on Saturday—the Biblical Sabbath."
- **St. Elisabeth Convent Catalogue (Q&A):**
"The Orthodox believe that Sabbath is Saturday (the Greek word for Saturday is pronounced 'sabbado' in many languages). Hence, Saturday is the old Sabbath, and Sunday is the Lord's Day, or the Day of Resurrection. In the Orthodox tradition, Saturday always retains the feasting character of the Jewish Sabbath; it is never observed as a strict fasting day. Moreover, it has always been liturgically practiced to serve Divine Liturgy on both Saturday and Sunday."
(Full details available at <https://blog.obitel-minsk.com/2017/11/the-Orthodox-view-on-sabbath-and-sunday.html>)
- **Saint Anthony Great Coptic Church:**
Their doctrinal statements under "Coptic Feasts and Worship" note that Moses' Law established seven major feasts—including the weekly Sabbath—and that these

feasts remain a living part of common worship. Local dioceses are responsible for teaching these ancient practices.

- **Holy Trinity Orthodox Celtic Church (Bishop Brian J. Kennedy):**
"The Celtic Orthodox Church has always placed great importance on Saturday as the Sabbath and on Sunday as the Lord's Day. All priests are obligated to offer the Mass on both days, and the laity are expected to participate fully."
- **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (Rev. George Mastrantonis):**
"It is a disappointing phenomenon that many religious people use Saturday and Sunday for leisure, thereby rendering these days unholy."
- **The Holy Trinity Orthodox Mission (Bishop Alexander, Mileant):**
"It would behoove Orthodox Christians to rekindle the zeal of the early Church by being truly dedicated on the seventh day—by attending church and taking Holy Communion. By doing so, they will attract the blessing of the Lord, and their other activities will be enriched."
- **New World Encyclopedia on Saint Thomas Christians:**
The article explains that the original rituals of early Jewish Christians—such as head covering in worship and observing services on Saturdays—have been preserved among Saint Thomas Christians in India.
- **Orthodox Theologian Herman Blaydoe (American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese):**
He stated:
"Some believe that Sunday has replaced Saturday, but there is no traditional support for that position. The debate centers on the relative importance of the Sabbath versus Sunday—a topic that remains open to pious opinion and local practice."
(Source: <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Eastern-Orthodox-1456/Sabbath.htm>, December 31, 2007)
- **Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church (Archpriest John Udics):**
Announced in 2011:
"We still keep the Sabbath, Subbota, Saturday, in a special liturgical way."
- **Encyclopedia Britannica on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church:**
The present Ethiopian Orthodox Church is noted for observing the Saturday Sabbath (in addition to Sunday) among devout believers.
- **American Orthodox Catholic Church (Bishop Walter Propheta):**
This church, registered since 1964, is a Sabbath-keeping community that observes both Saturday and Sunday.
- **Armenian Cathedral of Saint James of Jerusalem:**
This church holds mass on Saturday (the Sabbath) while treating Sunday as a regular day of rest.
- **Dr. Mugurdich Chojhauji Gabrielian:**
An Orthodox scholar who noted that the Armenian Church not only keeps Sabbath in commemoration of Christ but also on Saturday in memory of the completed work of Creation.

In many jurisdictions, the scheduling of worship services is dictated not by the intrinsic validity of the liturgical practice but by ministerial availability. In several areas, secular authorities mandated minimal Sunday services for pragmatic or political reasons. Nevertheless, the underlying liturgical tradition remains steadfast. The sacred texts and canonical practices clearly emphasize the importance of Saturday as the Biblical Sabbath.

Final Thoughts

The enduring practice of keeping the Sabbath in the Orthodox Church is not an outdated ritual but a vibrant expression of God's liberating truth. In every liturgical celebration—from the canonical hours to the detailed prayers of the Apostles' Didascalia, the Liturgy of Saint James, the Fourth Ode of Orthros, and the Clementine Liturgy—we find consistent testimony that the Sabbath is a day of rest and divine freedom.

It is also important to note that our examination of ancient manuscripts shows that, in some instances, the terms used to denote days of worship in Celtic sources were more neutral. Rather than strictly using the term "the Lord's Day," the original texts sometimes employ phrases that can be more accurately rendered as "the Lord's way" or simply as the days commanded by God. Although modern translations often insert "the Lord's Day," the originals indicate that the sacred observances of the early Church included both the seventh-day Sabbath and the holy feasts. This teaching is powerfully affirmed by the Stoglav declarations, which state that the Subota is the image of all Creation while the Nedelja commemorates the Resurrection.

It is my sincere hope that this chapter will open the eyes of the faithful and those in search of truth to the enduring, sacred observance of the Sabbath. As we continue to honor this holy day, we stand united as God's people, ever mindful that our freedom is found not in worldly conventions but in the eternal, liberating truth of His commandments.

CHAPTER 11: THE SABBATH OF YAHWEH, A SIGN THAT WE ARE HIS PEOPLE

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Day of the Crucifixion

The Most Foundational Reason for many churches using Sunday as the Sabbath is they believe Jesus died on Friday, and was in the grave during Sabbath, when there is no Scripture for that whatsoever. [also see our article on Orthodox Doctrine for Wednesday Crucifixion, Sabbath Resurrection]

Let us pay careful attention to all the surrounding Scriptures which paint a clear picture that He resurrected on the 7th Day of the Week, and that it would have been impossible for Him to have risen on the First Day of the week. Besides, no Scripture says He rose on the 1st day, but it does say He was already missing while it was still dark at the end of the 7th day.

72 hours in the heart of the earth: Mat 12:40 ***“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”***

“Three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” would mean 72 hours.

(Confirmation by Jesus is found in John 11:9: “are there not twelve hours in a day?” And twelve hours in a night = 24 hours.)

With these Biblical Presuppositions Jesus could not have died on Friday at 3PM because that would have meant He couldn’t raise for another 72 hours, which would have been Monday at 3PM. Besides, there is no Scripture saying He died on Friday or the 6th Day of the week. It is only logical to use the Bible’s account to say He was crucified and died on that Wednesday.

Jesus was NOT Crucified on a Friday, but on the “Preparation of the Passover”. There are seven “High Sabbaths” every year, and the Passover always has a specific preparation day for the special ceremony which landed on Wednesday that year.

Just because the verses say it was a preparation day for “a Sabbath” doesn’t mean it was the weekly Sabbath. However, all the gospels do say it was the ANNUAL SABBATH CALLED PASSOVER.

John 19:31 ***“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”*** This verse doesn’t say it was the 6th day of the week. However, it does say in context that it was the preparation of Passover:

John 19:14 ***“And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!”***

Where do these churches get it wrong calling this the Weekly Sabbath of Friday? If you read on you shall see it is an impossibility!

It can only make sense that Wednesday was the day of His crucifixion, at 3PM. He rose on the 7th Day Sabbath Day we know as Saturday at 3PM. The rest of the Biblical accounts confirm His Resurrection day was Sabbath, because they didn’t find Him in the empty tomb when it

was even still Dark Sunday morning! If He was already gone before Sunday began, then this is more evidence He wasn't crucified on Sabbath, and then already gone within 1 day. He had to stay in the grave three days AND three nights. They couldn't find Him early in the wee hours of the morning, while it was still dark on Sunday because He had risen the previous day, on Sabbath, on schedule.

No verse in the Scripture says that He arose ON the "first day", but they all say He was already gone when they were there, BEFORE the First day had dawned!

Matthew 28:1 ***"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher."***

Notice it says "in" the Sabbath, not "after".

We know on God's calendar the day starts at sundown, NOT AT MIDNIGHT. So in this passage it could actually mean that as it was starting*** to get dark Saturday Evening, that they went to the tomb and Christ was already gone. Since we know days start at Sundown according to the Bible (from evening to evening: "From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath" (Lev. 23:32) ***"And the evening and the morning were the first day."*** (Gen 1:5). If the Sabbath was "dawning" that would normally mean it was evening.

Did People Lose Track of the Days of the Week?

The next typical argument from those beholden to the First day Sabbath is they say is after all these centuries, surely they must have lost track of the days of the week. They never produce any evidence proving this wrongful assumption. God's word and history is the best determining factor on this situation.

There have always been a remnant of His people keeping the Seventh day Saturday Sabbath, in every Christian and post-Christian nation of the world. There is innumerable proofs that in the first centuries after Christ the week was heavily guarded. So many ancient texts and services that even deal with the hours, how to worship etc. You can even see that in the Dead Sea scrolls. I personally have photograph copies of very accurate Celtic Calendars that date back centuries before Christ. These were done in stone and preserved well. We know they never lost track of the 7 days of the week. Christ couldn't have lost track of which day was the 7th day either if He was to keep the Sabbath day. If He and those in the First Century couldn't lose track of it, neither could the rest. It can be found that people were more educated and advanced in earlier times in many ways more than now. However, these days they say we are even smarter, so why would anyone doubt that such Orthodox communities would lose track of the days of the week? When there's ample proof they guarded the days, hours and months with such tenacity.

Exodus 31:12 ***"And YAHWEH spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am YAHWEH that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to YAHWEH: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign***

between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days YAHWEH made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

See Lev 23, Deut 5:14, Exod 20:10-11 and notice it says it is not Israel's Sabbath, but it is ***"The Sabbath(s) of YAHWEH"***, as it says it is Holy unto YAHWEH and it's a commandment for Israel ***"to keep the Sabbath of YAHWEH throughout all their generations, and in all their dwellings FOR EVER"***. If you believe it was the 7th Day YAHWEH rested and not the first day then we also must acknowledge the Sabbath is only on the 7th day.

For Our Good

The Sabbath is a joy and delight. It is "made for man", made for our own good and betterment. As it says, none of God's commandments are grievous, but have all been called LIBERTY and true Freedom which we rejoice in, just as King David and Solomon declared.

1John 5:3: ***"For this is the love of YAHWEH, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."***

Breaking Bread Daily Didn't Change Sabbath

A lot of churches use the one Scripture where they broke bread on "the first day" as Paul was leaving for a mission; But what they don't talk about is Acts 2:46, ***"they broke bread DAILY FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE"***.

Any time Hebrew men gather together, to this day, they break bread and wine for a form of Kiddush, and Bless the cup, as Paul had referred to as ***"the cup of YAHWEH"***. This expanded in the principle of breaking bread, as foretelling our Saviour was in the Weekly Sabbath for families as well as for assemblies, all referring to the cup and bread that Christ became for us.

In the book of Acts it's that the early Apostles and Disciples kept the Sabbath on the 7th day 84 times, and not one time was the First Day of the week called "Sabbath" anywhere in the New Testament Scripture. [...article excerpted...]

It is easily shown from Scripture that there are many Sabbaths PLURAL, and the only logical conclusion is the "Sabbath" that Jesus was crucified on was not, and could not have been the weekly Sabbath but one of the Annual Sabbaths. i.e.: Lev 23:24 ***"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation."*** This is talking about the Annual Sabbaths, not the weekly Sabbath.

All of God's feasts are called High Sabbaths and will forever be called Sabbaths, even in the new heavens and new earth:

Isa 66:22-23 ***"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith YAHWEH, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith YAHWEH."***

It says in Zechariah 14 that even in the new heavens and new earth the Egyptians will be required to keep the feast of Tabernacles, and if they do not they will not get rain on their land. We today should also keep proper language in our dialogues concerning the Sabbaths of God.

It is a Great Blessing

Many churches have been greatly blessed for moving from the First Day “Sunday” to the 7th Day Biblical Sabbath “Saturday” as their primary day of worship. A viewpoint also on the issue of the Sabbath is in regards to blessings

Isaiah 58:13-14 ***“If you delight yourself in the Sabbath,... I will cause you to ride on the high places of the earth”***

Matt 5:19 ***“if you keep the least of my commandments and teach men to keep them you’ll be called great in the kingdom of heaven, but if you break the least of my commandments and teach men to break them you’ll be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.”***

So it is about rewards and being more set free, not about your spiritual salvation of going to heaven. Our spiritual salvation is only accomplished by receiving the the blood penalty accomplished by our Savior Jesus Christ. Being sanctified and growing in the spirit only is experienced by the extents we line up with the exact word of God.

There Remains a Sabbath Rest for the People of God,

Some good points can be gleaned from the following chapters. Mainly reiterating Sabbath is God’s day, not our day to pick and choose. Also that Christ never spoke of a different day. It says Sabbath is the day we hear His voice.

Hebrews Chapter 2-4:

“2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let [them] slip. 2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard [him]; 4 God also bearing [them] witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? 5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. 6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? 7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: 8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing [that is] not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. 10 For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified [are] all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. 14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself

likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For verily he took not on [him the nature of] angels; but he took on [him] the seed of Abraham. 17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

"Chapter 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses [was faithful] in all his house. 3 For this [man] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. 4 For every house is builded by some [man]; but he that built all things [is] God. 5 And Moses verily [was] faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; 6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. 7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in [their] heart; and they have not known my ways. 11 So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) 12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; 15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? [was it] not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

"Chapter 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left [us] of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard [it]. 3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh [day] on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. 5 And in this [place] again, If they shall enter into my rest. 6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: 7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. 8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God [did] from his. 11 Let us labour therefore to enter into

that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12 For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Some people are shocked to find it was, is, and will continue to be so prevalent in the Christian (and post Christian) Israelite descended nations. We should not be surprised by any of this. YAHWEH has preserved the National “sign” in every generation of His church these last 2,000 years.

Exo 31:17 “It (the Sabbath) is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

As we go through the examples, we’re reminded that “There is no private interpretation” but His truth of which day His Sabbath falls upon has been clear to all in the mainstream part of the church. For those who were ignorant to it, our great God still preserved this Biblical Israelite sign of the Sabbath within the tradition called “weekends”. On weekends everyone who lives in the true Israelite descended nations have always had an opportunity to keep all the Biblical days as it says in the Didascalia “Constitutions of the Apostles”(circa 250AD). As it says, to be free from work, hold it as a festival and receive instruction in God’s laws at church. Most churches have Saturday services as well. Having both days has always been fundamental to the Orthodox and Celtic faith.

The Didascalia not only tells us the services for Sabbaths and annual feasts, but it also tells us the way to start the Hebrew New Year. The year starts on the first visible new moon after the spring equinox. Don’t be fooled by new heretical calendars and so-called “ancient” traditions that nobody has heard of in any generation. A Commandment so Great as to be cataloged in the “BIG TEN COMMANDMENTS” would never be a mystery of which day it is, not to any one of His people, in any generation. However it would be widely known, chiefly held and kept central to their faith. Sabbath would be known by the whole nation, whether in rebellion or in obedience. A commandment that even carries the death penalty would not be an unknown mystery for any span of years. People everywhere have known about Sabbath being Saturday, and it is official in most churches of the whole world. It is one of the signs of our status as His great and mighty Israel nations (See also Romans 9:3-5). We have truly been blessed to have the benefit of the Sabbath in our lands.

CHAPTER 12: KEEPING THE SABBATH “LOVE FEASTS” MORE FULLY

This chapter offers practical guidance for believers seeking to deepen their observance of the Sabbath love feast. It is designed to help you delight more fully in the benefits and blessings that come from obeying God’s laws—especially the 4th Commandment, which, from Creation onward, has been established for our good.

The Foundation of Sabbath Observance

This book would be incomplete without a section dedicated to the benefits and practices by which a believer can increase in keeping the Sabbath love festival more fully. The 4th Commandment—a central law of God—is a weekly institution instituted for man’s benefit. It began at Creation, long before the Old Testament was given, and continues to confer blessings on all worshippers, even in the new heavens and the new earth.

Christ did not condemn the Sabbath itself; rather, He denounced the man-made traditions of the Pharisees that rejected the law of Moses (see Mark 7:9). In fact, He performed seven healings on the Sabbath—a reminder that His special work was to be done on the day God made for our benefit. The Sabbath is not a day to be chosen based on our own emotions; it is divinely ordained and set apart for worship and rest as prescribed in Hebrews 2–4.

The Process of Growing in Sabbath Observance

As believers, we grow in faith, rewards, and overall well-being—spiritually, mentally, socially, and even financially—when we faithfully observe the Sabbath. Romans 10:17 reminds us that faith comes by hearing and responding to the word of God. In the context of Sabbath worship, the spoken word of our Divinely ordained clergy, coupled with our heartfelt obedience, builds our faith. Full-time clergy and regular assembly are vital for a flourishing community, as indicated in Ephesians 4:11–12, which speaks of the gifts of apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints.

As we delight more in the Sabbath, we will also come to love God more deeply. The daily renewal of our minds in His word leads to a greater capacity to obey His commandments and experience the true freedom that comes from living in His grace.

The Benefits of the Sabbath Love Feast

Keeping the Sabbath as a “love feast” offers tremendous spiritual and practical benefits:

- **Spiritual Growth:** As you consistently obey the Sabbath commandment, you will experience increasing joy and freedom. God’s word, when received and obeyed, transforms our hearts and minds.
- **Family and Community Unity:** The Sabbath is a time for the entire family to gather, pray, share a meal, and celebrate together. Whether it is through potlucks, family meals, or special prayer times, these gatherings foster unity and strengthen bonds.

- **Holistic Renewal:** The Sabbath is not merely a day of rest from work—it is a time to engage in uplifting activities, such as singing, Bible study, and intercessory prayer, which promote spiritual, mental, social, and even economic well-being.
- **A Divine Rehearsal:** Think of the Sabbath as a rehearsal for the ultimate wedding feast of Christ. It is a 24-hour period that prepares us to celebrate the full Kingdom of God. As you practice these holy exercises, you are investing in your spiritual future.

In practical terms, consider setting aside a regular time—perhaps beginning Friday night—to prepare for Sabbath worship. This might include a family meal, candle lighting (in keeping with Orthodox and Hebrew traditions), and quiet moments of prayer. Even if not all family members participate initially, your faithful example can inspire them to join over time.

Practical Steps for a Fuller Sabbath

1. **Establish a Home Devotional Area:** Create a designated prayer and worship space in your home for daily morning and evening prayers. This space can serve as the starting point for your Sabbath preparations.
2. **Gather as a Family:** Organize a Friday night meal where you share a time of fellowship and prayer. Use this time to recount the blessings of the week and to set a tone of gratitude.
3. **Attend Congregational Worship:** If there is a local congregation that observes Sabbath, make every effort to attend. If your area lacks a Sabbath assembly, consider using remote services (conference calls, live video broadcasts) until you can join a local group.
4. **Engage in Scriptural Reflection:** Use the Sabbath as a time for Bible study, particularly focusing on passages that describe the blessings and purpose of the Sabbath (e.g., Exodus 31, Isaiah 58, Hebrews 4).
5. **Celebrate Together:** Organize community events such as potlucks, prayer meetings, or special gatherings to celebrate the Sabbath as a festive, holy day.

The Ultimate Promise of the Sabbath

The Sabbath is a day filled with the promise of blessings—a day designed by God for our prosperity and freedom. As Isaiah 58:13–14 assures us, if we delight in the Sabbath, God will cause us to “ride on the high places of the earth.” Moreover, the commandment to keep the Sabbath is not merely a ritual but a sign of our identity as God’s people. The Scriptures affirm that God’s laws are not grievous (1 John 5:3), but are a source of true liberty that frees us from sin and empowers us to live righteously.

Christ’s example and the teaching of the Apostles remind us that the Sabbath is the foundation upon which we build our lives. When we gather, pray, share in the love feast, and honor this holy day, we are participating in a divine appointment—a rehearsal for the ultimate wedding feast of His Kingdom.

Final Encouragement

I encourage you, dear reader, to commit to keeping the Sabbath “love feast” more fully. Embrace the opportunity to renew your spirit, foster deeper family and community bonds, and experience the abundant blessings that flow from obeying God’s commandments. Whether you join a local congregation or cultivate your own family’s devotional practices, let the Sabbath be a time when you delight greatly in His law, as King David did, and as promised by our eternal Covenant.

May the Holy Spirit empower you to transform your Sabbath into a day of joy, fellowship, and divine blessing—a true reflection of God’s love for His people.

CONCLUSION

God promised to keep a faithful remnant of Israel as His bride—a people who would continually observe the Sabbath of YAHWEH. **The Sabbath is only one of many signs or “marks” of His true people, who are destined to be known as the greatest, mightiest nations of the North West, bearing hundreds of distinct identification markers (as documented in the booklet “Marks of Israel”) that are not fulfilled by any other people. A quick study of this topic has convinced people from all backgrounds that the Biblical match with the European Christian nations is so perfect that it is as if we have a fingerprint of divine validation on our identity.** To claim that the Christian people have ceased to be the “twelve tribes scattered abroad” (cf. James 1) is to reject the very nature of the God of Israel. In doing so, we not only deny His covenant promises but also misrepresent the true identity of His people.

Romans 9:4-5 (KJV) provides a powerful reminder of this truth:

“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;
Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Only the families of Jacob—true Israel—are entrusted with the knowledge of His laws (see Psalm 147:19-20). Throughout history, it has been in the Christian lands that such knowledge and the freedom to keep God’s commandments have flourished. This is why we are called to celebrate the good news of the Gospel of the Kingdom and to observe His festivals with joy and reverence. God ordained these sacred avenues for the perfecting of His Saints, and as we grow in Christ—the Word incarnate (John 1:1, 1:14)—His teachings become ever more operative in our lives.

We are urged to support His Godly ordained ministers—be they Apostles, Evangelists, Prophets, Pastors, or Teachers—who have been anointed for the perfecting of the saints. These ministers, by the grace of God, will continue to grow and guide the Church, with or without our active participation, as He returns for a church without spot or wrinkle. His Ecclesia—the assembly of believers—has always been called to keep the festivals in corporate worship, reflecting the deep spiritual heritage of true Israel.

It is heartening to know that, despite periods when Christian nations have strayed or been blind to their heritage, God remains true to His covenant. His promise to preserve His covenant people—those marked by the sign of the Sabbath—endures through all generations. This is not merely an ancient truth; it is the very good news that sets us free. God has given us victory in and through Christ, and His Word remains our guide.

As we reflect on the significance of the Sabbath, we are reminded that it is a perpetual covenant—a sign of our identity as the children of Israel and a testimony to the liberating power of His law. The Sabbath is more than a day of rest; it is a call to renew our minds, bodies, and spirits. It is an invitation to embrace the full blessings of obedience to God’s commandments—a daily reminder that His law is not grievous (1 John 5:3) but is our pathway to true freedom.

Let us celebrate His Gospel and support those who faithfully lead us. May we each find joy in His Word, delight in His commandments, and continue to strengthen the Church, our true

Israel, as we await the day when Christ returns in glory. This is our hope, our call to action, and the assurance of our eternal inheritance.

Appendix Section 1

THE ORTHODOX DOCTRINE OF A WEDNESDAY CRUCIFIXION AND SABBATH RESURRECTION

by Blaine Newmann

Church of God 7th Day

Another Author and Minister, with whom I have maintained good contact over the years, is Mr. Blaine Newmann from the Church of God 7th Day. He sent me the following great article and asked that I include it in my larger book manuscript. It is on the topic of the Wednesday crucifixion day doctrine that has been held in the Orthodox church. While it doesn't have a major impact for the Orthodox, it does dispel myths held sacred by others.

We agree that the crucifixion was on Wednesday so that He rose on the afternoon of the Sabbath (Saturday). As Christ said, the sign will be that He will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth—like Jonah was in the belly of the fish. He also said, “Are there not twelve hours in a day?” (referring to the division of day and night). Thus, as it is recorded, He was dead at 3:00 p.m. Therefore, 72 hours after a Wednesday crucifixion would mean a 3:00 p.m. Resurrection on the Sabbath. No one believes He rose at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday. Sunday, however, remains a celebration for us all, as it was Christ's first full day after the Resurrection and the day He first visited all the Apostles—as it is recorded that they assembled together and then shut the doors on the eighth day for fear of the Jews. Then Yahshua miraculously walked into the room.

Chronology of the Crucifixion and Resurrection According to Ancient Texts

(The Wednesday Crucifixion – Saturday Resurrection Proven by History)

In the Christian world today, the predominant view concerning the chronology of Christ's last days is that He celebrated the Last Supper on Thursday evening, was arrested that same night, crucified on Friday, and rose on Sunday morning. In the early Church, however, evidence exists of a widespread view that Christ held His Last Supper on Tuesday evening. There is also evidence, to a certain extent, that early Christians believed in a midweek crucifixion and a Saturday (Sabbath) Resurrection.

To support the theory of a Tuesday night Last Supper tradition, the earliest source found is the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a church order composed circa A.D. 200 (originating in northern Syria, near Asia Minor). It states:

“For while He was yet with us before He suffered—as we were eating the Passover with Him—He said to us, ‘Today, in this night, one of you will betray Me’ ... And Judas came with the scribes and with the priests of the people and betrayed our Lord Jesus. And so in the night when the fourth day of the week drew on, He betrayed our Lord to them. But they made payment to Judas ... on the second day of the week ... For when we had eaten the Passover on the third day of the week at even, we went forth to the Mount of Olives, and in the night they seized our Lord Jesus.”¹

By the end of the third century, a fast was celebrated on Wednesday (until 3:00 p.m.) to commemorate Christ's arrest. Victorinus, Bishop of Petau (martyred in A.D. 304), explains:

“Now is manifested the reason of the truth why the fourth day is called the Tetras, why we fast even to the ninth hour ... The man Christ ... was taken prisoner by wicked hands, by a

quaternion, on account of the majesty of His works ... therefore, we make a station or a supernumerary fast.”²

Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (367–403 A.D.)—based in Cyprus and influential in the Eastern Church—says:

“Wednesday and Friday are days of fasting up to the ninth hour because, as Wednesday began, the Lord was arrested and on Friday He was crucified.”³

Even though by this time Friday was believed to be the day of the crucifixion, Wednesday was still known as the day of Christ’s arrest. The early Pseudepigraphal *Book of Adam and Eve* (circa A.D. 400) states:

“Then the Word of God said to Adam: ‘Adam, you have determined in advance the days when sufferings will come upon me when I shall have become flesh; for those days are Wednesday and Friday’.”⁴

(Note: The literal reading is actually “the fourth” instead of “Wednesday” and “the preparation” in place of “Friday.”)

Another pseudepigraphal work, “The Narrative of Joseph” (originally believed to have been composed in the fourth century, though our copy is from the twelfth century), states:

“Jesus also was taken on the third day before the Passover, in the evening. And on the following day, the fourth day of the week, they brought Him at the ninth hour into the hall of Caiaphas.”⁵

In most modern liturgical churches today, the reason for the Wednesday fast is largely forgotten, yet it remains very much alive in Eastern Orthodox Churches. For example, in the Coptic Church (i.e., the Egyptian Christian Church), the reason for fasting on Wednesday echoes that of the primitive Christian church. The *Coptic Encyclopedia* states:

“The Coptic Church ordains that Wednesday and Friday be observed as fast days, the former being the day on which Jesus Christ was condemned to be crucified, and the latter being the day on which His crucifixion took place.”⁶

Though the above references show that a Friday crucifixion was endorsed alongside a Tuesday Last Supper belief, in the *Acts of Pilate* (a pseudepigraphal work originally composed in the fourth century) a midweek crucifixion is indicated. According to the *Acts of Pilate*, two saints—Karinus and Leucius—who were supposedly resurrected at the time of Christ’s Resurrection, were told by Christ to remain in Jerusalem for three more days to complete the observation of Passover.⁷

One Greek version says:

“Thereafter we went unto Jerusalem also and accomplished the Passover.”

A Latin version states:

“For three days only were allowed unto us who rose from the dead, to keep the Passover of the Lord in Jerusalem with our kindred (parents) as a testimony of the Resurrection of Christ the Lord. And after three days, when we had kept the Passover of the Lord, all were caught up in the clouds which had risen with us and were taken over Jordan and were no more seen of any man.”⁸

Since Christ was killed on the preparation day of the Passover, followed by seven days of unleavened bread, and then the Passover festival was completed, the statement that only three days were left to complete the Passover after Christ's Resurrection would indicate that He spent a full three days and three nights in the grave—not merely parts of three days. Thus, the *Acts of Pilate* promote a midweek crucifixion.

If one assumes the Last Supper took place on a Tuesday evening and Christ was crucified on a Wednesday, then Thursday would have to be a Sabbath day (since the Scriptures state that Christ was crucified on the preparation day before the Sabbath).

- Luke 23:54 states: "And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on."
- John 19:31 states: "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away."

Rabbi Samuel Lacks states:

"The day of preparation (Greek *paraskeue*) equals Friday or the day before a holiday."⁹

Since the day of preparation can mean a day before any holy day, the preparation day on which Christ was crucified could well have been on a Wednesday, with the Passover Sabbath falling on a weekday (i.e., Thursday). In this scenario, the Passover meal would have been on a Tuesday. According to Leviticus 23:5–8, the fourteenth of the first month is the day of the Passover meal and the following day, the fifteenth, is the Passover Sabbath:

"In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord. Seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work therein."

Thus, the Passover Sabbath could be on a weekday.

Christ died on the preparation day at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) and was buried before sunset. If that day were a Wednesday, then three full days and three full nights later would be Saturday at 3:00 p.m.—just before sunset. According to this chronology, Christ would have been resurrected on Saturday after 3:00 p.m., yet before sunset. This is evidently what some early Christians believed: that the Resurrection took place on the Sabbath.

In the early Christian church, many believed that Christ's Resurrection occurred on the Sabbath (Saturday), though by the fifth century A.D. Easter Sunday celebrations became widespread. Church historian Socrates (ca. 440 A.D.), in a section entitled "Differences of usage in regard to Easter," revealed that in the East there were Christians who celebrated Easter on the Sabbath instead of Sunday. He stated:

"Others in the East kept that feast on the Sabbath indeed."¹⁰

Bishop Gregory of Tours (A.D. 538–594) tells us that many in France believed Christ arose on the seventh day of the week, even though he himself defended a Sunday Resurrection belief, stating:

"Now in our belief the Resurrection of the Lord was on the first day, and not on the seventh as many deem."¹¹

Alexander Ross (A.D. 1590–1654) writes that the Armenians believed in a Saturday Resurrection, though he disagreed with them:

“The Armenii taught ... that Christ rose from the dead on the Sabbath day, whereas the Scripture tells us plainly that He arose on the third day.”¹²

Though the belief that Christ rose on the Sabbath appears to have been largely forgotten today, vestiges of this view survive in certain Eastern Church ceremonies. For example, in the Coptic Church on Holy Saturday, “following the ninth hour (i.e., 3:00 p.m.), the Divine Liturgy is celebrated.”¹³ As early as 400 A.D., both Socrates and Sozomen state that in Egypt there was a Sabbath evening celebration of the communion. In the Nestorian Church in India, the communion (Qurbana) is still celebrated at sunset on Holy Saturday in honor of Christ’s Resurrection. Mar Aprem states:

“On Holy Saturday it is stated that Qurbana should be at sunset. Because it is believed that Jesus rose from the tomb at that time.”¹⁴

Since Christ died at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) on the day of preparation—and if this day were a Wednesday—then a full three days and three nights later would bring us to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. Given that Christ was buried before sunset, He would have been raised before sunset. The Resurrection on Saturday would thus have occurred between 3:00 p.m. and sunset.

[NB: A work tracing the history of the Wednesday crucifixion doctrine since the mid-1800s, titled *A History of the Saturday Resurrection Doctrine* by George Dellinger, is available for free download from www.friendsofsabbath.org.]

The references cited in this appendix are also available in the HTML version of the work at: <http://celticorthodoxy.com/2015/05/honoring-of-the-sabbath-in-the-historic-Orthodox-church/>

Appendix Section 2

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THE CONTROVERSY OVER FASTING ON SATURDAY BETWEEN CONSTANTINOPLE AND ROME

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The question of fasting on Saturday was a significant point of theological debate between the Eastern and Western churches during the first millennium of Christian history.¹ This issue is closely related to the fact that the Christian church, during the first several centuries after Christ, celebrated both Saturday and Sunday as weekly days of worship.

For example, a church historian of the fifth century, Socrates Scholasticus of Constantinople, noted that “For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.”² The *Apostolic Constitutions*, compiled in the fourth century probably in Antioch, states similarly that Christians should keep the Sabbath (Saturday) and the Lord’s day (Sunday) festivals “because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection.”³ It thus seems logical to assume, on the basis of these and other statements, that, with the exception of Rome and Alexandria, “throughout the [Christian] world” there were worship services on both Saturday and Sunday as late as the fifth century,⁴ with the Western church appearing to emphasize the importance of Sunday as the weekly day of worship. On the other hand, the Eastern church seemed to be torn by its desire to remain in harmony with its understanding of apostolic tradition and its need to keep good relations with Rome.

¹Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 3:378-386.

²Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.22, (*NPNF*² 2:132).

³*Apostolic Constitutions* 7.23, titled “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles” (*ANF* 7:469): “But keep the Sabbath, and the Lord’s day festival; because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection.” Cf. *ibid.*, 8.33 (*ANF* 7.495): “Peter and Paul do make the following constitutions. Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath-day and the Lord’s day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety. We have said that the Sabbath is on account of the creation and the Lord’s day of the resurrection.”

⁴Sozomen writes: “The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed in Rome or at Alexandria. There are several cities and villages in Egypt where, contrary to the usage established elsewhere, the people meet together on Sabbath evenings, and, although they have dined previously, partake of the mysteries” (*Ecclesiastical History* 7.19 [*NPNF*² 2:390]). Cf. Kenneth A. Strand, “The Sabbath and Sunday from the Second through the Fifth Centuries” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 323-332.

The Eastern-Western conflict over the day of worship is related to the question of fasting on Sabbath. These conflicts are especially evident in three historical events: the Fifth-Sixth Ecumenical Council held in Trullo in 691, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Bulgarian church, and the Great Schism of 1054.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and critically assess the canons of the Council in Trullo regarding the Saturday-fasting controversy, the encyclical of Patriarch Photius connected to the status of the Bulgarian church, and the documents associated with the Great Schism. This analysis attempts to explain why the matter of fasting on Saturday played such a central role in disagreements between the Eastern and Western churches.

The Fifth-Sixth Ecumenical Council in Trullo

The Council in Trullo, called by Emperor Justinian II in 691, met in the imperial banqueting hall (*in trullum*) at Constantinople.⁵ The purpose of this council, also known as the Fifth-Sixth Council,⁶ was to complete the work of the Fifth (553) and Sixth (681) Ecumenical Councils.⁷ In the absence of the emperor, the council was presided over by Paul III, the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, and attended by Patriarchs Petros III of Alexandria, Georgios II of Antioch, Anastasios II of Jerusalem, as well as by 211 bishops.⁸

There are disagreements among scholars as to whether the Western church was officially represented at this council. Historians and theologians of the Western church claim that Rome was not represented. An evidence of that claim is found in Pope Sergius III's rejection of certain canons of the council, particularly those statements giving the patriarch of Constantinople equal status with the Roman pope.⁹ However, historians of the Eastern church point out that the pope of Rome was represented through the delegation of bishops from Eastern Illyricum. In addition to these Western representatives, there were four bishops from Crete: Basilios of Gortyna, Nikitas of Kydonia, Sisinos of Chersonisos, and Theopemptos. Basilios of Gortyna signed the canons of the synod in the following way: "Basilios episcopus Gortinae, metropolis Christum amantis Cretae insulae et . . . totius synodi sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae" ("Basilios, bishop of Gortyna, metropolis of the Lord loving island of Crete and . . . of the whole synod of the Holy Church of

⁵Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), s.v. "Trullan Synod."

⁶The Fifth-Sixth Council is known also in church history as *Pentekte* (Greek) and *Quinisextum* (Latin).

⁷The Fifth Ecumenical Council was convened in 553 in order to confirm the anathema on Origen, Didymos the Blind, and Evagrius Pontikos for the Platonizing tendencies. The Sixth Ecumenical Council was also held in the *trullum* of the imperial palace in Constantinople from 680 to 681 (Isaias Simonopetrites, "The Pastoral Sensitivity of the Canons of the Council in Trullo [691-692]," *GOTR* 40 [1995]: 45-46).

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Brauer, 830.

Rome”).¹⁰ Nevertheless in spite of this evidence, the question of whether Rome was officially represented at the Council of Trullo will probably remain a point of debate between the Western and Eastern churches.

However, what is of interest for this work is that out of the 102 canons issued by the Fifth-Sixth Council, the 29th, 52d, 55th, 56th, and 89th refer to the issue of fasting in general, as well as to fasting on Saturday.¹¹ Why was so much space dedicated to the problem of fasting, particularly to fasting on Saturday? What is the historical background of this controversy?

From apostolic times Christians have practiced fasting.¹² Most early Christians of Jewish background apparently followed the Jewish custom of fasting and prayer on Mondays and Thursdays. However, contrary to that Jewish practice, at least some in the Christian church near the end of the first century adopted Wednesdays and Fridays as the days of fasting.¹³ Furthermore, by the end of the fifth century, the Latin church replaced Wednesday with Saturday as a fasting day,¹⁴ probably in opposition to the Jews and to Christians of Jewish background or leanings who were reluctant to change their practice of fasting on certain days.¹⁵ Nevertheless, in the Eastern churches it was a general rule that there should be no fasting on Saturday and, specifically, that Saturday as well as Sunday should be exempt from fasting in the period before Easter.¹⁶ The Council in Trullo strongly reacted against these changes made by Rome, claiming that by introducing Saturday as the day of fasting, the Roman church acted against the apostolic tradition clearly expressed in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and that should be followed by all Christians.¹⁷ What follows is a short review of the key points mentioned in canons 29, 52, 55, 56, and 89 of the Council in Trullo concerning the controversy of fasting in general and particularly on Saturday.

Canon 29

A canon of the Synod of Carthage says that the holy mysteries of the altar are not to be performed but by men who are fasting, except on one day in the year on which the Supper of the Lord is celebrated. At that time, on

¹⁰Ioan Dura, “The Canons of the Sixth Ecumenical Synod concerning Fasting and Their Application to the Present Needs of the Orthodox Faithful,” *GOTR* 40 (1995): 153-154.

¹¹See Archimandrite Akakios, *Fasting in the Orthodox Church* (Etna, CA: [np], 1990), 107.

¹²See Acts 13:2; 14:23.

¹³Tia M. Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists: Errors of the Latins* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 34-35. See also Brauer, s.v. “Fast Days.”

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1847-1855), 3:402.

¹⁶Ibid, 402.

¹⁷Kolbaba, 34-35.

account perhaps of certain occasions in those places useful to the Church, even the holy Fathers themselves made use of this dispensation. But since nothing leads us to abandon exact observance, we decree that the Apostolic and Patristic tradition shall be followed; and define that it is not right to break the fast on the fifth feria of the last week of Lent, and thus to do dishonour to the whole of Lent.¹⁸

The pronouncement issued by the Synod in Carthage declared that the Holy Eucharist can be officiated by nonfasting priests once a year on Holy Thursdays. The reasoning behind this pronouncement was that Jesus celebrated the “Pascha of the law” with his disciples before offering his own “spiritual Pascha,” and thus the apostles had not fasted when they had eaten the latter, since they had already taken “Pascha of the law.”¹⁹

However, the fathers of the Council in Trullo amended this pronouncement made by the Synod of Carthage, declaring that the clergy should fast whenever they celebrate the holy liturgy, and that the Lenten fast, as well as that of Wednesday and Friday, is obligatory. Thus the priests should follow the tradition of the apostles and the fathers, and “the fast should not be broken upon the fifth *feria* [Maundy Thursday] of the last week of Lent, and so the whole Lent be dishonoured.”²⁰ Therefore, only those priests who are fasting can perform the liturgy.

It seems obvious that this assertion was affirmed in opposition to what was the practice in the Western part of Christianity; namely, the Church of Rome was allowing its priests to carry out the holy liturgy on the Thursday of Lent without fasting.²¹

Canon 52

On all days of the holy fast of Lent, except on the Sabbath, the Lord’s day and the holy day of the Annunciation, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is to be said.²²

During Lent the holy liturgy was offered only on Saturdays and Sundays when fasting was not permitted. The Synod of Laodicea in canon 49 thus established for the duration of Lent the practice of keeping a part of the gifts sanctified in the liturgy of Saturdays and Sundays on the altar so that the believers could receive Holy Communion on week days.²³ “The bread once offered and consecrated is not to be consecrated anew on another day but a new offering is made of what was before consecrated and presanctified.”²⁴ In

¹⁸“The Canons of the Council in Trullo,” *NPNF*² 14:378. Cf. N. Milas, *Pravila Pravoslavne Crkve s Tumacenjima* (Novi Sad, 1895-1896), 136.

¹⁹“The Canons of the Council in Trullo,” *NPNF*² 14:378. Cf. Dura, 150.

²⁰“The Canons of the Council in Trullo,” *NPNF*² 14:378.

²¹See Dura, 151.

²²“The Canons of the Council in Trullo,” *NPNF*² 14:389.

²³*Ibid.* See also Dura, 151.

²⁴*NPNF*² 14:389, notes on Canon 52 by van Espen.

order not to interrupt the fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, the presanctified gifts were received in the evening after Vespers, when only the liturgy of the presanctified gifts was celebrated and not the complete liturgy.

Thus on Saturdays and Sundays, when fasting was not permitted even during Lent, the complete liturgy was celebrated. Consequently, the content of canon 52 of the Council in Trullo preserved this custom of the liturgy of the presanctified gifts decreed by the Synod of Laodicea.

Although one can find a large number of possible explanations to understand this clear distinction between Saturday, Sunday, and other days of the week, canon 52 seems to indicate that in the early centuries of the Christian church there was a special place in the worship schedule not only for Sunday, but also for Saturday. The fact that the period of Lent was considered to be one of the most sacred and significant of all festivals in the church's yearly calendar raises the following questions: Why was the liturgy during Lent offered on both Saturdays and Sundays? What was the reason for forbidding fasting on Saturdays and Sundays?

Canon 55

Since we understand that in the city of the Romans, in the holy fast of Lent they fast on the Saturdays, contrary to the ecclesiastical observance which is traditional, it seemed good to the holy synod that also in the Church of the Romans the canon shall immovably stand fast which says: "If any cleric shall be found to fast on a Sunday or Saturday (except on one occasion only) he is to be deposed; and if he is a layman he shall be cut off."²⁵

In this canon, the fathers of the Council in Trullo reacted against the noncanonical practice of fasting by the church in Rome on Saturdays and Sundays during Lent. At the end of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, "Ecclesiastical Canon" no. 64 states: "If any one of the clergy be found to fast on the Lord's day, or on the Sabbath-day, excepting one only, let him be deprived; but if he be one of the laity, let him be suspended."²⁶ On the basis of this statement, the Eastern church adopted, as a general rule, that there should be no fasting

²⁵"The Canons of the Council in Trullo," *NPNF*² 14:391.

²⁶"Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," *ANF* 7:504. The *Apostolic Constitutions*

7.23 also states on which days of the week Christians are to fast and not to fast and for what reasons: "But let not your fast be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth days of the week. But do you either fast the entire five days, or on the fourth day of the week, and on the day of the Preparation, because on the fourth day the condemnation went out against the Lord, Judas then promising to betray Him for money; and you must fast on the day of the Preparation, because on that day the Lord suffered the death of the cross under Pontius Pilate. But keep the Sabbath, and the Lord's day festival; because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection. But there is one only Sabbath to be observed by you in the whole year, which is that of our Lord's burial, on which men ought to keep a fast, but not a festival. For inasmuch as the Creator was then under the earth, the sorrow for him is more forcible than the joy for the creation; for the Creator is more honourable by nature and dignity than His own creatures" (*ANF* 7:469).

on Sabbath, and that Sabbath and Sunday should be excluded from the period of fasting before Lent. The one exception in the whole liturgical year was the Sabbath, “which is that of the Lord’s burial,” “for inasmuch as the Creator was then under the earth, the sorrow for him is more forcible than the joy of creation.”²⁷

Contrary to the position of the Eastern church and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the Western church, in opposition to Jews and Judaists (Christians of Jewish background or leanings), adopted the practice of observing Saturday as a day of fasting. However, Augustine, Ambrose of Milan, and Jerome claimed that this matter had not been decided by divine authority and that there was no particular connection with the essence of faith and of sanctification. They believed that “in such matters each individual should follow the custom of his own church, or of the country in which he resided, and strive that the bond of charity might not be broken by differences in such unimportant matters.”²⁸ Augustine writes that “God did not lay down a rule concerning fasting or eating on the seventh-day of the week, either at the time of His hallowing that day because in it He rested from His works, or afterwards when He gave precepts to the Hebrew nation concerning the observance of that day.”²⁹ Thus he emphasizes that neither the Holy Scriptures nor the universal tradition of the church says anything decisive on this point and that only weak minds insist on this practice as being the only right one.³⁰

In spite of Augustine’s position, however, which seems to express a great dose of religious liberty in the domain of “unessential matters,” the historical

²⁷Ibid. The period of fasting before Easter was intended to give an opportunity to Christians to engage in the process of self-examination, repentance, abstinence from the pleasures of the world, the diligent reading of God’s word in order to be able to enter into the process of commemoration of the new creation in humanity which came from the resurrection and glorification of Christ (see Neander, 3:408).

²⁸Neander, 3:402.

²⁹Augustine, *Epistle* 36, to Casulanus, in *NPNF*¹ 1:265-270.

³⁰Augustine writes: “As to the question on which you wish my opinion, whether it is lawful to fast on the seventh day of the week, I answer, that if it were wholly unlawful, neither Moses nor Elijah, nor our Lord himself, would have fasted for forty successive days. But by the same argument it is proved that even on the Lord’s day fasting is not unlawful. And yet, if any one were to think that the Lord’s day should be appointed a day of fasting, in the same way as the seventh day is observed by some, such a man would be regarded, and not unjustly, as bringing a great cause of offence into the Church. For in those things concerning which the divine Scriptures have laid down no definitive rule, the custom of the people of God, or the practices instituted by their fathers, are to be held as the law of the Church. If we choose to fall into a debate about these things, and to denounce one party merely because their custom differs from that of others, the consequence must be an endless contention, in which the utmost care is necessary lest the storm of conflict overcast with clouds the calmness of brotherly love, while the strength is spent in mere controversy which cannot adduce on either side any decisive testimonies of truth” (ibid.). See also Neander, 3:402.

evidence shows something different; namely, that the “Roman church . . . from a very early period required uniformity in things unessential.”³¹ The Roman church unmistakably claimed that “this custom [of fasting on Sabbath] came down from Peter, the first of the apostles, and hence ought to be universally observed.”³²

Further, at the same time that Augustine voiced his opinion about fasting, the Roman bishop Innocent issued a declaration to the Spanish bishop Decentius, “that the Sabbath, like Friday, must be observed as a fast day.”³³ In opposition to the entire ecclesiastical tradition expressed in the *Apostolic Constitutions* that the Sabbath is the commemoration of the joy of creation, Innocent argued that the Sabbath necessarily belongs to the period of sorrow because after Jesus’ crucifixion the apostles were plunged into grief and hid themselves due to fear, and that the Sabbath precedes Sunday, the joyful day of resurrection.³⁴

The controversy over fasting on Sabbath unmistakably shows that “the displacement of Saturday by Sunday as the day of weekly Christian worship and rest was a long and slow process. Evidence from the fifth century indicates that also at that time both Sabbath and Sunday were observed generally throughout the Christian world, except in Rome and Alexandria.”³⁵ Milas writes:

Christians celebrated Sunday, the day on which Christ was resurrected from death and through this accomplished his work of redemption. This day for Christians was a day of joy and brotherly meetings in Christ as well as the day of repentance for committed sins. Almost the same meaning was attributed to the Sabbath. Christians considered the Sabbath too as a day of joy and remembrance of the creation of the world and the rest of God.³⁶

On Sabbath in the Eastern church, assemblies were held, sermons preached, and communion celebrated.³⁷ Two canons issued by the Synod of Laodicea in Phrygia in 360 mentioned the Sabbath and some of the activities that the Christians should practice on Sabbath. Canon 16 states that “On Saturday, the Gospels and other portions of the Scripture shall be read aloud.”³⁸ However, in apparently sharp contradiction, canon 29 of the same Synod proposes that “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honour, in every way possible as Christians. If however, they are found Judaizing, they

³¹Neander, 3:403.

³²Ibid.

³³“Sabbato jejunandum esse ratio evidentissima demonstrat” (ibid.).

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Strand, 330. See also, Milas, 136.

³⁶Milas, 136.

³⁷Neander, 401.

³⁸“The Canons of the Synod of Laodicea,” *NPNF*² 14:133.

shall be shut out from Christ.”³⁹ While this is a statement against the practice of judaizing, however, Western Christianity was not yet ready to acknowledge fully that the real origin of the change of the day of fasting was in opposition to the Jewish communities, asserting instead that Peter established a fast on the Sabbath in preparation for the dispute with Simon Magus.

What is clear, however, is that canon 29 of the Synod of Laodicea demonstrates that, first, there were Christians resting on the Sabbath day in the second part of the fourth century, and who were doing so in recognition of the Creator’s own rest on the Sabbath at the end of Creation week. Second, August Neander rightly states that “In many districts, a punctual Jewish observance of the Sabbath must doubtless have become common: hence the council of Laodicea considered it necessary to order, that Christians should not celebrate this day after the Jewish manner, nor consider themselves bound to abstain from labour.”⁴⁰ Zeger-Bernard van Espen also writes that “among the Greeks the Sabbath was kept exactly as the Lord’s day except so far as the cessation of work was concerned.”⁴¹

Therefore, the controversy over the fasting on Sabbath, which was the point of debate at the Council in Trullo, is only the by-product of the deep conviction of the Christian church in the East during the first centuries of the Christian era that the Sabbath is the day of rest established by God at the time of the creation of the world. In addition to the evidence of canon 29, three key statements from the *Apostolic Constitutions* reinforce the statements of canon 55 concerning the Sabbath:

1. In the *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.59, the Sabbath is declared along with Sunday to be the day of church assemblies:

But assemble yourselves together every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the Lord’s house: in the morning saying the sixty- second Psalm, and in the evening the hundred and fortieth, but principally on the Sabbath-day. And of the day of our Lord’s resurrection, which is the Lord’s day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent him to us, and condescended to let him suffer, and raised Him from the dead. Otherwise what apology will he make to God who does not assemble on that day to hear the saving word concerning resurrection?⁴²

2. The *Apostolic Constitutions* states that on the Sabbath and on Sunday the slaves should rest from their labors and attend church with the rest of the Christians to listen to preaching from the Holy Scriptures:

Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath day and the Lord’s day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety. We have

³⁹Ibid., 14:148.

⁴⁰Neander, 401.

⁴¹“The Canons of the Synod of Laodicea,” *NPNF*² 14:133, notes by van Espen.

⁴²“Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,” *ANF* 7:422-423.

said that the Sabbath is on account of the creation, and the Lord's day of resurrection.⁴³

3. The *Apostolic Constitutions* declares that there should be no fasting on Sabbath, except for the Sabbath during which Jesus lay resting in the tomb, given that the Sabbath reminds one of the joy and delight of the creation of the world. If someone refuses to follow this decree, he should be excluded from the fellowship of the church.⁴⁴

Canon 56

We have likewise learned that in the regions of Armenia and in other places certain people eat eggs and cheese on the Sabbaths and Lord's days of the holy Lent. It seems good therefore that the whole Church of God which is in all the world should follow one rule and keep the fast perfectly, and as they abstain from everything which is killed, so also should they from eggs and cheese, which are the fruit and produce of those animals from which we abstain. But if any shall not observe this law, if they be clerics, let them be deposed; but if laymen, let them be cut off.⁴⁵

This canon demonstrates that the Christians in the East, although they did not fast on the Sabbath and on the Sundays of Lent, did, however, abstain from "everything which is killed . . . from eggs and cheese, which are the fruit and produce of those animals,"⁴⁶ from which they refrained during the fasting days. In writing this stipulation, the fathers of the Council in Trullo emphasized the need to remain faithful to canon 69 of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which states:

If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, or reader, or singer, does not fast the fast of forty days, or the fourth day of the week, and the day of the Preparation, let him be deprived, except he be hindered by weakness of body. But if he be one of the laity, let him be suspended.⁴⁷

It is necessary, according to canon 56, that the whole universal church of God fast in the manner already established as it is expressed in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. This warning is especially directed toward the church of Armenia "and in other places," probably having in mind primarily the church in Rome.

In canon 56, one can easily detect the urgency of the fathers of the Council in Trullo to remain faithful to the teachings of the apostles,⁴⁸ to the earlier, original traditions, and to what ultimately leads to the teachings of the early church and Christ himself. As with the other canons, this canon

⁴³Ibid., 7:495.

⁴⁴Ibid., 7:504.

⁴⁵"The Canons of the Council in Trullo," *NPNF*² 14:391.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷"Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," *ANF* 7:504.

⁴⁸They believed that the teaching of the apostles was expressed in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

also expresses the strong intent of the Council in Trullo to have some special regulations for Sabbath and Sunday.

Canon 89

The faithful spending the days of the Salutory Passion in fasting, praying and compunction of heart, ought to fast until the midnight of the Great Sabbath: since the divine Evangelists, Matthew and Luke, have shewn us how late at night it was [that the resurrection took place], the one by using the words *ovye. sabba,ton*, and the other by the words *o;rqrrou baqe,oj*.⁴⁹

As we have stated earlier, there was only one Sabbath during the year when, according to the Council in Trullo, the faithful should fast: the Great Sabbath of Lent. The *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.23 describe this as the Sabbath of “our Lord’s burial, on which men ought to keep a fast, but not a festival. For inasmuch as the Creator was then under the earth, the sorrow for him is more forcible than the joy for the creation.”⁵⁰ Canon 89 stipulates that the fast on the Great Sabbath should end about the middle of the Holy Saturday night,⁵¹ since “the divine Evangelists, Matthew and Luke, have shewn us how late at night” the resurrection took place. At the hour of the Lord’s resurrection, after the days of fasting, contrition, and humbling of soul, the faithful should cease fasting and begin to rejoice.

Regardless of one’s position regarding the theology of fasting, one can appreciate the preoccupation of the fathers of the Council in Trullo to remain in harmony with the teachings of the apostolic tradition and to maintain an ecclesiastical unity in the observance of fasting. Moreover, it is clear that for them the Sabbath day, as well as Sunday, had to be set apart not just as a special day of nonfasting, but also as a day of worship on which the faithful should experience the joy of the creation and the resurrection of Jesus.

The Controversy Concerning the Church in Bulgaria

Long before the controversy concerning who would have the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the church in Bulgaria in the ninth century, there were numerous quarrels between Eastern and Western Christianity.⁵² In 856, Theodora, empress of the Byzantine Empire,⁵³ retired from the court; and her underage son, Michael III, was appointed to succeed her under the

⁴⁹“The Canons of the Council in Trullo,” *NPNF*² 14:403, brackets original.

⁵⁰*Apostolic Constitutions*, *ANF* 7:469.

⁵¹Dura, 159.

⁵²See Jevsević Popović, *Opća Crkvena Istorija* (Sremski Karlovci: Srpska Manastirska Stamparija, 1912), 774-796. Frank Gavin, “Breach Between East and West,” in *An Outline of Christianity: The Story of Our Civilization*, 5 vols., ed. A. S. Peake and R. G. Parsons (London: Waverly, 1926), 2:189.

⁵³In 330, Constantine I established a second Roman capital at Byzantium (present-day Istanbul). When Rome fell in 476, the Byzantine Empire was founded on the remains of the once great Roman Empire with Constantinople as its capital.

protection of her brother, Bardas. However, Bardas and young Michael III allowed corruption and immorality to rule the court.⁵⁴ In response, the patriarch of Constantinople, Ignatius, refused communion to the young king, an act which infuriated Bardas and Michael. They removed Ignatius from his position and exiled him. Ignatius was succeeded by Photius, a layman, who was considered to be “the most learned scholar in the world . . . , the highly gifted man, distinguished as a philosopher in a generation, and displaying, as a theologian, qualities which bespeak genius.”⁵⁵

When news of the succession reached Pope Nicholas I (858-867), he sent two legates to investigate. When the legates arrived in Constantinople, they accepted gifts from Bardas’s supporters, and at the trial of Ignatius they took the side of Bardas. Thus Ignatius’s removal was confirmed.⁵⁶

However, in 862, Nicholas I reexamined the controversy and came to the conclusion that Ignatius was wrongly deposed. Because of this, he threatened Photius with excommunication, thereby further straining the relationship between Rome and Constantinople over the question of ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the church in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarians had been Christianized by missionaries from Constantinople and had received priests from the Eastern church. The Bulgarian king Bogoris (or Boris) had been baptized by Greek priests. However, Bogoris, upon further thought, decided that an ecclesiastical dependence on Constantinople might put the political independence of Bulgaria in danger. Therefore, he wrote to Rome, asking what has come to be called the “one hundred and five religious questions” and requesting the pope to send bishops to put the church in Bulgaria in order.⁵⁷ Nichols I honored Bogoris’s request, sending bishops who introduced the Latin form of worship and declared the church in Bulgaria to be the daughter of Rome. As a result, the Greek priests were humiliated and sent into exile to Constantinople. Distrust and aversion were transformed into open hostility.⁵⁸

In 867, the patriarch of Constantinople, Photius, wrote an encyclical to other patriarchs of the Eastern churches, accusing the Church of Rome of banditry and robbery of the church in Bulgaria, as well as accusing them of other abuses. The five abuses of Rome mentioned in this encyclical are:

1. observing Saturday as a fast day;
2. giving permission to the people to eat flesh food and animal products (cheese, milk, eggs) during the first week of Easter;
3. despising the priests from the East who live in a lawful marriage while their (Western) priests live in adultery and concubinage;

⁵⁴See Popovic, 778.

⁵⁵Gavin, 2:191.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Popovic,
780.

⁵⁸Ibid., 781; Gavin, 2:192. See also Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 158.

4. declining to give consent to the priests and bishops to conduct the sacrament of confirmation;
5. teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but adding the phrase “and the son” (*Filioque*).⁵⁹

This encyclical, which is sometimes called the *Magna Carta* of Eastern Orthodoxy, expresses a forceful declaration of Constantinople’s independence from Rome and finishes with the statement of dethronement and excommunication of Pope Nicholas I. At least during this short period of time, it seemed that Photius won in his criticism of Rome because of the logic of his argument and the support he had from the clergy and people.⁶⁰

It is significant for the Saturday/Sunday debate that at this critical point in the history of the relationship between the Eastern and Western parts of Christianity, the first point of disagreement mentioned in this encyclical is fasting on Sabbath. It is also interesting to notice that in this document Sunday is not mentioned as the nonfasting day. Of course, there were other issues behind this encyclical, such as the power struggle between the two segments of Christianity and aspirations to control certain territories; nevertheless, the problem of fasting on Sabbath not only remained on the agenda, but was still *the* item on the agenda of disagreements in the ninth century.

This first excommunication, in which Pope Nicholas I was also dethroned in 867, would find its echo from the Latin side in the eleventh century. Was fasting on Sabbath still an issue in the later controversy between the two Christian churches?

The Fasting on Sabbath in the Great Schism of 1054

In 1042, Constantine Monomachos was inaugurated as the new king of the Byzantine Empire. One year later Michael Cerularius become patriarch of the Eastern church. These two men would become the central protagonists in defending the interests of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Great Schism of 1054. Michael Cerularius was the real ruler not only of the church but also of the state, since soon after Constantine Monomachos became emperor, he suffered from paralysis and became a mere figurehead.⁶¹

In Rome, Pope Leo IX believed that he inherited absolute power over all Christian people and institutions from Peter himself.⁶² It seems that the Great Schism began with a letter written by Metropolitan Archbishop Leo of Achrida and Michael Cerularius to Bishop John of the church in Trani in southern Italy. However, the letter was intended not only for Bishop John, but also through him “to all the chief priests, and the priests of the Franks, and

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰See Gavin 2:193.

⁶¹Ibid. See also C. T. Marshall, “Schism, The Great,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (1987), 980.

⁶²Marshall, 981.

the monks, and the peoples, and to the most reverend pope himself.”⁶³ This open letter singles out two distinctive abuses of the Western church: it made a special attack on the practice of the Roman church of making the Sabbath a fast day, and the use of unleavened bread for the eucharist. It is interesting to notice that what was apparently the most controversial issue, that of the *Filioque*, is not mentioned in this letter.

Around the same time another learned theologian from the East, Nicetas Stethatos, wrote a booklet *Libellus Contra Latinos*, in which he accused the Roman church of breaking the rules of the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* against fasting on the Sabbath, as well as of being disobedient to the Scriptures and the canons of other church councils, which had forbidden this practice.⁶⁴

To these two accusing documents from the East came two replies from the Western side. Pope Leo IX wrote an *apologia* for the Roman church to Michael Cerularius and Leo of Achrida, claiming that “he was the successor of the apostle Peter, that he was invested with supreme authority over the universal church, and that his word was law for the faithful to obey.”⁶⁵ A second defence supporting Pope Leo IX came from Cardinal Humbert, who wrote his *Responsio* to Nicetas Stethatos.⁶⁶

Moreover, Pope Leo IX decided early in 1054 to send a group of theologians to Constantinople to discuss further the contended issues. This group consisted of three papal legates: Cardinal Humbert; Frederic, deacon and chancellor of the Church of Rome; and Peter, archbishop of Amalfi. Upon their arrival the papal legates discussed the disputed issues with the patriarch, the emperor, and publicly with Nicetas Stethatos in the presence of the emperor, his court, and other persons of high rank in affairs of state and church.⁶⁷ Patriarch Michael Cerularius was offended by the letter brought to him by the legates and responded to the accusations concerning the Sabbath observance by saying: “For we are commanded also to honour the Sabbath equally with [Sunday] the Lord’s [day], and to keep [it] and not to work on it.”⁶⁸

After these unsuccessful discussions and other attempts to bring the Eastern church into submission to the Church of Rome, there occurred one of the most dramatic and most devastating events in the history of Christianity. On July 16, 1054, the Sabbath day, when preparations had been made for the liturgy on that day, the three papal legates entered the Church of St. Sophia and laid the bull of excommunication on the altar and walked away,

⁶³Michael Cerularius and Leo of Achrida, “Epistle to John of Trani,” in *Patrologia graece*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857-1886), 120:835-845. See also R. L. Odom, “The Sabbath in the Great Schism of 1054,” *AUSS* 1 (1963): 74-80.

⁶⁴Nicetas Stethatos, “*Libellus Contra Latinos*,” (PG 120:1011-1022).

⁶⁵Leo IX, “Epistle 100, to Michael Cerularius and Leo of Achrida,” in *Patrologia latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844-1864), 143:745-768. See also Odom, 75.

⁶⁶Humbert, “*Responsio*,” (PG 120:1021-1038).

⁶⁷Humbert, “*Brevis et Succincta Commemoratio*,” (PL 143:1001, 1002).

⁶⁸Cerularius, “Letter I,” (PG 120:777, 7780).

toward Rome, shaking the dust from their feet. From that day on, the fracture between Constantinople and Rome has never been healed and the Church of Rome has considered Eastern Orthodox Christendom as excommunicated and heretical.

In his work, *Adversus Calumnias Graecorum* (*Against the Calumnies of the Greeks*), Cardinal Humbert wrote:

Therefore, in such observance of the Sabbath, where and in what way do we [Latins] have anything in common with the Jews? For they are idle and keep a holiday on the Sabbath, neither ploughing nor reaping, and by reason of custom do not work, but they hold a festivity and a dinner, and their menservants, maidservants, cattle, and beasts of burden rest. But we [Latins] observe none of these things, but we do every (sort of) work, as (we do) on the preceding five days, and we fast as we (are wont to) fast on the sixth day [Friday] next to it.

However, you [Greeks], if you do not judaize, tell (us) why do you have something in common with the Jews with the similar observance of the Sabbath? They certainly observe the Sabbath, and you observe (it); they dine, and always break the fast, on the Sabbath. In their forty day period they break the fast every Sabbath except one, and you [Greeks] in your forty day period break the fast every Sabbath except one. They [the Jews] have a twofold reason for observing the Sabbath, obviously by reason of the precept of Moses, and because the disciples were saddened and heavy (of heart) on this (Sabbath) day on account of the death of the Lord, whom they did not believe to be about to be resurrected. Wherefore, because you observe Sabbath with the Jews and with us Sunday, Lord's day, you appear by such observance to imitate the sect of the Nazarenes, who in this manner accept the Christianity that they might not give up Judaism.

But the Latin church, in compassionate regard for the Lord in (His) suffering and death, rejoice in (His) resurrection on the [Sunday] Lord's day, when concern much troubled the Jews as they were seeking to corrupt the guards of the sepulchre by means of money. Wherefore, we [Latins], holding unto the present time the apostolic tradition concerning the Sabbath, and desiring to hold (it) unto the end, are careful to subscribe to that which our ancient and venerable fathers declared and confirmed, among whom the most blessed Pope Sylvester, the spiritual father of the Emperor Constantine the Great, said, among other things:

"If every [Sunday] Lord's day on account of the [Lord's] resurrection is to be kept in the joy of Christians, then every Sabbath day [on account] of the burial is to be estimated in execration of the Jews. For all the disciples of the Lord had a lamentation on the Sabbath, bewailing the buried Lord, and gladness [prevailed] for the exulting Jews. But for the fasting apostles sadness reigned. Let us [Christians], therefore, be sad with the saddened on account of the burial of the Lord, if we would rejoice with them on account of the resurrection of the Lord. For it is not proper that we should observe on account of Jewish custom, the subversions of the foods and ceremonies of the Jews."

These and similar things having been said by St. Sylvester, this tradition of the apostolic see did not please some of the Easterners, but they choose rather to observe the Sabbath with the Jews.⁶⁹

Cardinal Humbert argued that the Christians from the East celebrate the Sabbath in a similar way as do the Jews (“why you have something in common with the Jews in a similar observance of the Sabbath?”; “They certainly observe the Sabbath, and you observe [it]”). He also states that the Jews and by analogy the Christians from the East “are idle and keep a holiday on the Sabbath, neither ploughing nor reaping, and by the reason of custom do not work.” Further, he explains the theological reasons why the Jews and the Christians from the East observe the Sabbath: observing “the precept of Moses,” most likely meaning the revelation given to humanity through the prophet Moses in the Pentateuch and more specifically the Ten Commandments, and (2) the fasting of the Orthodox Church on only one Sabbath during the year—the day when Christ was in the tomb and “the disciples were saddened and heavy (of heart) . . . on account of the death of the Lord.” Cardinal Humbert concludes that since the Christians from the East “observe the Sabbath with the Jews” and the Lord’s Day (Sunday) with the Latin church, they must be designated as a sect.

At least equally important, if not more so, is the response given by Patriarch Michael Cerularius, in which he states that Christians are “commanded also to honour the Sabbath equally with the [Sunday] the Lord’s [day], and to keep [it] and not to work on it.” Consequently, Cerularius does not deny the accusations made by Humbert, but argues that the Christians are “commanded,” probably meaning by biblical revelation and the apostolic tradition, to honour, worship, and not work on the Sabbath, even as on Sunday.

Summary and Conclusions

The dispute between Rome and Constantinople on the fasting on Sabbath was one of the most controversial theological issues between the two segments of Christianity, lasting for more than one thousand years. Although sometimes this theological quarrel is blurred with cultural and nonbiblical elements, one cannot but appreciate the resolve of the fathers of the Council of Trullo, Patriarch Photius, and Patriarch Cerularius to remain faithful to the tradition of the apostles and church fathers.

Five canons of the Synod in Trullo emphasize, in one way or another (four directly), the necessity for the Christian church to remain faithful to the truth about not fasting on Sabbath as expressed in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. The Sabbath, along with Sunday, was a day when Christians should assemble, sing psalms, and pray in the house of the Lord. On Sabbath, the slaves should rest from their labors, attend church, and listen to the preaching from the Holy Scriptures with the rest of the Christians. Finally, there should be no

⁶⁹Humbert, “Adversus Calumnias Graecorum,” (PL 143:936, 937); cited from Odom, 77-79.

fasting on Sabbath (or Sunday), because the Sabbath reminds us of the joy and delight of the creation of the world.

In the dispute between the East and the West on the subject of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Church in Bulgaria, Patriarch Photius in his encyclical against Rome mentioned, in the first place, the fasting on Sabbath, that is, the decision of the Roman church to reject and disregard the *Apostolic Constitutions* and to pronounce the Sabbath a day of fasting. It means that the struggle to understand the mystery of the Sabbath is still there in the ninth century.

Finally, in the eleventh century, after the Great Schism in 1054, Patriarch Cerularius made a tremendous statement that Christians are “commanded to honour the Sabbath . . . to keep [it] and not to work on it.”⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the Eastern Orthodox Church did not follow the words of Patriarch Michael Cerularius. In the centuries to follow, little by little, Eastern Orthodoxy distanced itself in its understanding of the Sabbath from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, from the fathers assembled at the Synod of Trullo, and from Patriarchs Photius and Cerularius, and came ever closer to the Church of Rome’s understanding of the Sabbath.

⁷⁰Cerularius (PG 120:777, 778).

Appendix Section 3:

THE DIDACHE, ST. IGNATIUS, AND THE SABBATH

Over the years I have been in contact with the authors of the website *cogwriter.com*. Although we do not agree with their views on rejecting the Trinity (we affirm the tri-unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the name into which we are baptized, YAHWEH), they have published many valuable materials. One article, in particular, that I believe is useful is their “19th Century Mistranslations of the Didache and Other Letters about ‘Lord’s Day’.” I have obtained permission to reproduce this article regarding the Didache. More on this topic can also be found in the subchapter discussing the liturgies used in the Orthodox Church.

“19th Century Mistranslations of the Didache and Other Letters about ‘Lord’s Day’”

By Dr. Bob Thiel – cogwriter.com

Some people, on the internet and elsewhere, have pointed to some basically 19th century translations of certain ancient documents in an attempt to support their contention that Sunday was observed early on by the original Christians.

The Didache is an ancient letter that may have been written near the time of the Apostle John’s death. Many consider it to contain the earliest indirect reference to Sunday worship by Christians.

Ignatius was an early leader in Antioch who apparently knew some of the apostles, as well as Polycarp the Bishop (or Pastor) in Smyrna (a part of Asia Minor). One of Ignatius’ writings, called his Letter to the Magnesians, is often cited as proof that Sunday was observed by early Christians. But is that what he really was teaching?

The late French Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie Danielou is amongst those that have claimed that Sunday observance by Christians is supported by the Didache and Ignatius’ Letter to the Magnesians [1].

But, do either of these documents support the observance of [Sunday](#)?

This article will discuss some of these writings and will include some of the original Greek to demonstrate what the early writings actually teach.

Early Writings

Before getting to those writings, there are two that perhaps should be mentioned first.

The first is the alleged Epistle of Barnabas. This anonymous document is sometimes cited as proof for Sunday worship, but scholars do not believe that Barnabas wrote it [2]. It is not a truly “Christian” writing. It essentially claims God wanted the ‘eighth day’ instead of the seventh-day Sabbath in the Book of Isaiah (even though terms for eight or eighth are never mentioned in Isaiah). Like some other heretical writings, it relies heavily on allegory to interpret the Bible.

There is also a quote allegedly from Ignatius’ Letter to the Trallians. However this “quote” is from verse 9 in the ‘longer version’ of that letter, which scholars discount as not authentic—it was

lengthened much later by someone else—the shorter version, whose authenticity is widely accepted, says nothing about “the Lord’s Day” [3].

The Didache

The Didache has been cited as the earliest non-Scriptural “proof” of Sunday worship by those who profess Christ [4], although it does not ever use the word Sunday nor the expression ‘first day of the week.’

However, verse 14.1 is often cited as proof of Sunday observance by promoters of Sunday observance.

The Greek expression in verse 14.1 in the Didache, is:

Κατὰ κυριακὴν δε κυρίου [5].

The Greek term κυριακὴν is often transliterated as kuriaki/kyriake.

Here is something from a Catholic priest and scholar on the meaning of κυριακὴν:

... the Greek kyriake, meaning “belonging to the Lord (kyrios),” from which the English word “church” is derived. [6]

Basically kuriaki means the Lord’s way.

I believe I have translated verse 14.1 in the Didache, properly below (with two options):

According to the Lord’s way, even the Lord’s.

or

According to the Lordly {way}, even the Lord’s.

However, it has normally been incorrectly translated by many Protestant scholars. Here are two examples:

“On the Lord’s day of the Lord,” by Kirsopp Lake [7].

“But every Lord’s day,” by Hall and Napier [8].

There are at least two reasons that the above by Lake, as well as Hall & Napier, can be shown to be mistranslated.

The first is that the translators should have realized that the Greek term for “day” (ἡμέρα) is missing in verse 14.1 [9] and is not required by the context.

The second is how each of them began the translation of this particular verse. The beginning in both translations is in error and is inconsistent with the translators other translations in this letter.

The Greek word translated in verse 14.1 as “On the” by Kirsopp Lake and “But every” by Hall and Napier (Κατὰ) truly does mean “According to” as I have translated it. Κατὰ should not be translated as “On the” or “But every.”

The Greek word Κατὰ is translated as “according to” by Kirsopp Lake five times (1.5, 11.3, 12.4, 13.5, and 13.7 [10]) and “with respect” one time (4.10). The other times Lake used the term “on” (verses 1.4, 7.3, 8.1a, 8.1b, 11.12, 16.8 [11]), it was NOT a translation from the Greek term Κατὰ.

Also the one time the Didache uses “on” with a day (which is in the translations of both Lake and Hall/Napier), it does not use Κατὰ, but it does include the Greek term for day (verse 8.1b) [12].

It may be of interest to note that in the KJV New Testament, Κατά is translated as “according to” approximately 110 times, and the only time (Acts 8:36) it is inaccurately translated as “on” it is not translated as “on” in the NKJV or NIV.

Hall and Napier translated Κατὰ as “according to” the six other times it is translated that SAME letter (see verses 1.5, 4.10, 11.3, 12.4, 13.5, and 13.7 [13]) and never translated it as “But every.” The one other time Hall and Napier used the term “But every” (verse 13.1) while translating the Didache it is not translated from the term Κατὰ [14]. Also, it may be of interest to note that the KJV never translated Κατὰ as “but every.”

Hence it appears that several translators intentionally exercised bias when translating verse 14.1.

The context of this portion of the Didache suggests that it may be referring to the [Christian Passover](#) (compare with I Corinthians 22:23-29) or some other gathering (compare with Acts 2:42), but only a forced and inaccurate translation would suggest Sunday (which is what many Sunday advocates suggest). The belief that this refers to Passover is centuries old as F. Coneybeare reported it was a belief of the Paulini:

But the Paulini also keep the feast of the Pascha on the same day (as the Jews), whatever be the day of the full moon, they call it Kuriaki, as the Jews call it Sabbath, even though it be not a Sabbath. [15]

Since the Protestant translating scholars of the Didache did not observe an annual Christian Passover and tended to be Sunday observers, this may explain why they did not translate it literally.

Ignatius' Letter to the Magnesians

The other major claim in favor of early Sunday worship is from Ignatius' Letter to the Magnesians.

Here is what the Greek states:

Εἰ οὖν οἱ ἐν παλαιοῖς πράγμασιν ἀναστραφέντες εἰς καινότητα ἐλπίδος ἦλθον, μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες, ἐν ἡ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν ἀνέτειλεν δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, <ὄν> τινες ἀρνούνται, δι' οὐ μυστηρίου ἐλάβομεν τὸ πιστεύειν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὑπομένομεν, ἵνα εὐρεθώμεν μαθηταὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ μόνου διδασκάλου ἡμῶν. [16]

Here is a fairly typical 19th Century translation of verse 9.1, by Dr. J.B. Lightfoot:

If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny — a mystery whereby we attained unto

belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher [17].

But is that correct?

It should be noted that the word for 'day' is not in the Greek text.

Interestingly, like Lake and Hall/Napier, Dr. Lightfoot also failed to translate *κατά*, which is in the text [18] as "according to." Yet, Lightfoot did translate *κατά* as "according to" in three other places in this letter (verses 3.1, 10.1, 13.2 [19]). He also failed to do so in his translation of the Didache, where he began verse 14.1 with "And on" [20]—an apparently intentional and improper translation as discussed above (Lightfoot translated *κατά* as "according to" five other times in the Didache [21]).

It is sad that these translators, all born in the 19th century, all decided to selectively change the meaning of a word.

Why?

Well, in order to support Sunday worship.

Yet, noted scholar Guy Fritz concluded that the text in Ignatius is too ambiguous to be used to support Sunday worship:

"in the study of the 'Lord's day' in the early church ... {it} cannot at the present time properly be introduced as evidence indicating its [Sunday] observance" [22].

The 19th century theologian John Kitto understood that neither the context nor the Greek required adding the word day. Thus he translated a highly relevant part of it correctly as follows:

...living according to our Lord's life...[23].

John Kitto also made the following comments about the passage from Ignatius:

Now many commentators assume (on what ground does not appear), that alter *κυριακήν* [Lord's] the word *ἡμέραν* [day] is to be understood... The defect of the sentence is the want of a substantive to which *αὐτοῦ* can refer. This defect, so far from being remedied, is rendered still more glaring by the introduction of *ἡμέραν*...the passage does not refer at all to the Lord's day...it cannot be regarded as affording any positive evidence to the early use of the term 'Lord's day' (for which it is often cited), since the word *ἡμέραν* [day] is purely conjectual [24].

Yet, almost all anti-Sabbath websites I have visited have ignored the scholars that understand the truth about Ignatius' writings as they cite the mistranslations as "proof" of early Sunday observance—even though the actual Greek text does no such thing.

While in Greece, I was able to verify that the word in koine Greek translated as "Lord's Day" in both the Didache and the Letter to the Magnesians, *κυριακήν*, could not be translated as "Lord's Day" as the Greek word for day is not present in the texts nor required by the contexts for either.

In Ignatius' Letter to the Magnesians, like in the Didache, κυριακῇν would be better translated as "Lord's way" or combined with the Greek word that follows it, ζωντες [25], "Lord's way of life" or "Lord's living." This is also consistent with what Paul wrote:

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4, NKJV throughout unless otherwise noted).

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

It was the custom of Jesus (e.g. Luke 4:16) and Paul to regularly keep the Sabbath (Acts 17:2). The Sabbath was part of the Lord's way of life, and Paul imitated Christ that way. Understanding Jesus' life is critical to understanding Ignatius.

Furthermore, to better understand Ignatius' letter, we should look at more of the context and not just verse 9.1. out-of-context, as some Sunday advocates have.

A more literal (though not grammatical) translation of the relevant portion from Ignatius' letter appears to be,

8.1 Be not seduced by strange doctrines nor by antiquated fables, which are profitless.

8.2 For if even unto this day we live according to the manner of Judaic concepts, we admit that we have not received grace: for the godly prophets lived after Christ Jesus. For this cause also they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to the end that they which are disobedient might be fully persuaded that there is one God who manifested Himself through Jesus Christ His Son, who is His Word that proceeded from silence, who in all things was well-pleasing unto Him that sent Him.

9.1 If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer keeping sabbaths contrariwise according to the Lord's way of life, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny – a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher –

9.2 if this be so, how shall we be able to live apart from Him? Seeing that even the prophets, being His disciples, were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit. And for this cause He whom they rightly awaited, when He came, raised them from the dead.

According to a scholar of koine Greek who I consulted with (a non-Sabbathkeeper), the first portion of 9.1 would grammatically be better translated as:

"If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer {Judaically} keeping sabbaths but according to the Lord's way of life..." [26]

This is because she insisted that the term 'but' (or 'contrariwise' as translated earlier above) had to refer to the "Lord's way" instead of the Sabbath.

There are at least two reasons for this. The first is that the godly prophets had been keeping the seventh day Sabbath. And the second is since the portion of the Greek term translated as the first part of "no longer" is a 'qualified negative' [27] the context supports that the 'Judaic concepts' (verse 8.2) are part of the qualification. It may be of interest to note that the terms first, day, or Sun are not in the above passages.

She confirmed with me that this section is certainly speaking about the same ancient prophets throughout, hence since they actually kept the Sabbath (and not Sunday), she felt that the idea of Judaically would have had to been in Ignatius' mind. And that this type of reference was required in English to properly understand what Ignatius was writing (and I also had this confirmed by others with a working knowledge of koine Greek).

This assessment is also consistent with later testimony from Jerome who mentioned that the Sabbath-keeping Christians he ran into did not adhere to the Jewish traditions—in other words, although they kept the Sabbath, the Nazarenes did not keep the Sabbath Judaically:

Jerome declares:

“On Isaiah 9:1-4

“The Nazarenes, whose opinion I have set forth above, try to explain this passage in the following way: When Christ came and his preaching shone out, the land of Zebulon and Naphtali [the region of Galilee] first of all were freed from the errors of the Scribes and Pharisees and he shook off their shoulders the very heavy yoke of the JEWISH TRADITIONS. Later, however, the preaching became more dominant, that means the preaching was multiplied, through the gospel of the apostle Paul who was the last of all the apostles. And the gospel of Christ shone to the most distant tribes and the way of the whole sea. Finally the whole world, which earlier walked or sat in darkness and was imprisoned in the bonds of idolatry and death, has seen the clear light of the gospel” (p.64).

In this passage, we find that the Nazarene Christians — like Yeshua the Messiah, Peter, James, John and especially Paul — rejected Jewish traditionalism, invention, and additions to the Torah or Old Testament. They referred to them as the “very heavy yoke of the Jewish traditions.” [28].

Thus, instead of proving Sunday and disproving the Sabbath, Ignatius (and indirectly even Jerome) seems to be warning against incorrectly observing the Sabbath as certain Pharisaical Jews insisted, with their antiquated fables. Or in other words, Ignatius was condemning the observance of [traditions of men over the Bible](#). (Ignatius also held views on the godhead that appear to differ from mainstream “Christianity,” please see the article [Binitarian View](#)).

Alfred Edersheim, a 19th century scholar, observed:

“In not less than twenty-four chapters {of the Mishna}, matters are seriously discussed {regarding Sabbath observance} as of vital religious importance, which one would scarcely imagine a sane intellect would serious entertain.” [29]

Note that these are mainly restrictions that are not found in the Bible (I have read many of these restrictions in the Mishna and they do seem to be absurd). Jesus also taught that Pharisaical Jews had improper concepts about the Sabbath (e.g. Luke 13:10-17).

Dr. Noel Rude, a self-described “grammar-freak” and linguist, felt that perhaps the following would be even more grammatically correct for the first part of verse 9.1:

“If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer (Judaically) keeping sabbaths but living according to the lordly way...”[30]

And that seems to be consistent with how I feel this verse should be translated.

Ignatius was teaching that the godly prophets, who lived in ancient times, lived in accordance to the ways of Jesus Christ, and not after improper Judaic concepts.

There is no doubt that the ancient prophets (such as Isaiah) kept the Sabbath on the day now known as Saturday. Around 167 BC, which is after the Old Testament was written, the Pharisees rose up. One of the way they were distinguished from the Sadducees is that the Pharisees placed great value on what they termed the ‘oral law’—or as we might call it now, Jewish tradition—in order to attain type of ‘holiness’ [31]. In other words, the party of the Pharisees relied on traditions outside of the Bible—which is something Jesus condemned them for (Matthew 15:3-9).

The Bible records that the Old Testament prophets knew how to keep the Sabbath (and not Barnabas’ eighth day) properly, as a delight for them to be in the LORD (e.g. Isaiah 58:13-14). Since the ancient prophets did that, Ignatius may be saying that Christians need to keep the Sabbath in accordance with Jesus’ example of doing good on the Sabbath and not be unduly focused on non-Biblical restrictions—for, Ignatius says, we are to not live apart from Jesus. Jesus, of course kept the Sabbath, as part of His way of life.

It is also possible that mainly what Ignatius was doing was the same type of thing that Paul warned about in Colossians 2:16—he was telling Christians to let the “body of Christ” and not others (like those advocating extra-Biblical Jewish practices) tell them how to keep the Sabbath. He may have simply written this section to help differentiate Christians from Jews in the eyes of both the Christians and the Gentile governments that they tended to be under (distancing Christians from Jews would have been physically advantageous for many Christians at that time). But regardless of the intended point, Ignatius’ Letter to the Magnesians does not advocate doing away with the Biblical Sabbath, nor does it show that the Sabbath was being replaced by Sunday prior to the time of the [Smyrna church era’s prominence](#).

It may also be of interest to note how the less-accepted “longer” version of Ignatius’ letter was translated in the Ante-Nicene Fathers as follows:

Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner...[32]

The text here seems less ambiguous, hence a more accurate translation is essentially forced.

Furthermore, the above version adds:

But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the workmanship of God, and not eating things prepared the day before, nor using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space, nor finding delight in dancing and plaudits which have no sense in them. [33]

Ignatius was not teaching that the Sabbath was done away and replaced by Sunday. The above version seems to be more consistent with the meaning than how most others have translated the more “accepted” version.

It should be understood that Ignatius’ other writings show that he did not try to do away with the sabbath commandment. Notice what else he wrote in his Letter to the Magnesians:

It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality: as some indeed give one the title of bishop, but do all things without him. Now such persons seem to me to be not possessed of a good conscience, seeing they are not steadfastly gathered together according to the commandment. [34]

The commandment that involves meeting together is the fourth commandment. It is the commandment that says to:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).

Part of the way the Sabbath day is kept holy is by meeting together for church services (referred to as “an holy convocation” in Leviticus 23:1-3). There is no direct statement anywhere in the Bible requiring a weekly convocation on Sunday.

While some Sabbatarians, and others, have questioned the authenticity of Ignatius writing the subject letter, any who have truly looked into this matter can affirm that the word ‘day,’ as in the expression “Lord’s day,” is missing from the Greek there and in the Didache [35] –I have both documents in Greek and can also do so.

Ignatius’ Other Writings

In his Letter to the Romans, Ignatius observed that true Christians kept the commandments:

I also salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father: to those who are united, both according to the flesh and spirit, to every one of His commandments [36].

But if anyone preach the Jewish law unto you, listen not to him. For it is better to hearken to Christian doctrine from a man who has been circumcised, than to Judaism from one uncircumcised. But if either of such persons do not speak concerning Jesus Christ, they are in my judgment but as monuments and sepulchers of the dead, upon which are written only the names of men. Flee therefore the wicked devices and snares of the prince of this world, lest at any time being conquered by his artifices, ye grow weak in your love [37].

Notice that Ignatius is once again complaining about Judaic customs that are not from the Bible. How do we know that the practices that Ignatius is referring to are not from the Bible? Because Ignatius is clearly saying to avoid snares from “the prince of the world.” The prince Ignatius is referring to is Satan (see Ephesians 2:2), and since the Sabbath did not come from Satan, as it came from God (see Genesis 2:1-3), Ignatius would not refer to something that God made as wicked.

Furthermore, notice that Ignatius mentioned about keeping “every one of His commandments”, thus this is not simply an admonition to love, but to keep all the commandments.

In his Letter to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius wrote about false Christians:

But I guard you beforehand from those beasts in the shape of men, whom you must not only not receive, but, if it be possible, not even meet with; only you must pray to God for them, if by any means they may be brought to repentance, which, however, will be very difficult. Yet Jesus Christ, who is our true life, has the power of [effecting] this. But if these things were done by our Lord only

in appearance, then am I also only in appearance bound. And why have I also surrendered myself to death, to fire, to the sword, to the wild beasts? But, [in fact,] he who is near to the sword is near to God; he that is among the wild beasts is in company with God; provided only he be so in the name of Jesus Christ. I undergo all these things that I may suffer together with Him, He who became a perfect man inwardly strengthening me. Some ignorantly deny Him, or rather have been denied by Him, being the advocates of death rather than of the truth. These persons neither have the prophets persuaded, nor the law of Moses, nor the Gospel even to this day, nor the sufferings we have individually endured. For they think also the same thing regarding us [38].

Since he writes that some of the false Christians do not have “the law of Moses” it is reasonable to conclude that Ignatius believed that he did have the “law of Moses,” in regards to the ten commandments, including the Sabbath commandment.

(It may be of at least of passing interest to note that Ignatius referred to the church as the “church of God” four times in his writings, Letter to the Philadelphians 0:0, 10:1; Letter to the Trallians 2:2; Letter to the Smyrnaeans 0:0.)

I would also add that it is not proper to teach that Ignatius associated the ‘cross’ “with the power of the Holy Spirit” as the late Cardinal Danielou said he did [39] and many mistranslators have. Ignatius used the word *stamos/stake*, not the word *cross*, in his writing in his letter to the Ephesians, Chapter IX. More on the ‘cross’ can be found in the article [What is the Origin of the Cross as a ‘Christian’ Symbol?](#) [Editor’s comment: This opinion on the Cross isn’t held by OCC. We at OCC actually teach what Paul said, that we are to “**EVANGELIZE THE CROSS / CRUCIFIXION, tokens of Christ our Lamb / Sacrifice**”]

Other Confirmation

The idea that those that professed Christ had a more positive, and less ceremonial attitude toward the Sabbath than did most of the Jews can also be found in an anonymous document titled the Epistle to Diognetus (probably written in the late second century). Specifically, in the following portion where the writer claims that the Jews:

4:3 And again to lie against God, as if He forbid us to do any good thing on the sabbath day, is not this profane? [40]

This is simply additional evidence that the way of sabbath emphasis of those who professed Christ was different from that held by many of the Jews then (an article of related interest may be [The Sabbath in the Early Church and Abroad](#)). True Christians understood Jesus’ teachings that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath (e.g. Matthew 12:12).

Greece and the Lord’s Day?

Year ago, I wondered before going to Greece, why native Greeks did not realize that *Κυριακήν* did not literally mean “Lord’s Day” as that meaning is not inherent in the word. So while in Greece, I decided to ask by speaking with several knowledgeable Greeks. Their statements made me conclude that because of pressures of tradition from compromised religious authorities, the meaning of this term had been changed over time—so much so that modern Greeks do not seem to think about its original meaning.

Now the modern Greek word for Sunday is Κυριακή [41]. Hence the Greeks consider that the word is simply now means Sunday, and thus they ignore its literal meaning. However, even in modern Greek, Κυρία (the base of the other words) still literally means Master or Lord—it has nothing to do with the Sun or a day—nor is the idea of “Sunday” supported by the context in Ignatius (more information can be found in the article [Lord’s Day or Day of the Lord?](#)).

Jesus taught that “in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

Sunday

Though where it first began in “Christian” circles is not entirely clear, the first clear reference to those professing Christ meeting on Sunday was from Saint [Justin Martyr](#) around 150 A.D. [42].

(Note Inserted by Dr. Stephen Michael OCC:

Some more telling quotes from Justin Martyr on his personal beliefs are in the following two: f

"For 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,--namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your hearts" (Dialogue. Chapter XVIII).

and

"The new law requires you to keep perpetual sabbath, and you, because you are idle for one day, suppose you are pious, not discerning why this has been commanded you: and if you eat unleavened bread, you say the will of God has been fulfilled. The Lord our God does not take pleasure in such observances: if there is any perjured person or a thief among you, let him cease to be so; if any adulterer, let him repent; then he has kept the sweet and true sabbaths of God (Dialogue. Chapter XII)."

As Christ did not remove any laws, but added several, as now not to even think breaking them in the heart, and said "...if it's your eye that makes you think about breaking them, to pluck it out, or your hand, cut it off, as it's better to go into heaven with one hand or one eye than have your whole body thrown into hell..." "Not one jot or one tittle will pass from the law, not even after heaven and earth passes away, not till all the National prophecies and all the National laws have been fulfilled (in the new heavens and new earth)..." Words of Christ, from John Chapter 5.)

The actual Greek expression Justin used was:

τῇ τοῦ Ἁλίου λεγομένη ἡμέρᾳ.

His statement is often translated as, “on the day called Sunday” [43].

Notice that Justin’s comment in the Greek language demonstrates that the term Κυριακὴν was not then the common Greek word for Sunday.

The terms he used specifically used were ἡμέρᾳ which means day, Ἁλίου is considered to mean Sun (although it is actually the term for the sun god Helios), and λεγομένη currently means said. Thus Justin literally stated “on the day said {of} Helios” or perhaps more literally “on

the Helios named day”. Justin probably used this expression to suggest to the Roman Emperor that Justin’s version of Christianity was not totally different from the worship of gods that the emperor was familiar with (and this is true).

But why Sunday? Justin actually claims that God chose the eighth day for meeting because of the fact that circumcision was performed on the eighth day:

Now, sirs,” I said, “it is possible for us to show how the eighth day possessed a certain mysterious import, which the seventh day did not possess, and which was promulgated by God through these rites...there is now another covenant, and another law has gone forth from Zion. Jesus Christ circumcises all who will—as was declared above—with knives of stone; that they may be a righteous nation, a people keeping faith, holding to the truth, and maintaining peace [44].

The average person who worships on Sunday probably does not wish to believe that this is what Sunday is based on, but this eighth day logic (which came from early Gnostics) is what the first Sunday references base its superiority on (including, as mentioned, the alleged Epistle of Barnabas).

Furthermore, it may be of interest to realize that Justin held many positions that those who worship on Sunday would hold to be heretical. Justin also stated that there were Christians in his day who kept the law of Moses (who he did not wish to associate with) and those who did not keep the Sabbath (those he kept Sunday with).

Notice that while in Ephesus, Justin Martyr wrote, in response to a Jew named Trypho:

But if, Trypho, some of your race, who say they believe in this Christ, compel those Gentiles who believe in this Christ to live in all respects according to the law given by Moses, or choose not to associate so intimately with them, I in like manner do not approve of them [45].

Thus, Justin admits that there were two groups in Ephesus, one that kept all the law and the other that did not. He also admits that he did not approve of those who kept the law.

Ignatius was associated with Polycarp, a church leader in Asia Minor, as well as with those in Ephesus, yet Ignatius and [Polycarp](#) endorsed what Justin is referring to as the law of Moses.

Furthermore, Justin Martyr records this accusation from Trypho:

But this is what we are most at a loss about: that you, professing to be pious, and supposing yourselves better than others, are not in any particular separated from them, and do not alter your mode of living from the nations, in that you observe no festivals or Sabbaths...you do not obey His commandments [46].

While the Apostle Paul told Ephesians were told to live differently than the other Gentiles in whose nation they co-existed with (Ephesians 4:17), those with Justin Martyr could not be distinguished, as they did not keep the Sabbath or the law as the true Christians in Asia Minor did. (More of Justin’s positions are documented in the article [Justin Martyr: Saint or Heretic and Apostate?](#))

Early, Faithful, Christians Kept the Sabbath

It is well known that from the first century until about 135 A.D. the first fifteen bishops/pastors of Jerusalem all kept the seventh-day Sabbath and were all circumcised Jews [47].

Although they have their own biases, even the historians Philip Schaff and Johann Gieseler correctly noted:

The Jewish Christians, at least in Palestine, conformed as closely as possible to the venerable forms of the cultus of their fathers, which in truth were divinely ordained, and were an expressive type of the Christian worship. So far as we know, they scrupulously observed the Sabbath, the annual Jewish feasts, the hours of daily prayer, and the whole Mosaic ritual [48].

While the Jewish Christians of Palestine retained the entire Mosaic law, and consequently the Jewish festivals, the Gentile Christians observed also the Sabbath and the passover (1 Cor. v. 6-8), with reference to the last scenes of Jesus' life, but without Jewish superstition (Gal. iv. 10 ; Col. ii. 16) [49].

It is known that early Jewish Christians did keep the Sabbath and Biblical holy days. And as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 56:1-7), so did the faithful Gentile Christians (and the Isaiah prophecy still has future application).

Polycarp

It may be of interest to note that Ignatius wrote:

...to Polycarp, bishop of the Smyrnaeans...So approving am I of your godly mind, which is as it were, grounded upon an unmovable rock, that my praise exceeds all bounds...Do not let those who appear to be trustworthy yet who teach strange doctrines baffle you. Stand firm, like an anvil...Grace will be...always...with Polycarp [50].

And according to the later testimonies of Irenaeus, Polycrates, and Tertullian, the leader of the Sabbath-keeping Smyrnaeans [51], Polycarp, did just that (more information is available in the article [Location of the Early Church: Another Look at Ephesus, Smyrna, and Rome](#)).

Polycarp also taught that Christians should keep the commandments [52].

And on the following sabbath he said; 'Hear ye my exhortation, beloved children of God. I adjured you when the bishops were present, and now again I exhort you all to walk decorously and worthily in the way of the Lord...Watch ye, and again Be ye ready, Let not your hearts be weighed down, the new commandment concerning love one towards another, His advent suddenly manifest as of rapid lightning, the great judgment by fire, the eternal life, His immortal kingdom. And all things whatsoever being taught of God ye know, when ye search the inspired Scriptures, engrave with the pen of the Holy Spirit on your hearts, that the commandments may abide in you indelible.' [53]

According to the The Martyrdom of Polycarp by the Smyrnaeans [54] and other sources [55], Christians in Polycarp's area kept the Sabbath after he died.

And since Polycarp referred to Ignatius as 'blessed' and endorsed Ignatius' letters in his [Letter to the Philippians](#) [56], it is logical to conclude that Ignatius was faithful to the same teachings and practices that Polycarp did (much more information about Polycarp can be found in the article [Polycarp of Smyrna](#)).

(Note: While some claim Polycarp also kept Sunday, that appears to be a later edition to the text [57].)

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Theophilus

In the late second century, Pastor/Bishop [Theophilus of Antioch](#) wrote:

"And on the sixth day God finished His works which He made, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because in it He rested from all His works which God began to create....Moreover, [they spoke] concerning the seventh day, which all men acknowledge; but the most know not that what among the Hebrews is called the "Sabbath," is translated into Greek the "Seventh" (ἐβδομάς), a name which is adopted by every nation, although they know not the reason of the appellation...God having thus completed the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and all that are in them, on the sixth day, rested on the seventh day from all His works which He made [61].

More more information on Theophilus and the Sabbath, check out the article on [Theophilus of Antioch](#).

The early faithful Gentile Christians kept the Sabbath. Until the early third century, there was harmony between the faithful Christians in Antioch and Asia Minor.

Conclusion

Early Jewish and Gentile Christians kept the seventh day Sabbath. The faithful did not believe that the Sabbath was done away.

Neither the Didache or Ignatius' Letter to the Magnesians actually mention the term Sunday or directly refer to the first day of the week.

The Didache is not an endorsement of early Sunday observance.

Ignatius, himself, would have had to be a supporter of the seventh day Sabbath and would not have written against it. Nor, if properly translated, do Ignatius' letters ever truly write against the seventh day sabbath—instead they endorse the concept that Christians are to keep the Sabbath in accordance with the commandments and the Lord's way of living, but not according to the ways endorsed by unBiblical Jewish tradition.

There is no evidence whatsoever that any who professed Christ regularly worshiped on Sunday when Ignatius was alive. The simple fact is that Ignatius' writings do not support the idea that the early New Testament Church observed Sunday.

The Greek expression he used in Magnesians (κυριακὴν ζῶντες) simply did not mean Sunday when Ignatius wrote his letters. And there is no other contemporaneous reference that any professing

Christian at the time of Ignatius observed Sunday. [Available evidence](#) (including the Bible, i.e. Acts 13:42-44; Hebrews 4:9) clearly supports the idea that early Christians kept the seventh day Sabbath.

The first clear reference to Sunday worship, even according to Roman Catholic sources, was from Justin [62, 63]. Yet he held so many heretical positions, it makes no sense to this author that any could truly consider him to be a true Christian.

On the other hand, [Polycarp](#) and those faithful Christians who remained in Asia Minor did continue to keep the Sabbath for centuries after Jesus died.

Information on the true Christian church and its history can be found in the free online booklets [Where is the True Christian Church Today?](#) and [Continuing History of the Church of God](#).

More information on Lord's Day references can be found in the article [Is Revelation 1:10 Discussing the Lord's Day or the Day of the Lord?](#)

(Emphasis is the Author's) The references are found in the condensed html version of the book as found at:

<http://celticorthodoxy.com/2015/05/honoring-of-the-sabbath-in-the-historic-Orthodox-church/>

Appendix Section 4

Regarding Monarch-led churches—a hallmark of Orthodoxy—East and West

A vital point for those questioning the British ecclesiastical practice is the longstanding tradition of monarch-led church leadership. Some skeptics doubt the legitimacy of having the head of state serve as the spiritual leader of the church. However, royal leadership has been a constant feature not only in Britain but also in other Western jurisdictions. In Germany, for instance, head monarchs often held titles such as *Landesbischof* or *Summus Episcopus*, serving as the highest ecclesiastical authorities within their states. These monarchs sometimes even waged wars against Rome when the imperial power attempted to impose its will on church appointments.

Similarly, in Byzantium the emperor exercised what is now commonly known as Caesaropapism—a system in which the ruler held supreme authority over the church. While this arrangement did not guarantee perfect leadership, it was deeply rooted in Biblical tradition and honored from the earliest days of the Church. Even Saint Paul, proud of his Roman citizenship, demonstrated that a believer can faithfully engage with both worldly authority and the Kingdom of God. His balanced perspective reminds us that our true identity lies in our allegiance to Christ, even as we uphold the traditions and rights bestowed upon us by our heritage.

Historical records confirm that throughout the early Church and the pre-schism period, British ecclesiastical leadership maintained its independent and apostolic identity. Numerous church councils, spanning from early medieval times to the modern era, have acknowledged Britain's ecclesiastical precedence. This is evident in the wealth of documentation that testifies to the consistent practice of keeping the Biblical Sabbath and preserving God's laws. The royal connection in church governance has always been integral to the British model—one that reflects not only the spiritual mandate of the Church but also the national identity and unity of its people.

Indeed, the British Church has produced a remarkable legacy of saints and leaders. Such figures testify to the fact that its ecclesiastical structures, built on the teachings of the Apostles, have always been at the forefront of preserving the truth of God's law. The royal and ecclesiastical traditions of Britain are not isolated phenomena; they resonate with similar practices in other Orthodox regions. For example, the head monarchs in Germany and the Byzantine emperors in the East both upheld ecclesiastical leadership models that echo the ancient Biblical paradigm. These models were characterized by a close alliance between state and church, ensuring that the spiritual heritage of true Israel was not diluted by external influences.

This chapter affirms that British Orthodoxy—with its deep royal roots and apostolic foundations—has long been an independent and vibrant expression of the true Church. The unity of the Church in Britain is not only a matter of national pride but also a testament to the enduring faith of its people—a faith that has withstood external pressures from Rome and secular authorities alike.

In sum, the practice of maintaining a monarch-led ecclesiastical structure, from the earliest days of apostolic ministry through the pre-schism era and into modern times, underscores the authenticity and vitality of British Orthodoxy. This long-held tradition, which continues to manifest in both Britain and other Western jurisdictions, testifies to the enduring covenant between God and

His people—a covenant marked by the faithful observance of the Sabbath and the celebration of His holy festivals.

Appendix Section 5: Renewing the Ancient Call to Repentance

Reintegrating the Full Practice of Confession in Liturgical Life

I. The Ancient Mandate: A Shared Heritage

From the earliest days of Christianity, repentance has been recognized as the essential prerequisite for true communion with God. The *Didache*—an early Christian treatise accepted in both Eastern and Western traditions—urges believers to “walk in the Way of Life,” a call that implies turning away from sin and renewing one’s heart. This ancient mandate is reflected in the enduring witness of the Church Fathers and is woven into the very fabric of our liturgical heritage.

II. Patristic Witness to Continuous Repentance

The Church Fathers consistently proclaimed that a repentant heart is not merely an occasional act but a lifelong transformation:

- **St. John Chrysostom** exhorts,

“Have you committed a sin? Then enter the Church and repent of your sin ... For here is the Physician, not the judge; here one is not investigated but receives remission of sins.”

(John Chrysostom, De Poenitentia)

- **St. Basil the Great** reminds us,

“Repentance is salvation, but lack of understanding is the death of repentance.”

(Basil the Great, De Perfectione Spirituali)

- **St. Anthony** teaches that true prayer—and therefore true repentance—is that in which one forgets oneself, merging with the Divine presence.
- **Gregory the Theologian** and **Symeon the Theologian** underscore the purifying power of tears:

“All must shed tears, all must be purified, all must ascend.”

“Remove tears and with them you remove purification; and without purification no one is saved.”

- **Abba Arsenios** declares,

“Truly you are blessed, for you wept for yourself in this world! He who does not weep for himself here below will weep eternally hereafter.”

These voices, united across time and tradition, demand that every approach to the sacred mysteries must be preceded by genuine, heartfelt repentance.

III. Liturgical Expressions in the West and East

A. The Western Model: Explicit Calls to Confession

In Western Christian practice, the call to repentance is made explicit at set times of prayer. For instance:

- **Roman Catholic Usage:**

In many Catholic communities—especially in Central and Western Europe—the faithful have access to multiple forms of general confession throughout the day. In some parishes there are as many as seven distinct confessional rites offered at various prayer times, ensuring that every participant regularly renews their commitment to turn away from sin. The general confession before the Eucharist and the structured penitential prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours underscore that no one may approach the sacrament without first addressing their sins.

- **Anglican–Orthodox Practice:**

The Book of Common Prayer includes explicit moments for general confession at both Morning and Evening Prayer, as well as during the Eucharistic liturgy. Anglican communities—often called “Anglican Orthodox” in their adherence to the ancient liturgical heritage—affirm that confession and repentance are indispensable prerequisites for a genuine encounter with Christ in the sacraments.

B. The Eastern Tradition: Implicit but Ever-Present Repentance

In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the call to repentance is woven into the fabric of daily prayer and the liturgical cycle:

- **Communal Liturgies:**

Eastern services are replete with penitential hymns, the continual recitation of the Jesus Prayer—

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"—

and liturgical invocations that, while less formalized as a “general confession,” nevertheless remind every communicant of the need for a contrite heart.

- **Home Prayer Life:**

The daily prayers observed in the home—whether through the recitation of the Jesus Prayer, the Trisagion (“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us”), or other morning and evening prayers—serve as constant reminders that repentance is not confined to the sanctuary. They ensure that the faithful, in their private lives, remain ever aware of the call to renounce sin and embrace divine mercy.

IV. A Pastoral Reminder for Ongoing Renewal

- The rich heritage of both Eastern and Western liturgical traditions confirms that the call to repentance is already woven into our daily worship and personal prayer. Many communities faithfully observe daily practices such as the Jesus Prayer at home, the penitential hymns in communal services, and, in the West, set times for general confession. These practices serve as constant reminders that true communion with God is reserved for hearts that have turned away from sin.
- Yet, it remains wise and necessary to be mindful—especially when behaviors that gravely contradict our calling begin to emerge openly. While most ministers and faithful already integrate a spirit of repentance into their lives, there is benefit in periodically reaffirming this commitment through brief, liturgical invocations during key moments (such as immediately

before Communion or during Vespers) and reflective sermons that echo our ancient call to renewal.

- Such gentle reminders help the community maintain a balanced approach: one that celebrates our established traditions of mercy and forgiveness while also remaining alert to those more serious transgressions that threaten the sanctity of our sacramental life. In doing so, we not only honor our shared heritage but also safeguard the ongoing integrity and transformative power of our worship in Christ.

V. Conclusion

Whether expressed in the structured general confessions of the West or the rhythm of daily prayer in the East, the ancient call to repentance remains unchanged: a faithful must renounce all sin—including habitual transgressions such as Sabbath breaking—to approach the sacred mysteries with a cleansed heart. By drawing upon the enduring witness of the Church Fathers and the rich tapestry of our liturgical traditions, we are called to renew our commitment to a sacramental life that is vibrant, authentic, and truly united in its call to repentance.

Sources and Further Reading:

- **The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles):** See Early Christian Writings – Didache for an English translation.
- **John Chrysostom, *De Poenitentia* and Homilies on Lazarus.**
- **Basil the Great, *De Perfectione Spirituali*.**
- **Writings of St. Anthony, Gregory the Theologian, Symeon the Theologian, and Abba Arsenios.**
- **Liturgical texts and the Book of Common Prayer** as used in Anglican–Orthodox communities.
- **Roman Catholic liturgical manuals,** with particular reference to the general confessions practiced in Central and Western Europe.

This unified treatment affirms that the call to repentance is not an optional accessory but the very heart of our worship—a living tradition that transcends cultural and liturgical differences, uniting East and West in the timeless mandate to turn from sin and embrace the grace of God.

Appendix Section 6: Saint David of Wales, the Culdees, and the True Meaning of the 'Lord's Way': A Defense of Celtic Sabbath Observance

The life and ecclesiastical practices of **Saint David of Wales** and the early **Celtic Christian** tradition have long been misunderstood or inaccurately aligned with Roman customs. Contrary to the assertion that these early saints observed Sunday as the Christian Sabbath, historical, textual, and linguistic evidence paints a different picture—one that reveals faithful observance of the **seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday)** in a distinctively **spiritual, non-Judaistic** manner.

The 'Lord's Way' – A Misunderstood Phrase

Modern translations of early Greek Christian texts, such as the **Didache** and **Ignatius of Antioch's Letter to the Magnesians**, frequently mistranslate the phrase "**κατὰ κυριακὴν**" as "on the Lord's Day," implying Sunday observance. However, rigorous analysis of Koine Greek reveals that:

- The word **κυριακὴν** is an adjective meaning "Lordly" or "belonging to the Lord," and **not inherently tied to the word 'day' (ἡμέρα)**.
- In both the **Didache** and **Ignatius'** writings, **the Greek word for 'day' is absent**, and there is no grammatical or contextual necessity to supply it.
- Scholars such as **John Kitto**, **Theony Condos**, **Bob Thiel**, and **Fritz Guy** agree that the phrase is better translated as **"according to the Lord's way"** or **"Lord's manner of life."**

Thus, the early Christian texts cited to support Sunday observance more accurately promote living in accordance with **the lifestyle and teachings of the Lord**—not shifting the Sabbath to Sunday.

Saint David and the Eastern Orthodox Connection

Saint David (Dewi Sant), patron saint of Wales, was closely aligned with the **Eastern Church**. He was reportedly **anointed and consecrated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem**, and upheld **Eastern liturgical practices**, not Roman ones. Sources suggest he used the **Greek/Byzantine (or Syriac)** scriptural texts, differing significantly from the Latin texts that interpolated "Lord's Day" sometimes where the Greek does not.

This reinforces the understanding that David, like the Eastern Church, held to the **Sabbath (Saturday)** as sacred.

Evidence from the *Life of Saint David*, Chapter 27

Arthur Wade-Evans' 1923 translation of the **Vita Sancti Davidis**, attributed to Rhygyfarch, describes:

“From the eve of the sabbath until after dawn light shall have begun in the first hour of the Lord's Day they apply themselves to watchings, prayers, and genuflexions, one hour then excepted after the matins of the sabbath.”

Wade-Evans assumes continuous worship from Friday night to Sunday morning. However, this reading contradicts:

- **David's known role** in developing the Celtic Mass (per **G.H. Doble**), along with Gildas.
- The rest of Celtic tradition which shows **rest or spiritual repose on Sabbaths**, not exhaustive activity.

A more accurate reading aligns with the **Jewish-Christian concept of Sabbath**:

A sacred day beginning Friday at sundown, culminating in matins on Saturday, with **a period of rest** following that most solemn observance.

Rule of the Culdees: St. Maelruan

St. Maelruan, a spiritual successor of Saint David, authored the [**Metrical Rule of the Cele De \(Culdees\)**](#), the basis for all Celtic monastic rules. One line reads:

“As we enter the church we kneel thrice; we bend not the knee only on the Sabbaths of the living God.”

This shows that the **Sabbath was honored with spiritual reverence**, and unlike other days, **no kneeling was required**—a mark of **rest and sacredness**, further disassociating their observance from Romanized rituals.

Broader Christian Witness to Sabbath Observance

This Sabbath observance by the Celtic Church is not isolated. Several early Christian sources support the continuity of **Saturday as the sacred day**:

- **St. Ignatius of Antioch** (2nd century):

“Let each of you observe the Sabbath in a spiritual manner... And after keeping the Sabbath, let every lover of Christ celebrate the festival of the Lord's Day—the Resurrection day.” (This supports **dual observance**, not replacement.)

- **St. Epiphanius of Salamis** (4th century):

“Assemblies for Communion were appointed by the apostles to be held on the fourth day, on Sabbath eve, and on the Lord's Day.”

- **Bishop St. Palladius of Galatia** (419–420 A.D.):

Described “Agape Saturday,” where believers partook in communion.

- **Socrates Scholasticus (5th century):**

“Almost all churches around the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath...” except in **Rome and Alexandria**.

- **Sozomen (5th century):**

“The people of Constantinople—and almost everywhere—gather on the Sabbath as well as on the first day.”

- **St. Irenaeus (2nd century):**

Affirmed the unity of practice between churches in **Britain, Gaul, Spain, and Germany**, and connected the Sabbath to the **seventh day of creation**.

“The true Sabbath... during which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation.”

Conclusion

The combined **Greek grammatical evidence, Celtic liturgical customs, and global patristic testimony** confirm that:

- The phrase "**κατὰ κυριακὴν**" refers to **the Lord's way/lifestyle, not the Lord's Day/Sunday**.
- **Saint David of Wales**, his spiritual descendants like **St. Maelruan**, and the **Celtic Church** as a whole **honored the seventh-day Sabbath**.
- They did so not in a Judaistic manner, but in a **Christian spiritual form**, emphasizing **rest, study, and reverence**.
- Later interpolations, especially from Latin translators, distorted the understanding of **κυριακή** to mean Sunday, whereas **Greek and Celtic traditions** preserved the original sense.

Thus, the faithful communities of the **Celtic Church**, rooted in the East and maintained across centuries, provide a **clear and early witness to Sabbath continuity** and the **true meaning of the Lord's Way**.

Do Cheliu De mpo rir.

Dia mbem po mam cleirpécta,
 Ip uapal in bepp;
 Aithigem in noebh eclair
 In cach epach do gheir.
 Antan po chlomar clocán,
 Ní pupail inéir,
 Tocbam epíthe polam ruar,
 Teilgem gnuirri ríir.
 Canam pater ocur glóir,
 Nachap cairli epíre,
 Sénam bpuinne ocur gnuir
 Apde epuiche Opi t.
 Map po hipram in neclair
 Slehtam co bo thpi;
 Ní pillem glufne nama
 In domnach Deuf.
 Ceilebpam ip cunpígem,
 Cen lobpa cen lén;
 Spuith in pep adgládamap,
 Coimbiu nime nél.
 Píglem legam aipnaigthem;
 Cach immet a nipt:
 Feibh na pée pegha lat,
 Ria glóir co teir.
 Taet caé gpaó pia éomabap
 Feib do beba coir,
 Amail ainmnigéir do caé,
 Othá teir co noin.
 In taer gpaó don naipnigéir,
 Donb aipfriund co ceir;
 Aer leiginn do popcetul,
 Feibh ata a neir.
 In bocbaó donb umalloir,
 Feib poéa atli:
 Ap ip bilep do diabul
 Copp no démeni.
 Lubap donb anecnaib,
 Do peir cleirpech cair:
 Saethap ecnaba na ghin,
 Saethap buirb na laim.
 Ceilebpaó caé oen epacha
 La caé nopb do gnam:
 Tpi pleétam pia ceilebpaó,
 A tpi inna ndiaibh.
 Tuae ocur bichpato,
 Raithínchí cen chlóen
 Cen poóopb cen inchoipopib.
 Olegap do caé oen.

OF THE CÉLI DÉ DOWN HERE.

If we be under the yoke of clergyhood,
 Noble is the calling:
 We frequent the holy church
 At every canonical hour perpetually.
 When we hear the little bell,
 The tribute is indispensable;
 We lift up a ready heart,
 We cast down our faces.
 We sing a Pater and a Gloria,
 That no curse fall *upon us*;
 We consecrate the breast and face
 With the sign of Christ's cross.
 As we enter the church,
 We kneel thrice;
 We bend not the knee only
 On the *Sabbaths* of the living God.
 We celebrate, and we instruct,
 Without weakness, without sorrow:
 Noble is the person we invoke,
 The Lord of the heaven of clouds.
 We watch, we read, we pray,
 Each according to his strength:
 According to the time, you contemplate,
 At gloria until tierce.
 Each order proceeds according to its duty,
 According to the proper manner,
 As is appointed to each,
 From tierce to none.
 The people in orders (priests), for prayer,
 For the mass rightly:
 The readers for teaching
 According as is their strength.
 The youth for humility,
 As is in the law:
 For the property of the devil
 Is a body that hath pride.
 Labour for the illiterate,
 After the will of pious clerics:
 The wise man's work *is* in his mouth,
 The ignorant man's work *is* in his hand.
 Celebration each canonical hour
 With each order we perform:
 Three genuflexions before celebration,
 Three more after it.
 Silence and fervour,
 Tranquillity without guile,
 Without murmur, without contention,
 Is due of every one.

—MS. Trin. Coll. Dubl. H. 2. 16. cols. 224, 225.

