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# Remarks on Sunday in the Early Church

**Michael Durst**

The Christian Sunday as it is known today is a *mixtum compositum* of different elements and facets, which in the course of historical developments have attached themselves to the Christian observance of Sunday. For example, Sunday, which was previously a normal working day, first became a day of rest (ordered by the state) under the Sunday Law of Emperor Constantine I in the fourth century. The ecclesiastically driven prohibition of menial labour appeared two centuries later. Beginning in the fourth century, the obligation to celebrate Sunday was formulated by the Church but infringements scarcely punished; only in the sixth century did the Church officially sanction Sunday rest.

Since most elements and facets of the Christian Sunday are the subject of other contributions in this volume, the attendant remarks are limited to three areas, with the intent of avoiding overlap of content as much as possible:

1. The Christian Sunday as a genuine Christian institution
2. Sunday in the New Testament
3. Sunday and Sunday observance; this heading includes the beginnings of the Christian Sunday, its ceremonial aspects (including secondary motifs), and Sunday as a day of celebration and joy.

## **1. The Christian Sunday as a Genuine Christian Institution**

‘Nach heutigem Forschungsstand gilt der Sonntag als eine originär christliche Einrichtung’ (According to current research, Sunday qualifies as an original Christian institution), Erfurt liturgical scholar Benedikt Kranemann states with good reason<sup>1</sup>. As a day of celebration and rejoicing for Christians – although not yet a day off from work – with the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist at its centre, it is without precedent. It can be derived neither from pagan institutions of antiquity nor from Judaism and its institutions, nor did it originate under their influence. This estimation can be verified by a glance at Sunday in the Greco-Roman world and in ancient Judaism.

### **Sunday in Greco-Roman Antiquity**

Before the introduction of the seven-day planetary week, there was no ‘Sunday’ in the Greco-Roman world, nor a ‘day of the sun’ occurring in a weekly cycle, nor a weekly rest day. Holidays and rest days were to be found throughout the year, scattered at irregular distances

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<sup>1</sup> Kranemann, “‘Der Tag des Herrn’”, p. 18.

across the festival calendar. According to Tertullian's report, the holidays and rest days, if added together, did not even result in a *pentekoste*<sup>2</sup>, meaning they numbered less than fifty. At the time of Augustus, forty-five stationary feasts were indicated in the Roman festival calendar; in addition, however, there were eighty-seven movable feasts, which were announced every year by the *pontifices*<sup>3</sup>. As for the feasts of the sun god, since Republican times the feast of Sol Indiges was celebrated on 11 December<sup>4</sup>. Under Emperor Aurelian (270–275) the *Natalis Solis Invicti* was added, which fell on 25 December.

The seven-day planetary week was introduced during the time of Augustus, with the days of the week named after the seven planetary gods, which according to ancient understanding also included the sun and moon. The planetary week appeared alongside the customary market week (nundinal week) of eight days (or ten in the Greek East); in the course of the first century, it gradually established itself and was widely known in the second century. The planetary week began with the 'day of Saturn' (Saturday), which was considered an unlucky day (*dies ater*), on which important business was to be avoided as much as possible; it coincided with the Jewish Sabbath. Sunday ('day of the sun') was the second day of the planetary week, which was a normal working day until the Sunday law enacted by Emperor Constantine I. Sunday was in no way elevated by specific ritual practices, not even within the cult of the sun god. Because among the followers of Mithras (commonly identified with Sol<sup>5</sup>) the sun occupied the highest position within the hierarchy of the planetary gods, Franz Cumont, followed by Franz Josef Dölger, suggested that Sunday was likely particularly celebrated in the Mithras cult<sup>6</sup>, but there is no evidence for this speculation<sup>7</sup>. Be that as it may, Cumont himself considered a dependence of the Christian Sunday celebration on the cult of Mithras unlikely. However, worth noting is the oracle of Apollo (usually associated with Sol<sup>8</sup>), which was handed down by Porphyrius (via Eusebius of Caesarea). The oracle urges worshippers to call upon the sun on Sunday and upon the other planetary gods on the days of the week named after them<sup>9</sup>. However, this was by no means a general or even widespread practice. The Apollo oracle probably should be interpreted not as underscoring an existing custom, but rather as intended to introduce a new practice, however with no discernible success.

The 'Adventist' position must also be mentioned, namely that Christians originally celebrated solely the Sabbath and that the Christian Sunday, which supplanted the Sabbath, emerged only in the second half of the second century with the adoption of elements of the pagan sun cult<sup>10</sup>. Obviously, this theory is intended to legitimize the Seventh-day Adventist practice, introduced

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<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *De idololatria*, ed. by Reifferscheid and Wisowa, 14. 7, p. 1115.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. König, 'Religionsgeschichtliche Aspekte', pp. 17–18; Jungmann, *Sonntag und Sonntagsmesse*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> König and König, *Der römische Festkalender*, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> For the identification of Mithras with the sun, cf. Clauss, *Mithras*, pp. 153–60.

<sup>6</sup> Cumont, *Textes et monuments*, I, p. 119; Cumont, *Die Mysterien des Mithra*, p. 154; Dölger, 'Die Planetenwoche', p. 214.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. especially Girardet, 'Vom Sonnen-Tag zum Sonntag', p. 301, along with note 118; cf. also Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 39; Wallraff, *Christus versus Sol*, p. 97. It is significant that in his book *Mithras*, Manfred Clauss manages not to mention Sunday (see index).

<sup>8</sup> For the identification of Apollo with Sol, see Cicero, *De natura deorum*, ed. by Gerlach and Bayer, 3. 51, p. 402.

<sup>9</sup> Porphyrius quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, ed. by Mras and des Places, 5. 14. 1, vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>10</sup> Odom, *Sunday in Roman Paganism*; Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*.

in 1845, of celebrating the Sabbath instead of Sunday. It is clearly untenable, based upon the early testimony of weekly Christian Sunday celebrations (e.g., in *Didache* 14. 1)<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the influence of the pagan sun cult on the Christian Sunday is grossly overestimated. At most, one could mention the association of the sun metaphor and symbolism with Christ; however, this is no simple borrowing from paganism, but rather arises from biblical roots, in which ‘sun of righteousness’ in Malachi 4. 2 LXX (= Hebrew Bible 3. 20) is understood as pointing to Christ and his resurrection<sup>12</sup> and Christ is known not only as ‘true sun’<sup>13</sup> but also as ‘sun of resurrection’<sup>14</sup>. Thus, Maximus of Turin and Jerome could invest the pagan term ‘day of the sun’<sup>15</sup>, generally shunned by Christians, with Christian meaning and use the term in reference to Jesus Christ and his resurrection<sup>16</sup>.

## Sunday in Ancient Judaism

Judaism has its own seven-day week, the origin of which is, of course, unclear. It consists of six working days, followed by the Sabbath as the week’s climax and as a day of rest. The working days of the Jewish week are unnamed and simply counted<sup>17</sup>. Sunday corresponds to the first day of the Jewish week, which receives its etiological justification through the first creation account (Genesis 1. 1–2. 4a, Priestly Source). Here God created light on the first day, separated it from darkness, and called the light ‘day’ and the darkness ‘night’ (Genesis 1. 3–5). Except at this point, the first day of the (creation) week plays no role in the entire Old Testament. The first day

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Rordorf, ‘Domenica’, p. 1009 or pp. 1474–75; Rordorf, ‘Rezension zu Samuele Bacchiocchi’, pp. 112–16.

<sup>12</sup> e.g., Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepticus*, ed. by Stählin and Treu, 11. 114. 3, p. 80,22–25; Origenes, *In Numeros homiliae*, ed. by Baehrens, 23. 5. 2, p. 128; cf. Origenes, *In Leviticum homiliae*, ed. by Borret, 9. 19, vol. 2, p. 122; Gaudentius Brixianensis, *Tractatus*, ed. by Glueck, 1. 1, p. 18; 1. 23, p. 23; 3. 4, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Cyprianus, *De dominica oratione*, ed. by Moreschini, 35, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepticus*, ed. by Stählin and Treu, 9. 84. 2, p. 63,19.

<sup>15</sup> In pre-Constantinian times, only four evidences from Christian sources refer to the ‘day of the sun’, which are found in three texts characteristically addressed to a pagan audience: Justin Martyr, *Apologiae*, ed. by Minns and Parvis, I. 67. 3 and I. 67. 7, pp. 258 and 260; Tertullian, *Ad nationes*, ed. by Borleffs, I. 13. 1, p. 32; *Apologeticum*, ed. by Dekkers, 16. 11, p. 116. Despite the Christian usurpation of the pagan term ‘day of the sun’ by Maximus of Turin and Jerome (see following note), widespread resistance to the naming of the days of the week according to the names of the gods remains until the end of antiquity; cf., e.g., Priscillianus, *Tractatus*, ed. by Schepps, 1. 15, p. 14; Filastrius, *Diversarum hereseon liber*, ed. by Heylen, 113 [85], p. 279. Augustine also criticizes using the names of gods and suggests that the ecclesiastical terms (*ritus loquendi ecclesiasticus*) be used instead: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ed. by Dekkers and Fraipont, 93. 3, pp. 1302–03, repeated by Isidorus Hispalensis, *Origines*, ed. by Lindsay, 5. 30. 11 (vol. I without pagination). Cf. the contribution of Rakotoniaina on Augustine in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> Maximus Taurinensis, *Sermones*, ed. by Mutzenbecher, s. 44. 1, p. 178: ‘Dominica enim nobis ideo venerabilis est atque sollempnis, quia in ea saluator uelut sol oriens discussis infernorum tenebris luce resurrectionis emicuit; ac propterea ipsa dies ab hominibus saeculi dies solis uocatur, quod ortus eam sol iustitiae Christus illuminet’ (The Lord’s day is venerable and celebratory for us because on it the Redeemer rises like the rising sun after the expulsion of the darkness of the underworld, into the light of the resurrection; and therefore this day is called ‘day of the sun’ by men of this world because Christ, the rising sun of righteousness, illuminates it); Jerome, *In die dominica Paschae*, ed. by Morin, 2. 54–56, p. 550: ‘Quod si a gentilibus dies solis uocatur, et nos hoc libentissime confitemur: hodie enim lux mundi orta est, hodie sol iustitiae ortus est’ (When it [i.e., the Lord’s day] is called ‘day of the sun’ by the Gentiles, we also gladly admit this, because today [i.e., Easter day] the light of the world has risen, today the sun of righteousness has risen).

<sup>17</sup> Compilation of documents in Schürer, ‘Die siebentägige Woche’, pp. 3–7.

of the week in Judaism – unlike the sixth (Friday) in its function as the ‘preparation day’ (παρασκευή, *cena pura*) for the Sabbath – has no prominent position.

Also in the Qumran texts, the first day of the week plays no role. It has been suggested that according to the calendar based on the solar year, which is documented in Qumran and which is related to that of the *Book of Jubilees*<sup>18</sup>, the most important feast days fall on the first day of the week (= Sunday), the third day of the week (= Wednesday), and the fifth day of the week (= Friday), indicating that these days were particularly significant and that the roots of Christian Sunday observance are to be sought here<sup>19</sup>. However, this hypothesis is contradicted by the fact that the first day of the week is not mentioned in the Qumran texts. Since not even the occurrence of a liturgical celebration on the first day of the week in Qumran can be proven, there is certainly no direct connection from individual feast days falling on Sunday to weekly Christian Sunday celebrations<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, according to the research of Sacha Stern, it is highly disputable that this solar calendar had any practical application in Qumran<sup>21</sup>.

In Rabbinic Judaism, Sunday is designated as the ‘first day of the week’ and also as the ‘day after the end of the Sabbath’<sup>22</sup>. Occasionally, Sunday is also encountered as a (feast) day of the Nazarenes (= Christians), on which one may not do business with them<sup>23</sup>, which refers to the period after Constantine’s Sunday law and reflects the existing Christian practice of Sunday rest. As becomes clear from the Talmud treatise b. Shabbat 156a<sup>24</sup>, the naming of the days of the week according to the planets was known, but in Rabbinic Judaism the days were not typically named after the planets<sup>25</sup>. The first day of the week was connected, on the one hand, with the remembrance of the beginning of the creation of the world – which Christians would take up as a secondary motif for Sunday observance – but, on the other hand, also with the remembrance of the beginning of the sacrificial system at the tabernacle (cf. Leviticus 9), which, according to Paul Billerbeck, lent a certain importance to this day of the week<sup>26</sup>. Only as a curiosity should it be mentioned that in the Talmud treatise b. Shabbat 156a, the influence of the day of birth on a person’s character and destiny is discussed: The one born on a Sunday will be either completely good or completely bad, which is explained by the fact that both light and darkness were created on that day<sup>27</sup>. A substantial influence of Jewish thought on the Christian Sunday is not ascertainable from the sources discussed here.

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<sup>18</sup> Regarding the calendar in Qumran, cf. Maier, *Die Qumran-Essener*, I, pp. xv–xviii, and III, pp. 52–86.

<sup>19</sup> Jaubert, *La date de la Cène*; Hilgert, ‘The Jubilees Calendar’.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 187; Rordorf, ‘Domenica’, p. 1008 or p. 1474.

<sup>21</sup> Cf., e.g., Stern, *Calendar and Community*, pp. 11–18.

<sup>22</sup> Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, I, pp. 1052–53, with selected sources. Cf. also the contribution of Günter Stemberger in this volume.

<sup>23</sup> Traktat b. Aboda Zara 6a (German trans. by Goldschmidt, IX, p. 449; English trans. by H. Mishcon, in Soncino Talmud online, fasc. 35a, pp. 18–19).

<sup>24</sup> Traktat b. Shabbat 156a (German trans. by Goldschmidt, I, pp. 938–39; English trans. by H. Freedman, in Soncino Talmud online, fasc. 12e, pp. 87–88).

<sup>25</sup> Schürer, ‘Die siebentägige Woche’, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, I, p. 1054, with selected sources.

<sup>27</sup> German trans. by Goldschmidt, I, p. 938; English trans. by H. Freedman, in Soncino Talmud online, fasc. 12e, pp. 87–88.

## Sabbath and Sunday

The relationship between Sabbath and Sunday is only briefly discussed here. The view sometimes formerly expressed, namely that Sunday originated from the Sabbath, is today obsolete and is no longer represented within scholarly research<sup>28</sup>. In fact, the Christian Sunday has practically nothing to do with the Jewish Sabbath. While the Sabbath is primarily a day of rest, this was not the case for the Christian Sunday until Constantine's Sunday law. Conversely, Sunday is dedicated to the remembrance and celebration of the resurrection of Christ, which in turn is utterly foreign to the Jewish Sabbath. The only thing that connects Sunday with the Sabbath is its weekly recurrence, which also connects it with all the other days of the week, thus failing to constitute a dependency. Neither does the Christian Sunday have its roots in the Jewish Sabbath nor did the Jewish Sabbath serve as a model for it. Thus, the Christian Sunday is not a transformation of the Sabbath but rather independent of it. Nor does the Christian Sunday claim to be a successor or substitute for the Sabbath. Jewish Christians continued to observe the Sabbath as a matter of course, as for example Justin testifies of his fellow Christians in the second century<sup>29</sup>. In contrast, for the Gentile Christians of the Pauline congregations who had no reason to observe the Sabbath, Sunday became an independent Christian institution alongside the Jewish Sabbath. Eusebius of Caesarea still reports in the fourth century that the Judeo-Christian Ebionites (or a group of Ebionites) observed the Sabbath and other Jewish customs, but at the same time also celebrated Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ<sup>30</sup>.

## The 'Sabbatization' of Sunday

Because Sunday was initially a normal working day (until the Constantinian Sunday Law), the Old Testament regulations on Sabbath rest could not be transferred to Sunday; furthermore, because Christians – apart from Jewish Christian groups – did not keep the Sabbath<sup>31</sup>, the Old Testament Sabbath regulations could not be taken literally in the Early Church, but rather were interpreted allegorically<sup>32</sup>. Augustine emphasizes that the commandment of Sabbath-keeping is the only commandment of the Decalogue that is not to be interpreted ad litteram but instead figu-

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<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, this view is still very much alive and continues to be influential. To name two examples: In the anonymous article 'Sunday' on the internet platform 'Wikipedia', the following gross error is to be found: 'Die Feier dieses Ruhe-und Gebetstags wurde von den Heidenchristen im Gedenken an die Auferstehung Christi auf den Dies solis verlegt' (The celebration of this day of rest and prayer [that is, the Sabbath, Exodus 20. 8–11] was transferred by the Gentile Christians to the Dies solis in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ); see <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonntag> (accessed on 31 August 2019); similarly by Dörnemann, 'Ohne Sonntag gibt es nur noch Alltage', p. 258: 'Die Feier dieses Ruhe-und Gebetstages wurde von den Christen im Gedenken an die Auferstehung Christi [...] auf den Tag nach dem Sabbat, den "ersten Tag der Woche", verlegt' (The celebration of this day of rest and prayer [that is, the Sabbath] was postponed by Christians in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ [...] to the day after the Sabbath, the 'first day of the week'). Of course, neither text belongs to serious contemporary research literature. But they prove that the thesis that Sunday is rooted in the Jewish Sabbath cannot be eradicated easily from popular-level theological literature.

<sup>29</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ed. by Goodspeed, 47. 1–4, pp. 144–45.

<sup>30</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. by Schwartz, III. 27. 5, p. 256.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ignatius Antiochenus, *Ad Magnesios*, in *Epistulae genuinae*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 9. 1, p. 91,4: 'no longer celebrating the Sabbath, but living in observation of the Lord's day'.

<sup>32</sup> Overview and particulars in Dumaine, 'Dimanche', cols 920–27; Pettirsch, 'Das Verbot der opera servilia', pp. 430–38; Huber, *Geist und Buchstabe der Sonntagsruhe*, pp. 49–61.

rate<sup>33</sup>, and, according to Gregory the Great, everything written about the Sabbath in Scripture is to be understood spiritaliter<sup>34</sup>. According to these hermeneutic principles, a direct transmission of Old Testament Sabbath regulations to Sunday was excluded.

On the other hand, Sunday became comparable to the Sabbath through its elevation to a work-free holiday under Constantine I, even though the concept of Sunday rest in the Constantinian Sunday Law was neither oriented towards the Jewish Sabbath rest nor compatible with the concept of Jewish Sabbath rest<sup>35</sup>. The view of Sabbath and Sunday as parallel or analogous soon led to the transfer of aspects of Old Testament Sabbath rest to Sunday rest and to a 'Sabbatization' of Sunday. Eusebius of Caesarea († 339) is the first to say that Christ 'through the New Covenant transferred the feast day of the Sabbath to the rising of light [i.e., to the following day, Sunday] and gave us a picture of true rest, namely the salutary Lord's day'<sup>36</sup>; all that was prescribed for the Sabbath Christians transferred to the Lord's day, which was deemed more precious than the Jewish Sabbath<sup>37</sup>. Pseudo-Athanasius even holds the view that the Lord (himself!) transferred the Sabbath to Sunday<sup>38</sup>. Ephrem the Syrian draws a parallel between Sunday as a day of rest and the Sabbath, stating that Sunday has taken the birthright from the firstborn<sup>39</sup>. A (fifth-century?) sermon incorrectly attributed to the martyr bishop Peter of Alexandria and preserved only in Coptic, interprets Sunday rest as a prohibition of work clearly oriented towards the Sabbath regulations and demands 'that one do nothing on the holy Lord's day'; it further states, 'Cursed is the one who does anything on the Lord's day'<sup>40</sup>. A sermon about the Lord's day (Περὶ τῆς ἡμέρας Κυριακῆς) from the fifth or sixth century, ascribed to the fictional author Eusebius of Alexandria<sup>41</sup>, defends Sunday rest by referencing the Sabbath: the week has seven days, of which God has given six for work but one for prayer and rest<sup>42</sup>; we celebrate the Lord's day in order to abstain from work and to be free for prayer<sup>43</sup>; Sunday is given for prayer but also for rest for labourers and slaves<sup>44</sup>. What is new here is the attribution of Sunday rest to the will of God and the social justification for Sunday rest, both oriented towards Old Testament Sabbath regulations. In the Latin West, it is Caesarius of Arles († 542) who for the first time establishes a connection between Jewish Sabbath observance and Christian Sunday rest<sup>45</sup>. Although he does not explicitly justify Sunday rest by means of the Sabbath commandment, he presents the Jewish Sabbath and its observance as

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<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. by Goldbacher, ep. 55. 22, vol. 34, 1, p. 193; cf. *De spiritu et littera*, ed. by Vrba and Zycha, 15. 27, p. 181; *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, ed. by Fraipont, 2. 172, p. 150; *Contra Pelagianos*, ed. by Vrba and Zycha, 3. 4. 10, p. 496.

<sup>34</sup> Gregorius I papa Magnus, *Epistulae*, ed. by Norberg, ep. 13. 1, p. 992.

<sup>35</sup> It is well known that Constantine excludes work in the fields and the right to emancipate and manumit from Sunday rest.

<sup>36</sup> Eusebius, *Commentarii in Psalmos*, in *PG* 23, 91.2–3, col. 1169C.

<sup>37</sup> Eusebius, *Commentarii in Psalmos*, in *PG* 23, 91.2–3, col. 1172A. Cf., however, a different estimation of this passage by Uta Heil in her introduction.

<sup>38</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Homilia de semente*, ed. by von Stockhausen, 1. 2, p. 171.

<sup>39</sup> Ephraem Syrus, *Sermo ad nocturnum dominicae resurrectionis*, ed. by Lamy, 4, vol. 1, pp. 542–44.

<sup>40</sup> Pseudo-Petrus Alexandrinus, *Admonitiones ad episcopos*, ed. by Schmidt, pp. 5–7.

<sup>41</sup> Pseudo-Eusebius Alexandrinus, *Sermones*, ed. in *PG* 86, s. 16 *De die dominica*, cols 413D–21C.

<sup>42</sup> Pseudo-Eusebius Alexandrinus, *Sermones*, ed. in *PG* 86, s. 16 *De die dominica*, col. 416C.

<sup>43</sup> Pseudo-Eusebius Alexandrinus, *Sermones*, ed. in *PG* 86, s. 16 *De die dominica*, col. 417A.

<sup>44</sup> Pseudo-Eusebius Alexandrinus, *Sermones*, ed. in *PG* 86, s. 16 *De die dominica*, col. 420C.

<sup>45</sup> Caesarius, *Sermones*, ed. by Morin, s. 13. 3, vol. 103, p. 66; cf. s. 73. 4, vol. 103, pp. 308–09. Cf. the contributions of Meier, Wood, and Kinzig on the development in the Latin West in this volume.

a model and pattern for Sunday. Caesarius thus contributes to the Church's sanctioning of Sunday rest, which began in the sixth century in the Merovingian Kingdom. The Christian Sunday became, so to speak, a 'Christian Sabbath'.

## 2. Sunday in the New Testament

Since Christians quite naturally adopted the Jewish seven-day week and the counting of the days of the week, the writings of the New Testament – with the exception of Revelation 1. 10 – use the term 'first day of the week' for Sunday (μία τῶν σαββάτων).

### Gospels

All references to Sunday found in the four canonical Gospels refer to the resurrection of Jesus or to appearances of the risen Christ on that day. This underscores the close connection between Sunday and the resurrection of Jesus: In the early morning of the first day of the week, the women went to Jesus's tomb (Mark 16. 2; Matthew 28. 1; Luke 24. 1; in John 20. 1 only Mary of Magdala is mentioned) and found it empty. Early on Sunday morning, the risen Christ first appeared to Mary of Magdala (Mark 16. 9). 'On the same day' (Luke 24. 13) the encounter of the risen Christ with the disciples of Emmaus took place. On the evening of that first day of the week, Jesus appeared to the disciples gathered in the Upper Room without Thomas (John 20. 19), and again 'eight days later', but this time with Thomas present (John 20. 26). Even though the designation of Sunday as the 'eighth day', expressive of the perfection of Sunday and its superiority over the Sabbath, is documented for the first time in the Epistle of Barnabas<sup>46</sup>, this time reference is perhaps less to be read as an historical reference and more as a reflection of the congregation's practice, already established at the time of the writing of the Gospel of John, of celebrating the Lord's Supper 'on the eighth day'<sup>47</sup>.

### Acts, Epistles, and the Revelation of John

Surprisingly rarely – in fact, in only three places – is Sunday mentioned in the rest of the New Testament. Proof of regular weekly Sunday observances is far from clear and therefore highly controversial<sup>48</sup>.

1. Acts 20. 7: Acts 20. 7–12 deals with Paul's farewell in Troas during his so-called third missionary journey. On the first day of the week, they were gathered to break bread. During

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<sup>46</sup> *Epistula Barnabae*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 15. 9, p. 29,22. For the symbolism of the 'eighth day', cf. Dölger, 'Die Symbolik der Achtzahl', pp. 160–82; Staats, 'Ogdoas als ein Symbol für die Auferstehung', pp. 29–52; Schneider, 'Achtzahl', pp. 79–81.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Kosnetter, 'Der Tag des Herrn im Neuen Testament', p. 43; Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, III, p. 394.

<sup>48</sup> Comparable to some extent with the controversy between Norman H. Young ('The Use of Sunday for Meetings') and Stephen R. Llewelyn ('The Use of Sunday for Meetings').



Paul's sermon, the young man Eutychus fell from the window of the upper chamber to his death but was raised by Paul. After breaking bread, Paul ate and spoke with the Troes until dawn and then departed. Here 'breaking bread' is not only an expression for a simple communal meal<sup>49</sup>, but in the Lucan use of the word clearly connotes the Eucharist<sup>50</sup>. Thus, not only is Paul's farewell supper described but also an early Christian Eucharistic celebration<sup>51</sup>. Whether it took place on the evening before Sunday<sup>52</sup> or on Sunday evening<sup>53</sup> cannot be conclusively determined. The explicit mention of the first day of the week in Acts 20. 7 in connection with the 'breaking of bread' possibly points to the already established tradition of gathering on Sunday for the Lord's Supper.

2. I Corinthians 16. 2: With regard to the collection for the Jerusalem congregation, Paul asks the Corinthians to put aside money on the first day of each week (κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου) and thus save what they can. Why does Paul choose Sunday as the day for the money to be set aside? Speculation that the choice of Sunday was connected with wage payment customs of the time<sup>54</sup> or with people still having enough money at the beginning of the week<sup>55</sup> cannot be substantiated by sources<sup>56</sup> and therefore remains speculative. The choice of Sunday would be plausible, however, if gatherings for worship occurred regularly on Sunday, at which times donations for the needy were also collected. The latter is at any rate later attested by Justin<sup>57</sup> and Tertullian<sup>58</sup>. According to Paul, this collection should take place outside of and parallel to Sunday worship and in addition to the regular collection perhaps made during the service.

3. Revelation 1. 10: The seer of the Revelation of John receives his first vision on a Lord's day. Here 'Lord's day' means neither an 'eschatological day' (the 'day of Yahweh')<sup>59</sup> nor an Easter Sunday<sup>60</sup>, but simply Sunday. The explicit mention of the Lord's day in Revelation 1. 10 – which, it is worth noting, is the oldest evidence for this designation of Sunday, which then becomes decisive for ecclesiastical language and replaces the designation 'first day of the week' – points to the prominent position and regular celebration of Sunday, which is explicitly attested about the same time in the Didache (14. 1).

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<sup>49</sup> Thus, e.g., Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 108–11; Rouwhorst, 'Der Sonntag als originär christliche Schöpfung', p. 165.

<sup>50</sup> Thus Kosnetter, 'Der Tag des Herrn im Neuen Testament', pp. 36–37; Klauck, 'Brotbrechen', pp. 232–33.

<sup>51</sup> Thus especially Haag, *Vom Sabbat zum Sonntag*, p. 175.

<sup>52</sup> Thus, e.g., Dumaine, 'Dimanche', col. 888; Callewaert, 'La synaxe eucharistique à Jérusalem', pp. 40–42; Riesenfeld, 'Sabbat et Jour du Seigneur', p. 211; Riesenfeld, 'The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism', pp. 127–28; Staats, 'Die Sonntagnachtgottesdienste der christlichen Frühzeit', p. 247; Bergholz, 'Sonntag', p. 451.

<sup>53</sup> Thus, e.g., Kosnetter, 'Der Tag des Herrn im Neuen Testament', p. 37; Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 199; Rordorf, 'Ursprung und Bedeutung der Sonntagsfeier im frühen Christentum', pp. 152–54 and passim.

<sup>54</sup> Thus Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, p. 309.

<sup>55</sup> Thus Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, p. 100.

<sup>56</sup> Kosnetter refers to this in 'Der Tag des Herrn im Neuen Testament', p. 39. No information exists regarding terms of payment at this time.

<sup>57</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apologiae*, ed. by Minns and Parvis, I. 67. 6, p. 260.

<sup>58</sup> Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, ed. by Dekkers, 35. 5, pp. 150–51: Collection only once per month.

<sup>59</sup> Thus, e.g., Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 123–31, but already considered by Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, p. 304.

<sup>60</sup> Documents and discussion in Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 118–23; Rouwhorst, 'Der Sonntag als originär christliche Schöpfung', p. 165.

### 3. Sunday and Sunday Observance

#### The Beginnings of Sunday Observance

The beginnings of weekly Sunday observance, well attested from approximately 100 onwards, remain largely obscure due to the scarcity of sources, but in any case go back earlier. Pope Innocent I views Sunday observance as grounded in an apostolic ordinance<sup>61</sup>. That Christian Sunday observance has its origin in the very beginnings of the Early Church<sup>62</sup> is by no means unlikely<sup>63</sup>, although it cannot necessarily be proven. At any rate, it certainly did not originate in the Gentile Christian congregations of the Pauline mission, since in that case the adoption of Sunday observance by Jewish Christians – especially if, like the Ebionites, they rejected the Apostle Paul and his letters<sup>64</sup> – is inconceivable<sup>65</sup>. In continuity with the meals the risen Christ shared with his disciples (cf. Mark 16. 14; Luke 24. 30–31; John 21. 12–13; Acts 1. 4; 10. 41), the ‘breaking of bread’ or the Lord’s Supper was perhaps since the earliest times implemented on Sunday as the day of the resurrection of Jesus<sup>66</sup>. That Christian Sunday observance was already an established practice in the Pauline congregations (Troas and Corinth) in the fifties is a possible conclusion, albeit not compelling, from Acts 20. 7 and I Corinthians 16. 2.

The *Didache* offers the first sure evidence for the weekly Sunday celebration: assembling on each Lord’s day with the ‘breaking of bread’ and thanksgiving, following a confession of sin<sup>67</sup>. Ignatius of Antioch contrasts the Christian ‘life according to the Lord’s day’, i.e., the observance of Sunday, with Jewish Sabbath observance<sup>68</sup>. The *Epistle of Barnabas* also testifies to the celebration of Sunday as the ‘eighth day’<sup>69</sup>. Justin Martyr describes regular gatherings for worship on Sunday and mentions the following elements: reading from the Gospels and/or the Prophets, sermon by the principle, (intercessory) prayers, preparation of the gifts and Eucharistic prayer, distribution of the Eucharist, delivery of the Eucharist by deacons to those absent, and collection for the needy<sup>70</sup>. The full text of a Eucharistic prayer is presented for the first time in the *Traditio apostolica*, within the framework of a bishop’s ordination on a Sunday<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Innocentius I papa, *Epistula 25 [21]*, ed. by Cabié, 7, p. 24 to bishop Decentius of Gubbio.

<sup>62</sup> Argued by, e.g., Dumaine, ‘Dimanche’, cols 893–95; Callewaert, ‘La synaxe eucharistique à Jérusalem’, pp. 63–66; Kosnetter, ‘Der Tag des Herrn im Neuen Testament’, pp. 43–44.

<sup>63</sup> Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 233.

<sup>64</sup> Regarding the rejection of the Apostle Paul and his letters by the Ebionites or by a group of Ebionites, cf. Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. by Schwartz, III. 27. 4, p. 256,13–15.

<sup>65</sup> Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, pp. 214–16; cf. also Kosnetter, ‘Der Tag des Herrn im Neuen Testament’, pp. 43–44; Troxler, *Das Kirchengesetz der Sonntagsmesspflicht*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>66</sup> Thus Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, pp. 219–33.

<sup>67</sup> *Didache*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 14. 1, p. 8,5–7. Regarding the thanksgiving, cf. also *Didache*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 10. 2–6, p. 6,11–26.

<sup>68</sup> Ignatius Antiochenus, *Ad Magnesios*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 9. 1, p. 91,4; cf. note n. 31 above. Cf. also Heil, ‘Ignatios von Antiochia und der Herrentag’.

<sup>69</sup> *Epistula Barnabae*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 9, p. 29,22–23.

<sup>70</sup> Justin martyr, *Apologiae*, ed. by Minns and Parvis, I. 67. 3–6, pp. 258–60.

<sup>71</sup> *Traditio apostolica*, ed. by Botte, 4, pp. 10–16.

Because Sunday was initially a normal working day, the Sunday celebration was feasible only in the early morning or in the evening. In the beginning, the Lord's Supper was celebrated in the evening<sup>72</sup>, initially in conjunction with a full meal<sup>73</sup>. Because the Jewish division of time, according to which the day lasted from one evening to the next<sup>74</sup>, was adopted by Christians<sup>75</sup>, disagreement exists as to whether Sunday celebrations took place in the evening after the end of the Sabbath<sup>76</sup> or on Sunday evening<sup>77</sup>, before being moved to early Sunday morning at the beginning of the second century. Pliny the Younger reports around 112 to Emperor Trajan that the Christians were in the habit of gathering on the appointed day (i.e., probably on Sunday) before sunrise to sing an antiphonal song, directed to Christ their God, and then of going their separate ways before coming together again in the evening for a simple meal; but they would have given up the evening meeting after the ban on *Hetairia* issued by Pliny<sup>78</sup>. The regular celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday<sup>79</sup>, attested by Justin in the middle of the second century, apparently took place early in the morning<sup>80</sup>. Tertullian speaks of assemblies before dawn (*antelucani coetus*)<sup>81</sup>, and Cyprian of Carthage mentions the celebration of the Lord's resurrection in the early morning<sup>82</sup>. Only after Sunday had become a day off from work under Constantine I could the Sunday celebration be moved to Sunday morning.

### Primary and Secondary Motifs

At the core of Sunday is the remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus, which stands at the centre of the Sunday celebration, not only on Easter but on every Sunday as a 'little Easter'. This is already clear from the designation of Sunday as the 'day of the resurrection' (*ἀναστάσιμος ἡμέρα*)<sup>83</sup>, attested in the Greek East since the fourth century. Augustine also

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Acts 20. 7–12.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. I Corinthians 11. 18–34; *Didache*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 10. 1, p. 6,11.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Leviticus 23. 32.

<sup>75</sup> With regard to Sunday, cf. Pseudo-Athanasius, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*, in *PG* 28, 53, col. 632A; John Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, ed. by Petschenig, 2. 18, pp. 31–32; Leo I papa, *Epistulae*, in *PL* 54, ep. 9. 1, col. 625B.

<sup>76</sup> Advocated by, e.g., Callewaert, 'La synaxe eucharistique à Jérusalem', pp. 54–55; Riesenfeld, 'Sabbat et Jour du Seigneur', pp. 211–12; Riesenfeld, 'The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism', pp. 127–28; Staats, 'Die Sonntagnachtgottesdienste der christlichen Frühzeit', p. 247; Bergholz, 'Sonntag', p. 451.

<sup>77</sup> Thus Dumaine, 'Dimanche', cols 900–02; Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, pp. 234–47; Rordorf, 'Ursprung und Bedeutung der Sonntagsfeier im frühen Christentum', pp. 152–54; Rordorf, 'Sonntagnachtgottesdienste der christlichen Frühzeit', pp. 138–41.

<sup>78</sup> Plinius minor, *Epistulae*, ed. by Kasten, ep. X. 96. 7, p. 642.

<sup>79</sup> Justin martyr, *Apologiae*, ed. by Minns and Parvis, I. 67. 3, p. 258.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. also Kinzig, "'Auszeit'", pp. 365–66.

<sup>81</sup> Tertullian, *De corona*, ed. by Kroymann, 3. 3, p. 1043; cf. *Apologeticum*, ed. by Dekkers, 2. 6, p. 88.

<sup>82</sup> Cyprianus, *Epistulae*, ed. by Diercks, ep. 63. 16. 2, p. 413.

<sup>83</sup> Eusebius, *Commentarii in Psalmos*, in *PG* 23, 21. 30, col. 213C, and 58. 17, col. 552A; Athanasius, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, in *PG* 27, 6. 1, col. 76C/D; Basilus, *De Spiritu sancto*, ed. by Pruche, 27. 66, p. 484,66; *Constitutiones apostolorum*, ed. by Metzger, II. 59. 3, vol. 1, p. 324; VII. 30. 1, vol. 3, p. 60; Barsanuphius et Iohannes, *Quaestiones et responsiones*, ed. by Neyt and Angelis-Noah, 751. 7–8, vol. 5, p. 194; Ephraem Syrus, *Carmina Nisibena*, ed. by Beck, 3. 6. 60–64, p. 12; German trans. by Edmund Beck CSCO 219/Syr. 93, 13; English trans. by Stopford, p. 171. In the Latin West, already Tertullian designates Sunday as the *dies dominicae resurrectionis*

explains the designation ‘Lord’s day’ with reference to the resurrection of the Lord<sup>84</sup>. The *Epistle of Barnabas*<sup>85</sup> and Justin<sup>86</sup> name the resurrection of Jesus on Sunday as the reason for the Sunday celebration. According to Ephrem the Syrian, Sunday is a holy day that separates six (week)days from the previous six and announces the resurrection of Christ and reminds us of it<sup>87</sup>. Pseudo-Athanasius says that Christians venerate Sunday ‘because of the resurrection’ (διὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν)<sup>88</sup>. According to Pope Innocent I, the venerable resurrection of Christ is celebrated not only on Easter but in a weekly rhythm every Sunday, with Sunday serving as an image for Easter<sup>89</sup>. Augustine declares that the Lord’s day is not intended for the Jews but rather for Christians, because of the Lord’s resurrection, and that it is from him (i.e., the Lord) that it acquires its celebratory character<sup>90</sup>. In a sermon on the first Sunday of Lent, Severus of Antioch addresses his listeners, who ‘celebrate every Sunday the memory of the resurrection and honor the glorious day which bears the name of our Lord and Redeemer’<sup>91</sup>. The edict of King Guntram I, issued following the Council of Mâcon of 585, states that ‘on every Sunday [...] we worship the mystery of the holy resurrection’<sup>92</sup>.

In addition to the resurrection of Jesus, other celebrative or commemorative motifs are also mentioned. Alongside the resurrection of Jesus, Justin Martyr names the beginning of creation on Sunday as reason for Sunday observance<sup>93</sup>. In an Armenian sermon fragment by Pseudo-Dionysius of Alexandria, a parallel is drawn between the separation of light and darkness at creation and the separation of faith and unbelief with regard to the resurrection<sup>94</sup>. Basil of Caesarea also connects Sunday as the day creation began with the Lord’s day sanctified by Jesus’s resurrection<sup>95</sup>, while Pseudo-Athanasius describes Sunday as the beginning of the second creation<sup>96</sup>. Both Ambrosiaster<sup>97</sup> and Leo the Great<sup>98</sup>, as well as Isidore of Seville<sup>99</sup>, name not only the resurrection of Jesus but also the beginning of creation as grounds for Sunday observance.

From the Old Testament *Heilsgeschichte*, the crossing of the Red Sea, which according to Pseudo-Augustine took place on the ‘Lord’s day’<sup>100</sup>, and the giving of the manna during

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*nis* (*De oratione*, ed. by Diercks, 23. 2, p. 271). The term can denote both Easter and Sunday, e.g., in Gregory of Tours; cf. Graviers, ‘L’expression “dominicae resurrectionis dies”’, pp. 289–300, with selected sources.

<sup>84</sup> Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, ed. by Willems, 120. 6, p. 663; cf. also *Contra Faustum*, ed. by Zycha, 18. 5, p. 493.

<sup>85</sup> *Epistula Barnabae*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 15. 9, p. 29,22–23.

<sup>86</sup> Justin martyr, *Apologiae*, ed. by Minns and Parvis, I. 67. 7, p. 260.

<sup>87</sup> Ephraem Syrus, *Sermo ad nocturnum dominicae resurrectionis*, ed. by Lamy, 4, vol. 1, p. 544.

<sup>88</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Homilia de semente*, ed. by von Stockhausen, 9. 1[8], p. 189.

<sup>89</sup> Innocentius I papa, *Epistula 25 [21]*, ed. by Cabié, 7, p. 24 to bishop Decentius of Gubbio.

<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. by Goldbacher, ep. 55. 13. 23, vol. 34.2, p. 194.

<sup>91</sup> Severus Antiochenus, *Homiliae cathedrales*, ed. by Brière, 69, p. 389.

<sup>92</sup> *Edictum Guntchramni regis a. 585*, ed. by Boretius, 11, pp. 22–23.

<sup>93</sup> Justin martyr, *Apologiae*, ed. by Minns and Parvis, I. 67. 7, p. 260.

<sup>94</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius Alexandrinus, *Fragmenta armeniaca*, ed. by Pitra, 3. 2, pp. 180–81 (Latin trans. by Pitra, p. 421).

<sup>95</sup> Basilus, *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, ed. by de Mendieta and Rudberg, 2. 8, pp. 36–37.

<sup>96</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *De sabbatis et circumcissione*, in *PG* 28, 4, col. 137C.

<sup>97</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. by Souter, 95. 2, pp. 167–68.

<sup>98</sup> Leo I papa, *Epistulae*, in *PL* 54, ep. 9. 1, col. 626A.

<sup>99</sup> Isidorus Hispalensis, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, I. 25. 3, p. 28.

<sup>100</sup> Pseudo-Augustine, *Sermones*, in *PL* 39, s. 167. 2, col. 2070.

Israel's desert wanderings are associated with Sunday. From Exodus 16. 26, Origenes calculates that the manna first appeared on the ground on a Sunday<sup>101</sup>. Ambrosiaster says that the manna was given to the Jews on the first day, i.e., on a Sunday, as a model for the Eucharist<sup>102</sup>, as does Isidore of Seville<sup>103</sup>. At the beginning of the sixth century, a Heavenly Letter about Sunday, originating in the East and said to have been written by Jesus Christ himself, circulated rapidly in almost every language; issuing dire threats, it called for participation in the Sunday Eucharist and strict observance of Sunday rest<sup>104</sup>. In the letter, a large number of biblical salvific events are stated as having occurred on Sunday, including God's visit to Abraham at Mamre in the form of the three men (Genesis 15), God's appearing to Moses on Sinai and the giving of the tablets of the Law, the archangel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary, and the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist<sup>105</sup>.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* connects the resurrection of Jesus with his post-resurrection appearances and his ascension into heaven as reason for the celebration of Sunday as the 'eighth day' and the beginning of the new creation<sup>106</sup>. Furthermore, Sunday is also distinguished by the sending of the Spirit to the apostles, whether through the bestowal of the Spirit on Easter Sunday (John 20. 19) or through the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2. 4), which Pseudo-Augustine<sup>107</sup>, Leo the Great<sup>108</sup>, and Isidore of Seville<sup>109</sup> mention. According to some sources, the return of Christ is also expected on a Sunday. The Syriac *Doctrina apostolorum*, presumably from the fourth century, claims that the apostles mandated that on the first day of the week worship, reading of the Scriptures, and the Eucharist should take place, because Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week, was exalted over the world on the first day of the week, ascended to heaven on the first day of the week, and will finally appear with the angels of heaven on the first day of the week<sup>110</sup>. Ambrose of Milan associates the general resurrection of the dead with a 'Lord's day'<sup>111</sup>, while Pseudo-Augustine directly expresses the expectation that Jesus Christ will return as judge on a Lord's day<sup>112</sup>. Jerome even associates the day of judgement with the Easter vigil, with the Lord coming at midnight; thus, the apostolic tradition has been preserved that the faithful in attendance at the Easter vigil may not be dismissed before midnight, i.e., before the expected time of the Second Coming, in order that they may celebrate the feast day in newly won security<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Origenes, *In Exodum homiliae*, ed. by Baehrens, 7. 5, p. 211.

<sup>102</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. by Souter, 95. 3, pp. 168–69.

<sup>103</sup> Isidorus Hispalensis, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, I. 25. 3–4, pp. 28–29.

<sup>104</sup> See Bittner, *Der vom Himmel gefallene Brief Christi*; see also Stübe, 'Sonntagsbrief', pp. 99–104; Stübe, *Der Himmelsbrief*, pp. 11–16; Esbroeck, 'La Lettre sur le dimanche, descendue du ciel', pp. 267–84.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Dagron, 'Jamais le dimanche', p. 166. Text of two Greek recensions (A and B) of the *Himmelsbrief* in *Anecdota graeco-byzantina, pars prior*, ed. Afanasij Vassiliev (Moscow 1893), pp. 23–28 and 28–32. Bittner, *Der vom Himmel gefallene Brief Christi*, presents three Greek recensions (A, B, and C) and gives a German translation of the oriental versions.

<sup>106</sup> *Epistula Barnabae*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 15. 9, p. 29,22–23.

<sup>107</sup> Pseudo-Augustine, *Sermones*, in *PL* 39, s. 167. 2, col. 2070AB.

<sup>108</sup> Leo I papa, *Epistulae*, in *PL* 54, ep. 9. 1, col. 626AB.

<sup>109</sup> Isidorus Hispalensis, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, I. 25. 3, p. 28.

<sup>110</sup> *Doctrina apostolorum*, ed. and trans. by Pratten and Cureton, can. 2, p. 38.

<sup>111</sup> Ambrosius, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, ed. by Adriaen, 8. 26, p. 307.

<sup>112</sup> Pseudo-Augustine, *Sermones*, in *PL* 39, s. 167. 2, col. 2070B.

<sup>113</sup> Jerome, *Commentarii in evangelium Matthaei*, ed. by Hurst and Adriaen, 4. 25. 6, p. 237.

## Sunday as a Feast Day and Day of Rejoicing

Although some early Christian authors express the idea that for the Christian every day is actually a ‘Lord’s day’<sup>114</sup> and thus a feast day<sup>115</sup>, or that the whole life of the Christian is a holy feast<sup>116</sup>, Sunday is nevertheless a day of celebration and joy for Christians, a day which receives special emphasis in the course of the week. According to Pseudo-Ignatius of Antioch, it is the queen (βασιλίδα) and the most sublime (ὑπατον) of all days<sup>117</sup>. According to the *Epistle of Barnabas*, it is ‘celebrated to our delight’ (εἰς εὐφροσύνην)<sup>118</sup>. Tertullian also testifies that on Sunday Christians give themselves to joy<sup>119</sup> and abstain from all signs of fear<sup>120</sup>. The Syriac *Didascalia* demands that the faithful always be glad on Sunday, ‘for everyone who afflicts his soul on Sunday is guilty of sin’<sup>121</sup>. Ephrem the Syrian compares the joy of Sunday with the joy with the joy of the apostles at the resurrection of Jesus<sup>122</sup>. The celebratory character (*sollemnitatis, dies festus*) of Sunday emphasized, for example, by Tertullian<sup>123</sup> but also by Augustine<sup>124</sup>. Minucius Felix says that on a celebratory day (*sollemni die*) Christians gather for a meal<sup>125</sup>.

The ban on fasting and kneeling on Sunday – just as during the Easter season –, already mentioned by Tertullian, is justified on the basis of the celebratory character of Sunday<sup>126</sup>. In the year 325 the Council of Nicaea criticized the practice of kneeling for prayer on Sunday and determined that on Sunday and during Easter season, prayers should be made while standing<sup>127</sup>. Basil of Caesarea justifies standing for prayer on Sunday inasmuch as Sunday is a metaphor for the world to come<sup>128</sup>, and Nilus of Ancyra sees standing for prayer as prefiguring that future world<sup>129</sup>, while Isidore of Seville interprets it as a sign pointing to the future resurrection<sup>130</sup>. The custom of not kneeling for prayer on Sunday is attested

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<sup>114</sup> Tertullian, *De baptismo*, ed. by Borleffs, 19. 3, p. 294; Origenes, *Contra Celsum*, ed. by Koetschau, 8. 22, p. 239.

<sup>115</sup> Origenes, *In Genesim homiliae*, ed. by Habermehl, 10. 3, p. 153; John Chrysostom, *In kalendas*, in: *PG* 48, 2, col. 956A.

<sup>116</sup> Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, ed. by Stählin, Früchtel and Treu, VII. 7. 49. 3, p. 37,1–3; cf. VII. 7. 35, 3, p. 27,14–18; VII. 12. 76. 4, p. 54,17–20.

<sup>117</sup> Pseudo Ignatius Antiochenus, *Ad Magnesios*, in *Epistolae interpolatae et suppositiciae*, ed. by Funk and Diekamp, 9. 4, p. 124,13.

<sup>118</sup> *Epistula Barnabae*, ed. by Funk and Bihlmeyer, 15. 9, p. 29,22.

<sup>119</sup> Tertullian, *Ad nationes*, ed. by Borleffs, 1. 13. 1, p. 31.

<sup>120</sup> Tertullian, *De oratione*, ed. by Diercks, 23. 2, p. 271.

<sup>121</sup> *Didascalia syriaca*, ed. and trans. by Achelis and Flemming, 21, p. 114; English trans. by Gobson, pp. 100–01.

<sup>122</sup> Ephraem Syrus, *Sermo ad nocturnum dominicae resurrectionis*, ed. by Lamy 4, vol. 1, p. 544.

<sup>123</sup> Tertullian, *De oratione*, ed. by Diercks, 23. 2, p. 271; *De idololatria*, ed. by Reifferscheid and Wissowa, 14. 7, p. 1115.

<sup>124</sup> Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. by Goldbacher, ep. 55. 13. 23, vol. 34. 2, p. 194.

<sup>125</sup> Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, ed. by Halm, 9. 6, p. 13,25.

<sup>126</sup> Tertullian, *De corona*, ed. by Kroymann, 3. 4, p. 1043; cf. *De oratione*, ed. by Diercks, 23. 1–2, p. 271: no kneeling.

<sup>127</sup> *Concilium Nicaenum a. 325*, ed. by Alberigo (*Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta*), can. 20, p. 16.

<sup>128</sup> Basilus, *De Spiritu sancto*, ed. by Pruche, 27. 66, p. 484.

<sup>129</sup> Nilus Ancyranus, *Epistulae*, in *PG* 79, ep. 3. 132, col. 444D.

<sup>130</sup> Isidorus Hispalensis, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, I. 24. 2, p. 27.

frequently<sup>131</sup> sometimes combined with a prohibition against fasting<sup>132</sup>. Liturgical sources, such as the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries of the Jerusalem Church<sup>133</sup>, prove the consistent liturgical implementation of not kneeling on Sunday: kneeling for prayers after the readings of the Easter vigil before midnight and standing for the mass after the beginning of Easter Sunday<sup>134</sup>. The prohibition against kneeling on Sunday also penetrated Byzantine court ceremonies, in which kneeling or proskynesis or prostratio before the emperor was forbidden on Sunday<sup>135</sup>.

Regarding the ban on fasting on Sunday, the prohibition is likewise widely attested by the Church Fathers<sup>136</sup> and can also be found in church ordinances such as the Syriac *Didascalia*<sup>137</sup> and the *Apostolic Constitutions*<sup>138</sup>. The Apostolic Canons included in the Apostolic Constitutions threaten clerics in violation of the ban with dismissal and laity with excommunication<sup>139</sup>. The Councils of Gangra (340/341?)<sup>140</sup>, Zaragoza (380)<sup>141</sup>, and Braga (561)<sup>142</sup> urge the Sunday ban on fasting and pronounce an anathema on Sunday fasting, as do the canons of Martin of Braga<sup>143</sup>. According to the *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, the person who fasts on Sunday is not to be considered a Catholic<sup>144</sup>.

The festive character of Sunday is alluded to when, in the *Vita sancti Hilarionis* written by Jerome, the monk Sabas invites his visitors to the vineyard on Sunday to enjoy grapes<sup>145</sup>. If, according to the rule of the abbot, on Sunday a dessert or a drink may be granted to accompany the meal<sup>146</sup>,<sup>146</sup> this too has its grounds in the celebratory character of the day.

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<sup>131</sup> e.g., John Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, ed. by Petschenig, 2. 18, pp. 31–32; Maximus Taurinensis, *Sermones*, ed. by Mutzenbecher, s. 44. 1, p. 178; *Regula magistri*, ed. by de Vogüé, 45. 12–13, vol. 2, p. 209.

<sup>132</sup> e.g., Jerome, *Altercatio Luciferiani et orthodoxi*, ed. by Canellis, 8, p. 26; Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. by Goldbacher, ep. 55. 15. 28, vol. 34.2, p. 202; John Cassian, *Conlationes*, ed. by Petschenig, XXI. 20. 3, pp. 494–95.

<sup>133</sup> *Lectionarium Hierosolymitanum armeniacum*, ed. by Renoux, 44b, pp. 296–307; *Lectionarium Hierosolymitanum ibericum*, ed. by Tarchnischvili, 721 and 734, CSCO 188, pp. 137 and 141 (Georgian text), CSCO 189, pp. 110 and 113 (Latin translation).

<sup>134</sup> Cf. also Brakmann and Chronz, ‘Ein neuer Zeuge des Ordos der Osternacht’, pp. 149–50.

<sup>135</sup> Dagron, ‘Jamais le dimanche’, p. 173.

<sup>136</sup> e.g., Hilarius Pictaviensis, *Instructio Psalmorum*, ed. by Doignon, 12, p. 11; Ambrosius, *De Helia et ieiunio*, ed. by Schenkl, 10. 33, p. 430; John Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, ed. by Petschenig, 3. 11, pp. 44–45; *Regula magistri*, ed. by de Vogüé, 28. 42–43, vol. 2, p. 158; Epiphanius Salamitanus, *De fide*, ed. by Holl and Dummer, 22. 6–8, p. 523; Isidorus Hispalensis, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, I. 34. 6, p. 40; cf. also n. 132 above.

<sup>137</sup> *Didascalia syriaca*, ed. and trans. by Achelis and Flemming, 21, p. 107; English trans. by Gobson, p. 95.

<sup>138</sup> *Constitutiones apostolorum*, ed. by Metzger, 5. 20. 19, vol. 2, p. 284.

<sup>139</sup> *Constitutiones apostolorum*, ed. by Metzger, 8. 47. 64, vol. 3, p. 298.

<sup>140</sup> *Concilium Gangrense a. 340/41 (?)*, ed. by Joannou, can. 18, vol. 1.2, p. 96: anti-Eustathian.

<sup>141</sup> *Concilium Caesaraugustanum a. 380*, ed. by Díez and Rodríguez, can. 2, p. 291: anti-Priscillianist.

<sup>142</sup> *Concilium Bracaraense a. 561*, ed. by Barlow, can. 4, p. 105: fasting and kneeling.

<sup>143</sup> Martinus Bracarenensis, *Capitula (sive canones)*, ed. by Barlow, can. 57, p. 138.

<sup>144</sup> *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, ed. by Munier, can. 77 [64], p. 178.

<sup>145</sup> Jerome, *Vita sancti Hilarionis*, ed. by Bastiaensen, 17. 6 [27], p. 110.

<sup>146</sup> *Regula magistri*, ed. by de Vogüé, 26. 11–13, vol. 2, p. 308.

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