



# The Eucharist as Historical Evidence

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## The Eucharist as Historical Evidence.

THERE is nothing that saddens the heart so much as the determined refusal of our Moslem brethren to admit the fact of the death of Jesus Christ, and to perceive, or receive, the benefits that flow from that death. Often, and especially when we come to the time when we commemorate the day on which He laid down His life, we say from our very hearts, "Would to God that the veil were taken away!" and publicly we pray for this in our churches, on the very day of that death—to the tragedy of which the Moslem adds by saying, whether indifferently or furiously, that it never happened!—The pity of it!

Probably, this failure to have faith in the death of Jesus Christ is a more fatal one than the rejection of other Christian doctrines; for, if a man's heart is thoroughly broken, and softened by what he learns of the death of Christ, he will specially make Christ the Master and Owner of his life, and the rest will follow.

We feel, therefore, that we must make one more effort to prove to our Moslem brethren—what is to everyone else a fact needless of proof—that Jesus Christ died; further, that He died of his own deliberate will (for the sins of mankind and their forgiveness). And our line of proof shall be rather an unusual one—the existence of a rite called the Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. In other words, we shall prove a fact of long ago by a phenomenon of to-day.

We begin, then, with a present fact gathered by observation: that in all churches in all lands, there exists a rite, performed, usually, on the first day of the week, in which, amid innumerable variation of detail, one point is fixed and central, *viz*, that bread is broken, and that the fruit of the vine is poured out and drunk; and that he who breaks the bread and pours forth the wine says that he does so in obedience to an express command given by the Saviour on the night before the day on which He died; for that He, on that night, Himself took bread, broke it, and gave it to be eaten, poured wine, and gave it to be drunk, saying, that the bread was His Body broken, and that the fruit of the vine was His blood shed for man, concluding, "*This do in remembrance of Me.*"

This is what is done in all Christian churches all over the world, and the practice has been handed down from generation to generation from time immemorial, as can be easily seen at a glance into the history of any century. And our thesis is that this takes us back to the original command, alluded to above, and proves that Jesus Christ, on a certain evening, did perform these acts, and did command them to be commemoratively continued. It is safe to say that the traditional consensus (*tawâtur*) of the Moslem world, in all generations, as to the authenticity of the Koran does not exceed that of the Christian world, as displayed by the universality of this practice, in time and place, for the authenticity of that

original command.

Now, if this is true, it means (1) that Jesus Christ did actually foresee His death—a violent one involving blood-shedding; for it shows that He knew the importance and the benefits of His death to be so unspeakable that He instituted a rite which should, dramatically, so to speak, remind all future ages of that death.

(2) that He actually accomplished that death. This last point we may assert without fear of contradiction, if the first is made good, because all admit He was a prophet, and He could not, possibly, be mistaken when He was solemnly declaring the whole issue and meaning of His life on earth; and also because the disciples would not have handed down this rite, or practised it themselves, unless Jesus Christ had actually been slain and shed His blood according to His solemn premonition.

We might add a third point which is proved by the consideration of the fact of this celebration in this and every age, *viz.*, that the fact of its performance *on the first day of the week* proves that He rose again from the dead. But this point, though equally important, is not our express theme to-day. All Moslems believe that He "rose;" and if once they can believe that He *died*, their former faith will help them to see that He *rose from death*.

We believe this argument will be more potent to convince the Moslem who loves truth, of the sacrificial death of Christ than even the historical argument for the crucifixion. For, in the case of the latter, the Moslem goes along with the Christian right down to the point that *a crucifixion* took place, and even that he who hung there resembled Jesus Christ. *Then* he asserts that it *was not* He, and demands the disproof of his negative!

But in the case of the institution of that Supper of Commemoration, no such sophistication of the matter is possible, for we are taken back not merely to an objective event, but to an event in which is involved the mind of Christ Himself, and this invests the whole argument with new force and meaning. No longer can our Moslem friend feel the confidence he felt when he was attacking the fact of the crucifixion as a mere abstract problem of identity: for now we are on personal ground, and ground that the Moslem must, and will always respect, *viz.*, the declared mind of a Prophet. For, if this rite has been celebrated all down the ages (and it has), and if it points back to a command of Christ Himself, that in all ages His believers should break bread in memory of His broken body, and drink the fruit of the vine in memory of His spilled blood, until His coming again (and it does), then the Moslem is without further argument convinced. For, as we said, no Prophet can be conceived of as making a capital error when solemnly summing-up the nature of His life-work and future influence:—therefore, He *did* die, His body broken, and His blood shed:—besides which, the very fact of His disciples obeying

the command to commemorate and hand on the circumstances of His death, shows that what He indicated in that command did come to pass.

Another feature of this line of proof that will appeal specially to our Moslem friend, is his rooted conviction that such commemorative actions cannot have a fraudulent origin. He says, with reason, that the pilgrimage—the mere fact of it—is the best argument of the real existence of Mohammed and his real connection with Mecca and Medina, and his real command to reverence the Kaaba; and he might rightly hold that these actions are even more of a support to the authenticity of the verses in the Koran commanding the pilgrimage, etc., than the latter are to the propriety of the actions. Similarly, that enormous heap of stones outside Mecca, and the yearly shower of fresh stones thrown on to it by the hand of the pilgrim, is the best argument that this strange action was really enjoined. In the East even the unauthorised imitation of the actions of a religious leader is often made the principle of religious rites and observances, how much more then his express command! A true tradition tells us that the Caliph was observed riding his camel round and round a certain spot, and when asked why he did so strange a thing, he replied with an oath that he knew not, save that he had seen the prophet of God do so! How much more would a solemn command be rigidly and faithfully obeyed!

In the East, then, the performance of symbolic actions, handed down by preceding generations, is a very deeply-rooted habit, and, if properly checked and corroborated by careful historical inquiry and documentary evidence, is a sure guide to the original fact. The existence of Mohammed, his connection with Mecca, and his injunction to perform the pilgrimage, are not more clearly demonstrated by the fact and details of the pilgrimage, than the existence of Jesus Christ, His connection with Jerusalem, and His injunction to commemorate the breaking of His body, and the shedding of His blood there, are demonstrated by the fact and details of this Sacrament.

But if some one asks ‘where is your historic and documentary corroboration?’, We are only too joyful to produce it. As to the *general* historic corroboration, we suppose that not one Moslem could deny that wherever anything is known about Christianity there is found the celebration of this rite on the first day of the week. The literature of all ages is full of it, and that in the days of, and long before, the Hegira. Thee conditions of *tawâtur* are here amply fulfilled—common consent of all ascertained and ascertainable times; transmission; and absence of motive for fraud—for who would wish to commemorate a terrible death if it never happened? or who, if he and others were already convinced it had happened, whether mistakenly or unmistakenly, would fabricate so solemn a proof? or who would wish to deceive men that Christ did die, not believing it himself? If the contention were that Christ's disciples tried to fabricate proofs that he did *not* die, it would be more in line of what has actually taken place in

connection with false Christ's, Imams, Mahdis, and Prophets, as is clear from the case of the Fatimide Hakim, the originator of the Druse sect.

As to the more particular historic or documentary proof that the Lord's supper was celebrated in the early ages, right down to the time of the Apostles, and that they, in consequence, received the command from Christ, and that Christ, in consequence, truly gave the command and that, therefore, was His body truly broken and His blood truly shed—We shall now give some idea of how strong it is. We give our word that the passages quoted are taken only from works whose authenticity is beyond dispute, and whose dates are approximately known. We shall give doubt the benefit of the doubt in all cases, by neglecting works against whose authenticity the sceptical inquirers of Europe (who are quite as anxious to disprove Christianity as our Moslem friends) have brought any plea:—we shall only adduce passages which are admitted even by them, and at the dates which they choose to assign:—we shall let everything tell against ourselves, and, at the end of it all, it will be still clear that this rite was celebrated in all the countries before the Hegira right down to the times of the Apostles. Which, if it is admitted, must prove, as we said before, that Christ did command bread to be commemoratively broken—and that therefore His flesh was broken; and wine to be commemoratively poured—and that therefore His blood was shed.

(1) There are treatises on this Commemorative Feast by writers of all ages right away up to the earliest centuries. They are far too numerous for us to mention even a fraction of them, the very names of their authors being unknown to the Moslem reader: but perhaps some of the following great names may have reached him—Luther, Calvin, Thomas Aquinas (the famous Aristotelian Philosopher), Chrysostom, Augustine, Athanasius, Origen, etc—these have all written profusely on this subject, and however different their interpretations of the meaning of the rite, the central fact is with them always the same—that Christ broke bread and gave wine; that he commanded the repetition of these acts to commemorate His broken body and His shed blood.

(2) There are liturgies, or service-books, in great abundance, going back to early times, giving the actual order of prayer on the occasion of the celebration of this rite. Passing over the Latin liturgies, we have many very ancient liturgies used in the Egyptian and other Eastern churches, some of them going back to before the Hegira, even to the fourth century A.D. The liturgy used in the Coptic church to-day, that of, St. Chrysostom [St. Mark], is an instance in point, and as there is an Arabic edition of it published in Cairo at the *Watan* office, we refer our readers to it. In all these very varied liturgies, one point is fixed, that bread is broken and wine poured forth in obedience to the command of Christ, to commemorate thereby His broken body and His shed blood.

(3) There are Church canons, or prescriptions made by authoritative Church Councils right down to that of Nicea, in 323 A.D., mentioning this commemorative rite, and giving directions about it.

(4) Finally, there are works of early Christian writers, mentioning, particularly or incidentally, the fact of this rite and its details; always as if it were an established rite, handed down to them from their fathers, universally celebrated—nay, the very centre of all their worship. And since it is these quotations that run the practice up to the very first century of the Christian era, we shall now give specimens of them, only premising that when we come to the writings of the books known as the New Testament, *we shall not be appealing to them as inspired*, but simply as ordinary writings, the approximate date of many of which are perfectly well-known, just as that of the writings of Caesar are as well-known. And thus we shall appeal to what their authors say, not as inspired or as divine words or commands, but as testimony to what went on in the time of the writers.

We shall pass over the writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and even the third, because the teeming abundance of their allusions to this rite makes selection impossible; we need only mention the names of Chrysostom, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil, Athanasius, Tertullian, and Origen. Early Moslem commentators are not more full of—say—Mohammed's injunction of prayer and fasting than these writers are of this rite, its origin, description, and meaning; and as to its origin and description, there is no point of difference; always the breaking of the bread, the pouring of the wine, to commemorate the actions of Christ when He pointed to His death and shedding of blood.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (150-220 A. D.) frequently mentions and discusses the matter:—he says for example (we translate from the original Greek) "Therefore the Saviour took bread, and, first, spoke and blessed it; then broke and proffered it saying 'Take eat, this is My body' ... Christ blessed wine, saying, "Take, drink, this is My blood." And in another place He speaks of what took place "after the customary division of the elements" (the bread and wine).

IRENÆUS (135-202 A.D.) flourished in the same century as Clement. He was Bishop in Gaul, but was brought up in the Eastern Church, being the pupil of Polycarp, the pupil of John the apostle. He also speaks much about this rite—about the bread and the wine, about their relation to Christ's body and blood. Here is an incidental allusion (we translate from the original Latin) "Vain men deny the salvation of the flesh, and despise its regeneration, saying that it is not capable of immortality. But if it is not to be saved, then did not the Lord redeem us with His blood nor is the cup of the Eucharist [the name of the rite we have been discussing] the communication of His blood, nor is the bread which we break the

communication of His body” (meaning of course that their contention was vain, because these three facts were sure).

*Earlier* in the same century we have JUSTIN, a philosopher who studied at Athens, and published a defence of Christianity which he made at Rome. And here we have the great advantage that he was writing to people who did not know Christianity, and therefore he describes in some detail this matter; whereas many of the authors mentioned above, writing to Christians, assume the knowledge of just the fact we want to prove to our Moslem brethren, and therefore do not explicitly describe them, but only allude to them obliquely. To a man intent on finding out the facts, it is true that the latter passages are fully as convincing as the former, just because they are so artless: but human nature likes to be saved the trouble of inferring, and so prefers direct description. Thanks be to God then that we have this too.

JUSTIN, then (born about 114, writing about the middle of the second century) says (we translate from the original Greek), describing the Christian ceremonies to his pagan friends: “I also affirm that prayers and thanksgivings made by those who are worthy, are the only sacrifices that are perfect and well-pleasing to God: for these are the only ones that Christians have had it handed on to them to perform, even in that Memorial of food both dry and liquid, wherein is also commemorated the passion which the Son of God suffered in his own person.”

And still more definitely in another place, “This food we call the Eucharist, which none is allowed to partake of but he that believes our doctrines to be true and who has been baptised . . . For we take not these as common bread and common drink: but, like as Jesus Christ our Saviour, being incarnate by the Word of God, bore about him both flesh and blood for our salvation; so are we taught that this food which is blessed by the prayer of the Word . . . and which is changed into the nourishment of our flesh and blood, is the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus. For the apostles, in their Commentaries called the "Gospels," have left it on record that Jesus so commanded them: for He took bread, and when he had given thanks, He said "Do this in remembrance of Me, this is my body;" in like manner also He took the cup, and, when He had given thanks, He said, "This is my blood," and gave it to them alone. (Justin Martyr, Apology I, chapter 66).

In the next chapter, he describes the general course of the service, which is, he says, on the first day of the week ("the day called that of the Sun") . . . "all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the Memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits . . . then we all rise together and pray, and, as before said, [*see* ch. 66], when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, . . . and there is a distribution to each and a participation of that over which thanks have been given. . . Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which

God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world, and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before Saturday, and on the day after Saturday appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things which we have submitted also to you for your consideration."

We shall not spoil the effect of this remarkable testimony by commenting on it except to point out that the older Christians of Justin's day were men who either knew some of the apostles, or at least were trained in the Churches founded by them in the preceding generation!

Justin's description of this commemorative rite of the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood, is well illustrated by a passage from a famous Roman author of that century, not a Christian, but an official who had to examine many Christians. We refer to PLINY, whose private correspondence with the Emperor Trajan is extant; he carries us back to the generation before Justin, for he was born in 62 A.D., and died in the year before Justin. Thus he was born before the deaths of Paul and Peter in Rome; and the Apostle John was still alive when Pliny was a man. Here is what he says to Trajan (we translate from the Latin original) "The Christians affirmed [*i.e.*, at their official inquisition] that the sum of their fault, error (call it what you please), was, that they were wont on a stated day to come together before light, and to recite a hymn together, in antiphone, to Christ as God; and to bind themselves by a "Sacrament," not to commit any crime, but to refrain from thefts or robberies or adulteries, and not to betray faith, or, when called upon to hand over a deposit, refuse to do so. After doing all this, their custom was to go apart, then come together again to take food . . . ." Here we have both the substance and the name of the feast ("Sacrament") glanced at, though not in detail, as is natural when we consider that the writer is not a Christian: but putting it alongside of Justin's description it is clear enough what is meant.

Let us come to IGNATIUS (55-107 A.D.), who died a martyr just after the close of the first century, and whose life therefore immediately succeeded the period of the apostles, while it *coincided* with the latter part of the life of the Apostle John, whose pupil, Polycarp, was Ignatius' friend, and to the Churches in whose diocese he wrote letters. Ignatius therefore may be taken as in immediate touch with Christ. What does he say in his extant writings? He says in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to Smyrna (we translate from the original Greek) "Some abstain from the *Eucharist* (*i.e.*, from partaking of the bread and wine) because they do not confess the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins Whom the Father of His goodness raised." Again in the 20th chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, "Obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality" . . . .

"For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup unto the unity of His blood."

We would only point out that the whole argument of that first quotation is that the mere fact of the Eucharist, with its breaking and eating of bread, its pouring forth and drinking of wine, is that it necessitates the belief in a real body of Christ, broken for us, and real blood, shed for us. As Chrysostom said—and how significant are the words to the Moslem of to-day—in his Homilies on St. Matthew, ch. 23 (we translate from the Greek) "For if Jesus did not die, then of what are the eucharistic elements symbols?" We may well echo—"of what indeed!"

There is one more link connecting the second century with the apostolic age, an extremely early book called "THE TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES"—by which is meant not that that book was by the Twelve, but that it embodied the substance of their teaching. The most sceptical critics allow that this book belongs to early in the 2nd century: some place it in the first century, 80-100 A.D. It says, referring to the Eucharist: "And on the Lord's Day (*i.e.*, the first day of the week) come together and break bread, and give thanks." And we are actually given the simple forms of prayer used at the consecration of the cup, and the bread as follows:—

"As touching the eucharistic thanksgiving give ye thanks thus. First, as regards the Cup—'We give Thee thanks, O our Father, for the holy Vine of Thy son David' . . . . Then as regards the broken bread— . . . 'As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, and being gathered together, became one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power, through Jesus Christ, for ever and ever.' —But let no one eat or drink of this eucharistic thanksgiving except they which have been baptised into the Name of the Lord."

And this brings us down to the times of the apostolic writings themselves, a period, roughly speaking, from 45 A.D. to nearly the end of the century. We repeat that we are not appealing here to these writings as inspired:—we leave that question entirely aside. We merely cite them as we have cited the above works, or as we might cite Caesar or Makrizi, or Ibn Khaldoun, or any writer whose writings are extant and authenticated. Nay, our case is stronger, for Makrizi and Ibn Khaldoun were only historians relying on documentary evidence for events before their own lifetime, but Paul (c.1—67 A.D.) was a contemporary of Jesus, and a friend of the eye-witnesses of all the events in question. And here, Moslem brother who respects truth, stand up to us like a man:—we tell you that the sceptics of Europe have fallen on this collection of writings and subjected each component part to a merciless criticism, as regards authorship and as regards date. Beyond

contradiction, then, we affirm that, at least, the following two results emerge as absolutely certain:—

The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Gospel,	{	by a member of the earliest Apostolic Church, on the authority of an eye- witness	}	not later than 70 A. D.
The 1 <sup>st</sup> Epistle of Paul to Corinth,	{	by Paul the Apostle, the friend of Peter and the other Apostles of Christ,	}	55 A.D.

Now, what do these tell us?

Let us take the second first. Here Paul alludes to the Eucharist as being a rite frequently, habitually celebrated in the Church of that day (remember that Paul was a contemporary of Jesus Christ, and that he was personally acquainted with all the Churches of his day, including the original one at Jerusalem, and with the original Apostles who were present with Jesus Christ during the last days of His life on earth): for he says (1 Cor 10—we translate from the original text)—"The cup of the Blessing which we bless, is it not a Communion in the blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, is it not a Communion in the Body of Christ?"— Always the same *motif*:—a broken bread, a poured forth cup, a commemorative rite.

But there is more still. In the next chapter he describes one of the meetings in that particular Church, and sharply criticises its disorderliness; and then by way of contrast he describes the *original Supper* (which should be the model of every subsequent Commemorative Feast—which he calls the "*Lord's Supper*,") in the following startling words—(we translate from the Greek original): "For I have had it handed on to me by the Lord, what I have also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, the night on which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke (it) and said '*This is My body which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of Me.*' Likewise also the cup after the supper, saying, '*This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.*'" And He adds—"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim The Lord's death, until He come." And He goes on to warn the Christians of the tremendous significance of that cup and that bread, in view of what they represent, by saying "whosoever eats the bread, therefore, or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthy, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

Mark well the words! Here we have, beyond dispute, the thoughts, words, doctrines, *practices*, and *commemorative custom*, of all Christians, including the

Apostles of Christ, in the generation immediately succeeding the original event commemorated. Finally, therefore, we ask, does the narrative of the second Memoir bear out this account? Does the description of what took place on that night agree with what Paul says took place, on the authority of the Lord Himself (see above), or, if we praetermit the question of inspiration according to our agreement, at least on the authority of the universal practice of his age? *It does agree!* Here is the account given by an eye-witness (Peter) to a friend (Mark).

"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it*, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many!"

We here close our discussion: observing once more to the candid Moslem that we have not claimed inspiration for any text we have cited, but have simply drawn his attention to the evidence for a universal custom ("*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*"—universal in time, in place, in practice) clean down to the time of the apostles, without a break. Again we are not discussing an abstract question of identity, as to whether that figure which all admit hung on the cross was the figure of Jesus, Simon, Judas, a Phantom, or some Unknown. No: we are discussing what the apostles heard Jesus say and saw Him do the night before. Here there is no question of Simon or Judas, no question of any "resemblancing"—for no Moslem, from the day of Mohammed till the present hour, has ever claimed that any such thing took place in that supper-room that night. Well then, we have proved that Jesus did sit down to supper with His twelve disciples; that he did break bread and cause them to eat it; that He did pass them a cup of the 'fruit of the vine' and cause them to drink it; that He did compare the breaking of the bread to the breaking of His body; and the pouring of the wine to the shedding of His blood; that he claimed for that blood a sacrificial quality—a blood in which a New Covenant was consecrated; and that he did command them, whether implicitly or explicitly, but none the less in a most unmistakable way, to continue performing this ceremony of bread-breaking and eating, of wine-pouring and drinking, to commemorate the event of that awful day on which they had just entered—His betrayal and violent death, the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood. And, finally, we have seen that in the immediately succeeding generation this command was being carried out, and being "handed on" to the next generation which carried it out, and so on to this day, in Egypt, and all over the world. So that we may say, in words with which we shall close our discussion, affectionately commending them to you, Moslem friend, earnestly asking that many of you reading this argument will admit its force and hail Jesus as your Sacrifice and Saviour:

"As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we do show forth the Lord's death until He come " (Paul the Apostle);

"If Jesus did not die, WHAT DO THE EUCHARISTIC ELEMENTS SYMBOLISE?"—Chrysostom's question rings like a challenge—May God help you to answer it like a true man!

## Sunday—from an Evidential View-point.

IN the former part of monograph we pointed out the evidential value of the Lord's Supper, proving that the very existence of that rite, taken in conjunction with the historical allusions to it all down the ages, proves a certain historic fact, *viz.*, that on a certain night Jesus Christ did do a certain act, and command it to be commemorated, and that this act pointed to one fact and one only, namely, His death.

And we pointed out that, in consequence, every sincere man, whether Moslem or Christian, must admit that He really did thus die, first, because a Prophet could not err on so absolutely vital a matter, and, secondly, because had He *not* died after giving this prophecy and command, His disciples would not have believed in Him—still less would have perpetuated the memory of a prophecy which was never fulfilled, and kept a command which never should have been given.

In the present chapter we bring forward a similar proof to establish another important truth, namely, that Jesus Christ not only died on that Friday, but also rose on the following Sunday. These matters are first and foremost matters of fact, events that either did or did not take place! And, therefore, since nothing can be more miserable than to be mistaken on matters of fact when the truth can easily be known, we sincerely feel that we are doing a service, a labour of love, in clearing up these matters for the benefit of our friends, whether Moslem or (in the case of our subject to-day) Jews.

Why *Sunday*? Why do the Christians keep their holy day on Sunday? Why do not they, in common with others who accept the Old Testament, keep it on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. Why the first day?

If one thinks of it, this practice of Christians is so astounding that nothing short of a most extraordinary *cause* is sufficient to account for such an effect. For just think what it has involved! It has involved their breaking away from the letter of a Law believed to be divine—changing the Day of Rest mentioned in the Decalogue to another day, and that without making any attempt to change the text of the Sacred Law. How amazing this is! Suppose Moslems were asked to change their day of meeting to Thursday, in the teeth of the Koranic command! What sort of a cause, think ye, would suffice to bring about an effect which seems so impossible?

Again, it involved Christians breaking away from a custom hallowed by the practice of thousands of years. And only Orientals who know the force of the sanction of such customs—when antiquity is added to divine command—can estimate what is needed to account for the wholesale changing of one such custom.

In ethical and social phenomena, the law of cause and effect holds good. When you see an amazing social phenomenon, you are bound to look about for an adequate cause to explain it. What, then, is the cause that accounts for Christians having changed their holy day from Saturday to Sunday?

It is an Event which happened on a Sunday; an Event which happened to the Founder of Christianity on a Sunday. Of course, this Event can be none other than His Resurrection from the dead.

We do not, however, assert all this dogmatically. We check our *a priori* argument by carefully comparing it with historic fact. And, in the remainder of this article, we show that from earliest times we have historic testimony, both that Christians did sanctify Sunday, and for the one reason that, on that day, Christ rose from the dead.

## The Third Century.

We take it we need not trouble about later centuries. The crucial test is the practice of the earlier centuries. Here, then, is an instance from a liturgical book of the third century (or earlier) called the "Apostolic Constitutions:"

"On the day of the Lord's Resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently . . . . On that day we pray, standing thrice, in memory of Him who arose after three days, and on that day is performed the reading of the Prophets, the preaching of the Gospel, the oblation of the sacrifice, and the gift of the holy food."

## The Second Century.

Here is a testimony from Clement of Alexandria, at the end of the second century:

"Man thoroughly keeps the command of the Gospel, and makes that day the Lord's day, when he abandons an evil disposition, glorifying the Lord's resurrection in himself."

Another witness from the middle of the second century, from Justin the Martyr, in his "First Apology," addressed to the Roman Emperor, about A.D. 150.

"On the day called the Day of the Sun, all who live in cities, or in the country, gather themselves together in one place, and the Memoirs of the Apostles are read . . . [Then follows a description of the prayers and the Eucharist that followed] . . . We hold our common assembly on Sunday, because it is the First Day, on which God having wrought a change in darkness, and chaos made it cosmos, and because Jesus Christ, our Saviour, rose from the dead on the same

day. For they crucified Him on the day before the day of Saturn<sup>1</sup> (Saturday), and on the day after Saturday, which is Sunday, He appeared to His Apostles and Disciples, and taught them these things . . ."

What could be clearer? Justin is describing a custom and a belief of his own day, a custom and a belief, which even in 150 A.D. were universal and unquestioned, and received from preceding generations!

In that very early liturgical book (early Second Century) called the "Didache" ("Teaching of the Twelve-Apostles") it is written:—

"On the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanks."

## The First Century.

We now come to a witness from the first century, Ignatius, whose life was contemporary with the latter part of the life of St. John the Apostle. He says, categorically, in the ninth chapter of his Letter to the Magnesians:—

"Those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living according to the Lord's Day, on which our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death."

In the practically contemporaneous *tafseer* on this passage, we find:

"Let us no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness . . . but let every one of you keep the Sabbath spiritually . . . and after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection-day, . . . on which our life sprung up again, and the victory over death was obtained in Christ."

This passage is especially interesting as it shows *how* the transition was made from Saturday to Sunday: it was made naturally and gradually: *both* days were observed in earliest times, and then Saturday gradually dropped out altogether. But the motive-power for the process, however it was accomplished, remains the same, namely the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the First Day.

We have thus well entered the First Century—the century of the Apostles. We have one more testimony from about this time, perhaps, the testimony of an Apostle himself—the so-called "Epistle of Barnabas."<sup>2</sup>

In this writing we find:—

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<sup>1</sup> (Justin calls the days of the week by their heathen names, because he is writing to a heathen emperor).

<sup>2</sup> This writing is anonymous; but from earliest times it was attributed to Barnabas the Apostle. But, in any case, it dates from not later than early in the Second Century.

"Wherefore we keep the Eighth Day as a day of gladness, on which Jesus rose from the dead, and after He had appeared rose into Heaven."

## Apostolic Times.

It now remains to add that that day was kept holy by Christians in the days of Peter and Paul, and others who were Jesus Christ's contemporaries (and here we quote the Scriptures—as historical documents—without assuming them inspired, but as testifying to facts).

First of all, the book called the Revelation of John the Divine, which most certainly belongs to apostolic times, proves that the expression "Lord's Day" was already the current appellation of Sunday. "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.*"—(Rev i., 10).

We read in Acts xx., 7: "On the First Day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." And in 1 Cor. xvi., 2, Paul recommends systematic almsgiving upon the same day: "Upon the First Day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him."

Nor is the cause for this sanctification of the First Day doubtful, for every one of the Four Evangelists, with one voice, especially mention the First Day as the day on which Jesus Christ rose from the grave of death, Matt. xxvii., 1; Mark xvi., 2, 9; Luke xxiv., 1; John xx., 1, 19.

May the Lord use these words to the strengthening of the faith of those who believe, and to the helping of those who have not believed!