

VOLUME II

CHAPTER 13

Ignoring Eastern Christianity for 175 Years

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D.M. CANRIGHT “OWNS” ADVENTISM

Despite the best efforts of D.M. Canright, Ellen White's chief antagonist during her life-time, Ellen White persisted in teaching that Christians abandoned Sabbath-keeping as the result of papal apostasy and conspiracy. Among other things, she taught that Constantine, the Roman emperor, “changed the day” in 321 CE. Her de facto chief historian, J. N. Andrews, conceded in 1859 that Sunday observance was widespread by 100 CE and universal by 200 CE. If Ellen White had not claimed that God Himself validated the view that the Roman Catholic (Western) Church was responsible for “changing” the Sabbath, we might be able to excuse her on the basis that neither she nor Andrews were scholars. Apparently whoever told White that the Western Church did this did not know that the Capital of Rome—and thus the center of gravity of Christianity—was in Constantinople from 330 CE until 1204.¹ This very concession on the part of Andrews—that Sunday observance was virtually universal within 200 years of the Resurrection—made Ellen White's theory of the so-called “change” of the Sabbath historically impossible. Adventism's theories on when and how Christians adopted Sunday worship are based solely on what occurred, or did not occur; inside the limited confines of Ellen White's skull.

Ellen White's and J.N. Andrew's deficits as historians are exemplified by their glaring absence of knowledge about the Egyptian Orthodox (Coptic Church), The Armenian Apostolic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Malankara-Syrian Church of India. Neither White, nor Andrews nor Adventist theologian Samuele Bacchiocchi ever mention these four Apostolic churches. They never mentioned them, because none of these churches ever kept the Sabbath. All four churches have deep roots into the first century of Christianity, and were founded directly by one or more of the original 12 Apostles. Alternatively, the Adventists knew, and made a command decision to withhold the evidence of these Apostolic churches from Adventist membership. As we have demonstrated elsewhere, that was an unfortunate and repeated tendency of Ellen White.

Very early Christian writings indicate that the Apostle Thomas went to India as a missionary in 52 CE (two years after the Council of Jerusalem). He started what is now known as the Malankara-Syrian Oriental Orthodox Church.² The Armenian Apostolic Church claims that it was founded in ancient Persia by the Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus immediately after the Resurrection in 33 CE.³ The Assyrian Church of the East similarly claims the same apostles founded it in 33 CE Persia, although it uniquely claims the additional contributions of Peter and Matthew. The Assyrians formed the first Christian empire, which predated the Roman Empire's embrace of Christianity by hundreds of years.⁴ Finally, the Apostle Mark was a missionary to Alexandria, Egypt, leaving Jerusalem in CE 42 and started a church now commonly known as the Coptic Oriental Orthodox Church.⁵ What is profoundly-interesting is these four churches

were founded in virtual geographic and linguistic isolation from the big early Christian population centers of Constantinople, Jerusalem and Rome. Paul, the “missionary to the Gentiles,” had nothing to do with them. All four of these apostolic churches completely severed all ties with the rest of Christianity in the aftermath of the long-brewing Christological crisis that was resolved in the 452 CE Council of Chalcedon.⁶ All of these churches adamantly insist they have worshiped on Sunday since their founding very early in the First Century by their respective Apostles, and no Adventist theologian or historian has ever bothered to dispute, let alone refute their contention. Both the Armenian and the Assyrian churches claim their founding within two years of the Resurrection. Their liturgical services, iconography and theological outlooks are culturally-unique, and bear scant resemblance to Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodox practices. No Egyptian Christians had formal ecclesiastical relations with Rome until the 17th Century, when a breakaway faction of the Coptic Church established communion with Rome.⁷ The Persian and Indian churches have had no similar relations with either the Roman bishop or the Roman emperor.

These four ancient churches stayed faithful to the doctrines presented by them by the respective founding Apostles, including the Lord's Day celebration of the Resurrection, the liturgy, and the Eucharist. They were geographically isolated and cut off from the Roman Empire prior to 451, and completely alienated from the rest of Christianity after 451.

The Sunday worship of the Syrian-Malankara Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Armenian Apostolic Church could not have been caused by Constantine's 321 CE Sunday Edict, since India and Persia were not part of the Roman Empire, nor subject to Roman law!

All of these ancient Apostolic Church's traditions of Sunday worship developed in virtual laboratory “double-blind” conditions, with no outside influence from the rest of Christianity, or the whims of the Roman Empire. Certainly, the Roman bishop had no effect or influence on them. The venerable Coptic Church has its own pope. The Syrian-Malankara Church existed on the faraway Malabar coast of India, far outside of the Roman Empire's jurisdiction. The Armenian and Assyrian Churches developed in exotic Persia, also far outside of the borders and jurisdiction of the Roman Empire. The Assyrian Christians evolved into a Christian empire that long predated Constantine's Council embrace of Christianity on behalf of the Roman Empire. Why would any of these churches obey the far away Roman pope? The Copts had their own pope to obey. The use of the word “pope” was not even used to describe the Roman bishop until the 11th Century. (the Bishop of Alexandria—i.e. the Coptic Pope—was the first Christian leader to be called a “Pope”).⁸

The Coptic Church harshly denounces Seventh Day Adventism as a non-Christian cult, and has aggressively sponsored language that would remove Adventists from Egypt's list of approved Christian organizations.⁹ This is a much more aggressive and abrasive stance than what has ever been taken by the Roman pope. The Coptic pope wants Adventism banned from Egypt for good. Adventist “sheep stealing” has resulted in a souring of the relations between Muslims and Copts in Egypt, causing Copts to be killed or persecuted.

He is actually doing what Ellen White predicted the Roman pope would do “someday.” This is known as a “double irony.” Adventism's silence on this—given White's complete absence of any mention of the Coptic pope in *The Great Controversy*—is deafening.

The history of these four relatively obscure churches irrefutably demonstrate that Christians worshiped on Sunday from the very beginning of Apostolic Christianity. They simply never

adopted Sabbath-keeping, not even temporarily. They were founded outside of the Roman Empire and far away from Jerusalem, where neither the writ of the Romans, nor their Pagan practices, nor the Roman Catholic Church had any effect on how they evolved. India and Persia, after all, were never part of the Roman Empire and were certainly not under the jurisdiction of the Roman bishop.¹⁰ St. Paul died between 64 CE and 67 CE, and he would have written his last epistle shortly before that—perhaps 63 CE. Within only 40 short years after his death, probably all Gentile Christians as well as the vast majority of Jewish Christians were worshipping on Sunday. As the four Apostolic Churches founded outside of the Roman Empire demonstrate, First Century Christians adopted Sunday worship because they were taught to do so by the original Apostles. Even Dr. Bacchiocchi conceded that Sunday observance was widespread by 100 CE and universal by 140 CE. Note that Andrews conceded four years before the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863 that Sunday observance was widespread by 100 CE.

Neither White, Andrews nor Bacchiocchi ever discussed the unrebutted-claims of the Coptic, the Armenian, the Assyrian and the Malankara-Syrian Churches that they were founded by the Apostles and worshiped on Sunday from the very beginning. White fantasized that all of Christianity was under the monolithic control of the Roman pope, and she appears to have been blissfully unaware that the Coptic Church had its own pope. The Roman pope couldn't have made a dent in the beliefs of the Egyptian, Persian, or Indian churches, even if he had wanted to. They were too far away, given the primitive travel and communication methods that were dominant during the first 1,000 years of Christianity.

The Indian, Egyptian and Persian churches worshiped on Sunday because that is what their respective missionary Apostle founders taught them to do. This conclusion is the only possible reasonable explanation. This is absolutely consistent with Acts 15, Colossians 2, the virulently anti-Mosaic Law themes in the Books of Romans and Galatians, and the repeated instances of Jesus' willful Sabbath breaking.

Dr. Bacchiocchi's 140 CE date seems especially cautious in view of the extensive writings of three of the earliest Christian writers, Ignatius of Antioch (d. 107 CE); Justin Martyr, writing in 155 CE, who was strongly anti-Sabbatarian; and Tertullian, who was born in 160 CE. Tertullian discussed at length the early church's understanding that the Sabbath was first given to Israel in Exodus 16, that the Sabbath was a temporary ordinance to regulate Israel between the Exodus and the cross, and that the Ordinance of Circumcision was required for Sabbath-keeping. He also explained that while Christianity's day of worship was uniformly on Sunday, Christians also celebrated "Christian Sabbath Festivals" with festivities on the two Saturdays that bookend Holy Week, the yearly week of celebration that lead up to Easter (in the Western traditions); and "Pascha" (in the Eastern traditions). Tertullian discussed how Christians should, or should not fast; and should, or should not kneel on these twice-a-year occasions. The Christian "Sabbath Festivals" celebrate the Resurrection of Lazarus on the day before Palm Sunday and the "Great Sabbath" (at the end of the week) that Jesus spent in the tomb. Neither event has any connection with the Jewish 7th Day Weekly Sabbath of the Old Testament or the 7th Day of Creation. They are creations of Christian tradition, with no scriptural warrant. Tertullian's writings sound very much like those of the new anti-Sabbatarians who have written about the subject after the Bacchiocchi Sabbath fiasco. We have examined Tertullian's anti-Sabbatarian leanings in another chapter. This additional, substantial volume of information is necessary because Sabbatarians quote one or more of his statements out of context to promote the erroneous idea that Tertullian was a Sabbatarian.

At the same time we have every right to question Dr. Bacchiocchi's scholarly integrity for not mentioning the substantial body of evidence that strongly suggests that Sabbath abandonment/Sunday observance took place almost immediately. By the time Dr. Bacchiocchi wrote *From Sabbath to Sunday*, historians had dated the *Didache*, which documents Christians worshiping on the first day of the week, to as early as 50 CE and no later than 125 CE. More accurately, the *Didache* is an Early Church liturgical handbook that was widely-used in the First Century.

The variance of the estimated age of the *Didache* is the result of widely-varying views on the efficacy of liturgical transmission via oral tradition.¹¹ The earlier dating suggests that the *Didache* was spread orally, as part of the memorized liturgy. The later dates reject the notion of oral transmission, and insist that the *Didache*—and its pronouncements—did not exist before it was put in writing.

Adventist pioneers might be excused from this oversight, since the *Didache* was not “re-discovered” until 1873.¹² But that is not an excuse that avails Bacchiocchi, writing in 1977. The *Didache* has sections that establish the practice of Christians worshiping on the first day of the week, which some researchers believe to have been authored around 70 CE. American scholars seem convinced that this section was probably written between 50 and 70 CE, whereas European scholars tend to think 70 CE. to 125 CE. Elsewhere, you will find our critique of SDA historian, J. N. Andrews' 1912 study on the *Didache*. If you look at our historical timeline in a subsequent chapter, you will see that in 1912 D.M. Canright was still bombarding Adventist leaders with the fact that Sunday observance happened almost immediately. Adventists should have raised the White flag of surrender to Canright, but instead they continued the myth that the papacy was to blame.

As Robert D. Brinsmead so clearly illustrated in his 1981 paper, *Sabbatarianism Re-examined*, a much clearer picture of the early church had emerged from continuing scholarly research by the 1960's, and this clearer understanding spelled disaster for Sabbatarians. Brinsmead presents the potent argument that the Gentile churches never kept the Sabbath and that the Jewish churches that continued Sabbath-keeping slid very quickly into fatal heresies.

Constantine's Sunday law of 321 CE didn't change the day of worship for Christians. It simply made it possible for Christian slaves (and others) to attend church without interference on the same day upon which they had been worshiping for 300 years— Sunday. History is devoid of protests from 4th century Sabbatarian Christians regarding this legal innovation. It is also silent on any negative enforcement actions against Sabbatarian Christians. Mind you, Christianity had just recently survived the most brutal tortures and mass executions the world had ever seen, and it had barely been legalized. Did Christians suddenly become cowards and buckle under Roman legal writ and abandon their cherished Sabbath? Adventists obsessively-focus on what is Constantine's most trivial pro-Christian accomplishment, which simply codified existing unanimous Christian practice. Then they ignore his undeniably-massive assistance to Christianity. After all, he only ended the deadly persecution of Christians.

“He exempted the Christian clergy from military and municipal duty (March, 313); abolished various customs and ordinances offensive to the Christians (315); facilitated the emancipation of Christian slaves (before 316); legalized bequests to catholic churches (321); enjoined the civil observance of Sunday, and in company with an ordinance for the regular consulting of

the haruspex (321); contributed liberally to the building of churches and the support of the clergy; erased the heathen symbols of Jupiter and Apollo, Mars and Hercules from the imperial coins (323); and gave his sons a Christian education.”¹³

In fact this same clearer understanding of the early church demonstrates that while the Jewish Sabbath-keeping Christians fell into serious heresies and were lost to Christianity within the first 200 hundred years, the vibrant Sunday-observing, Gentile churches supplied the Christian Faith with believers who maintained orthodox Christian doctrines and carried the Gospel to the world. In stark contrast to what Seventh-day Adventists teach their followers, Sabbath-keepers were not the heroes of the Early Church. The Jewish Sabbath-keeping Christians drifted into the fatal heresies of Ebionism and Gnosticism and gradually became extinct. Jerusalem today resembles the dusty “graveyard” of Jewish-Christianity.

THE UNIQUE CASE OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH

Of all of the “Oriental Orthodox” Churches that split away from the main body of Christianity in the schism after the 452 CE Council of Chalcedon, the 45 million-membered Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is the most unusual. Since Ellen White gave it such a fascinating, yet cursory treatment, we will begin by [quoting her in full](#):

“... Others suffered in a similar manner for their fidelity to the fourth commandment. The history of the churches of Ethiopia and Abyssinia is especially significant. Amid the gloom of the Dark Ages, the Christians of Central Africa were lost sight of and forgotten by the world, and for many centuries they enjoyed freedom in the exercise of their faith. But at last Rome learned of their existence, and the emperor of Abyssinia was soon beguiled into an acknowledgment of the pope as the vicar of Christ. Other concessions followed.

“An edict was issued forbidding the observance of the Sabbath under the severest penalties. But papal tyranny soon became a yoke so galling that the Abyssinians determined to break it from their necks. After a terrible struggle the Romanists were banished from their dominions, and the ancient faith was restored. The churches rejoiced in their freedom, and they never forgot the lesson they had learned concerning the deception, the fanaticism, and the despotic power of Rome. Within their solitary realm they were content to remain, unknown to the rest of Christendom.

“The churches of Africa held the Sabbath as it was held by the papal church before her complete apostasy. While they kept the seventh day in obedience to the commandment of God, they abstained from labor on the Sunday in conformity to the custom of the church. Upon obtaining supreme power, Rome had trampled upon the Sabbath of God to exalt her own; but the churches of Africa, hidden for nearly a thousand years, did not share in this apostasy. When brought under the sway of Rome, they were forced to set aside the true and exalt the false sabbath; but no sooner had they regained their independence than they returned to obedience to the fourth commandment.”¹⁴

First, White is to be commended for noticing (for the first time) that an Oriental Orthodox Church exists, although she never actually mentions that the Ethiopian Church belongs to that tradition. Otherwise, it is hard to know where to begin, but first and foremost White’s overly-simplistic

rendition of a very complex history and tradition is not at all fair to this proud and venerable branch of Christianity. Notice how she mentions no dates when the pope allegedly did his nefarious Saturday-crushing in Ethiopia? Watch closely as we unpack White's vivid fiction.

Ethiopia's conversion to Christianity can be traced to the early Apostolic age (Acts 8:26–38). But its conversion to Judaism hundreds of years before the time of Christ is the reason for its atypical seventh-day Saturday observance.¹⁵ While there are several theories about how the Ethiopians converted to Judaism at such an early time, one of those theories is that when the Queen of Sheba (Ethiopian) visited King Solomon, they had a hot romance. The Ethiopian story goes that she gave birth to a son when she returned to her country, and she and her son taught their people to worship the True God of Israel. Because this story also involves the Ark of the Covenant, it would make a movie that would draw a larger crowd than Harrison Ford's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. We will share with you shortly the other theories about how Ethiopia became a country heavily populated with followers of Judaism, but for the moment let us focus on the story of how Ethiopian Orthodoxy adopted the "schizophrenic-like" idea that they needed to "keep" both Saturday and Sunday.

Since the Ethiopians were essentially "Jewish" and had practiced Judaism for many centuries before Christian missionaries arrived, they had an existing culture that had long venerated the 7th day of the week. When the Christian missionaries arrived both Jews and non-Jews were converted to the Faith. As a manifestation of cultural values, Orthodox leaders seemed to have decided to recognize the day while at the same time giving it Christian connotations. In the process Saturday lost almost all of its association with things Jewish.

In their treatment of the 7th day, the Ethiopian Orthodox leaders appeared to be following, in principle, in the same footsteps of the other Orthodox churches, which chose to recognize the 7th day of the week but with the Christian values of Lazarus Saturday and the Great Sabbath. Therefore, this highly unusual Orthodox church worships God on both Saturday AND the Christian Lord's Day but requires its people to WORK on Saturdays. We will say more about this idea of working on Saturdays later.

Significantly, Sunday has the clear dominance since it is the day of the week when the Eucharist is dispensed. Notice that we insist on calling the first of the two worship days "Saturday" like the Ethiopian Orthodox do, rather than "Sabbath" like Ellen White does. You will see why we insist on doing this when you see the Ethiopian Orthodox canon laws that regulate what happens in the country on Saturdays. Those Canon laws long predate the influence of the Roman Pope described by White.

If Adventists were ever to discover the facts of Ethiopian Orthodoxy, they would find their greatly cherished Sabbath day slighted even further. The Ethiopian Church has multitudes of other yearly holy days that do not necessarily fall on either Saturday or Sunday, including a whopping 33 holy days spent venerating Mary alone! Given the massive number of holy and fasting days that must be observed that tend to fall outside of Saturday and Sunday, Saturday sinks even deeper down the list of which holy day the Ethiopian Orthodox Church values the most. That day is definitely not Saturday. It is, like most Christians everywhere, Sunday.

It is no exaggeration to argue that being an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian is a demanding, full-time career. By comparison, Adventists look like real slackers when it comes to holiness, as do all other Christians.

It is clear, then, that Ellen White made a serious error when she assumed that the Ethiopian Orthodox views on Saturday were synonymous with hers. The canon law of the Church is known as the “Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order,” and we cite the relevant part of it in two paragraphs below. It has been widely-available in written form since the early 1200’s, so Ellen would have been wise to have done a little more research before making her sweeping and erroneous statements. The Ethiopian Church does not even refer to Saturday as the “Sabbath.”

Working is mandatory on Saturday under canon law, which would be an explicit violation of the 4th Commandment, according to Jews and Adventists! It would appear for all the world that Orthodox leaders went out of their way to distance their recognition of the 7th day from Jewish associations. This excerpt from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church’s canon law also makes it clear that Saturday and Sunday are viewed as equally holy days. Scores of other holy days are discussed in the same section of canon law that are at least as important, or even more important, than Saturday and Sunday. Church attendance is mandatory on Sunday, but not on Saturday. Here is the [canon law governing Saturday observance](#):

“Christians must not stop work on Saturday, as the Jews do, but as Christians they shall work on this day. If among the [Christian] people some are found to behave like Jews, they will be driven away from the face of Christ. [. . .] Servants shall work for five days, but on Sundays and Saturdays they shall go to church to be instructed in the service of God, because the Lord rested on Saturday when He finished the creation of the creatures and He rose from death on Sunday. On all Saturdays, except the day of Fesh, and on all Sundays, you [i.e., priests] shall receive the Eucharist between you in the church and rejoice. In the chapter on fasting it is said that no one shall fast on Sundays and Saturdays, except the Saturday on which Our Lord Jesus Christ was buried in the tomb.”¹⁶

Get that? Refuse to work on Saturday and the Church will excommunicate you!

White’s depiction of Rome’s missionary efforts and ultimate influence of Rome with Ethiopia’s emperor appears to be outlandishly dishonest. Where did she get her information? Was there a historian she found somewhere who wrote such nonsense? If she got this errant history from her attending angel—the one who appeared to her almost daily in the form of a young man for the first 26 years of her ministry—he didn’t do his homework before he left the pearly gates of Heaven to minister to her on the day she wrote this section of *The Great Controversy*. Perhaps he burst into her Elmshaven upper-floor bedroom early in the morning, and she was too startled to take down what he said because she wasn’t exactly prepared to entertain a male visitor.

Remarkably, first and foremost, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church’s bishop was subservient to the Pope of Alexandria for the first 1600 years of Christianity—not the pope of Rome. Second, both Alexandria and Ethiopia broke completely away from the main body of Christianity in 452 CE. For almost 1,000 years, Rome made not the slightest effort to control the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, after it split from the rest of Christianity following the Council of Chalcedon. Sometime in the 1400’s, Rome began sending Jesuit missionaries to Ethiopia, originally as a consequence of the Portuguese defense of Ethiopia against Islamic conquest in the Abyssinian–Adal war.¹⁷ The resultant overwhelmingly-unsuccessful Catholic missionary effort ground to a sudden and catastrophic halt when Emperor Fasilides ascended to

the Ethiopian throne in 1632. Emperor Fasilides summarily expelled all of the Jesuit missionaries, seized their land and property, and ordered that all of the Catholic books be burnt.¹⁸

To take her historical blunder right over the top, all of this happened right in the middle of a period of time when White absurdly insisted that the Roman pope had “papal supremacy” and virtually ruled the world! Papal influence over Emperor Susenyos-Fasilides’ father and predecessor lasted approximately ten years, and led to massive revolts and a nasty civil war that was not quelled until the offending pro-Roman emperor, Susenyos, abdicated after suddenly panicking and reinstating religious freedom for the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church in a vain attempt to retain power.¹⁹

White is dishonest to claim that Saturday worship had anything to do with the repression of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity by a pro-Catholic emperor. White’s profound ignorance and twisting of the facts in regard to this issue— while claiming supernatural guidance for the material she was selecting for *The Great Controversy*— is simply astounding. No Sabbatarian Christians were ever persecuted. The severe anti-Sabbatarianism of Emperor Susenyos’ misrule was directed exclusively at the non-Christian “Falasha,” or “Beta-Israel” Jews.²⁰

In more recent history, an event took place that gives credibility to the idea that Judaism took a stronghold in Ethiopia long ago through a remarkable set of events. In 1984 a severe famine in Ethiopia threatened to cause widespread hardship and death for its population, which included its minority of Black Jews. This unique tribe of ancient Jews was summarily airlifted to Israel, and the [refugees were granted automatic citizenship](#) under Israel’s Right of Return.

The hard-nosed Israeli government found the Falashas petition for Right of Return refugee status compelling on the basis of a number of fascinating theories:

1. The Beta Israel may be the lost Israelite tribe of Dan.
2. They may be descendants of Menelik I, son of King Solomon and Queen Sheba.
3. They may be descendants of Ethiopian Christians and pagans who converted to Judaism centuries ago.
4. They may be descendants of Jews who fled Israel for Egypt after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and settled in Ethiopia.²¹

This airlift is one more remarkable set of circumstances that tends to give credibility to the possibility that the Ethiopian Jews were descendants of King Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, and their son. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has “always” claimed that it has possession of the Ark of the Covenant. It claims that the Ark is in a basement fortress underneath a certain one of its churches. The Ark has always been protected by a single virgin monk who has been carefully-selected to guard the Ark for life. It is kept on an Island in a lake, where no woman has been allowed for centuries. The guardian of the Ark prays next to it constantly, and burns incense daily. All of the monks who have guarded the Ark have eventually gone blind. The Ethiopian story goes something like this. When the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon’s son grew up, he wanted to see his father. He is said to have visited his father with a retinue of his warriors. As a godly prince he perceived that for some reason or another, the Ark was in grave danger. He had a copy of it made, snuck it into the Temple, and stole the real one, departing for

home under the pursuit of his father's army. So the story goes, he got away with the Ark and hid it from public view until this day:

“The Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims to possess the Ark of the Covenant, or Tabot, in Axum. The object is currently kept under guard in a treasury near the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion. Replicas of the Axum tabot are kept in every Ethiopian church, each with its own dedication to a particular saint; the most popular of these include Mary, George and Michael.” ²²

The prudishly-Victorian Ellen White must have been repelled and horrified by the flagrant sexuality inherent in the King Solomon/Queen of Sheba theory. However, for whatever reason it came to pass, the Judaism that was thoroughly entrenched in Ethiopian society was powerless to make Sabbatarians out of Christians when the Gospel of Christ showed up via Apostolic missionaries. With help from an “angel” guide, there would have been no excuse for her to teach that Sabbatarian Christians were persecuted in Ethiopia by a Roman pope. She simply made that up.

Last but not least, one of the most astonishing facts of Ethiopian history creates an irony that fully exposes Ellen White's intellectually dishonest and distorted Sabbath-centric view of history. There exists a tiny, yet truly unique sect of Ethiopian Christianity that continues to practice circumcision, dietary laws, and worship on both Saturday and Sunday. This tiny sect is NOT a part of the much larger Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox communion. It is the Ethiopian Catholic Church, also known as “Ge'ez Ethiopian Rite.” Yet it is in full communion and affiliation with Roman Catholicism and in the good graces of the Roman Pope! Incredible!

DR. BACCHIOCCHI CONTINUES ADVENTISM'S CONSPIRACY TO HIDE EASTERN CHRISTIANITY

Adventist theologian Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi's book, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, unintentionally ignited the modern-day anti-Sabbatarian movement. As we discuss elsewhere, it did so because it supported many of D.M. Canright's caustic debunkings of the blatant misrepresentations in Ellen White's Sabbath-centric faux history. Worse yet, Bacchiocchi's extremely Judaizing “interpretation” of Colossians 2:16 manages to outrage both Evangelicals and “Historic” and “Traditional” Adventists. For purposes of this section, we will analyze his book from the standpoint of his involvement in Adventism's long-term campaign to hide the existence and significance of Eastern Christianity from Adventist membership.

The main title chapters of Bacchiocchi's Book are revealing.

- “The Jerusalem Church after A. D. 70”
- “The Church of Rome and the Sabbath”
- “The Primacy of the Church of Rome”
- “Sun-Worship and the Origin of Sunday”

Notice that no Chapter is devoted to a discussion of Greek or Eastern Christianity and its dominance of Christianity for the first 1,000 years. No mention is made of the Capital of the

Roman Empire being moved to Constantinople in AD 330, which sealed the East's domination of Christianity. The chapter headings alone demonstrate Bacchiocchi's profound bias toward Rome.

The following analysis is difficult to follow unless you keep in mind that what we are demonstrating is what is not there but should be. All we could find were a few scraps—obscure references to various things—that merely hint at acknowledging the existence of a Church in the East. You might even wonder why we have included them until you realize that the point we are trying to make is that the dominance of Eastern Christianity during about the first 1,000 years of the Faith should have dominated his analysis.

Like an older child taking some gullible young children on the proverbial Snipe Hunt, Bacchiocchi decided to lead his trusting readers away from a place where they would have a real chance to stumble onto the real origin of Sunday observance.

While the last title is not about Rome, the contents are almost entirely devoted to the Roman Sun worship cult. There is just one footnote that references Helios, the Greek god of the Sun. The rest of the chapter and all of the rest of the footnotes discuss Roman Sun worship. There appears to be an unspoken ulterior motive behind this. Here it is:

”L.R. Farnell assumed ‘that sun-worship had once been prevalent and powerful among the people of the pre-Hellenic culture, but that very few of the communities of the later historic period retained it as a potent factor of the state religion.’ Our largely Attic literary sources tend to give us an unavoidable Athenian bias when we look at ancient Greek religion, and ‘no Athenian could be expected to worship Helios or Selene.’”²³

In other words, Bacchiocchi probably took one glance at Greek Sun god worship (or the complete abandonment of any such worship by the Greeks, long before First Century Christianity); and wisely-decided that Roman Sun worship could be a more viable model on which to base a dubious Christian Sunday worship theory. In one of the few mentions of Greek Christianity outside of endnotes, Bacchiocchi attacks the idea that Eastern Christianity could have been the source of Sunday Worship:

“Though the three New Testament references commonly quoted to substantiate an apostolic origin of Sunday observance belong to the geographic area of the Greek-speaking Christian communities of Greece ... or Asia Minor; there is a marked tendency in recent studies to attribute to the Apostolic community of Jerusalem the initiative.”²⁴

Next, Bacchiocchi adopts a truly bizarre theory that Greek bishops could have introduced Sunday worship when they “settled in Jerusalem:”

“Marcel Richard endeavors to show that the new day was introduced at this time not by the Church of Rome but by the Greek bishops who settled in Jerusalem. Owing to Hadrian’s prohibition of Jewish festivals, they would have pioneered the new Easter-Sunday date to avoid appearing “Judaizing” to the Roman authorities.”²⁵

That begs the question, why would Greek bishops “settle in Jerusalem?” They were required to live in the cities of their Bishopric. This is why “cathedrals” are named as such, since a cathedral is the seat of the bishop. Additionally, Jerusalem had its own bishop in the First Century, whose status was elevated to the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 530 CE. The first 16 Bishops of Jerusalem were Israelites, not Greeks. The first ethnic Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem was not appointed until after the 452 CE Council of Chalcedon. That Bacchiocchi would have endorsed such a flagrantly dishonest and easily-refutable statement is just mind-boggling.

Next is an obscure footnote about the "Sabbath Festivals" that are so mystifying to Sabbatarians, but which are the Lazarus Saturday and the Great Sabbath festivals that book-end the Holy Week of Pascha ("Easter" in the West):

“F. A. Regan, *Dies Dominica*, p. 60, raises a significant question: ‘Thus while protecting the practices of the Church from false and misleading influences, nevertheless the Church of the East was very solicitous in preserving the special reverence due to both Saturday (the Sabbath), and the Lord’s Day. How is it then, one may rightly ask, that the day which the Church of the West kept as a fast day, the Church of the East celebrated as a festival?’”²⁶

At least Bacchiocchi mentions the Great Schism, albeit in a footnote, which is better than the way that Ellen White and J.N. Andrews completely ignored it altogether. Here, Bacchiocchi tries to imply that the Schism was the result of Rome fasting on the Sabbath, and Constantinople not fasting. There were MANY more important issues that led to the Schism than the Sabbath, or whether to fast on it or not. Bacchiocchi does not mention the Patriarch of Constantinople's reply to the Papal excommunication order:

“[This treatise was composed in the form of a debate about the year 1054 by Cardinal Humbert.] The Cardinal had been sent by Pope Leo IX early in 1054 as papal nuncio to Constantinople to endeavor to bring back the Greeks into conformity with the religious practices of the Roman (Latin) Church. The mission however did not succeed. The treatise was composed as a further attempt to dissuade the Greeks from holding on to certain divergent religious practices such as the veneration of the Sabbath. The significance of the document for our study is twofold: (1) it substantiates the existing divergent attitude toward the Sabbath between the East and the West; (2) it quotes the earlier testimony of Pope Sylvester (ca. AD. 314-335) which offers additional insights into the motivations for the Sabbath fast.”²⁷

It is incredible to think that Bacchiocchi didn’t know better! The most heated dispute that provoked the split between Eastern and Western Christianity was Papal primacy and superiority. Other issues include the Pope’s accusation that Constantinople was the source of most heresies and the use of unleavened bread on the part of the Latins.²⁸

Here is Bacchiocchi's only mention of Constantinople (a mere footnote) in the entire book and it says NOTHING about it being the Roman Capital:

A fitting example is provided by the development of the patriarchal authority of the Bishop of Constantinople. At the Council held in that city in A.D. 381, he was given honorary pre-eminence after the Bishop of Rome, and in 451, in spite of the objections of the Pope,

patriarchal powers were formally conferred upon him (canon 28); cf. *Dictionnaire de theologie catholique* (1908), s.v. “Constantinople,” by S. Vailhe.”²⁹

Bacchiocchi does not come right out and admit that Greek Christianity actually existed:

“Bruce Metzger acknowledges that the need for Christians in the West to separate from the Jews provides “a reasonable historical explanation” for “the difference between East and West in the observance of the Sabbath.... In the West, particularly after the Jewish rebellion under Hadrian, it became vitally important for those who were not Jews to avoid exposing themselves to suspicion; and the observance of the Sabbath was one of the most noticeable indications of Judaism. In the East, however, less opposition was shown to Jewish institutions (Studies in the Lectionary Text of the Greek New Testament, 1944, II, sec. 3, p. 12).”³⁰

As both Canright and ourselves have demonstrated, Adventists perform extraordinary feats of concealment to hide the existence and significance of Eastern Christianity from Adventist membership, and its base of power in the Roman Capital of Constantinople. A book by an Adventist scholar that makes no mention of the fact that Constantinople was the Roman Capital between 330 AD and 1204 AD and almost no mention of Greek or Eastern Christianity deserves some sort of prize for obscurantism. Bacchiocchi’s “Jewish Persecution Theory” is based on nothing but hot air.

It is no wonder, then, that the chief architect of modern Sabbatarianism, Ellen G. White, never mentioned the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches in her history of the Sabbath as portrayed in her monumental work, *The Great Controversy*! The Eastern Church was the center of the Christian Faith for nearly 1,000 years, and it rejected Sabbath-keeping on biblical grounds. They simply obeyed the Apostles, and met on the first day of the week. In fact, there is a complete lack of historical evidence that any of the Eastern Churches ever kept the Sabbath. It is not a good area of history for Sabbatarians to investigate.

D. M. Canright confronted Adventist leadership of this fact well before the crisis of the 1919 Bible Conference. For an analysis of what Adventists knew and when they knew the impossibilities of Ellen White’s theory that the Western (Roman Catholic) Church “changed the day,” see Selections from Canright. No one understood this better than D. M. Canright—Ellen White’s most significant contemporary critic. Significantly, our own research, done with full access to the resources available with today’s Internet, substantiates the accuracy of his work to a very high degree.

Summary

The studied ignorance and complete-lack of scholarship on the Eastern Church by Adventists is apparently founded on deliberate dishonesty, and astounding in its depth and reach. Similarly, Adventism’s obvious ignorance of the Eucharist and its central role in Sunday “worship” is profoundly disturbing. Nowhere in *The Great Controversy*, or anywhere else in Ellen White’s writings is the Eastern Church mentioned. She seemed to think that Sunday was the equivalent of the Jewish sacramental Sabbath, when the Christian sacrament was the Eucharist. Historically, the Eucharist gave Sunday worship any “legs” it may have had. Bacchiocchi’s Sabbath books feature a similar absence of mention of the role and dominance of the Eastern Church, or understanding of the Eucharist. This is simply scholarship at its worst and most

dishonest. Neither Bacchiocchi or White ever mention the Apostolic Coptic, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, or the Syrian-Malankara Churches, which were founded directly by four or more Apostles in areas far away from the large Christian populations of the First Century. Neither mention the profound schisms of 452 and 1054 that split Christianity long before the Protestant Reformation, and the effect these schisms had on White's theories on papal supremacy, and the dates this supposedly occurred. As we have discussed in another chapter, the Eastern Church dominated the first seven Ecumenical Councils, resolving theological disputes that arose only in the Eastern Churches. The pope did not attend a single one of the seven Ecumenical Councils. Nor was the Sabbath ever discussed at any of them. Christianity was headquartered in Constantinople, the capital of the Roman Empire, not the city of Rome.

What is remarkable and refreshing about this study of D. M. Canright's views on Eastern Christianity is how modern historical sources adamantly support nearly all of his assertions. His analysis and writing remain as fresh and vivid as it was the day it was written. No wonder Adventists simply attacked his person, rather than his historical evidence.³¹ One thing is indisputable: Canright took into account the actual history of the Eastern Church, both its good and its bad. By contrast, Adventism has featured a deafening silence on one half of historic Christianity. Adventism is founded upon and posits an a-historical, virulently-bigoted and hysterical "Papal-Centric" historical/doctrinal fad that was all the rage in the 1850's. Adventism has had almost 150 years to refute Canright's brutal shredding of the Church's hysterical historiography. That Adventism has not made a dent in Canright's research and writing speaks volumes about this remarkable man, his integrity and his legacy.

1 Notably, nowhere in Adventist theologian Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi's *From Sabbath to Sunday* is the movement of the Roman Capital from Rome to Constantinople acknowledged, particularly on pp. 184-188 in the Chapter titled "The Primacy of Rome." (Lookup http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/Further_Research/SDAs/sab2sun.pdf using the Internet Archive.)

2 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malankara_Orthodox_Syrian_Church

3 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Apostolic_Church#Origins and <http://www.holytrinity-pa.org/files/holytrinity/files/looysoctdec13.pdf> and <http://www.stgregoryarmenian.org/faq1/>

4 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Church_of_the_East#Early_years_of_the_Church_of_the_East and <http://www.aina.org/faq.html> and <http://www.independentsentinel.com/the-assyrians/>

5 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_Orthodox_Church_of_Alexandria and <http://st-takla.org/Coptic-church-1.html>

6 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Chalcedon and http://orthodoxwiki.org/Fourth_Ecumenical_Council

7 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_Catholic_Church

8 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope#Title_and_etymology

9 See <http://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2003-01-13/egypt-coptic-pope-publicly-insults-seventh-day-adventist-church/> and <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/629/eg7.htm>

- 10 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Roman_trade_relations and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Roman_relations
- 11 See <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html>
- 12 See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didache>
- 13 See http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/3_ch01.htm
- 14 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 577–578
- 15 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomonic_dynasty and <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ejhist.html>
- 16 *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order*, pp. 114-115
- 17 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abyssinian–Adal_war
- 18 See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasilides>
- 19 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susenyos_I
- 20 Steven Kaplan, *The Beta-Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia*, pp. 92-93
- 21 See <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ejhist.html>
- 22 Stuart Munro-Hay, 2005, *The Quest for the Ark of the Covenant*, Tauris (reviewed in Times Literary Supplement 19 August 2005 p. 36). For more information about this legend, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menelik_I
- 23 See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helios>
- 24 Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, p. 131
- 25 Ibid., p. 181
- 26 Ibid. p. 203, fn 68
- 27 Ibid. p. 205, fn 85
- 28 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_I_Cerularius
- 29 Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, p. 212, fn 117
- 30 Ibid., p. 214, fn 134
- 31 See <http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/digitized/documents/b18300078.pdf> and <http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/digitized/documents/b16017237.pdf> and <http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/digitized/documents/b18365553.pdf>

Ignoring Eastern Christianity for 175 Years Addendum

THE BISHOP OF ROME AND THE CLAIM THAT THE PAPACY CHANGED THE SABBATH

The Sabbatarian's claim that the Catholic Church changed the Sabbath is extremely difficult in the light of what we now know about the status of Christianity for the first 1,000 years of the Faith. The most important thing, of course, is that Roman and Jewish histories record the fact that Hillel II changed the Sabbath from variable-week lunar governance to fixed-week Sabbaths in 359 AD and adopted the new Roman Saturday that was created in 321 AD. Reviewing how this happened, between the Time of Christ and 321 AD, the Roman Empire had two calendars in use in different territories. At first there was only the eight-day week calendar that supplanted

the Roman lunar calendar prior to the Time of Christ. However, a seven-day, fixed-week calendar gradually gained popularity. Constantine liked the seven-day week better, so he announced in 321 AD that the entire Empire would now use this shorter week.

Since our focus is on the Seventh-day Adventist view of early church history and how this history relates to the supposed changing of the Sabbath by the Catholic Church, we will approach this subject with this view in mind.

By the death of Seventh-day Adventist prophetess Ellen G. White, her most outspoken critic and antagonist, D. M. Canright had demonstrated to Adventist leaders that the primary force behind early Christianity was the church of the East—the Greek Orthodox Church. In Canright's mind, it was fairly early in the history of the Church that there was an organized Faith in the East known as the Greek Orthodox Church and an organized Faith in the West known as the Roman Catholic Church. He maintained that the Greek Orthodox Church had never kept the Jewish Sabbath, additionally expressing doubt that the Catholic Church had enough power to make such a change in Christian belief and practice. What Canright presented was more than sufficient to "prove" that the Catholic Church had not been responsible for changing the Sabbath, with, perhaps, his main argument being that the observance of Sunday had occurred before Rome had developed into a bishopric that was powerful enough to exert its authority on the other bishoprics in the East and West. His arguments were complete and well-documented enough to stop any movement in this errant direction.

Knowledge of the circumstances of the early church exploded in the 1960's, and revelations on this subject have continued to appear ever since. One good example of this phenomenon is the discovery of the *Fiscus Judaicus* tax levied on anyone who practiced anything considered Jewish, such as Sabbath-keeping and Circumcision. Christians were exempted from this tax in 97 AD because they were not practicing these things. (We discuss the *Fiscus Judaicus* tax elsewhere in this book.) In short, there was little significant Christian Sabbath-keeping in the Roman Empire prior to 97 AD, and essentially none thereafter. Elsewhere we explain that prior to 70 AD, Christian Sabbath-keeping existed exclusively outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire, and particularly in Arabia.

Here are some of the additional things we have learned since Canright, who wrote around the turn of the century—that is the late 1800's to early 1900's.

HOME CHURCHES UNTIL THE MID-300's

For the early centuries of the Faith, believers met primarily in the homes of believers, and churches were not plentiful until around the time of Constantine. The article on the history of the early church by the on-line edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* makes this observation:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-early-Christianity>

At first, worship must have taken place in private houses. Sometimes houses were handed over to the community and transformed into churches (known locations include [Dura-Europus](#) on the Euphrates, c. 232, and several in Rome), but numerous churches were constructed as such in the peaceful intervals of the 3rd century, and they were

plentiful by the time of Constantine, who added some notable ones (the Anastasis or [Holy Sepulchre](#) at Jerusalem, [St. Peter's](#) at Rome). Where [catacombs](#) existed, as at Rome and [Naples](#), they were burial sites, and not, by intention, places of refuge or ordinary worship. Catacombs and open-air cemeteries contained chapels [commemorating](#) martyrs, however, and these sometimes grew into great churches or monasteries.

The predominance of home churches up through the time of Constantine did not appear to foster centralized ecclesiastical authority. The limited ability of such an authority would be greatly hampered by the lack of communication over the vast distances that separated the home churches and the small churches that were developing from them.

AREA BISHOPRICS: NOT AN EASTERN OR WESTERN CHURCH

Instead of two large central church organizations, one in the East and one in the West, as Canright seems to have envisioned, the growing ecclesiastical powers were divided among bishoprics that were scattered all over the Roman Empire and beyond. Again, here is the assessment of the on-line version of *Encyclopedia Britannica's* summary of this development:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/The-internal-development-of-the-early-Christian-church>

Early Christianity was predominantly urban; peasants on farms were deeply attached to old ways and followed the [paganism](#) favoured by most aristocratic landowners. By 400 CE some landowners had converted and built churches on their property, providing a “benefice” for the [priest](#), who might often be one of the magnate’s servants. In the East and in [North Africa](#), each township normally had its own bishop. In the Western provinces, bishops were fewer and were responsible for larger areas, which would ultimately be called by the [secular](#) term [dioceses](#) (administrative districts). In the 4th century, pressure to bring Western custom into line with Eastern and to multiply bishops was resisted on the grounds that it would diminish the bishops’ [social status](#). By the end of the 3rd century, the bishop of the provincial capital was acquiring authority over his colleagues: the [metropolitan](#) (from the 4th century on, often titled [archbishop](#)) was chief consecrator of his episcopal colleagues. The bishops of Rome, [Alexandria](#), and Antioch in the 3rd century were accorded some authority beyond their own provinces, in part because the first bishop of each of those cities was thought to have been one of the [Apostles](#). Along with Jerusalem and Constantinople (founded in 330), these three sees (seats of episcopal authority) became the five [patriarchates](#). The title *papa* (“father”) was for 600 years an affectionate term applied to any bishop to whom one’s relation was intimate; it began to be specially used of bishops of [Rome](#) from the 6th century and by the 9th century was almost exclusively applied to them.

From the beginning, Christians in Rome claimed for themselves special responsibilities to lead the church. About 165 CE, memorials were erected at Rome to the Apostles [Peter](#)—traditionally considered the first bishop of Rome—and [Paul](#): to Peter in a necropolis on the Vatican Hill and to Paul on the road to Ostia. The construction reflects a sense of being guardians of an apostolic tradition, a self-consciousness expressed in

another form when about 190 Bishop [Victor](#) of Rome threatened with [excommunication](#) Christians in [Asia Minor](#) who, following local custom, observed [Easter](#) on the day of the Jewish [Passover](#) rather than (as at Rome) on the Sunday after the first [full moon](#) after the [spring equinox](#). [Stephen](#) of Rome (256) is the first known pope to base claims to authority on Jesus' [commission](#) to Peter (Matthew 16:18–19).

[Bishops](#) were elected by their congregations—i.e., by the clergy and laity assembled together. But the consent of the laity decreased in importance as recognition by other churches increased. The metropolitan and other provincial bishops soon became just as important as the [congregation](#) as a whole, and, though they could never successfully impose a man on a solidly hostile community, they could often prevent the appointment falling under the control of one powerful lay family or faction. From the 4th century on, the emperors occasionally intervened to fill important sees, but such occurrences were not a regular phenomenon (until the 6th century in Merovingian Gaul).

Sabbatarian churches that teach mandatory Sabbath-keeping, such as the Seventh-day Adventists, must have an early change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, and this change must come from Rome prior to 400 AD. None of the bishoprics in the East or the West had a lot of influence over the Christian world during this critically required time to impose such a change in belief and practice. As noted elsewhere in this book, the bishop of Rome did not even have enough influence to get the other bishoprics to adopt his preference for when Easter was to be celebrated. This Easter controversy arose prior to the AD 200's and seems to have been largely, but not completely, resolved by the Great Council, The First Council of Nicaea which was convened in 325 AD. Controversy over it would persist for centuries, despite the official pronouncement of the Council's ruling:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartodecimanism>

Despite Victor's failure to carry out his intent to excommunicate the Asian churches, many Catholic theologians point to this episode as evidence of [papal primacy](#) and authority in the [early Church](#), citing the fact that none of the bishops challenged his right to excommunicate but rather questioned the wisdom and charity of doing so.^[40] From the [Orthodox perspective](#), Victor had to relent in the end and we see that the [Eastern Churches](#) never grant him presidency over anything other than his own church, his own synod.^[citation needed] Cleenewerck points out that [Eusebius of Caesarea](#) simply refers to Victor as one of the "rulers of the Churches", not the ruler of a yet unknown or unformed "universal Church".^[40] As the date of observance of the Resurrection of Christ as being on the Sunday day of the week rather than the 14th day of the month was not resolved by Papal authority it was only finally resolved by an Ecumenical Council.^[41] Epiphanius even called Quartodecimanism a heresy.^[42]

The rejection of Bishop [Anicetus](#)' position on the Quartodeciman by Polycarp, and later Polycrates' letter to Pope Victor I, has been used by Orthodox theologians as proof against the argument that the Churches in Asia Minor accepted the [Primacy of the Bishop of Rome](#) and or the teaching of [Papal supremacy](#).^[43]

THE GREAT COUNCILS

We devote an entire chapter to the Great Councils in this book, but a short review here might help to put all of this into perspective. Recall that Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople in 330 AD. Beginning in 330 AD, it was the bishop of Constantinople who had the emperor's ear. Constantine attended church services presided over by the bishop of Constantinople. Hundreds of years later, the bishop of Rome would regain power and influence, thanks largely to the attacks on Constantinople and the Eastern Empire by the Muslims—a new religion at the time which was founded in 610 AD and spread rapidly as a menace to Europe and Asia. The first Muslim attack on Constantinople took place in 674-678 in what is known as the First Siege of Constantinople.

The Sabbatarian-friendly view of an ecclesiastical authority powerful enough to make a drastic change in Christian belief and practice during the first 600-700 years of the Faith is not supported by the facts. The Great Councils determined Christian belief and practice for both the bishoprics in the East and West for more than the first thousand years of the Faith. It was the Council of Laodicea, which convened in 365 AD, that determined that the practice of Jewish Sabbath-keeping represented the Judaization of the faith and labeled it a heresy.

Please refer to our chapter on the Great Councils for more detailed information. Combined with the other facts treated in this section, it is clear that the bishop of Rome never had the power to change the day of Christian worship. Since Roman and Jewish histories record the fact that the powerful Jewish rabbi, Hillel II changed the Jewish Sabbath in 359 AD, there is no reason to search for an alternate and highly questionable alternative.