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How ROME Counterfeited God's *Holy Days!*

Easter and Lent were celebrated 4000 years ago in Babylon. Yet ROME introduced these customs into the Christian Church. How and when did Rome become the "modern Babylon"?

by Herman L. Hoeh

THERE are over 750 million professing Christians in the world today—everyone of them, in greater or lesser degree, practicing the pagan mysteries of ancient Babylon!

By contrast, probably not more than 5000 truly converted members are in this, God's true Church today! Why?

How could the world believe that its hundreds of competitive sects and denominations are the one true Church of God?—and believe that its heathen customs and holidays supersede the AUTHORITY of the Bible?

Yes, how has it been possible, brethren, that *we* should be the sole remnant of God's Church?

What Is the "Mystery of Babylon"?

Admittedly the customs of the Protestant world came from the Roman Catholic Church; but how did Rome fall heir to the "Mystery of Babylon?"

Here is the answer!

In Revelation 17:5, an angel reveals to the apostle John, in symbol, the professing Christian world of today. Notice what kind of world it is! It is dominated by a "Mother Church"—symbolized by a fallen woman—whose name is "a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT', the Mother of the Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth.'"

That is her real name! She is named after the city Babylon! But why is this great church not called the mystery of

"Nineveh," or the mystery of "Sidon," or "Athens," or "Thebes"?—all famous cities of the ancient world in which competitive pagan mystery religions were located. Why is it called specifically the mystery of "BABYLON"? How did the "Babylonian mysteries" migrate to Rome? And *what* were the customs or mysteries that specifically distinguished the city of Babylon from the other centers of mystery cults?

First, notice what a "mystery" is. A mystery is *secret knowledge* revealed only to an inner circle, not to outsiders in general. Paul speaks of *the teaching of our Church* as a MYSTERY. "Now to the one able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the MYSTERY *kept silent* through the times of ages, but now is manifested," he wrote in Rom. 16:25-26. This mystery includes the knowledge God has revealed to us in the Bible. But the Bible is written in such a way that the world, which is carnally minded, cannot understand it. It is a mystery to the world!

Those who constitute the true Church of God are also called the "*mystery of God*" in Revelation 10:7.

People Crave Mysteries

People like to be told *secrets*. They like to hear stories about people and things *even if those stories are not true!* Human nature likes gossip and scandal—

it likes to be told what is pleasing to the self. Human nature rebels against the *authority of God*.

That is why Satan has been able to deceive the world ever since the Tower of Babel. Your Bible reveals that, at Babel, Satan influenced the world to *turn aside* from the way of God. Satan influenced his ministers to preach what the people wanted to hear.

Satan used Nimrod as his chief instrumentality in swaying the world. Nimrod was the first who totally *turned aside* after the flood. One of Nimrod's names, recently discovered in Babylonia, is spelled "Gaur" by archaeologists. "Gaur" comes from the Hebrew root *gáwr*, meaning "to turn aside" (*Strong's Concordance*). "Gaur"—Nimrod—was the first priest-king who ruled after the flood (Langdon's *Oxford Edition of Cuneiform Texts*, volume II, col. I).

The people did not all turn aside openly. Noah's influence was still strong. Those who did turn aside did it *secretly*. Their religion was a *mystery* to those who did not at first join in. It was also a COUNTERFEIT!

The Babylonian mysteries centered about a COUNTERFEIT savior or messiah. Their savior was Nimrod—not the Jesus who was to come. *Their savior promised them liberty from God's law* JUST AS THE VAST MAJORITY OF MINISTERS DO TODAY!

Later, Nimrod was killed, so they introduced the custom of mourning 40 days in his honor. Today the celebration of these same 40 days is called "Lent" by the professing Christian world. And Christians do it thinking they honor Christ!

The mystery of Babylon also involved the celebration of a purported resurrection of their savior. They celebrated "the sacred mysteries" in his honor at sunrise, Sunday morning, in commemoration of his supposed resurrection. It was a hoax, but the people liked the celebration anyway. The custom has continued to this day and is called "Easter."

Now notice WHEN THESE PAGAN CUSTOMS, WHICH MASQUERADE AS CHRISTIAN, WERE INTRODUCED FROM BABYLON TO ROME!

A Birthday Celebration Tells

People like to celebrate birthdays. The ancient Romans celebrated Nimrod's birthday on December 25. Christians today think it's Christ's birthday.

The original pagan celebration of the birthday of a savior goes back to ancient Babylon! Wherever the celebration of the birthday of Nimrod, the false Messiah, was introduced, it fell upon the WINTER SOLSTICE—the time that each day began to grow longer and the night began to grow shorter. To the pagans, this was a fitting symbol of the birth of the god whose glory was like the sun!

Today the winter solstice occurs about December 21. But the supposed birthday of Nimrod is not celebrated on December 21, but on December 25!

Why?

The answer to this question will reveal when the "Mystery of Babylon" was transplanted from *Babylon to Rome!*

HERE IS THE ANSWER! The introduction of the birthday of Nimrod among the Romans occurred when the winter solstice on their religious calendar occurred on December 25! That occurred about 300 B.C., shortly after Alexander the Great conquered the Persian empire and introduced the Mystery Cult of Babylon into the West. Alexander wanted to found one world and one religion—AND THE ONE RELIGION TO WHICH ALL COULD TRACE BACK THEIR ORIGIN WAS THE BABYLONIAN MYSTERY CULT! It claimed to be a universal or *Catholic* form of religion in which all peoples could find unity!

Notice now why the winter solstice occurred on December 25 around 300 B.C.

According to the *religious* calendar maintained by the priests of the mystery cults, each year averaged 365¼ days. This caused the winter solstice to vary over the centuries about the rate of one day in 125 years. In Rome the winter

solstice—"Christmas"—fell on December 25, beginning 300 years before Christ. By 300 A.D. it had already receded to December 21. By 1582 A.D. the winter solstice dropped back to Dec. 11. That was the year Pope Gregory altered the calendar so that the equinox was restored to December 21.

The celebration of Dec. 25 as the winter solstice is proof that the Mystery Cult of Babylon permeated Rome around 300 B.C. when Greece conquered the world.

How VATICAN Became Center of Babylonian Cult

When the Babylonian mysteries spread westward, they gravitated to Rome, not Greece. Greece was the center of culture and learning, but Rome had long been a center of religion. And the most important part of Rome was Vatican hill. "The Vatican sanctuary . . . seems to have been a well-known . . . cult-centre . . . of the worship of Cybele [the "Mother of God"] . . . No less than nine inscriptions referring to the same cult have long been known from the immediate vicinity of St. Peter's . . ." (from *The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations*, by J. Toynbee and J. W. Perkins, p. 6).

In the days of the apostles a "pagan cemetery lay on a knoll called Vaticanus"—Vatican hill, where the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church is today. "The Latin word *vatis* means a 'prophet' or 'soothsayer.' In days gone by there had been an Etruscan oracle on this spot," writes Werner Keller in *The Bible as History*, p. 390.

Notice that this Satanic oracle was a

soothsayer—one who soothed the people by preaching what the people wanted to hear. And it was associated with a cemetery. The chief object of reverence at this location *centuries before the time of Christ* was the shrine or tomb of a "Peter"!

But why would pagans be honoring "Peter" long before the apostle Peter was ever heard of?

The answer once again points us back to Babylon and Nimrod. Nimrod, according to ancient tradition, was "the firstborn" of deified human beings. He was the religious hero or star of that day—just as many have their "Hollywood idols" today. He was often symbolized by a bull—as Christ is by a lamb. Nimrod was therefore called a *firstling*—and in the Babylonian tongue (a dialect of Hebrew) the word firstling was "PETER"! (See *Young's Concordance*.)

But how did Nimrod become associated with Rome?

Nimrod Flees to ROME

Tyrants sooner or later meet their end. So, too, with Nimrod. After years of oppressing the people for his selfish interests, Shem (according to ancient records) forced Nimrod to flee. And to where did he flee?—to ROME! The ancient name of Rome was "Saturnia," recorded Pliny in his *Natural History*, bk. III. But what does "Saturnia" mean? It means the dwelling place of "Saturn." And the inhabitants of ancient Italy called Nimrod "Saturn," meaning "the hiding one"—because he "lay hid" from his pursuers (Jackson's *Chronological Antiquities*, p. 233).

A pagan shrine was later set up on

THE RUINS of ancient Babylon today. Here was the beginning of civilization—and the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom. Here, too, commenced the religion of the world. After Alexander the Great wrested this city from the Persians, the Mystery Religion of the City of Babylon found a new center far to the west—Rome!





St. Peter's, atop Vatican Hill, in Rome. This massive structure—note the tiny human beings in the entrance—is built over the fabled site of the burial of the Apostle Peter. Here it was, according to ancient Roman tradition, that Nimrod "lay hidden" when forced to flee his domain. Nimrod was the original "Peter" of Babylon—and his shrine was later dedicated to the Apostle Peter who never was at Rome!

Vatican hill to commemorate this event. And the birthday of Nimrod—December 25—was called the *Saturnalia* by the Romans.

Saturnia fell into decay. A new city, Rome, was later built on the same site—named after Romulus, according to Latin writers. But how is it that the Peter of Babylon came to be associated with the city named Rome?

Again we must turn to the language of Babylon. According to the Mystery of Babylon, Nimrod ascended "on high"—or was glorified. In the Semitic dialect of Babylon the word for "on high" was *rome!* (See *Strong's Concordance*.)

It is no wonder that wherever the Babylon Mystery spread the people heard that Peter, *another name for Nimrod*, went to ROME! And the *customs* of Nimrod's ancient Babylon gravitated there, too!

By the time of the Roman Empire, the city of Rome became the religious center of the world. Jerusalem, by contrast, was the headquarters of God's Church. Now let us notice how the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. opened the way for the Babylonian Mystery to make Rome the center of a COUNTERFEIT CHURCH!

Paul's Martyrdom Opened the Way

Through Paul's preaching, the Gentile Roman world heard of the true Savior—Jesus Christ. But here is Paul's warning: "I know that after my departure—*after his death*—grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among yourselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after

themselves" (Acts 20:29-30).

Paul was like a father to all the Gentile converts. His friends loved him. His enemies feared him. They knew his influence over the Gentile converts. Human beings are like sheep. They are subconsciously swayed by other human beings. That is why the apostasy set in shortly after the death of the apostle Paul. *His* influence was gone. The younger ministers whom Paul trained were not looked up to as fathers or elders in the same way that Paul had been.

The same is true today. People tend to follow the *man* through whom they are converted, instead of looking to the power of Christ working through the ministers.

Consider now what Jude said of those who brought heresy into the Church: "For *certain men have crept in privily*, who were of old written of beforehand" (Jude 4).

But why should false teachers have entered the Church? Because God's Church was a tithe-paying Church! "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words"—or deceptive arguments—"make merchandise of you"—or *make a profit* from you (II Peter 2:3). They wanted the tithe of God's Church. *Compare this with II Corinthians 11:4-15*. Here Paul warns of those who preach "*another Jesus*," and a "*different gospel*" and who receive the tithes of the people.

These false teachers were SPIES or FOREIGN AGENTS of the pagan "Mystery of Babylon." They were the followers of *Nicolaus* (Rev. 2:6, 15). Nicolaus was yet another name for Nimrod!

These false ministers of the Baby-

lonian Cult were already at work in Paul's day. "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work," wrote Paul when yet alive; "there is only one who restrains it now," he concluded—and *that was Paul himself* (II Thes. 2:7-8).

Now consider what happened. The Church of God at Rome was severely persecuted by Nero in 64 A.D. Nero falsely charged the Christians with burning the city. Perhaps some two or three years after the burning of Rome Paul was seized near Troas (II Timothy 4:13) and brought to trial at Rome where he was martyred. Events were now moving rapidly. The headquarters Church at Jerusalem was forced to flee in 70 A.D. to Pella.

The Churches of God which Paul raised up in Asia Minor were now under the general supervision of the apostle Peter. Peter wrote to the Churches in Asia and Galatia (I Peter 1:1) from his headquarters in Babylon near the Euphrates (I Pet. 5:13). The ancient city of Babylon was, next to Jerusalem, the most important center of Jewish life. And Peter was the apostle to the Jews—the circumcision (Gal. 2:8).

Looking for a New Headquarters

While the Church in the East was being held together, the Roman Church—with most of its leading members martyred—became the prey of false teachers. As soon as Peter was martyred, probably around 80 A.D. (see Ramsey's *The Church in the Roman Empire to 170 A.D.*) events moved to a climax. Now there was no headquarters church, there was no James or Peter or Paul.

use of the name of Christ so long as they could keep their old customs. Anacletus cleverly used the name of Peter—a name familiar to initiates in the pagan mysteries—to sanction these very customs, claiming that “Peter” approved those heathen abominations. The bishop of Rome never preached: “Learn NOT the way of the heathen”! Instead, he phrased it in practice: “Learn NOW the way of the heathen”!

When the news of the pretended authority of the bishop of Rome spread abroad, many other false teachers saw the advantage of casting in their lot with him. If they were associated with him, they, too, could use the name of Peter and take the customs celebrated in honor of the pagan savior and attribute those customs to Christ *in order to create a following after themselves.*

That is how the new headquarters of the apostatizing Church quickly gravitated to Rome!

In order to gain a large following after themselves, they soon began to introduce the pagan customs of Lent and Easter in place of the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Passover.

Where Lent Is Mentioned in the Bible

Lent is nowhere commanded or mentioned in the New Testament. But it is mentioned in the Old Testament!

Lent was an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz—another name for Nimrod, reborn as the pagan Babylonian messiah. Forty days preceding the feast of Tammuz (usually celebrated among pagans originally in June) the heathen held their Lenten season! Ezekiel describes it vividly in Ezek. 8:13-14:

“He”—the Lord—“said also unto me, ‘Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater *abominations.*’” Notice that God calls what Ezekiel is about to see an **ABOMINATION**. What does the prophet see?

“And, behold, there sat women weeping for *Tammuz!*”

They wept for Tammuz, the false messiah of the pagans!

Fasting was joined with weeping FOR A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS before the festival in honor of Tammuz. The period of weeping and semi-fasting fell originally during springtime. That is why the word Lent means “spring!” Lent is a continuation of the pagan spring-time custom of abstaining from certain foods just prior to celebrating a fake resurrection! *And God calls LENT an ABOMINATION!*

Lent a Substitute for Days of Unleavened Bread

Jesus left us an example of what we

ought to do—and that example is not Lent!

The example of Jesus was to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread. This festival symbolizes putting sin out of our life. But people do not want to put out sin. They want the temporary pleasures of sin and then prefer to do penance instead. Penance means to give up something in payment for sin. That is why the pagans, flocking wholesale into the professing Christian Church, ousted the celebration of the Days of Unleavened Bread and substituted Lent—40 days of Penance—40 days of denying oneself certain physical pleasures in return for enjoying sin for the other 325¼ days of the year!

The Origin of Lent

From what city did the celebration of Lent really begin to spread throughout the professing Christianity of the Roman World?

Here is what the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* records:

“In any case it is certain from the ‘Festival Letters’ of St. Athanasius that in 331 [he] enjoined upon his flock a period of FORTY DAYS of fasting preliminary to . . . Holy Week, and second that in 339 *after having travelled to Rome and over the greater part of Europe, [he] wrote in the strongest terms to urge this observance*”—Lent—upon the people under his jurisdiction.

Athanasius was influenced by Roman custom. It was *at Rome* that Lent entered the popular Christian Church. Irenaeus wrote that Lent was introduced during the time of Bishop Xystus of Rome. This Bishop “did not permit those after him” to observe the practices of the apostles, but instead introduced the custom of Lent.

Notice that Lent is a *counterfeit of the Days of Unleavened Bread* commanded by the apostles to be observed by all Christians (I Cor. 5:7).

A Fake Resurrection

Lent immediately precedes the celebration of a Sunday resurrection—supposedly of Christ! *But Christ was not resurrected on Sunday!*

Nowhere does the New Testament command us to observe the resurrection of Christ! We are commanded to observe the **PASSOVER**, a **MEMORIAL OF HIS DEATH**—“Do this in remembrance of Me,” commanded Jesus! The early inspired true New Testament Church did observe *that* memorial, but it never observed Easter or Lent! And we observe that same memorial today because we are the true Church of God.

Easter and Lent celebrate the fake resurrection of a false Christ. Paul warned that this very custom would
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Many people began to look for new leaders and a new headquarters. But they did not look to Christ, the head of the Church!

At this moment in history, the centuries-old tradition was revived and widely circulated that “Peter” had been in Rome. The heathen had never heard of the *apostle* Peter. But everyone at Rome had heard that there was a shrine of a Peter on Vatican hill and that *that* Peter or Nimrod had come from Babylon. Anacletus an elder or bishop in the apostate Church at Rome, dedicated the ancient shrine of the pagan Peter (or Nimrod) to the apostle Peter around 80 A.D., according to a record in the *Liber Pontificalis* (i, p. 125).

It was now an easy task for Anacletus to convince the drifting, unemployed pagan population of Rome—which was becoming interested in the mysteries—that the shrine at Rome was the site of burial of the apostle Peter—for had not the apostle Peter been at Babylon! And to cement his authority, he claimed to have been ordained by Peter.

Anacletus claimed to be the *sole successor* to Peter. He claimed that the two men who ruled in the Church before him were Peter and *Linus*. (See the Catholic list of bishops in any World Almanac.) Now it so happens that in ancient tradition, the son of Nimrod (the pagan Peter) was named *Linus!* (See Smith’s *Classical Dictionary*.)

It ought to be plain by now that the pagan Babylonian Mystery had taken root in the local church at Rome. The bishop at Rome had *the great advantage* of being in the chief city of the Roman Empire.

The heathen did not mind Anacletus’

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develop—"For if he that cometh preacheth *another* Jesus, whom we have not preached—and that is exactly what has happened (II Cor. 11:4). Lent cele-

brated *another* Jesus, a false messiah from Babylon!

The celebration of a festival on Sunday in honor of the resurrection comes directly from PAGANISM.

Notice that immediately after the Lenten observance, the prophet Ezekiel sees the people observing an Easter sunrise service: "Then said He unto me,

'Hast thou seen this?'—the Lenten fast. "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see GREATER ABOMINATIONS than these.'" What does the prophet see?—people bowing down toward the sun in the East. Easter sunrise services—the climax to the 40 days of Lent! (Ezek. 8:16).

What Ezekiel saw here in vision is a

prophecy for today!—for the House of Israel—Great Britain and America. And professing Christian people are practicing this very ABOMINATION today as our ancestors did centuries before Christ.

Catholics Testify to the Origin of Easter

Easter Sunday was derived by Protestants from the Roman Catholic Church, it is to the Catholic Church that we must turn for testimony regarding the origin of Easter. Here is their testimony—and they should know—they introduced it!

The Catholic scholar Hefele writes concerning Easter: "All the Churches of the West, the South, and the North, had adopted this practice"—celebrating Easter—"particularly Rome, the whole of Italy, Africa, Egypt, Spain, Gaul [France], Britain, Lybia, Achaia [Greece]; it has even been adopted in the dioceses of Asia, Pontus, and Cilicia." (From *History of the Councils*, pp. 306-307 of Vol. I.)

Notice that Easter celebrations were adopted—not from the Bible, but from the heathen, long after the death of Jesus Christ!

But from what sources did the scholar Hefele obtain this information?

He obtained it from ancient church history written shortly after the time Easter was adopted! Here is what Socrates Scholasticus wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History* not long after Emperor Constantine, in the 4th century:

"Neither the apostles, therefore, nor the Gospels, have anywhere imposed . . . Easter . . . Wherefore, inasmuch as men love festivals, because they afford them cessation from labor: each individual in every place, according to his own pleasure, has by a prevalent custom celebrated [Easter] . . . The Saviour and his apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast . . . just as many other customs have been established in individual localities according to usage, so also the feast of Easter CAME TO BE OBSERVED IN EACH PLACE ACCORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL PECULIARITIES OF THE PEOPLES inasmuch as none of the apostles legislated on the matter. And that the observance originated not by legislation, BUT AS A CUSTOM the facts themselves indicate" (chapter 22).

So says the ancient Catholic historian in the 4th century.

Notice further:

"And this diversity among the observers [of Lent and Easter] had not its origin in our time," wrote Irenaeus at the close of the second century, "but long before in that of our predecessors, some of whom probably, being not very accurate in their observance of it, handed down to posterity the custom as it had, through simplicity or *private fancy*,

been [introduced among them]. (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, p. 568, Vol. I.)

Now let us understand exactly how Easter was surreptitiously introduced.

The First Historical Records

The early Church of God in New Testament times was taught that Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights—that He arose at the close of the third day *after* the crucifixion. The crucifixion occurred upon a Wednesday, April 25, 31 A.D. This historical date of the Passover is demonstrated by seven irrefutable proofs which we published in *The PLAIN TRUTH* two years ago. Thursday, in 31 A.D., was an *annual sabbath* that year.

The *Passover* has always been observed annually by the Church of God, on the eve of Christ's death, on Nisan 14 of God's Sacred Calendar. You can find this information in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, or even in the "World Almanac" in your town Library. This New Testament practice was followed universally until after the death of the apostle John.

The Lord's Supper on Saturday!

Remember that up to this point the churches of God universally understood that Jesus rose after three days—on Saturday evening shortly before sunset.

Many now began to do what *seemed* right to them. *They began to observe the passover weekly on Saturday*, the Sabbath, believe it or not! Here is the proof:

For over 200 years this custom was a nearly universal practice of the apostatizing churches! The Catholic church historian, Socrates, wrote: "While therefore some in Asia Minor observed the day above mentioned"—he means that some faithfully observed the Passover on the 14th of Nisan as the apostles did—"others in the East kept THIS FEAST [Easter] ON THE SABBATH INDEED . . ." By "sabbath" all early writers meant Saturday!

So universal was the custom of observing a "Lord's Supper" on Saturday that he continued to write: "For although *almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week*, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, *have ceased to do this.*" (You may find this amazing testimony in Vol. 2 of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 131-132, from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates book V, chapter 22.)

Did you catch the *real significance* of this quotation?

The Passover was transformed by false teachers from an annual memorial in memory of the *death* of Christ into a weekly memorial in honor of His *resur-*

rection, which occurred on Saturday. These weekly "passovers" were called the "sacred mysteries"! What did Paul say about the sacred mysteries?

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come"—the day of Christ's return—"except there come a falling away first"—an apostasy, a falling into error. "For the MYSTERY OF INIQUITY *doth already work*" (II Thess. 2:3, 7).

A part of this "Mystery of Iniquity" was the weekly celebration of "sacred mysteries"—the communion. It first began to be celebrated on Saturday because the majority still believed *that* was the day of the resurrection! But how were the false teachers of Rome and Alexandria, Egypt, going to alter the knowledge that Jesus was three days and three nights in the tomb?

"Good Friday-Easter Sunday" Tradition

Let's notice! From the *Syriac Didascalia*, composed shortly before the time of Constantine, we have a record of what happened in those early days. False teachers began to interpret the three days and three nights in the following clever fashion:

They claimed Jesus's sufferings on the cross were part of the "three days and three nights" of Scripture. The daylight hours from nine in the morning to noon on Friday they counted as *one day*. The hours from noon to three o'clock—when the land was darkened—they reckoned as the *first night*. Then the time from three o'clock to sunset was reckoned as the *second day*. Friday night to Saturday morning, according to their reasoning, became the *second night*; the daylight of Saturday, *the third day*; and Saturday night to Sunday morning, *the third night!*

A very clever argument—and it *deceived* a great many people! Those false ministers twisted the truth that Jesus was IN THE GRAVE three days and three nights into a Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition!

For the first time the idea of a Sunday resurrection was injected into the churches. Now observe what happened.

Easter Sunday Begins at Rome

In commenting on those who did *not* observe the Passover in accordance with the practice of the apostles, Irenaeus, a Catholic living toward the close of the second century, mentions the following names to bishop Victor of Rome: "We mean Anicetus, and Pius, and Hyginus, and Telesphorus, and Xystus. They neither observed it"—the true passover on the 14th of Nisan—"nor did they permit those after them to do so."

Who were these men?—bishops of the church at Rome! Here is the first record, by a Catholic, of the fact that

the Roman bishops no longer observed the passover on the correct God-given time, but *on a Sunday!*

It was bishop Xystus (his name is also spelled *Sixtus*) who was the *first* recorded individual to *prevent* the proper observance of the Passover, and to celebrate the sacred mysteries annually on a Sunday. Irenaeus speaks further of him, declaring that his doctrine was in direct "opposition" to the practice of the remainder of the churches. Bishop Sixtus was living at the *beginning of the second century* (115-125), shortly after the apostle John died.

Here you have the astounding origin of Easter Sunday in the Roman Church beginning about 120 A.D. Together with this practice, the "sacred mysteries" began to be observed every Sunday!

The Romans Divided

The introduction of this custom naturally *divided* the Christians at Rome. The Catholic historian, Abbé Duchesne, wrote: "There were many Christians of Asia in Rome at that time"—remember that the Church of God at Rome was founded by those who came from Asia Minor where Paul preached—"and the very early Popes, Xystus and Telesphorus, saw them every year keep their Pasch"—the true passover—"the same day as did the Jews. They maintained that was correct. It was allowed to pass . . . though the rest of Rome observed a different use" (Vol. I, p. 210, of *The Early History of the Church*).

These are startling facts, but they are true! It is time we knew about them!

About 34 years later Polycarp visited Rome and denounced Easter.

A Fake Vision from God

Shortly after Polycarp left, there appeared an amazing letter—said by many scholars to have been a deliberate forgery. This letter states: "Pope Pius, who lived about 147, had made a decree, That the annual solemnity of the *Pasch* [*Pasch* is the Greek word for *Passover*] should be kept only on the Lord's day"—Sunday—"and in confirmation of this he pretended, that Hermes, his brother, who was then an eminent teacher among them, had received instruction from an angel, who commanded that all men should keep the *Pasch* on the Lord's day." (From pp. 1148-1149 of Bingham's *Antiquities*).

Of this same hoax we read in *Apostolical Fathers*, by Donaldson, p. 324, "One of the letters forged in the name of Pius, where one Hermas is mentioned as the author; and it is stated that in his book a commandment was given through an angel to observe the Passover on a Sunday."

If this letter was a deliberate forgery, it was invented after Polycarp's time in an effort to lend weight to the custom

of Anicetus, bishop of Rome, who maintained the Sunday observance of the eucharist or passover. If it were not a forgery, then Pius himself was the author of this deceptive letter. (Pius died just prior to the visit of Polycarp to Rome.)

Divine Calendar Change

The introduction of an Easter Sunday went hand in hand with the rejection of the Calendar God gave His people at the Exodus. The Jews have preserved the Calendar correctly. The true Church of God has continued to use the same Calendar that the Jews have always used. The knowledge for the mathematical and astronomical determination of the Calendar was at first passed through the Aaronic Priesthood, then through the Sanhedrin. God has not written all the details of the Calendar in the Bible, but enough details are there so that any layman could know the general characteristics of the Calendar.

As God's ministers, we today are responsible for knowing and passing along to one another the same mathematical principles which the Jews have preserved through the centuries.

According to these God given principles, the celebration of the Passover will average one day later in the year about every 230 years. In about 1900 years the passover will be celebrated slightly over 8 days later. To keep the Passover in the spring, God gave the Jews the knowledge of when to *postpone* the *addition of a thirteenth month*. Whereas the thirteenth month used to be added in the 2nd, 5th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th and 18th year of a 19-year cycle; today we add these intercalary months in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th year of a 19-year cycle. The postponement of the addition of the thirteenth month from the 7th to the 8th year of a 19-year cycle first occurred in 142 A.D. The *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, article "Calendar," p. 500 declares: "Under the patriarchate of Simon III. (140-163) a great quarrel arose concerning the *feast-days and the leap-year*, which threatened to cause a permanent schism between the Babylonian and the Palestinian communities—a result which was only averted by the exercise of much diplomacy."

The Church of God adhered to the mathematical determination of the Jews in Palestine, whose responsibility it was to determine the calendar. We have in our possession the very same mathematical and astronomical facts which lead to the fixing of the leap-year cycle in post-apostolic days. The full information may be found by comparing the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* with Neugebauer's *Astronomische Geschichte* (which we have translated from the German) and Maimonides' *Sanctifica-*

tion of the New Moon.

When this divinely determined cycle change occurred, the bishop at Rome found an entering wedge to discredit God's Calendar and to begin to substitute a pagan Roman calendar in its stead.

The Christians who fled Jerusalem in 69 A.D. "continued to use the Jewish cycle"—*God's method of reckoning the Passover* in the sacred calendar—"till the bishops of Jerusalem who were of the circumcision were succeeded by others who were not of the circumcision"—unconverted Gentiles. Then ". . . they began to *invent* other cycles" (p. 1152 of Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*).

Yes, Easter began as the *invention* of men—who exchanged the God-given Passover for the pagan Easter and threw away God's Calendar.

This same author continues: "We see, at this time the Jewish calculation"—God's inspired method of determining the Passover which the Jews had accurately preserved and which God's Church uses today—"was generally *rejected* by the . . . church, and yet no certain one agreed upon in its room. . . ."

This is how the celebration of the Passover on Abib 14 was gradually *rejected*.

But the Easter controversy did not end here!

Catholic Church Split

Within 35 years, the Passover controversy broke out vehemently between Polycrates of Asia Minor and Victor of Rome, who attempted to "cut off whole churches of God, who observed the tradition of an ancient custom"—the true Passover.

Here is a part of the forthright answer given by Polycrates to Victor, vindicating the truth of God:

"As for us, then, we scrupulously observe the exact day, neither adding nor taking away. For in Asia great luminaries have gone to their rest, who shall rise again in the day of the coming of the Lord . . . I speak of Philip, one of the twelve apostles . . . John, moreover, who reclined on the Lord's bosom . . . Then there is Polycarp . . . THESE ALL KEPT THE PASSOVER ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOSPEL, WITHOUT EVER DEVIATING FROM IT, BUT KEEPING TO THE RULE OF FAITH."

This remarkable letter is preserved in Vol. 8 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 773-774.

Polycrates came from that area in which Paul spent most of his time—in Asia Minor, near Ephesus. This is also where John spent his last days. Here we have many Christians still remaining true to the faith!

Here is proof that both the apostles

to the circumcision and Paul, the special apostle to the Gentiles, taught the observance of the Passover on the 14th of the first month of God's sacred calendar. Chrysostom, who wrote several centuries after the apostles admitted that "formerly it [the Passover] prevailed also at Antioch" from where Paul began his apostolic journeys.

Now, what happened to stamp out the true observance of the Passover from the popular churches?

Constantine—the Man of Power

Let the Catholic historian Eusebius, who lived in the time of Constantine tell the story: "But before this time another most virulent disorder had existed, and long afflicted the Church; I mean the difference respecting . . . Easter. For while one party asserted that the Jewish custom should be adhered to, the other [did not].

"Accordingly, the people being thus in every place divided in this respect . . . no one appeared who was capable of devising a remedy . . . BECAUSE THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUED EQUALLY DIVIDED BETWEEN BOTH PARTIES. . . . Constantine appeared to be the only one on earth capable. . . . He convoked a general council. . . ."

After the Nicaean Council closed, Emperor Constantine sent the following letter to all the churches:

"At this meeting the question concerning . . . Easter was discussed. . . . First of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this . . . feast we should follow the practice of the Jews. . . . Let us then have nothing in common with the Jews. . . . It has been determined by the common judgment of all, that the . . . feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day." The Council of Nicaea decided, under his authority, that Easter *must* be celebrated on Sunday and that the Passover must be forbidden!

The TRIBULATION Begins!

Not all accepted the decrees of the Council, which for the first time established Catholicism as a State Religion. To those who continued *to follow the truth*, the Emperor wrote the following official letter:

"Victor Constantinus, Maxumus Augustus, to the heretics:

". . . To speak of your criminality as it deserves demands more time and leisure than I can give. . . . Why not at once strike, as it were, at the root of so great a mischief"—he means the TRUTH OF GOD—"BY A PUBLIC MANIFESTATION OF DISPLEASURE?"—by inciting persecution, in other words.

Constantine continues: "Forasmuch, then, as it is no longer possible to bear with your pernicious errors, we give warning by this present statute *that*

*none of you henceforth presume to assemble yourselves together. We have directed, accordingly, that you be deprived of all the houses in which you are accustomed to hold your assemblies: and [we] forbid the holding of your superstitious and senseless meetings, not in public merely, BUT IN ANY PRIVATE HOUSE OR PLACE WHATSOEVER. . . . Take the far better course of entering the Catholic Church. . . . We have commanded . . . that you be positively deprived of every gathering point for your superstitious meetings, I mean all the houses of prayer . . . and that these be made over without delay to the Catholic Church; that any other places be confiscated to the public service, AND NO FACILITY WHATEVER BE LEFT FOR ANY FUTURE GATHERING; in order that from this day forward none of your unlawful assemblies may presume to appear in any public or private place. Let this edict be made public" (from Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, book 3).*

That is how the truth was stamped out for 1260 long years! It sounds unbelievable, but it is true.

The servile Eusebius sums up the work of Constantine by declaring: "And the credit of having achieved this mighty work" [of stamping out the truth] "our Heaven-protected Emperor alone, of all who had gone before him, *was able to attribute to himself*" (bk. 3, ch. 66).

Though everyone was now forced to observe Easter or flee the confines of the Roman Empire, the churches were still divided over the exact Sunday for Easter.

Easter Still Observed on Different Sundays

Here is how confusing matters became:

"But notwithstanding any endeavours that could be used then, or afterwards, there remained great differences in the church about it for many ages. For the churches of *Great Britain and Ireland* did not accord with the Roman church in keeping Easter on the same Sunday, till about the year 800. Nor was the Roman way fully received in France, till it was settled there by the authority of Charles the Great . . ." (p. 1151 of Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*).

These are startling facts—but they ought to make us, brethren, wake up to the dangerous times in which we live. It is high time we learned exactly what has happened to God's Festivals and to the practices of the New Testament Church of God these past 1900 years!