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### Insight

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Since someone unknown to me is sending LIBERTY to this address, and since you are said therein [Jan.-Feb., 1973] to be a professor of church history and insist that Sundaykeeping can never fulfill the Sabbath commandment, I am addressing this to you. . . .

Here we have a professor of church history claiming that ancient records, including the writings of Justin Martyr (!), "all prove that the day God's people kept in Bible times" was Saturday.

Justin, if you had given him a chance, would have told the reader what day it was on which Christians worshiped in the early church. You, however, do not even give the reference for your distorted quotation so that the reader can look it up.

Did the professor himself know these things? Was he sincere? I am sure he knew them, for he was indeed quoting Justin. Furthermore, he knew exactly where to start quoting and where to stop—in order to pervert what Justin was saying.

What Justin said was this: "On the day called Sunday, all . . . gather. . . . Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because . . . Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead" (*First Apology*, chapter 67).

CLYDE W. FIELD  
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I am genuinely happy to spend a little more time with Justin Martyr. He is one of my favorite early Christians. He was transparently sincere (even if at times I disagree with him), and he was a soul-winning layman.

There is no doubt that Justin attended worship services on Sunday, or that many other early Christians did the same. I

did not mention this fact in my article because I was there discussing primarily the Sabbath of the Bible. It may be of interest to you, however, to know that Seventh-day Adventists have for a long time acknowledged the early introduction of Sunday into Christian piety. In Volume I, No. 11 (November, 1850), of the first Seventh-day Adventist periodical, *The Present Truth*, there appeared these words: "The issue is not whether the first day of the week was observed at a very early period by Christians. We admit that it was. We admit that its observance may be traced up to very near the borders of the apostolic age." [Emphasis supplied.]

This statement is followed, as you might guess, by the question, "How was the day observed by early Christians?" and the answer given there, a century ago, is that they did not keep Sunday as a Sabbath.

This was, of course, quite correct. Barnabas (A.D. 130?) went so far as to say that no Christian was good enough to keep the Sabbath holy. Tertullian (around A.D. 200) argued that to the members of the church Sabbaths were "strange" (*On Idolatry*, chapter 14). What the early Christians did on Sunday was merely to assemble for Bible reading, preaching, prayers, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Other than that, Sunday during the second century was for most of them a day just like any other.

What this means for Christians today depends on whether they base their way of life on the traditions of the church or on the teachings of the Bible.

Those who claim Justin Martyr as an authoritative guide for their lives nowadays must reckon with other things he stood for. For example, in chap-

ter 29 of his *First Apology* he taught that among second-century Christians sexual intercourse was practiced only for the production of children. In the twentieth century, is this just as binding as Justin's Sunday?

In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapters 80-81, he insisted with other Christians of the second century that the soul does *not* go to heaven at death, and that the fires of hell are *not* burning now but will begin to burn at the second coming of Christ. Along with Sunday and sex-only-for-procreation, should these doctrines too be normative for a Bible Presbyterian like yourself?

As a Bible Presbyterian, wouldn't you prefer in every case to take the Bible rather than Justin Martyr as your ultimate rule of faith and practice? I know I would! And in my Bible, Jesus says, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. . . . For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17, 18, R.S.V.).

Incidentally, you will be interested to learn that in spite of his statement that "all" Christians assembled on Sunday, Justin said elsewhere that not all early Christians rejected the Sabbath. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 47, he referred to both Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians who "along with their hope in this Christ" observed the weekly Sabbath of the Bible.

Did John have Christians like these in mind when in the book of Revelation he described God's saints as those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12)?