

## **EARLY CHRISTIANISATION OF JEWISH DAYS**

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### **Abstract**

Early Christians attempted to Christianise Jewish practices towards the economy of salvation fulfilled in Christ. In this regard, during the first three centuries, they did not even hesitate to uphold Christianised Jewish traditions in day-to-day life. The early Christian worshiping day was not the Jewish seventh day of Sabbath day, but Sunday, the first/eighth day of the week. Christians never preoccupied with any other day of the week due to Sunday's special importance of resurrection with its eschatological dimension. The seven Jewish feasts were Christianised due to their relation to the paschal mysteries of Christ. The Jewish fast days of Wednesdays and Fridays in preparation for synagogue worshiping days, were related to Christ's paschal foretelling and fulfilment of his suffering and death respectively on the same days. Martyrs' courage in witnessing faith even at the risk of life made them real partakers of the paschal mysteries of Christ, and they were held in high esteem, as they were the real heroes of Christian faith.

**Keywords:** Weekly Pasch, Paschal Feasts, Annual Pasch, Paschal Fasts, Paschal Martyrs

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## Introduction

Early Christians, following Jesus and the apostles, had a great sense of appreciation for Jewish Traditions that they partook daily the temple sacrifices and regularly attended synagogue worships. This they did with the purpose of Christianising those practices to attaining the target of the economy of salvation (*Mdabranutha*) fulfilled in Christ. During the first three centuries, this attempt was very strong that they did not even hesitate to uphold Christianised Jewish traditions in day-to-day life. The following study includes the Christianisation of Jewish feast and fast days together with saints' commemoration days for down through the first three centuries.

The first three centuries' Christian outlook theologised paschal dimension of Sundays and the seven Jewish feast days. Whereas in the second century, the Christians substituted the Jewish annual feast of Pasch (Ex 12:1-13; 21-32) to their annual feast of Resurrection of Jesus, the true Pasch, as the centre of salvation history. While the third century aimed at the theologising of Jewish fasting days and martyr memorial days.

### 1. First Century

Two important developments during this period were the significance of Sunday and the Christian sense of participation in Jewish feasts. The early Christians strictly followed up the Jewish traditions in imitation of Jesus and the apostles. Nevertheless, they gave always Christ orientation to all such situations. This attempt based on the salvific acts of Christ for the redemption of humanity opened up a new horizon to the practical aspects of Christian life in search of retaining the actualisation of Christ experience always with them.

#### 1.1. Sunday

Almost all the post resurrection appearances took place on Sundays, the first and the eighth-day of the week. Appearances on the first day were to the Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9), the disciples to Emmaus (Lk 24:13), and the apostles (Jn 20:19); on the eighth day appearance was to the apostle Thomas (Jn 20:26). The only appearance without specifying the day was that which took place to the apostles at the sea of Tiberius (Jn 21:1). However, a week has only seven days, the significance of the eighth day as Sunday is purely eschatological as the expected day of the second coming of Christ to begin a new world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Letter of Barnabas* (before 130) 15.

### 1.1.1. Naming of Days

The naming of seven days in a week, based on quarterly subdivision of a lunar month (29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes), originated several thousand years ago in BC among the Semitic people in the Near East.<sup>2</sup> They simply called the days as the first day, second day, third day, fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, and seventh day of the week. The Egyptian astrological notion divided the year into seven-day units of seven celestial units (the sun, the moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn) as their pagan deities, where seven was considered always a propitious (heaven-sent hopeful) number. The Germanic people renamed four weekdays (from third to sixth) after their own deities as Tiw's-day (god of war), Woden's-day (god of magic), Thor's-day (god of sky), and Frigg's-day (goddess of love). The Jews never gave the names of heavenly luminaries to the days of the week, but following the Semitic tradition they counted week days as first day, second day, and so on, but with respective titles for the sixth and seventh days as "Preparation Day" (Mk 15:42) and "Sabbath Day" (Ex 20:10; 31:15; 35:2; Lev 23:3; Deut 5:14). Emperor Constantine in 321 established the present system of calling weekdays as Sunday to Saturday in the Roman calendar.

Semitic	Egyptian	Germanic	Jewish	Roman
First day	Sun's-day	Sun's-day	First day	Sunday ( <i>Dies Solis</i> )
Second day	Moon's-day	Moon's-day	Second day	Monday ( <i>Dies Lunae</i> )
Third day	Mars'-day	Tiw's-day	Third day	Tuesday ( <i>Dies Martis</i> )
Fourth day	Mercury's-day	Woden's-day	Fourth day	Wednesday ( <i>Dies Mercuri</i> )
Fifth day	Jupiter's-day	Thor's-day	Fifth day	Thursday ( <i>Dies Jovis</i> )
Sixth day	Venus'-day	Frigg's-day	Preparation day	Friday ( <i>Dies Veneris</i> )
Seventh day	Saturn's-day	Saturn's-day	Sabbath day	Saturday ( <i>Dies Saturni</i> )

### 1.1.2. Christianisation

Among the weekdays, Sunday as the first/eighth day is the present basis and nucleus of the Church calendar (SC, 106). The worshiping day of the early Christians was not the Jewish seventh day of Sabbath, but Sunday, the first/eighth day of the week. They never preoccupied with any other day of the week due to Sunday's special

<sup>2</sup>G. Dues, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, New London: Twenty Third Publications, 1998, 31; <https://www.Lunar month definition>, online accessed 1.2.2015.

importance of resurrection with its expected eschatological fulfilment at the end of time.

It was Justin the Martyr (d.165), who first introduced the name Sunday in Christian liturgy saying, "On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in country gather together in one place."<sup>3</sup> This change might have been made in view of spreading the Gospel due to the universal recognition of Sunday, and for the Christianisation of Sunday from pagan sun worship to the symbolism of Christian worship. Christians recognised Sunday (sun's day) as their worshipping day symbolising Christ, 'the Sun of Justice' (Mal 4:2), 'the light of the world' (Jn 8:12; 9:5; 12:46), 'the light of revelation to the gentiles' (Lk 2:32), and 'the true light that enlightens every one' (Jn 1:9).

#### 1.1.2.1. Jewish Influence

Though the Sunday worship is purely Christian, the counting of the day from evening to evening is of Jewish influence<sup>4</sup> in imitation of the Semitic reckoning,<sup>5</sup> which differed from the Roman reckoning of midnight to midnight. Sunday worship took place on Saturday evening, the beginning of Sunday, at around 6 p.m. just as the Jews observed their Sabbath (seventh day/Saturday) service at the preparation day evening (sixth day/Friday). The uniqueness of this day was established with an Easter vigil office before the breaking of the bread as the Eucharistic celebration (Acts 20:7-11). As a result, Sunday became a day of joy and of baptism,<sup>6</sup> where fasting and kneeling were prohibited.<sup>7</sup>

#### 1.1.2.2. Different Names

The early Christians named Sunday in various ways due to the importance of various themes stressed on this day.<sup>8</sup> "Resurrection Day" stressed resurrection, "Lord's Day" (Rev 1:10; *Didache* 14) recommended worship, "Agape Day" emphasised charity meal, "Gathering Day" promoted *koinonia*, "Contribution Day" encouraged collection for the widows and poor, and "Eighth Day" indicated the

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<sup>3</sup>1 Apology 67; A.C. Coxe, *The Apostolic Fathers, Ante-Nicean Fathers I*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967, 186.

<sup>4</sup>G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London: Dacre Press, 1978, 337.

<sup>5</sup>P.F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origin of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 192.

<sup>6</sup>P.G. Cobb, "The History of the Christian Year," in C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold, ed., *The Study of the Liturgy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1979, 404.

<sup>7</sup>Tertullian, *de Cor.3; De Orat.23*; Cassian, *Institutes* 2.18; Council of Nicaea, canon 20.

<sup>8</sup>A. Adam, *The Liturgical Year*, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1981, 39-45.

eschatological new beginning.<sup>9</sup> The expression “first and eighth day” of the week emphasise the eschatological dimension, because the eighth (day) will be like the first when the first life will be restored to the eternity.<sup>10</sup>

### Naming of Sunday

Sunday	Thematic Impacts
First day	Resurrection appearance day (Mk 16:9; Lk 24:13; Jn 20:19) Contribution day for the poor (1 Cor 16:2) Gathering day to break the bread or agape day (Acts 20:7)
Eighth day	Resurrection appearance day (Jn 20:26) with the vision of <i>Parousia</i>
Lord's day	Worshipping day (1 Cor 5:5; 2Cor 1:14; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pet 3: 10; Rev 1:10)

As a result, the Sunday celebration became their weekly Pasch. The highlight of this celebration was the ritual blessing of the Eucharistic bread and cup (1 Cor 11:23-26), preceded by the agape meal or ‘love feast,’ a regular charity meal for widows and the poor to maintain fellowship within the Christian community (1 Cor 11:17-20). Due to abuses in the agape meal, later it was separated from the Eucharistic meal (1 Cor 11:21-22). The absence from this gathering was considered as sacrilegious (Heb 10:25): “Make not your worldly affairs of more account than the Word of God; but on the Lord’s Day leave everything and run eagerly to your church.”<sup>11</sup>

#### 1.1.2.3. Blessing the Light

At the separation of the regular meal from the Eucharist, the Jewish custom of blessing the light or lamp at their evening ceremonial meals came to be applied also among the Christians symbolising Christ’s presence at their Eucharistic meal during the night (Acts 20:8). At the separation of the Eucharist during the night, Christians continued the blessing of light or lamp as a special evening ritual service, called later the *Lucernarium* (lamp lighting ceremony), which gradually developed into vespers (daily evening prayer service), and to the blessing of the Easter Fire and the Paschal Candle in the West during the middle ages.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup>J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Michigan: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979, 242-286; R.J. Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church” in D.A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1982, 251-298.

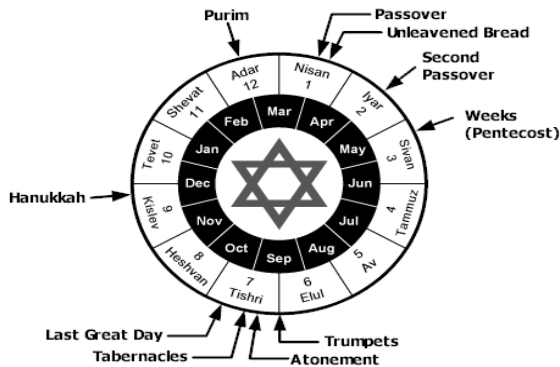
<sup>10</sup>Augustine, *Ep.* 55.17.

<sup>11</sup>*Didache* 23.

<sup>12</sup>G. Dues, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 23.

## 1.2. Christian Sense of Jewish Feasts

Early Christians continued their participation in the Old Testament Jewish feasts, but with a New Testament sense of fulfilment in Christ. Out of the seven Jewish feasts, three of them were major feasts known as great pilgrim feasts due to the obligation of making three-time yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem by every male Jew of twelve years and older to participate them (Ex 23:17). The Christianisation process of Jewish feasts related them to the paschal mysteries of Christ. Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Dedication are still continued. Even today, the date of Easter is calculated in relation to the full moon of Jewish tradition. Following are the Jewish feast with their Christian meaning.<sup>13</sup>



### 1.2.1. Three Major Feasts

#### 1.2.1.1. Passover (*Pesach/Pascha*) and the Unleavened Bread (*Matzot*)

The first pilgrim feast of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb on *Nissan* 14, the first full moon of spring in the first Jewish month (Ex 12:1-14; 21-28), followed by seven-day eating of unleavened bread (*Matzot*, Ex 12) from *Nissan* 15 to 21 (March-April), recalling the first Jewish Pascha in Egypt, resembled Jesus the real Pasch (1 Cor 5:7).

#### 1.2.1.2. Pentecost (*Shavuot* – Seven Weeks)

This second pilgrim feast known differently as the feast of the first fruits, the feast of weeks, or the feast of harvest after fifty days of Passover (Ex 23:16; Num 28:26) on *Sivan* 6 (May-June) recalling the giving of the law to the Jews after the fall of their temple, resembled

<sup>13</sup>See the table of 'Jewish Feasts' in RSV Bible, Bangalore, 1993, appendix; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, London: McGraw-Hill, 1961, 484-517; A. Adam, *The Liturgical Year*, 9-16; J. Felix, <https://www.Festivals and feasts in Ancient Judaism>, online accessed 29.5.2013.

the New Testament Pentecost of conferring Holy Spirit to the apostles (Acts 2:4).

### 1.2.1.3. Tabernacle (*Succoth* – Booth, Tent)

The third pilgrim feast of Booths or Ingathering for seven days (Lev 23:33-36; 39-43), started with the full moon of the seventh month (*Tishri*) from 15 to 22 (Sept-Oct) recalling the Jewish covenant renewal in the wilderness, resembled the new covenant of Jesus to love one another (Jn 15:12).

## 1.2.2. Four Minor Feasts

### 1.2.2.1. Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah* – Head of the Year)

The solemn holy convocation day of rest for worship and sacrifice (Lev 23:23-25; Num 29:1-6) proclaimed with blasts of trumpets (shofar - ram's horn)<sup>14</sup> on the first day of the seventh month (*Tishri* 1), the first-autumn new moon day of the year (Sept-Oct) recalling the assembly of God's people in memory of the day of Judgement, resembled the Christian Sunday gathering (Acts 20:7).

### 1.2.2.2. Atonement (*Yom Kippur* – Day of Atonement)

The annual convocation day of atonement (Lev 16; 23:27-28; 25:9) on the tenth day of the seventh month (*Tishri* 10) at the first moon (Sept-Oct) recalling penitential abstinence with fasting, repeated confession of sins, long prayers, and scripture readings when only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies once in the year to offer sin offerings and incense for himself, priests, and people with driving out of *Azazel* (demon/devil?) or scapegoat (called later) into the wilderness (Lev 16:22), resembled the Christian custom of purification process during the paschal time (Jn 13:1-11 Jesus' washing of the feet).

### 1.2.2.3. Dedication (*Hanukkah* – Inauguration, Renewal)

The eight-day feast of the rededication of the destroyed Jerusalem temple by Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers (1 Macc 4:36-61), known also as the feast of light with the lighting of new added light for each day of eight days in an eight branched candelabrum<sup>15</sup> in each home from twenty-fifth of the ninth month (*Chislev* 25) for 8 days

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<sup>14</sup>The trumpet in this connection is not of a metal one, but of ram's horn (shofar) still used in the synagogue worship, in memory of the sacrifice of a ram in place of Isaac (Gen 22:13). See Scholem Ben-Chorin, "Die Feste des jüdischen Jahres" *Theologische-Praktische Quartalschrift* 125 (1977) 160-161.

<sup>15</sup>*Hanukkah* candelabrum is different from the usual Jewish Menorah, the seven branched candelabrum (1 Macc 4:50); Scholem Ben-Chorin, "Die Feste des jüdischen Jahres," 162.

(Nov-Dec) recalling the glory of the temple with sacrifice of deliverance and praise with special joy (called as Jewish Christmas), resembled the rededication of the Church (Bride) to Christ (Groom) at the end of the world (Mt 25:31-46).

#### 1.2.2.4. Lots (*Purim* – Casting Lots)

The feast of two days of rejoicing on the fourteenth and fifteenth of the twelfth (last) month of the year (*Adar* 14-15) in memory of the extraordinary deliverance of Jews in the Persian Diaspora by Esther and Mordecai (Feb-March) from the slavery of Haman, the great enemy of the Jews (Esth 3:7; 9:19, 24; 10:3), recalling the power of divine protection over Israel, resembled Christ's divine protection over the Church (Mt 16:16-19).

## 2. Second Century

Second century met with the establishment of the annual feast of Pasch among Christians, which later became the centre of the Church calendar for its further growth towards the cycle of a year.<sup>16</sup> The English word Pasch was derived from the Greek term *Pascha* with its Aramaic form *Pesach* meaning *Passover*. Christians substituted the Jewish annual feast of Pasch (Ex 12:1-13; 21-32) with their annual feast of the resurrection of the Lord, the true Pasch, who freed humanity from the slavery of death and sin to the freedom of life through His death and resurrection. The day of Pasch/Easter was the main dispute of this period.

### 2.1. Pasch/Easter

Christian Passover became the great annual feast of redemption as a unified commemoration of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. The name Easter among the English speaking people originated from the feast of Eostre, an ancient Greek goddess of light, celebrated at the spring equinox on March 21, the sun's reaching/crossing the equator. Since the Pasch was celebrated during the spring season, Christians changed this pagan name to Easter indicating the resurrection of Jesus, the true light of the world (Jn 1:9).

#### 2.1.1. The Content

The twofold phases of the primitive Christian annual Pasch/Easter were the death and resurrection as the participation in the suffering and glory of Christ. Hence, the Christian Pasch included a *Triduum*,

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<sup>16</sup>J.A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy: To the Time of Gregory the Great*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976, 25-27; T.J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991, 1-26. A. Adam, *The Liturgical Year*, 57-63.



which began on Good Friday and closed with Easter Sunday. The first part included penance and mourning, while the second part contained great joy in resurrection. Thus, the Pasch (Passover) signified the transition from mourning to joy.<sup>17</sup>

In the beginning stage, both in the East and West the celebration of the annual Pasch took place differently on different days due to the synoptic and the fourth Gospels' approach to the date of death of Jesus on 14 or 15 of Nissan.<sup>18</sup> This paved the way for heated controversies between the East and West during the second century before fixing a common date of Pasch/Easter in the fourth century.

### **2.1.2. Asia Minor and Syria**

The communities in Asia Minor and Syria in the East following the apostolic tradition of John and Paul stressed the theme that Christ is our Passover/Pasch, and celebrated the annual Pasch together with the Jewish Passover feast on Nissan 14. According to John (19:31), Christ died at the same hour when the paschal lambs were slaughtered in the Jerusalem Temple on the Jewish preparation day (Friday). The death cry of Jesus was heard from the Mount Calvary exactly when the paschal lambs' cry at their slaughter in the Temple was heard from the opposite Mount Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup>

For St Paul, Christ is the paschal lamb sacrificed for our sake (1 Cor 5:7). Thus, they claimed that the Pascha should be celebrated annually on the precise date of Jesus' historical Passover, Nissan 14, the first full moon of the Jewish year, which may occur in any day of the week. Those who followed this tradition came to be known as *Quartodeciman* Christians, since they celebrated Pasch on *Quartodecima die* (fourteenth day).<sup>20</sup> Two bishops of Asia Minor, Policarp of Smyrna (d.ca.155-168) and Polycrates of Ephesus (d.200) supported *Qauartodeciman* tradition as the correct one.

### **2.1.3. Rome**

In Rome, they followed up the synoptic tradition of the death of Jesus on Nissan 15, the first day of the unleavened bread (Mt 26:17; Mk 14:12; Lk 22:7). Therefore, they argued that the Jewish Pasch on Nissan 14 had nothing to do with Jesus Pasch (Passover) that took

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<sup>17</sup>O. Cassel, "Art und Sinn der ältesten christlichen Osterfeier," *Journal of Theological Studies* 12 (1938) 1-78; E. Dekkers, *Tertullianus en de geschiedenis der Liturgie*, Brussels: De Kinkhoren, 1947, 147-156.

<sup>18</sup>A.A. McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year*, London: SCM Press, 1953, 82-87.

<sup>19</sup>*Mishna Pesachim* 5; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 469.

<sup>20</sup>T.J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 5-13.

place on the next day of the Jewish Pasch. Thus, they stressed the theme of Resurrection on the first day of the week (Sunday), and celebrated Pasch on the Sunday after Nissan 14. Pope Anicetus (155-166) supported this custom of annual Pasch on Sunday.

#### **2.1.4. Controversy**

The paschal controversy started with the papal attempts to bring the East in agreement with the Western computation of the annual Paschal/Easter day.<sup>21</sup> In order to solve the problem, bishop Polycrates from Asia Minor went Rome and discussed the matter with Pope Anicetus (155-166). Considering the identity of the East and West, and respecting the principle of unity in diversity, the discussion ended up amicably deciding to retain the *status quo*.

The problem became acute when Pope Victor I (189-199) decided upon the matter in favour of Roman tradition, imposing the entire province of Asia to observe Pasch (Easter) on the Sunday following Nissan 14. Churches in Asia Minor opposed Victor's decision. Polycrates in his letter to Pope Victor favoured the Eastern position saying: "We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints."<sup>22</sup>

At this point, Irenaeus of Lyons (177-202), a companion of Victor, intervened and wrote him urging for a moderate decision in this regard. As a result, the problem was solved granting Asia Minor the former freedom of retaining the *status quo*.

### **3. Third Century**

Formation of Paschal fast, Wednesday-Friday fast, and martyrs' memory were the main developments of this period. Annual Paschal fast led to the later formation of the period of Great Fast/Lent. Weekly fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays led to the significance of these days next to Sundays in Christian liturgy, and the martyrs' memory led to the commemoration of saints in different Church calendars in the course of time.

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<sup>21</sup>Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5. 23-25; see P. Schaff, H. Wace, ed., *Eusebius: Church History*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. 1, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952, 241-244.

<sup>22</sup>Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5. 24. 2; P. Schaff, H. Wace, ed., *Eusebius: Church History*, 242.

### 3.1. Paschal Fast

The formation of Paschal fast took place differently in different times and places. A summary of its external development in the early centuries keeps up the coherence in observing fast, a preparation for the Great Paschal Feast of Resurrection.<sup>23</sup>

Eusebius of Caeseria (d. 339),<sup>24</sup> citing the letter of Irenaeus (d.ca.202) to Pope Victor I (189-199), speaks of a paschal fast during the last days of Holy Week.<sup>25</sup> However, at least from the time of Tertullian (d.220) and Hippolytus (d.235), the Latin West fasted on Good Friday and Holy Saturday<sup>26</sup> in imitation of Jewish two-day fast from the preparation day (the immolation day of Paschal lambs in the temple) until eating the Passover meal.<sup>27</sup> The reason for this Christian fast was the saying of Jesus that the wedding guests do not fast while the bridegroom is with them, but they fast when the bridegroom is taken away from them (Mk 2:19-20).

Later this fast was extended to six days before Easter. The third century *Didascalia Apostolorum*,<sup>28</sup> and Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 264)<sup>29</sup> in his letter to Basilides<sup>30</sup> regarding Great Saturday, the final

<sup>23</sup>A.A. McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year*, 114-132 and P. Regan, "The Three Days and Forty Days," *Worship* 54 (1980) 2-18, have discussed in detail the formation of the Lenten Season in early centuries. For its development in Jerusalem before the 5<sup>th</sup> century, see M.F. Lages, "Étapes de l'évolution du Carême à Jérusalem avant le V<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue des études Arméniennes* 6 (1969) 67-102.

<sup>24</sup>Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5. 24. 12; see P. Schaff, H. Wace, *Eusebius: Church History*, 243; PG 20, 501-504.

<sup>25</sup>During the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Pasch contained three days: Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. These days were called "paschal triduum" as a single feast of redemption; see P. Regan, "Three Days and Forty Days," 2-5; C. Mohrman, "Pascha, Passio, Transitus" in *Etude sur le Latin de Chrétiens*, vol. 1, Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1961, 205-222; J. Tally, "History and Eschatology in the primitive Pascha," *Worship* 47 (1973) 212-221; M. Richard, "La question Pascal au I<sup>er</sup> siècle," *L'Orient Syrien* 6 (1961) 179-212; C. Chavasse, "La Structure du carême et les lectures des messes quadragesimales dans la liturgie Romaine," *La Maison-Dieu* 31 (1952) 81.

<sup>26</sup>A. Reiferscheid, G. Vissowa, ed., *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani opera*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 20.1, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1890, 291-293; B. Botte, ed., *Hippolyte de Rome: la Tradition Apostolique*, Sources Chrétiennes 11, Paris, 1946, 47-49, 64-65, no. 20, 29.

<sup>27</sup>T.J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 27.

<sup>28</sup>A. Vööbus, *The 'Didascalia Apostolorum' in Syriac*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptorum Syri 179, Louvain, 1979, 214.

<sup>29</sup>M. Routh, *Reliquiae Sacrae*, vol. 3, Oxonii: E Typographeo Academico, 1847, 229; see S. Salaville, "La tessaracoste du Ve canon de Nicée (325)," *Echos d'Orient* 13 (1910) 66.

<sup>30</sup>O. Stahlin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 2: *Stromata Buch* 1-6, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, 3, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1906, 91; PG 8, 888.

day of the fast, indicates six days of fast before Easter. This might have been in imitation of Israelites' preparation for the Paschal Feast. They ate unleavened bread for seven days before the feast (Ex 12:15, Deut 16:13). However, the Christians fasted only for six days, because Sunday being the day of the Lord, was exempted from fasting.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.2. Wednesday-Friday Fast

The Jews fasted twice a week (Lk 18:12) on Wednesdays and Fridays as preparation for synagogues on market days (Mondays and Thursday) and *Sabbath* days (Saturdays). While the Christians fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays with a different motivation in memory of suffering and death of Jesus for attaining resurrection. The foretelling of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection (Mt 26:1-5; Mk 14:1-5; Lk 9:22, 44; 18:32-33) and Judas' agreeing upon the betrayal of Jesus (Mt 26:14-16; Mk 14:10-11 Lk 22:1-6) took place on Wednesday, the fourth day of the week. Friday, the sixth day of the week (Mk 15:42),<sup>32</sup> is crucifixion day of Jesus at which the whole creation trembled and mourned for the greatest sin ever committed by humanity<sup>33</sup>

### 3.3. Martyrs' Memory

The first evidence for martyr's commemoration comes from Asia Minor with the martyrdom of Polycarp of Smyrna who was burned to death at the stake on 23 February 155/156. Christians collected his remaining bones like pearls, buried them in a safer place, and prayed together.<sup>34</sup> Even though the memory of martyrs started in the East out of persecutions in the second century, its celebration as yearly commemoration originated in the West during the third century

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<sup>31</sup>E. Vcandard, "Carême," *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie* 2.2 (1910) 2140.

<sup>32</sup>*Didache* 8.1; Tertullian, *De Orat.* 19; *Didascalia Apostolorum* 5.21; See G.P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 2, London, 1852, 416; A.A. McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year*, 24; P.G. Cobb, "The History of the Christian Year," 157. The weekly commemorations of Latin Church today are, Monday for Trinity, Tuesday for Angels, Wednesday for Apostles (from 1920 onwards for St. Joseph and Peter & Paul also added), Thursday for Holy Spirit (from 1604 onwards for Eucharist, and 1935 onwards for the High Priesthood of Christ also added), Friday for the Cross (from 1604 onwards for Christ's passion also), and Saturday for Mary.

<sup>33</sup>See W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1864, 26; A. Vööbus, *Synodicon in West Syrian Tradition*, CSCO 367, Scriptorum Syri 161-162, Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975, 189, 202.

<sup>34</sup>*Martyrium Polycarpi* ch.18; A.C. Coxe, ed., *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, ANF 1, Grand Rapids, 1967, 43.

reaching its climax in the fourth century with Constantine's edict of Milan (313), which closed the period of persecution.<sup>35</sup>

Martyrs were held in high esteem, as they were the real heroes of faith in Christ. Their courage in witnessing faith even at the cost of life made them venerable as confessors<sup>36</sup> of faith in the community. Their veneration, as good role models in imitating Christ, had great significance in the Church. Increasing number of these memorials necessitated the giving shape to the *Depositio Martyrum*, the oldest Roman chronographic calendar of 354, to inform people the days and places of twenty-four feast days of which only two — Christmas on December 25 and *Petri Cathedra* (Peter's chair, presently Peter's enthronement as bishop) on February 2 — were not of martyrs.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

Starting with the first century turning over of the weekly celebration of Jewish Sabbath to the Christian weekly celebration of Resurrection, passing through the second century conversion of Jewish annual celebration of Pasch to the Christian annual celebration of Resurrection, changed the third century Jewish significance of fast days as means of purification, to the Christian significance of fast days as the integration to the paschal dimension of Christ.

Knowing the master mind of Christ, the apostles established the kingdom of God on earth by adapting the Jewish practices to the mystagogy of Christian level. This religious adaptations helped the early Christians easily to grasp the practical aspect of Christian life, energising them to execute the gospel values in life even at the cost of life amidst persecutions.

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<sup>35</sup>J.A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy*, 177-178. K. Donovan, "The Sanctoral," in C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold, ed., *The Study of the Liturgy*, London, 1993, 421-424.

<sup>36</sup>The word 'confessor' in Latin tradition is another name coined for a martyr. As martyrs, though they were without the laying on of hands, often, they were granted the special honorary privilege of deacons or even presbyters, if they had been chained in prison for the Name (of Jesus). See G. Dix, *The Treaties on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*, vol. 1, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1937, 18f.

<sup>37</sup>T. Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 87.