

“THE LORD’S DAY”

(REV. i. 10)

THE object of this paper is to give proof that the expression, “the Lord’s Day”, in Rev. i. 10, means “the day of the Lord” of the Old and New Testaments. But we would premise that if any still cling to the popular belief that it indicates “the first day of the week”, such a belief in no way affects the decision of the larger question—the scope of the Apocalyptic Visions, and how they are to be interpreted.

The subject before us is, however, intimately bound up with that larger question, and therefore cannot fail to be of interest to all students of prophecy; and is one worthy of, if not calling for, patient investigation.

There are few subjects on which Tradition speaks so confidently; or diverges more definitely from the recognized principles governing Bible study. For it will be readily admitted, as a fact, that this Day, as a day of the week, is, in the Old Testament, from Gen. i. 5 onward, generally known as “the first day”; while in the New Testament it is called, without an exception, “the first day of the week”. (See Matt. xxviii. 1. Mark xvi. 2, 9. Luke xxiv. 1. John xx. 1, 19. Acts xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 2.)

Here we have its usage in all the four Gospels, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistle to the Corinthians. In any other case this would be deemed conclusive; and anyone who ignored such a fact would be regarded as not proceeding on Scriptural lines of investigation. And yet, if we look at the book, at the opening of which the expression stands, there can be no doubt that it speaks of judgment. This is the great scope of the book. Its subject is set forth in its opening words: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (not “the Revelation of St. John the Divine”).

The word Revelation is, in the Greek, *Apocalypse*, or *Unveiling*, of the Lord Jesus, as explained in verse 7: “Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him”. This can mean nothing but the personal appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in judgment, power, and glory.

The book is a record of what was "shown by signs" to John, as promised in verse 1. The first nine verses lead up to verse 10; and they all foreshadow coming judgment. The succeeding visions all lead up to the grand Unveiling which is reached in chapter xix.; where the Lord Jesus is seen coming with the armies of heaven to execute judgment on the Devil, the Beast, the False Prophet, and their followers. If Tradition had not assumed to have settled the matter, we should naturally have looked for some connection between these judgments and the Day when they would take place.

Ezekiel tells us (Ezek. viii. 3) how he was lifted up by the Spirit and brought "in the visions of God to Jerusalem". In chap. xi. 24, 25, he says "the Spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea". In chap. xl. 1-3 he tells us how he was brought again "into the land of Israel", and saw "visions of God". In these visions he was shown the Temple yet to be built there. These visions, which extend from ch. xl. to ch. xlviii., were not only then all future to Ezekiel, but they are still future, to us, to-day. Ezekiel nevertheless saw them as though they were then present to him nearly 2,500 years ago.

This is (we submit) exactly what took place in the case of John in Rev. i. 10. John says, "I found myself (or, lit., I became, or came to be) by the Spirit in the Lord's Day". The words ἐν πνεύματι (*en pneumati*), *in spirit*, may mean either *by the Spirit*, implying the action of the Holy Spirit (the Article not being necessary after the Preposition). Or, they may also mean in a *psychical condition*, as they appear to mean in Rev. xvii. 3, and xxi. 10, "He carried me away in spirit"; just as we speak of a person being lost *in thought*. Either sense will be in accord with our position as to "the Lord's Day".

The word "day" does not necessarily mean a day of 24 hours; but it is used of an extended portion of time.

And the preposition ἐν (*en*) does not necessarily mean "on". "In" is its normal rendering in such a connection:

See Rom. ii. 16, "*in the day* when God shall judge".

Matt. vii. 22, "many will say to Me *in that day*".

1 Cor. i. 8, "blameless *in the day* of our Lord Jesus Christ".

„ v. 5, "Saved *in the day* of the Lord Jesus."

2 Cor. i. 14, "ours *in the day* of the Lord Jesus".

2 Tim. iii. 1, "*in the last days* perilous times shall come".

The translation "in" is therefore perfectly appropriate to the sphere covered by the duration of the judgment period.

The translation of ἐν (*en*) by "on" is inconsistent; for, out of 113 times in the Rev. it is rendered "in" 112 times, and only once (here) "on"! Three times we have it in verse 9, and twice in verse 10. To render it only once "on", and four times "in", in these two verses is a sad example of the power of tradition to prevent consistency in translation.

We have a similar statement in chap. iv. 2; which, so far from being opposed to chap. i. 10, is in perfect harmony with it. In chap. iv. 1 John hears a voice calling, and saying, "Come up hither". What happens? John says, "Immediately, by the Spirit, he came to be" whither he had been called: in other words, he finds himself "in heaven"; where, "in the visions of God" he sees the throne set for judgment (according to Ps. ix. 7, 8; ciii. 19. Dan. vii. 9). He came to be in the future judgment scenes "in heaven", just as, in ch. i. 10, he came to be in the same judgment scenes of "the Lord's Day", and not on a day of the week. Such a day has nothing whatever to do with either passage. We are therefore prepared to approach the subject as being a question of *fact*, and not as a matter of *opinion*.

The question is this: Have we any warrant for assuming that, *before* John wrote the Apocalypse, "the first day of the week" had already come to be so well known as ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα (*hē kuriakē hēmera*) *the Lord's Day*, as to be perfectly understood without any explanation being necessary? It matters not how many writers so used the expression *after* John.

The name, "the Lord's Day", has become, by tradition, and by usage, so identified with "the first day of the week" as to be practically synonymous with it. People are born and brought up in this belief; and it is no marvel that, as in the case of the mistake of the four years in the commencement of *Anno Domini*, this belief as to "the Lord's Day" has crystallized almost into an Article of Faith. But this does not alter facts, or affect our position. It is not that we take the unreasonable position of relying on any argument which is based on silence. It would be just as illogical to base any evidence on the silence

of Christian writers as to assume that there were others who did mention it, whose writings have not come down to us. But, at the same time, it is not unreasonable to ask for evidence of *some kind*. For, in the absence of this, if the only name for this day, in the Gospel of St. John (xx. i, 19) is "the first day of the week", what right have we to suppose that he means "the first day of the week", when in Rev. i. 10 he uses the expression, "the Lord's Day"? If he meant us to understand the first day, why did he not say so? Why introduce another and quite a new name—"the Lord's Day"?

Dr. Hessey, in discussing the general question of "Sunday" (1) asks of "the Lord's Day", "What was this day?" and says, "Could it have been the Sabbath-day? But, if so, the presumption is that the Apostle would have called it by that name, which was not obsolete, or even obsolescent". Dr. Hessey (2) asserts that "John calls it by the name which had become usual in the Church to designate its Divine origin and institution, 'the Lord's Day'".

These, then, are the two issues.

As to the *first*, and the principle of interpretation involved in it, we perfectly agree; for it is our own contention that, if John had meant "the first day of the week" (*i.e.*, our Sunday), "the presumption is that the Apostle would have called it by that name, which was not obsolete or even obsolescent". It was not "obsolete": for it had not long before been used by Luke (Acts xx. 7), and by St. Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 2); say A.D. 59 or 60: or only some thirty years prior to John's then present writing. It was not "obsolescent"; for it was the name by which John had himself called it within some four or five years before, or (as some think after), in his Gospel. The date which is, by general consent, assigned to the Apocalypse is about A.D. 95 or 96.

As to the *second* issue: Is it the fact that the expression, "the Lord's Day", had "*become usual*", in the sense of our Sunday, at the time John wrote? This is the point which we have to investigate. We have to ask, What is the very earliest evidence, so far as we know, that has ever been adduced from post-Biblical writers as to the use of the expression "the Lord's Day"?

The earliest original and Biblical expression for our Sunday, from Gen. i. 5, was confessedly "THE FIRST DAY" OF THE WEEK. If the expression "the Lord's Day" had already taken

the place of this, and had "become usual" in the Church when John wrote, we shall certainly find some evidence as to its being so used by those who wrote during the first two centuries: especially when they are treating of the observance of this Day.

But, do we?

This is just the question. Those who hold the common view content themselves with making the assertion, and mentioning names. But, as it is a matter of documentary evidence (and not of argument), it is possible for us to examine, sift, and test this evidence.

Let us then do so.

The earliest writer who is supposed to refer to the expression "the Lord's Day" is—

1. IGNATIUS, Bishop of Antioch. He was martyred, some say in A.D. 107. (But Jerome says 109; while Bishops Pearson and Wordsworth say 115.)

Elliott, in his *Horæ Apocalypticae*, gives three quotations from what are taken to be his writings. But this is the preliminary question, which must first be settled, before we can properly and correctly estimate the value of the evidence.

"The Epistles ascribed to Ignatius have given rise to more controversy than any other documents connected with the primitive church." With these words the translators of *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* commence their "Introductory Notice". They continue: "There are in all fifteen Epistles which bear the name of Ignatius. . . . It is now the universal opinion of critics, that the first eight of these professedly Ignatian letters were spurious. They bear in themselves indubitable proof of being the production of a later age than that in which Ignatius lived. Neither Eusebius nor Jerome make the least reference to them; and they are now by common consent set aside as forgeries, which were, at various dates and to serve special purposes, put forth under the name of the celebrated bishop of Antioch". "None of them are quoted or referred to by any Christian writer previous to the 6th century" (p. 451).

As the most important of the three quotations given by Mr. Elliott is from one of these eight epistles—that to the Philippians—we need not refer further to it. It is enough to record the fact that, in it, there are references to heresies and events which did not take place till the close of the second century!

Of the other seven, which are acknowledged by Eusebius, there are two Greek originals, a shorter and a longer. "It is plain that one or the other of these exhibits a corrupt text, and scholars have, for the most part, agreed to accept the shorter form as representing the genuine letters of Ignatius."

As the second quotation relied on by Mr. Elliott occurs in the *longer* recension of the *Epistle to the Magnesians* (cap. ix.), we need not attach the slightest importance to it.

In 1838–42 a Syriac version was discovered, and was published by Dr. Cureton in 1845. But this contained only the Epistles to St. Polycarp, the Ephesians, and the Romans. This opened the controversy afresh, and it was argued that these three alone were authentic. If this be so, then the first quotation referred to above, from the *Epistle to the Magnesians*, and from that to the *Trallians*, are not among these three, and need not trouble us further. But there is another point connected with these three Epistles. Ignatius makes no mention of the Apocalypse. This had been used as an argument against the genuineness of the Apocalypse. To meet that argument Mr. Elliott refers to "the ancient and trustworthy Syriac version of Ignatius' Epistles, which only recognizes the three Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, and Polycarp, as genuine". "This", he urges, "weakens the argument derivable from their silence (if silent they be) about it, for Ignatius' non-recognition of the Apocalypse."

Mr. Elliott refers to this again in a note on page 604, vol. iv. He says, "Dr. Maitland sets aside the quotation from Ignatius to the Magnesians as not Ignatius' own, *and probably so far with reason*: an exception applicable also to the quotation from the Epistle to the Philadelphians. But we must remember that, though they were not Ignatius' own, they were probably written in his name by some writer prior to Constantine's time".

This settles the whole question as to the evidence of Ignatius: for we fully admit the use of the expression, "the Lord's day", prior to Constantine's time; though, as we shall show, it was so called for very different reasons than those which are usually supposed. It is, therefore, unnecessary for us to take any of the quotations from Ignatius seriously. But, lest we may be supposed to shirk the question, we will give one (the first), the only one occurring in the *shorter* form of the Epistles—that *to*

the Magnesians (cap. ix): We give the *whole* passage, in order to show what Ignatius is writing about. The part usually quoted we have put in italics; and given the original of it, and of the words that follow, in a note.

“Be not deceived with heterodox opinions, nor old unprofitable fables. For if we still live according to the Jewish Law, we confess that we have not received grace. For even the most holy prophets lived according to Christ Jesus. [κατὰ χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν.] On account of this they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace, in order to assure the disobedient that there is one God, who manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal word. . . . If they then who were concerned in old things arrived at a newness of hope, *no longer observing the Sabbath, but, living according to the Lord’s life*, by which our life also sprang up [within us] through Him, even [through] His death which some deny. . . . How can we live without (or apart from) Him?”

The chapter (ix.) of which this passage forms a part is headed “Let us live according to Christ”.

The whole scope of the context is entirely about living a Christian “life”, and not about keeping a Christian *day*. It is about walking according to “grace”, and not according to Judaism. It is about living “according to Christ’s life”, and not “according to Jewish Law”. It will be observed also, that he uses neither the expression, nor even the word “day”.

This passage, so far from being evidence as to the expression, “the Lord’s Day”, being in common use, cannot be used as evidence as to the observance of any day at all. Even supposing that the word ζῶην (*zōēn*), *life* be not found in certain MSS. of Ignatius, the internal evidence is of itself sufficient to show that it must be the correct reading: for the adjective, “Lord’s”, must have a noun, expressed or implied. And if the noun “life” be disallowed, where is our MSS. authority for substituting any other noun, or, the word “day”? It is unknown to the MSS. of Ignatius and foreign to the subject about which he is treating. Thus the evidence which is supposed to be furnished by Ignatius as to the use of the title, “the Lord’s Day”, must be ruled out; as his evidence does not refer to the matter which is under consideration.

Some may ask: Why, then, was Ignatius ever introduced as an evidence of the change, or of the common use of the name

“the Lord’s Day” instead of “the first day of the week”? But this is the question we ourselves ask.

2. BARNABAS is the next dated writer who is quoted. Some think he was the companion of St. Paul mentioned in the Acts. Others hold that he was a writer of the same name, living in the second century. But, be that as it may, it does not affect our question at all; seeing that he does not use the expression, “the Lord’s Day”, although he is actually speaking of the observance of a day of the week for Christian worship.

So far from the name having “become usual” in John’s time, we find this Barnabas, commenting on Isaiah i. 13; and, speaking of the seventh day or Jewish Sabbath, he writes: “See how He (God) says, Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to Me; but that one which I have made; in which, having finished all things, I shall make a beginning of an eighth day, i.e. a beginning of another world. Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day for joy, on which Jesus rose from the dead, and after being manifested, ascended up into the heavens”.

Here, again, we have a writer (whoever he may be: and the earlier he wrote, the more valuable is his evidence): speaking on the very question of the observance of days; when he would naturally have chosen the expression, “the Lord’s Day”, for our Sunday if it had “become usual” at that time. But he does nothing of the kind. Nor does he even call this day for worship “the first day of the week”; but he calls it “the eighth day.” Thus, the second writer must also be ruled out. He is good evidence if one’s object were to prove the “eighth day” to be the name in common use; but not for any other name.

3. The next evidence which is adduced is the *Didachē*, or *The Teaching of the Twelve*. This is supposed by some to be older than even Ignatius; being put in the last quarter of the first century, or shortly after. But this is only supposition. The earliest actual evidence of its date is that it must be as early as Clement of Alexandria, who wrote about A.D. 194 (he died about 220), and is the first to refer to it. The writer’s name is wholly unknown; and editors and critics are divided as to whether it be the source, or the copy, of Barnabas.

Clement’s date (A.D. 194) does not take us beyond Dionysius, A.D. 175; and therefore does not add to the value of this evidence. And as to the quotation itself, Clement does not

mention the *Didachē* by name; and the two sentences he is supposed to quote are not at all exact. We need not dwell upon this however; for, when we turn to the text of the *Didachē* itself, we again look in vain for the word "day". We find the adjective "Lord's"; and, as in the case of Ignatius, we have *κατὰ κυριακὴν*, according to the Lord's. This is followed by the word *κυρίου*, of the Lord, which makes no sense at all: "according to the Lord's of the Lord!" Some word or words must evidently be supplied: for the adjective must qualify a noun expressed or implied. Without such noun here, we are faced with an insoluble puzzle. If we supply the word "day", it is not the usual way of expressing *upon*, or *on*, any day: nor does it make any sense. What are we to understand if we translate the words "κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου", "and on the Lord's Day of the Lord?" The only suggestion we can make is that we should supply some other noun than "day", and take the adjective "Lord's", here, as having the meaning which it had acquired by this time, as evidenced by the recently discovered *papyri* belonging to centuries B.C. 1 and A.D. 1. The discovery of these *papyri* is revolutionizing both Lexicons and Grammars, and throwing quite a new light on the meaning and usage of many words. *κυριακός* has been hitherto supposed to be a purely Biblical and Ecclesiastical word, having no place in Greek literature: but from these *papyri*, the adjective *κυριακός*, is shown to have been in common use, and was used of what pertained to the Emperor.

Prof. Deismann has shown that *κυριακός* was commonly used in the sense of *imperial*, as belonging or relating to the *Lord*, i.e. ruler, or emperor.

In A.D. 68, *κυριακός λόγος* was used in the sense of *Imperial treasury*: the *κύριος* to which the word related being the Emperor himself. So, in the Berlin Royal Museum (l 15 f Fayyum), we read: "These afore-mentioned sums have also been paid into the *Imperial Treasury* from the poll-tax of the priests".

κυριακὴ ὑπηρεία is used of the *Imperial service*.

κυριακός φίσκος was used of *Imperial taxes*; or public or fiscal property subject to Imperial taxation.

If this sense of *Imperial* may be given to the adjective, as used here in the *Didachē*, we may then supply a noun which makes sense, instead of the noun "day", which makes no sense. The

natural word to supply seems to be “command”, or “ordinance”. Either of these will be seen to agree with the context:

“And according to the Imperial [*command*] of the Lord, coming together to break bread and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.”

To say “according to the Lord’s [day] of the Lord”, makes no sense at all: and, what is more, when the *Didachē* speaks of other days, it always calls them by their number, as the “second”, “fourth”, and “fifth” days (chap. viii. 1).

It is true that the first day of the week is in question here, in chap. xiv. 1; but it is the Lord’s *command* or *ordinance* which is to be observed on that day; and not that day which is so called.

The *Didachē* therefore affords no evidence as to the use of the expression, the Lord’s Day, for any day of the week.

There is no dispute that the adjective *κυριακός* (*kuriakos*), “Lord’s”, was *known* and *used* by St. Paul and St. Luke. The question is, Was it used in connection with *a day of the week*?

In 1 Cor. xi. 20 we have the words, “the Lord’s Supper”. But a little further on, in the very same Epistle, the Apostle, when speaking of the day (which is now our Sunday), does not say “the Lord’s Day”, but “the first day of the week” (1 Cor. xvi. 1). A little later St. Luke, so historically accurate, uses the same current phrase, ἡ μία τῶν σαββάτων, “*the first day of the week*”: and it cannot be doubted that this was the phrase in common use at that time. We are still destitute of any knowledge or evidence to the contrary.

4. The fourth authority who is referred to is JUSTIN MARTYR. He flourished about A.D. 140–155; but we shall have to rule him out also; and for three reasons:

First, he does not use even the Adjective “Lord’s” at all; and he says not one word about the expression “the Lord’s Day”.

Second, he speaks of the day of the week (i.e. our Sunday) twice: but he calls it the “first” day, and also the “eighth” day (as Barnabas does). Speaking of the day on which Christians worship, he says that is the antitype of circumcision; and the reason he gives is as follows:

“The command to circumcise infants on the eighth day was a type of the true circumcision by which we were circumcised from error and wickedness through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Therefore the first day of the week remains the chief of all the days. According to the number of the circuit of all the days, it is called the eighth; but it remains always the first."

It would appear then from Justin, that the name that had "become usual" was "the eighth day".

Third, he is the first writer to inform us that this day was called ἡ Ἡλίου ἡμέρα (*hē Hēliou hēmera*) *the Day of the Sun; or the SUN'S Day*.

This brings us to the next name which we find in common use. But, it is not "the Lord's Day". It is "The Day of the Sun", or "Sun-day".

JUSTIN MARTYR says, "On the day called the Day of the Sun, there is an assembly of all who live either in the cities or in country parts; and the memoirs of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets are read . . . Sun's-day is the day on which we all hold our common assembly; since it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturn's-day); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the Sun's day, having appeared to His apostles and His disciples, He taught them these things which we have submitted to you also for your consideration." This is, of course, good evidence for the early observance of "the first day of the week" for Christian worship: but so far from that day being called "the Lord's Day", it would appear that "the Sun's-day" was the name which was usual; for up to this we have not as yet heard anything of "the Lord's Day"; or seen any sign of it.

Whatever other divisions or cycles of days the Babylonians and other heathen nations may have had, it is certain that the Biblical and Jewish Septenary Cycle was well known to them. Latin classical writers, as well as Josephus, speak of the Jewish Sabbath as being universally known.

Dion Cassius, writing at the close of the second century, declares that, before the death of the Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 138), *the Egyptian names of the days of the week had, in matters of common life, almost universally superseded, in Greece and Rome, the national divisions of the lunar month.*

The Egyptian nomenclature, passing into Latin, called:

- The 1st day, *Dies Dominica*, the day of the Sun.
 The 2nd ,, *Dies Lunæ*, the day of the Moon.
 The 3rd ,, *Dies Martis*, the day of Mars.
 The 4th ,, *Dies Mercurii*, the day of Mercury.
 The 5th ,, *Dies Jovis*, the day of Jupiter.
 The 6th ,, *Dies Veneris*, the day of Venus.
 The 7th ,, *Dies Saturnis*, the day of Saturn.

Even Tibullus, a Roman elegaic poet, writing just before the commencement of the Christian Era, already calls the 7th day "the day of Saturn"; and speaks of it as a day of bad omen. And, not long since, these names were discovered scratched in this order on the wall of a dining-room in Pompeii, which, as we know, was destroyed in A.D. 79. While most of these names have been retained by the different nations of Europe, the "first" and the "seventh" are witnesses to the struggle which they have survived. "Saturn's day" has not been able to displace entirely the Hebrew name "Sabbath". But the "Sun's-day" has held its own all down the ages; though it shows traces of the struggle through which it has passed. We have seen the evidence of this from Justin Martyr and Dion Cassius above.

There is also the evidence of the Emperor CONSTANTINE: who, in A.D. 321, four years before the great Council of Nicea, ordained the general observance of the day by resting "on the venerable day of the Sun" (*venerabili die Solis*). It was because the Christians worshipped their Lord on the Sun's-day that they were accused of being Sun-worshippers; and were defended by Tertullian; who says: "they made the *diem Solis* a day of joy, but for other reasons than to worship the sun, which was no part of their religion".

A hundred years after Constantine, the Emperor Theodosius still calls it "Sun's-day (*dies Solis*), which is the first day of the week"; showing that this was the name which had "become usual".

Porphyry (A.D. 233-304) has left a prayer to the Sun, in which he speaks of him as "*Dominus Sol*", the lord Sun.

No accusation of any kind is brought against Justin or any one else of having Paganized "the first day of the week". On the contrary, they are to be commended for having *Christianized* the Pagan name.

Bingham, though he does not agree with our conclusions, is

compelled to bear witness to the truth of our premises, when he says: "It was the custom in the primitive church to replace heathen days and festivities by those that were Christian". This is exactly what, we contend, was done in this case. The Pagan name, "*Sun's-day*", was in common use; and, inasmuch as on the same day on which the heathen worshipped their "lord", the Sun (*Dominus Sol*), and the Christians worshipped their own Lord, Christ, we can understand how these Christians would naturally transfer the meaning from the sun of the heavens to "the Sun of righteousness", Who rose from the dead on "the first day of the week". The transition would be as simple, and as natural, as though the change had been (in English) from "the S-u-n's day" to "the S-o-n's day". Indeed, the change was soon apparent; for, it is just about this very time (A.D. 138) that (according to Dion Cassius) this name, the Sun's-day, became universal in the Roman empire.

Valentinian II. (Emperor of Rome A.D. 375-392) speaks of "*Solis diem*, which our forefathers have rightly and customarily called *Dominicum*" (c. xi., tit. 7).

It is not until after this that we have the unquestioned evidence as to the first and earliest use of the expression, THE LORD'S DAY, as meaning "the first day of the week", or our Sunday. From this point, therefore, we are all at one; for it is not until now that we find any trace of the expression, "the Lord's day". We have had the adjective *κυριακός* used in connection with various nouns, implied or expressed; but not yet in connection with the noun "day".

The earliest writer to use the expression is DIONYSIUS, Bishop of Corinth, A.D. 175. In a letter to the Church in Rome (a fragment of which is preserved in Eusebius), he says: "To-day we kept the Lord's holy day, in which we read your letter".

IRENÆUS, Bishop of Lyons (about A.D. 178; died 202), is the next to use it. He discusses the point whether Easter should be kept as in the Eastern Churches, "on the Passover day, or on the Lord's Day".

THE GOSPEL OF PETER is an apocryphal writing, of which only fragments remain. It is the subject of a letter, written by Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, during the last decade of the second Century, which is preserved by Eusebius. It was condemned by Serapion, both because it owed its origin to the

Docetæ, and because it contained additions to “the true teaching about the Saviour”. Nevertheless, it is good evidence of the fact that the adjective, ἡ κυριακῆ, is used for the actual day of Christ’s resurrection: and hence, as he says also, “He that observes the precepts of the Gospel makes that to be the Lord’s day, while he casts away every evil thought, and takes to him the true *gnostic* thoughts of wisdom and knowledge, thereby glorifying the resurrection of the Lord”. But, as his date is A.D. 194, his testimony needs no comment: and, as the Rev. Newport I. D. White remarks, in *Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible*, it “betrays at once, by the anachronism, a second century writer”. Though some put the date of this fragment as early as A.D. 150, it can hardly be regarded as earlier than DIONYSIUS.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (A.D. 194), is the next writer quoted. He thinks he discovers a reference to the Lord’s Day in Plato’s expression, “the eighth day”.

TERTULLIAN of Carthage (A.D. 200) is the next. He writes in Latin; and hence, his evidence is not decisive; for he uses the Latin expression *Dies Solis* (day of the Sun) as well as *Dies Dominicus*; so that the latter expression may be used in the same sense and with the transferred synonymous meaning.

It is hardly necessary to multiply these examples, because the practice became more and more general. Moreover, it is impossible to tell, in the case of the Latin Fathers, the exact sense in which they use the word “Lord’s”; seeing the Pagan expression, *dies Dominica*, is at least neutral; and it is sometimes difficult for us to decide whether it refers to the Lord Sun, or to the Lord Christ. One thing is certain: and that is: *that these Fathers never base their use of the expression on Rev. i. 10.* It is hardly fair, therefore, for others to do for these Fathers that which they never did for themselves.

The three names, “Sabbath”, “Sunday”, and “the Lord’s Day”, have struggled on in our own country. Shakespeare makes Shylock, the Jew, speak of the *Sabbath* (*Merchant of Venice*, iv. 1, 36); and Hamlet, as a Gentile, speak of the *Sunday* (*Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. 1).

At the Savoy Conference in England, in 1661, the Presbyterians desired that the expression “*the Lord’s Day*” might be everywhere used instead of *Sunday*. The reply of the Episcopalians was that “the word *Sunday* is ancient, as may be seen from

Justin Martyr (*Apol. prim.* pp. 97, 98), and therefore not to be left off”.

This, then, is the result of our historical investigation: and it may be thus summed up:

1. The original New Testament name was “the first day of the week”.

2. It was sometimes called the “eighth” day by post-Biblical writers of the second century.

3. It was also called the Sun’s-day.

4. Then, as it was “the day of Lord Sun” (*Dies Domini Solis*), the transition easily passed into “the Lord’s Day”. But this was never based on Rev. i. 10: but, either on the heathen or Pagan name; or, on Psalm cxviii. 24, “This is the day which the LORD hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it”.

Dr. Hesse bears witness to the well-known fact that the Fathers often quote Ps. cxviii. 24 as a direct prophecy of “the Lord’s Day”; and Hengstenberg animadverts on the employment of this Psalm as an argument by Dwight and others. It is very strange that the Fathers should have referred to Ps. cxviii. 24, when Rev. i. 10 would have served their purpose so much better, if the name, “the Lord’s Day”, had “become usual” when John wrote the Revelation (say A.D. 95). So far is this from being the case, that we do not meet with it at all until eighty years later. That is to say: that, even though several of the Fathers wrote on the very subject of the observance of a special day as a day for worship, they employ the expressions in common use; but the name, “the Lord’s Day”, is not one of them, until nearly a century had passed away. Even then, there is evidence to show that it was used from quite a different reason altogether. After it was once so used, it matters not *how many* Fathers used it. We have given the names of all who wrote in the first two centuries; and this is sufficient: for, that the name was freely used later is not in dispute.

What is in dispute is that, if John used an expression (the Lord’s Day), which as a matter of fact is shown to be *not in common use*, for “the first day of the week”, the presumption is that he *did not mean* “the first day of the week”; seeing that expression, as a name for that day, was “neither obsolete nor even obsolescent”; but was used by himself in his Gospel, by St. Luke in the Acts, by St. Paul in the Epistles, and by *all the Fathers down to* A.D. 175. When, therefore, we find John using

the expression, "the Lord's Day", we must seek for an explanation more in accordance with historical facts, and better attested by documentary evidence. Moreover, we must look for an interpretation more worthy of the dignity of Holy Scripture itself.

The objections to the interpretation here advocated may be thus summed up:

(1) That John, having mentioned the *place* (Patmos), would naturally connect with it the *time*. It may seem "natural"; but this can hardly be admitted as evidence in itself; and certainly fails to nullify all the positive evidence that has been adduced.

(2) That there are writers quoted *prior* to the date we concede (A.D. 175). But some of these do not use either the adjective or the noun; while others use the adjective with *another* noun implied or expressed.

(3) That writers *later* than A.D. 175 use the expression. But these do not, of course, affect our position, or strengthen that of objectors.

(4) For the same reason the unbroken Ecclesiastical usage is without any weight; as it is admitted, and is unquestioned. But it does not affect Rev. i. 10.

(5) The objection that seems to be most relied upon is that the writer of the Apocalypse would not have used the Adjective, *κυριακός* (*kuriakos*), *Lordly*, had he meant the Day of the Lord; but would have used the full expression, as it is invariably in the Old Testament. This, which is supposed to be the most conclusive objection, becomes, in fact, the weightiest evidence of all in favour of our position.

In the first place, it must be remarked that, as regards the Old Testament, there is no adjective for "lordly" in the Hebrew language. Hence, whatever is spoken of as being "the Lord's" is always expressed in Hebrew as being "of the Lord". This is generally translated literally "of the Lord": but frequently, also, it is rendered by the adjective "*Lord's*". Hence, the Hebrew "on the side of the LORD" is translated "on the LORD's side" (Ex. xxxii. 26); "the portion of the Lord" is translated "the LORD's portion" (Deut. xxxii. 9); "the anointed of the LORD" is rendered "the LORD's anointed" (1 Sam. xvi. 6, etc.); "the doing of the LORD" is rendered "the LORD's doing" (Ps. cxviii. 23); "the Passover of the LORD" is rendered "the LORD's Passover" (Ex. xii. 11). There is no reason whatever why, in

every case, "the Day of the LORD" should not have been, in the same way, rendered "the LORD's DAY". Indeed, in many cases, in the R.V. as well as the A.V., we have examples of *both modes of rendering when the very same Noun is in question*.

Thus, though we have the Hebrew, "the house of the LORD", generally and literally so rendered, yet we have, also, the rendering "the LORD's house" (Ps. cxvi. 19. Isa. ii. 2. Jer. li. 51. Hag. i. 2). In like manner, we have "the people of the LORD" (Ezek. xxxvi. 20), but we have also "the LORD's people" (1 Sam. ii. 24. 2 Kings xi. 17). We have "the mercy of the LORD" (Ps. ciii. 17), but, also, "the LORD's mercies" (Lam. iii. 22). We have "the vengeance of the LORD" (Jer. l. 15), but, also, "the LORD's vengeance" (Is. xxxiv. 8. Jer. li. 6). We have "the Table of the LORD" (Mal. i. 7, 12), but, also, "the LORD's Table" (1 Cor. x. 21). We have, generally, "the name of the Lord", but, also, "the LORD's name" (Ps. cxiii. 3). We have "the messenger of the Lord" (Mal. ii. 7), but, also, "the LORD's messenger" (Hag. i. 13).

So far, then, from furnishing any evidence as to a difference of meaning of "the Lord's Day" in Rev. i. 10, that meaning is conclusively shown to be *the exact equivalent of the Hebrew "the Day of the LORD"*, as witnessed by the alternative renderings of both the A.V. and R.V. Indeed, if the Translators or Revisers had chosen to render it "the Lord's Day" in *every* passage, as they have in many, this objection could never have been made.

In the New Testament the case is quite different; for the Greeks have the adjective *κυριακός* (*kuriakos*), *Lord's*; and therefore the Translators had the choice of rendering it either way ("Lord's", or, "of the Lord").

Now there are two ways of qualifying a Noun:

(1) When there is no unusual emphasis required to be placed on the Adjective, the Adjective is used, and the emphasis then falls naturally on the Noun.

(2) But, when a special emphasis is to be placed on the Adjective, then the writer goes out of his way to employ instead (by the figure *Enallage*) the cognate noun in the Genitive case.

For example: there are the adjectives *ἀληθής* (*alēthēs*) and *ἀληθίνοσ* (*alēthinos*), *true*: and there is the noun *ἀλήθεια* (*alētheia*), *truth*. (In the Genitive case this will be "of truth".) Now, it so happens, that both these words are used in con-

nection with the same Greek word rendered “sayings”, or “word”, as being true.

When the *Adjective* is used, the emphasis falls, in the usual course, on the Noun; and we have “true WORDS”, or “sayings” (Rev. xix. 9; xxii. 6). But when the *Noun* is used to do the work of the adjective, it is done in order to emphasise the Adjective, and to call our attention to it; and we then have “TRUE words” (as in Acts xxvi. 25); or “word” (as in 2 Tim. ii. 15, “the word of truth”). In the former case, the emphasis is on *what is said* or written; and in the latter case, it is on *the truth* of what is said, and not on the matter.

Now, in the case of Rev. i. 10, we have the Adjective, “Lord’s”, and the emphasis falls therefore, naturally, on the Noun “day”—“the Lord’s DAY”. But when it is desired to express the Old Testament thought of the Day being prophetic and future, and as having the emphasis on the word “Lord”, then the *Noun* is used (in the Greek) instead of the Adjective, and the emphasis falls on the Adjective “of the Lord”, i.e. “the LORD’s day”. (This is done in 1 Cor. i. 8. 1 Thess. v. 2. 2 Thess. ii. 2 (R.V.), and 2 Pet. iii. 10.) In the latter case (that of the Noun) the day is viewed as being “the LORD’s Day”, revealed by Him in the prophecies of the Word of God. In the former case (that of the Adjective: Rev. i. 10) the day is viewed as “the Lord’s DAY”, seen by John as being then present to him “in the Visions of God”.

There is an exact parallel to this use of the Adjective in 1 Cor. iv. 3, where we have the correlative word ἀνθρώπινος (*anthrōpinos*), *man’s*, with the Noun “day”. The emphasis here, therefore, is on the noun, “man’s DAY”; because this present time is the day when man is judging; and forming and executing his judgments. This is why the Greek word “day” is actually, rightly, and necessarily translated “judgment”, in both the Authorized and Revised Versions.

Ἀνθρωπίνῃ ἡμέρᾳ (*anthrōpinē hēmera*), in 1 Cor. iv. 3, is rendered “Man’s judgment (margin, Gr. *day*)”. So we contend that, in Rev. i. 10, ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα (*hē kuriakē hēmera*) should in like manner be rendered “The Lord’s judgment (margin, Gr. *day*)”.

In both passages the same word “day” denotes the time or period when the judgment spoken of is being carried out. In the former it is the day now present, when “man” is judging;

in the latter it is the future day, when “the Lord” will be judging. Indeed, this is the exact contrast as shown by the conclusion in 1 Cor. iv. 5: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord shall have come”. This coming is the great subject of the whole book of Revelation, as is proclaimed in its opening words (Rev. i. 7). And John is taken by the Spirit into the judgment scenes of that day.

This leads us to ask, whether there may not be a further reason, and a deeper meaning, in the choice and use of the expression which thus places the emphasis on the word “DAY”, rather than on the word “Lord”? May it not be intended to cover *the whole period* of the Lord’s action from the moment when the Church is removed, until *the latter portion* of that period which will indeed be “the great and terrible Day of the LORD”? May not the expression “the Lord’s DAY” cover the whole *συντελεία* (*sunteleia*) or *end* of the age or dispensation concerning which the enquiry was made by the three disciples in verse 3; and the expression, “the Day of THE LORD”, be limited to the *τέλος* (*telos*), *the end* of the *sunteleia*, referred to in verse 14?

After the Church is “received up in glory” (1 Tim. iii. 16) many things have to take place; and much has to be done by the Lord with Israel, and with the nations, long before the seals are broken, the trumpets sounded, or the vials of God’s wrath are poured forth. *The whole of this period* is covered by the *sunteleia*, or end of the age, i.e. “the Lord’s DAY”. Hence, if in Rev. i. 10 the term “the Day of THE LORD” had been used, it would have limited the whole of the Apocalypse and all its visions to the *telos*, or final and concluding years of the *sunteleia*. The part of the *sunteleia* at which the *telos* begins and the transition takes place, is indicated in Rev. x. 7–11: “in the days . . . when the seventh angel . . . begins to sound”, and when “the little book” is handed to John.

May not this “little book” (*βιβλαρίδιον*, *biblaridion*) of Rev. x. 8–10 refer to the *shorter* period, or *telos* (the Day of THE LORD)? and be set in contrast with the larger “book” (*βιβλίον*, *biblion*), of Rev. v. 1, which refers to the *longer* period, or *sunteleia* (the Lord’s DAY)? If so, then we can understand why this latter expression is used in Rev. i. 10 in order to cover the whole period; and why the former is not used, so that it might not limit the whole book to the closing years of

that period, afterwards spoken of (under the sixth Seal) as “the great day of His wrath”, and (under the sixth Vial) as “that great day of God Almighty”.

Thus, “the Lord’s DAY” (Rev. i. 10) stands in emphatic contrast with “Man’s DAY” (1 Cor. iv. 3); for, in this present day (“man’s day”) man is exalting himself and rejecting God. But there is another Day coming. In that day (the Lord’s Day) this will be reversed: For then,

“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isa. ii. 11,
17, and Zeph. i. 14–18).

This is the one great subject of the Book of Revelation. This is its scope. All the events and judgments which John sees and describes have that one great object and end: the abasement of man and the exaltation of God. Hence it was that John “came to be by the Spirit in the Lord’s Judgment [day]”, and sees, in “the visions of God”, the end of God’s controversy with man.

The scope of the Apocalypse is, of itself, sufficient to determine the interpretation of the expression “the Lord’s Day” in chap. i. 10. And the historical evidence as to the usage of the expression agrees with this.

But there is nothing in the Book that has the slightest connection with Sunday. There is no conceivable reason why John should have received this revelation on that or on any other particular day. The day of the week has no more relation to the great and solemn subject of the Book than the day of the month. Nor has it any bearing on the great issues contained in the expression itself.

And, why the day of the week more than the day of the month, or the year? The latter would seem to be much more important for us to know than the day. The expression should be one which would explain itself, and explain the book to us: and not one which needs explaining, as it does if it be merely a day of the week. And it does explain the Book: for when John was taken by the Spirit into the scenes of the Day of the Lord, no wonder the words immediately follow (in the same verse): “And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet”. This is exactly what John heard subsequently when he came to be in Heaven and saw the throne set for judgment (chap. iv. 1).

There was something in the call of that “great voice of a trumpet” that was suited to the judgment to which it was the summons: but it seems altogether trivial to associate it with a particular day of the week, whether “the first” or any other.

If we may be permitted to indulge, as others who oppose our view have done, in what seems “probable” or “natural”, then we may be allowed to say that the traditional view seems to be unworthy not only of this solemn Book, but of the God of the Bible.

Godet, who supports the traditional interpretation, is obliged to confess that the expression “the Lord’s Day”, as meaning a day of the week, so far from having become usual in John’s day, “is of purely Christian origin, belonging to the Ecclesiastical and technical language of later times”.

And Dr. Deismann, Professor of New Testament Exegesis, Heidelberg, while admitting that the traditional view “has much to be said in its favour”, yet, is compelled to add: “Usually Rev. i. 10 is cited as the earliest instance; but the article before κυριακῆ, and the connection, both favour the interpretation according to which ‘the Day of the Lord’ here stands for the Day of Yaweh [Jehovah], the Day of Judgment; in the Septuagint ‘ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου’; also in the New Testament, as in Rev. vi. 17; xvi. 14: the Great Day. This view is supported by a weighty minority of scholars”. Among that minority, led by such a scholar as Wetstein, in 1753, we are content to be found. Truth does not rest upon the names borne by individuals, or upon their number, but entirely upon the weight and the value of the evidence which they bring.

The issue is brought down to the narrowest possible limits. On the one side we have the *Biblical* usage; and on the other side we have what Godet calls “the *ecclesiastical usage of later times*”. We have to choose between these two. But, in such an issue, it will be agreed by all, there is really no choice. In the one case, we are to believe that John used the expression, “the Lord’s DAY”, according to its Biblical usage—“the Day of the Lord”; and, in the other case, we are asked to believe that John merely *anticipated* by some eighty years the “ecclesiastical language of later times”. And, what is more, we are asked to believe that, without a word of warning, the Holy Spirit forsook His own invariable usage in the Old Testament, and adopted another, so strange that no reader could have possibly under-

stood it; and that He Himself went out of His way to anticipate a usage which, as we have seen, arose from quite another reason, connected with the Pagan term, *dies Domini Solis, dies Dominica*, or the Sun's-day.

We turn with relief to the Word of God, and accept, for ourselves, a verdict in harmony with the depth of its teaching, and the height of its dignity. We are thankful for a solution, worthy alike both of that Word and of its Divine Author; a solution which associates the Visions shown to St. John with the great Day in which their grand and solemn fulfilment will take place.