

Sunday and the Organization of Freedom in Late Roman Law and Early Medieval Liturgy

Introduction

Sunday as a day free from work is an innovation in Roman culture dating to the reign of Constantine.¹ Constantine's active involvement in the development of a special day in the week is generally seen as a contribution to the social and religious organization of freedom.² The earliest administrative efforts to single out one day in the week in the early fourth century are found in legal documents directly related to Constantine. Central are the two constitutions issued in the year 321 and transmitted in the *Codex Justinianus* and *Codex Theodosianus*, both defining the *dies solis* as a day free from work.³ In the course of the fourth century, Constantine's successors continued to set apart the 'Day of the Sun' as a day free from public obligations, while gradually shifting the focus from *dies solis* to more biblical indications of this special day of the week, particularly *dies dominica* and 'Day of Resurrection.' This shift in focus with regard to the title and, thereby, the religious character of the special day of Christians is also reflected in the presentation of the first day of the week in the writings of contemporary

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- 1 Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, pp. 163–64; Girardet, 'Vom Sonnen-Tag zum Sonntag', pp. 279–80, with further bibliography. This article was written within the framework of the NWO VICI-project *Citizenship Discourses in the Early Middle Ages, 400–1100* (NWO VICI Rose 277–30-002, 2017–2022). I am grateful to Uta Heil and the participants in the conference that took place in Vienna, October 2019, as well as to Gerard Rouwhorst, Merel de Bruin, Robert Flierman, and Megan Welton for their insightful comments.
 - 2 For a summary of scholarly discussions about Constantine's possible motives to select the *dies solis* as a special day, see Girardet, 'Vom Sonnen-Tag zum Sonntag', pp. 285–88, with extensive further bibliography. See also Rouwhorst, 'The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath', pp. 263–64.
 - 3 *Codex Justinianus*, ed. by Krueger, III. 12. 2 (321), p. 248 and *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, II. 8. 1 (321), p. 87, see further below.

Els Rose (h.g.e.rose@uu.nl), is Professor of Late and Medieval Latin at Utrecht University. She is the project leader of the NWO VICI project *Citizenship Discourses in the Early Middle Ages* (2017–2022).

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ecclesiastical authors.⁴ Their intention is especially to frame a special day in the week to express a singular Christian identity, distinguishable from Jewish and pagan customs, as we will see in the first section of the present chapter.⁵

A second element associated with Constantine's definition of the *dies solis* is the purpose of the instituted free time, meant to facilitate and promote worship. This element is first and foremost brought forward by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*. It is likewise reflected by the later fourth-century legal regulations expressed by Constantine's successors. The organization of a day of rest and free for worship is strengthened and broadened in the early medieval Merovingian royal decrees and ecclesiastical canons, as we will see in the second section of this chapter.

Finally, the liturgical celebration of Sunday as the 'Day of the Lord' and 'Day of the Resurrection' presents the question as to how the ritual approach to this day contributes to the celebration of freedom in a spiritual and theological sense, the theme of the third section of this chapter. The focus is on the early medieval West, where the earliest preserved Latin prayers for Sunday Masses, transmitted in seventh- and eighth-century liturgical prayer books, provide insight into Sunday as the ritual celebration and enactment of spiritual freedom.⁶

A Day Free from Work

Two constitutions issued by Constantine in the year 321, both addressed to the *uicarius urbis Romae* Helpidius, link the development of a special day of the week to this emperor. In his study of Constantine's policy with regard to the *dies solis*, Klaus Girardet assumes that the said constitutions are the second step in Constantine's attempt at organizing the 'Day of the Sun' as a day venerated with special honour. The constitutions of 321 do not so much formulate how citizens should refrain from work to rest on this day, but rather bring forward some exceptions to this rule, already prescribed in earlier issuances.⁷ The constitution incorporated in the *Codex Iustinianus* (III. 12. 2) distinguishes between different kinds of activity that must or must not be carried out on 'the venerable day of the sun' (*uenerabili die solis*). While rest is prescribed to legal officials and urban craftsmen (*quiescant*), farmers, on the other hand, must 'freely and lawfully' (*libere licenterque*) do the work that the season requires of them:

Omnes iudices urbanaeque plebes et artium officia cunctarum uenerabili die solis quiescant. Ruri tamen positi agrorum culturae libere licenterque

4 Johnson, 'The Apostolic Tradition', p. 62.

5 On Sabbath and Jewish identity, see Rouwhorst, 'The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath', p. 227.

6 This contribution focuses on Latin liturgical sources. For an introduction to the plurality of the meaning of Sunday in the Byzantine rite, see Taft, *Beyond East and West*, pp. 51–71.

7 Girardet, 'Vom Sonnen-Tag zum Sonntag', pp. 292–95. Cf. the contribution of Fritz Mitthof on this subject.

insueriant, quoniam frequenter euenit, ut non alio aptius die frumenta sulcis aut uineae scrobibus commendentur, ne occasione momenti pereat commoditas caelesti prouisione concessa.

(Let all judges and urban people and craftsmen rest on the venerable day of the sun. Farmers, however, should freely and without restraint work the soil, because it often occurs that there is no more fitting day to take care of the preparation of grain land or vineyard, lest by letting the moment go the favourable circumstances provided by heavenly providence be lost.⁸)

A distinction is made here between different levels of the need to reserve the *dies solis* for rest. One is to refrain from civic matters, another to continue agricultural activities that depend too much on season and climatic circumstances to be left undone.

The second constitution of 321, transmitted in the *Codex Theodosianus* (II. 8. 1), likewise specifies that legal affairs in general must rest on the festive day of the sun, giving room only to a number of specific legal interventions:

Sicut indignissimum uidebatur diem solis ueneratione sui celebrem altercantibus iurgis et noxiis partium contentionibus occupari, ita gratum ac iucundum est eo die quae sunt maxime uotiuia conpleri. Atque ideo emancipandi et manumittendi die festo cuncti licentiam habeant et super his rebus acta non prohibeantur.

(Just as it appears to us most unseemly that the day of the sun, which is celebrated on account of its own veneration, should be occupied with legal altercations and with noxious controversies of the litigation of contending parties, so it is pleasant and fitting that those acts which are especially desired shall be accomplished on that day. Therefore all men shall have the right to emancipate and manumit on this festive day, and the legal formalities thereof are not forbidden.⁹)

The constitution conveys how the festive 'Day of the Sun' (*diem solis ueneratione sui celebrem*) does not lend itself to legal activity in general. An exception must be made with regard to manumitting and emancipating, legal activities that are particularly fitting on this day. Constantine's efforts to link the Christian ritual space and clergy to the manumission of slaves go back to earlier laws, most notably those issued in 316 and 321.¹⁰ These legal utterances express how the church building became the suitable locus, the ecclesiastical clergy the legitimate

8 *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. by Krueger, III. 12. 2 (321), p. 248.

9 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, II. 8. 1 (321), p. 87; trans. by Pharr, p. 44.

10 Lenski, 'Constantine and Slavery', pp. 247–49.

witnesses, and the ritual moment of Sunday Mass the appropriate setting to set slaves free and grant them Roman citizenship.¹¹

While the *dies solis* became a relevant day to liberate slaves during Constantine's reign, the early fifth-century emperors Honorius and Theodosius II framed this day as 'the Day of the Lord' (*omnibus dominicis diebus*) and defined it as a day fitting to give prisoners special attention (*Codex Theodosianus* IX. 3. 7, [409]).¹² Even if prisoners were released from their yoke only temporarily, the call for judges to inspect the conditions in prisons and to bring the captives out of prison so that they could share in (Christian) charity and bathe can likewise be seen as an expression of Sunday as a day of freedom. Just as with manumission of slaves, this care for prisoners is placed under the supervision of the Christian clergy.¹³

While Constantine's constitutions focused primarily on the day of the sun as a day free from (certain kinds of) public activity, his successors in the later fourth century combined these constrictive measures with a ban on specific forms of public entertainment, often directly linked to the city. The constitution issued in Constantinople by Valentinian II, Theodosius I, and Arcadius in 392 (*Codex Theodosianus* II. 8. 20) prohibits races and other forms of public games on the 'Day of the Sun' (*festis solis diebus*).¹⁴ Seven years later, in the same city, theatrical plays and horse races are forbidden on the *die dominico* (*Codex Theodosianus* II. 8. 23, [399]). The lawgivers comment on this indication of the day, which it has received due to its very sanctity (*ex ipsa reuerentia*).¹⁵ Honorius and Theodosius II then issue a constitution in 409 (*Codex Theodosianus* II. 8. 25) prohibiting all entertainment (*uoluptates*) on the 'Day of the Lord' (*dominica die*), which is commonly (*uulgo*) called '[Day] of the Sun'.¹⁶

In a constitution issued by Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I in 386, freedom from legal disputes and public cases is then linked to a call to worship on this special day, 'Solis die, quem dominicum rite dixere maiores'

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- 11 Lenski, 'Constantine and Slavery', pp. 247–52; Girardet, 'Vom Sonnen-Tag zum Sonntag', pp. 291–95. The custom to liberate slaves in church is still found in the early medieval West until at least the eighth century, see Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, p. 565.
- 12 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, IX. 3. 7 (409), pp. 442–43. The legal constitution is paralleled by the narrative-spiritual tradition giving prisoners in hell respite from punishment on the 'Day of the Resurrection', as expressed in the *Visio Sancti Pauli* (ed. by Silverstein, p. 147: 'in die qua resurrexi a mortuis dono uobis omnibus qui in poenis estis noctem et diem dominice refrigerium in perpetuum') and, probably from there, in the tradition of the Sunday Letter from Heaven: Haines, *Sunday Observance*, pp. 60–61.
- 13 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, IX. 3. 7 (409), pp. 442–43: 'Nec deerit antistitum Christianae religionis cura laudabilis, quae ad obseruationem constituti iudicis hanc ingerat monitionem.' Fabbrini interprets *antistes* as a word that in this context might also refer to a priest rather than exclusively to the bishop: Fabbrini, *La manumissio in ecclesia*, p. 54 n. 17; Lenski, 'Constantine and Slavery', p. 250 n. 47.
- 14 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, II. 8. 20 (392), p. 88.
- 15 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, II. 8. 23 (399), p. 89.
- 16 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, II. 8. 25 (409), p. 89.

(rightfully called Day of the Lord by our predecessors) (*Codex Theodosianus* II. 8. 18, [386]).¹⁷ The lawgivers consider all those unwilling to observe the ‘sanctae religionis instinctu rituuē’ (inspiration and celebration of the sacred cult)¹⁸ not only as ‘infamous’ (*notabiles*), but also as ‘sacrilegious’ (*sacrilegi*).

The emperors define here the *dies solis* with the help of terms that referred to Christ (*dies dominica*), as a day without work that benefits the organization of worship. The Christianization of Sunday terminology¹⁹ is a measure of the Christianization of the ‘Day of the Sun’, which increasingly becomes a process of ritualization too. Though this is not a linear process with only one possible outcome, imperial constitutions did contribute to the attempts to ban the term *dies solis*, rejecting it as ‘popular usage’ in the constitution of 409.

Interestingly, a similar phenomenon is visible in the work of contemporary ecclesiastical authors. Here as well, the Christian appropriation of the first day of the week through the choice of terminology that refers to a Christian content of the day (*dies dominica*, *dies resurrectionis*) is linked to an accentuation of Sunday as the day set apart for worship in the gathering of the cultic assembly. In this context, it is important to observe that the notion of *dies solis* did not entirely disappear from Christian usage, but was taken up polemically by early Latin authors. Even if it had a positive connotation for some authors mainly through association with Malachi 4. 2,²⁰ the term *dies solis* is considered as pagan usage, typical of ‘the men of this world’. This stance is found in an anonymous treatise on Easter Sunday, attributed to Jerome. Taking together Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension in one sacrament celebrated on the same day,²¹ the treatise polemicizes with Jews, pagans, and heretics:

17 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, II. 8. 18 (386), p. 87.

18 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen and Meyer, II. 8. 18 (386), p. 87.

19 On (the Christianization of) Sunday vocabulary, see Girardet, ‘Vom Sonnen-Tag zum Sonntag’, pp. 280–82; Rouwhorst, ‘The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath’, pp. 264–65.

20 Malachi 4. 2: ‘Et orietur uobis timentibus nomen meum sol iustitiae, et sanitas in pennis ejus: et egrediemini, et salietis sicut uituli de armento’ (‘But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall’, New Revised Standard Version). A positive association is present, e.g., in Maximus of Turin, who uses the pagan indication *dies solis* (*ab hominibus saeculi*) as a stepping stone to the biblical ‘sun of righteousness’. Maximus of Turin, *Sermones*, ed. by Mutzenbecher, serm. 44. 1, p. 178: ‘Dominica enim nobis ideo uenerabilis est atque sollempnis, quia in ea saluator uelut sol oriens discussis infernorum tenebris luce resurrectionis emicuit; ac propterea ipsa dies ab hominibus saeculi dies solis uocatur, quod ortus eam sol iustitiae Christus inluminet’.

21 As had been the custom with regard to the celebration of Easter until the fourth century, see Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 232 n. 85; on the development of the celebration of Christ’s ascension on the fortieth day after Easter, see Talley, *Origins*, pp. 66–70.

quid mirabilius esse potest istiusmodi sacramento? quid hac die felicius, in qua dominus iudaeis mortuus est, et nobis reuixit: in qua synagogae occubuit, et est ortus ecclesiae: in qua nos omnes fecit secum resurgere et uiuere et sedere in caelestibus, impletumque est illud quod ipse dixit in euangelio 'cum autem exaltatus fuero, omnia traham ad me'? haec est uere dies quam fecit dominus: exsulemus et laetemur in ea. omnes quidem dies fecit dominus: sed ceteri dies possunt et iudaeorum esse, possunt et haereticorum esse, possunt esse gentilium. dies dominica, dies resurrectionis, dies xpistianorum, dies nostra est. unde et dominica dicitur: quia dominus in ea uictor ascendit ad patrem. quod si a gentilibus dies solis uocatur, et nos hoc libentissime confitemur: hodie enim lux mundi orta est, hodie sol iustitiae ortus est, in cuius pennis est sanitas. numquid sol pennas habet? respondeant iudaei, et qui tantum secundum litteram scripturas intellegunt similes iudaeorum. nos autem dicimus: quicumque sub alis istius solis fuerit, qui dixit in euangelio 'quotiens uolui congregare filios tuos quasi gallina pullos suos sub alas, et noluisti?' iste securus erit ab accipitre diabolo, sub aquilis uolantibus in iezechiele, et omnia peccatorum illius uulnera sanabuntur.²²

What can be more miraculous than precisely this sacrament? What can be more felicitous than this day, in which the Lord died for the Jews and lived again for us; in which he died for the synagogue and was born for the Church; in which he made us all resurrect, and live, and sit in heaven with him, and [on which] this word is fulfilled that he spoke himself in the Gospel: 'When I shall be exalted, I shall pull all creation with me' [cf. John 12. 32–33]? This is truly the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it [Psalm 117. 24]. Indeed, the Lord made all days; but the other days can be also of the Jews, and of the heretics, and of the Gentiles. The day of the Lord, the day of the resurrection, the day of the Christians, that is our day. Hence it is called 'of the Lord': because on this day the Lord ascended as victor to the Father. And if this is called 'Day of the Sun' by the Gentiles, we are eager to confirm this: for today the light of the world [John 8. 12; 9. 5] is born, today the sun of righteousness is born, with healing in its wings [cf. Malachi 4. 2]. 'Surely the sun has no wings?' the Jews may answer, as well as those who understand Scripture only literally, as the Jews do. We however say: Whoever shall be under the wings of this Sun, who says in the Gospel: 'How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!' [Matthew 23. 37], he shall be safe from that hawk the devil, under the eagles flying in Ezechiel [cf. Ezechiel 17], and all the wounds of his sins shall be cured.

With regard to Jews, the treatise polemically defines the day of Easter Sunday as the day of Christ's death for the Jews (*Iudaeis/synagogae*) and of his renewed life for Christians (*nobis/ecclesiae*). Referring to Psalm 117 (118). 24 ('This is the day that the Lord has made'), the text acknowledges that God 'made all days'; but while all days of the week are 'of the Jews, of the pagans, and the heretics', Sunday, being the day 'of the Lord, of the resurrection', is 'our day' (*dies nostra est*), the special day of Christians. The notion 'Day of the Lord' (*dominica*) is rightfully referred to as *dies solis* by the Gentiles, as this treatise asserts. To clarify this, there is a reference to the birth of *lux mundi* (John 8. 12; 9. 5) and the aforementioned verse in Malachi: 'Today, the sun of righteousness is born, with healing in its wings' (Malachi 4. 2).²³ Through a polemic analysis of the literal versus the spiritual reading of the second half of this verse ('with healing in its wings'), the text returns to the beginning of the digression on the exclusively Christian ownership of Sunday as the day of the Lord, the day of the resurrection, 'our day'. Only in the *spiritual* understanding of the wings of Christ the Sun redemption is found. This interpretation also underlines the salvific character of (Easter) Sunday as *dies dominica*, to which we will return later in this chapter. We will now consider the second form of freedom organized by the Christianization of Sunday: freedom for worship.

Freedom for Worship

While the legal tradition emphasizes Constantine's effort to advance a day of rest set free from work (except for work that benefits either humans or the soil), emphasis on the organization of freedom to worship is found in the biographical tradition concerning Constantine. In book IV of Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, the singling out of a special day of the week to organize free time (*σχολή*)²⁴ has a specific purpose. The free time is earmarked: it is meant to favour participation in worship. Eusebius opens his comments on Constantine's organization of Sunday by stating that the 'Καὶ ἡμέραν δ' εὐχῶν [ἡγειῖσθαι κατάλληλον] τὴν κυρίαν ἀληθῶς καὶ πρώτην ὄντως κυριακὴν τε καὶ σωτήριον [διετύπου]' (truly sovereign and really first day, the day of the Lord and Saviour) was to be reserved for

22 *In die dominica Paschae II*, ed. by Morin, pp. 548–51.

23 Other authors, both before and after Jerome, are less lenient on the pagan terminology *dies solis*. Philastrius of Brescia (330–397), for example, considers it a heresy to state that God ordered the days as *solis, lunae*, etc. Philastrius emphasizes that God called the days by numbers, as is described in Genesis 1: *primus, secundus*, etc., thereby suggesting 'first day' as the suitable Christian indication of Sunday; Philastrius of Brescia, *Diversarum hereseon liber*, ed. by Heylen, 113, p. 279. In a remarkable turn of roles, Gregory of Tours calls it 'barbaric' to use the indication *dies solis* for 'the Day of the Lord': Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, III. 15, p. 113: 'sic enim barbaries vocitare diem dominicum consueta est'.

24 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. by Winkelmann, IV. 18. 2, p. 126. See for the historical context the analysis of Fritz Mitthof in this volume.

prayer.²⁵ *Vita Constantini* iv. 18. 3 states that the σχολή imposed by the emperor is meant to offer those ‘in the faith’ the possibility of attending church.²⁶ In Eusebius’s account, the people addressed by this call to participate in worship are ‘τοῖς ὑπὸ τῆ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ δῆμοις τε καὶ στρατιωτικοῖς’ (all those under Roman rule, both civilian and military).²⁷ Eusebius describes how these civil and military servants were organized as ‘a church of God’, characterizing them as ‘constituting a church’ under the supervision of the emperor himself.²⁸ Constantine’s organization of free time for worship, at least in Eusebius’s presentation, is not a general call for participation, but singles out one or two specific groups to carry out the ritual office, as a ‘ritual elite’.

As we have already seen in the previous section, it is difficult to separate freedom for worship and time free from work. When the first day is set apart for worship, this regulation at the same time imposes time free from work. It is often stressed that this freedom promoted by Constantine embarrassed Christians, who found a specific legitimization of their own religious existence in the fact that their practice *differed* from the Jewish Sabbath practice.²⁹ Gregory of Tours in the later sixth century still feels the need to emphasize that the Christian holy day of the week is the *first day*, not the seventh ‘as many think’ (*sicut multi putant*), because Christ’s resurrection took place on the first day, the day of the creation of light (Genesis 1. 3).³⁰ Only reluctantly did Christians come to

25 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. by Winkelmann, iv. 18. 1, p. 126; trans. by Cameron and Hall, p. 159.

26 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. by Winkelmann, iv. 18. 3, pp. 126–27: τοῖς μὲν τῆς ἐνθέου μετέχουσι πιστεως ἀκαλύτως τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ προσκαρτερεῖν μετεδίδου σχολῆς; trans. by Cameron and Hall, p. 159.

27 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. by Winkelmann, iv. 23, p. 128; trans. by Cameron and Hall, p. 161.

28 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. by Winkelmann, iv. 17, p. 126: ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ [...] ἐκκλησιαζομένων; trans. by Cameron and Hall, p. 159.

29 On this, see Rouwhorst, ‘The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath’, with bibliography for the earliest four centuries. Monastic authors (Jerome, Benedict) highlight the virtue of monks and nuns being assiduous in work also on Sundays (Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 165; see the contribution of Andreas Müller in this volume), and Ephrem the Syrian is translated by Rordorf as saying ‘Der ruhende Mensch begeht Sünden, denen die Arbeit ein Ende setzt’ (Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 167). Martin of Braga is the first to make explicit what kinds of servile labour (an Old Testament concept) are prohibited on Sundays (Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 170 n. 22). According to Rordorf, the growing equation of Sunday and Sabbath values and laws is a Carolingian development (p. 170). See on this also the Third Council of Orléans (538), explicitly declaring ‘licensed’ those indoor activities that some forbid on Sundays, in order to distinguish Christian from Jewish practice: Council of Orléans III (538), in *Concilia Galliae a. 314–506*, ed. by Munier, can. 31 (28), p. 125: ‘quae res ad Iudaicam magis quam ad Christeanam obseruantiam pertinere probatur’. Cf. the contributions of Mischa Meier and Ian Wood on these canons.

30 Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, i. 23, p. 18. Egeria’s account, on the other hand, might cause confusion when she states in 24. 8 that ‘the seventh day is the Day of the Lord’: Egeria, *Itinerarium*, ed. by Franceschini and Weber, p. 69: ‘Septima autem die, id est dominica die, ante pullorum cantum colliget se omnis multitudo quecumque esse potest in eo loco, ac si per Pascha in basilica, quae est loco iuxta Anastasim, foras tamen, ubi luminaria pro hoc ipsud pendent’. See, however, the note to the translation by McGowan and Bradshaw, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, p. 152 n. 8, suggesting that ‘Egeria calls Sunday the seventh day only because she has just been

include 'Sabbath' characteristics in their own observance of Sunday, transferring the holiness and rest of the *seventh day* to the first day of the week.³¹

In a further attempt to demarcate a proper Christian identity, Old Testament references to the *first day* as a special day were read christologically. In the Old Testament, the first day is highlighted as the day of the creation of light, as we saw above. It is also the day on which the first manna was provided in the desert — at least, in Origen's interpretation of Exodus 16. The biblical account nowhere explicitly mentions the first day as the day on which the people of Israel received this heavenly food for the first time, only that after six days, no manna appeared on the seventh. From this Origen draws the conclusion that the first manna must have appeared on the first day.³² Origen interprets 'our (Day) of the Lord' in relation to 'the Sabbath of the Jews' (*uolo comparare dominicam nostram cum sabbato Iudaeorum*), highlighting the significance of the first day through a spiritual interpretation of manna as 'the word of God'.³³ Thanks to the typological manna, the first day is singled out as the day to enjoy this heavenly food (*caelestia eloquia*).³⁴ The step to a typological interpretation of manna as prefiguring the Eucharist is a small one and is made by the late fourth-century, probably Roman, Ambrosiaster, who speaks of manna as 'a *typus* of the spiritual food' (*typus escae spiritalis*).³⁵

A third biblical element interpreted christologically to legitimize the first day as the Christian holy day is the fact that circumcision took place on the *eighth day*. The Christian appropriation of this part of Jewish law is inspired by Luke 2. 21, which recounts the circumcision and naming of the baby Jesus on the eighth

speaking about the preceding six days and not because it was a regular designation for that day' I am grateful to Gerard Rouwhorst and Harald Buchinger for their help in interpreting this passage.

- 31 e.g., Gaudentius of Brescia, *Tractatus XXI*, ed. by Glück, tract. 10. 1, p. 92, defining the first day as equal to the seventh day because it is a day of rest; see also tract. 10. 13 and tract. 10. 14. A detailed study of this issue, taking into account different groups of early Christians, cannot be given here, but see Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, pp. 178–79; Rouwhorst, 'The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath', pp. 262–63; Rouwhorst, 'Ritual Interactions', p. 177.
- 32 Origen, *In Exodum homiliae*, ed. by Baehrens, hom. 7. 5, p. 211: 'Sabbatum autem septima dies est. Quaero ergo, qua die coeperit manna coelitus dari, et uolo comparare dominicam nostram cum sabbato Iudaeorum. Ex diuinis namque scripturis apparet quod in die dominica primo in terris datum est manna. Si enim, ut Scriptura dicit, sex diebus continuis collectum est, septima autem die, quae est sabbati, cessatum est, sine dubio initium eius a die prima, quae est dies dominica, fuit'. See also the contribution of Günter Stemberger on Origen at pp. 101–04.
- 33 Origen, *In Exodum homiliae*, ed. by Baehrens, hom. 7. 5, p. 211: '[...] panis coelestis, qui est sermo Dei [...]':
- 34 Origen, *In Exodum homiliae*, ed. by Baehrens, hom. 7. 5, p. 211: 'In nostra autem dominica die semper Dominus pluit manna de coelo. Sed et hodie ego dico quia pluit Dominus manna de coelo. Coelestia namque sunt eloquia ista, quae nobis lecta sunt, et a Deo descenderunt uerba, quae nobis recitata sunt'. Caesarius of Arles in the sixth-century copies Origen's image of *diuina eloquia*: Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones*, ed. by Morin, serm. 102. 3, p. 422.
- 35 Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. by Souter, quaest. 95. 3, p. 169: 'manna autem typus est escae spiritalis, quae resurrectione domini ueritas facta est in eucharistiae mysterio'; see also Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 168.

day (*postquam consummati sunt dies octo*). Cyprian is an early Latin witness of a christological interpretation of circumcision as marking the *octauuus dies*, both the eighth and the first day, as a day of salvation.³⁶ Ambrosiaster makes this even more explicit. Christ was circumcised on the eighth day, i.e. the first day of the second week after his birth. Christ's circumcision on the eighth = the first day typifies salvation through his resurrection on the first day; the law of circumcision (*in circumcissionis lege*) is the figura of redemption in Christ.³⁷

As Willy Rordorf has emphasized, the sixth century stands out for its acceptance and furtherance of freedom from work on Sunday, a day set apart for worship.³⁸ In the post-Roman world, however, a day of rest to be free for worship is no longer restricted to specific groups in society, such as the military and civil servants under Constantine.³⁹ What is new in the councils and royal decrees of the Visigoths and of Merovingian Gaul is the universality of their address, which defines the rules and regulations of Sunday rest for *all*, regardless of religious or ethnic identity and including all social classes.⁴⁰ The call to observe the liturgical service for which Sunday is set free is similarly universal. This is made explicit in the decree issued by the Merovingian king Guntram in 585, who expects the entire people (*uniuersae plebis coniunctio*) to attend church every Sunday (*in omnibus diebus dominicis*), as well as on other religious feast days.⁴¹ In the same year, the Council of Mâcon describes the value and meaning of Sunday worship in a canon addressed to all Christians (*Omnes itaque christiani*).⁴² Compared to

36 Cyprian, *Epistulae*, ed. by Diercks, ep. 64. 4. 3, 422–23: ‘Nam quod in Iudaica circumcissione carnali octauus dies obseruabatur, sacramentum est in umbra atque imagine ante praemissum, sed ueniente Christo ueritate completum. Nam quia octauus dies, id est post sabbatum primus, dies futurus erat quo dominus resurgeret et nos uiuificaret et circumcissionem nobis spiritalem daret, hic dies octauus, id est post sabbatum primus et dominicus, praecessit in imagine. Quae imago cessauit superueniente postmodum ueritate et data nobis spiritali circumcissione.’

37 Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. by Souter, quaest. 29, p. 57: ‘Quia enim salus futura per Christum in primo die erat praedestinata, qui dominicus ideo dicitur, quia in eo resurrexit dominus, qui est post sabbatum, propterea salutis huius figura in circumcissione data est, ut quasi renouatio futura in circumcissionis lege dinosceretur.’ On circumcision and the eighth = the first day, see also Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, pp. 272–73.

38 Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p. 170 n. 22; also Rouwhorst, ‘The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath’, p. 262.

39 On the transformation and development of Roman law in the post-Roman world, see Esders and Reimitz, ‘Legalizing Ethnicity’.

40 Council of Narbonne (589), in *Concilia Galliae a. 511–695*, ed. by de Clercq, can. 4, pp. 254–55: ‘Vt omnis homo, tam ingenuus quam seruus, ghotus, romanus, sirus, grecus uel iudeus, die dominico nullam operam faciant, nec uobes (read: boues) iungantur, excepto si inmutandi necessitas incubuerit. Quod si quisque presumpserit facere, si ingenuus est, det comiti ciuitatis solidos sex; si seruus, centum flagella suscipiat.’

41 *Guntrami regis edictum* (585), ed. by Boretius, p. 11: ‘Idcirco huius decreti ac definitionis generalis uigore decernimus, ut in omnibus diebus dominicis, in quibus sanctae resurrectionis mysterium ueneramus, uel in quibuscunq[ue] reliquis solemnitatibus, quando ex more ad ueneranda templorum oracula uniuersae plebis inuinctio deuotionis congregatur studio, praeter quod ad uictum praeparari conuenit, ab omni corporali opere suspendatur nec ulla causarum praecipue iurgia moueantur.’ See also Rose, ‘*Plebs sancta*’.

42 Council of Mâcon II (585), in *Concilia aevi Merovingicae*, ed. by Maassen, can. 1, p. 165.

the Roman tendency to single out a military and civil elite, the Merovingian Franks include all believers (*omnes christiani*) in the call to Sunday worship. The boundaries of the ritual nucleus of society are now drawn between Christians and non-Christians. The call for Sunday observance gets an even more concrete expression in the fourth canon of this same council, where it is stipulated that 'on all Sundays, an altar sacrifice must be offered by all men and women, consisting in both bread and wine. For through these gifts they will be freed from the bonds of their sins'.⁴³ What does this universality of the call to worship mean and how is it further interpreted in the liturgical celebration of Sunday as freedom? This will be the topic of the final section.

Spiritual Freedom and Liturgical Celebration

The royal decrees and ecclesiastical councils of the early post-Roman world are important intermediaries transmitting to the medieval world the idea of singling out Sunday as a day free from work, as we have already seen in some examples from sixth-century Gaul.⁴⁴ We also saw that the Merovingian councils extended the range of people affected by Sunday observance. In this the councils moved a step forward, as we will discuss now, further defining the spiritual meaning and performance of Sunday rest.

The early sixth-century Council of Agde, held in 506 under the chairmanship of Caesarius of Arles,⁴⁵ makes clear that the freedom of Sunday rest goes further than only rest from work. The council underlines the *spiritual* freedom that Sunday represents and conveys, first, in the breaking of the fast, even on the Sundays of Lent.⁴⁶ The second aspect of spiritual freedom, likewise expressed bodily and with similarly ancient roots, is the omission on Sundays of the genuflections

43 Council of Mâcon II (585), in *Concilia aevi Merovingicae*, ed. by Maassen, can. 4, p. 166: 'ut per has immolationes et peccatorum suorum fascibus careant'. On the offering of homemade bread in Merovingian and Carolingian Francia, see Rose, *The Gothic Missal*, pp. 71–74; McKitterick, *The Frankish Church*, p. 144.

44 For further study of early medieval councils on this matter, see the contribution of Ian Wood to this volume.

45 Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, pp. 97–104.

46 Concilium Agathense (506), *Concilia Galliae a. 314–506*, ed. by Munier, can. 12, p. 200: 'Placuit etiam ut omnes ecclesiae <filii> exceptis diebus dominicis, in quadragesima etiam die sabbati, sacerdotali ordinatione et districtionis comminatione ieiunent'. Klingshirn reads Caesarius in the phrase *ecclesiae filii*, 'a favorite phrase' in the work of the bishop of Arles (Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, p. 101). In the sermons Klingshirn refers to (134. 3, 201. 1, 230. 5), it is clear that the faithful are meant by this phrase, not the clergy. In serm. 230, e.g., the bishop is addressed as responsible for the flock he is called to pasture (Caesarius, *Sermones*, ed. by Morin, serm. 230, p. 913). The earlier *Statuta ecclesiastica antiqua* (c. 475) describes fasting on Sundays as an act that disqualifies one as a non-catholicus: *Statuta ecclesiastica antiqua*, in *Concilia Galliae a. 314–506*, ed. by Munier, can. 77, p. 178: 'qui dominico die studiose ieiunat non credatur catholicus'; see also Munier, *Statuta*, pp. 127 and 144. For a dating of the *statuta*, see Pricoco, 'Gennadius of Marseilles'.

customary during the liturgical ritual. According to many patristic authors, this day calls for an upright posture in prayer.⁴⁷ Thus, Sunday embodies freedom and symbolically breaks the bonds of slavery. The ban on fasting and genuflecting on Sunday (*nefas ducimus*) goes back to Tertullian⁴⁸ and occurs in other early Latin authors as well. Egeria points to the duration of Lent, during which Sundays (and *sabbato*) are excluded from fasting.⁴⁹ Augustine speaks of fasting on Sundays as *scandalum*,⁵⁰ and Caesarius of Arles explicitly exempts Lenten Sundays from fasting.⁵¹ The specific posture of prayer on Sundays, formalized in the Council of Nicaea (325),⁵² is referred to by many patristic authors. Cassian carefully indicates the time span for which this physical freedom is valid: from Saturday Vespers to Sunday Vespers, and during the entire Eastertide.⁵³ Isidore interprets this posture within the context of Sunday as the celebration of Christ's resurrection, representing the hope of future resurrection of all the faithful.⁵⁴

Another expression of a spiritual deepening of Sunday rest is found in the hagiographic tradition of the death of a saint on a Sunday. Gregory of Tours emphasizes that Martin of Tours died deservedly on a Sunday because of the saint's faithful observance of the 'Day of the Lord'. Gregory sees the saint's demise on a Sunday as a clear sign of a 'glorious and praiseworthy death', taking place on the same day on which Christ rose from the dead and granting the saint a place in the eternal rest.⁵⁵ The topos of the saint completing his or her perfect life on a Sunday has earlier roots. It can be seen as an expression

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- 47 'The early Christian fathers made much of the contrast between the two postures of standing and kneeling', Haselock, 'Posture', p. 378.
- 48 Tertullian, *De corona*, ed. by Fontaine, 3. 4, p. 67: 'Die dominico ieiunium nefas ducimus, uel de geniculis adorare.'
- 49 Egeria, *Itinerarium*, ed. by Franceschini and Weber, 27. 1, p. 73: 'Propterea autem octo septimane attenduntur, quia dominicis diebus et sabbato non ieiunantur'. On the (eastern and western) early Christian traditions that included Saturday in the exemption from fasting, see Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, pp. 183–85; Rouwhorst, 'The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath', pp. 231 and 255–57.
- 50 Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. by Goldbacher, ep. 36. 5, p. 39: 'dominico die, in quo scandalum est ieiunare.'
- 51 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones*, ed. by Morin, serm. 199. 1, p. 803.
- 52 Council of Nicaea (325), in *Concilia oecumenica*, ed. by Tanner, can. 20, p. 16: 'Quoniam sunt quidam in die dominico genu flectentes et in diebus pentecostes: ut omnia in uniuersis locis consonanter obseruentur, placuit sancto concilio stantes Domino uota persolvere.'
- 53 John Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, ed. by Petschenig, II. 17, p. 17: 'Quod a uespera sabbati usque ad uesperam diei dominici genua non flectantur nec totis diebus Quinquagesimae.'
- 54 Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, I. 24 (*De dominica die*), p. 27: 'Nam sicut ipse dominus Iesus Christus et saluator noster tertia die resurrexit a mortuis, ita et nos resurrecturos in nouissimo saeculo speramus. Vnde etiam in dominico die stantes oramus quod est signum futurae resurrectionis.'
- 55 Gregory of Tours, *Libri IV de virtutibus sancti Martini*, ed. by Krusch, I. 3, pp. 139–40: 'Gloriosum ergo et toto mundo laudabilem eius transitum die dominica fuisse, manifestissimum est, idque in sequenti certis testimoniis conprobamus. Quod non parui meriti fuisse censetur, ut illa die eum Dominus in paradiso susciperet, qua idem Redemptor et dominus uictor ab inferis surrexisset; et, ut qui dominica solemnia semper celebrauerat inpollutae, post mundi pressuras dominica die locaretur in requie.'

of the 'Paschal dimension' ascribed to martyrdom and sainthood in the early Christian centuries.⁵⁶ Just as Sunday represents the resurrection by celebrating it, the saint embodies Christ's Passion and Resurrection in his or her perfection of life through martyrdom. Martin is not the only saint-not-martyr to whom this special honour of dying on a Sunday is granted. We see the *topos* occurring much earlier, e.g., in the second-century (Greek) apocryphal *Acts of John*, circulating in Latin as the *Virtutes Iohannis* from at least the sixth century onwards. In this narrative John, aged ninety-seven, is called in a vision by Christ to join the heavenly banquet. When John is about to follow this invitation immediately, Christ tells him to wait for the following 'Sunday, the day of my resurrection' (*Dominica resurrectionis meae die*).⁵⁷ After this intervention, John's peaceful death takes place in the immediate aftermath of a final celebration of the Eucharist (*mysteria dei*),⁵⁸ preceded by a lengthy address to the faithful. Sunday is indicated as the day of demise of other biblical saints about whom the Bible is silent, most notably the Virgin Mary.⁵⁹

Sunday, as it is presented in these sources, is a day free from work, including the labour of fasting, of a servile physical posture during liturgical celebrations and prayer, and, ultimately, of the labour of earthly life itself. In the following, we shall see how freedom from work on the 'Day of the Lord' is linked to the liturgical celebration of freedom in the commemoration of Christ's resurrection. Before we turn to liturgical sources *stricto sensu*, let us reconsider the already cited Council of Mâcon (585) to see in more detail how it links Sunday freedom from work and freedom for worship with the theological meaning of Sunday. The first canon, written as an *epistola sinodalis* (synodal letter), articulates Sunday as a special day and calls for its observance: 'Custodite diem Dominicam, quae nos denuo peperit et a peccatis omnibus liberavit' (Preserve the Day of the Lord, which created us anew, and which liberated (*liberavit*) us from all sins).⁶⁰ Sunday (*dies dominica*) is here defined not only as the day to commemorate redemption and liberation, but is itself an agent of liberation. All kinds of work, from legal disputes to work that involves the yoking of animals, are prohibited.

56 Auf der Maur and Harnoncourt, *Feiern*, p. 267.

57 *Virtutes Iohannis*, ed. by Junod and Kaestli, 9, p. 827: 'Cum esset annorum nonaginta septem, apparuit ei dominus Iesus Christus cum discipulis suis et dixit ei: "Veni ad me, quia tempus est ut epuleris in conuiuio meo cum fratribus tuis". Surgens autem Iohannes coepit ire, sed dominus dixit: "Dominica resurrectionis meae die, quae post quinque dies futura est, ita uenies ad me".'

58 *Virtutes Iohannis*, ed. by Junod and Kaestli, 9, p. 828: 'Veniente itaque die dominica [...] a primo pullorum cantu agens mysteria dei [...]'; 9, p. 829: 'Et cum complisset orationem, petiit autem sibi dari panem, respexit ad caelum et benedixit eum.'

59 Her death on a Sunday is presented in various representations of the *Transitus Mariae* tradition. In the Greek text attributed to Pseudo-John, dated between the fourth and the sixth century, it is stated in chapter 37 that all 'miraculous' events in the lives of Mary and Christ took place on a Sunday: Annunciation (although this is placed on a Friday in the same text, chapter 3), Christ's Birth, Palm Sunday, Resurrection, Last Judgement, Mary's Dormition): *Dormitio Mariae*, ed. by Mimouni, p. 183.

60 Council of Mâcon II (585), in *Concilia aevi Merovingicae*, ed. by Maassen, can. 1, p. 165.

Instead, 'Estote omnes in himnis et laudibus Dei animo corporeque intenti' (Let all (*omnes*) be involved in hymns and praises to God, with the devotion of soul and body).⁶¹

This canon stands out because of the intrinsic relation between the organization of freedom in a normative context, on the one hand, and the liturgical celebration of the day, on the other. Sunday is to be held in high esteem because it is the day that liberates from sin. Quoting Paul's letter to the Romans, in 6. 20 (*Cum enim serui essetis peccati, liberi fuistis iustitiae*),⁶² the canon emphasizes the transformation of former slaves of sin into sons of righteousness, which is presented by Paul as a direct consequence of baptism and participation in Christ's resurrection. This divine intervention deserves, according to the bishops gathered at Mâcon, a 'free servitude' (*liberam seruitutem*) as 'it made us free from the burden of sin' (*cuius nos nouimus pietate de ergastulis liberatos erroris*). The essence of the first day is expressed in terms of *libertas*. Originally the day par excellence to set free and manumit in order to obtain Roman citizenship,⁶³ it is now expressed in theological terms as emancipation of 'slaves of sin' to re-created 'sons of righteousness' in order to inherit heavenly citizenship.⁶⁴

Now that the link between *libertas* and liturgical Sunday observance has become so apparent, the question arises how the liturgy of the time itself celebrated freedom. To that end, I analyse here two coherent sets of Sunday Masses, collected in Merovingian liturgical sources. The first, comprising six Sunday Masses, is found in the so-called *Missale Gothicum*, a cathedral sacramentary composed in the final decades of the seventh century and probably used in the episcopal church of Autun.⁶⁵ The second series, including five Sunday Masses, is in the so-called *Missale Bobbiense*, containing not only prayers but, more comprehensively, also readings for Mass and some pastoral-didactic material. The latter book, dated to the first half of the eighth century, was probably made for a priest in a less urbanized pastoral setting.⁶⁶ The liturgical tradition of Frankish Gaul is known for its elaborate prayers that pay ample attention to the specific character of the day. If this is true for the highlights on the festive calendar, both with regard to temporale feasts and saints' feasts,⁶⁷ what specific themes mark Sunday in this same tradition?

The notion of freedom in the sense of spiritual freedom from sin, as expressed by the Second Council of Mâcon, is found in the Sunday Epistle, Romans 6. 12–18 (third Sunday Mass in the Bobbio Missal⁶⁸), and in the

61 Council of Mâcon II (585), in *Concilia aevi Merovingicae*, ed. by Maassen, can. 1, p. 165.

62 Council of Mâcon II (585), in *Concilia aevi Merovingicae*, ed. by Maassen, can. 1, p. 165.

63 See n. 11.

64 The semantic relationship between *libertas/liber/liberare* and *hereditas/heres* (in its eschatological meaning) is studied by Kressin, *Hereditas*, part. pp. 56–59.

65 Rose, *The Gothic Missal*, pp. 13–16.

66 Hen and Meens, eds, *The Bobbio Missal*.

67 Rose, *The Gothic Missal*, p. 58.

68 *Missale Bobbiense*, ed. by Lowe, 463, p. 139: 'serui peccati, liberati a peccato serui facti estis iusticiae.'

prefatio of the first Sunday Mass in the Bobbio Missal.⁶⁹ In Romans 6. 14, Paul presents grace as the substitute for the law. Being no longer subject to the law (*sub lege*) but to grace (*sub gratia*), Christians are free from sin and have become ‘instruments of righteousness’ (Romans 6. 13). The Christian paradox of liberation through a new servitude is expressed in the notion of ‘slaves of righteousness’ (Romans 6. 18), and ‘being subject to grace.’ This is formulated even more concisely in the concept of ‘free servitude’ (*liberam seruitutem*) that we observed above in the Mâcon council.

The paradoxical concept of *libera seruitus* is first introduced by Ambrose, presenting this free servitude as a voluntary serfdom, inspired by one’s inner spirit, not imposed by force.⁷⁰ The paradox is further elaborated by Augustine, identifying *caritas* as its driving force as opposed to *necessitas*,⁷¹ and by Fulgentius of Ruspe in North Africa, who describes it as a road to eternal freedom (*ut ad libertatem perueniamus aeternam*), also linking servitude to mutual love (*caritas*).⁷² Like Augustine, Cassiodorus brings in the concept in relation to the call in Psalm 99 to serve the Lord with gladness (*seruite domino in laetitia*). In Cassiodorus’s exegesis, the focus is on *laetitia*, along with mutual love, as the source of this servitude.⁷³

An elaborate reflection on the notions of freedom, slavery, free slavery, and enslaved freedom is found in Peter of Ravenna’s (c. 380–451) first two sermons on the prodigal son.⁷⁴ In his first *sermo*, Peter starts to reflect on the son’s departure from home. Leaving the father, the son loses not only his home (*domus*) but also his fatherland (*patria*), virtue, piety, and freedom (*quod morum, quod pietatis, quod libertatis [...] nil reliquit*). He, the former citizen, becomes a stranger, the former free man becomes a slave (*in peregrinum ciuem [...] liberum*

69 *Missale Bobbiense*, ed. by Lowe, 449, pp. 133–34: ‘[...] ut liberi ab infestacione inimici seruiamus tibi.’

70 Ambrose, *Epistulae*, ed. by Faller, ep. 20. 3, p. 147: ‘Verum est et seruitus libera, quae est uoluntaria, de qua apostolus ait: Qui liber uocatus est, seruus est Christi. Haec est seruitus ex animo, non ex necessitate.’

71 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, ed. by Dekkers and Fraipont, ps. 99. 7, p. 1397: ‘Libera seruitus est apud dominum; libera seruitus, ubi non necessitas, sed caritas seruit. Vos, inquit, in libertatem uocati estis, fratres: tantum ne libertatem in occasionem carnis detis; sed per caritatem spiritus seruite inuicem.’

72 Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Epistulae*, ed. by Fraipont, ep. 3. 2, p. 213: ‘Propter quod apostolus, ut ad libertatem perueniamus aeternam, seruitutem liberam inuicem Christi membris imperat exhibendam, dicens: uos enim in libertatem uocati estis, fratres; tantum, ne libertatem in occasionem carnis detis, sed per caritatem seruite inuicem.’

73 Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmodum*, ed. by Adriaen, ps. 99. 2, pp. 888–89: ‘O libera seruitus! O seruitium supra cunctas dominationes eximium, quibus talis laetitia tribuitur, qualis in regnorum gloria non habetur! sed istam laetitiam quae in hoc mundo praecipitur, uide quale praemium subsequatur. Dicit enim: intrate in conspectu eius in exultatione.’

74 Petrus Chrysologus, bishop of Ravenna, left a series of five sermons on this parable: Ristuccia, ‘Law and Legal Documents’, p. 139.

mutauit in seruum). Opposed to this alienation, the former situation at home with the father is expressed in poignant paradoxes:

Est penes patrem dulcis conditio, libera seruitus, absoluta custodia, timor laetus, blanda ultio, paupertas diues, secunda possessio.

(In the presence of the father is a condition of life that is sweet, free servitude [*libera seruitus*], custody without bonds [*absoluta custodia*], fear full of delight, tender punishment, rich poverty, secure possession.⁷⁵)

In Peter's second sermon on the same parable, the notion of free servitude recurs in the bishop's focus on the son's return to the father. The son repents and returns, willing to serve his father as a mercenary, 'Et hoc petit, quia qui penes extraneum seruam senserat libertatem, penes patrem credit sibi futuram liberam seruitutem' (because he had sensed in his stay in foreign parts the slavery of freedom, while with the father he believes there will be for him free enslavement).⁷⁶

A second stage in the liberation from slavery, also linked to Paul's letter to the Romans (8. 14–23), is found in the prayer of sacrifice in the fifth Sunday Mass of the Gothic Missal (Go 525). This time the state of slavery is lifted, not to be substituted by another slavery but to be replaced by a filial state. The faithful become 'sons' through adoption, receiving a spirit of freedom instead of a spirit of slavery (Romans 8. 15):⁷⁷

Immolacio. Dignum et iustum est, aequum et iustum est nos tibi hic et ubique semper gratias agere, domine, sancte pater, omnipotens aeternae deus. Qui nobis pietate pater es, cum dominus potestate permanes, quoniam quos origo fecerat seruos, adoptare dignatus es in filios et quos generacio terrena dimiserat in mortem, regeneracio caelestis erexit ad uitam.

(It is worthy and just, fair and just that we here and everywhere always bring thanks to you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God. For through your love you are a Father for us, while through your power you remain our Lord, for you deigned to *adopt as children* [Romans 8. 15] those whom their origin had made slaves, and heavenly

75 Petrus Chrysologus, *Sermones*, ed. by Olivar, serm. 1. 4, p. 17. Ristuccia comments on the legal meaning of *custodia* in the Roman context, referring to the father as the son's guardian and keeper of his inheritance. Ristuccia, 'Law and Legal Documents', p. 139 n. 85.

76 Petrus Chrysologus, *Sermones*, ed. by Olivar, serm. 2. 4, p. 24. On further occurrences of the phrase *libera seruitus*, see Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicorum libri II*, ed. by Parroni, I. 23. 4, p. 27; Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. by Adriaen, XXIV. 11. 26, p. 1205; XXXIV. 21. 40, p. 1762. An application of the phrase to the position of a wife in submission to her husband is emphasized by Jerome, *Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Titum*, ed. by Bucchi, 2. 3–5, p. 45, copied by Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, II. 20. 14, p. 95.

77 On the relation between 'spirit' and 'adoption', see Lewis, *Paul's Spirit of Adoption*.

rebirth raised up to life those whom their earthly birth had plunged into death.⁷⁸)

The filial-paternal metaphor in Peter of Ravenna's sermons helps to interpret this freedom as part of the Christian paradox. Since sons were, in the Roman legal tradition, submitted to the authority of the *paterfamilias*,⁷⁹ a 'spirit of adoption' made a son not merely free, but submitted him in a state of *libera seruitus* to the father. Only after the father's death did privileges (and duties) pass on to the son. This is expressed in the exhortation to prayer in the sixth Sunday Mass of the Gothic Missal (532), where related Pauline discourse is expressed in terms of the faithful sharing in the divine heritage:

Multiplicibus innixi uinculis dilectorum, fratres karissimi, ad singularem confugiamus absolucionis diuinae remedium et humiliati in sacrificium dominum dipraecimor, quem cotidie prauis inamaricamus operibus, qualiter nos sua protegente dextera ab omni contagione ereptus regnorum caelestium heredis efficiat.

(Most beloved brothers, entangled in numerous bonds of sins, let us take refuge in the singular remedy of divine absolution, and through [this] sacrifice let us humbly pray to the Lord, who we daily embitter through our bad deeds, that, rescued from all contagion by the protection of his right hand, he makes us heirs of the heavenly kingdom.⁸⁰)

While the references to emancipation from slavery to a state of sonship do not use the lexeme *libertas* as such, explicit mention of the term does occur in the Collect *post secreta* in the first and, in terms of number of prayers, most elaborate Sunday Mass of the Gothic Missal (483). The brief *post secreta* (Collect after the consecration⁸¹) focuses entirely on the performative force of the Eucharistic offering:

Post secreta. Ostende omnipotens deus gratiam, agnusce doctrinam, tu es mysterium pro salutem, tu praecium. Doce perseueranciam cum docueris disciplinam, ut in hac oblacionem nos liberis, qui pro occidentibus et moreris.

(Show [us] grace, almighty God, teach [us] your doctrine, [for] you are the sacred teaching that brings us salvation, you are the ransom. Teach us perseverance where you have taught us doctrine, so that you deliver us

78 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 525, pp. 539–40; trans. by Rose, 302. The orthography given in the quotes here follows the manuscript and is explained further in the edition.

79 Lewis, 'Slavery, Family, and Status'.

80 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 532, p. 541; trans. by Rose, p. 304.

81 Rose, *The Gothic Missal*, pp. 60–61.

[*nos liberis*] through this oblation [*in hac oblationem*], you who also die for mortals.⁸²)

The mystery of salvation entails Christ as ransom (*tu praecium*). Liberation is established through (*in*) the performance of the Eucharistic sacrifice, representing Christ's passion.

Finally, the Collect of the fifth Sunday Mass in the Gothic Missal (522) identifies the source of Christian belief as a source of freedom. The prayer asks for liberation (*absolue*) from the company of evil and evil-doers, and from the bonds of sin. Christian doctrine (*eruditor*), to which the faithful submit in hope (*in te sperancium*), procures access to a trustworthy, secure freedom (*tuta libertas*):

Colleccio. Deus, in te sperancium misericors eruditor, ab omni nos consorcio prauitatis absolue nec ullis nos iniquitatum uinculis paciariis adstringi, ut unde nobis est tota pietas, inde sit tuta libertas.

(God, merciful teacher of those who seek refuge in you, release us from all fellowship of evil, and may you not allow that we are bound by any bond of iniquity, so that whence is full love for us, thence is also freedom without danger.⁸³)

A specific set of prayers thematizing *libertas* in the context of Sunday Masses consists of the embolisms in the *Pater noster*.⁸⁴ These varying additions to the Lord's prayer, introduced by the stock phrase *libera nos ab omni male*, do not always elaborate on freedom. In the Gothic Missal,⁸⁵ only two of the six prayers do so by specifying the kinds of vices the faithful pray to be freed from (third and fifth Sunday Mass). These include 'temptation, offence (*scandalum*), heresy, works of darkness',⁸⁶ and 'present and future evil, perils (*periculis*), infirmities'.⁸⁷

When we move away from the weekly Sunday Masses to Easter as the annual celebration of the first day,⁸⁸ the frequency of the notion of *libertas* in Paschal prayers stands out. Relevant examples include the Collect for the third day of the Easter week in the Gothic Missal (288), where adoption is explicitly combined with *libertas*:

82 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 483, p. 530; trans. by Rose, p. 294.

83 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 522, p. 539; trans. by Rose, p. 302.

84 Rose, *The Gothic Missal*, p. 62.

85 The Sunday Masses in the Bobbio Missal do not contain this specific prayer.

86 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 507, p. 536; trans. by Rose, p. 299.

87 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 529, p. 540; trans. by Rose, p. 303.

88 On the relationship between the development of an annual Easter celebration and a weekly Sunday observance, see Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, pp. 179–82; Johnson, 'The Apostolic Tradition', p. 62; with regard specifically to the Easter lucernarium and its relation to (daily) cathedral Vespers, see Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, p. 37.

Colleccio. Omnipotens sempiterne deus, per quem nobis redemcio praestatur et adopcio, respice in opera pietatis tuae et quae dignatus es conferre, conserua, ut in Christo renatis aeterna tribuatur hereditas et uera libertas.

(Almighty and everlasting God through whom redemption and adoption is given to us, look upon the works of your love and preserve what you deigned to give, that to those reborn in Christ may be given eternal inheritance and true liberty.⁸⁹)

Salvation (*redemcio*) is expressed, again, in terms of the Pauline discourse on adoption and inheritance. The works (*opera*) of redemption, once accomplished, need confirmation and preservation (*conserua*), so as to give the participants in the Easter celebration a share in the eternal inheritance and, thereby, 'true freedom' (*uera libertas*). The Sunday readings that we considered above (of which the Mâcon canon is an echo) are also discernible in the Easter prayers.

Two other examples of Easter prayers in the Gothic Missal focus on liberation through salvation as celebrated in this festive period. Thus, the Collect in the Mass for Thursday of Easter week juxtaposes freedom and salvation as the products of God's creative act (*et libertatis nostrae auctor et salutis*):

Colleccio. Deus, qui et libertatis nostrae auctor es et salutis, exaudi supplicancium uoces atque eos, quos sanguinis tui effusione redimisti, praesta, ut per te uiuere et perpetua in te facias incolomitate gaudire.

(God, who is the Author of our freedom and salvation, hear the voices of those who make supplication to you, and grant that they whom you redeemed by the outpouring of your blood may live through you and rejoice in you with perpetual immunity.⁹⁰)

In the grand *contestatio* of the Saturday concluding the first week of Easter in the Gothic Missal, freedom is imagined more concretely in the sense of the breaking of the bonds of hell, where Christ is presented as the 'marvellous king' who makes 'the multitude of believers rejoice over the signs of freedom (*libertatis insignia*):⁹¹ The prayer, as the entire Mass formula at the end of the Easter Octave, is an elaborate recapitulation of the Easter themes, evoking anew the awe and force of the descent into hell, the victory over death, and the old enemy crushed. With their explicit use of the term *libertas*, the annually performed Paschal prayers make clear how Easter procures freedom, just as Sunday does this through a weekly celebration.⁹²

89 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 288, p. 461; trans. by Rose, p. 230.

90 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 298, p. 464; trans. by Rose, p. 233.

91 *Missale Gothicum*, ed. by Rose, 311, p. 468: 'Rex mirabilis Christe cuius condemnatione tartareis uinculis absoluta credencium turba libertatis insignia gratulatur.'

92 See also Rouwhorst, 'The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath', pp. 265–66.

Conclusion

Three forms of freedom related to the late Roman and early medieval development of the Christian Sunday were studied in this chapter: freedom from work, freedom for worship, and spiritual freedom. Studying the history of Sunday through the lens of freedom brings into focus a new understanding of this first day of the week as developed in legal and liturgical sources in discernible stages throughout Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The late Roman imperial organization of a day free from work on the 'Day of the Sun' is first and foremost an attempt to organize a weekly day of rest. On this special day of the week, free time for worship is promoted, while freedom to accomplish public work and attend public entertainment is restricted. In a second stage, the focus of the special day shifts away from (the cult of) the sun (*dies solis*) towards the commemoration of the biblical first day, Christianized as the Day of the Resurrection and, hence, the Day of the Lord (*dies dominica*). The various accentuations of freedom, present in both legal and liturgical sources, emphasize freedom from (physical, material, or spiritual) work, as well as freedom to participate in worship. These two aspects are closely intertwined and cannot be studied separately.

In early Christian theological sources, freedom is first and foremost understood spiritually, and is linked to freedom defined as redemption, brought about by Christ's resurrection. Sunday is the special day that commemorates this resurrection; it is the day 'of the Lord' and therefore, in a strong definition of Christian identity, 'our day', as we saw in the works of Origen and the Easter treatise.

In early medieval church councils and decrees issued by the new post-Roman rulers, the line set out by Constantine and his successors is maintained, extended, and deepened. In the Merovingian decrees and canons, a spiritual understanding of Sunday as the celebration of freedom understood within the Christian frame of salvation is immediately linked to the social organization of rest from work. At the same time, the call to refrain from work on Sundays is extended to all. Rather than a 'ritual elite', now 'all Christians', regardless of social status or ethnic origin are included in the call to worship. The liturgical expression of freedom is based on this community. Freedom is now defined as deliverance from sin and performed in the Eucharist as the heart of the communal Sunday assembly.

Studying Sunday through the lens of freedom brings into focus the performative strength of the first day of the week in its Christian conceptualization. Sunday is an example of the way ancient Roman concepts like *libertas* were filled with new, radically changed meanings. Sunday is not only celebrated through the performance of the liturgical cult, but it is also believed to effect-

ate freedom. As the prime liturgical representation of the resurrection,⁹³ the day of the creation of light and the heavenly food that typifies the Eucharist, Sunday brings about freedom as understood within the Christian framework of salvation, i.e., liberation from sin. The Christian paradox that substitutes slavery to sin with submission to grace stands out in this performative understanding of Sunday freedom. The performative strength of Sunday procuring spiritual freedom through redemption is rooted in the communal celebration of the Sunday liturgy to which these sources testify and is thus necessarily based on a general obedience to Sunday rest from labour.

⁹³ Sunday is the most explicit reference to rest and resurrection, as Augustine phrases it in *Ennarationes in psalmos*, ed. by Dekkers and Fraipont, ps. 150. 1, p. 2191: 'in illo enim obseruatur sabbatum, quod significat quietem: in isto dominicus dies, qui significat resurrectionem.'

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