

The Apocryphal Sunday in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

1. Hypotheses: The Christian Sunday as a day of rest is one central identity marker of a society shaped by Christianity. However, the development of a Christian Sunday culture took several centuries until the early Middle Ages, although already in 321 AD, Constantine had decreed a law to rest on the sacred Sun-Day. One reason was probably an intentional distancing from both Jewish Sabbath observation and beliefs in pagan *Tagwählerei* (unlucky days) and comparable astrological practices. Later on, when this anti-pagan issue diminished, and when pagan cults and calendars lost importance, a Sunday observance and veneration emerged as one element among other aspects of Christianization and sacralization of the Christian society in Late Antiquity, including holy places and holy people. Especially the sixth century seemed to be an important “watershed” in this respect, when new apocryphal literature and pseudepigraphy dealing with the Sunday was produced. The elevation of Sunday reflected a unification of feasts that were formerly variously celebrated within different social and religious groups.
2. Innovation: This estimation above is a first suggestion because the history of Sunday veneration after Constantine is a completely neglected subject in research. In addition, former studies rely on now obsolete decline theories of church life and theology (Legalism, Judaization, Germanization). New insights into the process of Christianization of the Romans Empire, the relationship between East and West and the centuries of the Migration Period have to be taken as the basis for understanding the emergence of Sunday veneration.
3. Methods: To broaden the evidence on Sunday veneration, three main strategies are used: data base research, biblical reference research and manuscript network analysis. In addition, papyri and inscriptions are relevant as a kind of “social data.” The project relies on the scientific historical-critical analysis of the sources, based on the new theory of “Intersectionality.” Adjacent fields will be included on the basis of interdisciplinary workshops and presentations. The aim is a) develop the new tool “Calendar Online of Late Antiquity” (COLA), b) to edit a volume including the organized papers of the international conferences as well as of the workshops, c) to publish a monograph on *The Apocryphal Sunday in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, and d) to present a new critical edition of the *Didaskalia of Jesus Christ*, an important apocalyptic-apocryphal text related to Sunday veneration (6th century).
4. Main Researchers: Main researcher is Uta Heil, together with two prae-doc positions. Cooperation partners are: Jörg Rüpke, Erfurt; Michele René Salzman, University of California at Riverside; Sofie Remijnsen, University of Amsterdam; Günter Stemberger, Wien; Claudia Rapp, Wien; Maximilian Diesenberger, Wien and Stefan Schima, Wien.