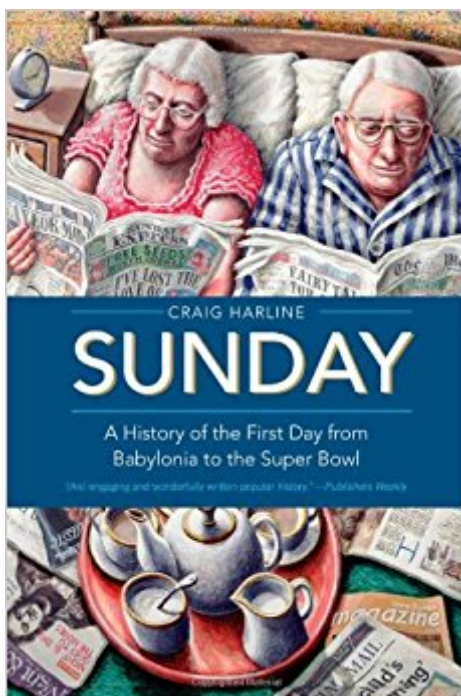


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# Sunday: A History Of The First Day From Babylonia To The Super Bowl



## Synopsis

The mere mention of "Sunday" will immediately conjure up a rich mix of memories, associations, and ideas for most anyone of any age. Whatever we think of—be it attending church, reading a bulky newspaper, eating brunch, or watching football—Sunday occupies a unique place in Western civilization. But how did we come to have a day with such a singular set of traditions? Here, historian Craig Harline examines Sunday from its ancient beginnings to contemporary America in a fascinating blend of stories and analysis. For the earliest Christians, the first day of the week was a time to celebrate the liturgy, to observe the Resurrection, and work. But over time, Sunday in the Western world took on still other meanings and rituals, especially in the addition of both rest and recreation to the day's activities. Harline illuminates these changes in enlightening profiles of Sunday in medieval Catholic England, Sunday in the Reformation, and Sunday in nineteenth-century France—home of the most envied and sometimes despised Sunday of the modern world. He continues with moving portraits of soldiers and civilians trying to observe Sunday during World War I, examines the quiet Sunday of England in the 1930s, and concludes with the convergence of various European traditions in the American Sunday, which also adds some distinctly original habits of its own, such as in the realms of commerce and professional sports. With engaging prose and scholarly integrity, Sunday is an entertaining and long-overdue look at a significant hallmark of Western culture.

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Harline, an acclaimed historian and author of *A Bishop's Tale*, adopts a brilliant day-in-the-life strategy to explore the history of the Christian Sabbath in various cultures and times. Rather than attempting a sweeping and methodically exhaustive approach, Harline investigates the topic episodically, portraying, for example, a medieval English Sunday in one chapter, a decadent fin-de-siècle Parisian Sunday in another, and a 1950s American Sunday in the last and longest chapter. Along the way we also visit the earliest Roman Christians; a Dutch Reformed family in the 17th century; some battle-weary soldiers during World War I; and England again during the interwar years. Harline is a marvelous storyteller, combing the diaries, popular periodicals and letters of the various periods to bring the people and their times to life. There are some surprising revelations; until the fifth century, Sunday was a day of worship but also one of work, as early Christian leaders were anxious to distinguish it from the Jewish Sabbath. And Sunday has sometimes given rise to unlikely leisure pastimes: in Holland 400 years ago, it was the preferred day for courting; and in America today, it seems sacrosanct for professional sports. Harline's engaging and wonderfully written popular history deserves a wide readership. (Mar. 27) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sunday means different things to different people and different cultures. Some look forward to it, others dread it. In this delicious study of Sunday as a concept, Harline contrasts the various ways that Western cultures have looked on the seventh (or first) day of the week, emphasizing Sunday observances, not Sunday rules, especially in western Europe and the U.S. First, however, he examines the emergence of Sunday in the ancient Mediterranean before moving on to medieval and Catholic Europe. He examines a late-nineteenth-century French Sunday, when Parisians promenaded the broad avenues intending to be seen; a Belgian Sunday before the Great War; an English interwar Sunday, when churchgoing was important, but equally many chose to spend the time at home, while others went to the local pub; and the American Sunday of the 1950s, a time for watching sports, especially football and baseball, reading the Sunday paper, and viewing programs on that increasingly popular technological marvel, television. Fine popular social history for the general reader. June Sawyers Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This supports the notion that much of what we define as worship and a day of rest has little to do with either. In the broadest sense we must all define for ourselves what setting a day aside should

encompass. For me I find that a pause, thoughtful reflection, spiritual focus and no work provides the balance and "reset" I need.

Harline is an excellent historian and this book is another example of his thoughtful interpretation of the data available to historians.

Teaches more than just about Sunday, let's you put things in perspective. Explains how Christianity originated and got organised, which was revealing and interesting.

The "Sunday" book is very insightful. The author describes in excellent detail, the origins and traditions of Sunday worship, rituals, and transformations that have occurred in society over several centuries! A great read and a very comprehensive history of the Sabbath.

Interesting at times, but boring the rest of the time.

This is a worthy successor to Beckwith & Scott's *This is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday and its Jewish and Early Church Setting*. It portrays the flavour of Sundays as they were kept in different times and places through the eyes of real people who lived through them. The most lyrical chapter portrays Sunday in occupied Belgium during the Great War. That so many rules were made to preserve the sanctity of 'The Lord's Day' and that so many loopholes were found, suggests that it was always a controversial topic. For all that Christians railed against Jewish 'legalism', church leaders made just as many rules about what was allowed, what forbidden. Laws against Sunday markets had to be repeated often so they obviously happened a lot. Sermons were preached warning the faithful of thunderbolts and hellfire should they break the rules. The author is an engaging historian but I wish he had a theologian check his work. He mistakes St. John the Evangelist for St. John the Baptist, he assumes that All Saints Church Margaret Street, London is Roman Catholic whereas it is Anglican. Sports were seen as religious events in the ancient world but Christians have never been sure. Some famous athletes have refused to compete on Sundays but many liberal Christians and even the evangelist Billy Graham have endorsed Sunday sport, the latter portraying Jesus as being like a strong American male with square jaws. The Lord's Day observance Society is fighting a losing battle. They no longer appeal only to the Ten Commandments but garner support from trade unionists and others who want workers to enjoy family time. Thus their magazine quotes an insurance broker who argues that there is less car theft on Sundays because

even criminals want to spend time with their families. Yet the modern weekend, with leisure on Saturday and calm on Sunday is nothing new. There used to be a 'St. Monday'; Sunday was so busy for people that they had Monday off work to recover.

I thoroughly enjoyed Harline's book as he delves into the history and traditions of Sunday in the most refreshing way. Reading it deepened my understanding for many of the traditions that have evolved over the centuries. Sundays are meant to be enriching and rejuvenate our daily lives and that is exactly what this book did for me.

This is a really enjoyable journey through history. The author writes with subtle grace and an eye for the interesting details that make for a good story. It initially seemed an unlikely topic but it works quite well as a cultural, religious history of western civilization.

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