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# THIS IS THE DAY

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*The Biblical Doctrine of the  
Christian Sunday in its  
Jewish and Early  
Church Setting*

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ROGER T. BECKWITH  
*and*  
WILFRID STOTT

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*London*

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## Introduction

THE subject of this book is the origin and significance of the Christian Sunday, or Lord's Day, and it takes its title from Ps 118:24, which was so frequently applied to that day by the early Fathers. Sunday has been continuously observed by the church from the New Testament period onwards;<sup>1</sup> and since the year 321, when Constantine, the first Roman emperor to become a Christian, commanded his subjects to rest on Sunday, it has been protected in many Christian countries by legislation.<sup>2</sup>

The benefit that the institution of Sunday has brought to mankind is incalculable. Not only has the day itself been a standing witness to Christ's resurrection, but it has provided the church with its chief opportunity to meet for worship, teaching, and evangelism, and has provided the individual Christian and Christian family with their chief (though not, of course, their only) opportunity to spend time in prayer and Bible study at home. Again, it has safeguarded for all who work a regular occasion of rest, change, and refreshment from daily toil, when they can devote time to showing kindness to their family and their fellow men.

It was not until some years after the Reformation that Sunday became a matter of serious controversy among Christians. Different emphases, indeed, are found in the teaching of the Fathers, the mediaeval schoolmen, and the Reformers themselves. The differences between the Reformers have often been exaggerated, however, and for the most part they are not of a serious character. Luther,<sup>3</sup> Calvin,<sup>4</sup> Bullinger,<sup>5</sup> Bucer,<sup>6</sup> Peter Martyr,<sup>7</sup> and Jewel<sup>8</sup> were all agreed that the fourth commandment requires Christians to observe days of rest and worship, or sabbaths, and that Sunday is the chief means of fulfilling the requirement. They were not agreed whether it was by human or divine law that Sunday was selected for this purpose, and Calvin, who held that it was by human law, differed from the others named in denying that the commandment bound the church to the observance of precisely one day in every seven;<sup>9</sup> but they were unanimous that, for practical purposes, the ancient and agreed day of Sunday fulfilled the role of the Christian sabbath and must continue. It was this 'sabbatarian' view which was embodied by Jewel in the homily 'Of the Place and Time of

Prayer' in the Church of England's *Second Book of Homilies*, and the same view was endorsed by Richard Hooker,<sup>10</sup> elaborated by Nicholas Bownde,<sup>11</sup> and given classical expression in the Westminster Confession (1647); since when it has had a deep influence on life and thought in the English-speaking world, notably in England, Scotland, and the U.S.A. It has also had a following on the continent, where it was approved by the Synod of Dort (1619), and has been advocated, among others, by E. W. Hengstenberg<sup>12</sup> and Karl Barth.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, a radical view was adopted by Tyndale, who tended to deny any connection with the fourth commandment,<sup>14</sup> and his followers include Peter Heylyn,<sup>15</sup> J. A. Hessey<sup>16</sup> and, in our own day, Willy Rordorf.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, the two main views are not reconcilable, but it may be doubted whether positions would have polarised so far, or the conflict would have been so sharp, had it not been for the growing rivalry in the seventeenth century between Laudians and Puritans, and the tendency which both shared to a legalistic casuistry. The desire among Puritans to answer all cases of conscience about the Christian sabbath, and to exclude not only work but also innocent recreation,<sup>18</sup> was in doubtful harmony with the Pauline principle of Christian liberty and with the fact that the sabbath and the Lord's Day are joyful feasts. This is not to say that their main position was wrong: the aim of this book is to demonstrate that it was right.

The division of opinion which became traditional in the seventeenth century has been accentuated in our own day by the pressures of secularism upon the church. In 1962, after preparatory work on this volume had already begun, Willy Rordorf's book *Der Sonntag* was published in Switzerland, and showed very clearly what reaction to secular pressures could be expected from the non-sabbatarian school. The book has since been translated into English as *Sunday* (1968), and has rapidly become a standard work in the English-speaking world as well. The information it contains is very useful, and no attempt has been made to duplicate all of it here. Its main thesis, however, is open to the gravest doubt, and has had to be refuted in order to achieve the positive purposes of the present work, to trace the origin and expound the theology of the Christian Sunday.

According to Rordorf, the Lord's Day was originally the occasion on which the Lord's Supper was celebrated—hence its name. This alone is the essential activity of the day, and this is what the church must strive to maintain when Sunday again becomes an ordinary working day, as he expects it to do. Quite unlike the sabbath, which Christ

abolished, the Lord's Day was at first a day of worship, not a day of rest. More accurately, it was a day on which worship occurred, for only a small part of the day was devoted to worship, the Lord's Supper and any other act of worship being fitted in before or after the hours of daily work. Sunday became a day of rest only as a consequence of Constantine's decree in 321, which was not indeed biblical but pagan and political in its motivation, yet led to the development of sabbatarian conceptions in the church, and to a search for ways of occupying devotionally a day on which work had previously continued as usual. Such being the original character of the Lord's Day, the subsequent character of the day has no claim to be maintained.

Rordorf's thesis, as he himself recognises, has practical, not just theoretical, consequences. It allows him to take up an accommodating attitude towards modern secularism. Because he reduces the biblical basis for Sunday to the narrowest limits, severing all links with the fourth commandment, he is able to agree that it would not ultimately matter if the church had to squeeze in its services in the hours of darkness before and after a working day (as under conditions of persecution), or if humanitarian needs for rest had to be satisfied on some other day (which would probably mean different days for different people, even within the same family). Whether the Christian Sunday could have survived to the present day if this sort of attitude had prevailed among Christians in the past is extremely doubtful, and whether it will survive for future generations if this sort of attitude now becomes prevalent is equally uncertain. But we would not have felt justified in opposing Rordorf's thesis simply because of its practical consequences. What has made us feel obliged to oppose it is the conviction that it is theologically and historically unsound.

In answering Rordorf's thesis, appeal must first be made to the Bible. The present work attempts to set out the biblical evidence in its fullness, without any arbitrary deletion of awkward passages as 'late' or 'secondary', and to trace the parallels between the Lord's Day and the sabbath, not simply the differences. This is something that has often been done before. Two other tasks are also attempted, however, and in these, it is believed, the present work supplies something relatively unique. Certainly they are tasks which Rordorf performs in a very inadequate, not to say misleading, manner. One is to set the New Testament evidence against its full background in contemporary Judaism, distinguishing carefully between Jewish writings which are really early and those which are late. Thus, use is chiefly made of the

relevant material in pre-Christian works (Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Aristobulus, *Jubilees*), in first-century works (the Zadokite Document, Philo, Josephus) and in the earliest records of rabbinical tradition (*Megillath Taanith*, *Mishnah*, *Tosephta*, *Mekilta*, *baraitas*, i.e. extracts from older compilations, in the two *Talmuds*); and though there are perforce a few references to the main body of the *Jerusalem Talmud* and to *Beresith Rabbah*, which are of later date, and one to *Exodus Rabbah*, which is later still, nothing of moment is allowed to rest on these references alone.

The other task is to give a thorough and balanced account of the evidence of the Fathers about Sunday (both their theology and their practice), concentrating on the ante-Nicene Fathers, who date from between the New Testament and Constantine, and on the Syrian Fathers from outside the Roman Empire, and so from outside the sphere of Constantine's influence. By performing these two tasks one is taking precautions against interpreting the New Testament teaching about the sabbath and Sunday in an anachronistic way, and is also providing the means for knowing whether, in fact, the decree of Constantine did introduce anything new into Christian thought or practice, as Rordorf claims.

Our book, as the title page and contents page indicate, is a co-operative enterprise. The chapters on the biblical and Jewish evidence (chs. 1-4) are basically the work of one of the authors, Roger Beckwith, while the chapters on the evidence of the Fathers (chs. 5-13) are basically the work of the other author, Wilfrid Stott. However, each author has read and commented on all the material, and both have benefited from membership of the study group on 'Sunday' organised by the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research, Cambridge, to which the first four chapters were originally submitted. To the other members of the study group the authors express their sincere thanks. The patristic chapters took embryonic shape a good many years earlier, in an address to the Gloucester diocesan conference, and were afterwards developed into a thesis for an Oxford doctorate in philosophy, before being revised and condensed for their appearance here. The author of these latter chapters owes a deep debt of gratitude to the supervisor of his work on the thesis, Professor S. L. Greenslade, and has also received kind help on a number of points from Professor G. W. H. Lampe, Professor C. F. D. Moule, and the late Professor F. L. Cross.

PART I

*The Biblical and Jewish Evidence*

## Chapter 1

### The Memorial of the World's Creation

At the end of the account of the creation of the world with which the book of Genesis begins, we read:

On the seventh day God finished his work which he had made (or done); and he rested (Heb. *šābat*) on the seventh day from all his work which he had made (Gen. 2 : 2).

The story of the Old Testament sabbath therefore begins with the sabbath or repose of God after his work of creation. The following verse goes on to say:

And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it he rested (*šābat*) from all his work which God had created and made.

In what way God 'blessed' or 'sanctified' the seventh day, we are not told, but it is hard to give the words any meaning unless one understands them to imply that God forthwith appointed the day to be observed in some fashion by mankind, whom he had just created.<sup>1</sup> The fashion in which the day was appointed to be observed is explained in another part of the Pentateuch, in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue as recorded in Exod. 20 : 8-11, where reference is made to Gen. 2 : 2f, and the same words 'blessed' and 'sanctified' (Heb. *bārak* and *kādāš*) are used:

Remember the sabbath day to sanctify it. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son nor thy daughter, thy manservant nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger who is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it.

The seventh day, then, was 'blessed' and 'sanctified' to be a day of rest: indeed, by a significant variation of language we are told that it was not the seventh day but the 'sabbath' day (Heb. *šabbāt*, day of rest) which God blessed and sanctified at the creation. So what Gen. 2 : 2f. implies, when read in the light of this commentary supplied by Exodus, is that at the creation God commanded man to imitate his Maker by

'doing work' for six days and 'resting' on the seventh. Since man had been 'made in the image of God' (Gen. 1 : 26f.), imitation of his Maker was no inappropriate vocation. Man's work was to rule the animal creation and tend the vegetable creation (Gen. 1 : 26, 28; 2 : 15). And after his work, there followed rest.<sup>2</sup>

That this is what Gen. 2 means seems so apparent that it is somewhat surprising that there has been so much controversy about it over the centuries. Reluctance to agree that the sabbath goes back to the creation may be traced to various sources. Among the rabbis and the Fathers it seems to have been mainly due to the absence of explicit reference to sabbath-keeping by the patriarchs. In later times it seems to have been mainly due to fear of being brought into bondage through legalistic misinterpretations of the sabbath-rest, when applied to Sunday. In our own day it seems to be mainly due to doubt about the way the creation-narrative is to be interpreted in relation to scientific enquiry (though sometimes to a general agnosticism about the historicity of the Old Testament).

#### THE SABBATH IN THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

It is certainly true that there is no explicit reference to sabbath-keeping by the patriarchs. It is also true that there is no clear evidence for a sabbath or seven-day week in sources outside the Bible dating from the pre-Mosaic period: for if the sabbath goes back to creation, one might expect to find traces of it among many ancient peoples. Traces, indeed, there are, but not the institution in its fullness. As Willy Rordorf shows,<sup>3</sup> those who have tried to find the source from which Israel derived its seven-day week and sabbath in Babylonian or other non-Jewish cultures have failed. Yet the evidence to which these writers have appealed could well be the last relics of an earlier sabbath-institution, even if they are not sufficiently similar to deserve to be regarded as the formative origins of a later one. The 'Pentecontad Calendar', which Hildegard and Julius Lewy (followed by Julius Morgenstern) claim to have traced among Semitic peoples of Assyria, Babylonia, Syria, and Palestine from the end of the third millennium BC onwards, was an annual calendar to some extent at least based on periods of seven or eight days (Lewy, 'Origin', pp. 1-152); and it seems certain from the evidence quoted by Rordorf that the Babylonians divided the month into four parts, particularly distinguishing the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days, and called the full moon (round about the fourteenth day) *šapattū*. In neither of these cases is there a

continuous sequence of seven-day periods (the former being geared to a year of 365 days and the latter to a lunar month); nor is it certain that *šapattū* is etymologically connected with *šabbāt*, or likely that the full moon actually fell on the fourteenth day of the month; but the parallels do not appear to be imaginary, and could go back to a common source.

Be this as it may, one would not *necessarily* expect to find evidence of the preservation of a primeval sabbath among heathen peoples, but only among the faithful patriarchs. Even among these (and their descendants), the Bible makes no explicit reference to sabbath-keeping until Exod. 16. But this could mean either that the ordinance is so taken for granted that it is not mentioned (compare the absence of references to circumcision from the narrative books of the Old Testament after Joshua, and to the sabbath itself from the books between Deuteronomy and 2 Kings), or that for one reason or another it was not observed, although it had undoubtedly been instituted (compare the non-observance of circumcision in the wilderness, and the non-observance of the ceremony of booths for many centuries, Josh. 5: 2-9; Neh. 8: 17). The former explanation is the more likely one, since the existence of the seven-day week (probably implying the sabbath as the division between one week and the next) is reflected right through the book of Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus. Periods of seven days (counting exclusively) or eight days (counting inclusively) are repeatedly referred to (Gen. 7: 4, 10; 8: 10, 12; 17: 12; 21: 4; 31: 23; 50: 10; Exod. 7: 25; 12: 15f., 19; 13: 6f.), three being the only other number of days which occurs with comparable frequency; and in Gen. 29: 27f. technical reference seems to be made to a 'week'.<sup>4</sup>

When one does at length reach an explicit reference to the sabbath, in Exod. 16, it does not look like the first institution of the festival. The rule about the seventh day is there incidental to the directions about gathering the manna, and seems more like conformity to a pre-existing observance. The fourth commandment in Exod. 20 could more easily be the institution of the sabbath, but in the chronology of Exodus the events of Exod. 16 are undoubtedly earlier. And even if Exod. 20 is taken by itself, one must not ignore the fact that it represents the sabbath as a memorial of creation. Can it then be instituting the festival? It would surely be odd to be instituting a memorial of creation as late as the Exodus. It seems better therefore to see Exod. 16 and 20 not as imposing a new ordinance but as reiterating a much older one (that of Gen. 2, to which Exod. 20, as we have seen, refers),

in a manner comparable to the reiteration of the institution of circumcision in Exod. 4 and Lev. 12, long after its first institution in Gen. 17. Exod. 16 may indeed be the *revival* of the sabbath, as something *relatively* new, after its inevitable disuse during the Egyptian bondage. This would account for the absence of the article before 'sabbath' until v. 29, and for the mild treatment of sabbath-breaking in vv. 25-30, as contrasted with Num. 15 : 32-36.

How the patriarchs kept the sabbath is a subject on which speculation could easily run riot. In the nature of the case, if they did keep it, they kept it by resting. But is there any evidence, some will ask, that it was a day of worship as well as a day of rest? The answer to this is that the distinction is a false one: their very resting was worship. For on the sabbath they did not merely rest as they rested at night, involuntarily, to restore and refresh their powers of body and mind; on the sabbath they rested deliberately, in obedience to God's command, in commemoration of his creative work, and in imitation of his own rest at the end of that work. The day had been 'sanctified', and their resting was a holy sign. Such resting was worship not only in the figurative New Testament sense, according to which all obedience to God's will is spiritual worship, spiritual sacrifice; it was also worship in the formal and literal sense, according to which it consists of words or symbols used for the glory of God and the edification of man.<sup>5</sup>

This being so, it is quite credible that the day was used also for those other acts of worship which we know the patriarchs to have performed, and for which the release from normal tasks on the sabbath would give liberty. Some of the acts of worship by the patriarchs described in Genesis are purely personal or purely occasional, but their normal public worship (or household worship, for in the patriarchal age there is little distinction between the two), consists of prayer (Gen. 4 : 26; 12 : 8; 26 : 25), sacrifice (Gen. 12 : 8; 13 : 18; 26 : 25; 28 : 22; 33 : 20), and teaching (Gen. 18 : 19). That these acts were regularly performed on the sabbath, even if to some extent on other days also, seems entirely probable.

The second and third of the three difficulties, mentioned on p. 3, in the way of taking Gen. 2 : 3 at its face value, can be more briefly dealt with. The second is the legalistic manner in which some who emphasise the creation sabbath have applied the doctrine to Christian practice. This, of course, is no argument against the doctrine itself—it only seems to be. Legalism forgets that our Lord's own attitude to the sabbath was the reverse of legalistic, and that there is an important

sense in which Christians are free from the Law—not only from its penalty, but also from its obligation. Literal obedience to the detailed outward observances of the Law was seen by the first Christians as a burdensome yoke from which Christ had freed them (Acts 15 : 10), and as a middle wall of partition, hindering the conversion of the Gentiles, which Christ had broken down (Eph. 2 : 14f.). The New Testament stresses the fact that observance of the Law is summed up in love (Matt. 22 : 36-40; Rom. 13 : 8-10; Gal. 5 : 14), and that consequently the Christian is not bound to obey the Law literally except in so far as love of God and man binds him to do so. This 'fulfilment' of the Law makes very far-reaching demands on the Christian—greater demands, in fact, than the old literal interpretation made (Matt. 5 : 17-48); but they are demands which do not enslave the Christian but set him free, since they are accompanied by the gift of God's Spirit (Rom. 8 : 1-17). However, we must say more about this when we come to consider the Mosaic sabbath in the following chapter.

The third and last difficulty is doubt about the way the creation narrative is to be interpreted in relation to modern scientific enquiry. Is the creation narrative really speaking of literal days? If not, was it a literal day on which God rested and which he sanctified? This raises very large issues, but it is not necessary to decide how the creation narrative should be interpreted before answering the question whether God sanctified a literal day. The latter question is answered for us by the commentary on Gen. 2 : 3 which is provided in the fourth commandment, quoted earlier, where a literal day of rest is undoubtedly commanded, and where the reason given is that God sanctified the seventh day when he created the world. He may have appointed the literal day as being merely analogous to the figurative 'days' on which he himself worked and rested, but it was a literal day that he appointed, and he did appoint it at the creation. On this, the fourth commandment leaves us in no doubt.

#### THE SABBATH AS A CREATION-ORDINANCE

If the sabbath goes back to creation, and belongs to the nature of things as God intended them from the beginning, it stands on a different plane from the ordinances which originated in the Mosaic Law. These, as we have seen, are not necessarily binding in their literal sense on Christians, since they were not given to all mankind but to Israel only, and have now, with the coming of the gospel, been 'fulfilled'. The Mosaic Law, as Paul teaches in Gal. 3, was in one sense a parenthesis between

the age of the patriarchs and the age of the gospel. Yet even those features of revelation which are older than the Mosaic Law and belong to the age of the patriarchs have sometimes been fulfilled, and in the literal sense abolished, under the gospel: circumcision and ritual sacrifice (both prominent in the book of Genesis) are cases in point. The mark of a 'creation ordinance', as theologians call it, is not that it antedates the Law but that it begins with man's very creation. John Murray, in the chapter on 'Creation Ordinances' in his book *Principles of Conduct* distinguishes four such ordinances for mankind in the creation narrative: parenthood, marriage, the sabbath, and work. Each of them is instituted before the Fall (marriage in Gen. 1: 27; 2: 18-24, parenthood in Gen. 1: 28, work in Gen. 1: 26, 28; 2: 15, and the sabbath in Gen. 2: 3), and three of them are specifically endorsed, and attendant penalties imposed, when the Fall takes place (for marriage and parenthood, see Gen. 3: 16; and for work, Gen. 3: 17-19). The significance of the fact that marriage goes back to creation, and of the form in which it is found at creation, is emphasised by our Lord in Matt. 19: 3-9, where the parenthetical character of the Law again comes to the fore. 'Moses', he says, 'for the hardness of your hearts permitted you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so'. Another aspect of this ordinance is stressed by Paul. Since the woman was created 'from the man' (from his side) and 'for the man' (as a help meet for him), not the other way round, and since this subordination of the woman to the man was reiterated at the Fall (Gen. 3: 16), it should always have a place in human families and human society, he teaches (1 Cor. 11: 7-9; 14: 34; 1 Tim. 2: 11-14).<sup>6</sup> The unchanging validity of the other three creation ordinances is not so clearly stated in the New Testament, but what is true of one is presumably true of all, and in the case of the ordinance which most concerns us, the sabbath, its unchanging validity is probably implicit in our Lord's statement that 'the sabbath was made for man' (Mark. 2: 27), as we shall see later in this chapter. If so, there can be no grounds for doubting the immutability of the other two ordinances, since they clearly belong in pairs. The ordinance of parenthood belongs with the ordinance of marriage, and the ordinance of work with the ordinance of rest. The relationship between work and rest makes it significant also that the New Testament so insists on work as a Christian duty (Acts 20: 35; Eph. 4: 28; 1 Thess. 4: 11; 5: 14; 2 Thess. 3: 6-12; 1 Tim. 5: 13). If rest is a creation ordinance, presumably work is also. If work is a Christian duty, so, presumably, is rest.

#### THE PRIMEVAL SABBATH IN HELLENISTIC JUDAISM

The traditions of interpretation of the Old Testament which developed among the Jews in the intertestamental period, and are represented in surviving literature, can be broadly distinguished, according to language and origin, as Hellenistic or Alexandrian, and Semitic or Palestinian. The latter tradition can then be subdivided into the Pharisaic, Sadducean, and Essene streams. In some respects, the last three schools of thought seem to have had a lot more in common with each other than with Hellenistic Judaism, but it is easy to exaggerate the extent to which the latter diverged. Hellenistic literature was regarded with suspicion by many Pharisees; it sometimes showed great sympathy towards Greek philosophy; and some of its most distinguished representatives were ignorant of the Semitic languages. Yet this is only half the picture. Palestinian literature was eagerly translated into Greek at Alexandria by Jews who did understand Hebrew and Aramaic, and the Greek translations often found their way back into Palestine, where Greek was widely spoken, accompanied (no doubt) by original literature in the Greek language. In this Greek literature, the opinions of the Palestinian schools are frequently reflected; and conversely, the rabbinical literature sometimes reflects ideas which seem to have originated at Alexandria, as does the New Testament also. On the matter of the sabbath, it is characteristic of Hellenistic literature to view it as a creation ordinance, common to all men, and it is characteristic of Semitic literature (though with some qualifications) to view it as an ordinance peculiar to Israel. The New Testament treatment of the matter seems to owe quite as much to the Hellenistic tradition as to the Semitic.

One of the earliest Hellenistic theologians of whom anything is extant is the philosophically-minded Alexandrian writer Aristobulus, Philo's great predecessor, who in the second century BC produced an exposition of the Old Testament Law, fragments of which are preserved by Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius.<sup>7</sup> One of these fragments is concerned with the sabbath. Aristobulus writes:

With this it is closely connected, that God the creator of the whole world has also given us the seventh day as a rest, because for all men (*pasi*) life is full of troubles: which day indeed might naturally be called the first birth of light, whereby all things are beheld. The same thought might also be metaphorically applied in the case of wisdom, for from it all light proceeds . . . But more clearly and more beauti-

fully one of our fore-fathers, Solomon, said that it (i.e., Wisdom) has existed before heaven and earth; which indeed agrees with what has been said above. But what is clearly stated by the Law, that God rested on the seventh day, means not, as some suppose, that God henceforth ceases to do anything, but it refers to the fact that, after he has brought the arrangement of his works to completion, he has arranged them thus for all time . . . He has also plainly declared that the seventh day is ordained for us by the Law, to be a sign of that which is our seventh faculty, namely reason, whereby we have knowledge of things human and divine.

Though what Aristobulus says is not entirely explicit, he appears to be making three main points:

(i) God who created the world gave the sabbath to all men (not just to Israel) as a rest from the troubles of life.

(ii) The sabbath (as the memorial of creation, or because God on the first sabbath 'saw everything that he had made')<sup>8</sup> may be called the birthday of light, by which all things are beheld. To light corresponds the metaphorical light of reason and wisdom; and (though the sabbath is the seventh day, not the first day, on which light was created) it must be remembered that wisdom existed even before the first day (and the day before the first day corresponds to the seventh day). This involved argument is apparently aimed to show that the sabbath is the day for the exercise of reason and the pursuit of wisdom.

(iii) The fact that God rested on the seventh day does not mean that thereafter he ceased to do anything, but that his creative work was then complete for all time. (Thus, God's sabbath rest continues for all time, during which he is constantly active, but not as creator.)

Philo's exposition of the sabbath two centuries later is much fuller, the theme appearing at many places in his works, but he likewise dwells on these three points, in a manner strikingly similar even if not absolutely identical.

(i) He teaches that the sabbath has existed from the creation, and for all people, not just for Israel. It is 'the festival not of a single city or country but of the universe, and it alone strictly deserves to be called public, as belonging to all people' (*De Opificio Mundi* 89). God at the creation bade 'those who should live as citizens under this world-order (*politeia*) to follow God in this as in other matters' (*De Decalogo* 98). The sabbath has held the place of honour in nature 'from the time when the world was framed', and what happened at the Exodus was not that it was first instituted but that Israel was taught to date it aright,

after the true date had got lost through the upheavals of history (*De Vita Mosis* 1.207; 2.263).

(ii) The sabbath has not only existed from creation, but is the memorial of creation, and Philo therefore delights to call it 'the birthday of the world' (*De Opificio Mundi* 89; *De Vita Mosis* 1.207; *De Specialibus Legibus* 2.59). It is also the day of light: 'seven . . . may quite rightly be described as the light (*phōs*) of six, for seven reveals as completed what six has produced' (*De Specialibus Legibus* 2.59). The sabbath is consequently linked with 'the seventh and truly divine light', 'the seventh and perfect light', 'that most brilliant and truly divine light', which is virtue (*Legum Allegoriae* 1.16-18). It also goes back, in a sense, before creation: 'that day has held the place of honour in nature, not merely from the time when the world was framed, but even before the heaven and all that sense perceives came into being (*De Vita Mosis* 2.263). As the day of light, it is the day of contemplation and the pursuit of wisdom: 'In the story of the creation . . . we are told that the world was made in six days and that on the seventh God ceased from his works and began to contemplate what had been so well created, and therefore he bade those who should live as citizens under this world-order to follow God in this as in other matters. So he commanded that they should apply themselves to work for six days but rest on the seventh and turn to the study of wisdom . . . Always follow God . . . Find, too, in the seventh day the pattern of thy duty to study wisdom, that day in which we are told that he surveyed what he had wrought . . . Let us not then neglect this great archetype' (*De Decalogo* 97-101). The sabbath is the day set apart for the pursuit of 'philosophy' (*De Opificio Mundi* 128). 'On this day we are commanded to abstain from all work, not because the Law inculcates slackness—on the contrary . . . when he forbids bodily labour on the seventh day, he permits the exercise of the higher activities, namely, those employed in the study of the principles of virtue's lore' (*De Specialibus Legibus* 2.60f.; cp. also section 64). And in this connection he relates how public teaching is given in the synagogues on the sabbath (section 62f.), a theme to which he returns in *De Vita Mosis* 2. 215f., in *Hypothetica* 7.12f., where he speaks of the reading and exposition of the Law, in *De Legatione ad Gaium* 156f., where he speaks of instruction in the Jews' 'ancestral philosophy', and in his accounts of the Therapeutae (*De Vita Contemplativa* 30-33) and of the Essenes (*Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit* 80-82), where he again speaks of teaching and of the reading and exposition of Scripture.

(iii) Finally, Philo deals with God's perpetual sabbath, in which he

is not idle: 'On the seventh day the Creator, having brought to an end the formation of mortal things, begins the shaping of others more divine. For God never leaves off making, but even as it is the property of fire to burn and of snow to chill, so it is the property of God to make' (*Legum Allegoriae* 1.5-7; cp. also sections 16, 18). He says elsewhere that God alone truly and eternally rests, not because he is idle, but because he works with absolute ease (*De Cherubim* 87-90).

As will be seen in the next chapter, slight traces of some of these ideas are to be found in Palestinian Judaism, but little more than that.

#### THE PRIMEVAL SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It was noted on p. 7 above that the conception of the sabbath as a creation ordinance is probably to be found in Mark. 2 : 27, where our Lord asserts that 'the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath'. A striking parallel to this saying occurs in one of the earliest Palestinian midrashim, *Mekilta*, where Rabbi Simeon ben Menasya interprets Exod. 31 : 14 as meaning 'the sabbath is given over to you, but you are not given over to the sabbath' (tractate *Shabbata* 1).<sup>9</sup> There is, however, one significant difference. In the teaching of *Mekilta*, and in the Palestinian tradition generally, the sabbath is an ordinance peculiar to Israel, and 'you' in Simeon's dictum means Israel. Christ, however, does not say that the sabbath was *given* to Israel, but that it was *made* for man, the word 'made' (*ginomai*) suggesting a connection with the 'making' of the world, and the word 'man' (*ho anthrōpos*) suggesting mankind as a whole. What our Lord's choice of words seems to imply, therefore, is that when God made the world, he also made the sabbath, and that he made it not just for Israel but for mankind. If so, he endorses the natural interpretation of Gen. 2 : 3, in the manner of Aristobulus and Philo, and declares the sabbath, like marriage, to be a creation ordinance of general and permanent validity.<sup>10</sup>

Another of Christ's recorded sayings, this time in the Fourth Gospel, is even more strikingly reminiscent of Aristobulus and Philo. Charged with healing on the sabbath, he replies, 'My Father worketh even until now (*beōs arti ergazetai*), and I work' (John. 5 : 17). Though this could be interpreted as meaning that God works on sabbaths as well as on weekdays, in accordance with the literalistic Palestinian idea of the relation of the days of the week to God (see chapter two), it is more straightforward to understand it in the Hellenistic manner, as meaning that God's sabbath is permanent. Hellenistic, too, is the unhesitating assertion that on his sabbath God continually *works*.<sup>11</sup> These traces of

Hellenistic teaching are not surprising when one notes how active Hellenistic Jews were in Jerusalem itself at the time when the Christian church originated (Acts 6 : 1, 9; 9 : 29). Our Lord was evidently ready to endorse Hellenistic teaching, where appropriate, no less than Palestinian.

The same theme of God's perpetual sabbath since the creation is taken up and developed by that great Christian Hellenist, the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 3 : 7-4 : 11). The direction in which he develops the theme is eschatological: he is not concerned with God's activity during his sabbath rest, but with our promised opportunity of sharing in that rest. Yet his eschatology is different from that of Palestinian Judaism, which simply saw the sabbath as a type of the rest which the righteous will enjoy in the age to come (*M. Tamid* 7.4; *Mekilta. Shabbata* 1); it is a Christian eschatology, based on the Hellenistic conception of God's perpetual sabbath since the creation, and stressing that the rest promised is God's own rest (Heb. 4 : 3f., 10), and that those who enter into it are not unbelieving Jews of past generations but Christian believers (Heb. 3 : 12, 14, 19; 4 : 2f.). Also, it is probably a partially realised eschatology, like the eschatology of Hebrews in general, teaching that a foretaste of the promised rest is already enjoyed in this life (Heb. 4 : 1, 3, 10).

Neither in John 5 : 17 nor in Heb. 3-4 is anything explicit said about the observance of a literal sabbath. But the inference sometimes drawn that the two passages exclude this is, to say the least, gratuitous. According to their teaching, God is already enjoying his sabbath rest in heaven, and his promise that men will share in it is already being realised; so why should a literal sabbath not be a means of that realisation, and a pledge of the full realisation still to come? (See Gaffin, *Acts*, pp. 158-66.) More positively, the background of the two passages, as we have seen, lies in a tradition of Jewish thought in which the observance of the literal sabbath is basic—in which it is held that the God who began his perpetual sabbath on the seventh day has also sanctified that day for man. In the passages from John and Hebrews, therefore, this complementary truth is not so much excluded as implied. And in Mark 2 : 27 it seemingly comes to formal expression.

## Chapter 2

### The Memorial of Israel's Redemption

WHEN the sabbath commandment was re-enacted at the Exodus, it was as a memorial of creation that Israel was bidden to observe the day, like mankind at the beginning (Exod. 20 : 11; 31 : 17). Yet the situation in which the commandment was now re-imposed was very different. Since the sabbath had first been given to man, he had fallen into sin, and the institution had been corrupted or forgotten virtually everywhere except among the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even among them, there had been generations of bondage in Egypt, during which they had doubtless been unable to rest on the seventh day.<sup>1</sup> In practice, therefore, the restored institution was peculiar to Israel, and was relatively new even to them. At the Exodus, God can truly be said to have 'made known unto them his holy sabbath' (Neh. 9 : 13f.).

In the Mosaic Law, this new situation is recognised in two striking ways. First, the sabbath is made a token or sign of the Sinaitic covenant between God and Israel. Just as the rainbow had been the 'sign' (*ōt*) of the covenant between God and Noah (Gen. 9 : 12f., 17), and circumcision the 'sign' of the covenant between God and Abraham (Gen. 17 : 11), so also the sabbath becomes a 'sign' of the covenant between God and Israel (Exod. 31 : 13, 17; cp. also Isa. 56 : 4, 6; Ezek. 20 : 12, 20). And just as circumcision is described in Gen. 17 : 9f., 13f. as a 'perpetual covenant' which Abraham and his descendants are to 'keep', so the same language is used of the sabbath in Exod. 31 : 16f. Yet even in this context, significantly, the link between the sabbath and Gen. 2 is not forgotten: it remains a memorial of creation (Exod. 31 : 17).

The second way in which the new situation is recognised is that the sabbath is made not a memorial of creation alone, as heretofore, but also a memorial of redemption from the bondage of Egypt. When the Ten Commandments are first recorded, in Exod. 20, the reason given for the sabbath rest is that God rested after his work of creation. When, however, the Ten Commandments are repeated, in Deut. 5, a different reason is given:

In it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son nor thy daughter nor thy manservant nor thy maidservant . . . that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day (Deut. 5 : 14f.).

The sabbath was not the only sign of the Sinaitic covenant, nor the only memorial of the redemption from Egypt. Under the Mosaic Law, circumcision was retained, and new ceremonies (notably the ceremony of the great annual feast of the Passover and that of the great annual fast on the Day of Atonement) were instituted; and these three ceremonies were, equally with the sabbath, essential signs of the covenant, inasmuch as the penalty of neglecting them was likewise death (Exod. 4 : 24-26; 12 : 15, 19; 31 : 14; Lev. 23 : 29f.; Num. 9 : 13; 15 : 35f.). Again, two of the new ceremonies, those belonging to the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles, resembled the sabbath in being memorials of the Exodus. But the sabbath, if only because of its frequency, was the most prominent of these signs and memorials.

#### THE SABBATH AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The incorporation of the sabbath commandment in the Decalogue placed it at the very heart of the Mosaic Law. Though the commandment of love is set forth in Deut. 6 : 1-9 as an even briefer and more basic summary of the Law, the uniqueness of the Decalogue is also given outstanding emphasis. Only the Ten Commandments were spoken by God from heaven with an audible voice and written by his finger, and only these were placed in the ark of the covenant, set within the holy of holies at the centre of Israel's worship (Exod. 20 : 1, 19, 22; 25 : 16, 21; 31 : 18; 34 : 1; 40 : 20; Deut. 5 : 4, 22-26; 9 : 10; 10 : 1-5). If, then, any part of the Mosaic Law is permanent, one would expect the Ten Commandments to be so. In general terms, this is admitted by most Christians to be the case, if only because so many of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament. The fifth is quoted in Mark 7 : 10 and Eph. 6 : 2f., the sixth in Matt. 5 : 21, the seventh in Matt. 5 : 27, the tenth in Rom. 7 : 7, the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth together in Mark 10 : 19, the sixth, seventh, eighth, and tenth together in Rom. 13 : 9, and the sixth and seventh together in Jas. 2 : 11. Thus, the last six commandments are all quoted, most of them several times; and the substance of them often appears in places

where they are not actually quoted.<sup>2</sup> Rordorf, however, attempts to base an argument against the sabbath on the fact that, though other commandments of the Decalogue are quoted, the sabbath commandment is not (*op. cit.*, pp. 106f.). But the truth is that none of the first four commandments, setting forth our duty to God, is quoted—only the last six, setting forth our duty to man.<sup>3</sup> Are we then to infer that our duty to God (to love whom is the first commandment of all) is less important than our duty to man? Or that Christ and his apostles do not care if we have other gods than one (despite Mark 12 : 29; Rom. 3 : 30; 1 Cor. 8 : 4, 6; Gal. 3 : 20; Eph. 4 : 6; 1 Tim. 2 : 5; Jas. 2 : 19; 4 : 12)? or if we commit idolatry (despite Acts 17 : 29; Rom. 1 : 22-25; 1 Cor. 5 : 11; 6 : 9f.; 10 : 7, 14; 2 Cor. 6 : 16; Gal. 5 : 19-21; 1 Thess. 1 : 9; 1 Pet. 4 : 3; 1 John 5 : 21; Rev. 9 : 20; 21 : 8; 22 : 15)? or if we take God's name in vain (despite Matt. 6 : 9; Luke 1 : 49; Rom. 2 : 24; 1 Tim. 6 : 1; Rev. 11 : 18; 15 : 4; 16 : 9)? But if the last six commandments are repeated in the New Testament, both in word and in substance, and the first three are repeated in substance, it is certainly strange if the fourth does not have equal status. The presumption surely is that it does, and indications are not lacking in the New Testament, as we saw on pp. 2f., 11f., and will see again on pp. 21-6 and 39-47, to confirm this presumption. The fourth commandment may require some measure of reinterpretation in a Christian context, just as our Lord reinterprets the sixth and seventh commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, and Paul implicitly reinterprets the fifth in Eph. 6 : 2f., but reinterpretation need not involve (any more than in these instances) a change of substance.

#### REST AND WORSHIP ON THE MOSAIC SABBATH

Under the Mosaic covenant, the sabbath rest becomes the subject of detailed stipulations. Not only is all work prohibited, but what constitutes work is stated with some precision. It is not simply 'laborious work' that is forbidden, as on many of the other holy days: on the sabbath and the Day of Atonement 'no manner of work' is to be done (Lev. 23; Num. 28-29). No exception from the command to rest on the sabbath is made at the busy times of sowing and reaping (Exod. 34 : 21). The gathering of food or fuel and the lighting of fires are prohibited (Exod. 16 : 25-30; 35 : 3; Num. 15 : 32-36). Buying and selling, and the preparation and carrying of wares, are naturally prohibited, as being the trader's normal way of earning his living (Neh. 10 : 31; 13 : 15-22; Jer. 17 : 19-27; Amos 8 : 5); and Nehemiah makes

no exception in the case of wares carried by animals or goods sold by foreigners, animals and foreigners being likewise covered by the sabbath commandment (Exod. 20 : 10; Deut. 5 : 14). It was because of these detailed prohibitions that the ungodly often resented the Mosaic sabbath,<sup>4</sup> but, rightly regarded, it was not a burden to Israel but a 'gift' (Exod. 16 : 29) and a 'delight' (Isa. 58 : 13f.). The Jew who gave Psalm 92 the title 'A Song for the Sabbath' certainly appreciated this fact.

It was remarked on p. 5 above that the sabbath rest was of the nature of worship, as being a way of symbolising God's rest at creation, and now of symbolising also Israel's rest when delivered from the servitude of Egypt, and her special relationship with the God who delivered her. The sabbath and worship therefore remain linked together, as the joint command given both in Lev. 19 : 3 and in Lev. 26 : 2, 'Ye shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary', indicates. The ordinary daily sacrifices continue on the sabbath (Num. 28 : 10), as do the special daily sacrifices of festivals lasting for a week or more (Unleavened Bread, Lev. 23 : 8; Num. 28 : 16-25; Tabernacles, Lev. 23 : 36; Num. 29 : 12-38; and apparently the dedication of Solomon's temple, 1 Kgs. 8 : 64f.; 2 Chr. 7 : 7-9); but the sabbath has its own additional sacrifices of burnt offerings and meal offerings (Num. 28 : 9f.; Ezek. 46 : 4f.), together with the showbread, which is renewed every sabbath day (Lev. 24 : 8; 1 Chr. 9 : 32). The ministers of the sanctuary are naturally needed for the offering of these sacrifices on the sabbath as well as on weekdays, and in fact the courses of priests and Levites seem to have changed over on the sabbath day (2 Chr. 23 : 4, 8).

There is reason to think that sacrifice did not exhaust public sabbath-day worship. Lev. 23 gives a list of the 'holy convocations', when Israel was bidden to come together for worship, headed by the sabbath (vv. 1-3). The other 'holy convocations' are Passover, the first and last days of Unleavened Bread, the Sheaf, Pentecost, Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the first and last days of Tabernacles. But after the wilderness period it was increasingly difficult for the nation to come together at the sanctuary on all these occasions, and in fact the Law envisages this by simply requiring that all male Israelites should appear before God three times a year, at Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Exod. 23 : 17; 34 : 23f.; Deut. 16 : 16), Passover alone being imposed under definite sanctions (Exod. 12 : 15, 19; Num. 9 : 13). Where, then, were the people to fulfil their 'holy convocations' on the other occa-

sions in the year, notably on the fifty-two sabbaths? We are not told. Sometimes they seem to have assembled with a prophet and his disciples, as in 2 Kgs. 4: 23. But the institution of the synagogue, which is lost in antiquity, may also go back to Old Testament times (Ps. 74: 8) and supply another part of the answer. The synagogue was always probably a teaching centre rather than a place of sacrifice,<sup>5</sup> but its ministers may originally have been the priests and Levites living in the vicinity, since the duty of teaching the Law rested especially upon them (Lev. 10: 11; Deut. 17: 11; 24: 8; 33: 10; Neh. 8: 7-9; Ezek. 7: 26; 44: 23; Hos. 4: 6; Mic. 3: 11; Hag. 2: 11; Mal. 2: 5-7), and the great forerunner of the lay 'scribes', who later taught in the synagogues, was Ezra the priest (Ezra 7: 1-6, 11f., 21; Neh. 8: 9; 12: 26).

Apart from acts of worship, the Old Testament occasionally records works of necessity also as being performed on the sabbath. Warfare could not necessarily stand still on the sabbath day, so the siege of Jericho, by God's command, goes on (Josh. 6: 3-15). And the monarch could not be left unguarded on the sabbath, so we find the royal guard changing on that day (2 Kgs. 11: 5, 7, 9).

#### THE MOSAIC SABBATH IN PALESTINIAN JUDAISM

If Hellenistic Judaism regarded the sabbath as a creation ordinance for all men, Palestinian Judaism by contrast regarded it as a Mosaic ordinance for Israel alone. This attitude also can be traced back to the second century BC, when it is found in *Jubilees* 2: 19-33; 50: 1. The book of *Jubilees*, a work apparently emanating from the same general school of thought to which the Essenes and the Qumran community belonged, and certainly much cherished by the latter, lays exclusive stress on the truth that the sabbath was a covenant sign between God and Israel, declaring that 'the Creator of all things . . . did not sanctify all peoples and nations to keep sabbath thereon, but Israel alone' (*Jub.* 2: 19 - 21, 31). This is the more striking, in that *Jubilees* per-versely carries the institution of various purely Mosaic holy days back to the patriarchal period. It is true that in the calendar of *Jubilees* the patriarchs are never represented as journeying or working on the sabbath but this is probably symptomatic more of the author's sense of propriety than of his views about the date when the festival originated.

Further striking differences from Aristobulus and Philo appear in this document. Although, in *Jubilees*, the seventh day of creation is not the institution of the sabbath for man, it is the institution of the sabbath for God himself and the higher angels, who likewise work for

six day days each week and rest on the seventh (*Jub.* 2 : 17f., 21, 30). Thus, God's sabbath is not eternal, it is every seventh day; and on that sabbath he does not work.

In rabbinical literature of the Pharisaic tradition, the same general outlook manifests itself. The idea of creation ordinances is fully accepted,<sup>6</sup> but the sabbath is not regarded as one. A *baraita* (i.e., a tradition of similar antiquity with the Mishnah, though from a different source), which is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud, states:

The Israelites were given ten precepts at Marah, seven of which had already been accepted by the children of Noah, and to these there were added at Marah social laws, the sabbath and the honouring of one's parents (*Sanhedrin* 56b).

*Mekilta*, when expounding the statements of Exod. 31 that the sabbath is 'a sign between me and you . . . a perpetual covenant between me and the children of Israel', comments 'but not between me and the nations of the world' (*Shabbata* 1). The midrash on Genesis, when explaining Gen. 2, makes the seventh day of creation God's sabbath but only the prototype of man's sabbath (*Beresith Rabbah* 11). If Adam observed the sabbath on its first occurrence (in accordance with the saying in the Palestinian Talmud, 'Man was created on the eve of the sabbath in order that he might begin life by a religious practice' (*Jer. Sanhedrin* 4.5), that was apparently the only time he did so. It is true that like *Jubilees*, the midrash is unwilling to infer that the three great patriarchs did not keep the sabbath: it states, in fact, that 'Abraham knew even the laws of the 'erub of courtyards' (which were refinements of the sabbath law) and that 'Jacob kept the sabbath', but in the latter case it adds, significantly, 'before it was given' (*Beresith Rabbah* 11.7; 64.4; 79.6). The midrashim also appear to agree with *Jubilees* in viewing God as resting for only a single day at creation, but as resting on every other sabbath thereafter; and they manifest some embarrassment at the idea of God working on such days. Speaking of the first sabbath, *Mekilta* says:

He ceased from the thought of work. Perhaps also from administering justice? It says 'and rested'. This tells that his administration of justice never stops. (*Shabbata* 1).

The idea appears to be that God did continue administering justice on the seventh day, but that this was not really work. In the midrash on Genesis, compiled somewhat later, it is admitted that this was work, but the effort is made to show that what God did on that sabbath, or does on subsequent sabbaths, is work permitted by the rabbis on the

sabbath, like moving an object four cubits. A dialogue to this effect between a Roman and Rabbi Akiba is recorded. The Roman raises the objection:

'If it is as you say that the Holy One, blessed be he, honours the sabbath, then he should not stir up winds or cause the rain to fall on that day.' 'Woe to that man!' he (i.e., Akiba) exclaimed. 'It is like one who carries objects four cubits' (*Beresith Rabbah* 11.5, 10).

In a later midrash again, a similar controversy is recorded, and the similar answer is given that the work God does on sabbath days is like a man carrying things within his own courtyard (*Exodus Rabbah* 30.9).

On the other hand, there is one interesting similarity between Palestinian and Hellenistic teaching. For the Palestinians also, the sabbath was the day of light:

'And God blessed the seventh day.' Wherewith did he bless it? With light (*Beresith Rabbah* 11.2).

But here again there is a difference. It is literal light that the midrash has in mind, not the metaphorical light of wisdom. The notion is that before the Fall the heavenly bodies had outstanding brilliance, which faded afterwards, but that it was maintained throughout the seventh day (although the Fall had already occurred) in honour of the sabbath.

The Palestinian literature is noteworthy for its great emphasis on sabbath rest, and for its elaborate directions as to what may or may not be done on the sabbath. According to *Jubilees*, the following acts are forbidden, in addition to those formally forbidden in the Old Testament: preparing food, drawing water, carrying a burden in or out of the house, performing the marital act, setting out on a journey, or talking about doing so for purposes of trade, riding an animal, travelling by ship, striking, trapping or slaughtering anything, making war (*Jub.* 2.29f.; 50.8f., 12). The acts for which the day is intended are eating and drinking, blessing God and offering sacrifice (*Jub.* 2.31; 50.9-11). Most of the acts forbidden in *Jubilees* are also forbidden in the Qumran literature, where quite a number of other prohibitions are added (CD 10.14-11.18). The most significant is the prohibition of helping a beast in labour, or pulling its young out of any cistern or pit into which it may fall; the latter prohibition being repeated in the case of human beings in the same predicament, unless (as is commonly done) one amends the text. A similar fanaticism is reflected in the Essene prohibition of relieving nature on the sabbath, recorded by Josephus. Josephus tells us that the Essenes were stricter than any other Jews in the observance of the sabbath rest (*War* 2.8. 9, or 2.147).

The Pharisaic casuistry, as developed in the Mishnah and elsewhere in the rabbinical literature, is much more subtle than this. The Mishnah enumerates no less than thirty-nine categories of prohibited actions (*Shabbath* 7.2), and then goes on to discuss what actions fall within each and what are exempt. Because of its extreme elaboration and precision, the Pharisaic legislation may have been as burdensome in practice as the Essene, especially to those who were seeking to justify themselves by works. But it did recognise, as we shall see below, that there were certain duties which took precedence over the duty of the sabbath rest. Much less to its credit were the evasions, such as the 'erub, by which it sought to mitigate the stringency of its own regulations, instead of admitting that the stringency was often arbitrary. But to this matter too we must return in the following section of the chapter.

Though the Palestinian literature has less to say about sabbath day services than the Hellenistic, these seem to have contained the same elements throughout the Jewish world. We saw on p. 10 that Philo describes the sabbath day services in the synagogue as consisting primarily of teaching, through the reading and exposition of Scripture. That prayer was also included is implicit in Philo's usual name for the synagogue, *proseuchē*, 'place of prayer' (*In Flaccum* 41, 45, etc.; *De Legatione ad Gaium* 132, 138, etc.), a name which is applied to the synagogue in Egyptian inscriptions and papyri from the third century BC onwards.<sup>7</sup> The same name is found in the Palestinian writer Josephus (*Antiquities* 14.10.23; or 14.258; *Life* 54, 56; or 277, 280, 293), who adds that the Law is read in the sabbath day services (*Against Apion* 2.17, or 2. 175; cp. also *Antiquities* 16.2.4, or 16.43), and quotes Agatharchides of Cnidos as stating that on the sabbath the Jews cease working and pray in their sanctuaries till the evening (*Against Apion* 1.22, or 1.209). Further evidence from Palestine and elsewhere is supplied by the New Testament. In Luke 4 : 16-27 Isaiah is read and expounded in the synagogue on the sabbath; in 2 Cor. 3 : 14f. the reading of the Law is spoken of as a regular occurrence; in Acts 15 : 21 the Law is said to be read in the synagogue each sabbath in every city of the Roman world; and in Acts 13 : 15, 27 both the Law and the Prophets are read on the sabbath in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, after which Paul is invited to give an exhortation. There is also the synagogue inscription from before AD 70 discovered at the Ophel, Jerusalem, stating that the synagogue there had been built 'for the reading of the Law and for the teaching of the commandments' (Sukenik, *Ancient*

*Synagogues*, pp. 69ff.). The evidence of the rabbinical literature is to the same general effect.

THE MOSAIC SABBATH IN THE TEACHING AND  
PRACTICE OF CHRIST

In the starkest possible contrast to his Jewish contemporaries, so Rordorf contends, Jesus Christ rejected the sabbath and rescinded the fourth commandment. 'The sabbath commandment was not merely pushed into the background by the healing activity of Jesus: it was simply annulled', he writes (op. cit., p. 70). This contention is one of the major arguments by which he attempts to establish a case for complete discontinuity between the sabbath and the Lord's Day, and it occupies pp. 54-79 of his book. In prosecuting the argument, he finds it necessary to discount large areas of the relevant Gospel material as unhistorical, and this he does on very speculative grounds. Almost the only parts of the material that he is prepared to accept with confidence are the parts in which Jesus makes messianic claims, for it is on the basis of these claims alone that he is able to explain our Lord's supposed readiness simply to abolish fundamental provisions of the Mosaic Law. But these too are insecure grounds for his contention, since, even if Christ had the authority to reject the fourth commandment, it does not follow that he had the will. Reinterpret the Mosaic Law our Lord certainly did. Reject some of the current interpretations of it he also did. Fulfil its requirements for atonement in such a way that they neither need be, nor can be, fulfilled again, this too he did. But the idea that he regarded it as part of his messianic mission completely to set aside the Law, or certain of its precepts, has first to be established by evidence before it can be accepted.

A less subjective treatment of the Gospel record leads one to very different conclusions. For,

(i) The statement by Christ in Matthew and Luke that it was not his purpose simply to destroy the Law, or any of its precepts, must be taken seriously into account (see Matt. 5 : 17-20; Luke 16 : 16-18).<sup>8</sup> There is no comparably clear statement that can be adduced against this.

(ii) The controversies of Christ over the sabbath all concern the sabbath rest. An equally important part of sabbath observance was the worship and teaching that took place in the temple and synagogue on that day. Jesus only visited Jerusalem for the feasts, and consequently did not come much into contact with the sabbath day sacrifices there.

But there are four distinct contexts in the Gospels which show him teaching in the synagogue on the sabbath (Mark 1 : 21f.; 6 : 2; Luke 6 : 6; 13 : 10), and there is one passage which shows him taking an active part in the regular service by reading the prophetic lection and expounding it, the evangelist remarking in this connection that 'he entered into the synagogue on the sabbath day, *as his custom was*' (Luke 4 : 16-27). Any claim that Jesus rejected the sabbath must come to terms with these facts.

(iii) If it is admitted, as it must be, that Jesus did not reject the sabbath day assembly for worship and teaching in the synagogue, it follows that he did not reject the sabbath rest either. For the sabbath day assembly presupposed the sabbath rest. Philo tells us that the sabbath day assembly went on until the late afternoon:

Some priest who is present or one of the elders reads the Holy Laws to them and expounds them point by point till about the late afternoon (*mechri schedon deiles opsias*) (*Hypothetica* 7. 13).

It seems from Josephus (*Life* 54, or 279) that in Palestine it was the custom to break off at noon for a meal, but even if the congregation did not reassemble afterwards, which there is no reason to think, an assembly lasting until noon would be impossible upon a working day. Elsewhere, as was seen on p. 20, Josephus quotes Agatharchides to the effect that on the sabbath the Jews pray in their sanctuaries till the evening. And the rabbinical literature everywhere speaks of at least one service after midday, quite apart from expository lectures.

(iv) This immediately casts doubt on the claim that Jesus rejected the sabbath rest absolutely. No doubt his opponents considered him to break the sabbath (as the Pharisees consider him to in John 9 : 16, and the Sadducees as well, possibly, in John 5 : 18), since he differed from their interpretations of the sabbath commandment. But they must also have regarded each other as breaking the sabbath on various matters, since they differed from each other's interpretation. The Essenes' interpretation, as we saw on p. 19, was the strictest; the Pharisees' interpretation was also decidedly strict in its own way, though not in the same way; and the Sadducees' interpretation must have differed again, since they rejected Pharisaic tradition, and much of the Pharisaic sabbath legislation depended more on their tradition than on anything clearly taught by the Old Testament: as the Mishnah puts it, 'the rules about the sabbath . . . are as mountains hanging by a hair, for Scripture is scanty and the rules many' (*Hagigah* 1.8). The Pharisees were, moreover, divided among themselves on the matter.

Many of the disputes between the schools of Shammai and Hillel concerned the sabbath (*M. Shabbath* 1.5-8; 3.1; 21.3; *M. Hagigah* 2.4; *Tos. Shabbath* 1.15-22; 3.3; 17.21), and it is likely that at least some of these went back to the founders of the two schools, and so to a time before that of our Lord. The question is not, therefore, whether the existing Jewish parties regarded Christ as breaking the sabbath (i.e., their interpretation of it), in the same way as they regarded each other as doing: this goes without saying. The question is, whether he regarded himself as breaking the sabbath (i.e., his own interpretation of it): and that has yet to be shown.

(v) It is here relevant to note that most of Christ's six disputes on the matter are with the Pharisees (Mark 2: 24; 3: 6; Luke 14: 1, 3; John 9: 13-16), and that it is only an inference that the Sadducees are involved at all. Now, among the Pharisees living at the time of our Lord, the strict school of Shammai was more influential than the more lenient school of Hillel, which only gained the ascendancy after the policy supported by the Shammaites had led to the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans (Moore, *Judaism* I, p. 79; Zeitlin, 'Mesures', pp. 22-36). It may well be with Shammaites, therefore, that the disputes about the sabbath took place. Writing from the point of view that later prevailed, modern Jewish scholars sometimes find it hard to understand why there ever was controversy between the Pharisees and Jesus about the sabbath.<sup>9</sup> And it may be that even in the time of his ministry the Hillelites were much more in sympathy with his attitude to the sabbath than those Pharisees who disputed with him about it. If so, this would explain the noteworthy fact that no charge of sabbath-breaking was made at Jesus's trial.

(vi) The character of the actions which Jesus performed or sanctioned on the sabbath does not suggest that his intentions were as revolutionary as Rordorf contends. We saw on p. 16f. above that the Old Testament authorises acts of worship and acts of necessity on the sabbath. In paragraph (ii) we listed Jesus's acts of worship: these were basically uncontroversial. Controversy was provoked by the acts of necessity which he sanctioned, when he defended his disciples for satisfying their hunger in the cornfields (Mark 2: 23-28), and when he told a cripple he was healing to take up his bed (John 5: 8-12); but acts of necessity were not a new category, and the only difference was that Jesus was consistent about them and his opponents were not.<sup>10</sup> All our Lord's other recorded actions on the sabbath are healings (Mark 1: 29-31; 3: 1-6; Luke 13: 10-17; 14: 1-6; John 5: 2-18;

9 : 1-41). These aroused intense opposition, but not apparently because healing on the sabbath was totally prohibited. On the contrary, the Mishnah permits healing on the sabbath if the life is in danger:

Rabbi Mattithiah ben Heresh said, 'If a man has a pain in his throat they may drop medicine into his mouth on the sabbath, since there is doubt whether life is in danger; and whenever there is doubt whether life is in danger this overrides the sabbath' (*Yoma* 8.6).

Here again, then, our Lord was not opening a new category of permitted actions. He was simply extending an existing category from cases where life was in danger to other cases also, so as to cover all acts of healing, and acts of mercy in general. As he pointed out, his hearers were accustomed to show mercy to animals on the sabbath, so how much more ought they to do the same to men? (Matt. 12 : 11f.; Luke 13 : 15f.; 14 : 5). Consistency required that they should treat men in the same merciful manner.<sup>11</sup>

(vii) The ways in which Christ defends his actions on the sabbath never suggest that he is rescinding the sabbath, and often suggest the contrary. It is true, as Rordorf says, that he makes messianic claims in this connection (Matt. 12 : 6; Mark 2 : 28; John 5 : 17). But he never uses his claims as an independent argument—not even in John 5, since the debate on this miracle is continued in ch. 7—or to support an assertion that the sabbath is now abolished and that all days are equal. Even though he could have done this, in the sense in which Paul did it later, he does not.

Much more frequently, however, his arguments are of other kinds. A second kind of argument is drawn from the practice of his hearers. On three occasions, as we saw in paragraph (vi), he defends his acts of mercy towards men from his hearers' acts of mercy towards animals. If they are not breaking the sabbath by their acts, he asks, how can he be breaking the sabbath by his? But the implication of this line of argument is that he, no less than his hearers, recognises the need to keep the sabbath.

A third kind of argument is drawn from the Old Testament. He appeals to David's action in eating the showbread (Mark 2 : 25f.), to the sacrificial worship by the priests which was appointed for the sabbath (Matt. 12 : 5), to Hosea's words 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice' (Matt. 12 : 7), and to the law that circumcision is to take place on the eighth day after birth, which is often a sabbath (John 7 : 22f.). But to appeal to the Old Testament is to appeal to the authority on which the sabbath itself rests. So in using this sort of argument our

Lord again implies that the sabbath is not abrogated but continues in force.

The fourth and last kind of argument is drawn from established rabbinical maxims. That acts of worship, such as the sabbath sacrifices and circumcision, could lawfully be performed on the sabbath, was not only taught by the Old Testament but was fully recognised in Jewish practice and in rabbinical exegesis. Both on the sabbath sacrifices and on circumcision, the Mishnah is explicit (on the former, see *Temurah* 2.1; on the latter, *Shabbath* 18.3; 19.1f.; *Nedarim* 3.11). So is the early midrash *Mekilta*. In *Shabbata* 2 it bases arguments on the premise 'The temple service . . . sets aside the laws of the sabbath'; similarly, in *Babodesh* 7, it affirms that Exod. 31 : 14, prohibiting work, and Num. 28 : 9, prescribing the sabbath sacrifices, 'were both spoken at one utterance' (i.e., the former is the general rule and the latter the particular exception); while in *Shabbata* 1, it bases arguments on the premise 'In performing the ceremony of circumcision . . . one is to disregard the sabbath laws'.<sup>12</sup> However, these are not the only two points of sabbath law on which our Lord echoes rabbinical maxims. We noted on p. 11 above that in Mark 2 : 27 he echoes the adage 'The sabbath is given over to you, but you are not given over to the sabbath' (*Mekilta. Shabbata* 1). And finally, in Mark 3 : 4, where he asks 'Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good or to do harm? *to save life or to kill?*' he is echoing the rabbinical principle 'The duty of saving life supercedes the sabbath laws', which forms a premise for argument in *Mekilta. Shabbata* 1 (cp. also the extract from the Mishnah on p. 24 above).

But all these rabbinical maxims are simply exceptions to the general rule that on the sabbath one must rest. In quoting such maxims, our Lord implies that he agrees with the rabbis not only about the exceptions but also about the general rule, since otherwise he would have had no use for exceptions; but would simply have contradicted the rule itself. It is true that he calls for more consistency in the application of the exceptions, so that acts of worship, necessity and mercy are clearly acknowledged to be permissible. It is true that he criticises the failure to see that mercy is more important than scrupulous ceremonialism.<sup>13</sup> It is true that he backs up his teaching not only with the customary sorts of argument but with messianic claims. But his whole mode of treating the subject proclaims him to accept the sabbath rest itself, and to be presenting an interpretation of it which, while significantly different from earlier interpretations at certain points, is in full agreement with them at others.

To all this, the reply might be made that occasionally, as in Matt. 5 : 23f., Jesus speaks directly of the Christian way to observe the ceremonial Law (though it is so soon to pass away), and that his teaching on the sabbath could be a similar case. If so, he would be accepting the sabbath only for the time being, not permanently. There is, of course, a measure of truth in this reply, since it is not contended that the *ceremonial* regulations of the Jewish sabbath (the sabbath sacrifices, for instance) are a permanent part of Christian practice. But if Jesus regarded the sabbath as *purely* ceremonial and *purely* temporary, it is remarkable that he gives so much attention to it in his teaching, and also that in all he teaches about it he never mentions its temporary character. This is even more remarkable when one remembers that he emphasises the temporary character of other parts of the Old Testament ceremonial—the laws of purity in Mark 7 : 14–23 and Luke 11 : 39–41, and the temple (with its sacrifices) in Mark 13 : 2 and John 4 : 21. By contrast, as we have already seen, he seems in Mark 2 : 27 to speak of the sabbath as one of the unchanging ordinances for all mankind.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE MOSAIC SABBATH IN THE TEACHING OF PAUL

If Christ did not abolish the sabbath, but rather reformed its observance, affirming as he did so that it 'was made for man', what about Paul? The disciple is not above his Master, but there is an important sense in which the disciples completed the teaching of their Master, in a way which was not possible during his ministry, when his death and resurrection had not yet taken place, and the Spirit had not yet come (John 16 : 12–14). In the teaching of Paul, certain important developments have occurred which affect the sabbath. In the first place, the observance of all the commandments has finally and explicitly been taken out of the context of justification by works. Henceforth, one is only to 'seek the righteousness of the Law by faith' (Rom. 9 : 32), as Israel ought always to have done. Secondly, the sabbath sacrifices and all the Old Testament sacrifices have been fulfilled and replaced by the atoning sacrifice of Christ (Rom. 8 : 3; 1 Cor. 5 : 7; Eph. 5 : 2) and the spiritual sacrifices of Christians (Rom. 12 : 1; 15 : 16f.; Phil. 2 : 17; 4 : 18; 2 Tim. 4 : 6). Thirdly, the only sense in which the Law still remains binding on Christians is the sense in which they are required to obey it by the fundamental commandment of love (Rom. 13 : 8–10; Gal. 5 : 14).<sup>15</sup> Otherwise they are free (1 Cor. 8 : 9; 10 : 29; Gal. 2 : 4; 5 : 13). Paul permits Jewish Christians to continue observing ceremonial

commandments of the Law such as food laws and festival laws, provided they do not try to force them upon Gentiles; indeed, he requires them to follow their conscience in the matter, and warns Gentile Christians against causing them to stumble; but, as for himself, he is clear that the obligation of these ceremonies has ceased (Rom. 14: 1-15: 13; 1 Cor. 8: 1-11: 1). When, therefore, Judaising teachers who have not even grasped the principle of justification by faith try to force Jewish distinctions of days upon Gentiles, Paul is greatly concerned (Gal. 4: 9-11; Col. 2: 16f.). In the latter passage he speaks explicitly of 'a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day' (i.e., annual, monthly, or weekly Jewish festivals), and it is plain that in Paul's mind the obligation of all these has come to an end, and that no one must try to re-impose it.

Does Paul then do what we saw Christ did not do, and simply abolish the sabbath day? Certainly he abolishes it in the form in which it had existed from the time of Moses: he abolishes its special sacrifices and its involvement in even the abstract possibility of justification by works. He abolishes also the detailed restrictions as to permissible and impermissible acts, with which it had been compassed not simply by the rabbis but by the Mosaic Law itself (see p. 15f. above); for the primary commandment of love does not necessarily involve the literal observance of all these, and Paul's principle in such cases is 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind' (Rom. 14: 5). Nor is this all: he abolishes, in addition, the link which the sabbath had with the seventh day of the week, and which we saw in chapter one to be pre-Mosaic. To do this might at first sight seem to bring the sabbath to a complete end. But since Paul retains the framework of the Jewish week, and accepts the Christian festival on its 'first day' (see below), and since the link which the sabbath had with a particular day of the week was again one of its ceremonial features, comparable to the sabbath sacrifices and the detailed regulations about sabbath activities, it is possible that Paul means to preserve the substance of the sabbath in the Lord's Day. The substance of the sabbath would not be altered by a change of day, unless that change destroyed the signification of the sabbath, as a weekly memorial of creation and redemption. Actually, a commemoration of the creation is as fittingly observed on the first day of the week, when it began, as on the seventh; and the commemoration of the redemption from Egypt had never been dependent on the day of the week at all, since there is no reason to think that the Israelites escaped from their bondage on the sabbath.<sup>16</sup> If, therefore, we find in the fol-

lowing two chapters that there are such strong connections between the Lord's Day and the sabbath that the Lord's Day can fittingly be regarded as a Christian sabbath, Paul's teaching that the literal observance of the Jewish sabbath is at an end will not be an obstacle. For his teaching must be understood in its context of the controversy with the Judaisers; and in that controversy it was the Saturday sabbath, and the Jewish manner of observing it, that was at issue, not the Christian Sunday, as observed by Christians.

Against this it may be urged that Paul's language, especially in Rom. 14 : 5, seems to abolish distinctions of days absolutely. But here again his language must be understood in its context. It is Jewish distinctions of days, and Jewish distinctions of foods, that are in question in Rom. 14-15 and 1 Cor. 8-11. Paul sees no inconsistency in rejecting Jewish distinctions of foods, since the earth is the Lord's, but then going on (in 1 Cor. 10-11) to stress the unique Christian meal, the Lord's Supper. Similarly, he sees no inconsistency in rejecting Jewish distinctions of days, since we serve the Lord daily, but also drawing attention to the unique Christian day—the Lord's Day or 'first day of the (Jewish) week' (1 Cor. 16: 2).<sup>17</sup> His practice agrees with his theory. In Acts 20 we find him personally observing the Lord's Day in the church of Troas, and the church of Troas was more likely than not a church of Pauline foundation, in which case he presumably introduced the observance of the Lord's Day there himself.<sup>18</sup>

One more facet of Pauline teaching on this subject must be noticed. In Col. 2 : 16f., he does not in fact say that the Jewish sabbath is abolished, but rather that it is fulfilled. He speaks of

a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day, which are *a shadow of the things to come, but the body is Christ's*.

What precisely the Christian body (or fulfilment) is to which these shadows point forward, Paul does not tell us. A hint of how he believed the 'feast days' to be fulfilled is given in 1 Cor. 5 : 6-8, with regard to the twin festivals of the Passover and Unleavened Bread. The fulfilment is partly doctrinal ('Christ our passover') and partly ethical ('the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth'). Similarly, he may have connected the new moons with newness of life, and the sabbaths with the promised rest in the age to come. But this would not prevent him from seeing a second fulfilment of the sabbath, less remote from its type, in the Lord's Day. Colossians itself presents us with a parallel double-fulfilment, when circumcision is seen as foreshadowing the 'circumcision made without hands', but not in such a way as to exclude

the outward ceremony of baptism—on the contrary, the spiritual circumcision is closely and explicitly linked with 'baptism' (Col. 2 : 11-13). The sister epistle, Ephesians, provides us with another parallel. There marriage is seen as foreshadowing the union between Christ and the Church, yet not in such a way as to supersede literal marriage, but rather to provide an example for married couples to follow (Eph. 5 : 22-33).

Reverting to the Passover, the fulfilment in that case seems to be multiple rather than double. In addition to the interpretations in 1 Cor. 5 : 6-8, our Lord, as Paul was presumably aware, had at the Last Supper interpreted the Passover meal as a type of the Messianic feast in the age to come (Luke 22 : 15-18; cp. Matt. 26 : 29; Mark 14 : 25). And Paul himself sees a fulfilment of it in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Thus, in 1 Cor. 10 : 14-22 he explains the sacrament as a feast upon the sacrifice of Christ, comparable to the feasts upon sacrifices known both in pagan religions and in Judaism. The great feast upon a sacrifice in Judaism was, of course, the Passover meal, and Paul may allude to this in v. 16, where his name for the eucharistic cup, 'the cup of the blessing', is derived from such banquets as the Passover meal.<sup>19</sup> Since he has, earlier in the epistle, called Christ 'our passover' (i.e., our passover sacrifice), it is all the more appropriate that he should view the feast upon that sacrifice as the Christian passover meal.

But if, for Paul, the annual Passover can be fulfilled four ways, in Calvary, in ethical qualities, in the Messianic feast, and in a literal meal, it is surely not hard to believe that he may have found a second fulfilment for the weekly sabbath in a literal festival like the Lord's Day, as well as in the promised rest of the age to come. No one can prove that Paul drew this conclusion, but it can hardly be regarded as improbable that he did so.

## Chapter 3

### The Memorial of Christ's Resurrection

IT is a striking fact that the Jewish sabbath almost disappears from recorded Christian practice after Christ's resurrection. The very day before his resurrection occurs, we find the disciples resting on the Jewish sabbath (Luke 23: 56; cp. also Mark 16: 1; John 19: 42), but after it has happened the observance of the seventh day is never mentioned except as a tolerated option for Jewish Christians (Rom. 14: 5), or an intolerable imposition by Judaising heretics (Gal. 4: 9-11; Col. 2: 16f.), or in passages where Paul reasons with the Jews in the synagogue on the sabbath (Acts 13: 14, 42, 44; 17: 2; 18: 4; cp. also Acts 16: 13), not apparently because the observance of the day is a regular part of his own devotional practice but because it provides an excellent opportunity for evangelism. The Acts of the Apostles does supply some remarkable evidence of the observance of the ceremonial Law by Paul (Acts 18: 18; 20: 16; 21: 23f., 26f.; 24: 17f.), yet we know from 1 Corinthians that this was not his constant habit, but that he adapted his practice to the circles in which he was moving, whether Jewish or Gentile, in order to avoid giving needless offence (1 Cor. 9: 19-23).

Now, Paul was not alone in this. We have the testimony both of Luke and Paul that even Peter, one of the pillars of the church of Jerusalem, did not try to keep the whole ceremonial Law (Acts 15: 10; Gal. 2: 12-14), and in both passages other of the Jewish Christians are linked with Peter. The attitude of James (whatever opinions the Judaisers may have attributed to him) does not seem to have been markedly different. In his epistle he manifests no enthusiasm for the ceremonial Law, and the 'works' that he calls for are works of love and faith like the relief of needy fellow-Christians or (in Old Testament terms) the offering of Isaac by Abraham and the helping of Joshua's messengers by Rahab (Jas. 2: 14-26). Moreover, in Acts 21, the report which he says has incensed the Christians of Jerusalem is not that Paul does not obey the Law but that he forbids people to obey it, and the test that he proposes to Paul could not in the nature of the case show that Paul always conforms to it but only that he is willing to do so on occasion, and hence is not hostile to such conformity (vv. 20-24).<sup>1</sup>

This being so, it cannot be taken for granted that all Jewish Christians continued the strict observance of the Jewish sabbath, after the Lord's Day had come into use as well. It would depend on whether, like Paul, they thought of the Jewish sabbath as a type now fulfilled. In Palestine, indeed, public opinion must have strongly discouraged complete disregard of the Jewish sabbath, especially with the tide of Jewish nationalism rising higher and higher as the first century ran its course;<sup>2</sup> and the conscience of the weaker brother must have been another important restraining influence. Yet even in Palestine it is quite possible that Peter and James and other moderate men sympathised with Paul's attitude, at least privately, and it is noteworthy that at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 they refrain from imposing the sabbath upon Gentile Christians, just as they refrain from imposing circumcision upon them, thus recognising that both institutions have ceased to be indispensable parts of a life pleasing to God.<sup>3</sup>

But whatever the personal beliefs of the Jewish Christian leaders may have been, whatever concessions they may have made to Gentile converts, and whatever may have been the practice of Jewish Christians living in Gentile countries, it seems likely on the whole that, in the outward practice of the first-century church of Palestine, the Jewish sabbath was as widely observed in some form as circumcision was. Just as circumcision was practised side by side with baptism (Acts 2 : 38-41; 21 : 20f., etc.), so, probably, the sabbath was kept side by side with the Lord's Day. This, of course, is to assume that the Lord's Day was also observed from an early date by the Palestinian church, and direct testimony is as much lacking on this point as it is on their observance of the sabbath. Nevertheless, the indirect evidence is very strong, and shows not merely that the Lord's Day was kept by Jewish Christians, but that it originated with them. The evidence is as follows.

In the first place, the New Testament mentions the Lord's Day only outside Palestine, in Acts 20 : 7; 1 Cor. 16 : 2, and Rev. 1 : 10; yet in the first of these instances we find it being observed in the presence of Paul, who was not a Gentile but a Jew, brought up in Jerusalem (Acts 22 : 3; 26 : 4); who often emphasises his Jewish descent (Acts 23 : 6; Rom. 11 : 1; 2 Cor. 11 : 22; Phil. 3 : 5); and whose thought is profoundly Jewish, as works like W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, show; in the second instance it is mentioned in one of his letters; and in the third instance it is mentioned in the book of the prophet John, who likewise gives every appearance of being a Jew, especially in his highly Semitised Greek. The references make it clear

that both Paul and John approved of the Lord's Day and personally observed it.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, the earliest post-biblical references to the Lord's Day, given in note 4 on p. 150, include more than one from Syria (which was peculiarly closely related to Palestine, both in geography and in language) or from Palestine itself. What is probably the earliest of all post-biblical references, that in *Didache* 14, is of such an origin; and here we find the peculiar expression 'the Lord's (Day) of the Lord'. The omission of the noun 'day' from the name is common in the early Church, the feminine form of the adjective *kyriakos* (dominical, the Lord's) showing what has been omitted; but the duplication *kyriakē* and *kyriou* is more surprising. Probably the explanation is that the name 'Lord's Day' originated in Aramaic, which has no word 'dominical' and so would use the genitive of the noun, as is sometimes done in the kindred Syriac language (cp. the Peshitta of 1 Cor. 11: 20, where 'the Lord's Day' is *yawmeh d'emāran*); but that when the name was rendered into Greek the adjective 'dominical' was either added, as here, or substituted, as normally, to show that it was the ecclesiastical 'Day of the Lord', not the eschatological, that was meant. If, however, the name is of Aramaic origin, the festival it denotes is probably of Palestinian origin.

Thirdly, the fact that the Lord's Day falls on 'the first day of the week' (Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 16: 2) is significant. In a Jewish writer like Paul, and in the continuation of St. Luke's Gospel (cp. Acts 20: 7 with Luke 24: 1), this doubtless means the first day of the Jewish week. Now, a festival on 'the first day of the (Jewish) week', called by that name, could hardly arise except among Jews.<sup>5</sup>

Fourthly, the non-Gnostic party among the Ebionites, an anti-Pauline Judaising sect which originated from the Jewish Christians of Palestine, observed the Lord's Day as well as the sabbath (see Eusebius, *HE* 3.27.5). So it must have been celebrated among Jewish Christians in Palestine, and without known dependence on the influence of Paul; and it is much more likely that the churches in Gentile lands derived the observance from them than the other way round.

The date at which the Lord's Day started to be observed is more obscure. The earliest mention of the day is in 1 Corinthians, about AD 54, perhaps a year before the events at Troas recorded in Acts 20. This is approximately twenty-four years after Christ's resurrection. But since the observance of the day probably first arose in Jewish-Christian circles in Palestine, since (as we shall see) it was observed in

commemoration of Christ's resurrection, and since commemorative festivals often originate with the events they commemorate, at the same time as well as the same place, it is not at all improbable that this is what happened with the Lord's Day, and that it had been celebrated ever since the resurrection. If so, the first to observe it were the Twelve and their circle, who must be considered to have instituted it; though it is not their institution of the day that is recorded in the New Testament but the endorsement of the day by Paul and John.

It is customary to speak of the Lord's Day as replacing the Jewish sabbath. This is what it eventually did, and this may be the way that Paul thought of it from a very early stage. But the substitution doubtless took place much more quickly among Gentile Christians than among Jewish, and originally, as we have said, the two days were probably celebrated by many Jewish Christians side by side, as by the Ebionites afterwards. Their way of observing the Lord's Day would be likely to resemble their way of observing the sabbath, that is to say, by rest and worship—this being the manner in which the Jews observed all their important holy days (see p. 42 below); and until Christians were excluded from the synagogues, and the temple was destroyed, the Palestinian church may have been accustomed to rest and join in synagogue and temple worship on the sabbath, and to rest and join in Christian worship on the Lord's Day. If so, their exclusion from the synagogues and the destruction of the temple probably led those among them of moderate, Pauline views to concentrate their weekly rest and worship on the Lord's Day, while the rigorous legalists became founders of Ebionism. The alienation between Church and Synagogue was probably by this time such that the moderates positively desired to dissociate themselves from the Jewish sabbath, just as they desired to dissociate themselves from Jewish fast days (*Didache* 8).

It has sometimes been thought incredible that the early Jewish Christians should have rested for two days in the week. To us who live in the age of the five-day working week, this seems less hard to believe. It should not be assumed that the Jewish Christians, and certainly not the moderate leaders among them, like Peter and James, observed the sabbath with a Shammaite rigour. They cannot have been oblivious of the new interpretation of the sabbath given by Christ, with its stress on the permissibility of acts of necessity and acts of mercy on that day, as well as acts of worship. When they started to observe the Lord's Day also, they would certainly not have applied rules of greater

stringency to the new festival than to the old, and the possibility that they kept a measure of rest on both days is therefore a very real one. This would be the case even if we did not have the remarkable evidence of Luke about the life of the Jerusalem Church. Luke tells us that the apostles 'were continually in the temple' (Luke 24: 53; Acts 3: 1); that they 'continued steadfastly in prayer' with the women and the Saviour's family (Acts 1: 14); that their converts 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers' (Acts 2: 42); that 'day by day' all who believed 'continued steadfastly with one accord in the temple and broke bread at home . . . and the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved' (Acts 2: 46f.); and that 'every day, in the temple and at home, the apostles ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ' (Acts 5: 42; cp. 3: 11ff.; 5: 12ff.). As long as this state of affairs continued, it does not look as if it would have been any problem to the church of Jerusalem to have rested from remunerative labour, either partly or wholly, on many more days in the week than a mere two!

The likelihood that the church of Palestine originally observed both the sabbath and the Lord's Day has seemed to some an objection to the belief that the Lord's Day fulfils the sabbath. A straight substitution, such as there appears to have been among Gentile Christians, would leave room for a sabbatarian interpretation of the Lord's Day, it is suggested, but the observance of both days side by side excludes it. This is to forget, however, that all the early institutions of Christianity were originally observed by Jewish Christians side by side with their Mosaic counterparts. Baptism was observed side by side with circumcision: this is beyond question. But the continued participation of the Jerusalem church in the sacrificial worship of the temple strongly suggests that the Lord's Supper was likewise observed side by side with the Passover meal. And it would only be natural that, when the disciples added to Christ's own two institutions the institution of the Lord's Day, it would be observed side by side with the sabbath. If this is so, far from it being improbable that they thought of the Lord's Day in sabbatarian terms, the reverse is true. For the evidence that baptism fulfils the Old Testament initiation rite and that the Lord's Supper fulfils the Old Testament memorial feast is virtually inescapable; moreover, it is likely, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the disciples would model the Lord's Day on the general lines of the festival they already knew and practised. If, of course, it could be

shown that originally the Lord's Day was not a memorial observance, a day of worship or a day of rest, as the sabbath was, then this presumption would fall to the ground. But the remainder of the chapter will make it clear whether the Lord's Day did possess such a character or not.

#### THE LORD'S DAY AS A MEMORIAL

The only actual directive about the observance of the Lord's Day in the New Testament is 1 Cor. 16 : 2. The other two references are a factual narrative of what took place on a particular Lord's Day, and a passing allusion. This being so, a great deal is left to inference, and, as in the case of the two Christian sacraments, inference must be based partly on the general teaching of the New Testament, and partly on its Old Testament and Jewish background. The first day of the week is mentioned in the Bible in only two connections. It is the day on which light was created (Gen. 1 : 3-5) and it is the day on which Christ rose from the dead and appeared to his followers (Matt. 28 : 1; Mark 16 : 2; Luke 24 : 1; John 20 : 1, 19, 26). 'The Lord's Day' (*hē kyriakē hēmera*) is found by this precise name only in Rev. 1 : 10. 'The day of the Lord' is used of the eschatological coming of God in the Old Testament, and of that of Christ in the New (Isa. 2 : 12; 13 : 6, 9; Jer. 46 : 10; Ezek. 13 : 5; 30 : 3; Joel 1 : 15; 2 : 1, 11, 31; 3 : 14; Amos 5 : 18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1 : 7, 14; Zech. 14 : 1; Mal. 4 : 5; 1 Cor. 5 : 5; 1 Thess. 5 : 2; 2 Pet. 3 : 10); and in Aramaic, as we saw on p. 32, this phrase is indistinguishable from 'the Lord's Day'. 'The Lord's holy day' is found in Isa. 58 : 13, with reference to the sabbath (cp. 'the Lord's sabbaths' in Lev. 23 : 38, and 'thy holy sabbath', 'my sabbaths', 'a sabbath to the Lord' elsewhere in the Old Testament). All these conceptions may have relevance to the Lord's Day, as we shall see, but since the first day of the week was newly chosen as a festival in the New Testament period, it is reasonable to look for its primary meaning in New Testament events and doctrines. On this showing, the Lord's Day would be primarily a memorial of Christ's resurrection and an anticipation of his future return. The context to Rev. 1 : 10 confirms these conclusions: see vv. 5, 7, 18.

The idea may also be present in Rev. 1 that the Lord's Day, as the day of corporate worship, is the Church's day of meeting with the risen Lord; but John's meeting with him was unique, and the idea is certainly not explicit.

The contention of Rordorf that the phrase *kyriakē hēmera* in Rev.

1 : 10 must be derived from *kyriakon deipnon* (1 Cor. 11 : 20), and must consequently mean the day on which the Lord's Supper is celebrated (op. cit., pp. 221, 274f.), is very improbable. *Kyriakos* is merely the adjectival form of *kyrios*, and its simple meaning is 'belonging to the Lord'. The fact that it occurs in the New Testament only in these two places may mean that it was not a very common word, but we find it used outside the New Testament both in the same connections and in different connections, and the underlying Aramaic word must have been much more common than the Greek.<sup>6</sup> The context in Rev. 1 is against Rordorf's theory, since it contains clear references to Christ's resurrection and return (vv. 5, 7, 18) but none to the sacrament; and though it is true, as Rordorf says, that Christ ate with his disciples on the day when he rose (Luke 24 : 41-43), yet there is no indication that the meal was the sacrament, and the whole emphasis of the Gospel narrative at this stage is on his resurrection, the eating being a deliberate demonstration on his part that he was really alive again. It is also worth noting that the Greek Fathers, who would be more sensitive to Greek linguistic nuances than we are, see no verbal connection between 'the Lord's Day' and 'the Lord's Supper'; for by the time of Hippolytus (c AD 215) *kyriakon deipnon* has come to mean the *agapē*, or love-feast, separated from the sacrament, and commonly held on weekdays—days suitable for fasting (*Apostolic Tradition* 25-27). We know from Acts 20 that the custom of celebrating the sacrament on the Lord's Day is an early one; and the appropriateness of celebrating the memorial of his death on the memorial of his resurrection is clear to anyone who considers how closely his death and resurrection are linked in the New Testament; but the inference that the Lord's Supper gave its name to the Lord's Day is one which the evidence does not permit us to draw. Rordorf's moral for today, that the only thing which really matters on the Lord's Day is the celebration of the sacrament (op. cit., pp. 305f.), is similarly excluded. 'The Lord's Day', be it repeated, simply means the day belonging to the Lord; it is observed in the New Testament by celebrating the sacrament, preaching and in other ways; it is an anticipation of the Lord's second coming; but above all—and this is the reason why the first day of the week was chosen—it is the memorial of his resurrection.

#### THE LORD'S DAY AS A DAY OF WORSHIP

It has already been noted that the form of language in Acts 20 : 7 seems to imply that to meet for the breaking of bread on the first day

of the week was normal practice for Paul and for the church of Troas. Even the fact that Luke names the day of the week (not usual in his writings) appears to indicate that there was something significant about it. The meeting described evidently occupied the evening (vv. 7f.), and the day is apparently reckoned from the previous evening or morning, since Paul's intended departure at daybreak is regarded as 'on the morrow' (vv. 7, 11). At what time the meeting began we are not told, but it presumably commenced in the afternoon or evening, since it goes on till dawn; though what we know of Jewish practice when teaching (see p. 22 above) and of Paul's own practice when thus engaged (see Acts 28 : 23) makes this inference somewhat uncertain. If the meeting did begin in the afternoon or evening, there may well have been other services earlier in the day, as in the synagogue on the sabbath. At all events, in this service Paul preaches at great length, knowing that he is about to depart, and it is not until some time after midnight that the breaking of the bread takes place (vv. 7, 9, 11).

We know also of daily worship in New Testament times. The church of Jerusalem worshipped together daily, as is shown by the evidence from Luke's writings quoted on p. 34. The members of this church, though they probably lived in separate houses and practised different trades, yet had all their possessions in common (Acts 2 : 44f.; 4 : 32-5 : 2) and appear to have taken their meals together (Acts 2 : 46; 6 : 1f.). Meeting so often, it is natural that they often joined in corporate worship, and it may be that the Lord's Supper was observed at the daily meal (Acts 2 : 46; cp. v. 42).

The only other probable reference to daily corporate worship is in Heb. 3 : 12f. (cp. Heb. 10 : 24f.), where the recipients of the letter are bidden to meet daily for mutual exhortation, unless the meaning is that they are to exhort one another at chance meetings. In this instance, we know practically nothing of their situation, but the exhortation in ch. 10 not to forsake the assembling of themselves together would be meaningless if they had lived together and needless if they had normally eaten together; so they do not seem to have been a community in as close a sense as the Jerusalem church. On the other hand, they may have been a community like the Therapeutae of Egypt described in Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*—indeed a closer community, in that they met for worship daily, not simply once a week. The presumption that a Hellenistic letter like Hebrews was written by a converted Hellenistic Jew, very likely an Egyptian Jew, is a strong one, and lends credibility to a destination in similar circles, though not necessarily in

the same country.<sup>7</sup> But we must not speculate further. The point to be noted is that the recipients were not necessarily an ordinary congregation.

Apart from these two cases, the corporate worship described in the New Testament (for example, in 1 Cor. 10-14) is probably weekly, like that of Acts 20. The Jewish origin of the Church makes this likely, for there is absolutely no evidence that in the first century it was normal for synagogue worship, like temple worship, to be held on weekdays; whereas there is abundant evidence of synagogue worship on the sabbath, supplied by the New Testament, Philo, and Josephus.<sup>8</sup> It is true, as has just been said, that the mother church at Jerusalem, with its communal life and its proximity to the temple, worshipped together daily, but even at Jerusalem there were synagogues (Acts 6 : 9 ; 24 : 11f.), which may have followed a different practice, like the synagogues in other places; and wherever the disciples carried the gospel we find them associating themselves with the synagogue for as long as they are permitted to, and trying to found the local church on a Jewish nucleus (Acts 9 : 20 ; 13 : 5, 14 ; 14 : 1 ; 17 : 1f., 10, 17 ; 18 : 4, 19, 26 ; 19 : 8). It seems probable, therefore, that when a local church first had to separate from the synagogue, it regarded itself as a synagogue, like the congregations called 'synagogues' in the Greek of Jas. 2 : 2 (which may or may not already have been separate), and met for worship weekly, though on the Lord's Day rather than the Jewish sabbath. Not only so, but it probably modelled its worship on what it had been used to in the Jewish synagogue, though with the addition of the Christian sacraments and of charismatic gifts like prophecy and tongues. The three recorded elements of the first-century synagogue service (Scripture-reading, teaching, and prayer) are not actually found together in New Testament accounts of specifically Christian services; and the first is not mentioned at all, except by implication (where the *exposition* of Scripture is spoken of, 2 Tim. 3 : 16, or the reading of *Christian* compositions, 1 Thess. 5 : 27 ; Rev. 1 : 3); though prayer is more fully attested (Matt. 18 : 19 ; Acts 2 : 42 ; 1 Cor. 14 : 14-17 ; 1 Tim. 2 : 8), and teaching more fully still (Acts 20 : 7-9 ; 1 Cor. 14 : 26 ; Eph. 4 : 11 ; 1 Tim. 3 : 2 ; etc.). But when we first have a clear description of a Christian Sunday service as a whole, in Justin Martyr's *First Apology* 67, dating from about AD 155, the influence of the synagogue service is plainly visible and is universally admitted (see, e.g., Dugmore, *Influence*, chs. 5, 7).

It might perhaps be objected by people without experience of

community life that the Lord's Day cannot originally have been a day of worship in any special sense, seeing that the church of Jerusalem worshipped together daily. But, in the first place, if this were true it would apply also to the sabbath, and the Jerusalem church would have had no special day of worship at all. Rather, the likelihood is that, since the church of Jerusalem worshipped together on ordinary weekdays, it devoted even more time to worship, and especially to the ministry of the word, on its two weekly festivals. This would agree with known Jewish practice on the sabbath, according to which a great part of the day was thus spent (see p. 22 above). Secondly, it must be remembered that Jewish Christianity soon spread outside the communal life of Jerusalem to other places in Palestine (Acts 8 : 1; 9 : 31-43), and that there the special character of the sabbath and Lord's Day would have been highlighted. Thirdly, Jewish-Christian practice at an early date, before the abandonment of the Jewish sabbath, is reflected in the customs of the Ebionites. But here we find no indication that the special character of the Lord's Day as a day of worship is not recognised. On the contrary, the Ebionites, says Eusebius, as well as observing the sabbath, 'each Lord's Day celebrated rites similar to ours' (*HE* 3.27.5).

#### THE LORD'S DAY AS A DAY OF REST

Rordorf is the latest of a line of writers who make a sharp distinction between the Lord's Day as the day of corporate worship and the Lord's Day as the weekly day of rest. The former, he claims, goes back to the New Testament, but the latter was only introduced by the emperor Constantine in the fourth century. In prosecuting this thesis, he draws his arguments partly from the writings of the Fathers, and partly from the supposed impossibility of Christians in pagan society resting on Sunday, both because many of them were slaves, and because, in times of persecution, a Christian who rested would thereby betray himself (*op. cit.*, pp. 85, 103f. 154-73). His case from the Fathers is very vulnerable. Dr. Stott shows in the second part of this work that the patristic evidence is capable of a wholly different interpretation. There are passages in Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and even earlier writers, which seem clearly to teach that Sunday is a day of rest, corresponding to the sabbath. Moreover, the Fathers regard the whole day as sacred, and appear to have devoted a great part of it to corporate worship, not hesitating to invade the normal hours of work for this purpose. As to Rordorf's other arguments, it should be noted that

pagan Romans were used to the Jews resting on Saturday, so would not necessarily have been intolerant of Christians resting on Sunday; that the proportion of early Christians who were slaves, and the harshness with which slaves were treated in the Roman world, are often exaggerated, but that slaves who were compelled to work on a day they regarded as a holy rest-day would have been able to comfort themselves that Christ permitted acts of necessity on the sabbath; that persecution is not now thought to have been as frequent in the early centuries as was once believed; and that the danger of revealing one's Christian allegiance by resting would have been small compared with the danger of revealing it by joining in worship—a danger which was frequently braved.

So much for arguments against the conception of the Lord's Day as a day of rest. Turning now to arguments on the other side, it should be noted first that the disjunction between a day of rest and a day of worship ignores the fact that, to the Jew, rest was itself an expression of worship. As was observed on pp. 5 and 13f. above, the sabbath rest was from the beginning a symbolical rest, commemorating God's rest after his work of creation, and was later given a further symbolical meaning, whereby it commemorated Israel's rest when delivered from the servitude of Egypt. In the New Testament, there is held before us the prospect of entering into God's creation rest ourselves, in virtue of the saving work of Christ (Heb. 3-4), so a symbolical rest, kept on the day which commemorates his saving resurrection and anticipates his glorious return, would have been no less meaningful to Christians. (See Gaffin, *Acts*, pp. 158-66.) Similarly, in the New Testament the creation is seen as fulfilled by a new creation (2 Cor. 5: 14-17; Eph. 2: 4-10), and the redemption from the slavery of Egypt is seen as fulfilled by redemption from the slavery of sin (Rom. 6: 1-23; 1 Pet. 1: 18-21), both the new creation and the new redemption being achieved by Christ through his death and resurrection. If, therefore, it had been appropriate to rest symbolically on the sabbath, the memorial of creation and of deliverance from the lesser bondage, it would surely have been regarded as equally appropriate to rest symbolically on the Lord's Day, the memorial of the new creation and of deliverance from the greater bondage.<sup>9</sup> Added appropriateness might have been seen in the fact that the rest now takes place on the first day of the week, not the last, for the redemption symbolised is not the outcome of our good works but the source of them (Rom. 8: 3f.; Eph. 2: 8-10; Titus 2: 14; Heb. 13: 2of.; 1 Pet. 2: 24).<sup>10</sup> These various ideas are widely distributed

in the New Testament, and one or more of them may have been present to the minds of the disciples from the time that they first observed the Lord's Day. For example, the promise of rest to those who believe in Christ is not confined to Hebrews but goes back to the Gospels and the earliest apostolic preaching (Matt. 11 : 28f.; Acts 3 : 19). Also, the fact that Christ's resurrection occurred on the first day of the week was an indication from the outset that his resurrection was the beginning of a new work of creation, and the Passover context in which his death and resurrection took place was an indication from the outset that in some new way he was redeeming his people from bondage: there is no reason why Paul need have been the first to draw these conclusions, especially as we have found them drawn by other New Testament writers as well.

The second fact to be noted is that there seems to be a hint of rest in each of the three New Testament references to Sunday. 'The Lord's Day' (Rev. 1 : 10), as we saw on p. 36 above, means 'the day belonging to the Lord'. But if it belongs to the Lord, it should be devoted to the Lord, just as the Lord's sabbath was (Exod. 20 : 8-11; 31 : 13-15; 35 : 2; Lev. 23 : 3; Deut. 5 : 12-14; Isa. 58 : 13). Not that other days should not be devoted to the Lord (Rom. 14 : 6-9); but on this day, as Paul says in a different connection, we should be able to 'attend upon the Lord without distraction' (1 Cor. 7 : 35).

Similarly, in 1 Cor. 16 : 2 we find the Lord's Day being selected not just for corporate worship but for a private duty. Commentators are more or less agreed that the phrase 'let each one of you lay by him in store' must mean an action performed at home. This alone is sufficient to refute Rordorf's idea that the Lord's Day at first existed simply for corporate worship. On the contrary, the day had further duties to fill it, such as calculating what amount of one's weekly earnings one could devote to the impoverished Christians of Jerusalem. And if this act of mercy is specially appropriate on Sunday, what about other acts of mercy?

Again, in Acts 20, Sunday is the regular day of corporate worship. But Sunday worship, as we saw on p. 38, was based upon the service of the synagogue, and the service of the synagogue, as we saw on p. 22, was of considerable length, far in excess of what was practicable on a working day. Not only so, but to the service of the synagogue the Church had added both the exercise of charismatic gifts and the celebration of the Lord's Supper! Except in circumstances where it was absolutely impossible, therefore, the Church would surely try to keep Sunday as a day of rest from normal duties.

The third and final fact which must be weighed is that not only the weekly sabbath, but also every important Jewish feast or fast, was a day of rest. On the first and last days of Unleavened Bread, on the Day of Pentecost, on the feast of Trumpets, and on the first and last days of Tabernacles, 'no laborious work' was to be done (Lev. 23 : 7f., 21, 25, 35f.; Num. 28 : 18, 25f.; 29 : 1, 12, 35), while on the sabbath and on the Day of Atonement 'no manner of work' was to be done (Lev. 23 : 3, 28, 30-32; Num. 29 : 7). Wherever it is stated in the Law that a day is a 'holy convocation', it is also stated that it is a day of rest.<sup>11</sup> Now, the Jewish Christians who instituted the Lord's Day evidently instituted it to be a holy convocation—indeed, it became before long *the* holy convocation, the Church's one regular day of corporate worship, through the decision of the Jerusalem council to exempt Gentile Christians from keeping the Jewish festivals, in agreement with the teaching of Paul, and through the subsequent decision of Jewish Christians to follow suit themselves. But to make the Lord's Day a holy convocation was equivalent to making it a day of rest. Otherwise one would have to suppose that its originators reckoned it of no more account than those minor festivals listed in *Megillath Taanith*, which were not holy convocations at all, and to which the only respect that was required was not to fast on such days: assembling for worship was optional, if indeed assemblies were held.<sup>12</sup>

The Lord's Day, then, was instituted to be a weekly memorial day, a weekly day of corporate worship and a weekly day of rest. In each of these three respects it resembles the weekly sabbath.

## Chapter 4

### The Continuity between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day

WE are now in a position to formulate the case for regarding the Lord's Day as a Christian sabbath. That there are differences as well as similarities between the new festival and the old was seen on p. 26f. The features of the sabbath introduced in the time of Moses—its special sacrifices, its detailed laws about permissible and impermissible acts, and its involvement in at least the abstract possibility of justification by works—are not continued in the Lord's Day. This is only what one would expect, if it is a creation ordinance, now being restored to its original form, so as to fit it for the gospel age, the age of spiritual sacrifices, Christian liberty and justification by faith. In addition, the day is moved from the seventh day of the week to the first, and a new act of God, Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week, becomes the primary event which it commemorates. Whether this development is any greater obstacle to regarding the Lord's Day as a Christian sabbath has been discussed in a somewhat desultory way in the course of the preceding two chapters: the threads of the argument will be drawn together in what follows, especially in paragraph (vi). A final difference between the new festival and the old is that of nomenclature. Though the title 'the Lord's Day' may be modelled on titles for the sabbath (see below), the title 'the sabbath' is not applied to Sunday in the New Testament, and is only rarely applied to it in the literature of the first three centuries. This may be due to the concern of early Christians to avoid confusion with the Jewish sabbath and the Jewish manner of observing it (which ceased to be a serious problem only after the conversion of the Roman Empire). In any case, the main issue is not whether the festivals are alike in name, but whether they are alike in their essential character.

To turn now from differences to likenesses, the Lord's Day corresponds to the sabbath in the following thirteen respects.

(i) Like the sabbath, the Lord's Day is a memorial. Just as the sabbath commemorated the creation and the deliverance from Egypt (see

pp. 2, 13f.), so the Lord's Day commemorates Christ's resurrection (see p. 35f.). This is the reason for the change of day.

(ii) Like the sabbath, the Lord's Day is the regular day of corporate worship (see pp. 5, 10, 16f., 20f., 36-9).

(iii) Like the sabbath, the Lord's Day is a day of rest (see pp. 2f., 8-11, 15f., 19f., 39-42).

(iv) Like the sabbath, but unlike almost any other festival in the ancient world (certainly any Jewish festival), the Lord's Day is celebrated at intervals of seven days, being geared to the Jewish week (see pp. 2f., 27f., 32).

(v) This is emphasised by the fact that the resurrection could equally well have been commemorated once a year, as in later times at Easter. Instead, it was from the outset commemorated every week (see p. 35f.). Hence, the Jewish festival on which the Lord's Day was modelled was not the annual Passover but the weekly sabbath.

(vi) The change of day from the seventh day of the week to the first does not abolish the older meanings of the sabbath, as a memorial of the creation and of the redemption from Egypt. Rather, it transforms these meanings by linking them with Christ's resurrection. For through his death and resurrection, Christ has inaugurated a *new* creation and achieved a *greater* redemption, from the slavery not of Egypt but of sin (see p. 40). Thus, the reference to the first creation and redemption is only indirect, through the new creation and redemption; but such a reference should not be thought of as excluded, for both the first creation and the first redemption continue to have relevance for Christians, who are taught by the New Testament that the world was created through Christ (John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:14), and that the nucleus of the Christian Church are the faithful remnant of the people of the Exodus, the Jews, into whose fellowship and privileges Gentile Christians have now been grafted (Rom. 9:27; 11:5, 13-24; and consider the presuppositions of the circumcision controversy).<sup>1</sup>

(vii) The sabbath is a creation ordinance, which, like marriage, took a parenthetical form under the Law, but which we should now likewise expect to find restored to its original state (see p. 6f.). No other day qualifies to be this restored sabbath except the Lord's Day. The change from the seventh to the first day of the week is, in view of the preceding paragraph, no difficulty; the change is merely ceremonial—, one which does not destroy the earlier meanings of the festival, but rather enriches those meanings by relating the festival to Christ. The

New Testament similarly enriches the significance of marriage by relating it to Christ (John 3: 29; 2 Cor. 11: 2; Eph. 5: 22-33; Rev. 19: 7, 9; 21: 2, 9; 22: 17).

(viii) The sabbath commandment is included in the Decalogue, and consequently has permanent validity (see p. 14f.). Though it requires some measure of reinterpretation under the Gospel, like other of the Ten Commandments, notably as regards the change from the seventh to the first day, it must not be re-interpreted in a way contrary to the needs of human and animal nature. These include not only nightly rest but a periodical change from daily toil, which it is unmerciful to withhold (see note 5 on p. 146). The New Testament teaches that deeds of mercy are appropriate both to the sabbath and to the Lord's Day (see pp. 23f., 41); and the Lord's Day, being a day of rest, still in force after the seventh-day sabbath has been annulled, is the Christian's opportunity of giving this merciful rest from toil to others, and of taking it himself.

(ix) Like the sabbath, the Lord's Day looks forward as well as back. In rabbinical thinking, the sabbath looked forward to the rest which the righteous will enjoy in the age to come. The New Testament, building on the teaching of Hellenistic Judaism, links this rest with God's rest ever since the creation, and teaches that to share this rest with God is the privilege of those who believe in Christ, and that a foretaste of it can be enjoyed here and now (see pp. 10-12, 28f., 40f.). In harmony with such teaching about the sabbath, one of the implications of the title 'the Lord's Day' in the book of Revelation is probably that the day is an anticipation of Christ's second coming (see p. 35), by which the expectation of the final rest will be fully realised. The Lord's Day, being a day of rest, itself emphasises the link between Christ's second coming and the final rest. Also relevant is the fact that the Lord's Day is a memorial of Christ's resurrection, and of the new creation and new redemption which it effected (see paragraphs i and vi above). For Christ's resurrection is the first fruits of our own future resurrection (Rom. 8: 11; 1 Cor. 6: 14; 15: 20-23, 45-49; 2 Cor. 4: 14; Col. 1: 18; 1 Thess. 4: 14; Rev. 1: 5); the new creation, which was inaugurated through Christ's death and resurrection, will be completed only at his return (Matt. 19: 28; Acts 3: 21; Rom. 8: 18-25; 2 Pet. 3: 13; Rev. 21: 1, 5); and the same is true of the new redemption (Luke 21: 28; Rom. 7: 24f.; 8: 23; Eph. 1: 14; 4: 30).

(x) The title 'the Lord's Day' may be modelled on Old Testament titles for the sabbath, such as 'the Lord's holy day' (see p. 35). These

provide closer analogies than the monthly *Sebastē*, or 'Emperor's Day' (on which consult Rordorf, op. cit., pp. 206f.).

(xi) The form of service used by Christians on the Lord's Day was probably based, from the outset, upon the synagogue service, and the synagogue service in question was that of the sabbath day (see pp. 20f., 38).

(xii) Both for Hellenistic Judaism and for Palestinian Judaism, the sabbath was the day of light (see pp. 8-10, 19). However, the day on which light was created was not the seventh day but the first (Gen. 1: 3-5). Moreover, the first day was the day on which Christ 'by the resurrection of the dead proclaimed *light* both to the people and to the Gentiles' (Acts 26: 23).

(xiii) In Pharisaic thought, the sabbath and the first day of the week were linked. The *maamads* (see note 8 on p. 151) refrained from fasting not only on the feast of the sabbath itself but on the day before it and on the day after it, because of the relation these days had with it (*M. Taanith* 4.2).<sup>2</sup> Jewish Christians would probably not have been uninfluenced in their thinking about the Lord's Day by this connection which it had with the sabbath.

Nearly all these thirteen resemblances between the Lord's Day and the sabbath must have existed from the very time that the Lord's Day began to be observed, in the Jewish Christian circles where it originated, since they arise either out of the Old Testament and Jewish background of the festival, or out of an inseparable feature of it like the choice of the first day of the week. The exceptions are point (vi), which cannot be proved to go back behind the teaching of Paul, points (vii) and (ix), which are in some measure dependent on point (vi), and point (x), where the title 'the Lord's Day' cannot be proved to have been applied to the festival much before the time of the Revelation of John. On the other hand, even these four resemblances may very well go back to the beginning. At all events, each of the thirteen resemblances had developed before the end of the New Testament period, as part of the Christian thought of one or more New Testament writers, or as part of the Jewish inheritance which they all shared; and even if it were the case that the measure of correspondence between the Lord's Day and the sabbath which existed from the outset was increased by contributions from the theology of Paul and John, the analogy between the two festivals would not lose its significance or its authority as a result. It would remain true that the sabbath was the model on which the disciples originally framed the Lord's Day, and

that, when viewed in the light of New Testament theology as a whole, the Lord's Day can clearly be seen to be a Christian sabbath—a New Testament fulfilment to which the Old Testament sabbath points forward.

PART II

*The Evidence of the Fathers*

## Chapter 5

### The Attitude to the Sabbath in Patristic Thought

HAVING examined the evidence supplied by the New Testament, we now go on to see what attitude was taken in the succeeding period.

It seems clear that the observance of the first day of the week began in Jewish circles and from the earliest days.<sup>1</sup> It did not stem from Gentile sources.<sup>2</sup> What exactly happened at Jerusalem among those of the circumcision is not clear. They may also have continued to observe the sabbath, as they seem to have continued to practise circumcision.<sup>3</sup> If we are to accept Eusebius's evidence about the Ebionites, presumably the survivors of those who continued to practise the Jewish ritual, there were in these sects those who kept two days, the seventh and the first (*HE* 3.27.5; *PG* xx. 273).

On the other hand, the *Didache* 14.8 (c. AD 90-110) mentions only Sunday and the two fast days of the Christians, apparently deliberately chosen so as not to coincide with Jewish fast days. Ignatius disapproves of the observance of the Jewish sabbath<sup>4</sup> and, as Dumaine ('Dimanche') pointed out, it looks from the passage as if Ignatius considered such an observance as a recent innovation among Christians, in much the same way as Paul does in his letter to the Galatians, also Gentile churches (*Gal.* 4: 10). Ignatius claims that his attitude to the sabbath was handed down to him.

In the *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. AD 70-100) the author states that 'the present sabbaths are not acceptable to me', and explains the real meaning of the sabbath as the age after the six thousand years of the world's existence. Only then shall we be able to 'keep the sabbath' truly. As he mentions the Christian practice of celebrating the day after the sabbath, this is clearly meant to be a condemnation of the Jewish sabbath observance (*Barn.* 15.8).

It will not be necessary to give details of the same attitude as it continues throughout the next two centuries<sup>5</sup>. But two points need to be emphasised. The church refused to accept Marcion's attitude to the Old Testament suggesting that it was to be abandoned altogether by

Christians. It refused to make the seventh day into a fast day as Marcion would have liked (Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* 4.12; *PL* ii. 383ff.). Only on the 'Great Sabbath', the day on which Christ lay in the grave, the day before Easter day, was fasting permitted. Secondly, Justin in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew is willing to allow him, if he becomes a Christian, to go on observing the sabbath, if he has conscientious qualms about it, provided he does not force it on others (*Dial.* 47; *PG* xx. 273). This is no doubt a development of Paul's argument in *Rom.* 14: 5.

There seems to have been, probably arising during the fourth century, an observance of the sabbath, as well as the Sunday, as a day free from work<sup>6</sup>. The origin of this practice is uncertain. It was considered the feast of the creation. By this time the emperor had already issued his Sunday decree of AD 321. Seventh Day Adventist scholars and others have attempted to prove that it was observed in this way from the earliest days, but the evidence is against them; for the passages in the *Apostolic Constitutions* which mention the observance of both days are absent from the *Didascalia*, which was written a hundred years earlier.<sup>7</sup> In fact, this double observance seems only to have been the practice in Syria and Asia Minor, and later in Constantinople. It appears in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, in the Gregorians and Basil, and in Chrysostom. The practice of not working on the seventh day is condemned by the Council of Laodicea, AD 363. Socrates implies that it was unknown in Rome and Alexandria, and presumably also in North Africa.<sup>8</sup> Though Gregory of Nyssa calls the days 'twin sisters' (*Adversus eos*; *PG* xlvi. 309), there is no doubt that even where the sabbath was observed it was never treated in the same way as the Sunday, though a eucharist was celebrated on it. This double observance during the period after the edict of Constantine may well be an excessive devotion, a preparation for Sunday which spread over an extra day.<sup>9</sup> Such an explanation is supported by the additions to Ignatius, where the Saturday observance was the preparation for the observance of Sunday (*Ps.-Ign., Mag.* 9.4; *PG* v. 768). This is the practice of the Orthodox Syrian Church in India today, though it is only an evening service and does not involve the whole day. In assessing the evidence for such an observance of the sabbath, care must be taken to be sure that the reference is not to a late service on the Saturday evening with the Roman method of reckoning the day.

The misuse of the sabbath by the Jews was a constant theme of Christian writers. The Jews are accused of spending the day in

'inactivity' (*argia*). Instead of using the day as it was intended by God in a study of the Scriptures and gaining knowledge, they spent it in idleness, in dancing and in the pleasures of debauchery (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.9, PG vii. 993; Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 4.31, PG xi. 1076). Sometimes there is contempt for people who take half-cold food and tepid drinks (Eusebius, *Pss.* 91 (92); PG xxviii. 1169). They are accused of finding leisure for evil, but not for good, and the charge is made that all work was forbidden, because the Jews could not be trusted to do what was good (Justin, *Dial.* 12, PG vi. 500; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.15.1, PG vii. 1012). Origen claims that it would be impossible to fulfil the sabbatic law, if taken literally, for one would not be able to move from one spot throughout the day (*De Princip.* 4.17; PG xi. 380).

#### THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SABBATH

We have seen the practice of the early church on the sabbath question; what then was its meaning for the church? There are three main lines of thought.

##### 1. *The sabbath is looked upon as a Jewish institution*

The aversion to it was not so much to the idea of one day in seven given to rest, as to its observance as part of the Jewish system and to its misuse. As a part of the Jewish system linked to the temple and the sacrificial system, to the laws of clean and unclean, and to the national outlook, it had passed away. It was included, often linked with circumcision, in the Old Covenant. This was partly due to its inadequacy as a picture of how time dedicated to God should be spent, its negative character; and partly to its grave misuse in unworthy forms. It was one of the signs of the Old Covenant with Israel. This was shown in Exod. 31:13-16. 'It is a sign (*'ōt*) between me and you throughout your generations'. Again, in Ezek. 20:10-12, 'I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them that they might know that I am the Lord'; 'I gave them sabbaths to be a sign'. In the same chapter, v. 20, 'Hallow my sabbaths and they shall be a sign'. So, too, in Neh. 9:14. The attitude of the Fathers is that with the passing of the whole system, temple, sacrifice, circumcision, clean and unclean, went the sabbath as a sign (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.1f., PG vii. 1012f.; Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 2.7, PG xi. 805, etc.).

The original purpose of the sabbath had been good. It was God-given. Several of the Fathers distinguish between 'my sabbaths' (Isa. 13:14; 56:4; Ezek. 20:12) and 'your sabbaths' (Tertullian, *De Idol.*

14, *PL* ii. 682; Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 4.26, *PG* xi. 1076). In other words, the way in which the Israelites were observing the sabbath was not the way God intended. 'To delight oneself in the Lord' (Isa. 58 : 13) was to seek the knowledge of God: to get to know him better. As Philo had seen, the sabbath gave the opportunity for meditation on the things of the spirit. It was meant for spiritual ends.

Yet some felt that this was not the best, but only a second best. Many of the Fathers consider that the whole Mosaic law was a law of bondage, given for slaves, who could not obey without it. No doubt this is connected with Paul's view of the Christian life as liberty and being 'set free from the law' (Rom. 7 : 3; Gal. 5 : 1). The sabbath regulations in this sense are only a part of this system of bondage. If the Israelites had not worshipped the golden calf, the Decalogue, God's natural law, would have been sufficient, but as they immediately broke it, they needed a 'yoke of bondage' to keep them from going astray.<sup>10</sup>

The Fathers, it seems unanimously, claimed that there was no sabbath observance before Moses; Abel, Enoch, and the patriarchs are held up as examples of those who had no sabbaths and yet lived godly lives.<sup>11</sup> They fulfilled what it implied without having a rule for its observance. Without sabbath regulations they observed its inner meaning. A modified form of this is the idea of a pupil learning his lesson. The law of Moses was 'being under a tutor'. When the lesson was learned, the tutor could be dismissed. Origen says, 'The work of the pedagogue is abolished by the perfection of the pupil' (*Comm. Rom.* 3.5-5.7, *PG* xiv. 958).

Moreover in spite of the sabbath regulations, God himself for his own purposes overrules the sabbath law which he has himself instituted. He himself has not ceased to work, for he says, 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work' (John 5 : 17). God has not ceased to guide his universe.<sup>12</sup> Since the time of Moses God has overruled his own law. In commanding the Israelites to march round Jericho for seven days, it is clear that one of these days must have been a sabbath (Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* 21, *PL* ii. 309b). This, these Fathers claim, was in fact 'doing the service of God'. It was in the same category with the priests 'who profane the sabbath and are blameless'. If God has commanded a thing it must be right to do it on a sabbath (Justin, *Dial.* 27, *PG* vi. 533; Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 10, *PG* xii. 752). This is in fact taking a step further the argument of Christ in the Gospels that the priestly service is beyond the law of the sabbath. The service of God lies outside the sabbath regulation. Or perhaps it would be better to say that included

in the sabbath meaning was this spiritual service to God. Behind the outward regulation of the sabbath lay deeper insights into its meaning.

2. *The sabbath is looked upon as a physical benefit*

Clement of Alexandria stresses this point of view, that man needs a day of rest (*Strom.* 6.16, PG ix. 364). Following Aristobulus, he says, 'God gave a seventh day for rest on account of the trouble there is in life'. Aphrahat (*Serm.* 12), writing between AD 336 and 345, and from outside the Roman Empire where Constantine's edict would not hold, points out that the sabbath was not instituted primarily for 'sin and righteousness, life and death', for it was prescribed also for animals which have no soul<sup>13</sup>. I presume that his meaning is that its observance was not of the essentials of the approach to God; it was nevertheless for man's good. For he goes on to point out that its institution was only binding on what grows tired in labour. He points out that rivers, clouds, rain, and sun, which do not grow tired, are excluded from the commandment and from the sabbath rest. Adam did not need a sabbath before the Fall, because his work was not laborious. Only what grows weary needs a sabbath. The sabbath then was a day of relaxation from toil enjoyed by both slaves and animals. This seems to be an extension of Christ's words that 'the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath'.

3. *The sabbath is looked upon as a spiritual benefit as well as a physical*

This viewpoint stems from Philo, as we have seen, and is taken up by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 6.16, PG ix. 364) and Origen (*Hom. Exod.* 7.7, PG xii. 347).

We have then in these varying attitudes a narrower view in which the sabbath was seen as part of the Jewish national covenant life and a wider view that it had a universal significance, a humanitarian, besides a religious significance. Perhaps these different views did not depend so much on the individual writer as on those to whom he was writing. This is brought out clearly in Tertullian. In writing against the Jews he claims that the sabbath is temporary and with the coming of Christ has come to an end. But in writing against Marcion, who claimed that the Old Testament had no connection with the Christian, he says, 'He was called the Lord of the sabbath because he maintained the sabbath as his own institution, but he did not utterly destroy it . . . he did not at all rescind the sabbath . . . he exhibits in a clear light the different kinds

of work . . . he imparted an additional sanctity' (*Adv. Jud.* 6, *PL* ii. 608c; *Adv. Marcion* 4.12, *PL* ii. 383ff.).

This warns us that in examining teaching on the sabbath it is very important to see what the purpose of the writer is. The Jewish sabbath has for all Christians passed away. The sabbath in its spiritual meaning is still of great importance to the Christian. Of what that meaning is we shall get glimpses in a study of what the Fathers felt the Old Testament usage implied for Christians.

#### THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SABBATH

It is possible to find various strands of thought in the Christian view of the Jewish sabbath. One suggestion is that the sabbath was the memorial of the first creation and of its completion (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.1f., *PG* vii. 1012f.; Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 2.7, *PG* xi. 805; Ps.-Athanasius, *De Sab. et Circum.*, *PG* xli. 468). Another view was that it represented a ceasing from our own works and a resting in the work of God. Salvation was by faith not works (Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.16, *PG* ix. 364). Rather another slant was to see the sabbath as a picture of ceasing to do what was evil, a rest of conscience (Epiphanius, *Adv. Haer.* 1.2.32, *PG* xli. 468; Ps.-Athanasius, *De Sab. et Circum.*, *PG* xli. 468).

Then again, some saw it as a picture of the Christian experience, the new land of promise into which the new Joshua was leading his people, the Canaan of God, life consecrated and made holy (Justin, *Dial.* 12, *PG* vi. 500; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.1-3, *PG* vii. 1013ff.; Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 8.23, *PG* xi. 1552). This was rest in comparison with the toil of the old selfish life. To keep sabbath was to have the heart set upon God all the time. All time belonged to God.

Seven whole days, not one in seven,  
I will praise thee.

(George Herbert)

Yet another suggestion is that as in the Genesis account there is no mention of an evening and a morning to the seventh day, the seventh day becomes the eighth day without any break. The rest of the seventh day merges into the perfect rest of the eighth day (Augustine, *Serm.* 259, *PL* xxxviii. 1197; *Civ. Dei* 22. 30, *PL* xli. 803).

Then too there was an eschatological meaning given to it. This might take two forms. In the first the sabbath was a picture of the eternal rest after death laid up for the Christian. It was an eternal sabbath

after the toil of this world. Of this the patriarchs had a foretaste.<sup>14</sup> As the ideals of the sabbath could not be fully realised down here and no one could serve God all the time, or have a wholly quiet conscience, its full meaning would only be realised in the world to come.<sup>15</sup> Heb. 4 : 9, which seems primarily to refer to the present life, was taken, and still is, by many expositors to refer to 'the keeping of the sabbath in the world to come'. But even as early as *Barnabas* this has already begun to take on a chiliastic slant. The earth's existence will last for six thousand years. Then will come the millennium, the thousand years of sabbath keeping. This conception continued to catch the imagination of those who held chiliastic views (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.2, PG vii, 1017; Origen, *Hom. in Gen.* 7, PG xii, 218; Methodius, *Symp.* 9.5, PG viii, 189). Augustine at first seems to have held these views, but later changed.<sup>16</sup>

It has been suggested (Daniélou, "Typologie") that Christ's attitude to the sabbath lay along the lines of realised eschatology. The sabbath was the foreshadowing of the Messianic reign and therefore Christ's miracles were deliberately performed on the sabbath day to show this. The Messianic salvation had begun in accordance with Isa. 61 : 1, and this Christ claimed to be fulfilling (Luke 4 : 17-21). True rest was to be found in Christ himself: 'Come unto me . . . I will give you rest' (Matt. 11 : 28). Perhaps this is the basis of another view to be found in Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (c. AD 380) in which Christ himself was the sabbath fulfilment. He says (*Adv. Haer.* 1.2.30, PG xli, 468), 'But when the Great Sabbath came, that is Christ, who gave us rest from our sins, of whom Noah was the type, This one shall give us rest from our sins . . .' He goes on to say, '*Sebeth*, which is interpreted rest and sabbath, which is Christ, in whom the Father rests and the Spirit rests'. He speaks of the Jewish sabbath as the 'little sabbath'. Christ then is the fulfilment of the Jewish sabbath, as he was also of circumcision. He was both the Joshua who circumcises and the flint, the stone, with which they were circumcised. Apart perhaps from the millenarian, these different views could all be traced back to biblical origin.

#### SUMMARY OF THE PATRISTIC ATTITUDE TO THE SABBATH

##### (a) *Practically*

1. The sabbath possessed a national character as a mark of the Old Covenant between God and Israel, and in that capacity it came to an end.

2. It bore a humanitarian character, wider than the national, a rhythm of life by which what 'grows weary' could gain refreshment.
3. It had a spiritual value and enabled men to have time for the service of God. The priestly service, being God's, was not given up.
4. By inference from the last two points, as the Fathers concerned seem to imply, the Saturday day of rest had merged into the Christian Sunday.

(b) *Theologically*

1. It was a memorial of the old creation and showed the completion of that work.
2. It was a picture of salvation by faith, not works.
3. It was a picture of the rest of conscience from sin.
4. It was a foretaste of the final rest in the world to come.
5. It was fulfilled in Christ and his Messianic work.<sup>17</sup>

What emerges from all this is that the Christian church considered the Jewish sabbath, in its setting in the Jewish economy and as a sign of the Old Covenant, to have come to an end. The seventh day was no longer the sacred day to the Christian. It had served its purpose in the Mosaic ritual, but was inadequate to express all that was contained in the New Covenant. This inadequacy Christ had begun to show in the way in which he acted on the sabbath day, and it was confirmed in the Epistles and the works of the Fathers. As Ignatius expressed it soon after the end of the first century, 'No longer observing sabbaths, but fashioning our lives according to the Lord's Day, on which also our life arose through him'.<sup>18</sup> As the Epistle to the Hebrews says, referring to the whole conception of Judaism, it had begun 'to become obsolete and, growing old, is ready to vanish away' (Heb. 8 : 13).

For a rite so firmly imbedded in their past with such obvious advantages and so strongly appreciated as the sabbath had been, to have been discarded must have required a most powerful dynamic. What was this? The answer lies in the theology of the Christian Sunday.

## Chapter 6

### The Early Church and Sunday in the First Three Centuries (I)

WE have examined the attitude of the early church to the Jewish sabbath. We now turn to its attitude to Sunday. Professor Rordorf, as we have seen, has claimed that it was not until Constantine's decree in AD 321 forbidding Sunday work that the church began to think in terms of a whole day. Before that it had been the occasion for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but little more. We shall be concentrating on the evidence before that date. The evidence before AD 321 will be mostly indirect, but if it all points in one direction we shall be able to form something of a definite picture of what was taking place. Our first question in this chapter will be, 'Did the Christians think in terms of a whole day?' and in the next chapter, 'If so, what sort of a day?'

#### I. DID CHRISTIANS THINK IN TERMS OF A WHOLE 'DAY'?

The Jews, and so Jewish Christians, the first nucleus of the church, were used to the observance of special days. To begin with, the Christian Sunday carried its Jewish name 'the first day of the week'. But later, by the end of the first century, it had gained its own special title, 'the Lord's Day' (*hē kyriakē hēmera*).<sup>1</sup> Before very long the title is in use without the word 'day', its meaning being already well known.

In the patristic evidence, it is always with the resurrection of Christ and not with the Lord's Supper<sup>2</sup> that the origin of the day is connected. To the Fathers it is Christ's rising again which has made it 'the Lord's Day'. As we shall see later, they were fond of linking it with Psalm 118 (117): 24, 'This is the day the Lord hath made . . . let us rejoice.'<sup>3</sup> Two verses earlier comes the great Resurrection testimonium, 'This is the stone . . .' So far as I am aware there is no instance of the name 'the Lord's Day' being attributed to the performance of the 'Lord's Supper' on that day.<sup>4</sup> The day carried, as we shall see, all the associations of that first day in Jerusalem when the Christ arose from the grave and appeared to the disciples and on various occasions during the day they saw him 'alive after his passion'. By AD 165 this day was considered

important enough to have a complete work written about it. Melito, bishop of Sardis, wrote a work *On the Lord's Day* (Eusebius, *HE* 4.26.2; *PG* xx. 392). As Melito wrote another book *On Baptism*, but did not, it seems, write on the Lord's Supper, it appears strange that if the church did not think in terms of a whole day the title was not *On the Lord's Supper*.

In assessing the attitude of the early church to Sunday several insights are important.

(1) The Christians compared Sunday both with the Jewish sabbath and with pagan festivals. It is not necessary to go into all these instances.<sup>5</sup> Several writers compare the observance of the sabbath by the Jews with the observance of Sunday by Christians. Perhaps we may give an example from Tertullian. He blames the Christians for joining in heathen festival days and sarcastically refers to the impossibility of the heathen being willing to join in the Christian festivals. He says, 'O better fidelity of the pagans to their sect which does not claim any solemnity (*sollemnitas*) for itself, no Lord's Day, no Pentecost, would they have shared with us.'<sup>6</sup> Just before he has spoken of the Jewish sabbaths, so that here is a double comparison of the Christian Sunday with both pagan and Jewish sacred days. In both cases these involved the whole day.

(2) That the whole day was thought of is seen also in two regulations of the early church. The first dealt with fasting. No fasting was allowed on the Sunday.<sup>7</sup> Nor, except later in Rome, was it allowed on the sabbath either. Now a fast covers the whole day and not only a part of the day, showing that they were thinking in terms of a whole day.

Again, on Sunday the regular custom was, throughout the day, to stand for prayer. Tertullian criticises those who 'not only on the Lord's day, but on the sabbath kneel for prayer' (*De Orat.* 23; *PL* i. 1191). He goes on, 'We, however, as we have received, only on the day of the Lord's resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling, but every posture and office of anxiety.' This clearly does not refer only to a service. Had Tertullian mentioned only kneeling this might have been inferred, but the inclusion of anxious thoughts shows that he was thinking of the whole day.

(3) Again, the word *epiteleō*, to 'complete', 'fulfil', when used of the Christian Sunday, suggests the same. It is the word used by Eusebius of the observance of Sunday by the Ebionites and can rightly be translated 'celebrate' the day.<sup>8</sup> The other two words *ago* and *diago* which are both used of Sunday have no religious significance and would

simply mean 'to spend' or 'pass'. The same two words are used of the sabbath.

(4) The passage already quoted which deals with the Ebionites suggests that Sunday was in very early times looked upon as the Christian equivalent of the Jewish sabbath. It is true that Eusebius uses a different Greek verb for the Jewish observance and the Christian, but the fact that he couples the two together and seems surprised that the Ebionites should accept both shows that the Christian Sunday was treated as the observance of a day.<sup>9</sup>

(5) In the controversy over the observance of the *Pascha* between the churches of Asia Minor and the church as a whole, called the Quartodeciman controversy, we get further light. These churches insisted that the *Pascha*, the observance of the Christian Passover, the death and resurrection of Christ, should be observed on the fourteenth of Nisan. This was the Jewish custom for slaying the Passover lamb. The rest of Christendom claimed that the feast of the Resurrection could only fittingly be observed on a Sunday. It is not necessary to go into the details of this controversy, but what emerges is that the church as a whole looked upon Sunday as the day to be observed in honour of the Resurrection. It would seem probable that the Asia Minor churches would claim that in observing Sunday<sup>10</sup> they were already observing regularly the feast of the Resurrection, and that the *Pascha* was not really a remembrance of the Resurrection but of the whole act of redemption, the sufferings, burial and resurrection, looked upon as the new Exodus, and therefore more appropriately connected with the Jewish Passover which it fulfilled.<sup>11</sup> On either side of the dispute we can see that honour was paid to the Lord's Day. In the one case, it was thought the only suitable day to celebrate the Resurrection. In the other, it was the regular celebration of the Resurrection. And as we have seen, Melito, himself a Quartodeciman, wrote a work on the Lord's Day.

(6) But the attitude to Sunday can perhaps be finally settled by a passage from Origen.<sup>12</sup> He writes, 'For this reason Paul seems to have said very finely, "Do you observe days and months and times and years? I am afraid for you." If anyone makes a rejoinder to this by talking of our observances of certain days, the Lord's Days, or the Preparation, or the Passover, or Pentecost, we would reply to this that the perfect man, who is always engaged in the words, works, and thoughts of the Divine Logos, who is by nature his Lord, is always living in his (*autou*) days and is constantly observing the Lord's Days.'

Here Origen admits that, in spite of Paul's words in Galatians, Christians do observe days, of which he places the Lord's Days first. If the early church had only observed a celebration of the Eucharist, it seems plain that Origen would never have needed to take this up at all. His answer, that to the perfect man each day becomes a Lord's Day, suggests clearly that he meant that the day was devoted to Christ and that this was how the early Christians looked on the Lord's Day.

We may conclude then from these hints that long before the time of Constantine the church thought in terms of a whole day, a day for the Christian set apart from other days of the week.

## Chapter 7

### The Early Church and Sunday in the First Three Centuries (II)

In this chapter we shall endeavour to discover in what way the early Christians looked upon Sunday, that whole day which they observed. The new day, which in some way at least had replaced the Jewish sabbath, was clearly different from it in Christian eyes. They poured scorn on the Jewish observance of the sabbath, as we have seen. So, too, they had refused to allow that one day in the week was God's, or had any holiness in itself. All time was God's. Is there enough information for us to gather the characteristics of the Christian Sunday?

#### WHAT SORT OF A DAY WAS IT?

On this, there are three main lines of thought among the Fathers.

(1) It seems clear from the letter which Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, wrote to Soter, bishop of Rome (c. AD 168), that the day was treated as a *holy day*. He wrote, 'Today we have passed the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your epistle.' The Greek reads *tēn sēmeron oun kyriakēn hagian hēmeran diēgagomen*. It could well be translated, 'Today therefore we have spent the Lord's day as a holy day.' The verb is colourless, though in 2 Macc. 12 : 38 it is used of the sabbath. The important words are 'holy day'. When 'holy' is used in the Old Testament of a day, it refers either to the sabbath or to a Jewish feast day, and means a day dedicated to God.<sup>1</sup> To Christians, the Lord's Day clearly would not be looked upon in quite the same way as the Jews looked upon their holy days, but it would imply that the day was seen as devoted to Christ. We have already noted in the last chapter that Origen looked upon the Lord's Days in this way where he says the days are 'his', that is, Christ's. Perhaps this is the explanation of the unusual phrase in *Didache* 14.1, 'each Lord's Day which belongs to the Lord (*kata kyriakēn de kyriou*).'<sup>2</sup> It is important to notice that Dionysius is writing in the plural and evidently for the whole church at Corinth. It is the church and not just the individual bishop who has spent the day as a holy day. The letter from Soter would be read to the whole church as had been the custom with the New Testament Epistles.

A passage in the *Didascalia* (c. AD 230) points to the same conclusion. The writer says, 'For not even on Sundays, in which we rejoice and make good cheer, is it permitted to anyone to speak a word of levity or one alien to religion.'<sup>3</sup> As the work is directed specially against those who consider the Jewish laws as still binding, this passage is particularly significant.

(2) The Christian Sunday was looked upon as a *feast*, a *festival*. This is very widespread and from the earliest times. It will be found that in the Old Testament certain words are associated with the festivals. Not only are they 'holy' days, but they are feasts (LXX, *heortai*). In them, those participating are to rejoice (*euphrainō, chairō*). On them are held 'holy convocations' (*klētai hagiai*). These days then were days of festival in which there was the spirit of rejoicing and on which the people met together for worship and to remember particular blessings, such as historic deliverances or the annual harvest.

When we turn to the patristic evidence we find the same words used with regard to the Christian Sunday, but this time in remembrance of spiritual deliverance, the work of Christ.

In *Barnabas* 15.1, the passage already quoted, the writer says, 'Wherefore we joyfully celebrate the eighth day, the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead. . . .'. The Greek reads *eis euphrosynēn*. We shall examine later the name 'eighth day' as given to Sunday, but meanwhile point out that both 'eighth day' and 'for rejoicing' come in the LXX of Leviticus 23 : 36-40, the description of the feast of Tabernacles.

Again, in the passage already mentioned, Tertullian (*De Idol.* 14) blames the willingness of Christians to get mixed up in heathen festivals, and describes the Christian festivals also by the expressions *sollemnitas* and *festus dies*. He has mentioned previously the heathen Saturnalia and the Kalends of January and other heathen festivals, and then the Jewish sabbaths and 'the other festivals at one time pleasing to God'. He is obviously looking upon the Christian Sundays as 'festivals'. Elsewhere he speaks of 'the festivals of the Lord' (*De fuga* 14; *PL* i. 682) and 'new festivals' (*De jejun.* 14; *PL* ii. 119).

Minucius Felix (second or third century AD), is confronted with the accusation of Caecilius that the Christians gathered on 'a sacred day' (*solemni die*), men, women, and children, for licentious 'banquets' (*epulae*) and carousings (*convivia*). This is refuted by Minucius, and a description is given of the modesty of the Christian 'banquets' (*epulae*). He does however still use the word 'banquets' for their gatherings—

convivial occasions (Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 31; *PL* iii. 262.) Here again the Christian Sunday is described as a festival.

In Clement of Alexandria there are the expressions 'the first day', 'the eighth day', 'a feast' (*beortē*); the verb 'rejoice' (*euphrainō*) and the thought of 'rest' (*anapausis*) (*Strom.* 6.16; *PG* ix. 364). Once again we seem to have echoes of the idea of the Jewish festivals in a description of the Christian Sunday.

#### WHERE DID THE IDEA OF THE FIRST DAY AS A FEAST SPRING FROM?

In the biblical section we have seen that the Lord's Day was a commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus (a joyful event); and that it is possible, even probable, that the resurrection of Jesus happened on the the feast of Firstfruits, that the Holy Spirit was given on the feast of Pentecost, in that case also a Sunday, and that the feast of Trumpets and the first and last days of the feast of Tabernacles also fell, that year, on the first day of the week. In the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles the feast days are connected with the work of Christ. If all this is true, it would be natural for the Lord's Day to be thought of as a feast. We have seen too that Christians looked upon the day as holy, and feast days were holy days.

But perhaps there is another clue which may throw light on this. The name 'Eighth Day' was given to Sunday.

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE EXPRESSION 'EIGHTH DAY'

We must now, and in this connection, examine the origin of a very early name for Sunday, 'the Eighth Day'. It may well be as early as, or even earlier than, the name 'Lord's Day'.<sup>4</sup> No adequate explanation of its origin has been suggested. Some have proposed a Persian origin.<sup>5</sup> Others have connected it with circumcision on the eighth day and Christian Baptism (Rordorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 271ff.). It occurs in the Slavic *Enoch*,<sup>6</sup> but it seems certain that this is a Christian interpolation into the original work and is more likely to come from a time when 'the eighth day' was in regular use as an eschatological term. It seems more probable that we must look for the origin of the word in the Old Testament, inasmuch as the early church, having accepted 'the first day' as the occasion of the resurrection and of Christian worship, saw the connection of passages in the Old Testament in which 'first' and 'eighth' are linked together. The most likely passage is one that has already been mentioned, Lev. 23: 36-39. It is the description of the

feast of Tabernacles. The first day and the eighth day are special days. On the first and eighth days there are to be 'holy convocations'. There is to be no 'laborious work' (*opera servilia; pan ergon latreuton*). The days are 'feasts' (*heortai*) to the Lord, and there is to be 'rest' (*anapausis*). The people are to 'rejoice' (LXX, *euphranthēnai*) before the Lord. The days are to be days of 'offerings' to the Lord. There are other references to 'the eighth day' in other connections. It is of course connected with circumcision and entry into the Covenant. As Pentecost in later Jewish eyes represented the establishment of the Covenant, so the eighth day was the individual entrance into the Covenant, Gen. 17 : 14 and Lev. 12 : 3. In Exod. 22 : 30 it is connected with the offering of the firstborn.

It seems likely, therefore, that it was the influence of the Old Testament references to the eighth day and its accompanying festal character of joy and rest that affected early Christian thinking. According to a Jewish scholar, the LXX *euphrosynē*, which is equivalent to the Hebrew *nahaṭ rûah*, portrays the atmosphere of the sabbath observance.<sup>7</sup> In *Barnabas* 15.9 we get the same combination of 'the eighth day' with this word 'rejoicing', which, as we have seen, is to be the atmosphere of the eighth day (and the first day) in the feast of Tabernacles, but especially of the eighth and 'great day' (John 7 : 37), the conclusion of the whole ceremonial. Is it too much to see in the second appearance of Christ to the gathered disciples in the Upper Room a hint of what set their minds in this direction? For it was on the eighth day that Jesus appeared to his disciples as a group for the second time, when Thomas was with them, and confirmed their faith, and Thomas confessed, 'My Lord and my God' (John 20 : 28).

If this suggestion of the origin of the name is correct, we have one more evidence of the close connection which the early Christians saw between the Christian Sunday and the Jewish festivals, so that the Sunday was a feast in their eyes.

THE FATHERS VIEWED SUNDAY AS A HOLY DAY AND A FEAST.

### (3) DID THEY ALSO VIEW IT AS A DAY OF REST ?

We can now begin perhaps to answer this question, both from what we have already seen and from further evidence available. It has been argued from certain sayings of the Fathers<sup>8</sup> that their antipathy to indolence (*argia*) shows that they must have meant ordinary work to be continued on Sundays. In a later section we shall endeavour to show that in fact there may be quite a different explanation of this attitude.

A *holy* day to the Jew was a day on which the time belonged to God in a special way, just as a holy place was one devoted to God. The sabbath was a holy day; feast days were holy days. If then the word 'holy' still carried even something of this meaning, it would imply that ordinary work was not carried out on the day.

The *feasts* differed from the sabbath in that on the feast days only laborious work (*opera servilia*) was forbidden, while on the sabbaths all work was forbidden. Now, it is interesting that in the later thought of the church it was laborious work (*opera servilia*) which was forbidden on the Sunday, and not all work. In either case, ordinary work was laid aside. So it was, too, in the case of pagan festivals, with which Tertullian, as we have seen, compared the Christian Sunday. Macrobius (AD 400) tells us that work was laid aside for pagan festivals.<sup>9</sup>

So when Tertullian makes the comparison between the Christian sacred days and those of Jews and pagans it seems certain that he implies that in all these ordinary work was laid aside.

We have seen that Sunday very early took the title 'eighth day'. When we examine the applications made by the Fathers of the conception of the eighth day, we find that it stands for the final rest in the world to come. From *Barnabas* onwards this is the eschatological meaning given to the 'eighth day' (Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, pp. 266ff.). Sometimes the sabbath is considered to be the picture of the final rest, and sometimes the eighth day is.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes it is the sabbath leading into the eighth day (Augustine, *Ep.* 2.55, 9.17; *PL* xxxiii, 212). Now, it seems certain that this could not have developed unless Sunday had been treated as a day of rest. If sometimes it was the sabbath and sometimes Sunday, then the idea of rest must have been connected with both days. It is true that the Augustine passages quoted in evidence come after the decree of Constantine, but they reflect only what had already been the conception long before that time.

This is borne out by an interesting sideline in Gnostic thought. Instead of a time sequence, Gnostic thinking is in terms of stages of advance in spiritual development. The eighth or highest stage is 'rest' (*anapausis*). An early Gnostic writing of before AD 160 states, 'The rest is on the Lord's Day, the eighth, which is called the Lord's Day' (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 63). It seems clear that this conception could not have arisen unless the Lord's Day had been a day of rest. It agrees with the eschatological view that the eighth day was the final rest.

*Further evidence: Clement of Alexandria*

Clement of Alexandria,<sup>11</sup> in dealing with the Ten Commandments, says, 'The third [fourth] commandment is that which intimates that the world was created by God and that he gave us a seventh day as a rest on account of the trouble there is in life. For God is incapable of weariness and suffering and want. But we who bear flesh need rest. The seventh day therefore is proclaimed a rest, by leaving off evils, preparing for the primal day, the true rest of ours which in truth is also the first, the creation of light. For from this day there shines out the first wisdom and gnosis for us. For the light of the truth is the first light. . . .'

This passage will be looked at again in studying the Decalogue, but meanwhile there are certain points which need to be examined here. As it is written about the sabbath commandment, it clearly has in view the days of the week and, at least to begin with, not in a spiritual but a physical sense. The reference to 'the flesh' shows this. What Clement is saying is that men with bodies need relaxation and rest for their bodies. This is all the more remarkable when we realise how much more interested Clement was in the gnostic, the spiritual man. He is not here allegorising in what he says of the need for rest. The first reference to the seventh day is without the article, and it is applied to 'us'. He obviously is not referring here to the Jews, but to mankind generally and this includes Christians, 'us': 'A seventh day has been given to us.' He has in mind the wording of the third [fourth] commandment and suggests that for 'us' a seventh day has been granted for the rest we need, as we 'bear flesh'. He goes on to say that the sabbath conception was preparing us for the 'primal day' (*archēgonon hēmeran*). Some refer this to Christ (*ANCL* 12, p. 386 note), but it may well refer to the first day of the week, the first day of creation, for it is used in connection with both the first and the eighth day.<sup>12</sup> What Clement is saying, then, in this first passage is that man ('we') need a rest day. God has given us one in seven, and this is the principle lying behind the commandment. The seventh day was a preparation for the first day.

We pass to another passage a little further on. Here Clement deals with the relationship of seventh and eighth. The passage is difficult and unless we had the section already mentioned it would be impossible to see any meaning in it. He says, 'For it may be that the eighth (*hē men ogdoas*) is properly the seventh, the seventh manifestly the sixth (*hexas de*), and it (*hē men*) properly the sabbath, but the seventh a work

day.' The last part of the sentence has been translated, 'And the latter (viz, the sixth) properly the sabbath, and the seventh a work day' (*ANCL* 12, p. 386). But this does not make any sense. If we take the second *hē men* as referring to the first *hē men ogdoas*, then it will make sense and mean, 'The eighth is properly the seventh day (of the commandment) and the seventh day of the week the sixth of the commandment. And it (the eighth day) properly the sabbath, the rest, and the seventh (day of the week) a day of work.' This makes very good sense.

Perhaps this is explained by another passage shortly afterwards. Clement says, 'But in the manner of the letters *zēta* is six and *ēta* seven, but the sign (*episēmos*) having slipped in,<sup>13</sup> I know not how, into the writing, if we so say, the sixth becomes the seventh and the seventh the eighth' (*Strom.* 6.16; *ANCL* 12, p. 388). The Sign (*episēmos*) is used of Christ (*PGL*, in loc.). So that with the coming of Christ there is a new reckoning and the seventh day, the sabbath, becomes the eighth. What Clement seems to be suggesting, if the passage is to make any sense, is that by the coming of Christ the day of rest has now been altered to the eighth day, that is the Sunday. As Clement has been explaining the meaning of the third (fourth) commandment, he is suggesting in these two passages that the seventh day mentioned in the commandment is now, by the advent of Christ the Sign, the eighth day, that is Sunday.

There may be again a reference to this idea in another passage where Clement speaks of 'the eighth region, the world of thought' (*Strom.* 5.6, *PG* ix. 62). Later, in yet another passage he speaks again of the 'church on high . . . the philosophers of God, who are Israelites indeed, who do not remain in the seventh seat, the place of rest (*anapausis*), but are promoted to the eighth grade' (*Strom.* 6.14). He seems to have in mind something like the Gnostic idea of development of Christian character, of two rests, the Jewish in the seventh and beyond that a perfect rest in the eighth grade. Here again we have much the same conception of an advance from seventh to eighth, from Judaism to Christianity, the latter being 'Israelites indeed'.

There is one more passage which carries a rather different slant. Clement says, 'The gnostic carries out the evangelical command and makes that the Lord's Day on which he puts away an evil thought and assumes one suited to the gnostic, doing honour to the Lord's resurrection in himself' (*Strom.* 7.12 (76); *GCS* 3.54). The same thought appears in Origen, Clement's pupil. Origen says, 'to the perfect Christian who is ever serving his Lord . . . all his days are the Lord's and

he is always keeping the Lord's Day' (*Contr. Cels.* 8.22; PG xi. 1549). These passages have been taken to suggest that the Christians made no difference between the days of the week. All were alike. But in fact another explanation is more probable. What both Clement and Origen, both of them Christian theologians and teachers, are thinking of is the possibility for the gnostic, the perfect Christian, to be always contemplating the divine. The gnostic is attempting to keep every day as a day of devotion and worship, while the ordinary Christian, engaged in daily work, can only keep the one day for this. While the ordinary Christian treats one day as concentrated on God, the gnostic attempts to treat all days as concentrated on God.<sup>14</sup> Instead of this meaning that the Sunday was to be treated as any other day, it rather meant that every day was to be treated by the gnostic as a Sunday. The inference then was that Sunday was a day devoted to spiritual things.

#### *Tertullian in North Africa*

In a passage already referred to, Tertullian is speaking about the habit of not kneeling but standing for prayer on the Lord's Day (*De Orat.* 23; PL i. 1191). He says, 'We however, just as we have received, only on the day of the Lord's resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling, but every posture and office (*officium*) of anxiety, deferring also (*differentes etiam*) our businesses (*negotia*) lest we give place to the Devil. Similarly (*tantumdem*) in the period of Pentecost, which period we distinguish by the same solemnity of exultation.' Evans translates, 'even putting off our business', but it could just as well read, 'as we also lay aside our affairs'. It has been suggested that, since the author goes on to say that the same is done throughout the period of Pentecost, this cannot refer to any giving up of work on a Sunday; if so, work would be given up for six weeks, an impossible suggestion (Rordorf, op. cit., p. 264). And so it must only mean the giving up of work for the period of worship. But if we examine the passage carefully we shall see that Tertullian is not dealing with the time of worship, the meal, but with the church's practice of not kneeling throughout the day. It is surely this that is continued both on Sunday and throughout Pentecost, as we know from other sources.<sup>15</sup> The 'also' (*etiam*) introduces an extra thought: 'We do not indulge in anxious habits of mind either, as we also lay aside our affairs.' In what sense are we to take 'businesses' (*negotia*)? In the Vulgate of the New Testament *negotia* is used in 2 Tim. 2:4 for 'the affairs of this world', and refers to the

Christian soldier not getting involved in these. The sense is similar here.

*Hippolytus (Rome) and Origen (Alexandria and Caesarea)*

In a passage attributed to Origen, but possibly from Hippolytus, the author says, 'The number fifty contains seven sevens, or a sabbath of sabbaths, and also, over and above these full sabbaths, a new beginning in the eighth of a really new rest that remains above the sabbaths'.<sup>16</sup> The Greek reads *en ogdoadi alēthōs kainēs anapauseōs*. Here, after the sabbath, on the eighth day, is a new rest, that is, a rest not known before—very much the same thought as in Clement. If this comes from Hippolytus, it comes from Rome, another area. The meaning is surely that, as the sabbath was a rest, so the day after the sabbath has become a 'new' rest.

In the *Homilies on Numbers* (PG xii. 749 (3)), an undisputed work of Origen, there is a long passage dealing with the 28th and 29th chapters of that book. Unfortunately it is extant only in a Latin translation. Origen is discussing the Jewish feasts and their meaning for Christians. In these chapters, the first section deals with the daily offerings, then comes the sabbath, and later the annual feasts. Origen follows this order, and commences with the daily worship of Christians, spiritualising the offerings as prayer and praise. He then goes on to ask what is the Christian observance (*observatio*) of the sabbath, and after quoting Heb. 4: 9, 'There remaineth therefore a sabbath-keeping to the people of God', he goes on to mention the ceasing from secular work and the going to worship and the hearing of the word of God and spiritual exercises. His words are:

Leaving the Jewish observance of the sabbath, let us see how the sabbath ought to be observed by a Christian (*qualis debeat esse Christiano sabbati observatio*). On the sabbath day all worldly pleasures ought to be abstained from. If therefore you cease from all secular works (*saecularia*) and execute nothing worldly, but give yourself up to spiritual exercises, repairing to the church (*ad ecclesiam*), attending to sacred reading and instruction, thinking of celestial things, solicitous for the future, placing the judgment to come before your eyes, not looking to things present and visible, but to those which are future and invisible, this is the observance of the Christian sabbath. But these things the Jews ought to have observed. In fact, among them if there were a mason or builder, or if there should be labour of this sort, let him give it up on the sabbath day. But the

reader of the divine law, or the teacher, does not desist from his labour and does not pollute the sabbath. For so our Lord said to them, 'Have you not read that the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are without crime.' He who therefore ceases from worldly works and is free for spiritual, he it is who celebrates the sacrifice of the sabbath and the festal day of the sabbath . . . What we have spoken of are true sabbaths, but if we should seek deeper what are the true sabbaths, the keeping of the sabbath is beyond this world.

The most varied explanations have been given of this passage. It has been suggested that it is spurious, but without any evidence; that it refers to the whole Christian life; that it refers to an observance of the Jewish sabbath by Christian Jews in Alexandria, in contrast to the non-Christian Jews, who observed their sabbath in licentiousness.<sup>17</sup> Others have suggested that it is a simple identification of the Christian day of worship with the Jewish sabbath. All these seem to be misconceptions of its meaning. It cannot refer to the Jewish observance of the sabbath, for elsewhere Origen clearly states that there is no manna from heaven on the seventh day (*Hom. Exod.* 7.7f.; *PG* xii, 347), that is, that there is no preaching of the word or spiritual food.

Is it possible that it refers to a Christian observance of Saturday as well as Sunday? We know that by the middle of the next century there was a Saturday observance, as well as the Sunday, in Syria and Asia Minor, the sabbath as a memorial of creation and the Sunday as a memorial of the Resurrection (*Apost. Const.* 2.36, 5.15, 7.33). But it is more than doubtful if it was ever observed in Alexandria. Origen could be referring to something in Syria, but the *Didascalia* is against this, as we have already seen. It is doubtful if as early as Origen there was such an observance anywhere.<sup>18</sup>

As other Christian festal days, such as Pentecost, are mentioned by Origen in this context, but there is no mention of the Christian Sunday, it is natural to infer that this must refer to the Christian Sunday. If we look at a passage quoted earlier, we see that it closes by Origen saying that only the unmarried man can offer the perpetual sacrifice of prayer. He goes on, 'But there are other festal days for those who are not able to offer the sacrifice of chastity.'<sup>19</sup> In other words, the unmarried can spend all their time in worship and prayer, but for those who have household cares there are fixed days. Such appears to be his meaning. In fact, if we compare the passage we have already seen where he almost apologises for Christians having special days (*Contr. Cels.* 8.23;

PG xi. 1662) it seems that this passage must refer to the Christian Sunday. It is almost impossible to believe that when Origen speaks of 'repairing to the assembly' and the 'reader' and 'teacher' he can be giving it a wholly mystical meaning. We shall probably get nearer to Origen's meaning if we put the word sabbath in inverted commas; the Christian 'sabbath', that is the Sunday of the Christians, is a sabbath in one sense, but not in the Jewish sense. It is difficult to see any other meaning in the passage than as referring to the Christian day of worship. The *Homilies* are not meant to be erudite theological works, but practical talks to ordinary Christians, and so are likely to have a practical bearing. It is significant that, before giving this explanation, Origen quotes Heb. 4: 9, 'There remains therefore a sabbath to the people of God.'

If we have been right in interpreting the passages in Clement, it will not be difficult to see their influence on Origen. If we were right in suggesting that Clement saw in 'the Lord's Day' a 'sabbath', though not the Jewish sabbath, this passage would show how Origen, building on these thoughts, felt the day should be spent. While elsewhere Origen clearly saw the sabbath as a type of the rest from sin and evil works of all kinds, here he is dealing in a practical way with the observance of the Christian festal day.

#### *The Didascalia - Syria (AD 230?)*

There are one or two sections which are important for our present inquiry.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the best approach is to give the passages in full and then discuss them. The author says, 'Do you, the faithful, therefore, all of you, daily and hourly, whenever you are not in the church (at the gathering), devote yourselves to your work, so that in all the conduct of your life you may either be occupied in the things of the Lord or engaged upon your work, and never be idle. . . . Therefore be always working, for idleness is a blot for which there is no cure'.<sup>21</sup> And again, 'If God willed that we shall be idle (Latin, *vacare*) one day in six, first of all the patriarchs and righteous men and all they that were before Moses would have remained idle, and God himself also with all his creatures. But now the governance of the world is carried on continually. . . .'<sup>22</sup> In another passage he states, 'Make not your worldly affairs of more account than the word of God, but on the Lord's Day leave everything (*omnia seponentes*) and run eagerly to your church (the gathering), for she is your glory. Otherwise what excuse have you, if you do not assemble on the Lord's Day to hear the word of life and

be nourished with the divine food? . . . If the heathen keep their festivals . . . and the Jews remain idle one day and assemble in their synagogues . . . if then they who are not saved bestow care at all times on those things . . . what excuse has he who withdraws himself from the assembly of the church? Let him know that the trades of the faithful are called works of superfluity, for their true work is religion. Pursue your trades therefore as a work of superfluity, but let your true work be religion.'<sup>23</sup> And again, 'For neither in the common assembly of rest on the Lord's Day, when they have come, are such . . . watchful.'<sup>24</sup> And lastly, in the fragments from the Latin: 'For not even on Sundays, in which we rejoice and make good cheer, is it permitted to speak a word of levity or one alien to religion.'<sup>25</sup>

At first sight these passages would suggest that, as soon as the ordinary service was over, the church members were to go back to their ordinary work on the Sunday. No time was to be unoccupied. The author is fearful of any form of laziness. He seems desperately concerned that the Christians will fall into the Jewish habit of leaving their sabbath empty. But does this mean that he suggests that Christians should spend part of their Sundays in work? We can see that he considers that Christian worship is the most important part of the Christian life. A person's trade is only of secondary importance. All else is to be laid aside in favour of worship. This does not suggest that the author felt that the worship was unimportant. But there are two hints which point perhaps to quite another explanation than that which appears at first sight. He mentions the word 'rest' in connection with the Sunday observance. This may of course refer only to the relaxation while the service was on, but in view of what we have seen in other authors it seems to suggest the observance of a day, and especially as it is compared here both with pagan and with Jewish religious practice. The other hint is in the last passage quoted. Here the author says that throughout Sunday no word alien to religion is to be spoken, nor any word of levity, though the day is to be a day of rejoicing. How are these passages to be reconciled? I would suggest that in fact what took place was that the gathering involved most of the day. We shall be examining this in chapter 9, and will there discuss the possibility that the first passage does not refer to Sunday at all. If this was so, then the advice to be engaged either in the things of the Lord, or in their work, would suggest exactly what is commanded in the fourth commandment, 'Six days shalt thou labour', the other day being devoted to 'the things of the Lord'.

### *Gnostic Writings*

There is still further evidence, this time in two Gnostic writings, from which we may get some light.<sup>26</sup> In the *Pistis Sophia*, a Gnostic work, probably of the third century AD and coming from Egypt, there is an interesting conjunction of ideas: the number eight and the thoughts of light, rest, and resurrection. While this is not a time sequence but the development of the Gnostic's spiritual advance, it seems to link the thought of rest with the eighth day and the day of light and resurrection. Theodotus suggests the same (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 63).

#### SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE FROM THESE SOURCES

It is possible now to collect together the information which we have obtained from various sources and different parts of the Christian church. The evidence is cumulative. While evidence from one source only might not carry weight, if it comes from several, and especially if it comes from different parts of the world, it should be conclusive. And the conclusion to which we come is that the Christian church in the first three centuries looked on its Sunday as a festal day, a holy day and a day of rest on which ordinary tasks were laid aside. At the same time they differentiated it from the Jewish sabbath in ways which we shall explore in a subsequent chapter.

## Chapter 8

### Eusebius of Caesarea and the Christian Sunday

EUSEBIUS is the bridge between the church before and after Constantine. The change from an emperor who either opposed or disregarded the church to one who favoured it created profound changes in its life. Born *c.* AD 260, probably at Caesarea, Eusebius studied under Pamphilus and was closely connected with the famous library there. He became a great admirer of Origen. This, it will be seen later, is important for our subject. Later Eusebius came to have a great influence over Constantine.

The most important of his writings with regard to the theology of Sunday is in his *Commentary on the Psalms*. This is one of his latest works and was probably written about eight years after Constantine's decree of AD 321 (Quasten, *Patrology* 3, p. 338). The passage occurs in the commentary on Psalm 91(92) (PG xxiii. 1168ff.). It is entitled 'A Psalm for the Sabbath Day':<sup>1</sup>

The righteous men and the patriarchs before Moses did not know or keep sabbaths. The Jews think that in their sabbath they have something excellent, so what is said in this Psalm must be explained to them. The impious cannot keep sabbath, as Psalm 95 shows. The Sabbath of God can be kept only by those who are just and the friends of God, as Abraham was. We must understand what the sabbath signifies. It signifies the rest of God after the creation. This rest is God's converse with sentient and heavenly beings. He 'works' when he deals with the 'non-sentient'. But when he is engaged on things apart from the body he is said to rest and to keep sabbath. So too with men, when they are labouring on physical (psychical) things they labour; but when devoted to the divine and the spiritual they keep sabbath. This is the meaning of 'there remaineth a rest (sabbath-keeping)'. The perfect sabbath and perfect rest will be in the final kingdom of God, from which pain and toil have fled, set free from the things of the body. But in the image (*eikōn*) of that sabbath and thrice blessed rest men of God as they bear themselves on earth make leisure and empty themselves of those things

which separate them from God. Giving themselves entirely to the contemplation of divine things, day and night continually in meditation on the sacred words, they then were keeping a holy rest, sabbaths, and a rest acceptable to God and were sabbatising. And so, suitably, the law of Moses, providing a 'shadow' (*skia*) of those things spoken of and symbols, set aside a day to the multitude in order that they might turn on it from their accustomed works and have leisure for the care of the law of God.

This present Psalm clearly teaches, on this point, that it is necessary that leisure be made for the sabbath and from useless inactivity and that they should come together for this same purpose; that is confession, praise, telling of God's mercy in the morning and telling his truth at night.

So you see how many things the present Psalm exhorts to be done on the day of the Resurrection (Sunday). The Psalm is for the sabbath, but the priests in the temple did many things, so it does not tell us to empty the day. The sabbath was not commanded for the priests; but for those who could not give all their time to the service of God, so that they might have leisure for works pleasing to God. They should do this at intervals of six days. But to those who fill the day with riotous living God says, "They make false sabbaths" . . . and so repudiating these, the Word, through the New Covenant, has changed and transferred the feast of the sabbath to the rising of the light and handed to us the image (*eikōn*) of a true rest, the Lord's Day, that brings salvation, the first, and the day of light on which the Saviour of the world, after all his works, which had been done among men, and having brought back victory over death, passed the heavenly gates and completed his work, receiving the sabbath which pleased God and the blessed rest when his Father said 'Sit thou on my right hand . . .'

On that day which is the day of the True Light and the True Sun we ourselves have gathered together with intervals of six days, celebrating (*heortazontes*) holy sabbaths and spiritual. We who have been redeemed through him from the nations all over the world, do what the law had laid down for the priests to do on the sabbath. We fulfil this after a spiritual law. We offer spiritual sacrifices (*thysias*) and oblations (*anaphoras*), what are called the sacrifices of praise and rejoicing. We send up the sweet incense, of which it is written, 'Let my prayer. . . .' But also we offer the showbread . . . the cup as a memorial, the blood of sprinkling of the Lamb of God that takes

away the sin of the world. We light the lights of the knowledge of the face of God. . . . In the morning we announce the mercy which comes to us from God towards the rising of the light. . . . All things which it was necessary to do on the sabbath, these we (*hēmeis*) have transferred to the Lord's Day, as being more closely linked to the Lord (*kyriōteras*) in itself and excelling, and the first and more honourable (*timiōteras*) than the Jewish sabbath. For on each Lord's Day what God said in the creation of the world 'Let there be light' comes into being and on each the Sun of Righteousness has arisen on our souls. Wherefore it has been handed down to us also that on each (Lord's Day) we should come together and it has been commanded to us to carry out what has been told us in the Psalm.

These things we do each Lord's Day. We are like the Jews who offered hymns on musical instruments on the sabbath day, breaking the inactivity and transgressing the law of the sabbath. For, as Paul says, we are Jews inwardly, not outwardly (Rom. 2 : 28, 29).

v. 5 'Thou hast made me rejoice, Lord, in thy work and in the labours of thy hands I will exult.' Had it been the Jewish sabbath he would have said, not 'in thy work', but 'in thy rest'. What was this 'work of God'? 'This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.' This indicates the day of the Resurrection. 'Let there be light' and 'God called the light day'. On this day God created nothing else except the light,<sup>2</sup> the first Lord's Day, about which he now says, 'Thou hast caused me to rejoice in thy work'. The works of his hands are the other days, the things of the senses. (PG xxiii. 1168ff.).

In this passage, which I have given almost in full, there is the first real attempt to find the relationship between the Jewish sabbath and the Christian Sunday. Are we to take it as wholly mystical? We have faced this question in regard to both Clement of Alexandria and Origen, in whom Eusebius is specially interested. It is clear that there are mystical elements in it, but the references to 'intervals of six days', 'gatherings throughout the world', the allusions to the Eucharist, including the bread and 'the blood of the Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world', the emphasis on 'each Lord's day' several times, all suggest that it is a literal Sunday which Eusebius has in mind. Then there is the contrast between 'the Lord's Day' and the ill-spent sabbath of the Jews. We may conclude that Eusebius has the Christian Sunday in view.

The line that Eusebius takes is to maintain that the real objective of the sabbath was foreshadowed in the creation story. After six days of dealing with the things of the senses, God rested and this rest was his converse with men and heavenly beings. The rest then for man was the knowledge of God and his service. It was on this that the priests were engaged on the sabbath day, and therefore, far from desecrating it, they were in fact carrying out its inner intention. The patriarchs did not know of sabbath days, for 'night and day' they were seeking to know God. The Jewish sabbath was instituted for those who, engrossed in the duties of this life, needed one day in which to concentrate on God; but they so often misused it, spending it in indolence (*argia*) or in riotous living. The institution of the Jewish sabbath was a 'shadow' (*skia*)<sup>3</sup> of that sabbath rest, the ideal sabbath (*to teleion sabbaton*) of the knowledge and service of God. This ideal sabbath will only be experienced in the world to come when we are free from toil and pain. While the Jewish sabbath was a 'shadow' (*skia*) of that perfect sabbath of communion with God, the patriarchs (*toi theou andres*) had an image of it (*eikōn*) in their night and day devotion to God. The Christian too has an image (*eikōn*) of that true rest in the Lord's Day, which the Word, when he transferred the festival of the sabbath to the Lord's Day, handed to us (*paredōken hēmin*). All that was suitable for the Jew to do on the sabbath, as regards the knowledge and service of God, is suitable for the Christian to do on the Lord's Day: 'The Word has exchanged and transferred the feast of the sabbath to the Lord's Day'. Eusebius does not merely say the sabbath was transferred, but 'the feast of the sabbath', apparently intending to introduce this conception into the thought of the Christian Lord's Day.

But it is not so much the sabbath of the ordinary Jew as the sabbath of the priests which is to characterise the Lord's Day. This was a day filled with the temple service, offerings, the showbread, the sacrifice of the lambs, the lighting of the lights—in other words, the service of God. The Christian equivalent of these is seen in the first three verses of this Psalm.<sup>4</sup>

All that God did on the first day was to create the light, 'Let there be light', and called the light 'the day'; the Christian Sunday is the day of light; the Sun of Righteousness has arisen in the Resurrection. On this day God says, 'Let there be light'. It is the day the Lord has made (Psalm 118: 24). We are to rejoice in it, God has made us glad in his work, in the giving of light, the works of the spirit.

The feast of the sabbath was transferred to the Sunday because that

day was 'in itself more closely linked to the Lord'<sup>5</sup> and 'taking the lead, being the first and more honourable'. Elsewhere, Eusebius has said that the change took place because of 'the rising of the light', the resurrection of Christ. It is also 'the Lord's' (*kyriakē*) and the day 'that brings salvation' (*sōtēria*). It is the 'image' of the true rest (*eikōn*).

The conclusion that must be drawn from these expressions is clearly that to Eusebius the Christian Sunday had a connection with the Jewish sabbath in that both were opportunities meant for the knowledge of God. The one was substituted for the other. He does not hesitate to say that 'on that day (Sunday) we ourselves coming together at intervals of six days are celebrating holy and spiritual sabbaths'. To Eusebius therefore the Christian Sunday is the image, the realisation, of that of which the Jewish sabbath was only the shadow. Both would be fully realised in the world to come.<sup>6</sup> The Christian Sunday has taken the place of the sabbath.

Summarising these thoughts then, the Christian Sunday is a day, a feast celebrated at intervals of six days, which has the same object as the Jewish sabbath, the knowledge and service of God, and has taken its place. It is closely connected with Christ and was given by him. It is a foretaste of the true rest of the world to come. All that was suitable for the priests to do on the sabbath is suitable for the Christian Sunday. The change is connected with the New Covenant.

Two questions arise in connection with this very important passage: (i) is this conception something entirely new; and (ii) if it is new, does it owe anything to the decree of Constantine in AD 321?

Dealing with (i) first, Eusebius makes the claim that what he has been saying has been 'handed down' (*paradedotai*) and 'ordered' (*prostetaktai*). Primarily the words are used of the Christian worship customary on the Sunday (PG xxiii. 1172B). But the first word is also used in his argument about Sunday being 'handed down to us' as the image of the true rest by Christ (PG xxiii. 1169C). He seems to suggest that this whole conception has been handed down to the church of his day,<sup>7</sup> a tradition of the church.

In support of this is the fact that if we analyse the conceptions in the passage we find that almost all of them have already appeared in pre-Nicene authors. What Eusebius has done is to think through their relationship and knit them into a coherent whole.<sup>8</sup> Below is a list of some of these conceptions and the references:

- i. The patriarchs had no sabbaths (Justin, *Dial.* 19, PG vi. 516; *ibid.* 27, PG vi. 533; Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 2, 3, PL ii. 601f.;

*Didascalia*, FXF 6.18.16, p. 362; Connolly, op. cit., p. 237).

ii. God did not cease all work on the sabbath day (Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* 2.21, PL ii. 309; Origen, *Comm. on Num.* 23.4, PG xii. 750; and the constant quotation of the text John 5:17 in this connection).

iii. The conception of a future fulfilment of the sabbath (*Barnabas* 15; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.1, PG vii. 1015; Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 6, PL ii. 608; Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.14, PG ix. 329; Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 7.5, PG xii. 346; Methodius, *Symp.* 9.1, PG xviii. 177).

iv. The sabbath intention, a devotion to spiritual things (Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 4, PL ii. 605; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.1, PG vii. 1016).

v. The Christian devoting himself to the contemplation of divine things (Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 8.23, PG xi. 1552).

vi. The sabbath, a day for the multitude to have time for spiritual things (Justin, *Dial.* 19, PG vi. 517; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.3, PG vii. 1017; Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 4.31, PG xi. 1076; *ibid.*, 8.23, PG xi. 1552).

vii. The priests do not desecrate the sabbath (Justin, *Dial.* 27, PG vi. 533; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.8.3, PG vii. 995; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 2.21, PL ii. 309).

viii. There are false sabbaths and true (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.12, PL ii. 384ff.).

ix. Sunday, the image of the true rest (the eighth day) (see the material on the eighth day in chapter twelve).

x. Sunday, the first day, a day of light (Justin, *Apol.* 1.67, PG vi. 429).

xi. The Christian Sunday a keeping festival (*Barnabas* 15; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 9, PL iii. 262; *ibid.*, 31, PL iii. 337).

xii. The offerings have a Christian equivalent (Justin, *Dial.* 41, PG vi. 564; Origen, *Hom. Num.* 23.3.4, PG xii. 748).

xiii. Sunday excels the sabbath (Justin, *Apol.* 1.67, PG vi. 429; Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 7.5, PG xii. 345; *Didascalia* 6.18, FXF, p. 360, Connolly, op. cit., p. 233).

xiv. The Sun of Righteousness arising (Origen, *Comm. Num.* 23.5, PG xii. 751; *ibid.*, *Hom. Exod.* 7.8, PG xii. 348).

xv. Sunday the day of rejoicing, quotation of Psalm 117(118):23 (Tertullian, *De Orat.* 23, PL i. 1191; Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.16, PG ix. 364; *Didascalia*, FXF 5.10.1, p. 264; Connolly, op. cit., p. 178).

xvi. The sabbath and Sunday as feasts (Origen, *Hom. Num.* 23.4, PG xxi. 749).

xvii. Sunday is a holy day (Dionysius of Corinth, in Eusebius, *HE* 4.23, *PG* xx. 388).

Particularly important is the thought of the sabbath rest as being the knowledge and service of God. This has appeared prominently in Clement of Alexandria and in Origen.<sup>9</sup> It stems originally from Philo (*De Spec. Leg.* 2.15 [61-63]).<sup>10</sup> Eusebius' use of it confirms the explanations already given of the passages from Clement and Origen and suggests Eusebius' indebtedness to them. It will be remembered that in Origen's explanation of the feasts he deals with the sabbath and seems to imply the Christian Sunday, and here Eusebius emphasises the 'feast of the sabbath' and says it has been transferred to the Christian Sunday.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps now it is possible to draw a conclusion. Almost all the conceptions in the passage have already appeared. What is new is the way in which Eusebius has linked them together into a consistent whole.

(ii) Does this owe anything to the decree of Constantine? The decree was purely negative. Its intention was to empty the day of ordinary work. There is no trace at all in this whole passage of anything which would suggest that the decree was in Eusebius' thoughts. In fact the emphasis on rejoicing in God's 'working' (*ergasia*) would suggest the opposite. It seems much more likely that Eusebius would have influenced Constantine in this direction, despite the contentions of Rordorf (pp. 162-6) to the contrary. In his *Life of Constantine* (iv. 18) Eusebius suggests that the decree was expressly issued to influence his subjects towards Christianity and that he himself was accustomed to 'honour' (*timan*) the Lord's Day in the imperial palace; while to the soldiers who were Christians he allowed time off (*scholen*), a word used in the *Commentary* on Psalm 91, on that day to continue (*proskarterein*) at the church gatherings, 'teaching them zealously to honour the Lord's Day'. Eusebius may be giving a wholly pro-Christian view of Constantine, but it seems unlikely that the edict of AD 321 (at least four years after the Christian banner had started being carried in front of Constantine's army) was not the result of strong Christian influence and probably of Eusebius himself. The use of the customary name 'Sunday' and the customary Roman concessions to farmers in the edict do not disprove this. The verb 'honour' (*timaō*), which is used both of Constantine's personal attitude and his influence on his soldiers, is a word which has appeared in earlier writings of the Christian attitude to Sunday. Eusebius has spoken of the Lord's Day in the passage we have quoted as 'more honourable', the adjective from the same verb.

It would seem that instead of Constantine initiating this attitude to Sunday it was handed down from earlier practice.

Before drawing this chapter to a close, we shall examine what is contained in the other important fourth-century contribution, the work *De sabbatis et circumcissione* (PG xxviii. 134ff.). It was attributed to Athanasius, but rejected as spurious, with all the other sermons, by Migne. The author probably wrote about the middle of the fourth century and may in fact have been Athanasius himself (Quasten, *Patrology* 3, p. 50).

The last paragraph suggests that he may be speaking at a baptism and probably too on a Sunday. In this material there are some new thoughts which have a bearing on the subject of this chapter.

His argument, stated briefly, is that the sabbath is the end of the old creation. There is a new creation which will have no end, but it does have a beginning. Sunday is the beginning of this new creation. To the new creation God did not command the observance of the old sabbath, but he revealed the Lord's Day to show the end of the old. The sabbath was not meant for idleness but for the knowledge of God, sacrifice and service offered to him. It is not identical with the seventh day, for the Day of Atonement is called a sabbath. So it speaks too of confession and humiliation of soul. God ceased from his work, but owing to Adam's Fall that work must be completed. The old creation ceased in the darkness of the cross; the new began in the rising from the dead the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in his wings. He did not create another, but renewed the old. The sabbath was the memorial of the old creation; Sunday is the memorial of the beginning of the new creation. It was the day appointed for this renewal. 'This is the day the Lord has made.' This day does not belong to all, but to those who are dying to sin and rising to the Lord. For this reason the Law commanded circumcision on the eighth day. We put off the one who died, on the sixth day, and we are renewed on the Lord's Day (Col. 2:17). Circumcision was the sign of the new birth through baptism. When the reality came, the sign ceased. As the Lord's Day has come, the sabbath has ceased. Both are directed forwards, and both are the beginning of the creation and the regeneration of man. So the eighth day dissolved the sabbath and not the sabbath the eighth day. Circumcision was the cutting off of the earthly birth, the shame of Egypt, the curse of 'Dust thou art . . .'. Then it was in part, in shadow; now it is fulfilled in the laver of regeneration on the eighth day.

Here is the same conception as we have already seen in Eusebius,

that the real meaning of the sabbath is a spiritual one, the knowledge of God, the service of God and the forgiveness received from God. Moreover it is not tied to the seventh day. He places the two days on a par as memorials of the first and second creations. Though he does not say so directly, the thought is clearly that Sunday represents just those things for which the sabbath stood in the old creation. He uses the same word as Eusebius—'we honour' the Lord's Day. The eighth day was the sign of the final rest and the full knowledge of God. Again his emphasis that in the new creation God did not create another, but renewed the old, suggests that this was also his thought in regard to the day.

As we conclude this chapter, it may be helpful to go over briefly what has been gathered so far. The Jewish sabbath was abolished. The Christians used the expression the 'Lord's Day' for their worship day. It was not merely a 'meal' in which they were interested, but a 'day'. That day, the first day, was also called the eighth day. It was considered as a holy day and a festival. This conception would mean that ordinary tasks were laid aside and there are hints that this was so. The day had affinities with the Jewish festivals in the thought of the Christian church, and with the sabbath conception of a day devoted to God. The original intention of the sabbath was for the knowledge of God. Sunday's close connection with Christ and with the resurrection meant that it became the mark of the New Covenant. In Eusebius these thoughts are gathered together and he claims that as the sabbath was a 'shadow' of a perfect rest and a perfect knowledge of God in the future, so the Christian Sunday was in the New Covenant the 'image' of that rest and to it Christ had transferred the feast of the sabbath. The Christians observed it, not as the ordinary Jews in inactivity, but as the priests observed their sabbath in the service of God. The sabbath was not tied to the seventh day, but signified the opportunity for the knowledge and service of God. Sunday was the memorial of the new creation as the sabbath had been of the old.

## Chapter 9

### How Christians Spent the Lord's Day

WE have attempted to show that the Christians thought in terms of a whole day and that the Lord's Day held the position of a Christian festival. But when we begin to examine the observance of the day, we are immediately faced with the problem of when the day began, and when it ended. The usual Jewish reckoning was from dusk to dusk<sup>1</sup>; the Roman civil reckoning was from midnight to midnight. In any examination of what took place this must always be borne in mind and checked.<sup>2</sup> The length of light and darkness in Mediterranean lands is not very different in summer and winter, so that sunset and sunrise do not greatly vary from month to month.

The question of the social life of that time is also important. Two meals in the day were the usual practice. The earlier meal (*ariston*) was taken towards noon, while the later meal (*deipnon*) was probably about five or six o'clock in the evening, when the day's work was done (see Macalister, 'Food'). After the earlier meal it was the custom to have a siesta for a time.<sup>3</sup> After the evening meal lamps would be lighted, if the family were well enough off, but it seems likely that in an average home by nine o'clock the household would have retired to rest.

It is impossible to be certain how long the early Christians continued the Jewish attitude of treating the day as beginning at dusk or whether they soon abandoned that for the Roman system.<sup>4</sup> It seems likely that though they may have treated the night before as a preparation for the Lord's Day, it was the morning in which they were more deeply interested, as being the time when the Lord rose from the grave.<sup>5</sup> We shall go into these points more fully later on.

Where the monastic system had developed, the whole conception of the week from a Christian standpoint would be altered, and it is necessary to be very careful in dealing with documents that may be affected by the monastic conception, but for earlier times this is not necessary.

#### THE SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN SUNDAY

Before going into the detail of the Christian observance of Sunday, it is essential to try to get, so far as is possible, the 'feel' of those early

days as the first Christians experienced them; and especially to discover the theological background in which the Christian Sunday was born. We can take it for granted that the observance commenced in Jerusalem and from the earliest days.<sup>6</sup> The atmosphere was that of realised eschatology. The early Christians felt that they were in an era of fulfilment. All the promises and expectations of the Old Covenant were being fulfilled in Christ. No doubt the full significance of this was only slowly realised, and, to begin with, its implications were not fully understood, but Christians were sure that the 'day of the Lord' had come.<sup>7</sup> With the Resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the new era, the New Covenant, had begun, 'the old had passed away', '(all) things had become new',<sup>8</sup> 'new wine must be put into new bottles'.<sup>9</sup>

They were living in a new age. The old forms were becoming obsolete.

In the Jerusalem Church, with its large percentage of Jewish Christians, this process would be a slow one, but as soon as Gentiles were received into the church, who had had little or no Jewish background, a decision had to be reached quickly and definitely as to how far the old forms were to be retained. The new forms had already taken shape before this.

These new forms were clearly pulsating with a new life, 'He hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 Pet. 1 : 3). The realisation that what the nation had so long been waiting for had at last been fulfilled gave them a new sense of liberty and joy. The arid wastes of rabbinic teaching had been left behind for a new interpretation of the Old Testament. This new interpretation gave a spiritual meaning to the old forms. In giving them up literally they were still retaining their spiritual values. Circumcision had passed away; but there was a new circumcision. The sacrifices had passed away; but there were new sacrifices to take their place. The temple was doomed, if it had not already disappeared; but a new temple was growing in its place. And these spiritual meanings were being attached to new forms. The new circumcision was clearly connected with the new initiation ceremony of Christian baptism (Col. 2 : 11-13). The old offerings had ceased, but there were still very practical offerings in the worship, the bodies (Rom. 12: 1f.) and the possessions (Heb. 13 : 16; 1 Pet. 2 : 5) of Christians. The worship of synagogue and temple was passing away, but a new worship was taking its place. The Jewish sacred meals were disappearing, but Christian

sacred meals were taking their place with new meanings. The sabbath and the feasts were passing away, but a 'new day' (1 Cor. 16: 2; Acts 20: 7; Rev. 1: 10) was being celebrated by Christians. The spiritual truths behind the old were clothing themselves in new forms.

All this was centred 'in Christ'. It was the coming, the death, the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, with his gift of the Holy Spirit, which had brought in this new covenant, this new creation. The fulfilments were to be found in him and associated with him. He is the one in whom the new circumcision takes place (Col. 2: 11). He is the new temple, and so also, through him, is his body the church (John 2: 21; Eph. 2: 20-22; 1 Cor. 6: 19). He is the victim of the sacrifice and at the same time the priest who offers it.<sup>10</sup> The supper is his, the Lord's (1 Cor. 11: 20), and the day is his, the Lord's (Rev. 1: 10). It was at this service and on this day each week that he was proclaimed 'Lord'. The Lordship of Christ in this new order was the central theme, and it was in the Resurrection that this Lordship had first been proclaimed (1 Cor. 12: 3; John 20: 28).

With these thoughts in their minds, that 'all things had become new' (2 Cor. 5: 17), and that all this centred in the fact that the Jesus with whom they had walked and talked was 'the Lord', the synagogue services and the temple ritual could never satisfy their desire for worship. Without the name of Christ or any remembrance of what he had accomplished those forms of worship would be insipid indeed.<sup>11</sup>

Not only so, but they were looking for his return. If he had gone, he would come again. He had appeared to them on the first Sunday after his crucifixion. He had appeared again to them on the second Sunday. His Spirit had been given on a Sunday. Was it not most probable that he would come again on a Sunday?<sup>12</sup>

On all these occasions he had appeared when they were gathered together. Was it not probable that it would be when they were gathered, that he would come again? Week by week they met with this expectation in their minds, that the 'appearing' (*parousia*) of their Lord might take place while they were gathered for worship that day.

So it was in this double eschatological outlook (realised and future) that the Christian Sunday came into existence. The old had passed away. They were living both in a new age, and in an age which might be brought to an end at any time by the advent of the Lord, in whom this new age was centred.<sup>13</sup>

This brings us to a second aspect of the theological background. It is the corporate spirit which pervaded the early church, the sense of

the 'fellowship' (*koinōnia*) and the 'brotherhood' (*philadelphia*). This is clearly marked in the early days of the church.<sup>14</sup> The effect of the experience at Pentecost was to give to the members of the Christian church a deep devotion to each other. They realised that they were members of the same body (*synōma*).<sup>15</sup> Of this body Christ was the head and they were members one of another (Rom. 12 : 5). The same Spirit possessed them all and none lived to himself (Rom. 14 : 7; 1 Cor. 12 : 26).

Now the only way in which this corporate spirit could show itself was in gathering together.<sup>16</sup> The gathering together was primarily for spiritual ends, prayer together, worshipping together and partaking of the eucharist.<sup>17</sup> But it was not only for spiritual ends. It seems certain that 'the breaking of bread' meant other meals besides the eucharist and would include social gatherings in each other's house.<sup>18</sup> At first, it seems, an attempt was made to carry this out every day (Acts 2 : 46), and possibly the selling of their property was to make this possible (Acts 2 : 45; 5 : 1f.). Perhaps the expectation of an early second advent suggested it. But as time went on it became clear that this was not generally practicable, and the gatherings became confined to the weekly gathering on the first day. It was on this day that they were expected to gather together as one body: 'We being many are one loaf'.<sup>19</sup> All were expected to be present. The spirit of exuberant joy (*agalliasis*) (Acts 2 : 46), which we shall examine later, would be the outstanding mark of their meeting together; this would be centred in the thought of Christ as 'Lord' and especially the thought of his resurrection. He was 'with them', even if only 'two or three' (Matt. 18 : 20).

So far as the evidence goes, after the early days there does not seem to have been any other gathering of the Christians during the week until a much later date.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the threat of persecution had something to do with this. It would be unwise to build an argument on such silence, but if in fact there were no meetings in between, this would certainly enhance the importance of the weekly gatherings. Their corporate life as a Christian body could only be expressed as they met together. Their deep devotion to their common 'Lord' required this, and the care of the poorer members of his body would show itself in these gatherings<sup>21</sup> and meals together.

The whole atmosphere of the early church, as reflected in the New Testament, suggests that these gatherings would be sources of deep help and satisfaction to all who joined in them, and that they would be extended as long as possible.<sup>22</sup> They would feel that in the presence

of their fellow-Christians they were enjoying the presence of the Lord himself.<sup>23</sup> There is nothing in the accounts which we have in Justin to suggest that the gatherings of the Christians were hurried services carried through before they went to work, or after they had completed it.<sup>24</sup> In fact there is much to suggest, as we shall see, that the morning gathering was not held until it was light, for how else could country Christians have been present after perhaps a longish journey?<sup>25</sup> From the descriptions given in Justin and also in Tertullian (Tert., *Apol.* 39; *PL* i. 468), there is every indication that these gatherings were long drawn out, with social intercourse and meals included in them. The fact that, in the earliest period, as many as wished could speak or pray in the gatherings suggests unhurried time (1 Cor. 14 : 6; *Didache* 10; see Congar, 'Théologie', p. 136).

If one takes into account, in addition, the earlier meal (*ariston*) and the siesta of Mediterranean countries, one gets the impression that a good deal of the day would be accounted for in these ways.<sup>26</sup>

There is a final consideration, which should be given its due weight. Beyond doubt, the early Christians were eager to learn. This would mean that if they could read they would want to read, and if unable to read would wish to have the Scriptures and other literature read to them.<sup>27</sup> It is unlikely that the poorer Christians would possess even part of the Scriptures for themselves. It would be at the weekly gatherings that the opportunity would come of reading or hearing the Scriptures. This will be examined more fully later on, but it is one more indication of the importance that the Sunday would have for the Christian.<sup>28</sup>

The background, then, in which the observance of Sunday began was an eschatological one, instinct with joy and hope, in which the corporate observance was the outstanding characteristic. The new life throbbing in the individual and in the churches showed itself in a deep devotion to their 'Lord' and to one another, and in a deep desire to share their experiences, to learn together what had been revealed, and to care for each other's needs.<sup>29</sup>

The sense of oneness in Christ's body and of the importance of each individual member (1 Cor. 12 : 15-25) would mean that for any to be absent from the gathering, the *ekklesia*, would be considered a tragedy, the absence of one limb from the body. Everything would be done to prevent this.<sup>30</sup> One remedy would be to take the bread and wine to these persons (Justin, *Apol.* 1.65; *PG* vi. 428). The concern to meet would become more pronounced as hostility from the outside world increased.

If, as we have suggested, the Christians considered their Sunday to be in some way a fulfilling of the Jewish sabbath and feast days, this conception would be heightened, for each feast day was a day of solemn assembly (*hē hēmera hē klētē bagia*) when the congregation of Israel was to meet together in joy to celebrate the feast. On the day of the Resurrection (the feast of the Firstfruits) they had met their risen Master, and again on the next Sunday. On the feast of Pentecost they had gathered together and he had bestowed the Holy Spirit. These thoughts must surely have been in their minds in their Sunday celebrations. And perhaps it is this conception of the corporate gathering of the Christians for worship, with Christ present as he had been on the day of the resurrection, that lies behind the vision in the first chapter of the Apocalypse (Rev. 1 : 12ff.). John is 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day'. He is separated in the island of Patmos from the worshipping churches on the mainland, but in his vision he sees the glorified Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks, 'the seven churches of Asia'. On the Lord's Day the Lord is present in his church at worship.<sup>31</sup>

#### THE PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN SUNDAY

How then, precisely, did the Christians occupy their Sundays? It is certain that the eucharist was at first an evening meal. The name (*deipnon*) implies this.<sup>32</sup> It is impossible here to go into the vexed question of the origins of the eucharist, but 1 Cor. 11 suggests that it was originally combined with an *agapē* in an evening meal. The Gospels suggest that Christ's appearance to the disciples on the day of the resurrection was in the evening. Luke 24 : 29, 30 indicates that it was at the evening meal ('the day is far spent') that Christ revealed himself to the two at Emmaus and only after that to the disciples in Jerusalem. There is no suggestion at what time of the day the appearance a week later, mentioned in John 20 : 24, took place. The service at which the celebration of the sacrament in Acts 20 : 7 took place was certainly in the evening: the 'many lights' and the mention of 'midnight' confirm this.<sup>33</sup>

In the time of Pliny (c. AD 112) the celebration, it seems, is being changed to the morning (*Ep.* 96. *To Trajan*). It is wise, however, to remember that conditions under persecution may not represent the normal practice of the church. By Justin's time (AD 160) it is probably in the morning (Justin, *Apol.* 1.65-67; *PG* vi. 428).

Is there any evidence that before the change of the eucharist from

evening to morning the Christians met together on the Sunday morning?<sup>34</sup> The fact that Christ rose in the morning would suggest to them that they should meet early, though there is no direct evidence of this in the first century.<sup>35</sup> But it is significant that on the day of Pentecost, the disciples had met together in the morning, especially if this was a Sunday, as it may have been. St. Peter says that the time when he was speaking was the third hour, nine a.m. This was the Jewish 'hour of prayer' in the temple (Acts 3 : 1), and the hour of the first of the sabbath services in the synagogue (Acts 2 : 15). According to Pliny, in the passage already mentioned, even before the Lord's Supper was changed the Christians were meeting in the morning.

If we turn to the descriptions of Christian worship in 1 Corinthians, in chapter 11 there is a description of the celebration of the eucharist, which is not yet separated from the agape. The confusion and the disorder of this arrangement is condemned by St. Paul. The whole seems to be called the *deipnon kyriakon*, suggesting that in Corinth, as in Troas, it still took place in the evening (1 Cor. 11 : 20).

In 1 Cor. 14 : 23-40, there is a description of a gathering in which it would seem anyone may speak who is moved to do so. If he is speaking in 'tongues' there must be an interpreter; if he is speaking prophecy (and it is clear from vv. 1, 5, 31 that a number could prophesy, and that Paul would have liked to see the number increase), it must be one by one and not all together. It seems that many in the church at Corinth claimed the privilege of addressing the gathering, the *ekklesia*, in one way or another (vv. 26, 31).

It would seem, then, that we have here the descriptions of two gatherings, or two parts of a single gathering, of the church in Corinth. These, it could be inferred from 1 Cor. 16 : 2, took place on a Sunday, *kata mian sabbatou*. If we may take it for granted that the eucharist and the agape, accompanied by preaching (Acts 20 : 7, 9, 11), took place in the evening, is it not possible that the other gathering took place in the morning?<sup>36</sup> It perhaps corresponded to some extent to the events on the morning of the day of Pentecost, when there were 'tongues' and the prophetic words of St. Peter.<sup>37</sup>

From both descriptions in 1 Corinthians it would seem that there was no hurry in these gatherings. Both would have required a considerable time before they were completed. We shall go into this more fully later.

But before leaving the question there is another point which should be borne in mind. The Christian church was not building its services

*in vacuo*. It is certain that it adopted many of its customs from pre-Christian Jewish sources and especially from the synagogue.<sup>38</sup> There was a morning service in the synagogue and a shorter one in the afternoon, often with exposition. In these services there were regular readings of the Scriptures, the law and the prophets (Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 47). Together with these were set prayers and probably the use of Psalms. It seems most likely that the church from the earliest days would model its services on these, at least in part.<sup>39</sup> The deep interest of the early church in the Old Testament is shown throughout the New Testament and in the earliest patristic writings such as 1 *Clement* and *Barnabas*, especially in the concern with *testimonia*. We can be fairly sure, then, that services in which the Old Testament was read and expounded and in which all might take part in speaking would occupy a very considerable time.

Probably the apostolic letters would be read during one of the Sunday gatherings when the Christian body was present as a whole. This can be inferred from Col. 4: 16; 1 Thess. 5: 27; Rev. 1: 3; and we know this to have been the practice at Corinth when Dionysius was bishop. To read the longer epistles such as Romans or 1 Corinthians would take at least an hour; the Apocalypse probably nearly two. It is doubtful if, to begin with, the Christians would be satisfied without hearing the whole. Probably also the Four Gospels would be read when they were available, as Justin says (*Apol.* 1.67).

#### THE PRACTICE IN THE SECOND CENTURY

##### 1. *Pliny's letter (Bithynia)*

If we move on from the New Testament period, when the eucharist seems to have been in the evening, to the second century, we have more material on which to go. Pliny's letter suggests that the Christians in his area met twice—before it was light and again to take food together. It is an account of Christian gatherings during a period of immediate danger and therefore it cannot be taken to be necessarily the ordinary practice of the church. The second gathering had been discontinued after Pliny's order and would refer to the *agapē*. The Christians would not have been willing to give up the eucharist. So it would seem probable that, unless by this time the eucharist was already being celebrated in the morning, it was changed to the morning in deference to Pliny's command; and that it was then accompanied by other acts of worship and probably by the recitation of the ten commandments.<sup>40</sup>

The later meeting, being a social occasion, would come under the law forbidding clubs (*betairiai*).<sup>41</sup>

2. *Justin Martyr (Rome, etc.)*

In Justin Martyr's *Apology* (PG vi. 428) there are two descriptions of the worship of Christians. The first, in chapter 65, is a celebration of the eucharist, apparently preceded by a Christian baptism. The baptismal rite itself has been mentioned in chapter 61. Here it is said that they are brought 'where there is water' and the service proceeds. In chapter 65 the baptism seems to precede the eucharist and to be followed immediately by it.<sup>42</sup> In chapter 67 the same celebration of the eucharist takes place, but in the place of the baptismal rite there is 'the reading of the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts'.<sup>43</sup> In chapter 67 at the beginning, concluding the other account, there are the words, 'And we continually remind each other of these things, and the wealthy among us help the needy and we always keep together, and for all things wherewith we are supplied we bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Ghost.'

There are several interesting points in this description of worship in Justin's time. Unfortunately we do not know of what church or district he is speaking, but it may very well be a general picture of things as they normally were in many parts, for Justin was well travelled. It would seem that the second account gives the normal Sunday morning practice. In the first account, having drawn attention earlier on in chapter 61 to baptism, he shows how the baptismal candidate goes on to partake immediately of the eucharist. This seems the natural meaning of the passage (PG vi. 428). The baptism may well not have been in the usual meeting place, for Justin says 'where there is water' (chapter 61). It is possible that this was at Easter,<sup>44</sup> but this is not certain. Then they proceed to the usual meeting place and the eucharist is celebrated.

In the ordinary services on Sundays readings from the 'memoirs of the apostles or from the prophets' take the place of the baptismal service. And these go on 'as long as time will allow' (*mechris enchōret*). What does this phrase imply? It can hardly mean 'until work begins', for they go on with the eucharist after this. It seems unlikely that the eucharist would start at a fixed time. The absence of any means of telling the time, apart from the sun, would militate against a fixed hour

of the day, though it is surprising how accurately country people without clocks can tell the hour of the day.

If I may draw from my own experiences as a missionary in China in the country districts, I would suggest that the phrase means 'until all the Christians had arrived for the eucharist'. The important point was not at what time, but whether all were present, and quite frequently there were long periods of waiting, especially if the individual lived far away.<sup>45</sup> Justin mentions quite clearly that there were Christians who came, not only from the city, but from the country too (chapter 67). Pliny mentions the same fact of the spread of Christianity to the villages, and that was some fifty years earlier.<sup>46</sup>

This seems to be decisive against the Sunday services proper beginning before dawn except in wholly city congregations. Again, if one may draw from experience on the mission field, no villager would venture out of his village before dawn, and it is unlikely that, if the town were a walled one, as some were,<sup>47</sup> the gates would be open before dawn.

It would seem probable that the eucharist proper did not start until well after dawn. Pliny's statement about the Christians gathering before it was light (*ante lucem*) may well have been due to the circumstances of persecution prevailing at that time. There is corroboration of this view in a sentence of Tertullian in his work *De Fuga* (14); 'If you cannot meet in the day (because of persecution) you can meet in the night' (*PL* ii. 119).

Can we get any indication of how long the eucharist would last? Or at what time it would be likely to commence? It seems probable, if we may draw on missionary experience, that the country people would come from distances up to seven or eight miles, though more probably from three or four. If we allow then an hour or two after dawn before the service began, it would be somewhere about seven to eight a.m.<sup>48</sup> We may be quite sure that the service will not be hurried. If we can draw conclusions from some of the material which has come down from rather later times, it would seem that there must have been several readings and possibly several expositions,<sup>49</sup> which would have accorded with Jewish practice. The prayer of thanksgiving we know from Justin to have been a very long one (*eucharistian epi polu poieitai*). There would probably be singing (Justin, *Apol.* 1.65; Eusebius, *HE* 5.28.5).

Again, if we may take examples from the mission field, the Christians would not be satisfied with less than two hours. In the *Pilgrimage of*

*Aetheria* (McClure and Feltoe, p. 51) the services in Jerusalem in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, though obviously of much later date and greatly expanded and adorned, lasted from dawn until early noon. In the Orthodox Syrian Church of India the service begins, so I am told, at seven a.m. and continues until eleven a.m., which is getting near the midday meal and the siesta which follows it. And this in a church where the government of the country has never been Christian, just as in the early church.

### 3. *Tertullian (North Africa)*

Justin does not seem to mention any other gatherings of Christians on a Sunday. But we have seen that in earlier days, probably, the eucharist had been celebrated in the evening in conjunction with the *agapē*. Pliny has mentioned a second gathering of the Christians which evidently bore some resemblance to the forbidden 'clubs' (*betairiai*) and which would seem to have been the *agapē*. It is to Tertullian that we must turn, if we would get some account of this second gathering from the second or third century. It is true that he speaks of the practice in North Africa, but as Pliny has mentioned what seems to be the equivalent in Bithynia, we can perhaps take it for granted that it represents a general custom.

He says in the *Apology* (39),<sup>50</sup> 'About the modest supper room of the Christians alone a great ado is made. Our feast explains itself by its name. The Greeks call it love, *agapē*. Whatever it costs, our outlay in the name of piety is gain, since with the good things of the feast we benefit the needy . . . a peculiar respect is shown to the lowly. If the object of our feast is good, in the light of that consider its further regulations. As it is an act of religious service, it permits no violence or immodesty. The participants, before reclining, taste first of prayer to God. As much is eaten as satisfies the cravings of hunger, as much is drunk as befits the chaste. They say it is enough as those who remember that even during the night they have to worship God. They talk as those who know that the Lord is one of their auditors. After manual ablutions and the bringing in of lights, each is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the holy scriptures or one of his own composing, a proof of the measure of our drinking. As the feast commenced with prayer, so with prayer it is closed.'

Here the description of the meal, quite clearly the *agapē*, is of a substantial meal. The pagan critics are able to suggest its extravagance: 'You abuse also our humble feasts on the ground that they are ex-

travagant as well as infamously wicked.' Those who come eat 'till they are satisfied'. This is followed by a service in which, apparently, all who are present take part. But before the service there are manual ablutions and then the lighting of the lamps.

The sequence is interesting. In the sacred meal of the Jews at the beginning of the sabbath the sequence is lamplighting and then the meal,<sup>51</sup> which would imply that the meal was after sunset. Here the meal would be before sunset and the lighting of the lamps the preliminary to the religious gathering which followed. If then darkness fell about six p.m., this meal would probably have commenced soon after four p.m. For it was clearly considered a festive occasion. Minucius Felix, describing the charges of pagans, says in the *Octavius* (ch. 9), 'On a solemn day (*sollemni die*) they assemble at the feasts (*ad epulas*) with all their children, sisters, mothers, people of every sex and every age. There, after much feasting,<sup>52</sup> when the fellowship has grown warm . . . a dog that has been tied to a chandelier is provoked, by throwing a piece of offal beyond the length of a line by which he is bound, to rush and spring and thus the light being overturned and extinguished, in the shameless darkness the connections of abominable lust involve them in the uncertainty of fate. . . .' (*PL* iii. 262). While this is obviously a hostile description, there is again the conjunction of what must have been a substantial meal, the mention of lamps lit after dark, and the gathering of the whole Christian fellowship, apparently including the children. Their presence would perhaps suggest that the meal started fairly early, as the Tertullian passage also suggests, but was continued into the dark (*Apol.* 39; *PL* i. 468).

The same order (though not only on Sundays) seems to be in view in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, which would be about the same date.<sup>53</sup> Here, in chapter 26, the celebration of the *agapē* seems to be at the invitation of some Christian. There follows the description of what is to take place and in section 18 the lighting of the lamp, 'when the evening is come'. This is followed by prayer and singing in which, in section 28, the children join. Apparently, if widows are invited, they are to leave before dark (27.1).<sup>54</sup> All this suggests again that these celebrations would begin in the later afternoon, possibly about four p.m., and the meal itself be finished before dark.

#### *A modern parallel*

There is an interesting sidelight on this in the present practice of at least a section of the Syrian Orthodox Church of India,<sup>55</sup> a church

which has always been in a minority and had to fight for its survival. It is likely that these practices are founded on very early patterns which have continued unchanged down the centuries. The Sunday starts on the Saturday evening with an evening service lasting one and a half hours. The eucharist begins about seven a.m. and continues until nearly noon. All church members, men, women, and children, attend. In the afternoon at about two p.m., after the midday meal and siesta, the church members gather in groups in different localities at the invitation of one member who invites the other members of the congregation in that locality, as families with the children, for a meal. In this instruction and singing go on, a more free and easy sort of gathering than on the church premises. It would seem that probably here is the survival of what had been practised in the early church.

If the conclusions drawn from what has been said are correct, then a good part of the Sunday in the early church was spent in the company of other Christians, in the *koinōnia*, the fellowship. This fits in well with the spirit of the early church, as we have already seen. And in fact not much time would be left for Christians to spend on their ordinary occupations (if indeed they ever did this).

#### 4. *Clement of Alexandria (Egypt)*

In confirmation of this, there is a passage in the *Paedagogus* of Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 3.11; *PG* viii. 657), which suggests that the Christians to whom he is speaking did not, after the morning celebration, go back to their ordinary jobs. He says, 'Woman and man (probably "wife and husband") are to go to church, decently attired, with natural step, embracing silence, possessing unfeigned love, pure in body, pure in heart, fit to pray to God. . . . But now I know not how people change their fashions and manners with the place. . . . So, laying aside the inspiration of the assembly, after their departure from it, they become like others with whom they associate . . . after having paid reverence to the discourse about God they leave within (the church) what they have heard. And outside they foolishly amuse themselves with impious playing and amatory quavering, occupied with flute-playing and dancing and intoxication and all kinds of trash.'<sup>56</sup>

This sounds very much like the description of the Jewish sabbath given by several of the Fathers (Chrysostom, *De Lazaro* 1; *PG* xlvi. 972), and which Augustine condemns by saying that it would have been better if they had spent the whole day in digging or in weaving than to spend it in this way (*Serm.* 9.3; *PL* xxxviii. 77). But what is

clear is that they were not occupied at their ordinary jobs, or he would not have been able to say what he does.

The same temptations seem to have been present much earlier, for in the so-called *Second Epistle of Clement*, perhaps the earliest example of a Christian sermon, the writer urges his hearers in section 17, 'Let us not think to give heed and believe now only while we are admonished by the presbyters, but likewise when we have departed home let us remember the commandments of the Lord and not suffer ourselves to be dragged off the other way by our worldly lusts, but coming hither more frequently, let us strive to go forward in the commandments of the Lord. . . .' The date usually given to this is c. AD 120-140.<sup>57</sup>

*Confirmation from Chrysostom (Antioch and Constantinople)*

This conception of concentrating on what has been heard in the Sunday celebration, mentioned in the so-called *Second Epistle of Clement* and in Clement of Alexandria, is well illustrated in a much later work, the *Commentary* of Chrysostom on Matthew. He says, '(the losing of the spiritual benefits) comes from the unbecoming use of our time. . . . For we ought not, as soon as we retire from the Communion, to plunge into affairs (*pragmata*) unsuitable to the Communion, but as soon as ever we get home to take our Bible into our hands and call our wife and children to join us in putting together what we have heard and then, not before, engage in the business of life. For if after the bath you would not choose to hurry into the market place, lest by the business in the market you should destroy the refreshment thence derived, much more ought we to act on this principle after the Communion. . . . When you retire from the Communion, you must account nothing more necessary, than that you should put together the things that have been said to you. Yes, for it were the utmost folly, while we give up five or six days to the business of life, not to bestow on spiritual things so much as one day or rather not so much as a small part of one day. . . . Therefore let us write it down as an unalterable law for ourselves, for our wives and for our children, to give up this one day of the week entire to hearing and to the recollection of the things which we have heard.'<sup>58</sup>

This passage from the sermons on Matthew's Gospel was given probably c. AD 390 at Antioch. It is, of course, well after the decree of Constantine, and therefore could not be used as an argument. But its spirit fits in so well with what has been already mentioned, and appeals not to the law or to the decree of Constantine, but to the value of the day

to the Christian, that we may take it as confirmatory evidence. It would seem to suggest that there existed undisciplined Christians who neither observed the emperor's decree nor showed any real desire for spiritual things—'not so much as a small part of one day'. Such people could exist at any period, but they incur reproof.

The passage is important also as showing that Chrysostom expected, not only the united worship of the church as a whole, but a family interest in the home, and it is noteworthy that he takes it for granted that many families will have a copy of the Scriptures, or part of them, in their homes.<sup>59</sup>

*Does the Didascalia (Syria) suggest a different practice?*

In this connection a passage in the *Didascalia* must again be examined which might seem to point the other way. In chapter 13 (the parallel passage to *Apostolic Constitutions* ii.63) it says, 'Let those who are young in the church be ministering diligently without sloth, in all things that are needful, with much reverence and modesty. Do you, the faithful, therefore, all of you, daily and hourly, whenever you are not in the church (at the gathering) devote yourselves to your work, so that in all the conduct of your life you may either be occupied in the things of the Lord or engaged upon your work, and may never be idle.'<sup>60</sup>

In the previous section<sup>61</sup> the writer has been dealing with Sunday worship. Then he goes on to warn about the danger of attending heathen celebrations, the theatre, idol festivals, etc. 'A believer must not even come near to a fair. . . .'<sup>62</sup> And then follows the passage already quoted. There does not seem to be any special reason why the words should be applied to Sunday, except that the whole section begins with a passage on the Sunday gathering. The warning seems to be occasioned by the thought that if the young man were not at his work he would be tempted to attend the theatre show or the heathen festival. But this explanation (that it does not refer directly to the Sunday) seems to be demanded by the word 'daily'. A passage a little earlier<sup>63</sup> in the *Didascalia* which is definitely speaking of the Sunday says, 'But if there be any one who takes occasion of worldly business to withdraw himself, let him know this, that the trades of the faithful are called works of superfluity; for their true work is religion. Pursue your trades therefore as works of superfluity, for your sustenance, but let your true work be religion. Have a care therefore that you never withdraw yourself from the assembly of the church.'

This seems to suggest, if we have rightly interpreted the meaning of

'a holy day', that the ordinary jobs were to be considered as secondary to the worship of the church, and as we have seen, this worship covered a large part of the day. As the parallel passage in the *Apostolic Constitutions* says, 'The worship of God is their great work. . . . Follow therefore your trades as by the by, for your maintenance, but make the worship of God your main business.'<sup>64</sup> In the *Apostolic Constitutions* the section beginning, 'Let the young men . . .' has as its reason for work that they may not be burdensome to the church, and the command about either being in church or at work is omitted.<sup>65</sup> We may, then, conclude that the *Didascalia* takes the same view as the other sources.

*Additional Sunday Practices: (a) Works of Charity*

But there is still another sidelight which we can get on Sunday practice in the early church. Besides the times of gathering together unitedly and of study at home, there seems from the earliest period to have been a regular practice of charity. In 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2 there is the first express hint of this, that on the first day of the week there should be a laying aside of what was probably a monetary offering, as a gift to the poor saints in Jerusalem. It is true that no mention is made of the gifts being given at the services of worship, possibly because Paul is speaking of an exceptional offering, beyond the regular practice at the Sunday services, and therefore laid by at home; but what does seem clear is the association of charitable giving with the Sunday.<sup>66</sup> The fellowship (*koinōnia*) of the early church included not only the joining in worship, but the sharing of goods, and especially with those who were poor. Such passages as 2 Cor. 8: 1-9: 15 show what weight Paul laid on the practical exhibition of Christian charity. It is doubly interesting if this passage is the sequel of 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2 (cf. 2 Cor. 9: 4, 5). The 'doing good' (*eupōia*), a sacrifice (Heb. 13: 16), seems to have included practical assistance.<sup>67</sup>

It would seem that the 'offering' (*prosphora, oblatio*) in the eucharist was connected with charitable giving. For the *agapē* was often provided for out of this, and also gifts were sent to the poor. In the *Apostolic Tradition* (3.26f.) charity is emphasised strongly. It seems from that source that wealthy Christians sometimes invited the widows to a meal, though this would not necessarily have been on the Sunday (Easton, op. cit., p. 50; BB 30, p. 74). In the same work there is the offering of the firstfruits in the Sunday gathering. This is probably part of the ordinary 'offering' at the eucharist (cp. 1.4-6), but it is

interesting to find that the idea of Sunday as in some way a continuation of the Old Testament feast of the Firstfruits is hinted at.<sup>68</sup> In the *Apostolic Tradition* again, the sick and aged are specially singled out as needing help from these sources (Easton, op. cit., p. 50; BB 30, p. 74). Tertullian (*Apol.* 39) includes in his description of what the Christian offerings were used for, 'to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons now confined to the house,<sup>69</sup> such as have suffered shipwreck, and if there happen to be any in the mines or banished to the islands, or shut up in prisons. . . .' It is true that this is a monthly collection, but it is probably in addition to the weekly 'offering' (*PL* i. 468ff.).

This agrees with a passage in Justin's *Apology* (I. 67), where he says, 'On the day called Sunday . . . they who are well-to-do and willing give what each one thinks fit, and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who through sickness or any other cause are in want, and those in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all that have need' (*PG* vi. 429).

Sunday would seem to be the day when this was possible for ordinary Christians, and probably it is to such practices that Peter of Alexandria (c. AD 310) refers when he says that the Lord's Day must be a day of rest from labour, or works of charity and of reading the Scriptures.<sup>70</sup> Chrysostom considerably later says in his *Commentary* on 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2, 'Wherefore call to mind what ye attained to on this day . . . the beginning of our life took place on this day . . . But not in this regard only is the season (the first day of the week) convenient for a zealous benevolence, but also because it hath rest and immunity from toils; the soul when released from labour becoming readier and apter to show mercy. Moreover, the communicating on that day in the mysteries so tremendous and immortal instils great zealousness' (*In 1 Cor. Hom.* 43.1; *PG* lxi. 368). Ambrose in his *Commentary* on 1 Cor. 16 (*PL* xvii. 272) has the same thought: 'He orders the collection to be made on the Lord's Day, as he had arranged for all the churches that on that day, on which the Lord rose again, his people be joined together for the praise and glory of God.' The meaning, it would seem, is, that by the sharing in worldly possessions their hearts would be joined together.<sup>71</sup>

It is probable, then, that this special care for those in need is really an extension of the spirit of fellowship, the *koinōnia*, which was the essential mark of the early church and its Sunday observance. Those

who were unable to be present at the gatherings would be visited in their homes. This is expressly mentioned of the eucharist. Justin (*Apology* 1.65) says, 'And to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons' (*PG* vi. 428). Eusebius of Caesarea<sup>72</sup> also mentions this.<sup>73</sup> The idea behind it probably is that among the whole body of Christians in that congregation none should be left out. Similarly, the thought behind the concern for sick, aged, and poor was that if 'one member suffered all the members suffered with it', and on the Sunday, the day of the fellowship, this needed to be shown in action.

#### *Additional Sunday Practices: (b) Baptisms*

As we have seen in Justin's *Apology* (1.65), baptisms took place on a Sunday morning and before the eucharist. This may only have been the practice at one period or in one place. Tertullian in his treatise *On Baptism* (chapter 19), suggests that the most suitable times for baptism are at the Passover and at Pentecost, but goes on to say, 'However, every day is the Lord's, every hour, every time is apt for baptism; if there is a difference in the solemnity (presumably the sacredness of the day), in the grace distinction there is none.' In the cases of Passover and Pentecost it would presumably have been on a Sunday. In the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (2.21),<sup>74</sup> it is at cock-crow on a Sunday. In the *Clementine Recognitions* (10.72; *PG* i. 1454) possibly between AD 211 and 230, Peter is said 'to have proclaimed a fast to all the people and on the next Lord's Day he baptised him'. This would seem to be built on a current practice of baptism on a Sunday at that time. It would seem that the same practice lies behind Cyprian's words in *Ep.* 66. 2-4 (*PL* iii. 1017; Oxford ed. 64), where he takes the eighth day of Jewish circumcision to be fulfilled in the Christian Sunday, and possibly behind Origen's comment in reference to Psalm 118 (*PG* xii. 1588). While not a direct reference, Origen's language is baptismal.<sup>75</sup>

#### *Additional Sunday Practices: (c) Ordinations*

In the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (Easton, op. cit., pp. 33-9; BB 2-8, pp. 5-27) the first nine sections of the first book deal with ordinations. These, in the case of a bishop and probably of the other orders, are to be on a Sunday. The ceremony it seems would be no very brief one. There is to be the naming and consent, presumably if not on the same Sunday then on a previous one. The consent would probably be something in the nature of a presentation of the candidate, followed by

discussion as to his suitability and possibly the interviewing of other candidates and an election. There is silent prayer and public prayer. All are to offer him the kiss of peace. There is the offertory and further prayer, which seems to be included in the eucharist. The ordination evidently preceded the eucharist, as baptism did in Justin Martyr's day.

*Additional Sunday Practices: (d) Discipline*

There is one other aspect of Christian practice on Sunday—the question of church discipline. With this would be included the whole question of social problems in the church. In Acts 6 the daily ministration to the widows becomes an acute problem, and the apostles call together 'the whole multitude of the disciples'. Again in Acts 15: 12 it is clear that the whole body of the Christians has been gathered together. So too in 1 Cor. 6: 1 St. Paul takes it for granted that 'the saints' should together find a solution for quarrels between Christians. And in 1 Cor. 5: 4f., 'when (the Christians) are gathered together' (*synachthentōn hymōn*), they will take disciplinary action against the church member guilty of flagrant sin. None of these references mentions on what occasion the gatherings take place, but it seems natural to think that they would take place when the Christians were already together, especially in view of Matt. 18: 17, where *ekklēsia* would mean the normal Christian gathering.

After New Testament times,<sup>76</sup> the practice of discipline would have continued until it crystallised into penance and excommunication.<sup>77</sup> These would be decided by the whole church and would absorb no small time. The schisms which resulted from this problem, Novatianist and Donatist, highlight the strong feeling which it generated. For this, unhurried time would be required.

SUMMARY

If we try then to summarise what has been said of Christian practice on Sunday, we may conclude that the day was the special day for an expression of the solidarity of the Christian church, the body of Christ, the day on which the festal celebration brought Christians together for as long as possible. It would seem that, both for the eucharistic gathering in the morning (after the early years) and the more informal gathering later in the day (normally an *agapē*), Christians wished to be in each other's company, both in worship and social intercourse, for as long as possible. Both were considered to be

expressions of worship, as meals were with the Jews. The festal character of the day included the spirit of triumphant joy, the atmosphere of the Resurrection. It was the day of offering, both to God and to one another, in the form of the eucharist and of the *agapē*, and in help for the poor. It was also the day of concern for those members of the body who were in any way suffering or unable to join the family circle of the church. The absence of any one member was noticed and followed up. It was also the day for Christian initiation and ordination and for the exercise of discipline in the church. 'This is the day the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it' (Ps. 118 : 24) is a verse frequently applied to Sunday, from Clement of Alexandria onwards.<sup>78</sup>

## Chapter 10

# The Theology of the Christian Sunday

IN the next three chapters we must seek to gather into order the various insights into the theology of the Christian Sunday which have appeared under one heading or another, and to see the picture as a whole. This will inevitably mean some repetition of what has already been said, but we have attempted to trace the practice, and we must now try to see what lay behind the practice. We shall expect to find that Sunday has the Jewish festival atmosphere and is a corporate observance, but it may be easiest to follow the theology along the lines of the names given to the day.

### I. THE FIRST DAY

This is the earliest name given to Sunday. It was the normal designation of the day in the Jewish week. All four Gospels emphasise very strongly that the Resurrection took place on 'the first day of the week', even when they could have said 'the next day', seeming to show that the title was important to them. It immediately distinguished the Christian Sunday from the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day. And just as in Jewish minds the seventh day was intimately connected with the account of creation in the first two chapters of Genesis, so the first day was, in the eyes of the Christians, connected with the same sequence of events in the creation narrative.

#### (i) *The New Creation*

The Christian saw in the first day of the week a new 'beginning', *archē*. Just as on the first day in the creation there had been a beginning, so now there was a new beginning, brought about by Christ's resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

This comes out especially clearly in the conception of a new creation, an idea which is present in the New Testament. In 2 Cor. 5 : 17 the work of Christ is represented as a new 'creation' (*kainē ktisis*), and in Eph. 2 : 10 again this work is described as a 'being created' (*ktisthentes*). This is connected in 2 : 5, 6 with the resurrection, *synexōpoiēsen tō Christō . . . kai synēgeiren*. Again, in 4 : 24 the 'new man' is said to be

'created' (*ktisthenta*). The equivalent passage in Col. 3 : 10, if we are to accept the reading, speaks of Christ as the one who 'created' (*ktisantos*) him. In Gal. 6 : 15 St. Paul speaks of a 'new creation' (*kainē ktisis*). This would connect up with the whole conception of the newness of the 'New Covenant', *kainē diathēkē*, and the 'new man', *kainos anthrōpos* (Heb. 8; Eph. 4 : 24), and we may compare with this Mark 2 : 21, 22, 'new cloth' and 'new wine'.

Ignatius (*Mag.* 9.1) connects Sunday with this 'new' outlook. He says, 'If those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto the newness of hope (*kainotēta*), not sabbatising, but living according to the Lord's Day . . .'. This is then connected with the Resurrection.

In Clement of Alexandria there is a description of the effects of the coming of Christ. He says, 'For in us, buried in darkness . . . light has gone forth from heaven . . . that light is eternal life . . . Night fears the light and hiding itself in terror gives place to the day of the Lord (*tē hēmera kyriou*). This was the end (objective) of the new creation. For the Sun of Righteousness drives his chariot over all . . . He hath changed sunset into sunrise (*anatolēn*) and through the cross brought death to life' (*Protrepticus* 11; *PG* viii. 232).

Tertullian says, 'If there is a new creation in Christ, our solemnities will be bound to be new' (*De jejun.* 14). *Sollemnitatis* is the word used of a Christian observance, and while Sunday is not mentioned by name it would clearly be in mind. The new creation and the new observance go together, just as the old creation and the old observance do.

The same thought of a new restoration connected with the Resurrection and Sunday appears in Ephrem Syrus (*Nisibene Hymns* 3.6; *NPNF* 13, p. 171): 'The day of thy deliverance is king of all days. The sabbath overthrew thy walls . . . the day of the resurrection of the Son raised again thy ruins; the day of resurrection raised thee according to its name. It glorified its title.'

Gregory of Nazianzus says, 'That, was the bond of the grave, and the Resurrection, this, clearly the second creation, in order that as the first creation began from a Lord's Day, . . . so also the second again began from it, being the first of those things that come after and the eighth from those things that come before. . . .' (*Orat.* 44.5; *PG* xxxvi. 612c).

In the short sermon attributed to Athanasius (*De Sabb. et Circum.*),<sup>2</sup> the passage runs, 'For the sabbath was the end of the former creation, but the Lord's Day is the beginning of the second, in which he renewed the old and made it afresh, and so, as he commanded them before to keep the sabbath day, the memorial of former things, so we

honour (*timōmen*) the Lord's Day, being the memorial of the second creation. For he did not create another, but renewed the old and completed what he had begun to make. . . . For the work was incomplete, if when Adam sinned mankind had died. But it was made complete when he came alive; having renewed the creation which was made in six days he appoints a day for the re-creation, of which the Spirit had spoken before through the Psalm, "This is the day the Lord hath made. . . ." (Ps. 117 (118) 24). For instead of the sun, God arises, lighting the soul of each. For this reason in the passion of the Saviour the sun did not give light, showing an end of the former creation, but a beginning of another, the rising of the Saviour. And as the Lord's Day is the beginning of the new creation, the sabbath too ceases. . . . For each is completed on the eighth day, both the beginning of the new creation and the new birth of man, and so the eighth day abolished the sabbath and not the sabbath the eighth day.'

This sermon is, it would seem, a fourth-century product. It connects closely the abolition of circumcision and the sabbath and in each case the reason given is the beginning of a new creation, a renewal. The two are connected together in the idea of the 'Eighth Day'. We shall go into this more fully later on. The connection of thought is that the resurrection of Christ was the beginning of the new creation on the first day, Sunday; this re-creation is general for the world, but also individual in the renewal connected with baptism. The rising of Christ is the rising of the sun, the darkness is past and Sunday is the mark of this, being the first day. The sabbath, the mark of the old creation, ceases.<sup>3</sup>

There is an interesting passage in a sermon, attributed to Eusebius of Alexandria.<sup>4</sup> He says, 'On this he gave the firstfruits of the creation of the world and on this day the firstfruits of the Resurrection. On this day he ordered the holy mysteries to be completed. This is why this is the "beginning" (*archē*, principle?) of all doing good; the beginning of the creation of the world and the beginning of the Resurrection and the beginning of the week. These three "beginnings" which this day has shows the principle of the Holy Trinity.'<sup>5</sup> Here too the idea of the first day and the Resurrection as the new creation are implicit.

#### (ii) *The giving of light*

Another aspect of the first day is the idea of Sunday as the day of light. This is of course closely connected with the idea of the new creation,

as the first step in the Genesis account of creation was 'Let there be light', on the first day. Remember also the Jewish conception of the sabbath as the day of light, discussed in the opening chapters.

There is a very full theology of light in both Old and New Testaments. God is the Creator of light (Gen. 1 : 2). His presence is light (Isa. 60 : 1-3, 19). Light is associated with the joy and the blessing that God gives (Ps. 97 : 11; Ps 36 : 9). Righteousness, the way of God, is a way of light (Prov. 4 : 18). Darkness is associated with sin and its judgment; and with ignorance of God (Isa. 60 : 2; 8 : 22). The coming of the Messiah will bring light (Isa. 9 : 2), and the Servant of the Lord is to be the light of the Gentiles (Isa. 49 : 6). The sun of righteousness will arise bringing healing (Mal. 4 : 2).<sup>6</sup>

When we turn to the New Testament, this is developed very fully, particularly in the Fourth Gospel. The Word is the source of light (John 1 : 4). The Word was the true light in his coming into the world.<sup>7</sup> The judgment of the world is that light has come and men loved darkness because their deeds were evil (John 3 : 19). Christ claims to be the light of the world (John 8 : 12; 9 : 5; 12 : 46). In the first Epistle of John, God himself is light (1 John 1 : 5), and Christ himself, the true light, is shining (1 John 2 : 8). The coming of Christ is light to the Gentiles (Luke 2 : 32).

Christ's followers become themselves sources of light (Matt. 5 : 14; Phil. 2 : 15). Moral righteousness and attractive conduct become light (Matt. 5 : 16). To turn to Christ is to leave the darkness and find the light (Acts 26 : 18; Eph. 5 : 8). As God is in the light, so the Christian must walk in the light (1 John 1 : 7). Christ, as the light of the world, is specially demonstrated in the Resurrection (Acts 26 : 23). And perhaps it is for this reason that the writers of the Gospels seem to emphasise that the Resurrection took place at dawn when it was becoming light (Matt. 28 : 1; Mark 16 : 2; Luke 24 : 1; John 20 : 1).

The knowledge of Christ, the preaching of the gospel, brings light (2 Cor. 4 : 4-6, quoting Gen. 1 : 2). Those who have received the message of the gospel have been enlightened (Heb. 6 : 4; Eph. 1 : 18).

Here then in the New Testament, on an Old Testament foundation, is a theology of light connected with the coming of Christ and especially with the Resurrection. In this realm of thought the idea of the light coming, the sun rising and shining, is connected with the giving of light to the world and the enlightenment of the individual who comes out of darkness into light. He becomes light (Matt. 5 : 14), and walks as a child of light (Eph. 5 : 8). It is interesting to note that the

conception of fellowship is in 1 John 1 : 7 connected with the light, 'If we walk in the light . . . we have fellowship one with another.'

It will be noticed in these passages that light is used both for the truth, and for the moral life which corresponds to it; an understanding of the truth and the life which it should produce. We shall examine the former conception more fully in its relation to Sunday later on.<sup>8</sup>

Passing to post-New Testament times, Justin Martyr says, 'Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on that day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn, and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things which we have submitted to you' (*Apol.* 1.67). Here two reasons are given for the observance of Sunday; it is the first day (with clear reference to Gen. 1 : 2f.) and it is the day of the Resurrection. Perhaps the thought in Justin's mind is that the 'appearing' of Christ and his teaching of the apostles is the equivalent of the giving of light on the first day. If Christ was the light of the world, then his 'arising' would be the giving of light. The 'teaching' would be continued as Sunday by Sunday the whole congregation (*pantes*) met together and he was in the midst, appearing in this way through the Scriptures and opening them up.

Clement of Alexandria, in the passage which we have already examined (*Strom.* 6.16), claims that 'on the primal day, our true rest, which is the first creation of light; from this day the first wisdom and knowledge illuminate us. . . . For the light of truth causing no shadow is the Spirit of God.'

In the *Paschal Canon* of Anatolius (11), he says, 'The festival of the Lord's resurrection is one of light and there is no fellowship between light and darkness.' And again, 'For on the Lord's Day was it that light was shown to us in the beginning and now also in the end, the comfort of all present and the token of all future blessings.' Anatolius wrote<sup>9</sup> probably c. AD 270. Primarily he is dealing with Easter day and the right date on which to keep it, but it is clear that the reference just given includes all Sundays as a general pattern, of which Easter (*pascha*) was the most outstanding. The 'light' refers to the resurrection of Christ.

In his *Commentary on Psalm 91* (92), Eusebius of Caesarea says 'And so refusing these (the false sabbaths), the Word through the New

Covenant changed (*metēgagē*) and transformed (*metatētheikē*) the feast of the sabbath to the rising (*anatolē*) of the light and handed to us the image of a true rest, the Lord's Day that saves, the first day of light, on which the Saviour of the world after all his works . . . and having brought back victory over death crossed the heavenly gates and completed his work of six days. . . . On that day which is the day of light and the first and of the true Sun, we also ourselves coming together, celebrating holy sabbaths and spiritual, we who have been redeemed from all nations throughout the world through him, we fulfil, according to a spiritual law, the things which the law had decreed that the priests should do on the sabbath. We are offering spiritual sacrifices. . . .' A little further on he says, 'In the morning facing eastward we proclaim the light, the mercy of God', the idea being probably the welcoming of the Sun of Righteousness as he arises from the dead.<sup>10</sup>

In these passages Eusebius states that 'the Word', Christ it would seem, in the setting up of the New Covenant transferred the feast of the sabbath to the rising of the light (*tēn tou phōtos anatolēn*), and that this was the first day of light. Christ is the true Sun who has risen, in the Resurrection. Sunday has become the sabbath of the priests, a day full of service to God and not the day of the ordinary Israelite, emptied of all (*argein*). The same thoughts occur later where Eusebius speaks of the creating of light and of 'the Sun of Righteousness arising on our souls'. The turning to the east in the morning service he connects with the conception of the coming of light in the Resurrection.<sup>11</sup>

#### *The giving of light in the opening of the Scriptures*

Eusebius goes on to connect the day with the preaching of the Word of God. He says, 'Going on and becoming better, we are commanded too to announce them to others and to teach those who are near us the mercies of God'. Perhaps there is in his mind the connection of the preaching of the Word and the coming of light. For further down he continues, 'The proclamation of God's mercy in the morning and his faithfulness every night (I am trying to fulfil). For then is shown especially the truth of the godly soul, when in darkness and meeting darkness it shows sincerity and purity of conscience as in the brightest light and clearest day' (PG xxiii. 1184a).

This emphasis on Sunday as the day of the opening of the Word, the giving of light to the soul, is widespread in the early church. It comes perhaps from the mentioning, in the Resurrection accounts, of the announcing of the Resurrection by those who saw him, cf. John

20 : 18, 25, involving belief and unbelief, 20 : 29, described as 'the testimony', 21 : 24; cf. also Luke 24 : 10, 11; Matt. 28 : 8.<sup>12</sup> Of similar significance, very likely, is the opening of the Scriptures to the disciples on the first Easter day (Luke 24 : 27, 45), that is, the explanation of what had taken place in the death and resurrection of Jesus in its relationship to the Old Testament Scriptures. So there seem to have been the announcement (*kerygma*) of the Resurrection and the teaching (*didaskalia*), the explanation of the Old Testament, both connected in the minds of the writers with the day of the Resurrection, the first day.

The light, then, would seem to signify the new spirit of hope and joy which the Resurrection brought, and the understanding of divine truth, and coupled with it the integrity of heart resulting from new life.

It would be impossible to go through all the passages which deal with the reading and expounding of the Scriptures,<sup>13</sup> but perhaps we may quote one from Justin Martyr. In *Apol.* 1.67, he says, 'On the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.' Clement of Alexandria, in *Paed.* 3.11, tells how, 'having paid reverence to the discourse about God, they leave within what they have heard'. At a later date, Chrysostom is especially insistent on the preaching and explaining of the Word.<sup>14</sup> In Origen *Hom. Exod.* 7.5; *PG* xii. 345) there is the suggestion that on the first day the manna began to be given, whereas there was no manna on the seventh day; in other words, in Christianity, not in Judaism, is the true manna. While the picture is far-fetched, the underlying thought seems to be that there was for the Christian a gathering of what would meet his soul's need on the Sunday: 'No heavenly bread which is the Word of God . . .' 'For even today the Lord on the seventh day is raining manna from heaven. For there are the heavenly oracles which have been read to us and the words have descended from God.'

It would seem, then, that included in the thought of Sunday, as the day of light, was a firm belief in the need for the light of the Word, the explanation and understanding of the Scriptures.

#### *The giving of light and the new creation in baptism*

There is still another aspect of Sunday, as having a connection with light, in the practice of baptism on Sundays. We have already examined

the passage from Justin Martyr which gives the procedure on a Sunday morning (*Apol.* 1.65; *PG* vi. 428). No doubt the word *phōtizō*, which in the passive came to be used of baptism,<sup>15</sup> helped this conception. Those who were coming into the light would naturally do so on the day of light. This would be even more appropriate as baptism was looked upon as a resurrection. And this would naturally take place on the day of the Resurrection. Sunday, being the day when the Christians were gathered together, would in fact be the only suitable day for the receiving of the new converts. But it was not long before another connection was seen. Sunday, the first day, was also the eighth day. The Jewish child was circumcised on the eighth. It would be appropriate then that baptism, the 'sign' of the spiritual circumcision, the initiation into the new covenant, should take place on the eighth day also. Cyprian inveighs against those who would copy the Jews and wait until the literal eighth day in baptising their children, which would result in the baptism being on any day of the week (Cyprian, *Ep.* 58 [Oxford 64]. 2-4; *PL* iii. 1015).

This conception, again, would be connected with the Spirit. As the Spirit moved on the waters in Genesis 1 : 2 and began the creation, so in baptism the Spirit, already connected with the new creation, is at work. In Acts 2, on the Sunday of Pentecost, there is the preaching of the Word, the giving of the Spirit and the baptism of three thousand.<sup>16</sup>

If we try to sum up the conceptions which we have examined under the heading of the first day, we find that the day of the Resurrection is thought of as the day when a new creation began. It began like the old creation, with the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a new beginning (*archē*), and from it sprang a new life. The rising of the Sun of Righteousness was the first step in this new creation. It was the giving of light where there had been darkness. This light was conveyed in the proclamation of the risen Christ and in the opening of the Scriptures, and resulted in people being enlightened and coming into the light, the outward sign of this being baptism. All these were connected in thought with Sunday, the first day.

## Chapter II

# The Theology of the Christian Sunday

### II. THE LORD'S DAY

From the earliest times Sunday was connected with Christ's resurrection. It would be quite impossible to begin to give a list of the passages in which the two are linked.<sup>1</sup> What took place on that day had a profound effect on its future observance. We have seen this already in other contexts: the spirit of enthusiastic joy and hope; the witness of those who saw Christ and heard him opening the Scriptures; the gathering of the disciples together and the presence of Christ in their midst; the fact that it was the first day of the week and the Old Testament inferences from that; the breathing of the Spirit on them and the bestowal of peace by the risen Lord (John 20: 21); the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—all these things had a deep meaning for the Christian church.

But what caused them, no doubt, to call the day the Lord's Day (*kyriakē*)<sup>2</sup> was that in all these conceptions Christ himself was the central figure. It was he who rose; it was he who appeared to them; it was he who spoke; it was he who broke the bread and ate with them; it was he who opened the Scriptures and spoke about the things 'concerning himself' (Luke 24: 27); he who breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Spirit'; he who bestowed his peace when they were gathered together and told them to keep together; he who stood in the midst, the living risen Christ.<sup>3</sup> There may also have been in their minds the thought of the Passover season during which he died and rose again. In Exodus 6: 3 this is closely connected in the LXX with the revelation of God as *kyrios* (Yahweh). The Christian confession was 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor. 12: 3). It was he who had delivered from the spiritual Egypt (1 Cor. 10: 1-11).

It does not seem surprising that the same word which was used to describe the Supper which he had commanded them to observe should be attached to the day which came to be observed as the feast of his Resurrection and on which the Supper was regularly celebrated.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that the word was used before the close of the first century. It seems clear that the use of it in Rev. 1: 10 does refer to

Sunday.<sup>5</sup> Certainly by AD 115 Ignatius employs it in this sense.<sup>6</sup>

While Christ appeared on the first and second Sundays to individuals for special purposes, it appears certain from the accounts in Luke 24 : 33ff. and John 20 : 18-19 that it was the realisation of his presence in their midst 'when they were gathered together' that specially impressed the early church. Compare also Acts 1 : 4 and Acts 2 : 1, in order to see that this is clearly the uppermost thought, the presence of the risen Christ in the midst of the disciples gathered together. The same thought is brought out in Rev. 1 : 10, where John, banished to Patmos and probably alone, 'in the spirit on the Lord's Day', sees the glorified Christ 'in the midst of the golden candlesticks', which are the *ekklēsiai*, the churches gathered together.

The central idea would seem then to be that Sunday was the day when the church gathered together as Christ's body, because conscious of the living Lord in their midst, as he had promised, 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst'. It would be the day on which the head, Christ, and his body, the church, were visibly united, the union publicly demonstrated.

The idea of the resurrection of Christ was extended to his body the church. They thought of themselves, after having died with Christ, as having risen with Christ (Col. 3 : 1), 'If ye then be risen with Christ. . .'. This was the picture in baptism (Rom. 6 : 3, 4). And this perhaps was the origin of the custom of not kneeling in prayer on Sundays, for they were risen and stood upright.<sup>7</sup> In spirit they had already 'risen': they were all risen together in the new life with their 'Lord'. In the day of the Lord's return they would be raised also in body.

This union, or communion (*koinōnia*), was shown firstly in the eucharist, the meal which 'Christ' himself had told them to observe in memory of his death and in which he himself was both host and food. As risen Lord he was himself the central figure, blessing and offering the bread and the wine to his church. It was of 'one loaf' they partook, to show that they were 'one body' (1 Cor. 10 : 17). Here was the supreme expression of their corporate unity.

But the 'Lord's Supper' seems originally to have included the *agapē*, the social expression of their united life, and Christ was felt to be equally present there.<sup>8</sup> No doubt they linked it with the experience of the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24 : 30), and in the upper room (Luke 24 : 43), and perhaps with the thought of the eschatological feast. Like all Jewish meals it would be felt to have a religious character.

So too in the 'opening' of the Scriptures, it would be, as on the first Sunday, Christ who opened the Scriptures, and certainly they felt that he was the subject of the Scriptures (cf. Heb. 1 : 1), and especially of the New Testament. In the use of *testimonia* he was the central figure.

So that perhaps it would be right to say that Sunday was in fact the occasion of the public proclamation of Christ as Lord, 'Jesus is Lord'. While there may not have been a conscious comparison, unconsciously each Sunday the Christian Church was challenging the claim of the emperor to the titles of Lord, *kyrios*, and Saviour, *sôtâr*.<sup>9</sup> At the same time it was claiming that Christ was the 'Lord', *kyrios*, of the Old Testament: 'God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' While it would be going too far perhaps to say that they definitely identified the risen Jesus with the 'Lord', *kyrios*, of the Old Testament,<sup>10</sup> yet they did not hesitate to apply Old Testament passages of this nature to him.<sup>11</sup>

The prayers in public worship were 'in the name of Christ'. 'If ye shall ask anything in my name' (John 14 : 14) was to be the basis of the public prayers, connecting this part of the worship with the risen Lord. So, too, praise and thanksgiving were 'through Christ' (Heb 13 : 15), and probably the doing of alms and the offerings were felt to be through the risen Lord (cf. Matt. 7 : 22; 18 : 5; 25 : 40). It is interesting to note that in Pliny's letter the hymns sung were to Christ as to a god, *carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere invicem*.

Then again Sunday was connected in the thought of the Christians with the return (*parousia*) of Christ. The Eucharist was to be 'till he come' (1 Cor. 11 : 26). So that there seems to be an anticipation that the return of Christ would take place on a Sunday. It seems probable that the Aramaic *maranatha* (1 Cor. 16 : 22), which became incorporated into the liturgy in *Didache* 10.6, means, 'O our Lord, come!' rather than 'our Lord has come'.

Eusebius suggests in his *Commentary* on Psalm 91 (92) that in fact Christ himself changed the day from sabbath to Sunday. As we have already seen, he says, 'The Word, through the new covenant, changed and transferred the feast of the sabbath to the rising of the light . . . the Lord's Day'.<sup>12</sup> In this connection he twice quotes Psalm 117 (118): 24, 'This is the day the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.' This verse, as we have seen, has already been quoted in reference to Sunday from Clement of Alexandria onwards. At first sight we are inclined to think that the use is quite arbitrary and has no real connection with Sunday. But on examination we find that in fact under-

neath there is a connection which is not at first realised. The Psalm was one of the *Hallel* psalms, associated with the feast of Tabernacles and other festivals, and from very early days was connected with the triumph of the Messiah; and, as we have seen, in the year of Christ's death, according to the Sadducees and (possibly) St. John's Gospel, both the first and eighth day of the feast fell on a Sunday. Verses 22 and 23, 'the stone which the builders rejected', comprise one of the most frequently used of the *testimonia*, applied by Christ himself and the New Testament writers to the Resurrection and the building up of the church, the new temple. These verses are followed by the verse in question, and so it was referred to the day of the Resurrection. They are linked together in Theodoret's *Commentary on the Psalms* (*In Pss.* 117; *PG* lxxx. 1817). He says, 'He calls that the day which the Lord had made on which this Stone arose after his passion. For immediately after the resurrection he commanded his apostles to go and make disciples of all nations. . . . For since from the beginning God had made the light in it, having received the resurrection of the Saviour, he sent out the beams of the Sun of Righteousness into all the world, and having made the light he called the light day. For he made nothing else on that day. This day alone as the first of days received the creation of the light.' Here Theodoret has brought together most of the conceptions we have already seen and has connected them with this verse.

We find that the expressions *agalliaō* and *euphrainō* and their nouns, which we have touched on before, are connected with the observance of Sunday, as the day of the Resurrection. *Euphrosynē* and *agalliasis* are used in the LXX quotation from Psalm 15(16):9-11, in Acts 2:28, a Resurrection testimony, and the latter word is used in Acts 2:46, of the spirit that should characterise Christian meals. Each is later applied to the Christian Sunday (*Barnabas* 15.9; Basil, *Ep.* 243.2, *PG* xxxii. 905; and many other references).

It seems clear, then, that to the early church the day itself had been chosen by Christ as his own. Augustine considered that Christ had deliberately chosen the day on which he should die, lie in the grave and rise again (*Contr. Faust.* 16.29; *PL* xlii. 334). This day, the church felt, he had himself 'made' (*epoiēse*) (Ps. 118:25 LXX) in the Resurrection, and therefore the day was his (*Serm.* 169. 2, 3; *PL* xxxviii. 916). The name 'Lord's Day' (*kyriakē*) spoke not only of the central figure in the day, but also of the one who had instituted it and to whom it belonged. It was his 'holy day' (Dionysius of Corinth; Eusebius,

HE 4.23.11; PG xx. 389), and would concentrate the thoughts of the early church on the person and work of Christ in his death and resurrection, on his presence in and for his church and on the expectation of his advent. It would be in their fellowship with all the members of the body of Christ that they would expect to find the fulfilment of all these conceptions, to realise his presence and experience his grace.<sup>13</sup> No wonder, then, that it was called the Lord's Day, a day in which the whole body expected to be together as they met the Lord, and that Eusebius of Caesarea can say that it is more suitable than the sabbath, as it is *kyriōtera* 'more linked with the Lord'.

## Chapter 12

# The Theology of the Christian Sunday

### III. THE EIGHTH DAY

As we have seen already, the origin of this name for Sunday seems to lie, partly at least, in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> The expression is not used in the New Testament. The idea is that Sunday fulfils the Jewish feasts. In Lev. 23 : 36 the first day and the eighth day are mentioned together. So also Pentecost is an eighth day after seven sevens (see chapter 7). We have seen too that, according to the Johannine account, Christ appeared to the disciples, gathered together with Thomas, on the eighth day after the resurrection (John 20 : 26).

With regard to circumcision on the eighth day, it seems more likely that this came to be regarded as a type of spiritual circumcision on the eighth day after the day had already got its name, than that it gave the day that name.

Before examining the theological thoughts connected with the eighth day, it will be worth while to notice a point brought out by more than one of the Fathers<sup>2</sup> in connection with the creation account in Gen. 1 and 2 : 1-2.

The thought that the seventh day had no evening and morning (none is mentioned in the Genesis account), but that it merged into the eighth day without a break, contains a deep theological insight into the relationship of the Jewish sabbath to the Christian Lord's Day. The rest of the Jewish sabbath merges into the rest of the Christian Sunday. Both are associated with rest, though the rest of the Christian Sunday is not the inactivity associated with the Jewish sabbath, but the restful activity of the service of God. So the atmosphere of the Christian Sunday is the foretaste of the perfect rest in activity of the world to come.

*Further thoughts behind the name 'Eighth Day': (i) Eschatological*

The eighth day indicated a conception outside the ordinary week and beyond it. If the week stood for 'time', then the eighth day would speak of something beyond and outside time.<sup>3</sup> The belief common among the Hebrews from the apocalyptic literature onwards

that there were fixed and distinct periods in the world's history, helped this conception, and especially when they were thought of as seven periods.<sup>4</sup>

The eighth in this case would be beyond history and beyond time. It would in some sense stand for eternity, the world to come (Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, p. 264). This conception must have arisen very early, for the Gnostics, building on this basis, transferred the idea from sequence in time to stages in the soul's development, degrees to which the Gnostic could progress. *Hebdomad* and *ogdoad*, as we saw earlier, became states of the soul.<sup>5</sup> In the characteristics attached to the state of the *ogdoad*, we traced ideas which were connected with the thought of Sunday, the eighth day.

'The eighth day', then, is generally an eschatological name in orthodox circles. For instance, its first appearance in *Barnabas* 15 is as the day which follows the seventh day, the true sabbath, when God will have restored all things and brought them to rest, the final age. Yet it is connected with Sunday, 'wherefore we keep the eighth day for rejoicing, in the which also Jesus rose from the dead'.

Numbers carried deep meaning for some minds in the early church. 'Seven' appears to have stood for the present world and 'eight' for the world to come. Or sometimes 'seven' stood for the Mosaic dispensation, while 'eight' stood for the Gospel (Ambrose, *Ep.* 1.44.4, *PL* xvi. 1137; Hilary of Poitiers, *Prolog. in libr. Pss* 16, *PL*. ix. 242). The verse in *Eccles.* 11: 2, 'Give a portion to seven and also to eight', received the fanciful explanation of meaning the Old and New Covenants (Gregory Naz., *Orat. in Pent.* 41.2, *PG* xxxvi. 432; Ambrose, *Ep.* 1.44.4, *PL* xvi. 1137; Augustine, *Ep.* 2.55.13, *PL* xxxiii. 215; Chrysostom, *Hom. Ps.* 6.1, *PG* lv. 543. See Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, ch. 16, p. 268).

As we have seen, the eighth day held an eschatological meaning: that which lay beyond the seven days or ages of the world's history. With this thought there were connected a number of similar ideas. If the eighth day was the resurrection of Christ (the first day), then in its eschatological content it was the day of the resurrection of the body of Christ, the church. The world to come would be ushered in by the general resurrection (Methodius, *Sympos.* 9.3; *PG* xviii. 181). This was connected with the feast of Tabernacles, the final harvest.

Another way of viewing this was that it was the final fulfilment of the new creation, of the new heavens and new earth (Ps.-Athanasius, *De Sab. et Circum.* 4; *PG* xxviii. 133ff.). As Sunday was the mark of the new creation begun, so the eighth day was the new creation completed.

But with this idea came also the idea that the eighth day was the day of judgment (Methodius, *loc. cit.*; Theodoret, *In Ps.* 11; *PG* lxxx. 941; also *In Prov.*; *PG* lxxx. 901). With the thought of resurrection came the thought that the sabbath stood for death, while the eighth day stood for resurrection. Perhaps this originated in the idea of our Lord lying in the grave on the sabbath and rising on the first day, which is also the eighth day. Behind it lies the notion of the inactivity of the sabbath rest, while Sunday was to be a day of rest in activity. Augustine says, 'The Lord's Day however has been made known, not to the Jews, but to Christians, by the resurrection of the Lord, and from him it began to have that festal character which is proper to it. For the souls of the pious dead are indeed in a state of repose before the resurrection of the body, but they are not engaged in the same active exercises as shall engage the strength of their bodies when restored. Now, of the condition of active exercise the eighth day, which is also the first day of the week, is a type, because it does not put an end to that repose, but glorifies it. For with the reunion of soul and body no hindrance to the soul's rest returns' (Augustine, *Ep.* 2.55.13 (23); *PL* xxxiii. 215). Elsewhere Augustine says, 'This rest is not a slothful inaction, but a certain ineffable tranquillity caused by work in which there is no painful element' (*idem* 9.17; *PL* xxxiii. 212). He speaks of praising God without toil or mental anxiety, a repose that is not followed by labour, but is wholly free from weariness in work and uncertainty in thought. Augustine seems to conceive of the life to come as service which is rest. In the last lines of *The City of God* he speaks of 'The eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. Then we shall rest and see; see and love; love and praise' (*De Civit. Dei* 22.30.5, *PL* xli. 804).

This view, then, is a conception of rest in activity, of frictionless service without weariness, because it is the service of God, and in it all activity takes the form of worship. This is the thought of Rev. 22 : 3, 'His servants shall serve him' (*latreousai*). That is the service of God.

Together with this conception of the eighth day is that of the Jubilee, the fiftieth year, and the fiftieth day, Pentecost, seven sevens followed by an eighth. Hippolytus,<sup>6</sup> in the *Fragments on the Psalms*, says, 'The number fifty contains seven sevens or a sabbath of sabbaths and also, over and above these full sabbaths, a new beginning in the eighth of a really new rest, that remains above the sabbaths . . . thus, for instance,

it is not without a purpose that the eighth Psalm has the inscription 'on the winepress', as it comprehends the perfection of fruits in the eighth; for the time for the enjoyment of the fruits could not be before the eighth.'

In the ideas which we have examined about the life to come, as seen in the eighth day, it is clear that the thought of 'rest' is prominent—not a rest of inactivity, but rest in activity, in worship and service. This will be important when we re-apply these thoughts from the world to come to Sunday. It is not the old rest, but a new rest.

We have already studied the conception of Sunday as a festival. This too is transferred to the eighth day of the world to come. Hilary of Poitiers says in his *Commentary on the Psalms*, 'Although the name and the observance of the sabbath had been established for the seventh day, it is the eighth which is also the first that we ourselves celebrate, and that is the feast of the perfect sabbath' (*Prol. in Lib. Pss. 12; PL xi. 239*). Much earlier, *c.* AD 150, we get the same thought in a Gnostic writer, Theodotus. He says, 'The rest of spiritual men will take place on the Lord's Day (*kyriakē*) in the *ogdoad* which is called 'the Lord's' (*kyriakē*). It is there that the souls that have been re clothed will be beside the Mother, until the end. . . . At the consummation they will also penetrate into the *ogdoad*. Then comes the marriage feast, common to all the saved, until all are equal and know one another' (*Excerpta 63; PG ix. 689*).

Perhaps these thoughts are connected with Christ's promise of the eschatological feast,<sup>7</sup> of which the Lord's Supper and the *agapē* were the foretaste. In the final eighth day this would be realised in full. But certainly there is the thought of rest again, both in Hilary's 'perfect sabbath' and in Theodotus' 'the rest of spiritual men'.

#### *Further thoughts behind the name 'Eighth Day': (ii) Sacramental*

There is another line of thought in connection with the eighth day, not associated with the world to come. It is the association of the eighth day of the circumcision of the Jewish child with the idea of Christ's resurrection. This seems first to appear in Justin Martyr. In his discussion with Trypho (*Dial. 41*), Justin says, 'The command of circumcision, again, bidding them always circumcise their children on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision, by which we are circumcised from deceit and iniquity through him who rose from the dead on the first day after the sabbath, our Lord Jesus Christ. For the first day after the sabbath, remaining the first of all the days, is called

however the eighth . . . and yet remained the first.<sup>8</sup> This conception is so constant that it may be taken as a regular attitude of the church. Sometimes it is linked with the thought of Christ being the rock, the flint, with which Joshua circumcised the people before entering the promised land.<sup>9</sup> Writing on the Psalms, Origen says, 'For before the eighth day of our Lord Jesus Christ came, the whole world was impure and uncircumcised, but when the eighth day, the day of Christ's resurrection came, immediately all were purified in the circumcision of Christ, being buried with him and raised with him.'<sup>10</sup> Asterius, in his *Homily* on Psalm 6, speaks of 'death' being circumcised by the resurrection of Christ on the eighth day (*Hom. in Pss.* 20; PG xl. 444). His meaning seems to be that, in the spiritual circumcision of the new covenant, death itself has been conquered. These are rather unusual approaches. The usual approach is that the eighth day represents the spiritual circumcision of the individual. Cyprian takes this line in his well-known letter on the baptism of infants. He has been asked if the baptism of a child ought not to be postponed until the eighth day after birth. His answer is, 'For in respect of the observance of the eighth day in the Jewish circumcision of the flesh, a sacrament was given beforehand and a usage; but when Christ came it was fulfilled in truth. For because the eighth day, that is the first day after the sabbath, was to be that on which our Lord should rise again and should quicken us and give us circumcision of the spirit, the eighth day . . . the Lord's Day went before in the figure, which figure ceased when, by and by, the truth came and spiritual circumcision was given to us.'<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps the most important example is the short tract under the name of Athanasius, which states, 'but this day is not the property of all, but of those who have died to sin and live to the Lord. For because of this it was on the eighth day that the Lord commanded circumcision. . . . For we put off the man who died on the sixth day and we are renewed on the Lord's Day, wherein the old man, having been put off, is born again by the resurrection . . . [a section about circumcision and its relation to baptism] . . . When we have put off the old, the sign is superfluous. And as the Lord's Day is the beginning of the new creation, the sabbath too ceases. . . . For each is completed on the eighth day, both the beginning of the new creation and the new birth of man, and so the eighth day abolishes the sabbath and not the sabbath the eighth day.'

Here the thoughts of the sabbath and circumcision are connected together in the thought of the eighth day, which causes both to cease,

the sabbath because of the coming of the Lord's Day, and circumcision because of the coming of baptism.<sup>12</sup> In each, the resurrection of Christ has provided a new meaning, and the inadequate pictures in the old institutions have ceased. Quoting Col. 2: 11f., the writer says, 'For circumcision is a type of the putting off through baptism. . . . For when Abraham believed, he received circumcision, which was a sign of the new birth through baptism. Therefore, when what is signified is come, the sign ceases. For circumcision was the sign, but the bath (*loutron*) of the second birth is what is signified. . . . As the Lord's Day is the beginning of the new creation, the sabbath too ceases. So also that which regenerates the man causes the circumcision to cease. For each is completed on the eighth day, both the beginning of the new creation and the new birth of the man' (Ps.-Athanasius, *De Sab. et Circum.* 5; PG xxviii, 133ff.). In this way baptism, normally carried out on a Sunday, came to be connected with the number eight. Probably there is the same suggestion in the phenomenon of octagonal baptistries and fonts, dating from quite early days (Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, p. 37).

#### A SUMMARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL IDEAS

We have examined the thoughts connected with the three names given in the early church to the Christian Sunday, the First Day, the Lord's Day, the Eighth Day. These give us an overall picture of the place Sunday held in the theology of the Christian Church.

(i) It stood for a new beginning which was at the same time the final age. It was both the first and the last, the eighth standing for what was last and final. It was, then, the distinctive outward mark of the New Covenant. For the New Covenant was both a new development and the final word of God to man. As the Epistle to the Hebrews begins, 'God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.' The New Covenant was both a new word and at the same time the last word that God was speaking.

(ii) The rhythm of life, one day in seven devoted to God, remained the same. The cycle was still the weekly cycle of seven days. This had been revealed as God's pattern in the fourth (third) commandment, and this cycle was not abrogated. The day was changed, but the rhythm remained the same. It was still one day in seven. The commandment in this sense retained its validity for the Christian.

(iii) The day was viewed in the light of the Jewish festivals. These had been days of gathering together, for the communal worship of

God by all his people; they had been days of rejoicing, days of recalling the physical and spiritual blessings which flowed from their special relationship to God. Instead of annual observances, the spirit of the festivals was concentrated into the weekly observance, looking back in gratitude and looking forward in anticipation.

(iv) The day was in a special way connected with Christ. It was his day. The day on which he had risen had declared without the possibility of doubt that he was Lord. The day was the day he had chosen, and the day belonged to him. On that day he revealed himself fully to his own as the one who fulfilled and completed the earlier covenant. All that had been spoken in that revelation 'about me' was now being fulfilled (Luke 24: 27, 44).

(v) But in this revelation of the person of Jesus Christ as Lord there was included the doctrine of the Trinity, for it was on a Sunday, the Day of Pentecost, that the Spirit was given. So that in the observance of the Christian Sunday there was not only an acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord and God, but also of the third Person of the Trinity. In other words, the Lord's Day was the confession of faith that the One God of the Old Covenant had now been revealed as existing in three Persons. John in Patmos was 'in the Spirit' on the Lord's Day. So in the change of the day came the acknowledgement of the Persons of the Trinity. Not that this was theologically expressed: it belonged to the realm of devotion and worship, and was only expressed theologically later on, but it is clearly seen in that worship, and in the baptismal creed. In the Resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit a new revelation of the nature of God had been given, and Sunday was the sign of this.

(vi) But not only was there a new revelation of the nature of God, there was also a new revelation of man's relationship with God. It was to be a new creation. This had been foretold in the Old Testament and began in the earthly life of Jesus, but it could only become clear after his death, resurrection, ascension and the giving of the Holy Spirit. It was linked with the full illumination of the Holy Spirit's teaching. The light had come into the world in Christ; the Sun of Righteousness had risen. There was no excuse any longer for darkness or half-light. The first day of creation had been the giving of light: this was repeated in the Christian Sunday, the Day of Resurrection, and each subsequent Sunday when the light was given afresh.

(vii) With the coming of light came a new order out of the chaos of the Fall, for man was being remade in the new creation. Of this the

Christian Sunday was the outward symbol, the first (and eighth) day revealing and initiating the new creation in Christ.

So it follows that just as the sabbath, the seventh day, was the symbol, the sign (*'ōt*) of the Old Covenant, so the Christian Sunday became the symbol and sign of the New Covenant in Christ.

## Chapter 13

### The Attitude of the Early Church to the Ten Commandments

**D**ID the early church hold the Decalogue to have a meaning for the Christian? And, in particular, did the fourth commandment retain any direct application to Christian life?

In any study of the Christian theology of Sunday this is a vital question and one which must be answered if it is at all possible. We have already seen that the Christian church rejected the Jewish sabbath. Moreover, there is no *direct* appeal during the first four centuries at least to the Decalogue, to support an observance of the Christian Sunday. Yet from what we have seen already, if the Christian Church accepted the Decalogue as being still relevant to Christians, they must have faced this problem. They could hardly have failed to see that in rejecting the sabbath of the Jews they were challenging, in some form or other, the fourth commandment. Some explanation would have to be given. Did the Christian Church then reject the Decalogue, with the rest of the Mosaic Law? We must now examine this question, and especially the question of the sabbath command.

#### THE ATTITUDE OF THE FATHERS: BEFORE CONSTANTINE

##### 1. *Pliny, Dionysius, Theophilus (Asia Minor, Greece, Syria)*

After the New Testament period (see chapter two), the attitude of Christians to the Decalogue remains much the same. There are clear references to the Decalogue in Clement of Rome,<sup>1</sup> in the *Didache* (2), in Aristides (*Apol.* 15.3-5), and in *Barnabas* (19).<sup>2</sup> Though these do not give us the attitude of the authors to each separate commandment, they show that in the minds of the writers there was no suggestion of the Decalogue being discarded, as the outward ritual was. The Ten Commandments were clearly felt to be still applicable to the Christian. The stronger emphasis is on the second table, which (as in the New Testament) is quoted much more frequently than the first. It seems to be taken for granted that there would be love to God in a Christian.

In Pliny's letter to Trajan (AD 112) there are probably hints that the

Decalogue was used in the worship of the Church. The words are 'on a fixed day before daylight to come together and to sing responsively a song unto Christ as God; and to bind themselves with an oath, not with a view to the commission of some crime, but on the contrary, that they would not commit theft, nor robbery, nor adultery, that they would not break faith, nor refuse to restore a deposit when asked for. . . .' This seems to be a reference to the use of the Ten Commandments (Grant, 'Decalogue', p. 11).

In the passage in Dionysius of Corinth (Eusebius, *HE* 4.23.11; *PG* xx. 389) already examined, the use of the word 'holy' (*bagia*) in connection with Sunday may be a reference to the fourth commandment, 'keep it holy'.

Theophilus of Antioch (AD 160) says, 'But God at least . . . did not abandon mankind but gave a law and sent holy prophets to declare and teach the race of men that each one of us might awake and understand that there is one God. And they also taught us to refrain from unlawful idolatry, and adultery and murder, fornication, theft, avarice, false swearing, wrath, and every incontinence and uncleanness, and that whatever a man would not wish to be done to himself, he should not do to another' (*Autolytus* 2.34f.; *PG* vi. 1108, 1133). Again later he says, 'We have learned a holy law; but we have as lawgiver him who is really God . . . He says, "Thou shalt have no other gods. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . .", and of doing good he said, "Honour thy father and thy mother. . . .", and again, "thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet . . ."' To these are added other ethical commands from Exodus, after which he continues, 'Of this divine law then, Moses, who also was God's servant, was made the minister, both to all the world and chiefly to the Hebrews. . . . Of this great and wonderful law, which tends to all righteousness, the ten heads are such as we have already rehearsed.'

It will be noticed that in neither of Theophilus's accounts is there any reference to the fourth commandment (Rordorf, op. cit., pp. 105f.). Yet in the summary at the end, 'the ten heads', it is clear that Theophilus had not omitted the commandment altogether. The third is also not mentioned in either list. The answer is probably that the explanation needed in writing to a non-Christian would have distracted from the line of thought, though he has in fact mentioned the sabbath earlier on (*PG* vi. 1136b).

## 2. *Irenaeus (Gaul and Asia Minor)*

Irenaeus gives a much clearer exposition of the Christian attitude to the Decalogue. In *Adv. Haer.* 4.12.3 (PG vii. 1004f.) he says, 'The precepts of an absolutely perfect life, since they are the same in each Testament, have pointed out to us the same God, who certainly has promulgated particular laws adapted for each, but the more prominent and the greatest (commandments), without which salvation cannot (be attained), he has exhorted the same in both.' At first sight this might be taken of the two commandments mentioned just before, 'love to God' and 'love to one's neighbour', but he goes on to refer it to Christ's answer to the rich young man, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, etc. . . .' (12.5). Again, he says, 'And that the Lord did not abrogate the natural (precepts) of the law, by which man is justified (cf. Rom. 2: 27), which also those who were justified by faith and who pleased God did observe previous to the giving of the law, but that he extended and fulfilled them, is shown from his words . . . "It has been said, Do not commit adultery . . . Do not kill . . ." Now he did not teach us these things as being opposed to the law, but as fulfilling the law. . . . neither is it the utterance of one destroying the law, but of one fulfilling, extending and affording greater scope to it. . . .' (13.1). Again, 'Inasmuch as all natural precepts are common to us and to them (the Jews), they had in them indeed the beginning and origin, but in us they have received growth and completion' (13.4). And again, 'Now all these precepts were not of one doing away the law, but of one fulfilling, extending and widening it amongst us; just as if one should say that the more extensive operation of liberty implies that a more complete subjection and affection towards our Liberator had been implanted within us. For he did not set us free that we should depart from him . . . but that the more we receive his grace the more we should love him' (12.3; PG vii. 1006ff.).

He goes on to summarise God's dealing with the Jews. 'They had therefore a law, a course of discipline and a prophecy of future things. For God at the first indeed, warning them by means of natural principles, which from the beginning he had implanted in mankind, that is, by means of the Decalogue (which if he does not observe, he has no salvation), did then demand nothing more of them. As Moses said in Deut. 5.22, "These are all the words which the Lord spake". But when they turned. . . back to Egypt, desiring to be slaves . . . he subjected them to a yoke of bondage . . .' (4.15.1).

And again, 'While they obeyed the Decalogue and, being restrained

by him, should not revert to idolatry, nor apostatise from God, but learn to love him with the whole heart' (15.2; PG vii. 1014).

He goes on, 'The righteous fathers had the meaning of the Decalogue written in their hearts and souls; that is, they loved the God who made them and did no injury to their neighbours . . . they had the righteousness of the law in themselves. But when the righteousness and love to God has passed into oblivion and become extinct in Egypt, God did . . . by a voice reveal himself . . . (the law) enjoined love to God and taught just dealing towards our neighbour, that we should neither be unjust, nor unworthy of God, who prepares man for his friendship through the medium of the Decalogue. . . . Preparing man for this life, the Lord himself did speak in his own person to all alike the words of the Decalogue, and therefore in like manner do they remain permanently with us, receiving by means of his advent in the flesh extension and increase, but not abrogation. The laws of bondage however were one by one promulgated by Moses, suited for their instruction or for their punishment. These things therefore, which were given for bondage and for a sign to them, he cancelled by the new covenant of liberty. But he has increased and widened those laws which are natural and noble and common to all, granting to men largely and without grudging . . . to know God the Father and to love him with all the heart' (16.3).

On the other hand, Irenaeus says elsewhere, 'Moreover, we learn from Scripture itself that God gave circumcision, not as the completer of righteousness, but as a sign, that the race of Abraham might continue recognisable. . . . This same does Ezekiel the prophet say with regard to the sabbaths, "Also I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign", Ezek. 20: 12 (see also Exod. 21: 13). . . . These things, then, were given for a sign. But the signs were not unsymbolical, that is neither unmeaning, nor to no purpose, inasmuch as they were given by a wise artist. . . . The sabbath taught that we should continue the whole day in God's service (*sabbata autem perseverantiam totius diei<sup>3</sup> erga deum deservitionis edocebant*). "For we have been counted", says the Apostle St. Paul, "all the day long as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom. 8: 36), that is, consecrated (to God) and ministering continually to our faith and persevering in it and abstaining from all avarice. . . . Moreover the sabbath of God (*requies dei*), that is, the kingdom, was . . . indicated by created things; in which the man who shall have persevered in serving God shall in a state of rest partake of God's table' (4.16; PG vii. 1015).

These rather extensive quotations are necessary if we would get a complete picture of Irenaeus' attitude to the Decalogue. The evidence comes from Gaul, and indirectly from Irenaeus's homeland of Asia Minor, but the thought-forms agree in principle so closely with other writings, that we may take it as representing the catholic view of the church.

The points which Irenaeus brings out are these:

(i) The Decalogue is a universal law which has in no sense been abrogated by the New Covenant. There can be no complete salvation if it is not observed. While the patriarchs did not possess it, they lived in its spirit and so did not need it.

(ii) The New Covenant, far from abrogating it, deepened, widened and increased its demands. This was done by its being written on the heart. In other words, the spirit of the commandments was more important than the letter. Its objective was the good of man.

(iii) The sum and substance of the Decalogue was love to God and justice to man. In other words, the whole intention was to develop these objectives.

(iv) But at the same time the sabbaths were a sign of Judaism, as circumcision was. Yet these had an inner meaning, the circumcision of the heart and the giving of the whole day to God. The rest of God is God's rule over the heart, which excludes the passion for worldly things and prepares us for the final rest.

### 3. Tertullian (*North Africa*)

In his *De Pud.* 5 (PL ii. 987a) Tertullian says, 'And now God's primeval law (the Decalogue) will serve to show us how serious a crime adultery is . . . for after condemning the superstitious worship of strange gods and the making of idols, after commending the observance of the sabbath (*post commendatam sabbati venerationem*), after enjoining (*imperatum*) a reverence for parents, immediately after that which is due to God it is laid down, "thou shalt not commit adultery".' It seems quite plain from this passage that Tertullian adopts the same positive attitude as Irenaeus to the Decalogue.

### 4. Clement of Alexandria (*Egypt*)

We turn now to Alexandria. Clement of Alexandria, writing about AD 200 in the *Stromata* 6.16, deals with the Decalogue.<sup>4</sup> This passage, as we have seen in a former chapter, is full of allegorical speculations and so has to be read with great reserve. He goes into the mystical meaning of numbers and this has repelled some people from trying to find out

his underlying thought (see Hessey, *Sunday*, p. 45 and notes 112-15). The passage is too long to quote in full (PG ix. 364b ff.). After dealing with the first two commandments he says, 'The third [our fourth] commandment is that which intimates that the world was created by God. He gave us a seventh day as a rest on account of the trouble there is in life. For God is incapable of weariness, suffering or want. But we who bear flesh need rest, abstraction from ills, preparing for the primal day, our true rest, which in truth is the first creation of light, in which all things are viewed and possessed.'

The first point to note in this passage is that Clement takes the commandment as applying to Christians. This must be the meaning of 'us' in 'he gave us'. It is inconceivable that Clement means 'the Jews'. He may mean 'mankind', but if this is so then he is suggesting that the sabbath conception of one day in seven as rest is valid for the whole human race.

The next point is that he is here suggesting that *physical* rest is necessary for 'us'. The words cannot primarily mean spiritual rest, even though Clement's thought moves to that later on. 'God is incapable of weariness' and 'we who bear flesh' must mean physical rest, as we have seen in our previous discussion of the passage. So in this Clement is suggesting that to the Christian, as to the Jew, a day of rest was necessary, and that this meaning was included in the idea of the fourth commandment, as it applied to Christians. At the same time, we noticed earlier that Clement omits the article with 'seventh' in applying it to 'us'. 'He gave us a seventh day.' And if the suggested explanation there of 'seventh' and 'eighth' is right, then his idea seems to be that 'a seventh day' is for the Christian 'the eighth'.

In another passage, *Paedagogus* 3.12 (PG viii, 668a), Clement says, 'We have the Decalogue given by Moses, which, indicating by an elementary principle, simple and of one kind, defines the designation of sins in a way conducive to salvation, "Thou shalt not commit adultery . . ." and so forth. These things are to be observed.'

##### 5. Origen (*Egypt and Palestine*)

Origen in *Fragments* 62 on *Jeremiah* mentions the Decalogue as the perfect law provided by God (GCS 3, p. 228), and in the *Homilies on Exodus* 8 (PG xii. 350) takes it as spoken to Christians, who have come from the bondage of sin into the liberty of Christ. In what has survived, he does not go beyond the first three commandments and so does not deal with the fourth.

## 6. *The Didascalía (Syria)*

In the *Didascalía* (9) the writer says, 'Hear, thou catholic church of God, . . . thou didst receive the Ten Words and learn the law. . . .' This the writer does not include in the second legislation, the ritual law, added afterwards (FXF 2.26.1f., p. 102; Connolly, op. cit. p. 86). Again, in ch. 26 he says, 'For whereas he spoke the Ten Words, he signified Jesus. For "ten" represents God. . . . He does not undo the law but teaches what is the law and what the second legislation (the ceremonial law). The law therefore is indissoluble. Now the law consists of the Ten Words and the Judgments, to which Jesus bore witness and said, "One jot or one tittle shall not pass from the law" . . . This is the simple and light law, wherein is no burden, nor distinction of meats. . . .' (FXF 6.15.1-3, p. 346; Connolly, p. 216). In chap. 2 he says, 'For the first law is that which the Lord God spoke before the people had made the calf and served idols, which consists of the Ten Words and the Judgments. But after they had served idols, he justly laid upon them the bonds . . . of the second legislation. . . . Do thou therefore read without the weight of these burdens, read the simple law, which is in accord with the gospel. . . .' (FXF 1.6.10, p. 16; Connolly, p. 14). And in chap. 1, 'As also in the gospel Christ renews and confirms and fulfils the Ten Words of the law. . . .' (FXF 1.1.1-4, p. 4; Connolly, p. 4).

These passages show that the Decalogue was treated in quite a different way from the Jewish ritual law. In fact there is the same treatment, stated in different terms, as we have seen in Irenaeus. The Decalogue is simple, natural and permanent, and received the approval of Christ himself and the church. It is therefore still applicable to Christians.

### A SUMMARY OF THESE VIEWS

If we summarise the attitude of the church before Constantine, there is no doubt but that they were unanimous in treating the Decalogue as being still applicable to Christians. It is treated as natural law, which is equally binding on those under the Old Covenant and those under the New. Christ, while deepening its meaning, as shown in chapter two, by no means abolished it. At the same time, it is these writers who state emphatically that the *Jewish* sabbath is not applicable to Christians. The only writer who seems to face the difficulty is Clement of Alexandria, who, as we have seen, in speaking of the fourth (third) commandment claims that man as a creature needs physical rest and that God has given a seventh day in each week for this purpose.

#### OUTSIDE THE ROMAN EMPIRE

It will be well to examine here a writer whose work, though some twenty years after the edict of Constantine, could hardly have been influenced by it: Aphrahat, or Aphraates, the Persian. His writings probably date from between AD 336 and 345. Where he lived is not certain, though it seems likely he suffered persecution under the Persian king Sapor the Great. He is writing about the sabbath and is making the point that the sabbath commandment is not one of life and death, sin and righteousness, but is a commandment of mercy. He says in the *Thirteenth Sermon*<sup>5</sup> (*De Sabbato*), 'The sabbath was set up not because from it came death and life. This is plain because it was commanded also for animals, as well as men. If the law of the sabbath was fixed for life and death, sin and righteousness, what use was there in its being observed by an animal. . . . There is no resurrection of animals. Nor do they receive a reward for keeping the sabbath, nor do they come into judgment. . . . The sabbath was given for rest to all creatures which work and get tired in their wearisome labour.' He goes on to show that things which do not grow tired—rivers, waves, lightning, etc.—do not observe a sabbath, and that it was not until after the law of labour was given that a sabbath was set up. 'But because God did not impose on Adam laborious work before the transgression, he did not give a sabbath to him.' God cares for all his creatures. 'Therefore he advised and ordered that there should be rest for them on the sabbath day. . . . 'If God, who did not tire, rested on the seventh day, how much more ought he, who still in servitude is subject to weariness, to rest. . . . But God is wearied with our sins. . . .' He goes on to say that the Jews were driven out into all countries because they only kept the sabbath 'in a bodily way'. 'Let us then keep the sabbath of God, that we may do the "rest" of his will and that we may enter into the sabbath of rest. For through it heaven and earth keep sabbath and rest and cease.'

In these passages there seem to be two main thoughts. The first is that men and animals need the relaxation of a weekly day of rest. This is tied up with the command to labour. While the command to labour remains, the need for rest remains, and this is provided in God's care for his creatures. The second thought is that this is not linked to the sabbath day as a matter of spiritual necessity, life, and death, as is shown by the fact that the patriarchs did not observe that day. The true rest is in doing God's will. It is of no use merely to keep a corporal

observance of a day, it needs the doing of God's will as the basis behind it.

There is no direct reference here to the Christian Sunday, merely to the conception of the sabbath. But here is a confirmation of what we have seen in Clement of Alexandria, who says that 'we who are in the flesh need rest', and who does mention the Lord's Day in this connection. It shows that, before Constantine's edict, or apart from it, the church felt that a day of rest was needed for mankind; and yet that the Jewish sabbath had been rejected; that there was no divine significance in the day as such. The important thing was the weekly 'rest' for man and beast.

#### THE ATTITUDE OF THE FATHERS: AFTER CONSTANTINE

##### 1. *Ephrem Syrus (Syria)*

It is interesting to find the same attitude in another writer from much the same background as Aphrahat, though writing slightly later. Ephrem Syrus, in the *Hymns of the Nativity* (xix. 10), speaks of the sabbath as a rest for men and animals (*NPNF* 13, p. 261). Both these writers speak of the Ten Commandments<sup>6</sup> and both evidently recognise the need for a day of bodily rest.<sup>7</sup>

##### 2. *The Apostolic Constitutions (Syria)*

In the *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.36.1f. (FXF, pp. 121, 349) there is a discussion of the Ten Commandments. Here the fourth commandment is not taken in a spiritual sense, but assumed to refer to the seventh day, the sabbath of the Jews; but the writer stresses that the important thing is not a giving up of work on the Saturday, but a remembrance of the creation. This is repeated in 6.19.2 and 20.1ff. At the same time, he makes it quite clear that the Lord's Day is to be kept more diligently (2.59.2; FXF, p. 171). For slaves, both Saturday and Sunday were free (8.33.1; FXF, p. 538).

##### 3. *Gregory of Nazianzus (Asia Minor)*

Gregory of Nazianzus takes the Ten Commandments one by one. Of the fourth he says, 'Keep all the sabbaths, exalted (heavenly) and with shadows' (*sabbata panta phylasse metarsia kai skioenta*). The meaning is far from clear. The Latin translation has *sabbata legitima tibi sunt servanda quiete tam quae tecta umbris, quam quae sublima sensu*, and suggests that the seventh day is a shadow of something much higher (*Carmina* 1.1.15.6; *PG* xxxvii. 477).

#### 4. *Chrysostom (Antioch and Constantinople)*

Turning to Chrysostom, we find the problem of the fourth commandment squarely faced in the twelfth *Homily on the Statues*, sect. 3 (PG xlix. 131). Here he says that, of the Decalogue commandments, most have no reason given why they should be observed, as the conscience agrees without question to their rightness. But where there is no natural light from the conscience, as in the case of the fourth commandment, God adds a reason. The reason is God's cessation of creation and the fact that they had been slaves in Egypt. He goes on to say that this command was not one of the leading ones (*tōn proēgoumenōn*), but it was 'partial and temporary' *merikē kai proskairos*. As used by Chrysostom, *merikē* seems to have two meanings: firstly, as opposed to *teleios*, 'perfect', in which case the meaning would be that a further development was to follow; and secondly, 'dealing with only a part', which does not seem to yield such a good sense here, though it might express the idea, which we shall see in Augustine, that the Christian gives all his time to God. Then, too, the commandment as it stands is *proskairos*, 'for that time', and therefore 'temporary'. 'After these things it was unloosed' (*kateluthe*), or dissolved, Chrysostom explains. At first sight this would imply that, in Chrysostom's view, the commandment has ceased to have any application to Christians, and that there is no day of rest. But if we examine other passages in his writings, it seems clear that this is not his meaning.

It will have been noted that one of the reasons given for the observance of the sabbath was that God rested. If we turn to Chrysostom's commentary on this passage, Gen. 2 : 1-3, he says, 'What is the meaning of "he hallowed it"? He set it then apart. The divine word, teaching us, also added the reason why he has said he hallowed it, that in it he ceased from all his works which God had begun to do. Already from then God provides teaching for us by means of parables in a figure (*ainigmatōdos*), disciplining (*paideuōn*) us that the one day (or the first day, *tēn mian hēmeran*) in the circle of the week we should wholly set apart (*anatithenai*) and separate it for the working (*ergasia*) of spiritual things. Because of this also the Lord says, "having completed in six days the whole of creation, I considered the seventh worthy of blessing" ' (*Hom.* 10.7; PG liii. 89).

Chrysostom is here referring to Christians: 'teaching us', 'disciplining us', that is in the hallowing of the sabbath. He speaks of *ainigmatōdos*,<sup>8</sup> 'in a figure'. This is almost always used in the Fathers of something foreshadowed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. Then he

says, 'God provides teaching for us' (*didaskalian hēmin ho theos par-ecchetai*). In other words, in the hallowing of one day in seven there was 'a pattern for Christians'. Then too 'the one day' (*tēn mian hēmeran*) may refer to the Christian usage. The article is significant.<sup>9</sup> It was the earliest name in use for Sunday, though it might here have a general meaning, as I have translated. But perhaps most decisive of all is the word 'working' (*ergasia*), for on the sabbath the Jew was forbidden all work of all kinds, as several of the Fathers point out. The passage, then, would point to the Christian Sunday, implying that in these words of Genesis God was showing the need for one day in seven to be given to spiritual things. This seems to be Chrysostom's line of thought, and, if so, it follows that the 'dissolving' of the fourth commandment would refer to its Jewish associations and not to the principle behind it.

In another place, commenting on 1 Cor. 16 : 2, 'on the first day of the week', he says, 'On every such day (let there be) the separation from all work; the soul becomes more joyful from this laying of it aside . . . the rejoicing over ten thousand good things in it (Sunday)' (*De Eleem.* 3; *PG* li. 265). And further on, 'Because of this (the blessings connected with the day of the Resurrection) it is fitting that we honour it with a spiritual honour . . . and every Lord's Day let the affairs connected with us as masters be laid aside at home.' Here again is the thought that a day is set aside, and that the day in question is Sunday. In his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Chrysostom speaks of Sunday and says, 'But it (Sunday) is convenient for a zealous benevolence, because it hath rest (*anesis*) and immunity from toils; the soul when released from labour becoming readier to show mercy' (*Hom.* 43.1 on 1 Cor. 16 : 2; *PG* lxi. 368).

Again, in his *Homilies on Matthew*, after describing how the sabbath taught the Jews to be gentle and conferred many and great benefits, he says, 'Did Christ then repeal (*elysen*) a thing so highly profitable? Far from it; nay, he greatly enhanced it' (*Hom.* 39 on Matt. 3; *PG* lvii. 436).

Here perhaps is the explanation of Chrysostom's claim that the sabbath has, and has not, been dissolved. It has been 'enhanced' to claim all the time of a Christian. Just as the local presence of an altar and temple in the Old Testament was a partial realisation of God's presence, to be revealed everywhere in Christ, so in relation to time the partial claim of one day was enhanced to be a claim on all days; and yet this did not, in Chrysostom's eyes, mean the abandoning of a special day devoted to spiritual things, a day of rest on which ordinary work

was laid aside and the day given over to the things of the spirit. It is the same pattern as in Origen, the double claim of the ideal and the practical<sup>10</sup>.

##### 5. *Augustine (North Africa)*

It is in Augustine's works that we find the fullest treatment of the fourth commandment (to him the third) among the Fathers, and so, although he is writing at the end of the fourth century, it is important to study his approach, especially as, in fact, his reasoning could not have been based on any interpretation of Constantine's edict. For whereas Constantine orders all to rest (*quiescant*), Augustine states clearly that the idea of the sabbath to the Christian is not 'inactivity of the body' (*otium carnalis*) (*Serm.* 9.3; *PL* xxxviii. 77). The one could hardly have sprung from the other.

In his *Letter to Januarius*, written probably in AD 400 and answering an enquiry why Easter was always on a Sunday and why the date changed, Augustine gives an explanation of the sabbath, the third (fourth) commandment and the Christian Sunday (*Ep.* 2.55; *PL* xxxiii. 211-15). He states quite definitely that the commandments are to be observed by Christians (*PL* xxxiii. 214), but of these ten the third (fourth) is the only one to be observed 'in a figure' (*figurate observandum*, perhaps the Latin equivalent of *ainigmatōdos*). In other words, there is an observance of this commandment, but not in the same direct way as the other nine. Elsewhere, in the *Sermons* (136.3; *PL* xxxviii. 752), Augustine states that 'The Lord was dissolving the sabbath' in his healings. It is clear that Augustine, while believing that the Jewish sabbath as such was dissolved, still held that the commandment was to be observed by Christians in some form. What are we to take *figurate* and *figura* to mean, as Augustine uses them? This is a difficult question, for there is more than one shade of meaning in his use of the words. Are we to take them as meaning 'a type', so that there was only a spiritual equivalent to the thought of the sabbath, with no equivalent of a practical nature? It is possible that this is his meaning, but it seems strange that, if this is so, he brings in 'the Lord's Day' to this section at all. In fact, in the letter to Januarius the argument starts from the Sunday thought and moves to the commandment and the sabbath. In his *Commentary on Psalm 150: 1*, Augustine says, 'In that (the Old Covenant) the sabbath was observed (*observatur*): in this the Lord's Day' (*PL* xxxvii. 1960). In the Old Latin and Vulgate of the third (fourth) commandment in *Deut.* 5: 12ff., the word is *observo*. So it would seem

that in some way the commandment had reference to the Christian Sunday.

Augustine claims that the first three commandments in the Decalogue speak of love to God, the first with special reference to the Father; the second to the Son; and the third to the Holy Spirit (*Ep.* 2.55.11 (20); *PL* xxxiii. 213). He points out that the first use of the word 'hallow' (sanctify) is in connection with the institution of the sabbath in *Gen.* 2 : 1, 2, and therefore that the sabbath rest was meant to include the work of the Holy Spirit sanctifying his people (*Serm.* 9.5; *PL* xxxviii. 80). This meant rest of conscience, the absence of servile works, 'no longer the servant of sin'. All love of the world and its covetous desires is excluded (*Pss.* 91.2; *PL* xxxvii. 1172). He goes on to point out that rest does not necessarily exclude activity, either in the case of God (*Pss.* 92.1; *PL* xxxvii. 1181) or of man (*Ep.* 2.55.9.17; *PL* xxxiii. 212). The two are not incompatible. The sabbath of the Jew was a bodily inactivity, and this is not for the Christian the meaning of the sabbath. Again, Augustine sees in the sabbath the hope of a final rest in the world to come. This rest may be either the millennium, his conception in his early days, or the final rest<sup>11</sup> of the world to come, which leads into the eighth day, the resurrection life. In all this Augustine is spiritualising the conception of the sabbath and its application to the Christian. If this is all he meant by the commandment having significance for Christians, its significance would simply be this: 'show your love to God by having a conscience that is quiet, and look forward to the world to come.' But into this framework Augustine brings an observance of the Christian Sunday. As we have already seen, the two days are placed side by side and contrasted. The Christian 'celebrates' (*celebrare*) and 'observes' (*observare*) the Lord's Day.

Augustine claims that this observing of Sunday was due to Christ himself. He states that Christ deliberately chose the time of his Passion. 'My time is not yet come' (*John* 7 : 5). He deliberately suffered on the Cross on the Friday, lay in the grave on the Saturday, the sabbath, and rose again on the Sunday (*Contr. Faust.* 16.29, *PL* xlii. 335; *Ep. ad Januarium* 2.55.9.16, *PL* xxxiii. 211). By so doing he consecrated (*sacratu est*) that day (*De Civit. Dei* 22.30.5, *PL* xli. 804; *Serm.* 169.2, *PL* xxxviii. 916: *consecravit*). As we have already seen, Dionysius of Corinth, two hundred and fifty years before, had spoken of the Lord's Day as the 'holy' day, and Eusebius of Caesarea had claimed that it was instituted by Christ, and a 'holy sabbath'. This, then, does not seem to be any new idea.

Augustine's application of his thought is that the Friday depicts the Christian life, with its crossbearing; the Saturday, the sabbath, the inactivity of the life between death and resurrection; and the Sunday, the final 'rest in activity' of the resurrection life in the world to come. So it would seem that his conception of the Christian Sunday was, as contrasted with the 'inactivity' (*otium, argia*) of the Jewish sabbath, a day devoted to 'rest in activity' in the service of God, corresponding to the sabbath observance of the priests rather than of the common people (*Ep.* 55.9.17, *PL* xxxiii. 212; *In Pss.* 92.1, *PL* xxxvii. 1182).

He seems to imply that the sabbath rest continued into the Sunday; just as the seventh day had no mention of an evening in Gen. 1 and 2, but merged into the eighth day. The rest of the sabbath was not removed, but glorified (*quia non aufert illam requiem [the seventh day] sed glorificat, Ep.* 55.13.23, *PL* xxxiii. 215).<sup>12</sup> The glorifying of the eighth day seems to mean its connection with the Resurrection, and its translation from a day of simple inactivity to one of active service of God and of festal joy.

What is more, Augustine claims that because this day had been revealed (*declaratus est*) to Christians and consecrated by Christ in the resurrection, its belongs to Christ. After saying that the resurrection of Christ has consecrated the day, Augustine adds, 'What is called the Lord's Day (*dominicus dies*) is itself properly seen to belong (*pertinere*) to the Lord, because on that day the Lord rose again.'

It is interesting that after describing the meaning of the third (fourth) commandment as being 'figurative' (*figurate*), where rest is commended, 'which is loved everywhere but is only found sure and sacred in God alone', he goes on, 'The Lord's Day, however, has been made known not to Jews but to Christians by the resurrection of the Lord, and from him it began to have the festive character which is proper to it' (*Dies tamen Dominicus, non Judaeis, sed Christianis resurrectione Domini declaratus est. . .*) (*PL* xxxiii. 215). This seems to be strengthened by an expression further on in the same passage, where he says (commenting on Eccles. 11: 2, 'A portion for seven and also for eight') that the meaning of the eighth day was largely hid from the Jews, and 'the sabbath alone was handed down to be celebrated'. But, after the resurrection of Christ, 'the eighth day which is also the first should begin to be celebrated' (*jam etiam dies dominicus, id est octavus, qui et primus inciperet celebrari*).

A SUMMARY OF THE PATRISTIC ATTITUDE TO THE DECALOGUE,  
AND ESPECIALLY TO THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

If we summarise what has been said about the Decalogue, we find that from the earliest days it has been accepted as a valid law for Christians, as the natural law given in commandments. This is unanimous. At the same time, the commandment about the sabbath has been treated differently from the others, and 'the sabbath' itself linked with the ceremonial law and circumcision, as being 'disolved' for Christians. Yet there seems in most cases to be a *hesitation* in saying that it has been done away with. Clement of Alexandria claims the need for physical rest on one day in seven; so too do Aphrahat and Ephrem Syrus. All writers claim that the commandment has a spiritual meaning which includes rest of heart and conscience, the giving up of sin (the *opera servilia* of selfish work), and the life consecrated to God. There is also the sabbath in hope, the looking forward to the final rest. Certain writers link this rest of heart and service of God with the Lord's Day, as a day instituted by Christ and consecrated to him, but with a wider import than the Jewish sabbath, and so give it an indirect connection with the fourth commandment.<sup>13</sup> Instead of emptying the day (*argia, otium*), they seem to suggest an active devotion in service to God, the sabbath of the priestly ministry in the temple.

Yet there is clearly a hesitation in applying the fourth commandment directly to the Christian Sunday, since all time belonged to God, and the sabbath had pre-Christian associations. The Christians were apparently from the earliest days setting a day aside; they were devoting the day to God and were engaged in his service upon it. The need for a day of relaxation, which writers like Clement of Alexandria and Aphrahat saw was necessary, was in fact being supplied, but they did not get the inspiration for this from the fourth commandment, except indirectly. There seems no doubt that Constantine's edict was not based on the fourth commandment directly, but on what the Christian church was already doing. The full meaning of the fourth commandment was that in loving God our time would be his, both in this life and in the world to come. More, not less, was expected of the Christian than the Jew; yet the rhythm of one day in seven was, in practice, maintained.

## Chapter 14

### Conclusion

**I**N the course of this book we have attempted to establish a number of facts. First and foremost, that the sabbath, as a creation ordinance and a precept of the Decalogue, was continued in the Lord's Day. There are certain points of difference between the two, owing to the transition from the Old Covenant to the New (just as there are certain points of difference between the primeval sabbath and the Mosaic, between circumcision and baptism, and between the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper), but there is also an essential continuity, shown in the thirteen correspondences listed in chapter four. The Lord's Day fulfils the role of the sabbath as the church's memorial day, day of worship and day of rest. It consequently does not depend upon a few passing references in the New Testament, but has a wide and deep basis in the Bible, as belonging to the order both of creation and of redemption, and as enjoined in one of the fundamental commandments of God's Law.

Secondly, we have argued that there was a difference between the attitudes of Hellenistic and Semitic Judaism to the sabbath. Hellenistic Judaism viewed it as a creation ordinance for all mankind, a day kept free for instruction and meditation in God's revelation, rather than as a national ordinance, compassed with countless restrictions. The New Testament attitude to the sabbath seems more akin to that of Hellenistic Judaism than of Semitic.

Thirdly, we have argued that the New Testament endorses the Ten Commandments, and that Christ endorses the sabbath, while reforming it; which he does by insisting on the propriety of works of mercy and necessity.

Fourthly, we have argued that the teaching of Paul takes the sabbath out of the context of justification by works into that of Christian liberty, but that it is a mistake to think of him as simply abolishing distinctions of days: he recognises the special character of the Lord's Day, and he knows of a fulfilment of the sabbath, in which the Lord's Day may well have had a part.

Fifthly, we have argued that in Jewish Christianity the Lord's Day

was originally observed side by side with the sabbath, just as baptism was observed side by side with circumcision, and the Lord's Supper with the Passover meal; but that this was due to weakness of faith, and that the relationship between the Jewish institutions and the Christian is more clearly seen in Gentile Christianity, where the former were immediately replaced by the latter.

Sixthly, we have argued that the name 'Lord's Day' does not allude to the Lord's Supper but to the Resurrection, and means that the festival of the Resurrection, like the sabbath, is a day of worship wholly devoted to the Lord.

Seventhly, we have argued that, though the ante-Nicene Fathers are often very critical of the Jewish sabbath, this is because of its pre-Christian associations and because of the way they believed the Jews to observe it, not because they were fundamentally opposed to such an institution.

Eighthly, we have argued that they thought of the Lord's Day in very similar terms to the sabbath, as a whole day, set apart to be a holy festival and a rest day. On Sunday Christians deliberately laid their daily work aside, and spent most of the day (not just a small part of it) in corporate worship.

Ninthly, we have argued, especially from the evidence of Eusebius, that the decree of Constantine was influenced by the church, rather than the reverse, and introduced nothing fundamentally new into Christian thought or practice regarding the Lord's Day.

Tenthly, we have argued that, though the early Fathers deny that the patriarchs kept the sabbath, and do not directly link the Lord's Day with the fourth commandment, yet they link it indirectly, and always insist that the Decalogue is binding upon Christians.

If these conclusions are sound, what do they teach us about our observance of the Christian Sunday today, especially in face of increasing secular pressures upon the church?

(a) They teach us that the observance of the day is important in itself, as the church's act of witness every week to the truth of the Resurrection, which the Lord's Day commemorates.

(b) They teach us that the observance of the day is also important because of the important activities of which that observance consists. Corporate worship is important—the reading and exposition of Scripture, public prayer, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Private devotions are important, both for individuals and for families. Rest and refreshment from the activities of the week are important.

Freedom for acts of kindness towards one's family and towards one's fellow men is important.

(c) They teach us that the whole day has been consecrated by God to these purposes. It is a rest day, set apart for these ends. Christians will not, therefore, be indifferent to the inroads being made upon the Sunday rest in modern society, especially by industry and commerce. The church needs to defend both the freedom of Christians to preach the gospel on the Lord's Day and the freedom of others to hear it.

(d) They teach us that the Christian sabbath is part of the perfect law of liberty, the law of love. The broad lines of the observance of the day are settled—it is a day of public and private worship, of rest and of mercy—but the gospel has taken it out of the context of elaborate legalistic restrictions, and every Christian must now be 'fully persuaded in his own mind' precisely how, in the light of the biblical principles outlined above, and in the light of his individual circumstances, he is to spend the day. He must make his own decision, though not forgetting the example he is setting to others. It might seem right to one man to spend more of the day in public worship and less in private, while to another man the reverse might seem right. It might seem right to a man who is very busy with his work on every other day of the week to spend part of the Lord's Day in innocent recreation, which does not cause labour for his fellows, but to a man who works a five-day week this might seem wrong. It might seem right to a preacher of the gospel to spend a minimum of time with his family on the Lord's Day, making up for it on a weekday, but right to another man deliberately to set aside time on the Lord's Day for the purpose. In details of this sort, every man must answer to God personally, without judging his neighbour. May the Lord give all of us wisdom to spend his own day in the way that is pleasing to him.

Finally, we must ask how fully these four ideals are actually being achieved in contemporary Christian practice.

The first ideal, that the day should be the church's weekly witness to the resurrection of Christ, is one which at present receives little attention. If an ordinary Christian were asked: When does the church commemorate Christ's resurrection? he would probably answer: At Easter. Easter Sunday naturally came to receive special emphasis as a commemoration of the Resurrection, being that Sunday which was nearest to the Passover; but the basic commemoration of the Resurrection was always Sunday itself. Today, even Easter is overshadowed by Christmas, and the primary significance of Sunday has been for-

gotten almost entirely. The early church really believed in the Resurrection; that the tomb was empty; that the disciples saw, heard, and handled the risen Christ; that he had conquered death and sin; and that now all authority in heaven and earth had been given to him. Every time they were reminded of the Resurrection, therefore, they rejoiced; and Sunday was their great reminder. Is it any wonder, then, that to them Sunday was a day of joy, not a day of gloom? We need to recover both their faith in the Resurrection and their conception of Sunday as the church's reminder of it.

The second ideal, that the church should value Sunday as its great opportunity for worship, rest and works of mercy, is more adequately appreciated than the first, though whether these three uses of the day are consciously before every Christian's mind is a question. Corporate worship is practised, but not loved as it once was; and in most places the level of attendance at church is low. Some biblical forms of worship are emphasised at the expense of others equally biblical: in one church nothing matters except the Lord's Supper, in another nothing except teaching and prayer. Rest from the activities of the week, and acts of kindness towards one's family, tend not to be taken very seriously; and where they are not, Christians begin their next working week with tired minds, and in particular their wives (receiving no more help than on any other day) begin their next working week with tired hands and feet. Sunday should be a family day, both for the human family and for God's family, the church. Like the early Christians, we should love one another, in deed as well as in word; and, this being so, we should enjoy each other's company, and look forward to the opportunity of sharing it which Sunday affords.

The third ideal, that the sanctity of the day should be respected, as especially holy in a week of which all the days are God's, is another matter on which today we fall far short. To many of our contemporaries, Sunday is just a second Saturday, and a less pleasant one, because it has duties and restrictions attached to it. Of course, the duties are really privileges and the restrictions opportunities (as the early church, which had *only* Sunday, could readily appreciate). But the unchurched masses of the twentieth century do not see things that way, and it is the church's task to help them to do so. Instead, Christian spokesmen only too often accept the secular viewpoint as their basis for discussion. Their defence of the day is therefore feeble in the extreme, and their own outlook on the day, and especially that of their half-instructed children, cannot fail to be affected.

The fourth ideal, that we should see the institution of Sunday as part of the perfect law of liberty, the law of love, is yet another point at which we nowadays tend to go astray. Some of us treat Sunday legalistically, and often in a very negative manner, while others of us treat Sunday lawlessly, regarding even its main purposes as matters of choice or whim. The middle path, of following biblical principles in the context of individual circumstance, of being fully persuaded in one's own mind, yet without judging others, is difficult to tread. Nevertheless, this is the only path for the Christian, and it is as we dare to tread it that we exercise our rights and responsibilities as sharers in the New Covenant, not in the Old, and learn to become mature as full grown men and women in Jesus Christ.

## Notes

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventh Day Adventist claim that, until the time of Constantine, the church did not observe Sunday but only Saturday, is one which first sprang out of ignorance, and can only be maintained today in the face of the most cogent historical evidence to the contrary. See chs. 3, 6-13.
2. On the present state of the law about Sunday in the United Kingdom, and the direction any change in it should take, see Hodgkins, *Sunday* ch. 13. For some account of American law, see Jewett, *Lord's Day* pp. 136-51.
3. *Large Catechism* (1529).
4. *Institutes* (1536), bk. 2, ch. 8, sections 28-34.
5. *Decades* II (1549), sermon 4; in Parker Society reprint, vol. 1, pp. 253ff.
6. *De Regno Christi* (1557), lib. 1, cap. 11; lib. 2, cap. 10.
7. *Loci Communes* (1576), on fourth commandment.
8. See foot of p. vii.
9. Luther (loc. cit.) regarded one day in seven as a minimum.
10. *Ecclesiastical Polity*, bk. 5 (1597), ch. 70: 9.
11. *The Doctrine of the Sabbath* (1595).
12. *Über den Tag des Herrn* (1852).
13. *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, pt. 4 (1951), sect. 53.1; in ET, pp. 47-72.
14. *Answer to More* (1531), bk. 1, ch. 25; in Parker Society reprint, pp. 97f.
15. *The History of the Sabbath* (1635).
16. *Bampton Lectures on Sunday* (1860).
17. See pp. viii-ix.
18. They were partly influenced in this by a doubtful interpretation of Isa. 58: 13f. Even if 'pleasure', not 'business', is the right translation there, it may well refer to wilfulness rather than to recreation.

### CHAPTER I (pp. 2-12)

1. In OT usage (as in NT usage) it is normally people that are 'blessed', and often people that are 'sanctified', not things. However, on those occasions when God 'blesses' a thing, he does good to it and good to men through it (Gen. 27: 27; Exod. 23: 25; Deut. 7: 13; 28: 5, 12; 33: 11, 13; Job 1: 10; Psalms 132: 15; Prov. 20: 21). Hence, for God to 'bless' the sabbath implies that he makes that day a blessing to men. One may compare the birthday that is 'cursed' and 'not blessed' in Jer. 20: 14 and Job 3: 1-9: it becomes a day of darkness and sorrow, instead of a day of light and joy. Again, when God 'sanctifies' a thing, he sets it apart as holy, to be treated as such by men (Exod. 29: 43f.; 1 Kgs. 9: 3, 7; 2 Chr. 7: 16, 20; 30: 8; 36: 14). He is not elsewhere said to 'sanctify' a day, but the meaning is doubtless the same as when he sanctifies any-

- thing else, namely, that he sets it apart to be observed as holy. Similarly, when it is men who 'sanctify' a day, or a year, they set it apart as holy, or (if already set apart by God) treat it as holy (Lev. 25 : 10; Neh. 13 : 22; Jer. 17 : 22, 24, 27; Ezek. 20 : 20; 44 : 24; Joel 1 : 14; 2 : 15).
2. In agreement with this, B. S. Childs affirms that Exod. 20 and Gen. 2 belong to a common tradition, and that both base the obligation of the sabbath on creation and date it from that era (*Exodus*, p. 416).
  3. *Sunday*, pp. 18-24. See also de Vaux, pp. 476ff. De Vaux is clear, however, that the sabbath is very ancient, possibly pre-Mosaic, being found in all strands of the Pentateuch and both forms of the Decalogue. The great antiquity of the sabbath is also recognised by Rowley (*Worship*, pp. 45f., 91f.) and Andreasen (*Sabbath*).
  4. It could be argued that the weeks of Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus are not necessarily in continuous sequence, and might simply be the approximate period of one of the phases of the moon. On this view, either of the above explanations of the absence of reference to sabbath-keeping would be as likely as the other. But there is no evidence that the biblical week changes its basis and character in the middle of the book of Exodus, and there are in fact examples in Genesis of two weeks in sequence (Gen. 8 : 10, 12; 29 : 27-30), even if not of a greater number. The sabbath so controls the biblical week that 'sabbath' is used as one of the names for the week (Lev. 23 : 15; 25 : 8).
  5. This is not to say that the sabbath rest did not also, like nightly rest, contribute to physical and mental refreshment. Exod. 23 : 12 and Deut. 5 : 14f. teach that human and even animal nature need not only sleep but a weekly change from toil. The anthropomorphic account of God's rest on the seventh day of creation in Exod. 31 : 16f. implies the same thing.
  6. This is not the place to attempt a full treatment of the topical and controversial issue of the subordination of the woman to the man. For a discussion of the subject, see Bruce and Duffield, *Why Not?*
  7. Gratuitous doubt was thrown on the genuineness of these fragments in the nineteenth century. For a thorough modern vindication of them, see Walter, *Thoraanusleger*. The fragment here quoted comes in Eusebius, *Praep. Evan.* 13,12.
  8. In the biblical account, this is stated at the end of the sixth day (Gen. 1 : 31), but Philo, as we shall see, supposes it to have actually happened on the seventh day, and Aristobulus may have done the same.
  9. Rordorf, being conscious that Simeon is not attacking the sabbath, takes the bold and unusual step of denying any parallel with the saying of Jesus (op. cit., pp. 62f.). His grounds are that Simeon applies his saying not to the satisfying of hunger but to the saving of life, and that he did not live till the end of the second century AD. But the satisfying of hunger and the saving of life are in principle the same thing, and the saying probably did not originate with Simeon, since a parallel saying about the temple occurs in 2 Maccabees, a work written not later than the first century BC (see 2 Macc. 5 : 19).
  10. This interpretation of Mark 2 : 27 is early attested by the variant reading

'created', *ktizō*, for *ginomai*, and by the corresponding Syriac rendering *b'ra*'. The interpretation has been most recently defended by Jeremias, *Theology*, pp. 208f. The primeval origin and general application of the sabbath is not, in context, the main point which Christ is concerned to make, but in the light of the difference between Palestinian and Hellenistic teaching his choice of words is probably deliberate. The contrast between this saying on the sabbath and his saying in Mark 7: 14-23 on distinctions of foods, when he 'made all foods clean', is striking, and appears to refute the idea that for Christ the sabbath was just one more ceremonial regulation, on a par with all others. There is a similar contrast with Mark 13: 2, where he announces the approaching end of the temple (and its sacrifices).

11. This takes no account of Oscar Cullmann's interpretation of the verse, adopted by Jewett (*Lord's Day*, pp. 84-7), according to which God's sabbath follows his present 'work' and has not yet begun. Such an explanation cannot be judged completely impossible, but it ignores the OT and Jewish background of the saying, and the relation of the saying to first century Christian thought.

#### CHAPTER 2 (pp. 13-29)

1. See p. 5 above. The references to the week in the early part of Exodus, listed on p. 4 above, all belong to the time of Moses, and all come in actions and words of God, not of Israel.
2. The substance, but not the actual wording, of the last six commandments is reproduced and endorsed in the following places: the fifth commandment in Rom. 1: 30; Col. 3: 20; 1 Tim. 5: 4; 2 Tim. 3: 2; the sixth commandment in Mark 3: 4; 7: 22; John 8: 44; Rom. 1: 29; Jas. 4: 2; 1 Pet. 4: 15; 1 John 3: 15; Rev. 9: 21; 21: 8; 22: 15; the seventh commandment in Mark 7: 22; 10: 11f.; 1 Cor. 6: 9; Heb. 13: 4; 2 Pet. 2: 14; the eighth commandment in Mark 7: 22; 11: 17; 1 Cor. 6: 10; Eph. 4: 28; 1 Pet. 4: 15; Rev. 9: 21; the ninth commandment in Matt. 15: 19; 1 Cor. 15: 15; 1 Tim. 3: 11; 2 Tim. 3: 3; Titus. 2: 3; 1 Pet. 3: 16; and the tenth commandment in Mark 7: 22; Luke 12: 15; Rom. 1: 29; 1 Cor. 5: 11; 6: 10; Eph. 5: 3, 5; Col. 3: 5; 1 Tim. 3: 3; 6: 10; 2 Tim. 3: 2; Heb. 13: 5; 2 Pet. 2: 3, 14.
3. Actually, the fourth commandment comes nearer to being quoted than the first three. The statement in the latter part of it that 'the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them' (Exod. 20: 11) is echoed in the NT four times (Acts 4: 24; 14: 15; Rev. 10: 6; 14: 7).
4. Not all the ungodly resented it. Some of them enjoyed religious festivals, as they might a secular holiday (Hos. 2: 11). Presumably it depended on whether their primary aim was gain or amusement.
5. Psalms 74 clearly envisages only one sanctuary, that at Jerusalem, alongside the many synagogues: see vv. 2-7. The synagogues that it speaks of are consequently not high places used for sacrifice.
6. Thus, in the Palestinian Talmud, the Mosaic law against the mingling of diverse kinds is stated to be a creation ordinance: 'Was this forbidden

to Adam also? Yes, replied Rabbi Jose in the name of Rabbi Hiyya, for, as is universally agreed, that law exists by reason of the precepts imposed upon the world at all eras' (*Jer. Kilaim* 1.7).

7. Cp. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 343. For the papyri references, see LS. Another word of similar meaning used by Philo is *proseuktērion* (*De Vita Mosis* 2.216).
8. For a discussion of these passages, see the commentaries of Plummer, Strack-Billerbeck, and Geldenhuys, ad loc.
9. This is the case with Hirsch, in his article 'Sabbath', in *JE*.
10. The inconsistency in the case of the cripple is aggravated by the fact that the Mishnah permits a man to be carried out on his couch on the sabbath (*Shabbath* 10.5). Yet when Jesus heals such a man, the man is forbidden to carry his couch back again! It should be mentioned here that one act of necessity apart from those that occur in the Old Testament had been clearly recognised by the Jews as permissible since the time of the Maccabees, namely, self-defence (1 Macc. 2: 29-41; 9: 43-47; Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.4.2f., or 14: 63f., etc.) In the case of the satisfying of hunger, this can be regarded both as an act of necessity (when considered as the disciples' own act) and as an act of mercy (when considered as the act of Christ, who sanctioned it). In the latter respect, it is all of a piece with the saving of life, as the remainder of this paragraph shows, and as has already been remarked in note 9 on p. 146.
11. Rordorf's claim that Christ singled out the sabbath as the day on which to do his healings, in order to show that it had no authority for him (op. cit., pp. 65f.), is quite arbitrary. The fact that six of the healings recorded are on the sabbath simply indicates that they were remembered because of their novel and controversial character and the teaching to which they led. Many healings on weekdays are also recorded, not to mention exorcisms and raisings of the dead.
12. *Jubilees* and CD also recognise the need to make an exception in the case of the sabbath sacrifices (somewhat grudgingly in the case of the latter work), but this school of thought was less likely to be in the forefront of Christ's mind than Pharisaism, with which he was in continual contact.
13. This ceremonialism was to a considerable extent based upon a rigorous interpretation of Exod. 16: 29 and Jer. 17: 21f., divorced from their contexts of gathering the manna and trade. The rabbis pressed these texts to mean that no one must for any purpose leave his city or carry anything out of his house. Christ may well have rejected these interpretations altogether, as he would certainly have rejected the evasion of the 'erub by which the rabbis attempted to mitigate the rigour of their own exegesis.
14. A different conclusion might be drawn from the saying in Matt. 12: 5f., where the temple takes precedence over the sabbath, yet even the temple is being fulfilled and replaced. The inference is that the same is true of the sabbath. But what is in view here is not, as in Mark 2: 27, the sabbath in its primeval form, but the sabbath in its Mosaic form, with its appointed sacrifices and its rigid restrictions on work. It is the appointed sacrifices that take precedence over the rigid restrictions

- during the Mosaic period. This form of the sabbath was indeed being fulfilled and replaced through the ministry of Christ.
15. In these two passages, Paul is actually speaking only of love to one's neighbour, but in Rom. 8 : 4-9 he implicitly says the same about love to God, this being the opposite of 'enmity against God', and so equivalent to that 'walking after the Spirit' which 'fulfils the ordinance of the Law'. Love towards God is for Paul a summary of the Christian life (Rom. 8 : 28; 1 Cor. 2 : 9; 8 : 3; 2 Thess. 3 : 5).
  16. The narrative of Exod. 16 suggests that the sabbath fell seven days after the arrival of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sin, which took place on the fifteenth day of the second month. This means that the day of their arrival was likewise a sabbath, the Israelites having not perhaps as yet recommenced the actual observance of the sabbath after their Egyptian bondage, which they do later in the chapter. But if the fifteenth day of the second month was a sabbath, then the fifteenth day of the first month, on which they set out from Rameses (Exod. 12; Num. 33 : 3), was not. According to the Qumran calendar, based on the book of *Jubilees*, it was a Wednesday. According to rabbinical tradition, it was a Thursday or Friday (*Mekilta. Beshallab 2, Wayassa 2*). See also Frank, ch. 10.
  17. Though it is apparently a private duty that Paul is enjoining in 1 Cor. 16 : 2, his choice of this day for it must be significant. Paul, as a Jew, would presumably be referring to the first day of the *Jewish* week. There was also a pagan planetary week, beginning on Saturday, of which Rordorf gives a detailed account; but no evidence has been found to support the conjecture that its first day was a pay-day, and so might have been in Paul's mind here.
  18. The form of language in Acts 20 : 7 seems to imply that to meet for the breaking of bread on the first day of the week was normal practice for Paul and for the church of Troas. See p. 36f. below.
  19. See Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, p. 87, and Strack-Billerbeck there cited. As Jeremias shows, it is probable that Paul, like Luke and the other synoptists, believed that the Last Supper took place on the occasion of the Passover meal. However, the fulfilment of a type is not dependent upon exact synchronisation with its antitype. If in 1 Cor. 15 : 20, 23 Paul means that Christ by his *resurrection* fulfilled the type of the feast of *Firstfruits*, or the Sheaf, it cannot be the case that the resurrection also took place on the very day of the feast it fulfilled, at any rate according to the Pharisaic reckoning, which placed the Passover meal and Firstfruits on successive days. The Pharisaic reckoning was the reckoning followed in practice, according to Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.1.3f., or 18.15, 17), and it was of course the one in which Paul had been educated (Acts 22 : 3; 23 : 6; 26 : 5; Phil. 3 : 5). On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that, according to the rival Sadducean reckoning, the day on which Christ rose *was* Firstfruits (see note 12 on p. 152); and, in any case, the fact that the Last Supper certainly took place at *about* the season of the Passover meal, and the resurrection at *about* the season of Firstfruits, was enough to link each type with its antitype in the apostle's mind.

CHAPTER 3 (pp. 30-42)

1. It should not be thought that Acts plays down the strictness of the Jewish Christians of Palestine. On the contrary, as Jacob Jervel has argued, convincingly in the main, Acts emphasises this (*Luke*, chs. 2, 5). So any qualifications that it makes should be given their full weight.
2. This may be the explanation of Matt. 24 : 20—not that Christ envisaged his followers having scruples about the performance of acts of necessity on the sabbath, contrary to what we saw on p. 23, but that he envisaged unbelieving Jews putting obstacles in their way, by discouragement, threats, the barring of city gates, etc. How far the Jewish Christians actually shared the nationalistic ambitions of their fellow-countrymen is uncertain, but it must not be forgotten that they had been warned by this prophecy of Christ's that Jewish nationalism was heading for disaster.
3. As has often been observed, the decree of the Jerusalem council is based upon the so-called Noahic Laws, listed in the Tosephta (*Abodah Zarab* 8 : 4) and in a *baraita* recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanbedrin* 56a), and discussed in the succeeding columns of the Talmud. These are laws believed to have been imposed upon all mankind, at least from the time of Noah, if not from the time of Adam, so that a heathen who transgressed them was held culpable by a Jewish court. A God-fearer or half-proselyte was naturally expected to observe them, though he was not expected to be circumcised or to observe the whole Law; and this seems to have been the model on which the Jerusalem council worked. A God-fearer, however, was expected to observe the sabbath as well as the Noahic Laws, in accordance with what is required of the resident alien in the fourth commandment (though a *baraita* in *Bab. Kerithoth* 9a somewhat reduces the stringency of the sabbath law in such a case). But of the sabbath the Jerusalem council's decree, significantly, says nothing.
4. For a refutation of the theory that Rev. 1 : 10 refers not to Sunday but to Easter Day, see Rordorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-15. The patristic evidence of the late first century and the first half of the second, from which Rordorf argues, strongly supports the view that the Lord's Day was Sunday, that it was kept as the memorial of Christ's resurrection, and that it was the Church's regular day of corporate worship. See *Didache* 14; Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9; *Epistle of Barnabas* 15; *Gospel of Peter* 9, 12; Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1.67. Compared with this, the evidence for the existence of Easter is late; but, once the church had Sunday as a commemoration of the Resurrection, it is natural that in time the Sunday nearest to the Passover should have come to be specially emphasised.
5. See also note 17 on p. 149 above.
6. As noted above, there is no adjective 'dominical' in Aramaic, so 'Lord's Day' and 'Day of the Lord', 'Lord's Supper' and 'Supper of the Lord' would in Aramaic be indistinguishable, and would simply be two among the large group of similar phrases reflected in NT Greek: 'angel of the Lord', 'name of the Lord', 'way of the Lord', 'temple of the Lord', 'the Lord's death', 'the Lord's brother', etc.

7. Various theories of this kind are discussed by F. F. Bruce (*Hebrews*, pp. xxixff.). Though he thinks Italy a more likely destination for the letter than Egypt, he concludes that the recipients were a house-church belonging to a larger congregation, not a congregation in their own right.
8. See pp. 10, 20f. above. It is worth noting in this connection that one of the names for the synagogue current at the beginning of the Christian era was *sabbateion*, 'the building for sabbath-day worship': see the decree of Augustus quoted by Josephus in *Antiquities* 16.6.2, or 16.164. The fact that the Jews in some towns where Paul preached, but not others, pursued their discussions with him in their synagogue on weekdays, does not of course mean that they were accustomed to worship there on those days: see Acts 17: 10f. and possibly Acts 19: 8-10, but contrast Acts 13: 14, 42, 44; 17: 17; 18: 4. Perhaps the nearest thing to regular weekday worship in the synagogues is what the Mishnah records about *maamads*. The Mishnah states that, while the temple was still standing, each of the twenty-four courses of priests had a lay *maamad* corresponding to it, which provided an embryo congregation in temple and synagogue through the week when that course was officiating (*Taanith* 4.1-5). But, in the nature of the case, a member of a *maamad* was on duty only one week in twenty-four. It is clear from *Bikkurim* 3.2 that *maamads* did not meet in the synagogues of all towns, and from *Megillah* 3.4, 6 that, even in towns where they did meet, they were not meeting all the year round. *Bikkurim* 3.2 implies that the country was divided into twenty-four geographical areas, with one *maamad* to each, in which case they would not have met in any one place for more than two or three weeks in the year. Moreover, the services of the *maamads* took a form which shows that the later daily services were not yet in use; for they included readings from Scripture (*Taanith* 4.2f.) and were four in number—morning prayer, additional prayer, afternoon prayer, and the closing of the gates (*Taanith* 4.3-5). In both these ways they corresponded to the temple and synagogue services of sabbaths and holy days, not to the later daily services, which were only three, and did not include Scripture-readings. Apart from *maamads*, the Mishnah mentions services on Mondays and Thursdays (*Megillah* 3.6-4.1), but states that these were held only in some towns, not all (*Megillah* 1.3). See Elbogen, *Gottesdienst*, pp. 99f., 237, 239f.; Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, pp. xvii-xix, 24, 27f., 30f., 118f.
9. In the NT, the themes of creation and redemption are not explicitly linked with the Lord's Day, the memorial of Christ's resurrection, but only with his resurrection itself. Nevertheless, the context of the title 'the Lord's Day' in Rev. 1: 10 speaks not only of his resurrection and return (as was noted on p. 35) but also of the old and new creation. For the chapter repeatedly refers to God or Christ as 'him who is and who was and who is to come', 'the Alpha and the Omega', 'the First and the Last' (vv. 4, 8, 17), and the implication of this language, 'Behold, I make all things new', is drawn out in ch. 21, vv. 5f. In exactly the same way, the context in ch. 1 refers to the old and new redemption. For in vv. 5f. it

employs this remarkable language about Christ: 'him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a *kingdom*, to be *priests* unto his God and Father'. The subject here is the new redemption through Calvary and the resultant privileges of the Church, but the language chosen to express it is evidently drawn from the Exodus, when God loosed the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt and thereupon constituted them 'a kingdom of priests' (Exod. 19 : 5f.).

10. See James Orr, *The Sabbath Scripturally and Practically Considered*, as quoted by Swanton, RTR, p. 22.
11. Passover proper and Firstfruits (the Sheaf) are not individually described as holy convocations and days of rest, but they appear in the list of holy convocations in Lev. 23. Moreover, the Passover *meal* fell on the first day of Unleavened Bread, which *is* so described, and Firstfruits was one of the mid-festival days, on all of which a measure of rest was actually observed—as also on Passover proper (*M. Pesabim* 4; *M. Moed Katan, passim*).
12. *Megillath Taanith* is the oldest extant piece of rabbinical literature, and the only one compiled as early as the first century (though with additions made early in the second century). It is mentioned in the Mishnah (*Taanith* 2 : 8). For text and discussion, see Zeitlin, 'Megillat Taanith'; Greenup, 'Megillath Taanith'. In relation to the Jewish feasts, Dr. Stott has pointed out to me that in Passion year, according to the Sadducean reckoning, many of them fell on Sundays, which were consequently days of rest. The Sadducees held that the day on which our Lord rose was Firstfruits, since it was the day after the weekly sabbath (*M. Hagigah* 2 : 4; *M. Menaboth* 10 : 3); and as this was a Sunday, Pentecost, seven weeks afterwards, was also a Sunday. If the Last Supper was the Passover meal, then the Sadducean Firstfruits fell on Nisan 17 and the Sadducean Pentecost on Siwan 7; but this being so, Trumpets and the first and last days of Tabernacles, Tishri 1, 15, and 22, were probably also Sundays, since the lunar month averages  $29\frac{1}{2}$  days, which would make these three dates come 112, 126, and 133 days later respectively, that is, exactly sixteen, eighteen, and nineteen weeks later. Assuming that the Lord's Day was observed from Passion year onwards, those who observed it (especially if of Sadducean background) may well have noticed how often it coincided with a holy rest-day that year.

#### CHAPTER 4 (pp. 43-7)

1. Since the reference of the Lord's Day to the old creation and the old redemption is only secondary, it is natural that the first day of the week was preferred to the seventh, as being more consonant with the primary reference of the festival, which is to the resurrection. Actually, there is no problem about commemorating the old creation on the first day, when it began, rather than on the seventh day, when it was all over; nothing is lost except the precise reference to God's *rest*, after the work of creation (though it is through Christ, raised on the first day, that Christians enter into God's rest). Even less is there any problem about

commemorating the Exodus on the first day, since the Exodus was at no time commemorated on the day when it occurred (see p. 27); consequently, the first day is as suitable for this purpose as the seventh. The commemoration of more than one event on the same day, as on the Mosaic sabbath, was freely practised in rabbinic Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era, and could readily have been implemented in the case of the Lord's Day. The Mishnah tells us that as many as five different calamities were commemorated on Ab 9, including both destructions of the temple, and the same number on Tammuz 17 (*Taanith* 4.6). All these were thought of as having taken place on the date in question, though one presumes that historically they did not all do so. A similar case is that of the feast of the Rededication of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus on Chisleu 25. It appears from 2 Macc. 1 : 18 that this served also as the commemoration of the original dedication of the second temple, which actually happened on Adar 3 (Ezra 6 : 15f.), and may well have been commemorated on that date prior to the time of Judas Maccabaeus. A modern English parallel is Remembrance Day, which was originally the day when the first world war ended, but later, with a slight adjustment of date, was made the commemoration of the conclusions of both world wars.

2. The relevant words do not occur in all texts of the Mishnah, but the Jerusalem Talmud knows them either as Mishnah or as *baraita*—material of similar antiquity (*Jer. Taanith* 4.3f.). Further support for the words in question is found in the Mishnah's account of another similar custom of the *maamads* in *Taanith* 2.7. In the later rabbinical literature, fasting on Sunday is often permitted, and even in the Tosephta Sunday is regarded as a sad day, 'the day of the going out of the sabbath' (*Tos. Taanith* 4.9), but in the time of the *maamads*, before the destruction of the temple, this was evidently not so. The rule of not fasting on Fridays goes back to Judith 8 : 6, and the extension of the rule to Sundays by the *maamads* was the next stage, after which the reaction began.

#### CHAPTER 5 (pp. 50-57)

1. Rordorf, *Sunday*, p. 234; and pp. 31-3 above.
2. Dumaine, 'Dimanche', p. 889. See also Callewaert, 'Synaxe', p. 35; Dix, *Shape*, p. 336; Duchesne *Christian Worship*, p. 47. Rordorf, op. cit., p. 291.
3. Eusebius calls the Jerusalem bishops, 'they of the circumcision' (*HE* 4.5.3; *PG* xx. 308).
4. Ignatius, *Ad Mag.* 9.11 (*PG* v. 669): 'no longer observing sabbaths'.
5. Ignatius, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, etc.
6. Apost. Constit. 2 : 36 : 1, 2; 2 : 59 : 2f; 7 : 23 : 3; 8 : 33 : 2 (*FXF*, vol. 1, pp. 121, 171f., 408, 538). There is a list of passages where Sunday and Saturday services are mentioned. Rordorf (op. cit., p. 140), believes it may have started in Tertullian's time, but Tertullian says in *De Idol.* 14 (*PL* ii. 682), 'We to whom sabbaths are strange.'
7. Bishai, 'Sabbath', pp. 25-31; Kraft, 'Notes', p. 18. Dugmore *Influence*,

- pp. 31ff., seems to take the same view. See too Dumaine, *op. cit.*, p. 937.
8. Socrates, *HE* 5.22 (PG lxvii. 625) and 6.8 (PG lxvii. 688), mentions Arian gatherings on Saturdays and Sundays in Constantinople.
  9. This observance tells against Rordorf's argument that after the edict the church leaders had to multiply services in order to fill the day and avoid laziness, when work on Sundays had ceased. It suggests rather that they wanted more time. They even forbade slaves working on the Saturdays (Apost. Constit. 8. 33).
  10. Irenaeus, *Haer* 4.13.2 (PG vii. 1007), holds this view strongly. It is developed even more fully in the idea of the Middle (Second) Legislation (*Deuterosis*) in the *Didascalia*. See R. H. Connolly's edition, ii, iii, pp. 12-14 and lvii ff., where the writer calls the Mosaic law 'the middle times' between the Patriarchs and Christians. Cf. Ephrem Syrus in *Three Rhythms* 2.40-41; Morris, *Select Works*, p. 391.
  11. Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 3 (PL ii. 605); Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.1 (PG vii. 1013); Eusebius, *Comm. Pss.* 92 (PG xxiii. 1163); Aphrahat, *Serm.* 12; Ephrem Syr., *Rhythm on Faith* 1.41.
  12. Ephrem Syr., *Hymns on the Nativity*: 'Praise to him who made void the sabbath by fulfilling it'; CSCO, 186, Hymns Nat. 3.2.
  13. CEP 25, pp. 412ff. See also Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 39.3 (PG lvii. 436).
  14. Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 6 (PL ii. 608). The hymn by Abelard looks at the sabbath in this way.
  15. *Barnabas* 15. Apocalyptic literature had already paved the way for this; cf. *Enoch*.
  16. Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Victorinus, and Lactantius all held millenarian views; so also rabbinic Judasim.
  17. There is a fine summary of the attitude of different Fathers to the sabbath in Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, pp. 230ff. See also Dumaine, 'Dimanche', pp. 918-29.
  18. Ignatius, *Ad Mag.* 9.1. This, the usual explanation of the passage in Ignatius, has been challenged by the Seventh Day Adventists. See Guy, 'Lord's Day'.

#### CHAPTER 6 (pp. 58-61)

1. In the *Gospel of Peter* (probably c. AD 150) 'the first day' is already changed to 'the Lord's Day'.
2. As Rordorf suggested *op. cit.*, pp. 220ff.
3. This seems first to occur in Clement of Alexandria.
4. I have attempted to explore the significance of the word *kyriakē* in Rev. 1: 10 in an article in *NTS* 12 (1965), pp. 70-75.
5. See, for instance, Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.16 (PG ix. 364); Tertullian, *De Idol.* 14 (PL ii. 682) and *De Orat.* 23 (PL i. 1191); Victorinus, *De Fab. Mundi* (PL v. 306).
6. A *sollemnitās* was generally the observance of a day; see Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*.
7. It was a day of rejoicing, Hippolytus, *Comm. Daniel* 4.20 (GCS).
8. Eusebius, *HE* 3.27.5 (PG xx. 273); see also *HE* 5.24.11 (PG xx. 500ff.).

9. This throws light on the Seventh Day Adventist claim that Christians observed the sabbath from the earliest times.
10. Eusebius, *HE* 5.24 (PG xx. 499). See, for the whole controversy, Brightman, 'Quartodeciman Controversy'; Lohse, *Passafest*.
11. Melito, himself a Quartodeciman, wrote a treatise on the *Pascha*, recovered earlier this century and edited by C. Bonner (in Lake, *Studies* xii). As Melito also wrote a treatise on the Lord's Day, which has not survived, it looks as if this was his view.
12. Origen, *Contr. Cels.* 8.32 (GCS, p. 239); cf. Tertullian, *De jejun.* 14 (PL ii. 773).

#### CHAPTER 7 (pp. 62-74)

1. See BDB under *šab̄t* (pp. 871ff.). For Dionysius, cf. Eusebius, *HE* 4.23.
2. P. Schaff (*Church Manual*, p. 208) says the word is used pleonastically. Other translations give 'the Lord's Day' and 'the Lord's own day'. For a different explanation, see p. 32 above.
3. *Didascalia* 5.10.1 FFXF, p. 264; Connolly, op. cit., p. 178.
4. It occurs in *Barnabas* 15. The date is uncertain, but in *ODCC* it is given as AD 70-100. Altaner gives before AD 140.
5. Dumaine, op. cit., p. 880 (the idea of eternity following time).
6. Morfill and Charles, *Secrets*, p. 45 (2 *Enoch* 33.1); Fotheringham, 'Slavic Enoch', p. 252.
7. Hirsch, 'Sabbath and Sunday', claims that the word *euphrosynē*, which appears in *Barnabas* 15.9 and is used often by the Fathers, applied to Sunday, is the equivalent of the Hebrew words already given, and is the spirit of the sabbath.
8. See Justin, *Dial.* 12.3; 29.3; *Ep. Diognetus* 4.3, and many other passages, esp. in the *Didascalia*.
9. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.16.9; Strabo, *Geography* x. 467. See Dumaine ('Dimanche', p. 916), who points out that a cessation of manual work especially was the mark of all feasts, pagan, Judaic, and Christian. See also Socrates (*HE* v. 22) 'Inasmuch as all men have festivals, for they provide them with cessations from labour' (PG lxvii. 625).
10. Augustine, *Sermo*, 94 (A. Mai *Bibliotheca patr. nov.*, Tom. 1, 1852, pp. 183f.).
11. *Stromata* 6.16 (PG ix. 364b). The meaning of *archēgonos*, here translated 'primal', will be discussed in the next paragraph, but whether we take it as referring to Christ or to the first day of the week of creation, it is connected with rest in this passage.
12. See under *archēgonos* in *PGL*.
13. There is a variant reading, 'slipped out'.
14. The monastic system which grew up later seems to have been an attempt to carry this out. Both Clement and Origen feel that the true gnostic should be contemplating God all the time. Philo (*Decalogue* 20) suggests rather that a rhythm is needed; 'Let us then not neglect the great archetype of the two best lives, the practical and the contemplative' (the six days and the one).

15. A list of passages in the Fathers can be found in *DCA* 1, p. 724, art. 'Genuflexion'.
16. *Introd. to the Pss.* 4 (*PG* x. 713; *ANCL* 6, p. 500). Quasten (*Patrology* 2, p. 175) maintains that the preface is almost identical with Origen's.
17. Dugmore, *Influence*, p. 31. By contrast, Daniélou (*Bible and Liturgy*, p. 239) argues that it refers to the whole Christian life.
18. The Ebionites, and the Nazarenes, if they were different, observed both in early times, but this was considered strange.
19. It will be remembered that Origen made himself a eunuch.
20. This work was written originally in Greek, but has survived only in a Syriac translation. Parts of the Greek text appear in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, but only in an approximate form. Parts exist in a Latin translation.
21. FXF 2.63.1, p. 178; Connolly, op. cit., p. 128.
22. FXF 6.18.16, p. 362; Connolly, *ibid.*, p. 236.
23. FXF 2.59.2, p. 170; Connolly, *ibid.*, p. 124.
24. FXF 3.6.5, p. 192; Connolly, *ibid.*, p. 134; *Apost. Const.* 3.6.
25. FXF 5.10.1, p. 264; Connolly, *ibid.*, p. 178.
26. *Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften*, ed. C. Schmidt and W. C. Till, vol. 1 (*GCS* 43, *Die Pistis Sophia*, Berlin, 1962), pp. 134, 336, 341, 350f., 353, 360, 366f.

#### CHAPTER 8 (pp. 75-83)

1. I have made a précis of the whole passage and in important sentences I have translated word for word.
2. Cp. Theodoret, *Pss.* 117 (118) (*PG* lxxx. 1817).<sup>5</sup>
3. The word comes in connection with the sabbath in Col. 2.17.
4. This was probably connected with the conception of the priesthood of all Christians, 1 Pet. 2 : 5; Rev. 1 : 6.
5. I suggest this as the most suitable meaning for *kyriōtera*. It would imply its connection with Christ.
6. Though Eusebius does not mention the eighth day in this passage, the thought is the same, as we have seen elsewhere, that both sabbath and the eighth day were foretastes of the final rest.
7. Is it possible that Eusebius was indebted to Melito of Sardis in any way, e.g., for the transference of the sabbath to Sunday? He knew of Melito's work, *On the Lord's Day* (*peri kyriakēs*). The expressions 'the Word', 'the New Covenant' and 'changing' seem to be favourites of Melito's in his work on the *Pascha*.
8. The same process took place with regard to the Trinity, the Person of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The thoughts were there before, but not yet sorted out.
9. Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.16 (*PG* ix. 364); Origen, *Hom. Num.* 23 (*PG* xii. 750f.); Theodoret's *Commentary* has the same thoughts about the sabbath, in *Psalm* 91 (*PG* lxxx. 1616); but Augustine, *Pss.* 92(91).2 (*PL* xxxvii. 1172) treats it in a purely spiritual way.
10. See also p. 10 above.

11. Eusebius says in 1169c, 'We are celebrating (*beortazontes*) holy and spiritual sabbaths'. We do not have the Greek of the Origen passage. He speaks of the festal day of the sabbath.

CHAPTER 9 (pp. 84-103)

1. The sabbath light in Jewish homes had to be lit before dusk to welcome the sabbath (*JE*, art. 'Sabbath').
2. Moule (*Worship*) suggests that the origin of Sunday may have been a continuance of the sabbath day after six p.m. See Callewaert, 'Synaxe', pp. 34-40; see also Wordsworth, *Ministry*, p. 304.
3. This is almost universal in the warmer areas of the world.
4. Callewaert (op. cit., p. 40) assumes the author of Acts to have been writing as a Jew. But Bruce (*Acts*, p. 372) takes the opposite view. Foakes Jackson (*Acts*, p. 187) agrees with Callewaert's view. Williams (*Acts*) supports Bruce. On the question in general, see Beckwith, 'The Day'.
5. In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost not only the apostles but apparently 120 followers in all were gathered together on the Sunday morning. *Pliny* (*Ep.* 96, *To Trajan*) states that even before he had taken any action, the Christians were meeting in the morning.
6. See Callewaert, 'Synaxe', p. 34, and Carrington, *Mark*, pp. 1-29. See also pp. 31-3 above.
7. Acts 2: 17. See Dix, *Shape*, p. 336; Rordorf, pp. 112-16.
8. 2 Cor. 5: 17. The addition of *in panta* in the variant reading shows the thought of the early church.
9. Mark 2: 22; Luke 5: 36, 37. It will be noticed that in each of these cases the words precede a sabbath incident, the plucking of the ears of corn.
10. Heb. 9: 26 and 10: 6, 7 and the conception of the Lamb of God; and Heb. 5: 5 and 8: 1.
11. 1 Cor. 16: 22. See Moule, *Worship*, pp. 70f, 75.
12. Dix, *Shape*, p. 325; Bengel, *Gnomon* 5, p. 201 (on Rev. 1: 10); Feret, 'Sources', p. 101. On Pentecost, cp. note 16 on p. 162.
13. St. John's vision in the Apocalypse of the final judgment and triumph of Christ is seen on a Sunday. The eucharist was 'till he come'.
14. The fellowship (*koinōnia*) was the outstanding mark of the church in Acts 2: 42f. The spirit behind it was brotherly love (*philadelphia*), Rom. 12: 10; 1 Thes. 4: 9; Heb. 13: 1; 1 Pet. 1: 22; 2 Pet. 1: 7.
15. See Eph. 3: 6. It is interesting to trace out the use of the compound *syn* in this epistle; cf. also *homothymadon*, Acts 2: 46.
16. In his exhaustive treatment of this theme in *Common Life*, it is strange that Thornton does not seem to see the importance of Sunday.
17. 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17; 11: 18 and the conception of the body in 1 Cor. 12. See also 1 Cor. 14: 26 and Heb. 10: 24, 25.
18. For the purpose of this work it will not be necessary to go into the controversy over the origins of the Eucharist. It was not long before this was separated from the *agapē*. For the *agapē*, see Oesterley, *Background*, pp. 194-204, and Lietzmann, *Mass*, fasc. 3, pp. 161-71.

19. 1 Cor. 10 : 17, alternatively rendered: 'Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body.'
20. Some writers have suggested that from the earliest times, at least in some areas, Christians never ceased to observe the sabbath and gather on it, as well as on Sunday. See Dugmore, *Influence*, p. 37.
21. See the section about 'works of charity' further on in the chapter, for this.
22. See, for example, *Didache* 10, where the prophets are permitted at the eucharist 'to offer thanksgiving as much as they desire'. Also Cullman, *Worship*, p. 16.
23. If the contents of the first Gospel reflect the thoughts of the early church, in Matt. 18 : 20 and 25 : 40, 45, the church felt Christ as present in its gatherings.
24. See Justin, *Apology* 1. 65-7 'We always keep together'; and the whole spirit of the passage (*PG* vi. 428ff.).
25. Justin in the same passage speaks of Christians 'from the country' (*agrous*); cf. Pliny's letter, which speaks of Christians in the villages.
26. Meyrick (*Sunday Observance*, ch. 7) has tried to suggest the way the day was spent. Unfortunately he has mixed up the evidence from the different periods and from non-monastic and monastic sources, but the main outline is probably correct. He mentions the midday siesta on p. 67. (Peter, in Acts 10 : 9, 10 falls asleep while waiting for the midday meal!)
27. Justin in the passages just cited speaks of a 'reader'. The production of many versions of the Bible as the church extended shows the deep interest in learning. It is the same in the mission field in modern times. See the note on 'lector' in *ODCC*.
28. Dugmore, *op. cit.*, has pointed out the debt that the Christians would owe to synagogue customs. Earnest Jews made use of the sabbath to instruct their families.
29. See Dix, *Shape*, p. 344. He uses the words 'overwhelming exultation'.
30. The extreme punishment, excommunication, was for the good of the body and the individual, but the concern showed itself in the desire for his restoration, 2 Cor. 2 : 7; 2 Thess. 3 : 14f. This concern was shown also in the order of penitents, who were not excluded from worship.
31. For a Christian to get out of the atmosphere of the world around him, with so much that was licentious and degrading, and to find the quiet, pure atmosphere of fellow-Christians, would be another reason for him to spend as much time as possible with them.
32. Jungmann, *Roman Rite*, I, p. 17. The name *deipnon* would seem conclusive in this respect. Cf. Callewaert, 'Synaxe', p. 52; Lietzmann, *Mass*, pp. 210f.
33. Callewaert (*ibid.*, p. 52) suggests that they would want to re-enact what went on in the upper room.
34. Dumaine ('Dimanche', p. 897) suggests that there would be a morning gathering at which they thought of Christ's resurrection, and an evening one in which they looked forward to his return.
35. The idea which is present in the Fathers, certainly from the time of Justin and probably much earlier, of the Sun of Righteousness arising,

- and the turning to the east, would be connected with the thought of the morning.
36. Jungmann (*Roman Mass*, p. 31) suggests that there was a morning gathering based on the synagogue service, and which became the introduction to the eucharist; cf. also his *Roman Rite* 2, pp. 17 and 20. Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, takes it that 'the liturgy of the Holy Ghost' (1 Cor. 14) followed 'the liturgy of Christ'.
  37. The accusation of misconduct was hurled against the Christians later on; see Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 9. vii (*PL* iii. 262). But this can hardly be due to the presence of women at late-night eucharists, since by then it would seem the eucharist had already been transferred to the morning. Jeremias (*Eucharistic Words*, p. 45) maintains that the evening meal commenced about four p.m.
  38. See the *JE* art. 'Sabbath'; Rordorf, *op. cit.*, p. 123, seems to belittle this.
  39. Callewaert, *op. cit.*, p. 47. The Jerusalem Christians would use the synagogue services at first and would probably take over the form of service. See also Dugmore, *Influence*, pp. 26f.
  40. Pliny's reference to an oath suggests this, though Lietzmann interprets it of the baptismal vow (see Rordorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-9).
  41. This the Bithynian Christians were willing to give up.
  42. Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* 2.21, mentions the baptism at cockcrow on a Sunday, likewise followed by the eucharist (Easton's ed., p. 45).
  43. Greenslade ('Pastoral Care', p. 112) suggests that only the bishop was allowed to preach at the eucharist. In Justin it is 'the president'.
  44. Blunt, *Justin's Apology*, p. xxxix; Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 19, allows any day (*PL* i. 1222).
  45. In the district where I was in China there was a Christian family who regularly walked twenty-one *li* (nearly seven miles) every Sunday to the services.
  46. See J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, Part II, vol. 1, London, 1889, p. 53: *Neque civitates tantum sed vicos etiam atque agros . . . contagio pervagata est*. See Greenslade, 'Pastoral Care', pp. 102-18.
  47. There are several references to city walls in both the OT and NT; in Acts 9 : 25 Paul is lowered from the walls. The new Jerusalem has walls and gates (Rev. 21 : 19).
  48. This is the time when the worship begins in the Orthodox Syrian Church in India.
  49. 'At daybreak everyone proceeds to the greater church . . . all the priests take their seats, as many as are willing preach and afterwards the bishop . . . the delivery of these sermons greatly delays the dismissal from the Church' (McClure and Feltoe, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 50f.)
  50. *PL* i. 468. Compare this with the Orthodox Syrian Church practice on page 96 and in note 55.
  51. *JE*, art. 'Sabbath'; see Lietzmann, *op. cit.*, fasc. 3, p. 162, where he claims that the celebration of the *agapē* had ended before the day ended.
  52. The words are *multas epulas*.
  53. Easton, *Apostolic Tradition*, 3.26, p. 50; 26-29, *BB*, p. 66. See the text given in Dix (*Shape*, p. 85) from the Ethiopic version of the *Apostolic*

*Tradition.* He considers the date not much, if any, later than Hippolytus' time.

54. Easton, *Apost. Trad.* 3.27, p. 51 (BB 30, p. 75); cf. R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, p. 88; FXF 2.28, p. 108; Chrysostom, *De Eleem.* 3 (PG li. 264), seems to refer to the same thing.
55. I received this information from the Rev. Toppil Cherian Mathai of Bombay. The practice is to work on Saturdays, but not on Sundays. In the service beginning at seven a.m. there are five OT lessons before the eucharist. Then in the eucharist there are two Epistles, the Gospel, and a sermon lasting an hour.
56. Chrysostom warns them of the same thing much later, *Hom. Matt.* 5.1 (PG lvii. 55), and *Hom. 1 Cor.* 27.5 (PG lxi. 231); see also Eusebius of Alexandria, *Serm.* 16, No. 111, *De Die Dominico* (PG lxxxvi. 417).
57. J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, ed. J. R. Harmer, London, 1891, p. 51.
58. *Hom. Matt.* 5.1 (PG lvii. 55). It would be possible to object that this was only a clerical attitude, a counsel of perfection, but it seems to fit into the pre-Nicene picture.
59. In the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus 3.36, it is suggested that people may have a 'holy book' at home.
60. Connolly, op. cit., p. 128 (FXF 2.63, p. 178). See also the previous discussion of the *Didascalia* on pp. 72f.
61. Connolly, op. cit., p. 126f. (FXF 2.60, p. 172)
62. Connolly, op. cit., p. 128 (FXF 2.63, p. 178)
63. Connolly, op. cit., p. 127 (FXF 2.60, p. 173)
64. FXF 2.61, p. 176-7
65. Aetheria on a Sunday climbed Mount Sinai, receiving the eucharist five times! (McClure, op. cit., pp. 1-6).
66. Most commentators take it in this way.
67. When Christ claims in Mark 3 : 4 and parallel passages that it is right to 'do good' on the sabbath day, he seems to refer to acts of mercy.
68. *Apost. Trad.* 3.28.13; B.S. Easton, op. cit., p. 50 (BB 31, p. 74); *Didascalia*, 9.25; Connolly, op. cit. p. 87 (FXF 2.26, p. 102); in fact, at all O.T. feasts there was an offering of some kind.
69. Some take this of old slaves.
70. The genuineness of this passage has been challenged.
71. Compare Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* 3.28, esp. of the bishop visiting (Easton op. cit., p. 50).
72. *HE* 6.44 (PG xx. 633) (Dionysius of Alexandria's ruling).
73. The practice of prolonged reservation, so that the sacrament could be eaten at home or carried about, had exactly the opposite effect.
74. Easton, op. cit. p. 45; (BB 21, pp. 44ff.)
75. Orthodox Syrian baptisms in India are also mostly on a Sunday.
76. Duchesne, *Early History*, pp. 376f.; also *ERE* 4, art. 'Discipline (Christian)', by D. S. Schaff.
77. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3; cf. Tertullian, *De Paen* and *De Pudic.*; Cyprian, *De Orat.* 18; *Epist.* 41; *Apost. Constit.* 2.16, 21-4, 37-9.
78. Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.16 (PG ix. 364); Cyprian, *De Dom. Or.* 35 (PL iv. 542); Athanasius, *Fest.* 11.15 (PG xxvi. 1412); Eusebius Caes., *In Pss.*

92(93) 5 (PG xxiii. 1173); Ambrose, *In Pss.* 43.6 (PL xiv. 1090); Ps.-Athanasius, *De Sab. et Circum.* 5 (PG xxviii. 133.40).

CHAPTER 10 (pp. 104-111)

1. Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.16 (PG ix. 364); see also Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 7.5 (PG xii.345); and Ambrose, *Ennar. in Ps.* 43.6 (PL xiv. 1090)
2. PG xxviii. 133. Hoss considered that it was a genuine work of Athanasius; see Quasten, *Patrology* 3 (Sermons), p. 50.
3. Ps.-Athanasius, *De Semente* (PG xxviii. 144), has the striking phrase, 'The Sun has arisen; the lamp ceases', of the relationship of Sunday and the sabbath. Zahn (*Skizzen*) inclines to a fourth-century date for this work; Dumaine ('Dimanche', p. 929, note 1) suggests Antioch as its origin.
4. PG lxxxvi. 416. Bright (*DCB*) suggests the fourth or fifth century as the date of the sermon. Here first, so far as I can find, the word *phylassein* is used of Sunday. Its use with 'the holy day' suggests the fourth commandment. Rordorf (quoting H. Hüber) would place this work in the sixth century (op. cit., p. 168, note 2).
5. This connection of the Holy Spirit with Sunday we shall examine later on.
6. It was because of this verse that the early church was willing to accept the pagan title 'Day of the Sun'.
7. This is the better translation.
8. The conception of 'sons of light' was of course pre-Christian. In the Qumran texts the *War Scroll* is concerned with the opposition of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, and the same ideas occur in *Enoch* 61: 12 and 108: 11 (cf. Charles, *Enoch*, pp. 122, 271), where it speaks of a spirit of light. No doubt the ideas stem originally from the Psalms and Isaiah and possibly Zoroastrian influence.
9. PG x. 218. However, this treatise is usually assigned to the sixth century, only the part quoted by Eusebius being reckoned the genuine work of Anatolius.
10. PG xxiii. 1169a. The translation is mine.
11. See also the following passages: Eusebius of Caes., *Demonst. Evang.* 4.16 (PG xxii. 312); Ps.-Athanasius, *De Sabb. et Circum.* 5 (PG xxviii. 133); Juvenius, *Lib. Evang.* 4, line 728 (PL xix. 339); Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.8 (PG xxix. 52); Gregory of Nyssa, *In Pss.* 5 (PG xlv. 504); Ambrose, *En Pss.* 43.6 (PL xiv. 1090); Augustine, *Pss.* 47 (PL xxxvi. 532); Jerome, *In die dom. Pasch.*; G. Morin, *Anecdota Maredsolana* 3.2, 1897 (418); Theodoret, *In Pss.* 117.24 (PG lxxxii. 584). The Mandaean Prayer Book, while obviously very late, probably has early connections, and links Sunday and light; see Drower, *Prayer Book*, pp. 110, 116. It is also connected with the oblation.
12. The last verses of Mark 16 emphasise the same thing: 16: 10, 11, 13, the 'telling' (*apēngeilen*) and the 'unbelief': see also 16: 20 (*ekēryxan*).
13. We have already seen several passages which refer to the dullness of the hearers after the Word has been preached. See also Tertullian, *Apol.* 39

(PL i. 468); Acts of Peter 30 (M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford, 1924, p. 330), which describes Peter preaching on the Lord's Day. I have collected more than thirty references in the first four centuries.

14. See Justin, *PG* vi. 429; Clement Alex, *PG* viii. 657; Chrysostom, *Com. Matt. Hom.* 5.1 (*PG* lvii. 55); *Adv. Iud.* 1 (*PG* xlvi. 844).
15. Heb. 6 : 4 and 10 : 32 may have this meaning. Moffatt (*ICC*) and Wickham (*Westminster Comm.*) both feel that it had not yet acquired this meaning. Spicq (*Hébreux*) and Montefiore (Hebrews, p. 108) seem to feel that this meaning lies behind the words. See also Maclean, *ERE*.
16. Augustine, *De Sermone in Monte* 1.4.12 (*PL* xxxiv. 1235); see Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, pp. 37, 266. There is also the connection of eight person in the Flood story with baptism and the eighth day (cp. 1 Pet. 3 : 20f.). That the Sadducean Pentecost in the year of Christ's passion, like the later Christian Pentecost, was a Sunday, see note 12 on p. 152.

#### CHAPTER II (pp. 112-16)

1. I have a list of at least fifty passages in the first four centuries.
2. Jungmann (*Early Liturgy*, p. 20), points out that 'the Lord' in this connection must mean Christ. St. Paul almost always when he uses it refers to Christ, except in OT quotations. See also Bousset, *Kurios Christos*, pp. 95-9.
3. If we accept the tradition in Mark 16 : 14f., then the commission to preach would also have taken place, it would seem, on the second Sunday.
4. We have seen that some authors have suggested (improbably) that the day got its name from the meal.
5. I have gone into this in an article in *NTS* 12 (1965-6), p. 70, 'A note on the meaning of *kuriake* in Rev. 1.10.' White in the art. 'Lord's Day' in *HDB* points out that one so familiar with the OT as the author would certainly have used the common OT expression for 'the day of the Lord' if he had meant that.
6. This has been challenged by Seventh Day Adventist authors, but without success.
7. Another name for the day was *anastasimos*; see the references in *PGL*, in loc. and also Basil, *De Spirit. Sanct.* 27.66 (*PG* xxxii. 192).
8. The two are combined in 1 Cor. 11. It is clearly a religious service in Tertullian's *Apology* 39 (*PL* i. 468).
9. For *kyrios*, see Bousset, *Kurios Christos*. For *sôtēr*, LS give references to the Greek gods and the Roman emperors.
10. Adolph Saphir, the converted Jew, attempted to identify the two (*Divine Unity*, p. 59).
11. For instance, see the references in Heb. 1. It is interesting to note that in Luke's Gospel the author uses *kyrios* no less than seventeen times of Christ.
12. *PG* xxiii. 1169; Ps.-Athanasius, *De Semente* (*PG* xxviii. 144), has the same thought.

13. It is strange that the celebration of the Eucharist more than once on a Sunday and at different times of the day has tended to destroy this understanding. No doubt the taking of the elements in the early days to those not present was to emphasize the unity that 'all' were partaking. The celebrations which later grew up on other days than Sunday would tend to have the same splintering effect.

CHAPTER 12 (pp. 117-124)

1. Bultmann (*Theology*, I, p. 128) suggests that the name may have arisen merely in contrast with Jewish custom. Rordorf (p. 271) suggests a baptismal origin.
2. Justin Martyr, *Fragment* 16 in Anastasius (PG vi. 1597c); *Barnabas* 15 (PG ii. 769c); Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.16 (PG ix. 364b). *Barnabas* says, 'the sabbath . . . in the which, when I have set all things at rest, I will make the beginning the eighth day'.
3. Jungmann (*Early Liturgy*, p. 22) points out that the Christian did not like to think of the seventh day as the climax of the week; cp. Gregory of Nyssa, *Comm. Pss.* 2.5 (PG xlv. 504-505).
4. In non-millenarian circles there were seven ages followed by the world to come. In millenarian circles there were six ages, then the millennium on earth, i.e., the seventh day, then the eighth, the final state.
5. See the references under ch. 7, n. 26.
6. Hippolytus, *Fragments on Pss.* 4 (PG x. 713); compare Clement Alex., *Strom.* 4.25 (PG viii. 1368b); Origen, *Hom. Canticles* 1.1 (PG xiii. 37).
7. Luke 22 : 18; Matt. 26 : 29; and the parables of the Great Feast and the Marriage Supper. Cf. Rev. 21 : 2.
8. Justin, *Dial.* 41 (PG vi. 564); see also Methodius, *Sympos.* 7.6 (PG xviii. 133). Ps.-Athanasius has the complete connection of the sabbath and circumcision worked out in the idea of the new creation: *De Sab. et Circum.* (PG xxviii. 133).
9. Justin, *Dial.* 113 (PG vi. 736); Origen, *Comm. Joban.* 6.26 (PG xiv. 277); Augustine, *Serm.* 169.2, 3 and *Serm.* 231.2 (PL xxxviii. 916 and 1105).
10. Origen, *Pss.* 118.2 (PG xii. 1588); Philastrius of Brescia (*De Haer.* 141) speaks of the eighth day as the perfection of virtues. (PL xii. 1274).
11. Cyprian, *Ep.* 58 (Oxford 64) 2-4 (PL iii. 1015). See also Didymus the Blind (AD 313-398), *Exp. Pss.* 6 (PG xxxix. 1173).
12. Probably in the writer's mind is the conviction that it is the coming and work of Christ which have brought both to an end. As they were signs of the first covenant, the new covenant required new signs for the spiritual truths behind them, namely Baptism and Sunday.

CHAPTER 13 (pp. 125-139)

1. 1 *Clement* 2.3 The references seem definitely to be to the Ten Commandments and not to the Jewish law in general.
2. But it is not mentioned in the *Shepherd* of Hermas.

3. *Totius diei* surely must be rendered 'the whole day' or 'a whole day', especially in view of the reference to Rom. 8 : 36.
4. In ch. 7 we have discussed these passages from the point of view of Sunday rest, but here we are dealing with them in regard to the authority and interpretation of the Decalogue.
5. The thirteenth sermon, *De Sabbato*, can be found in CEP 25, under the name of Jacob of Nisibis; see Rordorf, op. cit., p. 84.
6. Ephrem Syrus, CSCO 145; St. Ephrem. *Commentaire de l'évangile concordant*, trans. Louis Leloir, Louvain, 1954, p. 130.
7. In his *Hymns and Sermons* (ed. J. Lamy, Malines, 1882, p. 4, col. 542) Ephrem says that the sabbath has lost the blessings of the first-born, which have been given to the Lord's Day.
8. *Ainigmatōdos*; *ainigma* was originally a riddle; then something seen only dimly; cf. 1 Cor. 13 : 12, 'in a mirror dimly'. It is used also in the LXX, Num. 12 : 8—Moses was to see God face to face, not 'dimly'. The sabbath, then, would give a picture only dimly.
9. If it is taken to mean 'that one day', referring to the sabbath, it is strange that Chrysostom uses 'us', i.e. Christians.
10. In Chrysostom, as in all fourth century writers, the tendency towards monasticism has to be carefully watched, as this will affect the attitude to Sunday; but in the passage quoted this does not come in. When it does, the ideal of all time given to God takes the form of the monastic life.
11. Augustine abandoned his earlier millenarian views later in life; see Daniélou, 'Typologie', p. 16, and *Bible and Liturgy*, pp. 282-6.
12. For this idea compare Justin M., *Fragment 16* (PG vi. 1597).
13. See the passage in Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.12 (PL ii. 386ff.), where he says, 'He hath yet put his own sabbaths in a different position (Isa. 58 : 13; 56 : 2). Thus Christ did not at all rescind the sabbath. He kept the law thereof . . . imparting to the sabbath day, which from the beginning had been consecrated by the benediction of the Father, an additional sanctity by his own action.' He speaks of the sabbath as, to do good, to save life—not to destroy it, and of the gentleness, the mercy, suitable to it. Cp. Hippolytus, *On the Pss.*, *Fragment 4* (PG x. 713); Peter of Alexandria, 'Coptic Fragment', in Gebhardt and Harnack, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, Neue Folge, 1899-1901, v. 4.4; Eusebius Caes., *In Pss.* 91 (92) (PG xxiii. 1169); Chrysostom, *In Gen. I*, Hom. 10.7 (PG liii. 89); *Comm. Matt.* 39.3 (PG lvii. 436); Ps.-Athanasius, *De Sab. et Circum.* 2 (PG xxviii. 133).

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## Abbreviations

- AG W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago, 1957.
- ANCL *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, 1864ff.
- AUSS *Andrews University Seminary Studies*.
- Bab Babylonian Talmud.
- BB B. Botte, *La Tradition apostolique de S. Hippolyte*, Münster, 1963.
- BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1907.
- CD Damascus (Zadokite) Document (Qumran).
- CEP *Collectio Ecclesiae Patrum*, Paris, 1842.
- CSCO *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Paris, 1903ff.
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vienna, 1866ff.
- DACL *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, Paris, 1920.
- DCA *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, London, 1875-1880.
- DCB *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, London, 1877-1887.
- DDC *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, Paris, 1949.
- ERE *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh, 1908-1926.
- ET English translation.
- ETL *Ephemerides Theologicae Louvanienses*.
- FXF F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, Paderborn, 1905.
- GCS *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte*, Leipzig, 1897ff.
- HDB J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible*, Edinburgh, 1898-1904.
- HDCG J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Edinburgh, 1906-08.
- HE *Historia Ecclesiastica*.
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*.
- HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*.
- ICC *International Critical Commentary*.
- ILOT S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Edinburgh, 1891.
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*.
- JE *Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York, 1901-6.
- Jer Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud.

<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review.</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies.</i>
LS	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (rev. H. S. Jones), Oxford, 1940 <sup>9</sup> .
LXX	The Septuagint Version.
M	Mishnah.
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , New York, 1887ff.
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies.</i>
<i>ODCC</i>	F. L. Cross (ed.), <i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</i> , Oxford, 1957.
<i>PG</i>	J. P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , Paris, 1857-66.
<i>PGL</i>	G. W. H. Lampe, <i>Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> , Oxford, 1961.
<i>PL</i>	J. P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina</i> , Paris, 1844-64.
Rordorf	W. Rordorf, <i>Sunday</i> , ET, London, 1968.
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i> (Australia).
<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel, <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , (ET by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964-77.
Tos	Tosephta.
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae.</i>

Abbreviations of the titles of other works can readily be identified from the Index.

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