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A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

"THE SABBATH"

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May the Sabbath Day Become a Blessing

Editorial

The theme for this issue of Mishkan is the Sabbath. Different contributors take different approaches to the theme and arrive at different conclusions. The lack of a definitive conclusion should encourage further reflection on the Sabbath and the problems and blessings related to it.

Only the rite of circumcision rivals the Sabbath in giving and maintaining Jewish identity through the ages. It is therefore natural that Jewish believers in Jesus today show concern for the Sabbath – and circumcision. When Jewish people previously came to faith in Jesus and were baptized they were considered ex-Jews by the Church. Messianic believers today do not consider themselves ex-Jews. They have taken a more positive approach to the Sabbath than the Christian Church previously allowed them. This more positive approach to the Sabbath has also been assumed by some theologians and missiologists within the Christian Church. But what kind of positive approach? And do Messianic believers actually consider it sufficient?

The first time the word "Sabbath" is used in the Gospel of Matthew it regards a dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees (Matt 12:1ff). Later, when the Church was dominated by a gentile majority another dispute arises concerning Jewish believers' Sabbath observance. This theological debate continues even today. It has been part of the discussion of the modern Messianic movement of the last three or four decades, but existed in 19th century as well. The debate in the second century took place at a time when the Jewish part of the Church was diminishing. In the 19th century the debate occurred when Jewish believers in Jesus were again appearing on the agenda of the Church. In the intervening 16 centuries — the vast majority of church history — the discussion was limited to theologians interested in the early history of the Church. There were hardly any Jewish believers in Jesus who contradicted the Church and its theologians on its viewpoint of the Sabbath. Those Jews who had come to faith had become "Christians." In the eyes of the Church this meant that they ought not — or could not — take a positive approach to Judaism and consequently, not Sabbath — the Sabbath, which the Lord of the Church kept.

The New Testament makes it clear that there was a debate between the Jew Jesus and the Pharisees on several issues relating to the Sabbath. Jesus criticizes part of the very detailed Sabbath code of the Pharisees. However, the New Testament also shows that Jesus kept the Sabbath. This creates a tension. The validity of the Sabbath is not questioned by Jesus. Neither is it possible in the New Testament to find statements saying that Sabbath observance has been replaced by Sunday observance. What Jesus criticizes are man-made regulations that hide God's intention regarding the Sabbath. The Son of Man, Jesus, is Lord of the Sabbath. He has divine authority to manifest the real meaning of the law. Authoritatively, he interprets the law in agreement with its intention. But regardless of his good or bad intentions, man must not make regulations concerning the Sabbath which set aside mercy and compassion. Scripture references like Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-3,6 and Luke 6:1-11 are important in order to understand Jesus' view of the Sabbath. Any discussion of the Sabbath will therefore also need to deal with these

passages — a task assumed by many of this issue's contributors. Any discussion of the Sabbath which does not relate to these passages and the tension therein is incomplete.

Four Examples from History

We will briefly deal with four historical examples which underline the tension that Jewish believers in Jesus experience. Based upon this we will ask some questions for further reflection, not only for the gentile church, but also for Messianic believers.

Justin Martyr's "Dialogue with Trypho the Jew"

Justin Martyr of the second century provides us with a relevant example in his book *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. In strong terms he turns against the kind of Jewish Christian who — although he maintains Jesus is the Messiah — nevertheless considers him to be only a man of men. But Justin knows of other Jewish Christians who, while having true faith in Christ, still observe Sabbath and circumcision. He records Trypho asking: "But if someone, knowing that this is so, after he recognises that this man is Christ, and has believed in and obeys him, wishes, however, to observe these institutions, will he be saved?" To this Justin answers: "I my opinion, Trypho, such a one will be saved, if he does not strive in every way to persuade other men — I mean those Gentiles who have been circumcised from error by Christ, to observe the same things as himself, telling them that they will not be saved unless they do."[1]

In the same context Justin mentions that there are gentiles of a different opinion. In other words: Compared to the first century, when gentile believers did not question the adherence of Jewish believers to Jewish customs (cf. Acts 15), the situation in the second century differed. Only the moderate elements within the gentile church accepted that Jewish believers would keep Jewish customs. From having been an honored minority Jewish believers in Jesus became a tolerated minority in the eyes of these moderates. In the eyes of the less moderate gentile believers they were a minority that had excommunicated itself from the Church.

Justin had in mind two groups of Jesus-believing Jews. As a gentile Christian he dared to evaluate them based on Christological (Jewish!) criteria. He approved the one group — there is freedom to keep the Sabbath. But other group he can't approve as their Christology is unacceptable. The question to the Christian Church today is: Will it, together with Justin, give its approval to Jewish believers for them to continue to live as Jews? The question to Messianic Jews on the other hand is: Will you, if necessary, question fellow Jews who emphasize an external "Jewishness" rather than maintaining a true Jewish Christology?

According to Justin, Jewish believers in Jesus ought to have the freedom to live as Jews — a view that is repeated in the 19th century (see below). However, in the following we shall first mention the opposite viewpoint which (shamefully) dominated the Church from the second and third century until our time.

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1 *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 46,1-2, cf. Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Jerusalem-Leiden: Magnes Press-E. J. Brill, 1988), p. 19-20.

Professions of Faith from the Church of Constantinople

In *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue,* James Parkes has collected some professions of faith which were demanded from Jews who converted to Christianity in the Middle Ages. They show in no uncertain terms that when a Jew was to be baptized, the Church demanded a total breach with all things Jewish. Suffice it to mention a brief extract from "Professions of Faith," from the Church in Constantinople:

> As a preliminary to his acceptance as a catechumen, a Jew must confess and denounce verbally the whole Hebrew people, and forthwith declare that with a whole heart and sincere faith he desires to be received among the Christians. Then he must renounce openly in the church all Jewish superstition, the priest saying, and he, or his sponsor if he is a child replying in these words:
>
> "I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads and sacrifices of lambs of the Hebrews, and all the other feasts of the Hebrews, sacrifices, prayers, aspersions, purifications, sanctifications and propitiations, and fasts, and new moons, and Sabbaths, and superstitions and hymns and chants and observances and synagogues, and the food and drink of the Hebrews; in one word, I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom and above all I renounce Antichrist, whom all the Jews await in the figure and form of Christ; and I join myself to the true Christ and God. And I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."[2]

According to this and similar Confessions of Faith made by the Christian Church it is impossible for Jesus-believing Jews to believe in Jesus the Messiah and at the same time live as Jews. The question today is: Does the Church still — although not with the same words — hold similar views as expressed in the above-mentioned Profession of Faith?

With this question in mind we shall move on to the 19th century where both Jesus-believing Jews and gentile Christians questioned that "Jewishness" and "faith in Jesus" were mutual exclusive.

Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement in Kishinev

Joseph Rabinowitz (1837-1899) —"the Herzl of Jewish Christianity"[3] — was able to place on the agenda the question of whether faith in Jesus and Jewishness were mutually exclusive concepts in a way that nobody else had done in modern times.

In a meeting between Joseph Rabinowitz and representatives from foreign mission organizations in March 1884 Rabinowitz expressed that he and others like him desired liberty to observe Jewish customs handed down from their fathers. This was before the Russian authorities granted him permission to hold services for The Israelites of the New Covenant, the name he used for his congregation. The gentile Christian participants in the conference were afraid that Rabinowitz and his adherents would nevertheless keep the commandments not merely because of national but also religious motives. For the sake of clarity regarding Rabinowitz's attitude, the question was asked "Does a Jesus-believing Jew who does not circumcise his child commit a sin?" Rabinowitz's reply was: "He does not commit a sin, but he thereby estranges himself from

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2 James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York, Atheneum: 1977), p. 397.

3 Cf. H. J. Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity, From the First to the Twentieth Century (London, 1936), p. 223.*

his people." He gave a similar reply when asked if Jesus-believing Jews who do not keep the Sabbath committed a sin. From a "religious" point of view, Rabinowitz and his adherents believed that the law had been perfectly fulfilled by the Messiah. But from a "patriotic" point of view, they felt obligated to keep the law as much as national circumstances allowed.[4]

From the beginning of his public preaching, the words of Paul in Romans 10:4 became one of Rabinowitz's key words: "The Messiah is the end of the law." Rabinowitz's point of departure is that he was Jewish and that his faith in Jesus didn't make him an ex-Jew. From 1885 until his death in 1899 he held his services mainly on Sabbath. But according to Professor F. Delitzsch, Rabinowitz was going too far when it came to Sabbath and circumcision. In 1887 Delitzsch expressed the hope that Rabinowitz with his Pauline attitude would finally draw the Pauline conclusion and abandon his view. "Israel's national distinctiveness must be maintained and will be maintained without circumcision and with Sunday instead of the Sabbath," Delitzsch said.

However, this did not prevent Delitzsch from defending Rabinowitz when he was accused. Also in 1887, when the Lutheran pastor in Kishinev, R. Faltin insisted that a national Jewish-Christian church must be built within "the evangelical church in Russia," Delitzsch came to Rabinowitz's rescue, asking, "The Lutheran or the Reformed? … As they wish to retain the Sabbath and circumcision, how could a Lutheran or Reformed church government officially legalize this retention?"[5]

The example of Rabinowitz raises the question today as to whether Rabinowitz went too far, as was Delitzsch's opinion, and if so is the Church then still willing to support the Messianic movement, as Delitzsch was? The challenge to Messianic Jews is to answer the question regarding Paul's intention in Romans 10:4.

From a Conference on Jewish Evangelism in Leipzig, 1895

The German pastor A. Wiegand gave a lecture on the correct attitude for Christ-believing Jews towards the Law ("Die Stellung des Judenchristen zum Gesetz") at a conference in Leipzig, June 6-8, 1895.[6]

He mainly related to three areas: circumcision, Sabbath and dietary laws. Wiegand first mentioned the different attitudes towards the law in the Christian Church. While the Reformed church, following Calvin, regarded Sunday as a new "legal institution" which had taken the place of the Sabbath, the Lutheran church did *not* regard Sunday as a "legal regulation." Wiegand then formulates three theses concerning the relation of Jewish Christians to the law:

> The first thesis: From the point of view of the New Testament, the Jewish Christian has complete freedom to observe or not to observe the Jewish law.
>
> The second thesis: Voluntary observance of the Jewish law is recommended to a Jewish Christian, especially if he is engaged in Jewish missions — from the point of love for his yet unbelieving tribesmen.

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4 Kai Kjær-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (Grand Rapids- Edinburgh: Eerdmans-The Handsel Press, 1995), p. 56.

5 Kjær-Hansen, p. 139.

6 A. Wiegand, "Die Stellung des Judenchristen zum Gesetz" in *Nathanael* 1895, p. 110-128.

The third thesis: Voluntary observance of the Jewish Law is recommended to him — in the light of the hope of a future church in Israel.

The following discussion in the journal *Nathanael* shows that Wiegand's defense of the freedom of Jewish Christians to live as Jews was not shared by all involved in Jewish evangelism 100 years ago.[7] With a little optimism it can be said that within parts of the Church today there is more understanding of the viewpoints represented by Justin in the second century and Wiegand in the 19th century — viewpoints that were contrary to those dominating the Church in the centuries in between. This means that Jews, who come to faith in Jesus have the freedom to live as Jews and therefore also the freedom to keep the Sabbath.

Is Freedom Enough?

Most Jewish believers in Jesus will no doubt welcome this development or rather this reconsideration within the Church. But one question needs to be answered. Gentile Christians will say that Jewish Christians have the *freedom* to live as Jews. Is this, from a Messianic Jewish point of view, too vague an attitude? Will not at least part of the Messianic movement argue for a theological-based *obligation* to live as Jews and keep the Jewish Sabbath. And even emphasize gentile Christians' *freedom* to keep the Sabbath rather than Sunday?

This raises the following questions to Messianic Jews today: Do Jesus-believing Jews, who do *not* keep the Sabbath, commit sin? (Compare the answer given by Rabinowitz above.) Are such non-observers second-class believers in the eyes of the observers? And what does it mean to be Sabbath observers? Is it possible to sanctify the Sabbath in Jesus' name without an authoritative and meticulous Sabbath code?

This is not a matter of asking trick questions in order to show inconsistency on the part of Messianic Jews. Gentile Christians would have enough in dealing with their own inconsistencies. The argument that Jewish believers in Jesus are more in danger than others of becoming slaves under the law is too naive. This is a danger for all believers, including gentile believers, who often have very specific regulations for what to do and not to do on a Sunday. Such regulations come closer to the Pharisaic Sabbath code than one wishes to realize.

It is of course tempting to ask Jewish believers in Jesus who are Sabbath observers to come up with a Sabbath code. What is permitted and what is prohibited on the Sabbath? But this would mean asking for a detailed list of regulations that most likely could be compared to the Sabbath regulations that the Pharisees followed in the time of Jesus — regulations that Jesus criticized. And then we are right back to our point of departure concerning the discussion on the Sabbath: Jesus and his relationship to the Sabbath. What did he mean?

7 Cf. Kjær-Hansen, p. 114.

A Challenging Thesis

Stephen Westerholm, a Swedish scholar, in his challenging doctoral thesis *Jesus and Scribal Authority* deals also with Jesus' relationship to the Sabbath.[8] Without distorting the picture of the Pharisees — they were sensitive to human needs on the Sabbath and in exceptional cases they could allow the Sabbath command to be overridden — Westerholm maintains that there is a fundamental difference between the Pharisees and Jesus. The Pharisees regarded "the law as statutes, i.e. as made up of prescriptions whose very wording was binding for legal procedure."[9] According to Westerholm, Jesus' understanding of the law is not governed by statutory laws.

In dealing with the well-known words of Jesus "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27) Westerholm notes that a saying similar to this can be found in rabbinic writings (e.g. Mekilta to Exod 31:13). But Westerholm reminds his readers that a basic difference remains:

> For the Pharisees, even such a concession had to be formulated as a rule of halakhah, and behaviour patterned after the rule. Thus, for the rabbis, the words "Man is not given over to the sabbath" are used, not to justify violations of the halakhah, but to justify the halakhic principle that human life takes precedence over the Sabbath laws. The case where human life is in danger thus finds satisfactory solutions within the sphere of halakhah. The latter takes on a humane character, but man is still its subject. And the will of God is still seen as human submission to divine statutes. On the lips of Jesus, the words "Man was not made for the sabbath" affirm that the primary purpose of the command was the securing, not of human submission, but of human well-being. To subject man to a code of law based on the casuistic application of the command is to distort and defeat the divine purpose.[10]

According to Westerholm, Jesus defends his healing on the Sabbath "not with legal arguments bringing them in line with Pharisaic or any other halakhah, but with appeals to compassion as a criterion for sabbath behavior transcending casuistic regulations."[11] Westerholm denies that the difference between Jesus and the Pharisees can be explained by maintaining that Jesus showed greater concern for the needs of men than the Pharisees did. Even if Jesus went further than Pharisaic halakhah in what we may call a humanitarian direction, the Pharisaic halakhah was a human one, Westerholm claims. He concludes with the following words:

> The essential difference is another. The Pharisees treated the scriptural commands as binding statutes, to be interpreted for practice by the competent authorities. Certainly practical and humanitarian considerations coloured their exegesis of scripture and supplementary legislation; but behaviour was still to be determined by the resulting system of casuistic regulations. Jesus for his part not only opposed specific regulations in cases where they prevented the meeting of human needs, but showed in general a non-halakhic approach to sabbath observance. His opposition never took expression in specific regulations proposed as alternatives to Pharisaic ones. When pressed as to the legality of his behaviour, he countered by undermining on moral rather than legal grounds the understanding of his opponents. And, in a *mashal* (parable) summarizing his view on the sabbath, he

8 Stephan Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), p. 92-103.

9 Westerholm, p. 21.

10 Westerholm, p. 99-100.

11 Westerholm, p. 102.

> indicated that subjecting man to a casuistic system defeats the purpose of the sabbath. In his view, not casuistic, but compassion; not rules developed on the basis of scripture's letter, but an awareness of the purpose of scripture's Author, determines what in a given situation is the will of God.
>
> It should be noted once more that there is no suggestion that Jesus intended to bring a new law for the sabbath, or that his coming marked the end of the old one. His words are concerned only with a true understanding of what God intended with the sabbath command.[12]

The real issue concerning Sabbath observance is, after all, that the Sabbath day becomes a blessing for ourselves and for others. God was active on the seventh day of creation, the first Sabbath. He rested from all his work and then he blessed the day and made it holy. This kind of "work" is not against the Sabbath.

Kai Kjær-Hansen

12 Westerholm, p. 102-103.

A Messianic Jewish Understanding of the Sabbath

Daniel Juster[13]

History records five basic views of how to deal with the Sabbath command in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

The Day of the Sabbath was changed

The most common view in Christianity has been that the Sabbath command, as part of the Ten Commandments, is still valid, but that the New Testament enjoins a change of days, from Saturday or the seventh day to Sunday or the first day. This interpretation was fixed in the early Church councils. It is therefore the historic interpretation of Catholicism, Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy, all of which reverently affirm the early councils of the Church.[14] This view reflects the historic position that the moral law of the Hebrew Scriptures, especially as seen in the Ten Commandments, is valid in the New Covenant. Classical Christianity affirmed a distinction between moral and ceremonial law. In Catholic thought, the ceremonial law was replaced or transformed to become the cultus of Roman Catholic feasts, fasts, and masses (sacramentalism). In Reformed thought, the sacramental cultus was rejected. The ceremonial practices were understood as finished, but the moral law as continuing. However, the Sabbath command, as part of the Ten Commandments, was seen as part of the moral law for humanity. This was not true of the other feasts of Judaism since they were not given the prominent place of inclusion in the Ten Commandments.[15]

Today, the easy distinction between moral and ceremonial law is rejected by many scholars. Those who follow the classical distinction still speak of the Christian Sabbath, but it is more common today to hear the term "the Lord's Day."[16] Various Christian traditions differed concerning what was permitted on the Lord's Day and what was forbidden. Almost all rejected economic endeavor. This was the origin of the Sunday Blue Laws in the West, which until recently required the closing of business establishments on the Sunday Sabbath. It is of interest to recall the strong Puritan and later Methodist preaching against the violation of the Sabbath day!

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14 John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1959), pp. 30-35. James Orr, *The Sabbath, Scripturally and Personally Considered (*1886), o.p. John A. McHugh and Charles J. Cullan, *Catechism of the Council of Trent For Parish Priests* (New York, 1958), p. 404.

15 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1960), pp. 395-401.

16 Paul King Jewett, *The Lord's Day, A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of the Lord* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972).

Those who argue for this position today do not enjoin restrictions to the extent that classical proponents did.

The Sabbath command was canceled

The second view is recent. It holds that the law was done away with the coming of the New Covenant. We are in no way under the law, even the Ten Commandments. This is the view of dispensationalism, developed in England under J. N. Darby. Dispensationalists traditionally rejected the distinction between the moral and ceremonial law. As proof that the whole Mosaic Law is finished, the dispensationalist points out that the Sabbath command is in the middle of the Ten Commandments. Moral and ceremonial were both fulfilled, completed and thus finished with the death of the Messiah. What then is to guide us ethically? The answer is the teaching of the Epistles in the New Testament and the leading of the Spirit. Most have held that the New Testament enjoins no particular day.[17] Passages such as Romans 14 which teach that each person is to be convinced in his own conscience, and Colossians 2, to let no one judge us with regard to a holy day, are used as proofs to show that there is no Sabbath enjoined today. A minority of dispensationalists hold to the view that the New Testament establishes a new day of worship on Sunday. This is not the Sabbath switched to the first day, however. It is a new ordinance for gathering and celebrating to commemorate the resurrection of Yeshua on the first day. Harold Lindsell reflected the view that no day is enjoined on the Christians. However, he argued that since Jews and Adventists keep the seventh day, all should join on this day for the sake of national unity, that we might have a more human pace of life. Christians should accommodate those who were required to worship on the seventh day.[18] Martin Luther anticipated the dispensationalists when he railed against the Sabbath restrictions being placed upon Sunday observance by English Christians.

The Sabbath command has not been changed and is required by all

The third historic view is that the Sabbath is still the seventh day and is required by all. It is argued that the Sabbath transcends the limits of the other feasts. This is shown by its mention in the creation accounts and since it is a creation ordinance it is therefore rightly included in the Ten Commandments. Human beings need to rest one day in seven.[19] Most of these groups do separate the moral and ceremonial commands of the Bible but see the Sabbath command as part of God's moral order. In its mild form, as in some Seventh Day Baptist groups, other Christians are seen as simply wrong and to be corrected. However, in Seventh Day Adventism, Sunday Sabbath keeping is seen as the mark of the beast. Identifying Rome with the Antichrist system, as did the Reformers, they see Sunday worship as one of the marks of Rome and the Antichrist which was not corrected by the Reformation. Some believe that the challenge has not yet come whereby all who are of this mark will be lost. It has historically been difficult for Adventists to

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17 Russell K. Tardo, *Sunday Facts and Sabbath Fiction* (Arabi, Louisana, 1991).

18 Harold Lindsell, "Consider the Case for Quiet Saturdays," *Christianity Today* (Nov. 6, 1976).

19 Samuel Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977). This is a very full presentation; the historical information is massive.

cooperate with other Christians because of these views, but this is changing in some circles.

The Sabbath command continues, but is only for the Jews

The fourth view is that the seventh day Sabbath is for Jewish people. It is, as the Scriptures state, "a sign between God and the Children of Israel," (Exod 31:16,17). The New Testament does not enjoin the Sabbath upon any other people in the New Covenant, but it does not do away with the Sabbath as part of Jewish life. This view gains credibility from recent studies on the meaning of covenant signs in the Ancient Near East. Conservatives and liberals differ as to what this implies. To the Liberal ecumenical mind, Jews are seen as still having their own valid covenant and Christians theirs. Conservatives maintain that Sabbath continues to be valid as part of God's covenant with Israel but that Jewish people still need to enter the New Covenant.

Accommodation for the Transitional Age

The fifth and last view is that the Sabbath is a covenant sign given to Israel. It still has continuing validity for Jewish people. Herein, this view is similar to the fourth view in arguing that the Sabbath continues to be a valid part of God's covenant with the Jews. However, the Sabbath has other features that are more universal. It does reflect God's creation pattern, and is a foreshadowing of the Kingdom age in fullness. The Sabbath will be practiced on a worldwide scale in that age when the New Covenant is fully established (Isa 66). Yet the New Covenant Scriptures do not enjoin the Sabbath on the Church in this transitional age. Therefore, this view sees the requirement of the Sabbath as suspended for the gentiles during this age.[20] This is a transitional age between the old age and the age to come. In this age of transition, gentiles are accommodated. Furthermore, there is no easy distinction between moral and ceremonial laws. The ceremonial is a celebration that has as its purpose to motivate moral understanding and behavior. Each commandment must be looked at as to how it is to be properly applied in the New Covenant order, both in the age of transition and in the age to come.

In presenting my view, the fifth view, my criticisms of the first three views and my addition to the fourth view will be clear.

The Sabbath as a Memorial of Creation

The seven-day cycle of life was unique to Israel. Attempts have been made to find other nations with parallel practice to no avail.[21] Seven as a number figures significantly in the biblical material. Its first appearance in the biblical text is that it is the number of God's creative days. Genesis presents God as creating the world in six days and resting on the seventh. In Exodus 20:11 we are told that one of the reasons for the Sabbath command is to reflect that in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day He rested. Popular Christianity often overlooks the fact that the weekly life cycle is a reflection of the historic divine activity. The Bible, therefore, roots human activity in work for six days and rest on the seventh. This connects

20 Bacchiocchi, pp. 146-147.

21 Bacchiocchi, pp. 238-241

us to participation in divine life. Human work and rest are therefore given transcendent meaning.

The Sabbath in ancient Israel is therefore testimony to the fact that the Lord is God alone and the creator of heaven and earth. This testimony is given visible pictorial expression in the weekly life cycle. This is why Seventh Day Adventists and classical Christians who saw a change in the day of observance (but still held out for one day of rest in seven), saw the Sabbath as a creation ordinance. However, it is well to note that Sunday observance makes the day of resurrection a day of rest, putting creative work and rest into the same day. The parallel to creation is somewhat lost.

When ancient Jews (Israelites) corporately observed the Sabbath, they were a testimony to the unique status of Israel's God as the only creator. This is also a Jewish testimony today.

The Sabbath as a Memorial of the Exodus

The passage in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 emphasizes the Exodus from Egypt as a key reason for the Sabbath command. Israel was in slavery in Egypt. The nature of slavery is continual work; work can be bondage. By resting one day in seven, Israel is commanded to adopt a life-style that demonstrates that work is not to have dominion over them as if they were slaves. Therefore, the Sabbath becomes a memorial of the Exodus and is like a weekly Passover celebration. It is a festival of redemption and liberty, an anticipation of the reversal of the curse on human work as a result of the fall. Because of the fall, the cultivation of the earth is difficult (thorns and thistles). Sabbath anticipates redemption in a larger sense when all work will be restored to its pre-fallen place of fulfillment.[22]

The Sabbath as a Humanitarian Law

Slavery is the worst form of economic bondage. It is bondage in law and reality. However, work itself can be bondage or spiritual slavery. Thus the Sabbath law provides a break from the routine of striving for economic provision. One day in seven everyone is freed. This does not only apply to the physical descendants of Jacob, but applies as well to the foreigners in the midst of Israel, their servants and even the animals which serve the Israelites. All in the land are forbidden to work and are given the opportunity to experience liberty. The Sabbath is a day of thanksgiving and worship, but it is also a great humanitarian gesture. It anticipates all modern laws that limit working hours and days. The Bible clearly teaches that God's desire is for human beings to be able to live their lives without the sphere of work filling the totality of their lives in destructive domination. The words of the text in Deuteronomy 5 ring out clearly.

> Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, or the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

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22 C. G. Berkhouer, *Man, the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1952).

The Sabbath as a Covenant Sign

The most overlooked aspect of the Sabbath command in the historical approaches we have enumerated is the Sabbath as a covenant sign between the LORD God and Israel. As God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, the parallel in Israel's weekly life would be a testimony to their special covenant relationship with the Creator. Thus we read in Exodus 31:16,17:

> The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.

Since the work of George Mendenhal in the 1950s, it has become common to examine the parallels between ancient Near-Eastern treaty forms and the material of the Torah. Sometimes the parallels are so striking that they yield interpretive insight. The most noted parallel has been the treaty between the king and his vassal nation. Meredith Kline has forcefully argued that the 15th to the 13th century Hittite treaty form is the closest to the Deuteronomy "treaty" form. He refined this argument in several publications.[23] The implication is that the treaty form of Deuteronomy shows it to be a covenant of grace. However, Kline also argues that the Ten Commandments themselves are an abbreviated treaty within the treaty of the larger Torah. He and others have argued that the two tablets of the Ten Commandments are duplicates. This is contrary to the tradition that understood the two tablets as each containing only half of the commands. In the traditional view, one tablet contained the commands more related to obligations to God. The other contained commands concerning our obligations to our fellow human beings.

Why duplicates? Ancient treaties were made in duplicate so that each party to the covenant might have a copy noting their promises and obligations. These copies were placed in the temples of the leaders who were the parties to the covenant. Thus the suzerain and his vassal people were obligated to the covenant in oath before the gods of their nation. The two tablets of the Ten Commandments represented God's copy (the great suzerain) and the copy for the people of Israel (the vassal people).

The Sabbath command comes in the middle of the tablet. It serves as a replacement for the insignia of the god of the suzerain, an idolatrous representation. Because God cannot be represented, the sign in Israel is the Sabbath command and Israel's obedience to it.

This explains why the Sabbath command is in the list of what seems like more universal commands. It is there because Israel's moral commandments were tied to a covenant between them and their God. This covenant is pictured in the Sabbath cycle of life. Therefore it is appropriate that the covenant sign between God and Israel be in the midst of commands that made Israel a morally unique nation.[24]

However, this does not negate the humanitarian features of the Sabbath command. Nor does it completely answer the question of what obligation, if any, Jewish and gentile disciples of Yeshua

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[23] For the following points, see Meredith Kline, "Treaty of the Great King," *The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1963), and *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans).

[24] *Structure*, p. 120.

have to the commandment in the New Covenant order. These key questions must be addressed.

The Sabbath as a Sign of the Age to Come

The Sabbath is a reflection of living in the land of promise, of entering into rest. Therefore when the prophets speak of the age to come, they speak of it in Sabbath terms. It is an age of extraordinary prosperity and peace. In that age the Sabbath will be rightly kept by Israel and the nations (Isa 66:23).

> As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD.

The passage brings out the meaning of the Sabbath as an eschatological sign.[25]

Seriousness of Sabbath Violation

Based on this background, one can understand why the prophets were so intense in calling attention to Israel's Sabbath violations. It is not merely a breaking of a minor commandment, but is a denial of the covenant of God with Israel. It is a failure of faith. Indeed, the keeping of the Sabbath required faith in God, for it was only possible to keep the Sabbath and have adequate provision if God would supernaturally provide. The Sabbath day, feast days, and Sabbath years added up to too much time away from economic endeavors! The violation of the Sabbath, therefore, was treachery — a betrayal of the heart of the meaning of Israel. Isaiah repeatedly rebukes Israel severely:

> Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant — these I will bring to my house of prayer ... for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. (Isa 56:3,6,7)

> If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath, and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight, and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD. (Isa 58:13,14)

The Sabbath and the New Covenant

Strangely, recent Christianity, and especially classical dispensationalism, interpret the New Covenant as being in such complete discontinuity with the Mosaic Covenant that its commandments and features are considered irrelevant, even though the New Covenant is made with the house of Israel and the House of Judah according to Jeremiah 31:31ff. Indeed, the New Covenant promises that Israel's destiny will be fulfilled and that the law of God will be written on the hearts of the people. The parallel passage of Ezekiel 36 puts forth the promise that the gift of

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25 This is common to Rabbinic thought as well as to historic Church understanding. Augustine in *Semo* 80 Pl 38, 1198, in Bacchiocchi, p. 293; *City of God*, 22,30, *Genesis Rabbah* 17:5.

the Spirit will move the Israelites to obey God's statutes, ordinances and judgments.

The gentiles are secondarily in view in passages that are New Covenantal. Some passages should be understood as New Covenant passages when the term New Covenant is not used, as Walter Kaiser rightly points out.[26] The concept is that the New Covenant enables Israel to fulfill her destiny and to become the capital nation of a world under the Lordship of the God of Israel and under the rule of the Messiah. Therefore the age to come, or the millennial age, is the New Covenant age.

We presently live in the age between the Old and the New. We have received the New Covenant and tasted of the Kingdom, the powers of the age to come (Heb 6:4,5). The Kingdom, even the New Covenant, has broken into this age, in the life and ministry of Yeshua and his disciples and in the experience of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).[27]

The New Covenant is first defined in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is the Covenant of greater grace than the Mosaic. God will undertake to do more. It is a different covenant. However, many more of its features are in continuity with the Mosaic Covenant than either classical Reformed/Covenantal or Dispensational theologies grasped. For life under that Covenant is described in the Hebrew Scriptures as an age of obedience to the Law (Torah) of God, many features of which are the same in the Mosaic writings. Furthermore, the goal of God in the New Covenant age is described as the Law of God going forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa 2). In addition, all the nations celebrate the Feast of Sukkot and send representatives to Jerusalem (Zech 14). Even more than this, the nations are described as worshiping God from New Moon to New Moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath (Isa 66:22,23). Apparently, the New Covenant age is an age that includes the Sabbath, the New Moon and the Feasts. So much do the Apostles see this continuity that Paul sees no conflict with taking a Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18), professing to be in obedience to the Law (Acts 21) and instructing Timothy that the Hebrew Scriptures are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16, 17). In I Timothy 1 Paul states that the Law (of Moses) is good if one uses it rightly. He then notes that the Law is needed for Law breakers not for the righteous (who naturally do what is right). Many believers end their discussion of the passage at this point. However, Paul goes on to give a catalogue of wrong behavior according to the teaching of the Mosaic Covenant. What is most noteworthy is that he ends this catalogue of sinful behavior by stating, “whatever else is contrary to my Gospel.” What is contrary to basic teaching of Moses is contrary to the Gospel or to the New Covenant order. This is a far cry from the view that we are only to be concerned with the moral instructions of the Epistles for guiding the lives of the believer.

Here we face the issue of the discontinuity between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant. Has the Law of Moses become almost irrelevant for guiding the life of the believer as in classical dispensationalism — has it ended Jewish life for the Jewish believer? This conclusion is contrary to the thrust of the texts just noted. It is also contrary to apostolic example. Are the moral parts of the Law of Moses part of the New Covenant as in Reformed thought? Yes, but it is

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26 Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1983).

27 George Ladd, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 57-69.

more than this. In the New Covenant the death of the Messiah on the cross is the point of identification wherein the power of sin is destroyed. “Reckon yourself to be dead to sin, but alive to God in the Messiah Jesus,” (Rom 6:11). Secondly, the gift of the Spirit moves us to obedience. God therefore does for us in the cross and through the Spirit what we could not do because of our former sinful weakness in responding to his holy, just and good law (Rom 7, 8). Furthermore, the power of the Spirit releases the universal potential of the prophetic hearing of the voice of God (Acts 2, Joel 2:28-30). The writer to Hebrews can express this as tasting the powers of the age to come (Heb 6:4,5).

The Apostles lived in the time of the breaking in of the Kingdom. They were between the ages. It was understood that in the age to come, the stipulations of the Covenant would be different.[28] Accommodations that were necessary in the weaker Mosaic period would be necessary no longer. Witness the stronger requirements on divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the Messiah Jesus. There would be changes, but not with regard to the kind of behavior that God considers good and ennobling. Furthermore, the progression of salvation history is such that the redemptive past is caught up and seen in the redemptive fulfillment of the future. This was passionately argued by Oscar Cullman in his *Salvation In History*.[29] The past is not lost. The number seven is seen from creation to the New Heavens and New Earth. The names of the 12 tribes of Israel adorn the New Jerusalem.

Yeshua died and rose, and the Spirit was poured out. Yet Rome still ruled, not Jerusalem. How do we come to terms with this? The central problem of the New Testament writers, in my view, is to make sense of the present in the light of the fact that we are not in the old age any longer, but neither are we fully in the age to come? As the years passed after Shavuot (Pentecost), it became clear that Israel was not at that time going to bow the knee to Yeshua and accept the authority of the apostles. Israel's deliverance from Rome and exaltation to become the head of all the nations was not to occur quickly (“Will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1:6). The Apostles found themselves in a time of transition between the ages. The rules of the old age and of the age to come do not easily apply in this transitional period. In the old age, the rule is strict separation between Jew and gentile. In the age to come there is a unity of Jew and gentile in the Covenant made with the house of Israel and Judah. This was the problem of the book of Acts. What do we do about the gentiles in this transitional time? Not seeing this context has made interpreters unfairly critical of the apostles for not immediately understanding the place of world missions!

The apostles were given two promises from Yeshua. First was the promise of the Spirit to lead them into truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The second promise was the keys of the Kingdom of God (Matt 16:19, 18:15-20). The keys were the authority to make halacha, that is to apply the principles of the Word to the present circumstances. They would have wisdom from the Spirit and Yeshua in their midst to bind and loose. To bind is to forbid behavior. To loose is to permit behavior. It was now the call of the disciples to bind and loose for the sake of the community of Yeshua. The New Testament Scriptures provide us with specific apostolic rulings that apply to

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[28] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 3rd Edition (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 147, 148, 224.

[29] Oscar Cullman, *Salvation In History*, 1967.

this transitional age. These Scriptures also provide a pattern to follow in reading the Hebrew Scriptures so that in the wisdom of the Spirit we may properly apply its teachings to this present transitional time. What is appropriate to this transitional time between the first and second comings of the Messiah, a time not foreseen in the prophets?

First, the same basic moral behavior required in the Mosaic Covenant is understood to be right in the New Covenant (1 Tim 1; 1Cor 5:11; 2 Tim 3:16,17). Secondly, the age-to-come dimension of the unity of Jew and gentile is to be expressed in the body of believers — the bride of the Messiah. This was proven by the gifts of the Spirit expressed by the household of Cornelius and in the communities established by Paul during his ministry journeys. James' quote from Amos 9 was a realization that another dimension of the age to come was then appearing — the unity of Jew and gentile in the Messiah. Acts 15 made this official halacha. However, Acts 15 has broad application beyond the decision of accepting gentiles without their becoming Jews by circumcision. The implication of Acts 15 is that beyond faith in Yeshua and commitment to basic morality there is to be no additional requirement for accepting gentiles as part of the household of God.

The Sabbath in a Transitional Age

Where does this leave the Sabbath commandment in this stage of the partial Kingdom, "the already, not yet" as George Ladd terms it?[30] It is quite clear that the New Testament simply does not enjoin the Sabbath command for New Testament communities. Romans 14 states that each is to be convinced concerning observing certain days as special. It is not precluded for those who believe they are called to so observe — nor is it enjoined. The texts in Colossians 2 and Galatians 3 have similar implications. I am aware that the list of practices warned against in these texts is apart from what the Torah enjoins (the worship of angels, and the forbidding of eating meat, i.e. vegetarianism). There is likely a combination of superstition with biblical feasts.[31] Paul would not call Torah commandments the commandments of men. However, in speaking of the feasts and Sabbaths as a shadow, he has in mind biblical holy days. To call them a shadow is not pejorative. It is to say that they point to and highlight the substance, the Messiah. We are not to extol the shadow, the foreshadowing exposition of the Messiah, but the Messiah himself. However, that history and historic biblical tradition are no longer to be seen in the stage of fulfillment is beyond the meaning of Paul's words. He himself observed the holy days.[32] Yet, it is noteworthy that the holy days are enjoined on no one in the New Testament texts. It might have been a hardship to require the Sabbath of a people in an empire of nations which did not even know a weekly cycle of measuring time! What would gentiles (even servants and slaves) say to their employers? It seems clear that the command for Sabbath keeping was suspended to accommodate the gentiles in this transitional age. (The Roman world *did* accommodate the Jewish people and allow them to keep the Sabbath.)

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30 Ladd, pp. 57-69.

31 Bacchiocchi, pp. 339-347, Ralph Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, in *New Century Bible Commentary*, pp. 90-91.

32 Davies, pp. 321-322.

Conclusions

How then do we relate to the Sabbath commandment? It is still a sign between God and Israel. It is so in the land of our fathers today. As a part of the age to come and as part of Israel's historic life, the Sabbath has, for the Jewish believer, a significance and calling beyond simply an optional preference. It is part of Jewish life, and the Jewish follower of Yeshua is still a Jew. It will, by God's grace, become universal in the age to come in that greater fullness of the Kingdom when the halacha will again change, and binding and loosing will bring different applications. My conviction, therefore, is to encourage Sabbath observance among Messianic Jews and their congregations.

However, what about the gentiles? Enough has been said to show that the Adventist position is without New Testament foundation. The seventh day, Sabbath, is not required of the Church in this transitional age, nor is it the mark of the beast to worship on Sunday. Mature Adventist scholars like Samuel Bacchiocchi have a point, however, in arguing that the New Testament does not give credence to the switch of the Sabbath day to Sunday. The only three biblical texts used by Sunday Sabbatarians can also be used to show the opposite. In Acts 20:7 we are told that the believers met on the first day of the week. However, the text could as well mean that this was a Saturday evening, and only the first day of the week by Jewish timing wherein the next day begins at evening. It was still the first day the next morning when Paul set off on his journey! The Corinthian text concerning believers putting aside an offering on the first day of every week is also used (1 Cor 16:1,2). In Corinth there were Jews and gentiles. There was some sense of a seven-day cycle, yet too much is read into the text when it is pictured that the congregation passed the plate on Sunday morning. Nothing is said about collecting — only putting aside. In addition, it is possible that the first day was chosen because Jews sought to avoid handling money on the Sabbath.

Bacchiocchi and others give strong evidence that the observance of Sunday as a special day is not rooted in the New Testament but in the Roman practice of exalting Sunday, the day of the sun and of light. This occurred after the empire adopted a seven-day week. It probably was expedited by Hadrian's persecution of the Jewish people during and after the Bar Kochba revolt (131-135). This persecution may well have included Christians who identified with Jewish feasts or other Jewish roots.[33] It was parallel to adopting a new date for celebrating the resurrection and departing from Passover as a Christian Holy Day.[34] In the later second century the connection of this day with the day of resurrection was made. The resurrection was given as the prime meaning of the day over against the themes of light. However, New Testament teaching on liberty in this transitional period applies equally to observance of Sunday or any other day.

Yet what are we to make of those who passionately argue about the need for the Sabbath, though they would like to make it a Sunday Sabbath as Paul King Jewitt and other Christians in years past proposed?[35] Some Christians are not so sure that they do not need a Sabbath. Aside from the specific sign of the Covenant dimension for Israel, the meanings of the Sabbath seem so

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33 Bacchiocchi, p. 241

34 See Bacchiocchi's excellent arguments on pp. 90-91.

35 Bruce Metzger, *Studies in the Lectionary Text of the Greek New Testament*, 1944, II., Sec. 3, p. 12.

universal. First, doesn't everyone need a pattern of rest and work on a more consistent basis in this life while still living in physical bodies in this time dimension? Isn't it good to have a day given over for rest and renewal — one day in seven? This can be experienced on Saturday, Sunday, or any other one day in seven that the society would permit a community and its individuals. Is it not good to reflect that God is the Lord of creation one day in seven and to participate in this meaning? In this case, the seventh day is more fitting. There is so much richness in the Sabbath, can all not benefit? The answer to all of these questions is "yes," but it cannot be required of New Covenant fellowships and especially of gentiles. The halacha has been set. It is not to be required during this transitional age. It was set during a time when peoples did not yet have a weekly cycle of days. There is nothing to preclude a people from adopting the Sabbath for their benefit. These benefits are what made the classical apologists' arguments for Sunday Sabbath keeping so persuasive. There is a strong moral element to the Sabbath that is very analogous to humane labor laws. Fathers especially need to take a faith stand for the sake of families that the economic sphere will not be a tyranny in life.

For all the good reasons to keep a Sabbath and other Jewish feasts, the words of James are most telling, "Moses is read every week in the synagogues," (Acts 15:21). What is the meaning of this statement? Is it that gentiles are free to adopt Mosaic practices as they learn about them and are drawn to them? They are not required to do so. If they do so they need to do it with wisdom and understanding, and certainly not in such a way as to project that they have replaced the Jews. Nor is the focus to be on the shadow instead of the substance! However, they are free!

Personally, I agree with Lindsell.[36] It would be a better world if all kept the seventh-day Sabbath. How greatly do we need freedom from the bondage of the economic and the encouragement of faith to know that the Lord is our provider. Therefore our position is neither Adventist nor Sunday replacement. It is rather that the Sabbath is a good choice for all who can so choose. It is not required for gentiles — this is an accommodation for this transitional age. However, it is still part of God's unique dealing with Israel and remains a Covenant sign for Israelites (Jews). For the Jewish people, including the Jewish disciples of Yeshua, the Sabbath was never suspended, but it will not become universal until the arrival of the age to come — the New Covenant Age. Yet as I look over the harried lives of so many of my friends, I desire for them to know this great blessing of a day that breaks us free from the bondage of work.

36 Lindsell, see note 5.

Sabbath and Worship in Messianic Congregations in Israel

— A Brief Survey

Bodil F. Skjøtt[37]

The following is a survey of Sabbath worship in Messianic congregations in Israel. The survey was done in January 1995 and is based on telephone interviews with congregational leaders. The interview followed a questionnaire including 11 questions concerning style and emphasis of worship used in the congregations. Eighteen congregations responded — roughly half the Israeli Messianic congregations that meet regularly.

The survey is in many ways incomplete and the answers often raise deeper questions. We are quick to talk about Messianic worship and often use the term as if it is clear to all what it entails. The responses below will show that this is not the case. However, the survey still gives a representative picture of how Sabbath worship and Sabbath observance is expressed and understood in Messianic congregations in Israel today.

The word siddur means "order" and refers to the prayer book used in the regular synagogue service.

Kabbalat Shabbat means "receiving the Sabbath". It refers to a special Friday evening service. The term is often used about the whole synagogue service on a Friday evening.

The Shema is one of the central sections of the Jewish Prayer Book comprising three paragraphs: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41.

A minyan is a quorum of ten males over the age of 13. A minyan is the minimum number for formig a congregation.

Results of the survey

1. Does your congregation meet on Sabbath?

Seventeen answered yes.
One answered no.

2. What considerations caused you to decide to meet when you do?

The reasons given for both the choice of the day and for the time during the day varied. Eight mentioned that they met on Sabbath because of practical reasons. It was the day people were free to come. Some had changed from meeting in the evening on a regular weekday to Sabbath

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37Bodil F. Skjøtt holds an M.A. of Divinity from the University of Aarhus, Denmark. She is presently working with the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

because it gave them more time together. Four emphasized that Sabbath was chosen both because of practical reason and because it was "the day of worship." Five congregations pointed out that this was the day set aside for such a purpose, the day of rest and the day of worship.

The one congregation, which doesn't meet on Sabbath expressed they meet on a weekday because they want Sabbath to be a day of rest, a day for the family.

3. If you answered yes to #1, does your congregation incorporate into the service any of the elements of the normal synagogue siddur?

Here 10 answered that they had no elements from the siddur. If there were elements in their service that were parallel to elements in the regular Siddur they were not incorporated for that reason. Five answered that they did include elements from the siddur in their service. Two congregations have a liturgical service in which they follow a liturgy made especially for their congregation. They were hesitant to call it a siddur and it was not initially made to resemble the regular synagogue service.

One congregation follows the regular siddur from the synagogue.

3a. Have you adapted the siddur in any way by adding Messianic elements to it?

Seventeen answered no**.** The one congregation following the regular siddur has in some places added the name of Jesus.

3b. What elements in your service would not normally be found in a non-Jewish Christian service?

The answers to this question reflect different understandings of what a non-Jewish Christian service is. About half of those asked mentioned that they included in their service a reading from the Torah, most often the weekly reading. About the same number recite the Shema or part of it during their service. Almost all stressed the Jewish holidays in their services and the holidays are observed by the congregation. Two congregations mentioned that they encouraged the congregation to interact with the preacher during the sermon and that the sermon often was conducted as a dialogue between the preacher and the congregation. This was mentioned as something specifically Jewish. One congregation mentioned that they prefer to be an minyan before they begin. A few emphasized the songs and also the musical instruments used during their service as something that made their service different from a non-Jewish Christian service.

3c. What elements in your service would not be found in a non-Messianic synagogue?

Twelve congregations emphasized their use of free prayer. All except one mentioned the Lord's Supper, reading from the New Testament and the use of the Lord's Prayer. About half underscored that their service was non-liturgical and followed a free form, contrary to the synagogue service. One mentioned that the only thing in their service that could not be found in the synagogue was prayer in Jesus' name.

4. Do you have this adapted siddur in written form, and would you be willing to give a copy to Mishkan?

The two congregations that conduct their service following a written order of service have given a copy to *Mishkan*. It should be noted that the congregations themselves do not call their order of service a Siddur.

5. What percentage of your members are Jewish?

Two congregations said under 50 percent. Three congregations said 50 percent; four congregations said 60 percent; three, 70 percent; three, 80 percent; and three, 90 percent.

6. What percentage of your members are Sabbath observers?

Fourteen congregations said none. Two congregations each have one family that are Sabbath observers. One congregation estimates 10 percent.

One said that all members were Sabbath observers. Clearly, in all cases diverse definitions of the term "Sabbath observers" might prompt different responses.

7. Does your congregation have a Kabbalat Shabbat service?

Five congregations answered that they have a Kabbalat Shabbat service regularly (most of these have it once a month). Eleven said that they never do. Two said that they don't have such a service but encouraged the families to celebrate the beginning of Sabbath in their homes. One congregation added that to have a Kabbalat Sabbath service in the congregation was "Messianic Jewish gimmick" and that they would not encourage such a tradition.

8. Do you have instrumental music in your Sabbath service?

Seventeen congregations answered yes; only one said no.

9. Do you take an offering during the service?

Nine congregations answered they did so regularly.

Five said that they have a box or basket at the door that members and guests use for offerings toward the work of the congregation. Two of those five preferred a box at the door rather than collect an offering during the service, which they saw as being un-Jewish.

One answered no.

Three mentioned that they encourage tithing but that they did not use the method of passing an offering plate or having a basket at the door.

10. In the past three years, has your congregational meeting moved more toward or away from traditional Sabbath elements?

Nine congregations know of no deliberate changes in the style of their worship. Four have introduced changes to make the service more Jewish, mainly in connection with celebrating the

holidays, which consequently play a more significant role in the life of the congregations.

Five said that there had been changes but that they had not been introduced out of a desire to become more Jewish. Rather they were a response to other needs in the congregations.

11. Do men and women sit separately in your service?

All answered no, but many supplemented their answer by expressing the difference in what men and women can do during the service.

Two mentioned that women are encouraged to cover their head in the service based on Paul's teaching. Most mentioned that women are allowed to pray, but not preach or teach in the congregation. In the majority of the congregations women cannot take part in the leadership of the congregations.

Conclusion

Comments not strictly related to the questions asked in the survey have also been included because they can be helpful for a broader picture of the type of worship one finds in the Messianic congregations in Israel. The comments also show not only what practices are being used but also how and why they have been decided. Obviously different understandings of what makes a service Jewish or what makes it Messianic exist. It is hoped that the survey not only gives a real and fair picture of how Messianic congregations conduct their worship service but also that the survey will stimulate reflection, and a desire to be enriched and inspired by what others have found helpful and fruitful means to celebrate and observe the Sabbath.

From Sabbath to Lord's Day?

Ole Chr. M. Kvarme[38]

An early Christian author writes that they used to celebrate Sunday with joy, because on that day Jesus was raised from the dead. The joy of the Sabbath, *'Oneg Shabbat*, is also a key expression in Jewish language and one of the key institutions of Judaism. According to Jewish teachers and philosophers, the weekly observance of the Sabbath has helped the Jewish People to survive. The observance of Sunday, however, does not have the same significance within the Christian Church and attitudes to Sunday and Sabbath do vary. Still, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus is very basic to Christian faith: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain," Paul states. But how do Sabbath and Sunday relate to one another - biblically, historically and practically?

The last 30 years have seen a renewed debate on the relationship between the Sabbath and the Sunday. One of the most comprehensive studies from this period is a collection of articles, edited by D.A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation, Michigan 1982*. This book began in 1973 as a research project on "Sunday" which was sponsored by the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research in Cambridge and developed with significant interaction with other scholars. The purpose of this article is to present and discuss Carson's book and to make some proposals that can further the discussion and our understanding.

Recent Discussion on Sabbath and Sunday

Before we turn to Carson's book, it may be helpful to mention two other contributions which will place the book in its scholarly and theological context. In 1962 the German scholar Willy Rordorf sparked off the recent discussion with his study, *Sunday: the History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church*.[39] Rordorf's thesis was that the Sabbath in the Old Testament began as a day of rest and later became a day of rest and worship, whereas the Sunday in the New Testament was a day of worship that later in church history became a day of worship and rest. In his analysis Rordorf left little room for a historical and theological link between Sabbath and Sunday and emphasized the discontinuity between the two institutions.

In 1977 the Seventh-Day Adventist Samuele Bacchiocchi published his doctoral thesis at the

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38Ole Chr. M. Kvarme is the General Secretary of the Norwegian Bible Society. He serves as President of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.

39 Published first in German, then in an English translation by SCM, London, in 1968. In 1972 Rordorf also published a very useful collection of historical sources, *Sabbat und Sonntag in der Alten Kirche*, Traditio Christiana 2, Theologischer Verlag, Z□rich.

Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity.*[40] Bacchiocchi argued that Sunday observance arose in Rome during the reign of Hadrian (117-135) when Roman repression of the Jews prompted the church to distance itself from Jewish tradition and adopt Sunday as its day of weekly celebration and Christianize the symbolism of the pagan cults related to this day. Bacchiocchi also maintained that the early church in Jerusalem and in the East continued to observe the Sabbath, and that e.g., the expression "the Lord's Day" in the New Testament refers to the Sabbath, thus providing reason for a continued Sabbath observance.

A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation

Carson's book contains contributions from an outstanding group of scholars in the field of biblical, historical and theological research. H.H.P. Dressler and C. Rowland write on the Sabbath in the Old Testament and in early Judaism. D.A. Carson, M.M.B. Turner, D.R. de Lacey and A.T. Lincoln deal with Jesus, the New Testament and the Sabbath. R.J. Bauckham then turns to the question of the Lord's Day and the relationship between Sabbath and Sunday in the apostolic and post-apostolic church as well as in the medieval church and in Protestant tradition. And A.T. Lincoln concludes the study with a biblical and theological perspective, "From Sabbath to the Lord's Day."

The main thesis of this study and its contributors is that Sunday is a new day of worship that was chosen to commemorate the unique, salvation-historical event of the death and resurrection of Christ, and that this day of worship originated in the early church in Israel. This study thus disagrees fundamentally with Bacchiocchi, but it emphasizes with Bacchiocchi and Rordorf that there is no historical or theological link in the early church between the Sabbath as the day of rest and the celebration of Sunday as a day of worship. Thus there is an emphasis upon discontinuity between the observance of Sabbath and Sunday, and they challenge the view that gives biblical status to the Sunday tradition as binding for the individual or the church.

With such a basic conclusion from the biblical, historical and theological analyses, however, the contributors also state that it is not their intention to challenge the value of the existing institution of Sunday. With a reference to Deuteronomy 5:14 they emphasize that the Sabbath had a profound social and humanitarian significance which needs to be part of a Christian view of work and recreation. They also point to the fact that Jesus in the New Testament recognized the need of his disciples for physical rest as well as salvation rest (Mark 6:31; Matt 11:28), and their position suggests that this rest can be any day or extended part of a day, including Sunday, but that there is no biblical or theological reason it has to be Sunday.

However, the contributions of Carson's book differ from Rordorf as they open up for an analogy between Sabbath and Sunday: Both recur weekly and involve distinctiveness for one day in seven, and it is stressed that the early church inherited the weekly cycle from Judaism. Both

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[40] Bacchiocchi has since published a number of books and articles on related topics, i.e. *The Sabbath in the New Testament* (Michigan, 1988).

Sabbath and Sunday celebrate redemption and prefigure the future rest of the consummation, although the points of reference for redemption are not the same and they prefigure the eschatological rest in two different ways. Finally, Sabbath and Sunday are also linked through the notion of worship and through the concept of lordship. But the study of Carson differs strongly from a Sabbatarian view and it rejects the fourth commandment of the Decalogue as binding for Sunday observance.

Carson's anthology is impressive in its rich documentation, particularly with regard to the apostolic and post-apostolic period, and I must immediately confess that I have great sympathy for its thesis and basic conclusions. However, when its key points in the interpretation of Scripture and patristic literature are reviewed in the following, I will also give some critical remarks to its use of Jewish material, biblical and patristic evidence, and I will therefore end up with a more distinct view of the continuity and the analogical relationship between the two institutions.

The Sabbath as an Old Testament Institution

Let us start with the statement concerning Sabbath in Genesis 2 and the Sabbath as a covenantal sign in the Old Testament. It has been customary to refer to the rest of the seventh day in Genesis 2:3 as a "Creation ordinance" which is what both Luther and Calvin do. However, Dressler and Lincoln both join the German Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad who states that the divine rest is not made normative for the rhythm of human life; nothing is said here of the Sabbath law, and Israel learns of this only at Mt. Sinai.[41] They therefore reject the notion of the Sabbath, or the seventh day, as a "Creation Ordinance" with universal implications and maintain that the story of Genesis 1 and 2 gives history a Sabbatical structure after which the weekly cycle has been patterned.

In the Old Testament, therefore, the Sabbath stands out as a sign of the Mosaic covenant indicating God's sovereign claim on His people's time and loyalty and as a memorial of creation and God's redemptive activity in delivering the people from Egypt (Exod 20:8ff; 31:12ff). Dressler underlines that "the Sabbath was to reflect God's compassion for his people, as well as to emphasize the character of His holiness."[42] However, as a sign of the covenant it was a specific institution for Israel and it was to last as long as that covenant. Lincoln also quotes rabbinic literature that states that the Sabbath is "a perpetual covenant between me and the children of Israel, but not between me and the nations of the world."[43]

With this in mind Lincoln also refers to the fact that the Sabbath is not listed as one of the Noahic commandments for gentiles in Jewish literature, and that Acts 15 with its list of regulations for gentile churches does not refer to any necessity of Sabbath observance for gentiles. At the same time they argue that Hebrews 4:3-4 with its quotation of Genesis 2:2 sees

41 *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays* (New York, 1966) p. 101.

42 Dressler, p. 34.

43 Mekilta Shabb. 1. Cf. also Gen Rabba 11.

the Sabbath rest as the eschatological salvation rest.

It is hard to disagree with this organization and interpretation of the Old Testament material. However, there are two perspectives that should complement this analysis. Whereas it is true that the text of Genesis 2:2f. does not specify any Sabbath regulations, one also has to ask how this passage was read in a community that was already celebrating the seventh day. One has to ask about the significance of this verse not only in the narrow context of Genesis 1-2, but in the broader context of the Old Testament canon and the biblical canon. Further, it should also be pointed to the fact that Isaiah 56:6-7, which speaks of the house of the Lord as a house of prayer for all nations, also looks forward to a time when gentiles will serve the Lord and keep the Sabbath. These questions, which touch upon the universal as well as the covenantal aspect of the Sabbath, are not dealt with in a proper way in Carson's book, and I will later return to the implications of these questions.

Jesus, the Apostolic Church and the Sabbath

When we turn to the New Testament, Carson's book reflects well the development with regard to the Sabbath which takes place from the Gospels and Acts to apostolic letters, Hebrews and Revelation.

Carson, Turner and Lincoln all emphasize that Jesus kept and celebrated the Sabbath, but they also repeat that Jesus contravened and rejected the Halakhic Sabbath regulations. They then point to the fact that the healing ministry of Jesus on Sabbath days and the Sabbath controversies point to his fulfillment of the Law in its totality, his covenantal authority and his Messianic claim as Lord over the Sabbath. Thus they conclude that

> Jesus' explicit treatment of the Sabbath is not so much in terms of positive formulations as in terms of negative formulations, i.e., He shows what is not meant by the law rather than what is meant by it. Nevertheless, there are suggestions that the Sabbath rest is intrinsically bound up with God's eschatological purpose of salvation. These hints come to clearest expression in John 5.[44]

Similarly the Book of Acts reflects a situation in which the Jerusalem community and the Jewish Christians of the early church celebrate the Sabbath, but there is no positive reflection of the significance of the Sabbath in this part of the New Testament. On the other hand, it is maintained that Paul's letter to the Romans reflects a situation in which Paul tolerates Jewish-Christian observance of the Sabbath in his statements about the weaker brethren (Rom 14:5-6). But the dominating theme with regard to the Sabbath is the eschatological rest present in Christ now and in the future consummation. This is already indicated in the Gospels (Luke 4:16-21; Matt 11:28-30), but more fully developed in the early chapters of Hebrews (Lincoln).

Thus the Sabbath as an institution of the Old Covenant is seen as fulfilled and abrogated by Jesus as the Messiah, but it is also emphasized that the sabbatical structure of history still awaits its consummation:

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44 Carson, p. 85. Cf. also Lincoln, *Sabbath, Rest and Eschatology in the New Testament*, p. 197-220.

> This transformation of meaning is not unique to the Sabbath rest but is similar to that which takes place in the New Testament with regard to other concepts, for instance the way which the writers treat the theme of the Temple or the way in which Paul treats the seed of Abraham in Galatians 3 and Romans 4. This is not spiritualization in the popular sense of the word with its connotations of etherealizing concrete realities, but spiritualization in the best sense where the writer moves from earthly shadows to spiritual realities.[45]

Again there is much to be said for this organization and interpretation of the New Testament material. However, two brief comments may open up for a slightly different conclusion with regard to the significance of the Sabbath. First of all, the repeated statement that Jesus contravened and rejected the rabbinic Halakha has been effectively questioned by scholars like David Flusser and Shmuel Safrai.[46] According to their view Jesus' actions and statements partly fall within accepted Halakha, partly represent different trends within contemporary Jewish life. With such a reading of the Gospel stories Jesus is more firmly rooted in Jewish tradition with regard to the Sabbath than what is usually reflected in New Testament scholarship.

Secondly, when the Gospels picture Jesus as the Messiah who also fulfills the Old Testament Sabbath rest — as in Matthew 11:28ff., Luke 4:16ff. and in the Gospel of John — one should also more precisely discuss the theological content and significance of the Sabbath in early Judaism and its significance for New Testament Christology. The Christological emphasis in Carson's book should be welcomed, but the references given to the Jewish celebration of the Sabbath concentrate too much on the legalistic aspects of Sabbath observance and there is too little reference to “the Gospel of the Sabbath” in Jewish tradition: the celebration of God's Kingship and his presence, the encounter with the Lord of creation and redemption, the restoration of man's identity as created in the image of God, the Sabbath as a foretaste of the world to come — to mention just a few examples.[47] In short, the Jewish Sabbath theology which enriches New Testament Christology and clarifies the continuity between the Sabbath as a biblical institution and Jesus as the Messiah, should have been treated more broadly in Carson's book.

The Sabbath in the Post-Apostolic Church

The post-apostolic period from the end of the first to the second and the third century has a wealth of literary evidence both with regard to the Sabbath as well as Sunday celebration, and R.J. Bauckham has an excellent treatment of this material in all its diversity. This diversity continues in the post-apostolic church. He writes:

> The churches of the New Testament period included a variety of views. There were legalistic Jewish Christians who regarded the observance of the whole law as a matter of salvation, but there were also Jewish Christians who themselves continued to keep the Sabbath as a matter of national mores

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45 Lincoln, p. 215. Cf. also his concluding article.

46 Cf. D. Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity. Studies and Essays* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 1979, esp. pp. 424-26, and S. Safrai, *Jerusalem Perspective, 1992.*

47 Cf. e.g. A.J. Heschel, *The Sabbath — Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York 1951/86). It is thus typical that the one article in Carson’s book on Judaism deals with Sabbath observance in Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era (C. Rowland).

> but laid no such obligation on Gentile converts. There were Gentile Christians who adopted the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, while others regarded themselves as entirely free from the commandment.[48]

It is quite clear that Jewish-Christian communities of Syria and Israel continued to keep the Sabbath, whereas it is unclear to what extent Jewish Christians in predominantly gentile churches did so.[49] The literary evidence of their theology with regard to the Sabbath is also scant. The Codex Bezae version of Luke 6:5 may reflect a Jewish Christian attitude which is close to Paul's teaching in Romans 14, and which tells about Jesus: "On the same day he saw a man working on the Sabbath and said to him: Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed; but if you do not know, you are accursed and a transgressor of the law."[50] In a Jewish-Christian gospel from the second century quoted by Jerome, we also find the following account of Jesus' baptism with connotations from the biblical and Jewish Sabbath terminology: "The Lord said to him: My son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you, so that you would come and I might rest in you. For you are my rest; you are my firstborn son, who will reign forever."[51]

The main patristic writers of the second century seem to have been little influenced by Hebrews 3 and 4, but they inherited the same late Jewish tradition of thought about the eschatological Sabbath rest as Hebrews reflects, and Bauckham divides these authors into two categories: gnostic writers who understood Sabbath rest in terms of realized eschatology, and catholic writers who located the eschatological Sabbath wholly in the future.[52] A combined variant of these two categories is found in the letter of Barnabas and its new interpretation of Sabbath rest: (1) It is applied to holiness rather than to physical rest, and (2) it is applied to the eschatological Sabbath that follows the Parousia, the return of Christ.

The same kind of interpretation as in the letter of Barnabas is also to be found in the writings of Justin, Irenaeus, Ptolemaeus and Tertullian. Justin Martyr writes that "the new law requires you to keep the Sabbath constantly,"[53] and he has then in mind not physical rest, but abstinence from sin, and then not just one day, but every day. Every day is to be a day of spiritual service to God. The patristic authors thus treat the weekly Sabbath observance as a temporary Mosaic institution, and this attitude to the Sabbath is part of their wholesale condemnation of Judaism, as is made very clear by Carson's book. We may then also note that these writers make use of the Decalogue in their cathecetical instruction, and there is an increasing tendency to treat it as "natural law," but their ethical lists do not include the fourth commandment.

The patristic authors are struggling with the concept of the Sabbath, although Sabbath observance quickly disappears in their gentile context. In the third and fourth century, however,

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48 Bauckham, p. 255.

49 Epiphanius, Panarion 29,7.5; 30,2.2; 30,16.9. Eusebius, H.E. 3,27.5. Jerome, In Matt 12:2. Cf. Bauckham, pp. 257 and 289.

50 Cf. Bauckham, p. 255.

51 Jerome, Comm. in *Esaiam* 4,11.2 (PL 24,144f). Cf. Bauckham, p. 252.

52 Bauckham, p. 252.

53 In his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 12,3.

there was a grass roots resurgence of Sabbath observance among gentile Christians in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, but this seems to be a new development which primarily grows out of their own reading of the Scriptures and interaction with the Synagogue. This is then the background to Sabbath polemics in patristic literature of this period.

Sunday as Lord's Day in the Early Church

On 3 March 321, the Emperor Constantine promulgated a law requiring a total, public rest from work "on the most honorable day of the Sun," and only farmers were exempt from this law. This legislation is the earliest reference to Sunday as a day free from work, but with the exemption of agricultural work — which was particularly prohibited on the Sabbath — it also seems clear that Constantine's model was not the Jewish Sabbath, but the Roman pagan holidays. But this picture is too simplistic. At this time Christian thought had already moved toward a correlation of Sabbath and Sunday, and Sunday worship already had its history.

The origin of the Lord's Day remains in many respects obscure, but there is reason to maintain that Sunday worship began at an early stage of Christian history and was early understood as commemorative of the Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week. Bauckham and Lincoln bring together the evidence of the New Testament and the second century Christian writers, and the following picture emerges:[54]

(1) It is only in the second half of the second century that Christian writers in Asia Minor unambiguously use the term "the Lord's Day" for Sunday and a day of worship (Acts of Peter; Acts of Paul; Epist. Apost.).

(2) However, when similar expressions appear in writings from the end of the first and the beginning of the second century, it is natural to relate these expressions to Sunday as the Lord's Day and a day of worship, although this identification is not mandatory (Didache; Ignatius; Gospel of Peter). Other writings of the same period clearly mention worship on the first day of the week as a celebration of the resurrection (Barnabas; Justin).

(3) It is in this context we also have to see the reference to the Lord's Day in Revelation 1:10. In the context of the whole book of Revelation with its hymns and liturgical material, its use of the expression "Lord's Day" points to a day of worship and celebration of Christ's resurrection and lordship in John's community.

(4) However, when we move to the Resurrection narratives in the Gospels with their emphasis upon the first day of the week, they permit no demonstrable case that Sunday worship was established at that time and was initiated on dominical authority.

The New Testament and patristic evidence thus indicates that Sunday worship developed in the latter part of the first century, and when Eusebius refers to a second century Jewish-Christian group of Ebionites as celebrating not only Sabbath, but also Sunday as the day of the resurrection of Christ, the Palestinian origin also seems quite certain.[55] Sunday thus early became regarded as

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54 Bauckham, p. 222ff and 227ff.

55 Eusebius, H. E. 3,27. Cf. Bauckham, p. 237.

the Christian festival, but in view of the frequent patristic discussion of the Jewish Sabbath, the lack of any comparison of the Lord's Day with the Sabbath is notable in the same writings.

The first extant Christian work that claims that the Sabbath has been transferred to Sunday, is the commentary on Psalm 92 by bishop Eusebius of Caesarea from the fourth century. He builds on ideas and material already present in the writings of Origen who maintained that Christians were to correspond to the patriarchs who had no Sabbath, but devoted their whole lives to the contemplation of God. Eusebius, however, focuses upon Sunday as a day devoted to the service of God:

> The Word by the new covenant has changed and transferred the feast of the Sabbath to the rising of the light. He has given to us an image of true rest, the day of salvation, the Lord's day and the first day of the light, on which the Saviour of the world, after all his deeds among men, and victorious over death, opened the gates of heaven, passing beyond the creation of the six days, and received the divine Sabbath and the blessed rest.

With this transfer of the feast of the Sabbath to the celebration of Sunday, however, it should also be noted that Eusebius does not refer to the fourth commandment of the Decalogue.

With this material presented, Bauckham and Lincoln also conclude that a Sabbatarian understanding of Sunday rest was a medieval and not a patristic development, manifest particularly from church councils in the late sixth century (e.g. the Second Council of Macon in 585; the Council of Rouen in 650).

Fulfillment, Continuity and Discontinuity

When I now proceed to comment upon the patristic evidence, I will do so in the context of an overall response to the general thesis and contributions of Carson's book and then also touch upon the practical implications in our current situation.

Diversity: The lack of distinct New Testament instructions with regard to Sabbath and/or Sunday celebration and the diversity in the early church should first of all caution against making the issue of Sabbath and Sunday a dividing matter, neither in the gentile-dominated church nor in Messianic-Jewish congregations. This diversity and lack of instructions, however, does not mean that the issue needs to be treated at random. The scriptural evidence and the patristic evidence may help us develop a more consistent understanding and attitude.

Christological fulfillment: Carson's book demonstrates well how the Gospels and the New Testament letters see a Christological fulfillment of the Sabbath and the Sabbath rest, and that the Sabbath rest is now to be found “in Christ” here and now, every day, and will be manifest in the world to come when Christ appears in glory. This Christological fulfillment is then more broadly followed up in the patristic literature, in Jewish-Christian as well as in gentile-Christian sources.

On this point, however, a critical remark must be brought forward with regard to the concept of fulfillment. In Carson's book the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest in Christ is treated as an abrogation of the celebration of the day of rest. We must, however, ask if this is a necessary consequence? When Paul in Romans 10:4 speaks of Christ as the “telos” of the Law, it is most often translated as “the end of the Law” and interpreted as the abrogation of the Law. However,

the Hebrew background of Paul indicates that the Hebrew "takhlit" lies behind which connotes purpose and goal and implies a fulfillment with a stronger element of continuity. Could this also apply to the celebration of the Christological fulfillment with regard to the day of rest and worship? This question should then also be examined with regard to the New Testament and patristic evidence.

From Sabbath to the first day: Bauckham and Lincoln also quote the reference to the Sunday as the eighth day in second-century literature such as the letter of Barnabas (15:9) and in other writings (cf. 2 Enoch 33,1f; Epist Apost 18). In the pre-Christian, apocalyptic Jewish work of 2 Enoch 33 it is said with regard to the future that the eighth day will be the first. This terminology belongs to an apocalyptic understanding of history, according to which the weekly structure of history shall be closed and followed by a new day. With such terminology Sunday was celebrated in anticipation of the future rest in the world to come — when there will be only One Day (Zech 14). But the eighth day, which was the first, was then also a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus and the present salvation rest "in Christ."

It is probable that the mentioned terminology of Barnabas is influenced by the gnostic idea of the *ogdoad*, the eighth heaven of rest, and it is also possible that the reference to the eighth day in 2 Enoch 33 is a Christian interpolation in this pre-Christian, apocalyptic Jewish book. However, Bauckham also admits that with such terminology in the early second century there was no great step to an association of Sabbath and Sunday. But it is more important to ask if this understanding of Sunday celebration is in line with New Testament theology. And it is my contention that a stronger focus upon early Jewish Sabbath theology and celebration would more clearly have shown: (a) that Jesus not only fulfilled, but identified with the Sabbath, and that the concept of the Sabbath is an important background to the Christology of the Gospels, Hebrews and Revelation; (b) that this fulfillment naturally also was celebrated in worship on the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection, the new day; and (c) that the celebration and anticipation of the future rest also corresponds to the Jewish understanding of the Sabbath and represent an early and natural transference from Sabbath to Sunday.

Sunday — with a Christological focus: With such an understanding of the Christological fulfillment of the Sabbath and its significance for the celebration of the first day of the week, I would like to stress the continuity and analogy between Sabbath and Sunday more strongly than in Carson's book. Sunday is a liturgical and recreational celebration that the Sabbath has been fulfilled in Christ, and that we live in anticipation of the rest of the world to come. Thus *there is theological cause to celebrate Sunday* as a day of worship and joyful rest. But this rest is not determined by the ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant; it receives its content from the celebration of Christ as Savior and Creator. Theological reason does not imply that the celebration of Sunday represents biblical law which becomes morally binding. But Sunday as a liturgical and recreational institution can be theologically and biblically motivated, and its celebration illumined and enriched by the relevant biblical material. The salvific as well as the recreational aspects of this celebration may thus remain in continuity with the biblical Sabbath

tradition and also be illumined by Jewish Sabbath traditions.

Sunday and Sabbath: In our current situation it is then also important to keep in mind not only the diversity in the early church, but also the fact that Sabbath as well as Sunday was celebrated by early Jewish Christians — even as it seems, in the New Testament Church. The theological reasons given for the celebration of Sunday do not rule out such a practice today either, and there must be room for Sabbath rest as part of the national and biblical mores of the Jewish people as long as the Christological fulfillment and the Messianic content of the Sabbath are maintained. This would not only be in line with Paul's exhortation in Romans 14, but such a diversity should also enrich the life and witness of Christ's one body of Jews and gentiles. In a world which is bent on conquering space and which has problems with time, our celebration of Sabbath and Sunday may also be a significant witness to the world about the life and the hope that we have received in Christ — the Messiah.

"So God Blessed the Seventh Day and Hallowed It..." (Gen 2:1-3)

Maureena Fritz[56]

Introduction: God blessed all the days of the week, but one day, the seventh or Sabbath day, received a special blessing and was set apart as a unique gift from God to the human race. All those who receive this gift, experience its blessings and behold in it, the dream of perfection, the sign of redemption, the symbol of freedom, the taste of eternity. For the Jewish people, it is especially the memorial of creation and the mark of its covenant with God.

In this article, we will first discuss the meaning of the Sabbath. Then we will look at Jesus and the early followers of Jesus and their observance of the Sabbath. Following this, we will make mention of the fact that the major Christian churches changed the seventh-day Sabbath to a first-day Sabbath, and we will conclude with some remarks for Christians on Sabbath observance.

The Sabbath

The Jewish community weaves its prayers of the Sabbath around three main themes: Creation, Revelation and Redemption. The Sabbath as a memorial to Creation underlies the entire prayer service on Friday night. The Sabbath morning service with the intermediate blessing of the *Amida*, beginning with "Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion," and "the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath"[57] refers to the Revelation on Mount Sinai and is dedicated to the Sabbath as revealed in God's Law. The *Amida*, which is recited in the afternoon,[58] refers to Redemption and looks to the future when God will be One and God's name One. Thus through the three principal prayer services, the Sabbath reflects the world as an orderly sequence of past, present and future. First, God creates the world, then comes Revelation and finally Redemption of humankind.

Creation

> You sanctified the seventh day for Your Name's sake, the conclusion of the creation of heaven and earth. Of all days, You blessed it; and of all seasons, You sanctified it — and so it is written in Your Torah:
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> Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their legion. On the seventh day God completed His work which he had done, and he abstained on the seventh day from all His work which he had done. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it he had abstained from all His work

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57 Nosson Scherman (ed.), *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur (*New York: Mesorah Pub., 1984) p. 425.

58 Scherman, p. 517.

which God created to make . . .

Our God and the God of our ancestors, may You be pleased with our rest. Sanctify us with your commandments and grant our share in your Torah; satisfy us from your goodness and gladden us with your salvation, and purify our heart to serve you sincerely. O Lord, our God, *with love* and favor grant us your holy Sabbath as a heritage and may Israel, the sanctifiers of your Name, rest on it. Blessed are you, LORD, who sanctifies the Sabbath.[59]

The creation of the Sabbath is characterized by the words "with love" — for the Sabbath is the day in which the creature, freed from the cares of work, is reunited with its Creator in purity and contemplates the divine model of activity.

The model of God's activity is the seven-day week and not the 24-hour day. Within this dynamic polarity, God works six days and rests on the seventh. Work assures involvement, while rest guarantees separation and freedom from absorption into Creation.

The rhythm of six/one, work/rest is the divine heart-beat with its contractions and dilations of immanence and transcendence, of involvement and separation. Through this divine, dynamic pulsation, God is lovingly present to Creation and yet above and beyond it, free and sovereign.

Contemplation of God's creative action is contemplation of the loving divine heart that reveals to us the holiness of the seventh day and presents to us a model of life that guarantees creativity and freedom.

Revelation

Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion: that You called him a faithful servant. A crown of splendor you placed on his head when he stood before you on Mount Sinai. He brought down two stone tablets in his hand, on which is inscribed the observance of the Sabbath. So it is written in your Torah:

And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath an eternal covenant for their generations. Between me and the children of Israel it is a sign forever that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.[60]

While the Sabbath eve is consecrated to the celebration of Creation, the Sabbath morning is dedicated to revelation. According to the Talmud,[61] it was in the early morning hours of the Sabbath that God revealed the divine self to the people and gave to them the Sabbath as a command and a sign.

In Genesis, there is no command to keep holy the Sabbath day. Humankind is not ready to receive the command. Before the Israelites receive the divine gift of the Sabbath they must be purified in the desert and fed on manna, a heavenly food. Only then can they hear the command and welcome the gift. When they accept the offer, they accept to be God's covenant partner. The acceptance itself comprises the betrothal ceremony and the Sabbath becomes the wedding ring. The weekly hallowing of the Sabbath is a weekly renewal of the covenant that was enacted at Sinai and is a continual proclamation to the world of the partnership, expressed in the words, "I

59 Scherman, p. 341.

60 Scherman, p. 425.

61 Sabbath, 86b.

am your God and you are my people."

Although the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant, an historical fact effected at Sinai, it is a sign that must be related to creation rather than to history; it is a sign forever that in six days God made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day God rested and was refreshed.

When humans imitate the divine model and refrain from work in response to the divine command to keep holy the Sabbath Day, they sanctify the Name of God. It is "sanctification of the name of God" because it testifies that humans recognize their creaturehood, admit that they are finite and cannot complete all the work assigned them. Hence, in an act of obedient surrender, they hand what is incomplete to the Divine Maker for completion.

Those who remember the command and observe the Sabbath possess the Magna Carta of human freedom on which is written: Six days you shall assert your creative powers and do all your work — but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work. Once you were a slave in the land of Egypt but the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. You will never again have to work non-stop for the Sabbath endows you with the ability to say "No" to any form of coercion and provides for you a sanctuary in time. In that sanctuary, which you must build, you develop a new consciousness of your dignity and experience freedom from the tyranny of other human beings.

Redemption

> You are One and your Name is One; and who is like your people Israel, one nation on earth. The splendor of greatness and the crown of salvation, the day of contentment and holiness have you given to your people. Abraham would rejoice, Isaac would exult, Jacob and his children would rest on it, a rest of love and magnanimity, a rest of truth and faith, a rest of peace and serenity and tranquility and security, a perfect rest in which you find favor. May your children recognize and know that from you comes their rest, and through their rest, they will sanctify your Name.[62]

The *Amida* prayer which is recited in the afternoon refers to redemption and looks to the future when God will be One and God's name One.

As we have seen, the opening prayers of the Sabbath are a preparation and a welcoming of the Sabbath; the morning prayers are dedicated to the betrothal and the afternoon service marks the intimate union of Israel with God and looks towards future redemption "when all will be Sabbath."

In the expressions of rejoicing, the future is invoked and the end times celebrated. All will recognize God — the Lord will be one and God's Name one. That is, all people will be united and one with God. Peace and prosperity will then reign.

The fruits of redemption are love and magnanimity, truth and faith, peace and serenity and tranquility and security.

In Sabbath observance, creation is renewed, revelation occurs, and redemption is enacted. Those who embrace the Sabbath learn her secrets.

Jesus and the Sabbath

62 Scherman, p. 517.

From the Gospels we learn that Jesus was Jewish. He was born of a Jewish woman, of the tribe of David and the people of Israel. He was brought up Jewish. He was circumcised according to the Law. He spoke and acted like a Jew. His mode of preaching and teaching were Jewish. Many of his parables and sayings can be found in Jewish tradition. His first disciples were Jews, as were the Apostles and the first martyrs. Then why, we must ask, is Jesus sometimes portrayed as being at enmity with his own people and as having done away with the Sabbath?

We can't answer that question here, but we can look more closely at Jesus' attitude to the Sabbath. Did Jesus observe the Sabbath? Did he annul it? What was his stance before the Sabbath? We will examine each of these questions.

a) Did Jesus observe the Sabbath?

There are several references in the Gospels that indicate that Jesus was an observant Jew who observed the Sabbath.

In Mark 1:21 Jesus is pictured as arriving on time for the Sabbath: “and they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught.” Luke (4:16) emphasizes that it was the custom of Jesus to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath: “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day.” And Matthew (24:20), knowing the laws surrounding travel on the Sabbath, has Jesus saying, ”Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.”

b) Did Jesus annul the Sabbath?

In Mark Jesus is presented as walking through the grainfields with his disciples on a Sabbath day: “and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to him, ‘Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’” (2:23-24).

Jesus answers: “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him; how he entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” (2:25-26).

Jesus argues from within the Law. He denies breaking the Sabbath law. There was a precedent for what he did.

Jesus concludes his argument: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath” (27-28). Again Jesus is arguing from within tradition. Like the other rabbis of his time, Jesus uses the same arguments as his contemporaries. The Sabbath is a sign of liberation and freedom, not of slavery: “The Sabbath is given unto you, not you unto the Sabbath” (Mekilta to Exod 31.13). “But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the place for the sake of the nation” (2 Macc 19).

c) The Controversy over the Sabbath.

The controversy described in the Gospels over Sabbath observance was not over questions of life and death, but rather over the degree of healing that was permitted. Mark recounts that Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and a man with a withered hand stood before him. To the

Pharisees who were waiting to see if Jesus would cure the man, Jesus said, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:3). But they were silent for they knew that it was permitted to save a life on the Sabbath. A scholar who lived in a town and even questioned whether the Sabbath might be broken for a person dangerously sick in the community was to be despised as a man neglecting his duty, every delay in such a case being fraught with grave consequences to the patient.[63]

Hence, the controversy is not over questions of life and death but over healings that could wait until the Sabbath was over. Why then did Jesus heal on the Sabbath when these healings could have waited a few more hours? We can't be sure of the answer. Perhaps it was because he sensed the urgency of the establishment of God's kingdom.

Whatever his reasons, Jesus did not do away with Sabbath observance. To the end he remained a faithful Jew. He remained a Jew even after his resurrection. Resurrection did not take anything away from his humanity.

The Sabbath, the Early Christians, and Sunday

If Jesus and his disciples kept the Sabbath, we would expect the followers of Jesus after his death to keep the Sabbath and observe Jewish customs. We find this to be so. The Book of Acts describes them frequenting the Temple, and saying the *Kiddush* before meals (Acts 2:46). The historian Eusebius (d. 339) wrote: "They kept the Sabbath and observed the other practices like the Jews; but they celebrated Sunday in memory of the resurrection almost as we do."[64]

As more and more gentiles entered the Church, and as the Church became more and more Hellenized, the Church progressively lost sight of the Jewish notion of the Sabbath. In the early fourth century, Constantine proclaimed Sunday as a free day. After its proclamation, the Church theologized upon Sunday, as the eight day, and proclaimed it the Day of the Lord, the new day of Messianic times. Yet Christians had to be educated to view Sunday as a holy day, and to this end, the Fathers of the Church turned to the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish tradition.

Christians Today and Sabbath Observance

Christians accept the Ten Commandments as their basic ethical code, including the commandment to keep holy the Sabbath Day. It is true that some churches change the wording of the Sabbath commandment from "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8) to "Remember the Lord's Day to keep it holy." Yet there is an understanding that one day of the week should be kept holy unto the Lord.

Christians who care about keeping one day of the week holy have found different ways of doing so. For some it is not much more than going to church on Sunday. Others try to keep Sunday holy by adding practices similar to those used by the Jewish community, i.e., a special meal, flowers, etc. And still others try to imitate the early Christians described by Eusebius who said: "They kept the Sabbath and observed the other practices like the Jews; but they celebrated

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63 Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (Schocken Books 1961) p. 152.

64 *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 27, 2-5.

Sunday in memory of the resurrection almost as we do."

Two words describe how to keep the Sabbath: remember and observe. The Sabbath Day is holy but only those who "remember" it and "observe" it, know it. How to remember and how to observe is an art. Heschel[65] describes the effort as "building a cathedral in time." The home becomes the cathedral, a sanctuary in time which opens unto the vestibule of heaven.

Here are some suggestions to help create an atmosphere of holiness in the home. They are drawn from Moses Maimonides' (1135-1204) commentary on the Torah.[66] Maimonides is still considered to be one of the greatest teachers of Judaism; as well, he had a strong influence on St. Thomas Aquinas and through him upon Christian thinking. Hence, he can help us again today.

(1) Stop work. The first requirement and the predominant feature of the Sabbath is cessation from labor and all business activity. That is, keep the day unprofaned by workaday purposes.

> Some acts are forbidden on the Sabbath even though they neither resemble nor lead to prohibited work. Why then were they forbidden? Because it is written: 'If you refrain from following your business on the Sabbath, on my holy day... If you honor it, not following your wonted ways, not pursuing your business, nor speaking of it' (Is.58.13). Hence one is forbidden to go anywhere on the Sabbath in connection with his business, or even to talk about it … all this, and the like, is forbidden, for it is written 'nor speaking of it.' That is to say, speaking of business on the Sabbath is forbidden; thinking of it, however, is permitted.[67]

In case of serious illness, the Sabbath becomes like a weekday. Everything must be done for the comfort of the sick person, including "lighting or extinguishing a lamp, slaughtering, baking, cooking, heating water for drinking or bathing."[68]

Freed from work, there is time to worship God, to study Torah, to reflect on one's own life, to make social contacts and to delight in creation.

(2) Light Sabbath lights. Sabbath lights should be lit just before the Sabbath begins and should be the first act when the Sabbath closes. "The lighting of Sabbath lights is not a free choice, to light or not to light as one chooses … it is rather a duty, binding on women and men alike; they are obligated to have lamps burning in their homes on Sabbath eve. If one has nothing to eat, go begging at the doors, buy oil, and light a lamp for it forms an integral part of Sabbath delight. Before lighting, one should recite a blessing: 'Blessed art thou, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with thy commandments, and commanded us to light the Sabbath lights.'"[69]

(3) Wear festive clothes and eat festive meals. "Four things have been enjoined regarding the Sabbath: two on biblical authority, and two on the authority of the sages and clearly expressed by the Prophets. The Torah says: *Remember* (Exod 20:8) and *Observe* (Deut 5:12); the prophets speak of *Honor* and *Delight*, as it is written: 'Call the Sabbath a delight, and the Lord's sacred day

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65 Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath. Its Meaning for Modern (*New York: *Man*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951).

66 Philip Birnbaum (ed.), *Maimonides Mishneh Torah* (Yad Hazakah), Book III, *Set Feasts of the Code of Jewish Law* (New York: Heb. Pub. Co., 1944).

67 Birnbaum, Book III, chapter 24, p. 71.

68 Birnbaum, chapter 2, p. 67.

69 Birnbaum, chapter 5, p. 68.

an honor' (Isa 58.13)."[70]

What is meant by honor? "We honor the Sabbath by wearing clean clothes. One must not wear weekday apparel on the Sabbath ... One should spread the Sabbath table on Friday ... so too, one should set the table at the end of the Sabbath ... in order to honor the Sabbath both at its entrance and departure."[71]

What is meant by Sabbath delight? "The sages explained this by declaring that one should prepare rich food and fragrant beverages for the Sabbath as much as one can afford. The more anyone spends for the Sabbath and the preparation of varied tasty food, the more praise one deserves."[72]

"One should eat three meals on the Sabbath: one in the evening, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon."[73]

(4) Praise. "It is a positive duty to express the sanctity of the Sabbath day in words, for it is written: 'Remember to sanctify the Sabbath day' (Exod 20.8); that is to say, remember it in terms of praise and sanctification."[74] Hence, the first meal of the Sabbath begins with a blessing called a "Kiddush," and the Sabbath is closed with another blessing of praise, called the "Havdalah," or prayer of separation between the Sabbath and the work week. Both of these blessings should be recited over wine.[75] A blessing is also recited over fragrant spices at the conclusion of the Sabbath in order "to cheer the soul which is saddened at the departure of the Sabbath."[76]

Conclusion

Since Israel is still God's beloved chosen people and since Christianity is in continuity with the covenant made to the Jewish people as a wild olive branch is to the true olive tree (Rom 11:17), we have much to learn from Judaism. In this article we first looked at Jewish observance of the Sabbath and learned that the Sabbath is a day that commemorates and reenacts creation, revelation and redemption. Then we studied Jesus' faithful observance of Sabbath and that of his followers. Finally, we focused on ways to create a day of holiness in time, have a foretaste of heaven and discover the meaning of true joy.

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70 Birnbaum, chapter 30, p. 74.

71 Birnbaum, p. 74.

72 Birnbaum, p. 75.

73 Birnbaum, p. 75.

74 Birnbaum, chapter 29, p. 73.

75 Birnbaum, p. 73.

76 Birnbaum. For the Sabbath *Kiddush* see Birnbaum, p. 361, and for *Havdalah*, p. 619.

The Sabbath as Holy Time

Bente Afset[77]

In this article I want to present Abraham J. Heschel's study on the Sabbath in his book *The Sabbath – Its Meaning for Modern Man.*[78] We will focus primarily on how the author explains the holiness of this biblical and Jewish institution, and point out some theological consequences of his position. Several aspects of Heschel's study invite examination from a theological as well as a philosophical point of view. This is certainly the case when it comes to the highly original concept of time that he develops. His Sabbath theology depends on the central position of time that he finds in the Bible. Heschel's idea of time is connected with concepts such as holiness, spirit and eternity. Thus he gives time a transcendent character that is strikingly different to the approach of western theology. Here he acknowledges time mainly due to its importance in the concept of history, which is considered the dominating area of divine revelation. However, time itself is seen as a product of creation.[79]

What engages Heschel in *The Sabbath* is not time as a temporal phenomenon. Clearly he sees time as something more than how it is experienced by man. In his exposition he arrives at the importance of time and Sabbath in the Bible by way of contrasting time and space, time being the dominant part.

The Challenge of Modernity to Religion

An important theme in Abraham Joshua Heschel's philosophy of religion is the challenge that modernity poses to religious faith, and to Judaism in particular. The subtitle of his book on the Sabbath reflects this concern. In a language rich in poetic and metaphoric formulations he presents biblical and Jewish tradition on the Sabbath, to stimulate wondering, longing, and responsiveness to God.[80]

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78 A.J. Heschel (New York,1951), 1988.

79 Cf. Augustine's position. The emphasis on history as the central concept in theology has been challenged, i.e. by B. Albrektson: *History and the Gods*, 1967, and later by B.R. Goldstein and A. Cooper, "The festivals of Israel and Judah and the literary History of the Pentateuch", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110, 1990, p. 19.

80 This genre that Heschel so eloquently presents in *The Sabbath*. is in perfect accord with the fundamental views regarding religious communities. The unsystematic and poetic style is typical of his other publications as well. It underlines his fundamental scepticism towards the fruitfulness of analutic and discursive language. According to several critics, Heschel's style is not a means to escape rationality into mysticism, but poetical language is a means to reach beyond rationality into the ineffable, i.e. knowledge not accessible to strict definition, Though, the ineffable is not a synonym of the inexpressible. Cf. John C. Merkle, *The Genesis of Faith. The Depth Theology of Abraham Joshua Heschel* (New York, 1985) p. 46. Cf. also F.A. Rotschild,

Thus the primary concern of Heschel's book, is to present a concept of the Sabbath that may give modern man a renewed insight in and understanding of the dimension of reality where man and God, the human and the holy, can meet. According to Heschel, modern man is estranged to real religion. The victories of modern technical civilization and the modern sciences have made man believe in his superiority over nature and space. And this one-sided orientation towards space and things has deprived man of his ability to appreciate "all reality that fails to identify itself as a thing, as a matter of fact,"[81] i.e. spiritual and religious values. Heschel characterizes this modern world view as materialistic and spaceminded. It has made modern man blind to a dimension just as important as space — the dimension of time.[82]

The concepts *time* and *space*, as Heschel uses them, seem primarily to represent a fundamental contrast within the religious mind. Thus space (and spacemindedness) denotes a certain religious inclination within modern man to base his attitudes and his understanding of life exclusively on nature and the natural world. Against this "materialism" of modernity Heschel argues the centrality of time in the biblical world view.[83]

Holy Time

On this background Heschel characterizes Judaism as *a religion of time* aiming at *the sanctification of time*. Judaism teaches man to be attached to sacred events in time, to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge "from the magnificent stream of a year."[84] These sanctuaries of time are the Jewish festivals. The weekly Sabbaths he calls great cathedrals, while the Holy of Holies (alluding to the inner room of the temple) is the Day of Atonement. This shows, in Heschel's view, that Jewish ritual may be characterized as an *architecture of time*.

Most of its observances – the Sabbath, the New Moon, the festivals, the Sabbatical and the Jubilee year – depend on a certain hour of the day or season of the year … The main themes of faith lie in the realm of time.[85]

Thus time is radically different from space. Time is outside the control of man; it transcends man and his manmade and man-dominated world. Man may dominate space, but he is not able to dominate time.

> It is both near and far, intrinsic to all experience and transcending all experience. It belongs exclusively to God ... It is *otherness,* a mystery that hovers above all categories … It remains beyond

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"God and Modern Man: The Approach of Abraham J. Heschel," *Judaism* 8, 2/1959, pp. 112-120.

81 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 5

82 Heschel emphasizes the contrast between time and space to such a degree that he might be understood to transfer the contrast between spirit and matter into that between time and space. However, this was not his intention. Cf. his "Space, Time and Reality: The Centrality in the Biblical World-view," appendix to *The Sabbath*, 1963. Cf. also J. Brinkmann, *The Perception of Space in the Old Testament* (Kampen, 1992) p. 21, and S. Tanenzapf, "Abraham Heschel and his Critics." *Judaism* 23, 3/1974, p. 284.

83 T. Boman uses the same contrast, time vs. space, in his *Das Hebrדische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechishen* (Gצttingen 1952). However, the concern of Boman's study is to compare Western thought rooted in Greek philosophy, to the Hebrew (and biblical) thought. The studies are therefore not quite comparable. Boman's study has also been heavily criticized on methodological reasons.

84 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 8.

85 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 8.

our grasp. It is almost holy.[86]

Heschel explains time in a typical religious vocabulary making “time” and 'holiness' almost interchangeable concepts.

Time as Ultimate Reality

In Heschel's view, man fails to understand himself and his own existence adequately in terms of the categories of space. This refusal of materialism may not seem original, but Heschel's argumentation is. He writes: “Existence is never explicable through itself, only through time.”[87] Time is then a category of existence, and also a metaphor of spiritual reality.[88]

However, according to Heschel, a special consciousness is required to recognize the ultimate significance of time. “To the spiritual eye space is petrified frozen time, and all things are petrified events.”[89] This quotation makes two postulates: first, there is a spiritual dimension to time in terms of which man may understand his life. Second, the transcendent character of time makes time more real than space. Movement, change and evanescence characterize the world of space, but time “which is beyond and independent of space, is everlasting; it is the world of space which is perishing. Things perish within time; time itself does not change.”[90]

It is not existence or being as such that engages Heschel, the problem of living precedes the problem of being. This is, in my view, fundamental to his philosophy. In *Who is Man?* He writes: “By being human man exceeds sheer being.”[91] Creation imposes a commandment on man, “(t)he order of things goes back to an 'order' of God.”[92]

Consequently, ultimate reality is not to be found in the realm of space. Ultimate reality is within time. Like the burning bush of Exodus 3, time is never consumed. Though hours, minutes and seconds go by, never to return, time itself does not vanish. According to Heschel, time is holy and eternal. Nothing in the world of space resembles God, but time is holiness in the world.

Heschel describes time in a very dynamic way. Space and the things of space are results of God's creating activity, and as such they have an apparent independence that hides their creator. However, creation is also a continuous process, and time is the name of this process in the realm of spirit. Through his creating activity God is present in the world, and this presence is within

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86 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 99.

87 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 99.

88 The concept of time that Heschel operates with here, is not temporal — a constant flow of minutes and seconds. He defines temporality “as the relation of space to time.” *The Sabbath*, pp. 96-97. F.A. Rothschild has suggested that it might be fruitful to compare Heschel’s philosophy of relgion to Heidegger’s existential philosophy. Cf. Rothschild, “Architect and Herald of a New Theology,” *Conservative Judaism* 28, 1/1973, p. 55. However, there seem to be some basic differences bewteen Heschel and Heidegger. Heschel does not focus on the problem of being as such (see below). And God, or the transcendent dimension, that are so fundamental to Heschel, are not recognized in the same way in Heidegger’s philosophy.

89 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 97.

90 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 97.

91 Heschel, *Who is Man?* (Stanford, 1965, 1968), p. 96.

92 Heschel, *Who is Man?*, p. 97.

time. This is why time, not space, is the dimension in which man may understand his being.

The Sabbath — a Sanctuary in Time

Time, not space, is the realm of holiness and eternity, according to Heschel. But there is also a diversity within time. Some moments are unique, these are the "sacred moments," bearers of spiritual meaning.

> The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments. What is retained in the soul is the moment of insight rather than the place where the act came to pass … We must not forget that it is not a thing that lends significance to a moment; it is the moment that lends significance to things.[93]

The significance of time is relative due to God's activity in history. Heschel points out that some moments are unique because God is near in his creating activity or in his word. These are precious moments in the history of Israel – actualized and celebrated in Jewish ritual – in Heschel's words *significant forms in time*, and, as we saw above, an *architecture of time*.[94] In this architecture of time the Sabbath has a special place. Unlike the other festivals of the Jewish year, which depend on a certain hour of the day or season of the year, the Sabbath is independent of the life of nature. The seventh day is not related to the physical world, but to creation. So Heschel finds great significance in the fact that the first time the word *qadosh* is used in the Bible, it is pronounced over the seventh day (Gen 2:3). The essence of the Sabbath is therefore to celebrate time. Unrelated to the physical world and to the consciousness of man, the Sabbath is holy time, and as such it represents a fundamental corrective to the modern "space-oriented" world view. On the Sabbath modern man is given the opportunity to celebrate time rather than space.

> Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.[95]

Heschel describes the Sabbath as a "room," a holy place one has to prepare oneself before entering: "He who wants to enter the holiness of the day must first lay down the profanity of clattering commerce, of being yoked to toil."[96] Heschel points out that six days a week we wrestle with the world, on the Sabbath we may especially care for the "seed of eternity planted in our souls."[97]

The Symbolic Character of the Sabbath

Heschel describes the Sabbath as detached from the world of space; it is spirit in the form of

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93 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 6.

94 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 8.

95 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 10.

96 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 13.

97 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 13.

time.[98] Thus the leading theme of Heschel's book may be summarized in his metaphor of the Sabbath, it is *holiness in time*. However, while explaining this metaphor Heschel continuously falls back into "spatial categories" characterizing the seventh day as *a palace of time, a cathedral*, and *a sanctuary in time*. All these metaphors allude to the holy place of biblical times – the temple in Jerusalem.

Heschel's intention is to present and advocate the biblical and Jewish faith in God and holiness – for modern man. And in this endeavor he gives time, and the Sabbath in particular, a special symbolic function as a means to open the space-minded and materialistic world view of modern man. The Sabbath is explained as a potent religious symbol, a symbol of holiness, faith and religious identity, a symbol that will help modern man understand and find meaning in his life and existence. Here Heschel comes close to describing the Sabbath in sacramental terms.

However, he points out that the symbolism of the Sabbath is not dependent on any physical object. As a symbol of holiness and spiritual reality – a symbol of God's presence — the Sabbath is totally different from other religious symbols, like holy stones, icons, holy towns etc. The Sabbath is not a thing, but time, and consequently "wholly other" than anything in the world of things. No other symbol or ritual object is called for on the seventh day, "The Sabbath is itself the symbol."[99] Through the Sabbath celebration man may become conscious of holiness, spiritual reality and his relationship with the God of the Sabbath. This "awakening" is not only intellectual understanding and knowledge, but an experience and insight that stimulate action, i.e. Sabbath celebration.

Heschel's Sabbath Theology from a Biblical Perspective

In the following I will try to point out some characteristics in Heschel's views on Sabbath and time compared to biblical theology.[100] We will focus on Heschel's presentation of the *holiness of the Sabbath* and the theological implications of his views.

The Sabbath — a Mediator between Man and God

Heschel argues that it is time, especially sabbatical time, that represents the dimension of the holy in the world. As opposed to the holiness of the land, the people etc., the Sabbath is consecrated by God.[101] Nothing in the world of space is holy, but "the Sabbath is all holiness." How does this relate to the biblical statements about holy objects and holy places, in particular the

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98 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 75.

99 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 82.

100 The term biblical theology is often considered problematic in Jewish and Christian dialogue, as energically described by J.D. Levenson in his article "Why Jews are not interested in biblical Theology," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. J. Neusner (Philadelphia, 1987) pp. 281-307. According to Levenson, biblical theology is a typical Christian endavor, characterized by a search for harmony in the multitude of biblical theologies. In his view Judaism is better situated to deal with the polydoxy of biblical theology than is Christianity.

101 "The holiness of the chosen day is not something to stare and from which we must humbly stay away. It is holy not away from us. It is holy unto us. 'Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you' (Exod 31:14). The Sabbath adds holiness to Israel." Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 82.

holy place, the Temple? Heschel differentiates between the holiness of objects and places and holy time. The former was a derived holiness, whereas the holiness of the Sabbath is from creation.

He writes very vividly about the sabbatical rest — the *menuha.* It is not a relaxation for the sake of gaining strength for new efforts, not just a pause in the daily labor, but a rest for the sake of life. Rest is a positive act, not for the purpose of efficiency, not a tool for another end, but something in itself precious. This Sabbath theology may be a sorely needed corrective to a capitalistic and product-oriented modern society, a message of human dignity: It is not what man does or does not that matters on the Sabbath day; the Sabbath draws near and adds holiness to man.[102] The rest of the seventh day proclaims inner freedom for man, freedom from the world of things and from other men.[103] Thus Heschel proclaims the Sabbath as "the holy place" where modern man may find freedom, rest and relationship to the God of Israel.

To explain the riches of the sabbatical rest, Heschel draws a parallel to negative theology. He points out that the splendor of the Sabbath is expressed in terms of abstentions, i.e. through the prohibition of labor. Just as the mystery of God is conveyed *via negationis*: "We can never say what He is, we can only say what He is not."[104] This seems little different from proclaiming the Sabbath as a mediator between man and God — or even honoring the seventh day with godlike attributes.

Holiness and Man

What consequences does Heschel's concept of holiness have on his understanding of man's relation to the holy? Heschel points to the social and humanitarian aspects of the biblical Sabbath as stated in Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20.[105] And he explains in a beautiful way how meaningful the Sabbath may be for the individual, in psychological and religious terms. According to Heschel, the Sabbath represents a continuous reminder and an opportunity for man to adjust his relations — to God, to other men and to the world of things.

Heschel does not discuss the details of Sabbath observance, probably because he is not primarily interested in *how* people observe the Sabbath, but whether they do at all. This does not mean that Heschel sees Sabbath observation as of minor significance, but he points out that purely mechanical observation is in vain. He does not discuss the *how* or *if*, but the *why* of Sabbath observance. Thus, *mitzvah* is given major importance in Heschel's exposition. With an allusion to Kierkegaard's expression "leap of faith," Heschel forms a corresponding expression, "leap of

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[102] Cf. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 87. Mekilta to Exod 31:14.

[103] "The seventh day is the armistice in man's cruel struggle for existence, a truce in all conflicts, personal and social, between man and man, man and nature, peace within man; a day on which handling money is considered a desecration, on which man avows his independence of that which is the world's chief idol. The seventh day is the exodus from all tension, the liberation of man from his own muddiness, the installation of man as a sovereign in the world of time." Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 29.

[104] Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 15.

[105] Freedom and rest are two important aspects ofthe biblical Sabbath. Though this primarily seems to comprise the Israelite and his neighbour (cf. Deut 5:12-15) one may argue that there is also a certain element of universality expressed in Gen 2:1-3.

action," i.e. learning by doing. F. Rothschild writes:

> by participating actively in performing God's will, to appreciate and to be enriched by an experience which touches the whole of man which goes beyond the mere analysis and reinterpretation of that which we already knew beforehand. In doing, we go beyond ourselves, we surpass ourselves and become co-workers in the task of redemption.[106]

However, crucial to the biblical material on holiness is the fact that holiness primarily is tied to YHWH.[107] Whatever he consecrates and names holy shall be considered holy by man. The people, the Sabbath and anything else that is called holy, has been given this holiness from YHWH. Israel's holiness is described in an almost paradoxical way. According to Leviticus 20:7-8, the people *are* holy because God made them so, and therefore they must *be* holy. The Sinai covenant imposes an obligation on Israel. They must act according to the Law they receive.[108] On the other hand the covenant relationship is alone dependent on YHWH's will and his choosing as declared in Exodus 19:5. Heschel's description of the holiness of both man and Sabbath does not seem to convey this ambiguity that the biblical texts do.

The Need for Atonement

Compared to the biblical concept of holiness there is another aspect that escapes Heschel's presentation, i.e. the seriousness and gravity that surround holiness. Holiness (whether it has to do with the temple or the Sabbath) is not only explained in positive terms, as a dimension where the people (or the individual) may meet God. There is another side to holiness as well, the dimension of the cult that has to do with redemption of the sin and guilt of the people.

> Life versus death is a central theme to the holiness passages, eg in the Holiness Code where anyone who desecrates himself or anything that is said to be holy by YHWH, is threatened with the death penalty (Lev. 20:1-8, 18). Exod. 19:10-15 explains that both men and animals risked their lives if they came too close or approached the mountain where YHWH would reveal himself. Correspondingly we see that the sons of Aaron, who took unholy fire before the Lord and acted in defiance with the law, had to die (Lev. 10:1-3).

The Bible gives us very little information that explains how the Sabbath was celebrated both before, during and after the exile. It has been a common assumption in biblical scholarship that important institutions to the exiled community, like the Sabbath, circumcision and the institution of the Synagogue, to a certain extent replaced the temple cult. However, it has been argued, I think convincingly, that the temple cult was still a central element in post-exilic times.[109]

> The connection between Sabbath, covenant and holiness is obvious in the book of Ezekiel. Here it is

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106 F.A. Rothschild. "Arthitect and Herald of a New Theology," *Conservative Judaism* 28, 1/1973, p. 58. Cf. also E.La.B. Cherbonnier, "Heschel's Time-bomb," *Conservative Judaism* 28, 1/1973, p. 18, and J.H. Lookstein, "The Neo-hasidism of Abraham J. Heschel," *Judaism* 4, 3/1956, p. 255.

107 Cf. P.P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness, A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOT SS (Sheffield, 1992) p. 48 notes 2&4.

108 Cf. Lev 20:26.

109 Cf. P.R. Acroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (London, 1972), p. 237, and N.-E. E. Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath — A Tradition-Historical Investigation*, SBL DS (Missoula, 1972), pp. 245 ff.

emphasized that the Sabbath is given to Israel as a sign of the covenant "that they may know that I am the Lord that consecrates them" (Ezek. 20:12, 20, cf. vv.'s 13, 16, 21, 24). The purpose of the law is to give life (20:11): "I gave them my commandments and made my laws known to them that they may live. He who keeps my commandments shall live," (cf. vv.'s 19, 21). Life and holiness are here seen in relation to the fundamental event in Israel's theological understanding, the rescue from Egypt (20:10-12). The connection between cult and Sabbath is documented in 2 Kings 4:23, 11:4 ff, Isaiah (1:13) 66:23, Lev. 23:3 and Num. 28:9-10. The Numeri passage describes the Sabbath sacrifices; twice the daily burnt offering. The special sin – or atonement sacrifice was not usual on the Sabbath day. But on *pescha* and *sukkoth* a ram was sacrificed each day for seven days, which also involves the Sabbath (cf. Num. 28:23-24; 29:16).

This shows that there was a terrible side to holiness, a graveness that taught Israel not to deal with holiness lightly. The Lord defended his holiness.

Heschel admits that man has disregarded his relationship to himself, to nature and to God. This is one of his important insights. However, he does not mention what seems just as important in the biblical texts, the fact that confronted with holiness (and God) man is in need of more than a new and changed consciousness or attitude. Uncleanness has to be cleansed, and sin and guilt have to be atoned for by sacrifice.[110] In Heschel's understanding, the Sabbath is explained as a means to recreate the broken relationship between man and God. However, this is explained without the radical confrontation and settlement that the biblical sacrificial cult demands. This could be because he sees this thought as untenable for modern man, and thus an obstacle to his aim: explaining the meaning of the Sabbath for modern man. In my view, it also teaches us the Jewishness of Heschel's Sabbath theology concerning the basic understanding of theological anthropology and the relationship between man and God.

[110] Cf. Lev 1-7, 16-17, Num 28-29 (P). The following is repeated in this passages: "and the priest shall shall atone for him/them so that he/they may have forgiveness (Lev 4 [several times], 5:16 amd Num 15:25, 26, 28). K.A. Tɴngberg, "Forsoningens rɴtter, in B. Oftestad, K.A. Tɴngberg (ed.) *Forsoningen* (Oslo, 1986), pp. 13-14.

Foundations of Messianic Theology: Following in Jesus' footsteps?

John Fischer[111]

Recent years have witnessed a resurgent interest in Jesus of Nazareth. This interest has sparked his reclamation by Jewish scholars as an important Jewish figure and has fostered an understanding of the Jewishness of the New Testament by Christian scholars. But this delving into Jewish roots has also surfaced a problem, as reflected by the following: "At times Jesus speaks of the permanent validity of the Law (Matt 5:17f.); yet his actions and words often seem contrary to the Law (Mark 2:18-27)."[112] The question is, where did Jesus stand in relation to the Judaism of his day? Did he place himself against its practices, live consistently within them, or something in between? The answers to these questions have significant ramifications for Messianic theology and practice.

The first part of this paper seeks to examine his consistency with the Jewish thinking and practice of his day. It does not seek to establish the direction of influence of the one on the other. It also works from the documents of Scripture exactly as handed down to us, rather than engaging in source criticism and other related methodologies.

The Jewishness of His Life and Teaching

The New Testament accounts (e.g. Luke 2:39-52; John 8:46; Gal 4:4 et al.) stress that Jesus was brought up as a Jew in the traditions and faith of his ancestors. His teachers were Jewish. He shared their life and dress. His primer was the Hebrew Bible.

Like his childhood, his later life was also stamped by his Jewish heritage. He respected the Temple and its worship, expecting his followers to offer the usual sacrifices (Matt 5:23, 24) and going out of his way to pay the Temple tax (Matt 17:24-27). Like the devout Jews of his day he attended synagogue regularly on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16 et al.), first being taught there as a child, and later doing the teaching himself. He consistently observed the Jewish festivals and holidays and used these occasions to indicate how they highlighted his mission (John. 2:13; 5:1; 7:2, 10, 37-39; 8:12; 10:22-23; 13:1-2).

He used and taught the traditional prayers of his time (cf. Matt 6:9-13). "His special prayer is merely a shortened form of the third, fifth, sixth, ninth and fifteenth of the Eighteen

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112 Donald Hagner, "Jesus and the Law: the Modern Jewish Perspective", paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society.

Benedictions."[113] Undoubtedly, he used the familiar blessings over bread and wine when he said grace at meals (cf. Luke 22:19-20).

The Gospels also indicate that he was quite Jewish in his dress. When the woman with the hemorrhage reached for him, she grabbed the hem of his clothes (Mark 6:56; Matt 9:20; Luke 8:44). The Greek term used here, *kraspedon*, commonly translates the Hebrew, *tzitzit* or fringes,[114] which God had commanded the Jewish people to wear (Num 15:37-41).

His way of life reflected other Jewish customs as well. He followed the custom of both preaching in the synagogue and in the open air like the rabbis who "preached everywhere, on the village square, in the countryside and in the synagogue."[115] Even the frequent use of baptism associated with his ministry was quite common to his time, as the Talmud itself testifies (Sanh 39a).

Perhaps most significant was his relationship to the Law and traditions. He declared the permanence of the whole Torah (Matt 5:17-19) and even accepted Pharisaic extensions (Matt 23:2-3). Some of these include: tithing of herbs (Matt 23:23; cf. Maaserot 4.5), grace at meals (Mark 6:41; 8:6), blessings over wine and recitation of the Hallel and Psalms at the Passover seder (Mark 14:22-23, 26). In effect, "the Gospels provide sufficient evidence to the effect that Jesus did not oppose any prescription of the written or oral Mosaic Law."[116]

The fact that Jesus preached regularly in the synagogues — which would not have been possible if his lifestyle or teachings had been recognizably different from the current teaching — substantiates these observations. The incident in Matthew 9:18f. provides further corroboration. The "ruler" — in Luke 8:41 and Mark 5:22, the "head of the synagogue" (*rosh knesset*) — comes to Jesus. Both his request and his posture indicate this religious leader's ready acceptance of and profound respect for Jesus as an observant Jew and religious leader.

In fact, even the Sermon on the Mount, often viewed as the essence and epitome of Jesus' teaching, reflects concepts familiar to the Jews of his day. Much of the Sermon consists of illustrations of the proper understanding of the Law, spelling out its wider implications and describing its broader principles. Many of the illustrations were common to the sages of his day; and the whole is carried out in the style of a *midrash*, an interpretive supplement of Scripture, much as is exemplified in the Oral Torah which later became the Talmud.[117] Much like Jesus these teachers felt that the morally sensitive must go beyond mere conformity to the Torah (cf. Baba Mezia 88a; Mekilta on Exod 18:20).

As each expounded the Torah, many things they taught paralleled each other. An example of this parallel teaching comes from the Talmud: "He who has mercy on his fellow-creatures obtains mercy from heaven" (Shabbat 151b; cf. Matt 5:7). Other similarities to the Beatitudes could be

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113 Joseph Jacobs, "Jesus of Nazareth in History," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. VII, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1916), p. 102.

114 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, further revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

115 Jules Isaac, *Jesus and Israel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 46.

116 David Flusser, "Jesus", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 10, p. 14.

117 B. Z. Bokser, *Judaism and The Christian Predicament* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967), p. 194.

cited as well.[118]

Scholars frequently cite the famous "turn the other cheek" passage (Matt 5:38-48) as an example of the radical newness of Jesus' teachings. Here, the point Jesus emphasized is the proper response to an insult, "a slap in the face." A person is not to seek redress or retaliation but should endure the insult humbly. With this the rabbis agreed, and counseled that a person struck on the cheek should forgive the offending party even if he does not ask forgiveness (Tosefta Baba Kamma 9:29f). The Talmud commends the person who accepts offense without retaliation and submits to suffering and insult cheerfully (Yoma 23a). In fact, one can find parallels to almost all of Jesus' statements in this paragraph (5:38-42).[119] The next paragraph (vv. 43-47) builds on "loving your enemy." Here, too, statements expressing similar ideas can be found in the writings of the rabbis. For example, "if anyone seeks to do evil unto you, do you in well-doing pray for him" (Testament of Joseph XVIII.2; cf. Matt 5:44). While it is true that the rabbis did not always agree over how to treat an enemy, there are indications that many of them taught perspectives similar to those of Jesus.[120]

A Jewish scholar's assessment of the parallels between the teachings of Jesus and those of the Pharisees acknowledges this commonality but also recognizes the independence:

> We have noted that the teachings of Jesus ... are expressive of the method and substance of the Oral Torah as developed by the great masters of rabbinic Judaism. If, in some details, Jesus hewed an independent line, this was normal in rabbinic Judaism, which allowed a wide latitude for individual teachers to think independently. If, in some instances, his views might have aroused opposition from contemporary teachers, this, too, was a normal phenomenon in Judaism. The debates between the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel on the interpretation of the tradition and its application to contemporary life were sometimes fiercely acrimonious, but there was never any doubt that both were legitimate lines for the exposition of Judaism.[121]

The Conflict Defined

While Jesus was very much in tune with his times and his people, there were points of conflict between him and the religious leaders. Just what was the nature of this conflict?

Jesus taught in a period of flux and transition, of various developing and occasionally conflicting interpretations of the Torah. In taking advantage of this liberty in interpretation, he nevertheless remained thoroughly Jewish. For example, he accepted the laws concerning the Sabbath but differed in the exegesis of those laws concerning certain conditions which justify its suspension.[122] "In minor points ... he showed a freedom from traditional custom which implied a

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118 See, e.g. Isaac, pp. 78-79; Johannes Lehmann, *Rabbi J* (New York: Stein & Day, 1971), p. 91.

119 E.g., v. 39 cf. Baba Kamma 8.6; v. 40 cf. Pirke Avot 5.13, Mekilta on 22:25, 102b; v. 41 cf. Baba Mezia 7.1; v. 42 cf. Sifra Kedoshim on 19:18, 89a. See also Bokser, p. 192; Asher Finkel, *The Pharisees and The Teacher of Nazareth* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), p. 165.

120 E.g. v. 43 cf. Sifra on Lev. 19:18, 89b; v. 45 cf. Mekilta on 18:12, 67a; v. 48 cf. Sifre Deut. on 11:22, 85a; see also Montefiore, pp. 68, 73-74; Jacobs, p. 166; as well as Samuel T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on The New Testament* (New York: KTAV, Hoboken 1987).

121 Bokser, p. 206.

122 Israel Abrahams, *Studies In Pharisaism and The Gospels* (New York: KTAV, 1967) I, pp. 134, 131.

break with the stricter rule of the more rigorous adherents of the Law at that time."[123] However, "some of this, of course, may be allowable violation of traditions which, far from having a binding force, were subject to free and continuing intramural debate."[124]

It must be remembered that he did not violate generally accepted customs and practice; he simply disagreed with certain *specific* pronouncements put forward by *some* teachers. The Sabbath question illustrates this.

> ... there is proof that Jesus never openly broke the Sabbath; when he appeared before the Sanhedrin, there is no trace of such an accusation which would certainly not have failed to be produced had it had the slightest foundation … in the case of the Sabbath, as in every case of this sort, Jesus took the clear position, not against the Law, not even against ritual practices, but against the excessive importance that particular Pharisee doctors attributed to them; not even against Pharisaism, but against particular tendencies in Pharisaism, especially the tendency to put the letter before the Spirit.[125]

One other consideration deserves mention. A number of Jesus' comments indicate that he interacted with the discussion between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, and therefore would be in conflict with one or the other.[126] For example, the statement about tithing mint and dill (Matt 23:23f.) reflects one of the things included for tithing by Shammai but not by Hillel (Maaserot 1.1 cf. 4.6; Eduyyot 5.3; Demai 1.3). This shows the extent of Shammai's zeal and commitment to the law of tithing (Deut 14:22-23). The reference to enlarging the fringes alludes to another discussion between the schools. In response to the command to make fringes (Deut 22:12), Shammai wanted to make broader fringes than Hillel (Menahot 41b).

What then was the major focus of the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of his day? Was it simply differing interpretations or applications of the Torah? Or, was it something deeper, as has been suggested?

> ... the tone adopted in recommending these variations was altogether novel in Jewish experience ... he emphasized his own authority apart from any vicarious or deputed power from on high.[127]

The key to the conflict, then, revolves around Jesus' uniqueness and authority as Messiah, and as the Second Moses. In his ministry "I say" replaced "thus says the Lord." As the Messiah and initiator of the "age to come," he brought in a new order of things.[128] Jesus' Messiahship implied something new had come for Judaism (cf. Matt 9:16f.). This formed a basis for his authority and for whatever appropriate adaptations or interpretations he might have made, or for the challenges he leveled against certain interpretations which obscured the intended meaning of the Torah. As Messiah and Second Moses he was the authoritative interpreter of the Law. In fact, the Talmud indicates that Messiah's authority is so great that, "Even if he tells you to transgress any of the

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123 Jacobs, p. 162.

124 Hagner, p. 22.

125 Isaac, p. 60.

126 Finkel, pp. 139-142.

127 Jacobs, p. 163.

128 Cf. G. F. Moore, *Judaism in The First Centuries of The Christian Era*, vol. 1 (New York: Shocken Books, 1971), pp. 270-271.

commandments of the Torah, obey him in every respect" (Yebamot 90b).

Jesus' Basic Premise

Jesus, according to the rabbinic understanding of the Messiah as the Second Moses, (as previously noted), had the authority as Messiah to adapt the Torah and the traditions.[129]

Before dealing with the question as to how he *did* deal with the Torah, it is important to discern Jesus' basic perspective with respect to the Torah. In short, he did *not* abrogate the provisions of the Torah but did elaborate on the implications of its guidelines and principles.

Jesus said quite directly: "Observe the commandments of God" (Mark 10:17-19; Matt 19:16-19; Luke 18:18-20). He also indicated that the Torah would not pass away with his coming (Matt 5:18). Often his statements beginning with "but I say" are put forward as evidence for his setting aside the Torah. But, these statements — as will be seen — appear to function more as an unfolding of the deeper, fuller meaning of the Torah, rather than as a sweeping away.[130]

However, Matthew 5:17-20 remains the crucial passage in understanding Jesus' perspective of his relationship to the Torah. It is here that he described his purpose or intent ("I have come/not come") with respect to the Torah. He stated that his purpose was *not* to abolish the Torah. The term abolish (*kataluo*) carries the idea of do away with, annul, make invalid, repeal, terminate.[131] Jesus came to do *none* of the above. In fact, he mentioned "not abolish" twice so as to emphasize his intent. The strength of his statement is further reinforced by the phrase "Don't think that" which has the thrust of "Never think that."[132] He wanted people to clearly understand that he would not annul, repeal or terminate the Torah!

Next, he set up a stark contrast with this statement. In using this particular construction for "but" (*ouk ... alla*), Jesus was presenting "fulfill" as a direct opposite of, or strong contrast to, his previous statement. In effect, everything "abolish" is, "fulfill" is not, and the reverse; any explanation of fulfill that resembles the thrust of abolish is therefore out of the question. Now, in the passive, "fulfill" (*pleroo*) is used in the sense of things – particularly Scripture — being fulfilled. However, in the active, as it is here, the sense is different. Here it carries the idea of cram full, make complete, confirm, show forth the true meaning, bring to full expression; in other words to fill full.[133] The image seems to be that of a treasure chest, packed full of valuables (cf. Matt 13:52.).

The probable linguistic backgrounds of the Greek in the text here help fill out the

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129 Generally, however, our sources reveal the expectation that the Torah in its existing form would persist into the Messianic Age, when its obscurities would be plain, and when there would be certain natural adaptations and changes, and according to some, the inclusion of the gentiles among those who accepted the yoke of the Torah. W. D. Davies, *Torah In The Messianic Age and/or Age To Come (*Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Research, 95), p. 84.

130 David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London Press, 1956), p. 60.

131 Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, "kataluo."

132 Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek,* vol. III, "Syntax," (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 77.

133 Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, "pleroo."

implications of "fulfill", particularly in light of the context. In the Septuagint, the term translates *mala*, *taman*, and *sava* with the sense of "make completely full, fill up the measure."[134] (In the Targums, *male* and *kum* are used interchangeably.)[135] The likely Aramaic equivalent, *la'asuphe*, means "to add"; and it connotes the idea of preserving the intended meaning of a statement by including all the actions or prohibitions implied in it.[136] Jesus' discussion in verses 21-48 pointedly illustrates this emphasis. The probable Hebrew term behind the Greek is *kiyyem*, which means "uphold, sustain, preserve."[137] The term implies that the teaching given agrees with the text of the Scripture in question. This, too, fits admirably with the discussion of verses 21-48. Since Jesus spoke both Hebrew and Aramaic — as did the people of his day[138] — he undoubtedly would have utilized both languages, from time to time, in his teaching. Therefore, the Hebrew and Aramaic are relevant here. And strikingly, both the Aramaic and Hebrew backgrounds reinforce the idea of fulness as filling full or filling out, as is emphasized in the context of this passage.

As it turns out, "abolish" and "fulfill" are terms used at that time as part of scholarly debate and rabbinic discussion.[139] A sage was accused of abolishing or cancelling the Torah if he misinterpreted a passage, nullifying its intent. If he fulfilled it, he had properly interpreted Scripture so as to preserve and correctly explain its intent.

The remainder of this paragraph (vv. 18-20) further reinforces this understanding of "fulfill". When Jesus talked of not even the "smallest letter" or "least stroke of a pen" passing away, he spoke in terms similar to the sages:

> If the whole world were gathered together to destroy the yod which is the smallest letter in the Torah, they would not succeed (Canticles Rabbah 5.11; cf. Lev Rabbah 19). Not a letter shall be abolished from the Torah forever (Exodus Rabbah 6.1).

And, he added that no one can break or set aside even the least of the commandments, without jeopardizing his future status (v. 19). As if this were not enough, he concluded this section (v. 20) by emphasizing that his followers needed to be even *more* observant and devout than the Pharisees!

Therefore, it appears that Jesus said: "... not only do I not overthrow the Law ... or empty it of its content, but on the contrary I increase that content, so as to fill the Law full to the brim."[140]

Jesus came to bring the correct interpretation and understanding of the Law, i.e. to indicate the full implications and complete meaning of the commandments. Therefore, a person who

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134 Gerhard Delling, "pleroo," in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), *The Theological Dictionary of The New Testament*, vol. VI (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1968), pp. 287-288.

135 D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, Frank Gaebelein, (ed.) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), p. 143.

136 Finkel, p. 163.

137 Daube, p. 80; David Bivin, "Preview: The Jerusalem Commentary," *The Jerusalem Perspective*, March 1988, p. 4.

138 P. Fischer, "The Linguistic Situation in Israel During the Second Temple Period," unpublished masters thesis (University of South Florida, Tampa, December 1992).

139 Bivin, p. 4.

140 Isaac, p. 66.

obeyed his teachings obeyed even the least of the commandments (v. 19) because he was teaching their intended import (cf. Rom. 8:4). The context following (v. 21f.) expands on this foundational principle (vv. 17-20) in typical rabbinic fashion, i.e., a listing of cases demonstrating or illustrating the principle. [141] Basically, in this section, Jesus was saying:

> I say to you: do not stop halfway in obedience to God and his holy commandments; go beyond, always beyond the letter of the commandment, to the spirit that gives it life, from the literal to the inner meaning; "... be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:47); and may the Law at last be carried into effect, in its fulness.[142]

In effect, Jesus built a "fence around the Law" — as indicated by the Aramaic and Hebrew underlying "fulfill" – much as the earlier sages cited by the Talmud did (Pirke Avot 1.2). And his fence is remarkably similar, in many ways, to that of the sages.[143] So, in his teachings as well as in his life, Jesus remained consistent with the Torah and the traditions.[144]

Problem Passages

Much of the discussion about Jesus' relationship to the Law revolves around apparent violations of the Torah and traditions. A review of some of the passages often understood as violations of the Torah or the traditions is in order.

Matthew 5:21-48

Frequently, the formulation "You have heard it said … but I say to you" found in the Sermon on the Mount, is presented as evidence of his opposition to the traditions. Actually, this statement reflects a rabbinic formula used to indicate that a particular interpretation of the Bible may not be valid in the fullest sense. In other words, it implies: "One might hear so and so ... but there is a teaching to say that the words should be taken in this sense." In fact, this is a phrase that Rabbi Ishmael — an important rabbi at the end of the first century and one of the foremost scholars cited in the Talmud — used frequently (cf. Mekilta 3a, 6a, et al).[145] The point being made by the

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[141] Daube, p. 61.

[142] Isaac, p. 66.

[143] See Lachs; Montefiore; Finkel; G. Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: KTAV, 1991); Pinhas Lapide, *The Sermon on the Mount (*New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1986); Gregory Hagg, "The Interrelationship Between the New Testament and Tannaitic Judaism," doctoral dissertation (New York University, 1988); and Strack-Billerbeck's German commentary on the gospels.

[144] According to the three gospels, Matt, Mark, and Luke, the Synoptic Jesus never and no where broke the law of Moses, the Torah of Moses, nor did he in any way provoke its infringement – it is entirely false to say that he did. With the Johannine Jesus there is only a single passage, and that is a borderline case, the healing on the Sabbath, where he says to the man who has been cured, "Take your bed and walk." Here there might be some discussion as to whether the law really was broken ... In this respect you must believe me, for I do know my Talmud more or less ... This Jesus was as faithful to the law as I would hope to be. But I suspect that Jesus was more faithful to the law than I am – and I am an orthodox Jew. See Pinhas Lapide, in Hans Kung, "Jesus in Conflict," a dialogue between Pinhas Lapide & Hans Kung, in *Signposts for the Future* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), pp. 74-75.

[145] Solomon Schechter in Abrahams, I, p. 16; Solomon Schechter, "Rabbinic Parallels to the New Testament," reprinted in *Judaism and Christianity*, Jacob Agus (ed.) (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 427-

formula is that to some people Scripture appears to have a certain meaning, but that apparent meaning is an incomplete, or inaccurate, understanding. So then the first part of the formulation implies a specific interpretation of Scripture held by some, and is not intended as a quotation of Scripture. As such, it is a rabbinic way of refuting an inaccurate or incomplete understanding.[146]

Usually what followed was a logical deduction introduced by a form of the verb "to say": "you must say" or "there is a teaching to say." However, Jesus used no logical argument or development to validate his interpretation; he simply said: "I say." He went beyond the usual emphasis, and instead of a rabbinic exposition of the Torah, he presented the more complete sense in an authoritative proclamation that implied he was the supreme or final authority. (Yet, even in this, the specific formulation was quite rabbinic and paralleled that found in Aboth DeRabbi Nathan [XIII, p. 16a — *aval ani omer leka*].) In fact, in the rabbinic literature God is the one who occasionally undertakes these "corrections" (Midrash Tanhuma, Jer 4:2 on goodness)![147]

The previous discussion implies that Jesus did not oppose the old Law with a new one, but contrasted two interpretations, his — based on his personal authority — and some commonly accepted one. His was fuller — explaining the intent and ideal underlying the Scripture and using teachings and traditions common to his contemporaries — not setting aside the other, but including and expanding it.[148] In effect, as the Sermon on the Mount aptly illustrates, he intensified the Torah with his declarations.[149]

The Sabbath Controversy

The gospels record a number of discussions and differences between Jesus and the religious leaders regarding activities appropriate to the Sabbath. Some have seen in these accounts teachings of Jesus that appear to violate or set aside certain laws concerning the Sabbath. In analyzing these passages, it is important to remember that certain "violations" of the Sabbath were allowed. The prevailing view went like this: "It is right to violate one Sabbath in order that many may be observed; the laws were given that men should live by them, not that men should die by them."[150] Considerable concessions were made, although there was much debate as to the limits of such concessions. The fact that saving life, alleviating acute pain, curing of snake bites and cooking for the sick were all allowed on the Sabbath (Shabbat 18.3; Tosefta Shabbat 15.14; Yoma 84b; Tosefta Yoma 84.15) shows leniency, not absolute rigidity. Quoting Isaiah 58:13, the rabbis also allowed acts of service to others — for example, meetings for the purpose of deciding on grants to charity, making arrangements for engagement or for a child's education. They viewed these acts of service as God's business, not their own. Since good deeds were God's business, they were allowed (Shabbat 150a). However, these relaxations were not extended indiscriminately for

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146 Daube, pp. 55-62; Schechter, "Parallels," pp. 427-428; Finkel, p. 166, note 3.

147 Daube, pp. 55-62.

148 Daube, p. 60.

149 "We cannot speak of the Law being annulled in the antithesis, but only of its being intensified in its demand, or reinterpreted in a higher key." W. D. Davies, *Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1966) p. 194.

150 Montefiore, p. 243.

fear of destroying the rest for which the day was set aside by God.[151] Nevertheless, the basic principle remained: "The Sabbath was made for you; you were not made for the Sabbath" (Mekilta on Exod 31:14, 104a).

Others question the propriety, rabbinically, of Jesus healing on the Sabbath. However, rabbinic rulings of his day *would* allow his Sabbath healings. Safrai concludes: "Jesus' Sabbath healings which angered the head of the synagogue were permitted by tannaitic law."[152]

Several other considerations are worth mentioning. Josephus' writings imply that many of the Sabbath, and other, regulations were not in force in Jesus' time.[153] They were still under discussion. Jesus, in his interaction on the Sabbath question, did not deny the validity of the Torah but merely countered these casuistic interpretations propounded by some. He usually opposed the views of Shammai in favor of those of Hillel (cf. the discussion by Lee).[154]

Even his replies were not as revolutionary as first imagined but were "in harmony with the views of the modern scribes."[155] He made his replies in typical rabbinic fashion and form, frequently using a specific kind of homily called *yelammedenu*. This involves a question addressed to the teacher, followed by his answer based on a midrash (interpretation) or halachah (authorized opinion). The Sabbath passages (Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-23; Luke 13:10-17 et al.) record Jesus' response in this form, in which he cited an interpretation of Scripture or an accepted rabbinic opinion, e.g. "Is it lawful to save life or let it die on the Sabbath?" (Yoma 35b).His argument closely paralleled that of the somewhat later Rabbi Ishmael (Yoma 85a), particularly in Mark 3.[156] In making his case in situations such as this, he used a variety of familiar concepts and methods.[157]

In typical rabbinic fashion he also frequently cited both the principle and an example which helped clarify it. Therefore, both the form of his replies and the content derived in these situations struck familiar chords in the hearers — consistent with teaching they had received — which, because of their cogency, left them without a comeback.

Several implications arise from the previous discussions. First, there was disagreement and discussion in Jesus' time over what was and was not lawful; it was not a settled matter. He entered this discussion and proclaimed his teachings. In them he acknowledged the prohibitions against working on the Sabbath and explained their applications and qualifications. But then, this is exactly how the Sabbath regulations were handled by the religious leaders.[158] Second, the fact

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151 Abrahams, I, pp. 134-135; Bokser, p. 196.

152 Shmuel Safrai, "Religion in Everyday Life," in S. Safrai & M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century*, vol. II (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 805.

153 Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1925), p. 134.

154 Bernard Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

155 David Flusser, *Jesus* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), p. 48

156 Finkel, pp. 163-172; Samuel Cohon, "The Place of Jesus in the Religious Life of His Day," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XLVIII, 1929, p. 98.

157 "Jesus justified the action impugned, adducing a piece of teaching which his opponents also recognized as valid: a wise saying ... a passage from Scripture ... an established ordinance ... in other words, he starts from the same basis as his antagonists. If he did not ... it would not have put them to silence." Daube, p. 174.

158 Bokser, p. 196.

that he took the trouble to argue and to declare certain things lawful, and did not just say the Sabbath was suspended, is significant. It means he acknowledged that certain actions were unlawful on the Sabbath and, therefore, did not set aside the Sabbath commandments. (Compare with Matt 24:20, where he assumed the continuance of the Sabbath laws when he said: "Pray that your flight is not in winter or on Sabbath.") If he had broken the Sabbath, as previously noted, evidence of this would have been used against him at his trial before the Sanhedrin. This would havebeen presented if there had been the slightest foundation for the accusation, yet there is no trace of it (Mark 14:55-64). Third, in the cases of controversy Jesus took a clear-cut stand, not against the Torah or the customs, or even against Pharisaism, but against *certain* tendencies or interpretations among *some* of the Pharisees, frequently siding with one school of the Pharisees against the other.[159] Finally, when Jesus entered the debate and presented his case, he did so in the typical rabbinic fashion, using arguments and examples familiar to his hearers and coming to conclusions they found both consistent with what they had been taught and quite compelling.

Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 12:1-5

The argument Jesus presented here was familiar to his "opponents" for several reasons. The key phrase, "Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," as has already been pointed out, appears in the rabbinic material (Mekilta 103b, Yoma 85b). Also, the rabbis frequently used the quotation from Hosea 6:6 to argue that helping people was of greater importance than observing the rituals and customs (e.g. Sukkah 49b, Deut Rabba on 16:18, etc.) as Jesus did here. In fact, they used the same examples Jesus presented — David's eating the Tabernacle bread and the Temple offerings made on the Sabbath — to demonstrate the same general principle, that the needs of life override the Sabbath restrictions (Y'lomm'denu, Yalkut II, par. 130, Tosefta Shabbat 15b).[160]

In the first century, it was also apparently the general opinion, at least in Galilee, that it was acceptable not only to pick up fallen ears of grain but also to rub them in one's hand to get to the grain. Some Pharisees objected to this practice, but according to others it was perfectly permissible.[161] The Talmud itself says: "Bundles which can be taken up with one hand may be handled on the Sabbath ... and he may break it with his hand and eat thereof" (Shabbat 128a). This certainly allows for what the disciples did; their actions fall well within the bounds of acceptable pratice.

Matthew 15:1-18; Mark 7:1-19

In pre-Pharisaic times the washing of hands was necessary for handling holy objects (Shabbat 14b). This was later extended to handling food. But once again there was a debate between Shammai and Hillel. Shammai insisted on washing the hands before filling the cup. This implied both a state of purity and appropriate rules for the outside of the cup. Jesus referred to this when

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159 Isaac, pp. 59-60; Cohon, p. 97; or Lee.

160 Klausner, pp. 122, 278.

161 Flusser, *Jesus*, p. 46; S. Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source," *The Israeli Academy of Science And Humanities Poceedings* II, Jerusalem, 1966, p. 66.

he said: “They clean (declare pure) the outside of the cup.” In fact, in their commitment and zeal some had gone so far as to define eleven categories of pollution which could defile a utensil.[162] Actually, the precept about handwashing states: “Washing hands before a meal is a matter of choice, ablution after a meal is obligatory” (Tosefta Berakhot 5.13). And, even this may not have been binding on all, but only on those who accepted it voluntarily.[163] Handwashing was not, then, a universal command although some chose to live under such restrictions. Apparently, at this time “the majority of purity laws applied only to priests, or to laymen who had occasion to enter the Temple.”[164] As the previous citation indicates, although handwashing was important in some circles, its exact extent was a matter of dispute at this time, and continued to be until the compiling of the Talmud. And, even then, it was not determined how much of handwashing was compulsory and how much meritorious.[165]

Jesus' response to this situation compared favorably with others of his time.[166]

The famous first century rabbi, Yohanan ben Zakkai, stated: “In life it is not the dead who make you unclean; nor is it the water, but the ordinances of the king of kings that purifies.”[167] So, Jesus' analysis and criticism were quite thoroughly Jewish and most appropriate.

Many have interpreted Mark 7:17-19 to mean that Jesus set aside the food laws. But by doing so he would have contradicted himself. His detractors had just accused him of not observing their traditions, and he had responded they did far worse; they did not observe the commandments of the Torah (vv. 9-13). To choose this time to set aside other commandments of the Torah would have undercut his whole response. It would have left him open to their charge, and which he implicitly denied. It would also have shown him to be inconsistent.[168]

But then, what did he mean here? As Flusser aptly notes:

> The passage about the washing of hands does not justify the assumption that Jesus opposed the Jewish legal practice of this time; but by the third century, Origen understood it as signifying the rejection of Jewish dietary laws by Jesus. The overwhelming majority of modern translators thoughtlessly accept Origen's interpretation when they take Mark 7:19b to mean “Thus he declared all foods clean,” although the Greek original can hardly be read in this sense.[169]

As Flusser pointed out, “the Greek original can hardly be read in this sense.” The nominative participle (*katharizon*) modifies “drain” or “latrine” (accusative). This is just one example of a construction “in which the grammatical object of the sentence is regarded as the logical subject.”[170] What Jesus stated, then, is what is physically true: the latrine removes that part of

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162 Finkel, pp. 140-141, 52-56.

163 Flusser, *Jesus*, pp. 46-48.

164 Abrahams, p. 200.

165 John Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 39, 70.

166 ...their hands and hearts are all corrupt, and their mouths are full of boasting – and yet they complain: Do not touch me lest you make me unclean. (Assumption of Moses 7.9-10.)

167 Flusser, *Jesus*, p. 48.

168 Isaac, pp. 62-63.

169 David Flusser, "Son of Man," in *The Crucible of Christianity*, Arnold Toynbee (ed.) (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 225.

170 Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. I (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 359-360. Alford cites

food which cannot be used for nourishment and so "purges" the food. As Alford goes on to note:

> The *aphedron* (latrine, drain) is that which, by the removal of the part carried off, purifies the meat; the portion available for nourishment being in its passage converted into chyle, and the remainder being cast out.[171]

The passage should then read: "Do you not understand that whatever enters a man from without cannot defile him because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then passes out of it, thus purging the food."[172]

Further, if the disciples had understood Jesus to mean he had set aside the dietary laws, why did Peter – who put the question to Jesus and received the answer (Matt 15:15f.) – react so strongly against the possibility of eating non-kosher food when he saw the vision (Acts 10)? He expressed great indignation and shock. And why did he not later say, especially when explaining these events (Acts 11), "Now, I remember the words of the Lord, making all foods clean"?[173] He said nothing of the sort, because Jesus had not in fact set aside the dietary laws.

Jesus and the Traditions

The second part of this paper seeks to examine Jesus' and the apostles' relationship to the Jewish traditions, and thereby to point toward a model for our own day.

Several examples from Jesus' life help illustrate his approach to the traditions. A significant passage is Luke 4:15f. Here Jesus attended a synagogue, participated in its service, and read the Haftorah portion (the Scripture reading from the prophets) of the day.

Much of the traditional synagogue service was intact during Jesus' time, as the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm. Fragments of scrolls of both daily and festival prayers dating to the Hasmonean period (second to first century B.C.E.) from the fourth cave at Qumran show striking parallels with the traditional prayers in content, structure and texts. Since the prayers in these scrolls exhibit nothing sectarian — unlike the other documents which contain specific Qumran terminology and ideas — these prayers were apparently part of the traditions of the broader Jewish community.[174]

At this point, it should be noted that numerous scholars are critical of the use of the classic rabbinic material as accurate sources of the Second Temple period. They would date this literature as later, and therefore unreliable for information about the Second Temple. However,

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several other examples as well.

171 Alford, pp. 359-369.

172 Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1969) makes note of this sense; Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 217-218, argues on behalf of it. The King James Version translators correctly follow it, as does George Lamsa, *The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts* (New York: Holman, 1961).

173 Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973), pp. 28-29.

174 S. Ackerman, "Rabbinic Lore Vindicated by Prayers from the Past," *Jerusalem Post*, 27 October 1990; L. Schiffman, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early History of Jewish Liturgy," in L. Levine, *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, l987). Also see, e.g. A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy* (New York: Shocken Books, 1975); J. H. Hertz, *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1985)

this critical assessment relies on a specific methodology *and* all the assumptions inherent in it. Jacob Neusner, in his recent book, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature,* describes this approach, which he himself uses. That same basic "higher critical" approach has yielded unfortunate, unnecessary and unreliable results when applied to Scripture.[175] In short, the very methodology — as demonstrated by biblical scholars — is highly suspect and unreliable.[176] It should come as no surprise, then, that the application of this same methodology to the rabbinic sources yields results which are similarly untrustworthy.[177] Finally, as Gerhardsson[178] has shown for the New Testament, the oral transmission of both narrative and didactic materials over many years can be completely trustworthy and historically accurate. And, this is particularly true when dealing with societies such as that of Second Temple Judaism — whose educational system is orally oriented.[179] In his anthropological study of orally-oriented societies, Ong[180] described and demonstrated how verbal accounts and historical events are *accurately* transmitted orally over many generations (which is precisely the situation for the rabbinic sources). It would, therefore, be appropriate to conclude:

> The data contained in our rabbinic sources of the second century A.D. and later are proving more reliable for earlier times than generally believed. The sayings of the leading Jewish teachers of the intertestamental and NT periods were preserved with remarkable tenacity for centuries after their original date.[181]

The synagogue, its service, and the cycle of readings are all "traditional" institutions, in which Jesus approvingly participated. And his followers shared the same attachment to these traditional institutions (e.g. Acts 13:14-15; 14:17). Further, for example, there is evidence to suggest that the gospels are structured as commentaries on the cycle of Jewish lexical and holiday

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175 The use of "higher criticism" with respect to the Old Testament has been clearly answered and sharply critiqued by numerous authors, including, among others, G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966) R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969); and J. B. Payne (ed.) *New Perspective on the Old Testament* (London: Word, 1970). With respect to the New Testament, this has been carried out, among others, by: D. A. Black & D. S. Dockery (eds.) *New Tesstament Criticism and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (InterVarsity:1970); and G. Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

176 Cf. C. Brown (ed.), *History, Criticism And Faith* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1976) and E. Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), Linnemann, especially, has shown the bankruptcy of this approach.

177 For a studied, contrasting approach, see, among others: S. Heilman, *The People of the Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); S. Safrai (ed.), *The Literature of the Sages* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); A. Steinsalz, *The Essential Talmud* (New York: 1976), and H. L. Strack, *Introduction to Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Atheneum, 1969).

178 B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961).

179 Cf. D. Bivin, "Jesus' Education," *Jerusalem Perspective*, vol. 2, nos. 2-3, November 1988 and December 1988; and S. Safrai & M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century*, vol. 2 (Assen, Van Gorcum: 1976).

180 W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Routledge, 1988).

181 W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *Matthew*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 26 (New York: Doubleday, l987) p. clxvi.

readings, another traditional practice.[182]

Concerning Jesus' life as a whole, two passages are most characteristic and instructive. In the first situation, Jesus challenged the crowds, which *included* the religious leaders, "Who among you can accuse me of any wrong?" (John 8:46) No one came forward to claim he had violated any of the biblical laws *or* any of the Jewish traditions. Not one religious leader was able to point to a flaw in his behavior or conduct, even with respect to the traditions! The same holds true in the second situation. Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:55-56). Some of the religious leaders tried to find something of which to accuse him. Nevertheless, they were unable to find *one* thing in his life that they could present as a violation; he had lived flawlessly according to the traditions. Finally, they found something. As a man he had claimed to be God, blasphemy from their perspective. They could accuse him of *no* other violation of the Torah or the traditions!

This perspective about Jesus is further reinforced by his statements in Matthew 23:2-3, where he instructed his followers, "Whatever the Pharisees teach, that do." Since the Pharisees and their allies were the religious traditionalists and proto-rabbis of the first century, Jesus' instruction certainly encompasses the "rabbinic traditions" of his day. Many of the traditions, or halakhot (as they were already called in the Hasmonean period), were definitely in place during the Second Temple period. As Schiffman notes, based on the evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls,

> The talmudic materials are far more accurate than previously thought ... the terminology, and even some of the very laws as recorded in rabbinic sources (some in the name of the Pharisees, and others attributed to anonymous first-century sages), were actually used and espoused by the Pharisees. In other words – and this is extremely important — rabbinic Judaism as embodied in the Talmud is not a post-destruction invention, as some scholars had maintained; on the contrary, the roots of rabbinic Judaism reach back at least to the Hasmonean period.[183]

And so — in light of this and Matthew 23 — it is not surprising to find virtually all of Jesus' teachings, from the Sermon on the Mount on, paralleled in the rabbinic materials.[184] Several examples should suffice at this point.

> He who is merciful to others shall receive mercy from Heaven (Shabbat 151b; cf. Matt 5:7)
>
> Let your yes be yes and your no be no (Baba Metzia 49a; cf. Matt 5:37)
>
> Do they say, "Take the splinter out of your eye"? He will retort, "Remove the beam out of your own eye." (Baba Bathra 15b; cf. Matt 7:3)

But, didn't Jesus condemn the Pharisees? Yes, he did in Matt 23, for their hypocrisy, *not* for their teachings. But this was only after his instructions at the beginning of this chapter, where he

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182 See P. Carrington, *The Primitive Christian Calendar. A Study in the Making of the Marcan Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1952); M. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974); M. Goulder, *The Evangelists Calender. A Lectionary Explanation of the Development Of Scripture* (London: SPCK, 1978); and A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

183 L. Schiffman, "The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Bible Review*, October 1990, p. 25. By way of note, the same can be said for the "halakkah" of the Essenes and Sadducees. This was a time of tremendous vitality and variety in Judaism as numerous groups interacted and developed their ideology.

184 See note 32.

urged his followers to follow their teachings (vv. 2-3). And, his criticism was no more severe than the Pharisees' own criticism of themselves in the Talmud. Here they call the hypocrites and insincere among themselves “sore spots” and “plagues” and “destroyers of the world” (Berakot 14b; Hagigah 14a; Sotah 3.4). Their main concern here, as it was for Jesus, was hypocrisy and lack of sincerity.

After reviewing Jesus' relationship to the Judaism of his day,[185] it would not be inappropriate to describe Jesus as a Pharisee in good standing.[186] Quite clearly, then, Jesus remained an observant, traditional Jew, both in his life and in his teaching.

The Apostles and the Traditions

In his life, the great rabbi from Tarsus, Paul, reflected the same respect for the traditions. In Acts 13:15 he was invited to speak in the synagogue because he was recognized as a religious leader or teacher by his dress, a matter of tradition.[187] In Acts 23:6 he claimed, “I *am* a Pharisee,” not “I *was* a Pharisee.” Then in Acts 26:5 he added, “They have known me for a long time and can testify that according to the strictest sect of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.” The context here indicates not only his past behavior but a continuing lifestyle as a Pharisee. On his arrival in Rome, Paul confirmed his attitude toward the traditions. He explained his situation to the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome and defended himself (Acts 28:17): “I have not violated the customs (or traditions) of our fathers.”[188] Since this last phrase apparently includes the traditions passed on by “our ancestors” through the Pharisees and proto-rabbis, the passage indicates that he had faithfully followed Jesus' instructions about observing the teachings of the Pharisees (Matt 23:2-3).

His teaching was consistent with his lifestyle, as Romans 3:31 indicates: “Does faith nullify the law. No! It upholds it!” (cf. Matt 5:17) That his teachings reflect his observant attitude is also clearly demonstrated in his discussion with James, Jesus' brother (Acts 21:20f.). They met on Paul's return to Jerusalem, and James told him of a rumor circulating about him, that Paul was teaching Jews “not to live according to our traditions.” In order to counter this rumor, James suggested a demonstration of his commitment to the traditions. “Take to the Temple this group of Messianic Jewish men who have made a religious vow, join their purification rites and pay their expenses.” Then, as he said, “Everyone will know that there is no truth to the reports about you.” Paul followed this excellent suggestion so that those “zealous for the law” could rest assured of

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185 For a more complete discussion of Jesus' relationship to the Judaism of his day, see J. Fischer, "Jesus and Early Judaism," in the forthcoming *The Enduring Paradox. Judaism and Belief in Jesus*, J. Fischer and D. Juster (eds.).

186 Cf., e.g., A. Finkel; W. Phipps, "Jesus the Prophetic Pharisee," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 1977; and H. Falk, *Jesust the Pharisee* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); see also Lapide, in Kung, pp. 74-75.

187 Cf. the discussion by H. L. Ellison, "Paul and the Law," *Apostolic History and the Gospel* . F. F. Bruce, W. W. Gasque, R. P. Martin (eds.) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970).

188 This use of "our Fathers" appears to be similar to and consistent with the use found in Pirke Avot, where it includes the traditions passed down by our ancestors. These traditions were transmitted by the Pharisees and proto-rabbis.

his commitment to the traditions, both in his life and teaching.[189]

Galatians appears to contradict the previous analysis. Didn't Paul teach there that grace is opposed to the traditions? Not in any way![190] In fact, he declared: "The law is not opposed to the promises (or grace) of God!" (3:21) Moreover, the term "law," which he used frequently in his letters, can refer to anything from Scripture to laws in general to legalism; it has a multiplicity of uses. Paul referred to six different kinds of "law" in Romans 7 alone! In Galatians he focused his attack on legalism. There, the term is parallel to the concepts of flesh, works and self-effort. Therefore, he was not attacking the traditions, but the idea that a person's efforts and achievements earn that person merit (or standing) before God. And his discussion is neither anti-Jewish nor outside the framework of normative Judaism; it is consistent with Judaism.[191]

Further, as R. Alan Cole points out:

> Paul never seems to have compelled the Gentile Churches to act like Jews ... but it remains equally true that he does not expect Jewish Churches to act like Gentile believers. He never says that it is wrong for them to be circumcised, or to keep the law, or to observe the festivals. All he insists is that these have nothing to do with the gift of salvation.[192]

Some among the first-century Jewish people had missed the message of the Torah and the significance of the traditions. They distorted and transformed their observance into works, self-effort and self-achievement — into a means of getting right with God by one's own strength and merit, i.e. legalism. They taught gentile believers that self-effort and works resulted in salvation and/or spirituality (3:3; 5:4). This, and *not* the traditions, Paul vigorously attacked.

However, his attack against legalism must not be misconstrued. Throughout his life, Paul remained a consistent, observant Pharisee (Acts 26:5; 28:17).[193]

Jesus' stance and Paul's observance find both biblical and historical corroboration in the practices of the apostles. The first century Jewish historian Josephus records the martyrdom of Jesus' brother James (*Antiquities* xx.9.1). James had aroused the ire of the religious establishment, so they had him killed. The Pharisees were so incensed — because of their respect for James and his devout, observant life – that they sent a delegation to Rome and demanded the removal of the High Priest!

James was not alone in living as a consistent, traditional Jew, a "tzaddik," as he was described by his contemporaries.[194] Irenaeus, a prominent second century leader, whose teacher was taught by the apostles — and who therefore had accurate knowledge of their lives — wrote concerning the apostles (*Against Heresies* 3.23.15): "But they themselves ... continued in the ancient observances .... Thus did the apostles ... scrupulously act according to the dispensation of

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189 For a more complete discussion of these issues, see J. Fischer, "Paul in His Jewish Context," *Evangelical Quarterly*, July 1985, pp. 211-236.

190 For a more complete discussion of Galatians in this respect, see the series of articles "Messianic Midrash," by J. Fischer, in *The Messianic Outreach*, from Autumn 1988 through Summer 1989.

191 H. J. Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 42.

192 *Epistle of Paul to The Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965) p. 12.

193 Ellison, "Paul and the Law," p. 109.

194 Hegessipus, a second century church historian and leader, quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), pp. 75-79.

the Mosaic law." In other words, the apostles carefully followed Jesus' instructions to observe the traditions (Matt 23:2-3).

As a result, they remained fully involved in the Jewish community. They continued to worship in the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1). They continued to worship in the synagogue and to pray the liturgy (Acts 2:42). "*The prayers*" (the literal Greek of this passage) denote the set prayers of the synagogue liturgy. Some scholars even hold that Peter actually wrote a bit of the synagogue liturgy, specifically, one of the Shabbat prayers, and a poetic section of the Yom Kippur liturgy.[195]

Considering this, it is no wonder that several centuries later, Jewish believers were still following the apostolic practice of observing the traditions, as Epiphanius noted (c. 375-400 CE) about the Nazarenes (*Panarion* xxx,18; xxxix,7):

> They are mainly Jews and nothing else. They make use not only of the New Testament, but they also use in a way the Old Testament of the Jews; for they do not forbid the books of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings ... so that they are approved of by the Jews, from whom the Nazarenes do not differ in anything; and they profess all the dogmas pertaining to the prescriptions of the Law and to the customs of the Jews, except they believe in Christ... They teach that there is but one God, and his son Jesus Christ. But they are very learned in the Hebrew language; for they, like the Jews, read the whole Law, then the Prophets [i.e., they use the cycle of synagogue Scripture readings] .... They differ from the Jews because they believe in Christ, and from the Christians in that they are to this day bound to the Jewish rites, such as circumcision, the Sabbath, and other ceremonies.

Therefore, concerning the apostolic and early Messianic Jewish practice, it can be said:

> The earliest adherents ... regarded Jesus as the Messiah. They made *no other* changes. They continued to go to the Temple, and presumably to the synagogue, as they had been accustomed to do ... they conformed in *every* respect to the usual Jewish observances.[196] [Emphasis mine]

Quite clearly the apostles and their followers remained a part of the "traditional" Jewish community.

This biblical pattern emerges: Jesus, Paul, the apostles, and the early Messianic Jews all deeply respected the traditions and devoutly observed them, and in so doing, set a useful pattern for us to follow. However, several underlying assumptions or operational principles need to be clarified. Above all, the traditions are *not* authoritative for Messianic Jews; *only* the Bible has that role. Anything that contradicts Scripture does not belong in Messianic Judaism. However, the traditions are usually beneficial and elevating; Messianic Jews can learn and appreciate much through them. Not that the traditions have no shortcomings, but they possess a great deal of richness, beauty and depth.

The Holidays

If we did not have the traditions to fill out the details of the biblical holiday instructions, our observance would lose significant dimension and depth, and our celebration would be correspondingly diminished.

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195 Jacob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (London: SPCK, 1962), pp. 201, 383 note 1.

196 I. Epstein, *Judaism* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 107.

The traditions have provided us with the Pesach haggadah (the guide to the ceremony of the Passover), setting forth the order and elements of the seder (the Passover meal). The stirring images and striking pictures which richly reflect Jesus would be lost to us apart from the "traditional" seder. The traditions give us the *aphikomen* (the broken matzah used for dessert) and the three pieces of matzah, the cup of redemption, Elijah's cup, and more.

Without the traditions, we would not know that Shavuot (Pentecost) is more than a harvest festival, that it celebrates the giving of the Torah and the formalizing of God's covenant with us. We would then miss the impact of the work of the Spirit of God at the Shavuot of Acts 2, where he writes the Torah on our hearts, and God renews his covenant with his people (Jer 31:31f.). The traditions also speak of the Moroccan Jewish custom of pouring large containers of water over the Shavuot celebrants to picture the prophecy of Ezekiel concerning the coming of the Spirit (36:25-27).

The traditions remind us that Rosh Hashanah is more then just the Festival of Trumpets. It celebrates the creation of the world. And, the rabbis remind us that the sounding of the shofar will announce the Messiah's coming and will usher in the Messianic age, the time of the world's re-creation. The traditions give us the ceremony of *tashlich* with its reminder that Micah 7:18-20 is the basis for participating in the Messianic age and the new creation.[197] The rabbis wrote the striking prayer at the blowing of the shofar which mentions "Yeshua, the Prince of God's Presence."[198]

The Yom Kippur liturgy provides us with "*Oz M'lifnai Bereshit*," the startling *musaf* prayer which describes the Messiah in terms from Isaiah 53 and requests his return to his people. The liturgy also paints the pictures of Messiah's death and resurrection by means of its stress on the "sacrifice" of Isaac and the reading of the book of Jonah. And, the traditions keep alive the basic message of atonement by sacrifice through the custom of *kapporot*.[199]

The historical customs surrounding Sukkot gave Jesus the perfect opportunity to present himself as the source of living water (John 7) and as the light of the world (John 8) against the stirring backdrop of the Temple water-drawing ceremony and the lighting of the Temple courtyard menorahs.[200] The existing traditions of the waving of the lulav remind us of Jesus' last entry into Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-9) and anticipate his return through the Golden Gate. Finally, the accompanying *Hoshanot* prayers and the traditionally prescribed reading from Zechariah 14 both beautifully picture the time of his return to reign over Israel.

The ancient traditions add so much to our celebration and enjoyment of the holidays! We would lose much by way of insights and joy had they not filled out the details of the biblical instructions.

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[197] During the *tashlich* ceremony the family gathers by a body of water and throws either bread or stones into the water. As the objects sink out of sight, the family recites Micah 7:18-20.

[198] See the Rosh Hashanah service in J. Fischer, ed., *Messianic Services for Festivials and Holidays* (Palm Harbor, FL.: Menorah Ministries, 1992).

[199] The swinging of the chicken over the heads of the participants with the accompanying request that the chicken's death serve as a basis for "entering into a long and happy life."

[200] For more on these traditions, and on the significance of the holidays, see J. Fischer, *The Meaning and Importance of the Jewish Holidays* (Palm Harbor, Fl.: Menorah Ministries, 1979).

The Liturgy

The traditional liturgy — besides that which relates to the holidays — provides us with awesome and inspiring reflections of God as well as breathtaking opportunities and vehicles to worship him.

The words of the special *kaddish* chanted as part of the burial service ring out with stirring hope:

> May his great name be magnified and sanctified in the world that he will create anew, when he will raise the dead, and give them eternal life; will rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and establish his temple in the middle of it; and will uproot all pagan worship from the earth, and restore the worship of the true God. 0 may the Holy One, blessed be he, reign in his sovereignty and majesty during your lifetime, and during the lifetime of all the house of Israel, speedily, soon, and say, Amen.[201]

Then there is the rich beauty of the words beginning "*Nishmat kol chai ...,"* which elevate participants to the heights of worship:

> Every living thing shall bless your name, O Lord our God, and all flesh shall ever acclaim and exalt your fame, O our King. From everlasting to everlasting you are God; and beside you we have no King, who redeems and saves, liberates and delivers, who supports and comforts in all times of trouble and distress; yes, we have no King but you.
>
> You are the God of the first and of the last ages, God of all creatures, Lord of all generations, adored in countless praises, guiding your world with faithful love and your creatures with tender mercies .... he makes the dumb to speak, liberates the prisoners, supports the falling, and raises up those who are bowed down.
>
> To you alone we give thanks. Were our mouths full of songs as the sea, and our tongues full of praise as its many waves, and our lips full of thanks as the wide expanse of the skies; were our eyes shining with light like the sun and the moon, and our hands were spread forth like the wings of eagles, and our feet were swift as the wild deer, we would still be unable to thank you and praise your name, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, for one thousandth or one ten thousandth part of the bounties which you have bestowed on our fathers and on us .... may your name be exalted, our King, forever and throughout all generations.[202]

The liturgy also invites us to come before God in repentance, expecting him to respond because of his grace. So the sixth benediction of the daily *Amidah* expects us to pray: "Forgive us our Father for we have sinned; pardon us our King for we have transgressed, for you pardon and forgive. Blessed are you, 0 Lord, GRACIOUS and ever ready to forgive."

In fact, a major portion of the liturgy teaches or describes God's grace. During *Shacharit* (the daily morning prayers) we pray: "Sovereign of all worlds! Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our supplications before you, but because of your abundant mercies." During *Minhah* (the daily afternoon service) we add: "Our Father, our King, be gracious to us and answer us, for we have no good works of our own; deal with us in graciousness and lovingkindness, and save us." Finally, during *Ma'ariv* (the evening service) we include Psalm 51, which so clearly expresses our

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201 J. Fischer and D. Bronstein (eds.), *Siddur for Messianic Jews* (Palm Harbor, FL: Menorah Ministries, 1988), p. 119.

202 Fischer and Bronstein, *Siddur*, p. 155.

need to rely on God, not ourselves, because we are sinners.

In their discussions and commentaries, the rabbis repeatedly refer to God's graciousness. For example, in the Midrashim they reflect:

> Deal with your servant according to your grac …' (Ps. 119:124). Perhaps you take pleasure in our good works? Merit and good works we have not; act toward us in grace. (Tehillim Rabbah, on 119:123)

C. G. Montefiore accurately assessed the importance of God's graciousness in the rabbinic materials; it is a significant and representative aspect of the rabbis' thinking, not an isolated stream.[203] Lapide makes this quite clear: "It is evident to all Masters of the Talmud that salvation, or participation in the coming world, as it is called in Hebrew, can be attained only through God's gracious love (grace)."[204] The evangelical scholar, William Sanford LaSor, also attests to this:

> Salvation is always and everywhere in Scripture by the grace of God. There is no other way of salvation in either the Old Testament or the New. A study of the Jewish Prayer Book will show that this is also the faith of the Jews.[205]

However, much misinformation persists to the effect that Judaism is a religion of law, in contrast to Christianity as a religion of grace. [206]

In addition, the rabbis even had a concept of vicarious atonement, one person dying in the place of another to secure his atonement.[207] And, of course the Talmud reminds us: "Does not atonement come through the blood, as it is said: 'For it is the blood that makes an atonement by reason of the life'?" (Yoma 5a)

The ancient, traditional Jewish penitential prayer, the Prayer of Manasseh, beautifully presents the issues involved in having a relationship with God.

> (11)And now behold I am bending the knees of my heart before you; and I am beseeching your kindness. (12) I have sinned, 0 Lord, I have sinned; and I certainly know my sins. (13) I beseech you; forgive me, O Lord, forgive me! Do not destroy me with my transgressions; do not be angry against me forever; do not remember my evils; and do not condemn me and banish me to the depths of the earth! For you are the God of those who repent. (14) In me you will manifest all your grace; and although I am not worthy, you will save me according to your manifold mercies. (15) Because of this (salvation) I shall praise you continually all the days of my life; because all the host of heaven praise you, and sing to you forever and ever.[208]

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203 C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Shocken Books,1974), p. 88.

204 *Paul: Rabbi and Apostle* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) p. 39.

205 "Law, Grace, Faith, and Works," in *Yavo Digest*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1988, p. 4.

206 For further development of this, see R. Brooks, *The Spirit of the Ten Commandments: Shattering The Myth of Rabbinic Legalism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990); S. Riskin, "The Spirit of the Law is As Important As the Letter," *Jerusalem Post*, 13 Aug.1990; S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Shocken, 1972)

207 M. Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1972).

208 J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol. 2 *(*New York: Doubleday and Co., 1935), pp. 634-635.

To this, only one more thing needs to be added, the statement of the Talmud: "...then came the prophet Habakkuk and reduced all the commands to one, as it is written: 'the just shall live by his faith'." (Makkot 23-24)

Principles

In dealing with the traditions, and in incorporating them, certain principles must be remembered. The focus of Messianic Judaism *must* remain squarely on Jesus, but this does not mean setting aside the traditions. Further, the traditions are *not* authoritative, only the Bible is. Nor are we under "the authority"[209] of the rabbis; we are under Jesus' authority! However, the prayers and teachings of the rabbis are valid and helpful as they reflect and do not contradict Scripture. In fact, rather than obstacles, the traditions serve as rich and meaningful pointers to, and reinforcers of, Jesus![210] Indeed, God used these very traditions to preserve our people through the centuries. The rabbis and the traditions are not without their flaws and shortcomings, but they possess a depth, beauty and richness that are too often ignored.

[209] This concept of "the authority of the Rabbis" is frequently a badly distorted perspective and a poorly understood concept some Christians share, often due to the influence of the Western World Protestant and Catholic views of authority.

[210] See, e.g. Fischer and Bronstein, *Siddur*, pp. 180ff.

The Sabbath Day and How to Keep It

Joseph Shulam[211]

The Sabbath is mentioned 117 times in the Bible: 61 times in the Tanakh (Old Testament) and 56 times in the New Testament. That the New Testament has much to say about the Sabbath might surprise both Jews and Christians. Jews might be astonished that the New Testament — the "Christian" Bible, as they view it — contains so many incidents and discussions related to the Sabbath. The same amazement might be found among those Christians who worship on Sunday, and in the mildest case, hold the Sabbath in slight regard. Sunday is mentioned in the New Testament as the "first day of the week," without any commandment to worship or to rest on it. On the other hand, in the Torah, the Law of Moses, God commands observance of the Sabbath many times. In fact, one of the grounds for its practice rests on the idea of creation, which thus applies its observation to all mankind in the book of Genesis.

Here are some significant implications from these very simple biblical facts:

* The centrality of the Sabbath in the writings of the New Testament reflects the Jewish context in which the New Testament was written.

* The Sabbath was not alien to the life and practices of the early church (see Col 2:16ff, Rom 14).

* The Sabbath is never derogatorily referred to in the New Testament, although it frequently records its misuse or misapplication by different people.

These observations form an introduction to our subject. For some Christians, Yeshua's statement, ¢For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt 12:8) indicates the overruling of observance of the Sabbath. Generally speaking, their reasoning is that Yeshua declared himself "Lord of the Sabbath" and thus disparaged the actual keeping of the Sabbath according to the Tanakh. In the light of our observation above that the mention of the Sabbath in the New Testament reflects the Jewish context in which it was written, we can attest to a more accurate interpretation of the text than that which has led to the depreciation of the Sabbath in historical Christianity.

The term "Son of Man" which Yeshua uses in his famous statement has traditionally been understood by translators to refer to Yeshua.[212] This explains why most translations also capitalize the phrase. However, in the context of the Jewish world of the Second Temple period, the term ¢son of man¢ could simply mean "man" or "human being." Both in Hebrew and

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212 The phrase "son of man" is used in the Bible 182 times. It is found 93 times in the book of Ezekiel, twice in the book of Daniel, and four times in the other books of the Tanakh. In the majority of cases, the reference is to a human being (see Num. 23:19, Job 25:6, Ps. 8:4, Ezek. 2:3). Ezekiel uses this term in a specific sense, possibly indicating the prophet's humanity in contrast to the supernatural vision of the *Merkavah* (chariot). For other capitalizations of the phrase in the New Testament, see Matt 12:32, John. 1:51.

Aramaic, the phrase *ben adam* or *bar enosh*, ¢son of Adam," was used as the normal word for a person. In the New Testament, however, we see the gospel writers referring to the ¢Son of Man¢ as a messianic figure greater than merely an ordinary human being. Moreover, Yeshua himself adopts this usage when he speaks of his role at the end of times.

The expression "son of man" in this context is very likely directly influenced by the judgment scene in the book of Daniel: "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man was coming, and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him" (Dan 7:13).

Yeshua identified himself, and is identified by the New Testament writers, as this "son of man" from Daniel. He is the divine Messiah who comes down from heaven on the clouds (see Matt 26:64, Mark 13:26-27). In the passage in Daniel, by adding the word "as" to the usual phrase "son of man" and describing him as descending from heaven, the prophet attributes a supernatural quality to this figure. The "son of man" is only "like" a human being. In reality, he is more than simply human because he descends from heaven. The gospel writers picked up this interpretation, which can be seen most clearly in Mark 13:26-27:

> And then they shall see the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.

In rabbinic literature of the same period and later, we find the same linkage of Daniel 7:13 to the Messiah.

> R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. It is written, in its time (will the Messiah come), whilst it is also written, I (the Lord) will hasten it! (Isa. 60:22) — If they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, (he will come) at the due time. R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7:13); whilst (elsewhere) it is written, (behold, thy king cometh unto thee . . .) lowly, and riding upon an ass! (Zech. 9:7) — If they (the people of Israel) are meritorious, (he will come) with the clouds of heaven (i.e., swiftly); if not, lowly and riding upon an ass. (Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 98a)

A second stage of the development of this concept is described in the Midrash Tanhuma. In this passage, the name of the Messiah is given as *annani* or "cloud-man":

> Who is "Annani"? This is the Messiah. For who has despised the day of small things but these seven [cf. Zech 4:10], as it is written, ¢In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence¢ (Dan 7:13) (Tanhuma Toledot 14).

Although some of these developments appear in rabbinic texts of much later origin than the New Testament, it is very possible that they reflect and preserve earlier traditions of interpretation of the passage in Daniel, and that Yeshua and the gospel writers are witnesses to the early stages of their development.

The statement ¢For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath¢ can certainly be understood, for those who wish, in the eschatological and Christological context of traditional Christian interpretation. However, it can also be understood in the context of the incident in which it appears in the text. This context, in my opinion, is neither eschatological nor Christological. Rather, it deals with halakhic decisions concerning what work was in fact permissible on the

Sabbath.

The context of Yeshua's statement is a dispute with some (other) Pharisees over the disciples' picking grain on the Sabbath. The point at issue was whether this should be considered forbidden as work. Several statements in Jewish literature speak of the Sabbath as being God's gift to man, given to him for pleasure, for holiness, and for rest (see Midrash Psalms 29:2). The point which Yeshua was making in his argument with the Pharisees who condemned his disciples for plucking corn on the Sabbath therefore does not have to be understood as a Christological point. It could very well be that Yeshua's decision of whether his disciples were transgressing God's commandment was that ¢The Sabbath was given for the son of man" — meaning for mankind and not for the appeasement of the religious establishment. I realize that this kind of interpretation goes against the ¢grain¢ of many centuries of Christian understanding. Yet in no way does it diminish the sonship or lordship of Yeshua as Messiah.

The Sabbath day is the only day mentioned in both Old Testament and New Testament as a day of rest, and there is no reason whatsoever to change it to Sunday. We read in Hebrews 4:9 that "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." Surely the writer of the book of Hebrews would not have used such a phrase in writing to a community of Christians who had abandoned the Sabbath and switched to Sunday. Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, himself attended the synagogue regularly every Sabbath. Frequently, he was asked to read from the Torah. Is it conceivable that the Jewish community in Corinth, or in Thessalonia, or Ephesus, would have invited Paul to participate in their services if they had known or suspected him to be a Sabbath breaker? According to Paul's own witness, he kept the Sabbath like any other religious Jew of his generation. If this statement weren't true, Paul could not have made such a claim as is recorded in Acts 25:8: "Paul said in his own defense: 'I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against Caesar.'"

If Paul had not kept the Sabbath, at least until the time when he stood before the procurator Festus, how could he say to people who knew him, "I have committed no offense against the law of the Jews"? Breaking the Sabbath would certainly be considered an "offense"in the eyes of all Israel, and Paul would turn out to be a deceiver. (Or if not Paul himself, one could at the least say that Luke, the writer of Acts, misrepresented Paul's argument.)

An impression of inconsistency may well be created if one compares such a view of Luke's description with Paul's own letters, as many Christians have done. In Romans 14:5-10, Paul seems to argue that the keeping of ¢one day¢ over another is not significant. In verses 10-13, he says:

> But you, why do you judge your brother? Or again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself before God. Therefore let us not judge one another any more, but rather determine this — not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

Similarly, the verse in Colossians 2:16, ¢Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day,¢ does not prohibit the believer from keeping the Sabbath. Rather, it opens up freedom in a congregation of both Jews and gentiles to allow the Jewish believers to keep the Sabbath and the dietary laws of the Torah,

without being judged, and the gentiles to act according to their own convictions.

The major problem which keeping the Sabbath raises for contemporary Jewish believers is not whether we should keep the Sabbath, but how to keep it. Over the 2000 years of exile from Israel, Judaism, like Christianity, has developed many strata of traditions in which the biblical way of looking at the Sabbath, and indeed the whole Torah, has been lost. Note these rabbinic quotations:

> The Sabbath was given to Israel for holiness, pleasure, and rest, not for sorrowing. For this reason we pray three blessings at the beginning, and three blessings at the end, and in the middle we rest. (Tanhuma Vayera 1) Rabbi Akiva said, ¢Treat your Sabbath day like a weekday (*chul*) rather than be dependent on mortals … (Tanna debe Eliyyahu 133).

Rabbi Akiba is one of the most respected Jewish rabbis from the Tannaitic period. In my opinion, if Messianic Jews took the Torah more seriously, and did not just mimic *Yiddishkeit*, we would gain the right to examine and reinterpret the keeping of the Sabbath in light of Judaism's ancient traditions and according to the Spirit of God. On the verge of the 21st century, Messianic Jews must reevaluate the heritage and traditions which we have received from both our Jewish history and from Christianity, and forge a more biblical orientation to our faith in Yeshua the Messiah.

The spirit of Yeshua and the spirit of the Torah are in agreement, and at times one can find the same Spirit of God demonstrated by the rabbis of old. It is in this spirit that we as Messianic Jews must revive our expression of faith in the Messiah.

Looking deeply in the wells of our salvation, Jews can find the tools to express our faith in Yeshua in a more Jewish, and more importantly, a much more authentically biblical way. This done, the Sabbath will again gain its proper place in the community of Israel's remnant. This will not, and ought not be, at the expense of fellowship with our gentile brothers and sisters, who are free to keep or not to keep a day, as long as everything that we and they do is unto the Lord God of Israel.

For Messianic Jews to keep the Sabbath, at least to the extent that conservative Jews keep it, for example, does not necessarily bring under condemnation the gentile churches which keep their Sunday tradition. The seventh day, Sabbath, is in no way in competition with the first day of the week on which the early church met to celebrate the Lord's death and resurrection.[213] We have good biblical evidence that the early church met on the first day of the week, and we ought not ignore the example that Scripture lays before us. These examples, however, do not give any support either to the replacement or the abrogation of the Sabbath day of rest, which God gave as a gift to Israel and to all mankind.

It is difficult for some people to acknowledge that for Israel the Sabbath is a commandment, while for the gentile Christians it is a gift. We must not forget that the same status was given to the gentile Christians regarding circumcision. The Apostles in Acts 15 did not forbid circumcision to the gentiles. James simply said: "Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" (15:19). It is important to note that the present

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[213] Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:1-2 provide two clear examples that the church met with the ending of the Sabbath and the beginning of the week, which would mean Sabbath evening after sundown.

participle *epistrephousin*, "who are turning to God," allows the possibility that James was implying that the Jewish church was not to press the gentiles while they were in the process of *turning* to God. I bring this point here only to note that it is feasible for different sections of the Body of the Messiah to have different responsibilities and specific commandments which apply only to one segment of the Body or the other. We recognize — or at least we ought to — that women have different obligations and restrictions in the Bible than those which apply to men.

The question of "how" to keep the Sabbath is much more complicated, as the following examples indicate: 1) Many Messianic Jewish congregations contain a majority of gentiles. These gentiles are often more eager to keep ¢Yiddishkeit¢ than those who were born Jewish and have had some experience of ¢Jewishness.¢ The danger of ¢Galatianism¢ becomes very real under these circumstances. 2) The Orthodox Jewish way of keeping the Sabbath might appear beautiful at first, but at times it ignores the fact that the Sabbath was given first and foremost for rest. It is forbidden to take the electric elevator to an apartment on the 8th floor, but if you have guests on the Sabbath it is incumbent upon you — and you are also halakhically allowed — to go 10 times up and down the stairs into your store-room and carry chairs and tables for your guests, all the way up to the 8th floor, or even the 15th floor.

These are just two illustrations of the conflict between modern living and tradition. The latter is an example of how the flexibility of halakha can ossify so easily that the "tradition of men" becomes more important than God's commandments, or, as in Yeshua's statement, religious observance dictates men's lives instead of knowing that God's commandments are meant to improve them: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the son of man is lord even of the Sabbath."

Only with this understanding of Yeshua's instruction can Messianic Jews properly keep the Sabbath and not lose its spiritual and authentic spirit. For many centuries Judaism was a dynamic faith which adapted itself to many cultures and many different and diverse worlds. This gave the people of Israel the ability to survive as Jews and to keep their laws and traditions. The development of the *Shulchan Aruch* and the codification of the Jewish laws two and a half centuries ago, however, has petrified the very soul of living Judaism — that which gave it life and enabled it to survive. Today, Orthodox Jews will break the Sabbath by throwing rocks at passing vehicles. As Messianic Jews we must bring back the spirit of the law back into our tradition. This will only be possible when we take Yeshua's words seriously.

The Sabbath is a gift from God to all mankind. For the Jewish people it is a commandment and a gift. We ought not to cast out the good gifts which the Father has given us, but we also cannot force them on our fellow brethren. Let the words of Yeshua be our guide: ¢So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath¢ (Matt 12:12).

Book Reviews

From Sabbath to Sunday:

A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity.

Samuele Bacchiocchi
Gregarine University Press, 1977. 372 pp. US$ 13, 12th Printing.

Reviewed by Benedict T. Viviano[214]

The circumstances under which this book appeared are noteworthy. It is a doctoral dissertation in early church history, written by a Seventh Day Adventist for a Roman Catholic university, and published by that university's press (perhaps in a burst of early ecumenical generosity, not to say naivetʊ). The book strives for scholarly objectivity but, especially in the treatment of Scripture, one senses the heart of a passionate believer beating just beneath the surface.

The book may be understood as an Adventist response to the challenge set down by the work of Willy Rordorf (*Sunday*, Philadelphia, 1968). To this extent, the debate is internal to the Reformed tradition within which both Rordorf and Bacchiocchi stand. This tradition places greater emphasis on the Hebrew Scriptures than other branches of Christianity do, including at times a certain fascination with the ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic dispensation. This emphasis partly explains the Puritan emphasis on strict Sabbath observance (on Sunday), and the Adventist return to Saturday as the day to keep the Sabbath. On the other hand, we must keep in mind that the observance of the Sabbath is included in the Decalogue, and that the Puritan strictness also had roots in medieval theology and law.[215] Yet the book's interest is wider than the Reformed tradition, since in examining the transition from Sabbath to Sunday so thoroughly, the whole problem of the emergence of Christianity from its Jewish matrix is disclosed *in nuce*. This crucial problem, usually discussed in terms of circumcision and St Paul, lies at the heart of early church history and has contemporary implications, e.g., for Jewish-Christian relations. So much for the general interest of the book.

The book contains ten chapters and an appendix. It covers both biblical exegesis and

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215 e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1-2, q. 100; 2-2, q. 122, 4; K.L. Parker, *The English Sabbath*, (Cambridge, 1988).

patristics. The first major chapter (2) covers all the gospel passages dealing with Jesus and the Sabbath, as well as the Sabbath in the letter to the Hebrews. It concludes that Jesus did not abolish the Sabbath but gave it a new meaning as the experience of salvation through healing. There follows a short chapter on the resurrection appearances and meals of the risen Christ. Since these narratives are often used to provide a theology of the Christian Sunday, the author stresses that there is in them no *explicit* reference either to the Eucharist or to the foundation of a liturgical tradition.

The next chapter (4) studies three New Testament texts which are commonly used to show that the earliest Christians held their principle worship on Sunday: 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Acts 20:7-20; Revelation 1:10. It concludes that the first text refers to fund-raising not worship, the second — to an exceptional case, the third - to the *parousia*. The collective conclusion to which these three foundational chapters lead is that there is no explicit New Testament basis for the Christian Sunday. This impression is weakened however when one turns to the chapter-length appendix at the end of the book. This deals with Paul and the Sabbath, specifically with Colossians 2:16-17; Galatians 4:8-11; Romans 14:5-6. The author argues that Paul is not attacking Sabbath observance as such but a perverted, syncretistic form of such observance and, further, "that Paul rejected the Sabbath as a means of salvation but accepted it as a shadow pointing to the substance which belongs to Christ" (369). The reader is here led to wonder whether the author has quite done justice to Paul's radical break with the Torah, though the reviewer grants that Paul does retain the moral content of the Decalogue (Rom 13:8-10).

The patristic section now begins. It is the most original part of the book and contains a bold thesis which concedes everything to the Roman church provided that both the New Testament and the early church of Jerusalem are preserved intact from any dealings with Sunday observance. The thesis runs that (a) the Jerusalem church observed the Jewish Sabbath until A.D. 135 (chap. 5); (b) only the Roman church had sufficient prestige, authority and motivation to introduce such a radical liturgical break and innovation as the shift from Saturday to Sunday. The motivation consisted of the need to distinguish Christianity from Judaism during and after the Second Jewish Revolt against the emperor Hadrian who regarded Jewish practices as barbaric. The alternative was treason. The Quartodeciman or Easter controversy is studied as an analogous case (ch. 6). What the author calls patristic anti-Judaism is then pursued in Ignatius of Antioch, pseudo-Barnabas and Justin (chap. 7).

The eighth chapter studies the day of the Sun in pagan Roman religion and argues that this festal tradition (for which some ambiguous archeological evidence is adduced) directly influenced the choice of Sunday (rather than some other day) as the Christian day of weekly worship. Such a pagan tradition also helped to determine the choice of 25 December to commemorate the birth of Christ. (Recent studies by Thomas Talley have tended to undermine this widespread explanation of the origin of Christmas.) In the ninth chapter the author reviews Christian theological arguments for Sunday, and finds such flimsy allegorical interpretations of creation and the eschatological eighth day or *ogdoad* as to possess little biblical standing. Only the commemoration of Christ's resurrection on that day (chap. 10) can be taken seriously as an argument, but even it is only an argument for a worship service, not for a complete day of rest. Only the Sabbath is adequate for the sanctification of weekly time. Later, under Christian

emperors, Sunday became the official day of rest; an amalgamation of Christian Sunday and Old Testament Sabbath legislation took place. But this compromise solution is currently being undermined by commercial greed and human restlessness. The author ends with a plea for a return to the seventh-day Sabbath.

What are we to think of this complex, multilayered argument? First, let us look at it from the angle of the author's unstated but operative presuppositions. He starts from a biblicistic viewpoint that there is a chasm between Scripture and early Christian tradition. But since the T□bingen school of the 1830s, this view has been overtaken by a greater awareness of organic development. The Apostolic Fathers are writing before the New Testament canon is completed. They did not dwell in watertight compartments, but interacted with the New Testament authors.

His second unstated presupposition is that the bishop of Rome is the whore of Babylon, man of sin and antichrist (Rev 18; 2 Thess 2:3-4; 1 John 2:18,22). (This, although Rev 18, according to historical interpretation, refers to the emperor, not the bishop, of Rome.) Thus any practice, such as Sunday observance, which one abhors, can be conveniently attributed to him. Given these two principles, the author has less difficulty with Catholics and Eastern Orthodox (both of whom admit that liturgical practices may derive from church tradition) than with traditional Protestants who adhere to the *Sola Scriptura* position, while at the same time worshipping on Sunday.

Historico-exegetically, we make two comments: (1) the Pauline texts which are defensively treated in his appendix (Col 2:16-17; Gal 4:8-11; Rom 14:5-6), when read in the light of Paul's break with the Torah as a means of salvation (Gal 1-4; Rom 3:21-31), seem to prepare the way for the break with the Sabbath which the author finds for the first time in Barnabas and Justin. That is, there is a visible continuity between Scripture and tradition. (2) It is not implausible that the shift to Sunday as the day of the main weekly liturgical celebration was facilitated by the great ancient sees such as Rome and eventually Constantinople. Whatever the historical facts may be (and some links in the chain of evidence are missing), the reader closes the book grateful to the author for his passionate and thorough examination of the Sabbath-Sunday issue, one of the signposts of the emergence of Christianity as something more than a rejected Jewish sect.

Jesus Ben Joseph

Walter Riggans

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153 pages, price $ 3.99

Reviewed by Richard Robinson[216]

Everybody knows that Jesus was a Scottish Episcopalian, right? Or at least he was some kind of Christian, wasn't he? To some the absurdity of those statements is obvious, but for others it is not. According to Walter Riggans, General Director of CWI, far too many people have forgotten that Jesus was Jewish — and this includes both Christians and Jesus' own Jewish people.

In Jesus Ben Joseph, Riggans presents a popularization of Jesus' Jewishness for the benefit of both Christian and Jewish readers. This is by design not a defense of Christian doctrine but a call for Christians to understand Jesus as he truly is, and an encouragement for Jewish readers to pick up the New Testament and read it first hand.

This book is just the thing for Christians unschooled in — or worse, hostile toward — the Jewish background of Christianity. It is likewise thought-provoking for Jews who have not really considered the Jewishness of the New Testament but who are willing to hear about it. After a provocative chapter on antagonism to the very notion of a Jewish Jesus, chapter three lays out a smorgasbord of various aspects of Jesus' Jewish life: the significance of his *tzitzit*, the traditional fringes worn on the corners of garments; his participation in Jewish festivals such as Passover and Hanukkah; and the ways in which Hebrew can shed light upon the New Testament text.

The survey of aspects of Jesus' Jewishness continues in chapter four as we listen to the views of Jewish writers like Joseph Klausner, Claude Montefiore, and Martin Buber. Riggans observes that Christians have tended to stress the uniqueness of Jesus to such an extent that they have minimized his Jewish and human context; but both emphases are needed.

Chapter five speaks to misconceptions that pit Old and New Testaments against each other, particularly the playoff of "law" versus "love"; and the views of more Jewish scholars such as Geza Vermes, Hyam Maccoby, and Harvey Falk are explored.

These first five chapters orient us to both the Jewishness of the New Testament and the remarkable views of several Jewish authors. Chapters six through eight go on to offer a historical view of Jewish understandings of Jesus. This part of the book alone is worth the price as it provides a thought-provoking look not only at *what* Jews have believed about Jesus but *why*. For example, the ridicule of Jesus as seen in the medieval lampoon *Toledot Yeshu* is traced in part to the response of powerless Jews to anti-Semitism and social oppression.

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Clearly, Christians who wonder, "Why do Jews think as they do about Jesus?" will find an answer here as will Jewish readers who may know what they think about Jesus, but have never stopped to wonder why they think that way. The story of Jewish attitudes toward Jesus begins with the Talmudic literature, moves on to the first-century liturgy of the Eighteen Benedictions and then to John 9 in the New Testament itself, where we read how followers of Jesus were "put out of the synagogue" (but why not all these in chronological sequence?). Next, the medieval *Toledot Yeshu* is examined along with the forced disputations so well known from this period. The tale continues with the era of the Enlightenment and Emancipation, in which new attitudes towards Jesus and towards religious faith in general place Jesus in the service of "universal" morality. More recently, Jewish scholarship continues to favorably explore the Jewishness of Jesus, though never accepting him as Messiah. To be sure, any Jewish person who thinks there is *a* Jewish stance on Jesus will come away from this survey challenged to rethink his or her assumptions. Of particular value throughout the book are the quotes from the various Jewish authors; and also some too-short comments with regard to anti-missionary literature. Very insightful was the remark that there may well be greater family disruption in the homes of newly-Orthodox *baalei teshuvah* than in the families of Jewish believers in Jesus! I wish some more space had been given to counter-missionary accusations and appropriate responses, if only because such popular presentations unfortunately get a wider hearing than the more favorable Jewish scholarship.

I really have only two points I question, and one less serious. To whet the appetite of Jews for reading the New Testament, a selection of passages from Matthew's Gospel is given in the final chapter. The quotes are from David Stern's Jewish New Testament translation. Unfortunately, at this one point *Jesus Ben Joseph* tends to become self-defeating. Stern's translation was a much-needed attempt to provide a Jewish-oriented approach; but most non-Israeli or non-Orthodox Jews will trip up over "P'rushim" and "Tz'dukim," and many will not recognize even "zedekah" and "Moshe." They may ironically be left with the impression that one needs a knowledge of Hebrew in order to understand the New Testament, or that the Jewishness of Jesus is somehow akin to Orthodox Judaism. Strangely, some of the phraseology avoids the usual synagogue style, e.g., "You are to love Adonai your God with all your heart." Most English-speaking Jews will recall "love the Lord your God" as the usual siddur translation. To facilitate the stated aim of encouraging Jewish people to read the New Testament, my chief suggestion is that in the next edition Riggans either use a different existing version or experiment himself and come up with a translation that non-Israelis and secular Jews can better appreciate.

The second point in question is this. Serving as it does the dual purpose of addressing both Christians and Jews, one finds that sometimes a topic is broached which has significance for one group more than the other. For instance, we have a section wherein it is shown that "law" cannot be played off against "love" inasmuch as the two concepts are found in both Testaments. This however is a Christian distinction, not a Jewish one, and the discussion at this point is directed more to the Christian than to the Jew. This dual thrust is workable; the Gospel can not only be heard but overheard while others are being addressed. I do wonder whether a more single focus on one audience or the other would not have sharpened the edges a bit.

On the whole, this is a fine book that ought to get a wide reading. Riggans is up on his

scholarship and his experience among Jewish people. *Jesus Ben Joseph* is quick enough reading to get through in a couple of sittings. Any Christian who reads it might profitably loan it to a Jewish friend to get his opinion — "Say, I've been reading this book on what Jewish people are thinking about Jesus these days. Would you mind having a look at it and letting me know what you think?" There should also be a use for this book not only by individuals but in Sunday School settings and the author might include study questions in the next edition that correlate with each chapter; this would enhance its value even further.