

Sabbath rest and Sunday worship

We are entitled to both

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Introduction

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER IS TO SHOW that there is a place for Sabbath observance among Christians. Sunday, historically celebrated as a day of worship in memory of the deeds and works of Jesus, did not, until many years later, part company with the Sabbath but was seen as a day in continuity with the Sabbath. Even today, the theological reasons given for the liturgical celebration of Sunday do not rule out the practice of the Sabbath rest.

In this article, we will first discuss the meaning of the biblical injunction to observe the Sabbath, and the sages' understanding of this commandment. Then we will consider the observance of the Sabbath by Jesus and the early followers of Jesus. Following this, we will consider some of the later changes that occurred in various communities of the Church and the development of Sunday as the day to proclaim that 'the crucified Jesus lives for ever with God, as an obligation and a hope for us'.¹ We will conclude with some remarks and suggestions on Sabbath observance.

The Sabbath commandment

God blessed all the days of the week but one day of the week, the seventh day, the Sabbath, 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 and the taste of eternity. For the Jewish people, it is especially the memorial of creation and the mark of its covenant with God.

Genesis 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So

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God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

From this text, we are presented with a paradigm of creation: six days of work and one day of rest. Within the polarity of the six and one the whole drama of creation occurs.

The polarity inherent in the six and one is presented as that between God's work and rest, between God's immanence to creation and God's transcendence from it. Work attests to involvement, while rest guarantees separation and freedom from absorption into creation. God is not totally absorbed by the divine project nor rendered passive by divine rest. Such a dialectic of work and rest energizes both poles.

The dialectic of the six and one is enacted within the time span of a week, which is the biblical unit of reality, not the twenty-four-hour day. Seven, demonstrating as it does an important dimension of wholeness, has always been a significant number both in Judaism and Christianity. For example, as a multiple of the Jubilee year (i.e., seven times seven) it points to the beginning of a new social reality. In the week, the number seven points to an intimate connection between the ordinary holiness of the everyday and the double portion of holiness attached to the Sabbath. While the thrust of the week is towards the holiness of the Sabbath, the Sabbath, in turn, renews the six days of work. Commenting on the institution of the Sabbath, Rosenzweig writes:

For this is the ultimate significance of the Sabbath: it was instituted primarily to commemorate the work of the beginning and thus forms the solid and lasting basis of the spiritual year. On the other hand, its institution was the first sign of revelation within the act of creation itself; though veiled, the revealed name of God appears in the Scriptures for the first time in the words instituting the Sabbath. So, through being at once the sign of creation and the first revelation, it is also, and even mainly, the anticipation of redemption.²

Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made

heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

The commandment to keep holy the Sabbath is one of the ten commandments in the Decalogue. In Genesis 2:1–3, the command to keep holy the Sabbath day is absent. In Genesis we simply contemplate God in a first revelation of the divine self but here is the command to keep holy the Sabbath day. Its observance is to commemorate creation.

The command is twofold. First we are to imitate God in the work week: ‘Six days you shall labour, and do all your work.’ Then, after the six days of work, a time when we have asserted our creative powers, the Sabbath is to be observed: ‘The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work.’ Work, though important, must not totally claim the creature. Ceasing work, even unfinished work, in response to God’s command, is an act of surrender to God and a proclamation of God’s sovereignty over our lives. Obedience to this command works miracles. Jewish people claim that their continued existence down through the ages, despite efforts to destroy them, is a result of Sabbath observance. Abraham Heschel describes the phenomenon in terms of a resurrection for the whole of humankind: ‘Every seventh day a miracle comes to pass, the resurrection of the soul, of the soul of man and of the soul of all things.’³

Exodus 31:12–17

And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to the people of Israel, “You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; every one who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”’

At a time when the Israelites are about to begin construction on the Tabernacle (Exod 30:1—31:11), a work of the greatest importance because it is to be a sign to the people of Israel that God dwells in their

midst, the command to keep holy the Sabbath day is repeated and emphasized. Even work of the highest significance is not permitted to supersede Sabbath observance. The Sabbath is in itself the wedding-ring, the sign of the covenant between God and the people. Through its observance the people will 'know that I, the LORD, sanctify you'. Not only the Israelites will know, but so that 'all nations may know', says Rashi, the great medieval commentator.

Anyone who desecrates the Sabbath is to be put to death. Death may not be immediate, but death's attributes can be detected in loss of life through burn-out, the waning of enthusiasm, chronic fatigue, etc. Following this threat of death for failure to observe the Sabbath, the command is repeated, 'Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord'. And then again, for emphasis, 'Whoever does any work on the Sabbath shall be put to death'.

Sabbath observance is not for a limited time only but for all time and for all generations. Its weekly observance enacts the renewal of the covenant and acknowledges that God is Creator who continues to renew creation today.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labour, 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

This text in Deuteronomy, written at a later date, is a second version of the Ten Commandments. The words are stronger. 'Observe' replaces the 'remember' in the Exodus texts; 'as the Lord your God commanded you' are words not found in Exodus but are rather a rhetorical amplification of them. An additional reason is given for keeping the Sabbath: 'You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and outstretched arm'. Therefore, 'the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day'.

The servant 'as well as you' has an equal right to Sabbath rest. The Sabbath proclaims equality among all. Endowing all with the ability to say 'No' to any form of coercion, the Sabbath is a sanctuary in time forming a new consciousness of the dignity and freedom of each individual. It is the Magna Carta of the liberation of all human beings from the tyranny of other human beings.

In all of the above Sabbath texts, the word 'work' is crucial to understanding, appreciating and observing the Sabbath. The Bible does not give a definition; that was left to the rabbis. The Mishna, compiled and edited at the beginning of the third century, a collection of Jewish law and ethics, ranking second to the Hebrew Bible, lists thirty-nine categories of activities regarded as forbidden work. But rules regarding these categories do not apply when a person's life is in danger. It is considered a duty to do whatever is necessary to save a life. All Sabbath laws are suspended in matters of serious illness or in any situation in which a person's life is at stake. A physician who is called upon to render emergency treatment may do all that is necessary to save a life without regard to Sabbath restrictions.⁴

Underlying the repeated commands to cease work and to keep holy the Sabbath day is God's invitation to divine/human intimacy. The opening verses of Genesis contain the key to the grandeur of the Sabbath. God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. A blessing is something real, it partakes of God, it is the divine presence. Heschel⁵ calls the Sabbath a 'palace in time', 'the presence of God in the world'.

The Sabbath table-song of Rabbi Isaac Luria contains the phrase, 'To come into the entrance-ways of the apple field (a symbolic term for Shekhinah or divine presence).' Why does he refer to the 'entrance-ways'? Does one not come directly into the apple field? The truth is that this apple field is everywhere, as Scripture says: 'The whole earth is filled with His glory!' (Isai 6:3) . . . But the essential task of worship is the opening of this point. On the Sabbath that gate is indeed open, as it is written: 'The gate to the inner courtyard will be closed on the six workdays and open on the Sabbath and the New Moon' (Ezek 46:1).⁶

The following biblical text from Isaiah describes the kind of experience available to those who observe the Sabbath.

Isaiah 58:13-14

If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy

day of the LORD honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

After all the strict commandments to keep holy the Sabbath day, here is the great reward: you shall take delight in the Lord. You will ride upon the heights of the earth, and not feel oppressed by its burdens. You will feed upon the heritage of Jacob and know fullness.

Jesus and the Sabbath

From the New Testament we learn that Jesus was Jewish. He was born of a Jewish woman, of the race 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 was 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. Yet Jesus has often been portrayed as being at enmity with his own people, even that he abolished the Sabbath. Did he, in fact, abolish the Sabbath or was he faithful to Sabbath observance? First, did Jesus observe the Sabbath?

Did Jesus observe the Sabbath?

Several references in the Gospels indicate that Jesus was an observant Jew who observed the Sabbath. In Mark, Jesus arrives on time for the Sabbath: 'and they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught' (1:21). Luke 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' (4:16). And Matthew, knowing the laws surrounding travel on the Sabbath, has Jesus saying, 'Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath' (24:20).

Did Jesus annul the Sabbath?

One Sabbath day, Jesus walks through the grainfields with his disciples, '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?"' (Mk 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?’ (Mk 2:25–26)

What Jesus is doing here is not making up new laws, or changing the Law, but rather, by using arguments from within the Law, he shows that he is motivated by the Law. A precedent exists for his action. Jesus concludes his argument with, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath’ (Mk 2:27–28). Again Jesus is arguing from within the tradition. Like the other rabbis of his time, Jesus uses the same arguments as his contemporaries. A Jewish source reads, ‘The Sabbath is given unto you, not you unto the Sabbath’ (Mekilta to Exod 31:13). And in Maccabees a similar principle governs an analogous situation: ‘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 5:19).

The controversy over the Sabbath

To understand the controversies over the Sabbath, two facts should be kept in mind. First, the Talmud (Sotah 22b) lists seven different categories of Pharisees, ranging from the righteous to the hypocritical. Second, recall that the controversy described in the Gospels 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 a group of 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?’ (Mk 3:3). But they were silent, for they knew that it was permitted to save a life on the Sabbath. The rabbis severely criticized anyone who took time to question whether the Sabbath might be broken for a person dangerously sick in the community, for every delay in such a case was fraught with grave consequences to the patient.⁷

Most scholars today recognize that Jesus observed the Sabbath as did his disciples and early followers. That is, Jesus did not do away with Sabbath observance. To the end of his life on earth 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*⁸

No mention is made in the New Testament that the Sabbath was replaced by Sunday. Jesus' followers continued to observe the Sabbath even after his death. Paul himself did not advocate the abolition of the Sabbath but continued to worship on the Sabbath as 'was his custom' (Acts 17:2).

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE was decisive in weakening the influence of the Jerusalem church with its strict adherence to the precepts of Judaism. As more and more gentiles entered the Church, and as the Church became more and more Hellenized, it progressively lost touch with its Jewish roots and often defined itself 'over against' Judaism. Supersessionism, a doctrine that sees the covenant of God with the Jewish people as broken and the Church replacing it as the new people of God, is evident in the *Epistle of Barnabas*.⁹

But they lost it (the covenant) completely in the following manner, after Moses already had received it, for the Scripture says, and Moses was on the mountain fasting for forty days and forty nights, and he received the covenant from the Lord, stone tablets inscribed by the finger of the Lord's hand. But when they turned to idols, they lost it.¹⁰

This epistle not only declares the brokenness of the covenant of God with the Jewish people but announces its fulfilment in Jesus (14:5) and therefore, the Sabbath, a sign of the old covenant, is replaced by the eighth day, which commemorates the resurrection (15:1-9). This is one of the earlier references to Sunday as the eighth day, meaning the beginning of eternity, which the resurrection inaugurates.¹¹

The anti-Judaism of *Barnabas* was not widespread and hence the abandonment of Sabbath observance was a gradual occurrence which varied in different localities in the West and the East. In fact, for three to four hundred years some type of both Sabbath and Sunday observance existed among the Christians.

Both Hellenistic Egypt and the rest of the Hellenistic Christian East practised the observance of both the Sabbath and Sunday in the fourth century and as late as the fifth century.¹² A canon attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria, the most important episcopal delegate from Egypt to the Council of Nicaea in 325, speaks of the necessity of observing both the Sabbath and Sunday.¹³ Timotheus, Bishop of Alexandria in 381, forbids sexual relations on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day because on these days the spiritual sacrifice of the Eucharist is offered to the Lord.¹⁴ Epiphanius of Salamis (in Cyprus) places the

Sabbath alongside Sunday as a day of Christian gathering.¹⁵ Pseudo-Ignatius (fourth century) writes, 'After keeping the Sabbath, let every lover of Christ celebrate the festival of the Lord's Day – the resurrection day, the royal day, the most excellent of all days'.¹⁶ And in the Apostolic Constitutions:

Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day let them have leisure to go to Church for instruction in piety. We have said that the Sabbath is on account of Creation, and the Lord's day of resurrection.¹⁷

These are strong indications that the Sabbath as well as Sunday were important to the early Christians; they are two separate days, and the Sabbath is not absorbed into the Sunday. That the Sabbath and the Lord's Day were two different days is attested to in modern times by Dom Gregory Dix, who writes:¹⁸

It is still too often assumed that the observance of the Christian Sunday is a continuation on a different day of the Jewish Sabbath . . . but the main ideas underlying the two observances were from the first quite different . . . Sunday was in the primitive Christian view *only* the prescribed day for corporate worship, by the proclamation of the Lord's revelation and the Lord's death till He come . . . there was no attempt whatever in the first three centuries to base the observance of Sunday on the fourth commandment . . . Christians showed no hesitation at all about treating Sunday as an ordinary working day like their neighbours, once they had attended the *synaxis* and Eucharist at the *ecclesia*.

However, over the course of time historical developments hastened the replacement of Sabbath by Sunday. Not least of these was the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. After that date Jerusalem lost its centrality in church government. Ecclesiastical authority passed over to Caesarea and thence to Rome, which became powerful from the fourth and fifth centuries, particularly with the accession of Pelagius to the papacy. When, in March 321, a decree of Constantine proscribed work on Sunday, the first such edict to be enacted, the movement toward replacement of Sabbath with Sunday was further strengthened. This replacement is clear in the commentary of Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea on Psalm 92:

Through the new covenant the word [of God] has, therefore, transferred the Sabbath celebration to the light's rising and has given us a type of the true rest in the saving day of the Lord, the first day of 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.¹⁹

Sabbath observance diminishes further and, additionally, is condemned by certain conciliar decrees. Increasingly, the Church loses touch with its Jewish roots and the anti-Judaism found in the early writings of the Fathers develops into the vicious anti-Semitism which was partly responsible for the Holocaust.

A new paradigm

Since the *Shoah*, the Church has taken steps to mend the breach between herself and the Jewish people. In the document *Nostra aetate*, the Church condemned all forms of anti-Semitism and racism. It redefined its relationship with Judaism not 'over against' the Jewish faith, but rather in 'complementarity' with it, emphasizing the origins of the Church in Judaism, the Jewish identities of Jesus, Mary and the Apostles, and the Church's ongoing nourishment 'from that good olive tree', the Jewish tradition, on to which the Church has been grafted. In Mainz, in a dramatic statement before a Jewish audience, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that God's covenant with the Jewish people has never been revoked and that the Jews 'remain most dear to God – for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues'.²⁰

In the light of the new relationship of the Church with the Jewish people, we have undertaken this discussion of the Sabbath and Jesus' relationship to the Sabbath as well as that of the Church to the Sabbath and Sunday throughout the years. We have discussed three different moments of Sabbath and Sunday observance which can be summarized as follows:

- Sabbath observance: Jesus and his disciples observed the Sabbath.
- Sabbath and Sunday observance: The early Church observed the Sabbath as a day of rest according to the biblical injunction and Sunday, known as the Lord's day, was a day of corporate worship to proclaim the Lord's revelation and the Lord's death until he comes. Once they had worshipped, the Christians showed no hesitation at all about treating Sunday as an ordinary working day like their neighbours.

- Sunday: The first extant Christian work claiming that the Sabbath has been transferred to Sunday is the commentary on Psalm 92 by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (see above). Of note, however, is that Eusebius may not have had the Jewish Sabbath in mind in his transfer of the Sabbath to Sunday, because he does not refer to the commandment of the Sabbath in the Decalogue. Nevertheless, elements of Sabbath observance were absorbed into Sunday, and Sunday became viewed as the eighth day, the day in commemoration of Jesus' resurrection and the new creation brought about because of him.

From this brief summary of these three different moments in history, and in the light of the Church's new relationship with the Jewish people, in continuity with rather than 'over against', we emphasize that *fulfilment* does not mean abrogation of the Law but rather *continuity* with it. Given the example of Jesus' observance of the Sabbath, and the diversity of opinions in the early Church, as well as the fact that the Sabbath was celebrated by Christians into the fourth century, a strong rationale is given for observing the Sabbath rest. As well, there is theological cause to celebrate Sunday as a day of joyful celebration of the mighty works of God in Jesus of Nazareth. Celebrations of the biblical notion of Sabbath, as a day of rest, and Sunday, as the Lord's Day, gives witness to the 'now' and the 'not yet'.

Keep holy the Sabbath day

In this millennium year we need to recall the words of Pope John Paul II: 'In the dialogue with other religions, the church gives pride of place to the Jewish people, our "elder brothers and sisters" . . . There is much that Christians and Jews share together, and it is vital now that Christians should learn more of that common heritage.'²¹ Hence, while remembering the strong theological reasons for the celebration of Sunday as the Lord's Day, let us reclaim the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11). In our reclamation of the Sabbath let us turn to Jewish tradition.

Stop work

The first requirement and the predominant feature of the Sabbath is cessation from labour and all business activity. 'If you refrain . . . from pursuing your own business on my holy day . . . if you honour it, not going your own ways, not pursuing your business, nor speaking of it . . .' (Isai 58:13). That is, we are to rid our minds of any preoccupation with our weekday professions, and we are to go even

further and not even allow ourselves to speak of our business preoccupation. All has been surrendered into the loving hands of God.

In the event that one must work, the minimum requirement is to remember the Sabbath and long to observe it (Exod 20:8). This longing is expressed by some symbol such as a white cloth on the table.

Released from daily concerns, the mind and body are freed to turn towards God, to study the Word of God, to make social contacts, and to delight in good food and conversation.

Light Sabbath lights

Candlelight adds to the spirit of peace and tranquillity. Candles should be lit before the Sabbath begins so that entry into the Sabbath is on God's time, not ours.

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 *honour* and *delight*, as it is written: call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honourable (Isai 58:13).'

What is meant by honour? 'We honour the Sabbath by wearing clean clothes. One must not wear weekday apparel on the Sabbath . . . One should spread the Sabbath table to welcome the Sabbath . . . so too, one should set the table at the end of Sabbath . . . in order to honour the Sabbath both at its entrance and departure.'²²

What is meant by 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 one spends for the Sabbath and the more one prepares tasty food, the more praise one deserves . . . One should eat three meals on the Sabbath, in the evening, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon.'²³

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.'²⁴ The opening of the Sabbath must begin with words of praise of God, and the day must likewise close with words of praise. Psalms, hymns and words of Torah are appropriate means of praise and should be part of the meals.

In conclusion, in this paper I have demonstrated that there is a place for Sabbath observance among Christians. At sundown on Saturday night, as Christians bid farewell to the Sabbath, they also bid welcome to Sunday, the Lord's day. The blessing which closes the Sabbath is also a blessing which welcomes the Lord's day, from *kodesh lekodesh*, from holiness to holiness. While our observance of Sabbath is a foretaste of eternity in time, Sunday worship is a significant witness to the life and the hope we have received in Christ. In our observance of Sabbath and our worship on the Lord's day, we pray and hope for the day when all humankind will be one (Rom 14), for that day when the Lord will be one and God's name will be one (Zech 14:9).

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NOTES

- 1 Hans Küng, *Judaism: between yesterday and tomorrow* (ET, Crossroad, 1992), p 337.
- 2 Franz Rosenzweig, *The star of redemption*, trans. from the second edition (1930) by W. W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p 314.
- 3 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: its meaning for modern man* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1951), p 83.
- 4 Hayim H. Donin, *To be a Jew: a guide to Jewish observance in contemporary life* (Basic Books, a Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1971), p 96.
- 5 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: its meaning for modern man*, pp 14, 60.
- 6 Arthur Green, trans and interpreter, *The language of truth: the Torah commentary of the Sefat Emet* (Jew. Pub. Society, Philadelphia 1998), p xxxv.
- 7 Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of rabbinic theology* (Schocken Books, 1961), p 152.
- 8 I am grateful to Marianne Dacy NDS, doctoral candidate, University of Sydney, Australia, for so generously sharing with me the results of her research into early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism although I alone am responsible for what I have written.
- 9 While this epistle is attributed to the apostle Barnabas it is more likely to be a document written by a Christian of Alexandria who wrote at some time between 70 and 150. Its Greek text was first discovered entire in the Codex Sinaiticus. It contains a strong attack on Judaism. See *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*, third edition (1997), ed E. A. Livingstone, p 159.
- 10 *Barnabas* 4:6c-7 from *Barnabas and the Didache*, trans Robert A. Kraft (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), vol 3 of *The apostolic Fathers: a new translation and commentary*, ed Robert M. Grant.

11 Justin Martyr, who speaks of the eighth day in connection with circumcision, says this day does not cease to be called the first. See *Dialogue with Trypho* 41:4. See also Enoch 33:2. Later in the third century Cyprian speaks of the eighth day, calling it the day after the sabbath, the day of resurrection when the Lord gives spiritual circumcision. See Cyprian, *Epistula* 64:4.

In the fourth century, Ambrose developed the thought of Cyprian, calling the eighth the day of the perfect circumcision that is passed down to all humankind. See Ambrose, *Epistula* 31 (44) *ad Orontianum*. In his commentary on the Psalms Ambrose introduced other biblical witnesses for the number eight. See *Commentary on the Psalms* 43, 62. See also Hosea 3:1-2; and Micah 5:4-5. Athanasius, in the fourth century, called seven a symbol of the Old Testament and eight a symbol of the New Testament. See in *De Sabbatis et Circumcisione* 1 and 4. Augustine has the same thought. See *City of God* XVI:26.

12 See Robert A. Kraft, 'Some notes on Sabbath observance in early Christianity', *St Andrew's University Seminar Studies* 3 (1965), pp 18-33.

13 See Canon 92, as translated from the Arabic text, *Canons of Alexandria: the one hundred and seven Canons in the Arabic translation from the Coptic version of the Greek*, by Michael, Bishop of Tinnis, of the eleventh century, ed and trans W. Riedel and W. E. Crum (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1973), reprint of the London edition of 1904, p 59.

14 *Responsa Canonica* PG 33: 1305.

15 The *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis, trans Frank Williams (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), Nag Hammadi Series XXXV, ed Martin Krause, James M. Robinson and Frederick Wisse.

16 Pseudo-Ignatius, *Magnesian* 9:3-4, ed Funk-Diekam. See Robert Kraft, 'Some notes', p 23.

17 *Apostolic Constitutions* viii. 33. 2. See *The Apostolic Constitutions*, ed with notes James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1870), Ante-Nicene Christian Library, vol viii.

18 Gregory Dix, *The shape of the liturgy* (2nd edition Adams and Charles Black, 1975), p 336.

19 *Codex Justinianus* III.12.9 (*de feris*) 3, cited from R. Rordorf, *Sunday, the history of the day of rest and worship in the earliest centuries of the Christian Church* (London: SCM Press, 1962).

20 The 'covenant which has never been revoked' was explicitly emphasized by Pope John Paul II in the presence of official Jewish representatives in Mainz in 1980 and was quoted in the Vatican 'Notes' of 1985.

21 Pope John Paul in a speech in Rome, 28 April 1999.

22 Philip Birnbaum (ed), *Maimonides' Mishneh Torah* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., c. 1964, 1967), p 74.

23 *Ibid.*, p 75.

24 *Ibid.*, p 73.