

THE SABBATH, HOLY DAYS AND THE SOUL IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

The Culture and Faith of Early Christianity

Modern readers often assume that Early Christianity is a collection of only one or two cultures when, in reality, the situation was quite syncretic. Today there are various attempts to recover original Christianity from those who profess to have an understanding of original Hebrew Christianity. They often attempt to use a purist model of Hebraic only interpretations of the biblical text without regard to intercultural pollination which made the Middle East a collection of state sub-cultures into regional culture. For example, the Septuagint, LXX 70, was translated from Hebrew to Greek in Alexandria, Egypt. The Book of Daniel has Hebrew and Aramaic sections that have been edited for a modern reading. About 80 percent of New Testament scholarship believes that the underpinning of much of the New Testament corpus of literature was Aramaic translated into Greek for the widest possible circulation while other NT writings such as the general epistles of Paul and the writings of John as well as other NT writers are referring to the Hebrew scriptures and then re-applying them in the Greek language. Many New Testament critics in Eastern traditions attribute the Gospel of Mark to be written for the Coptic brethren in the land of Egypt.

The Egyptian Recension and Its Influence on the Biblical Text

From the days of the murder of Gedeliah during Jeremiah's ministry, massive trade routes with Egypt continued to be used for Jewish trade and migration. Coptic Christianity would flourish from this when the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Alexandria during the first century and a quarter of the people of Egypt were Christian by ca. 325 and a half by 400.¹ Most scholars believe the Greek text called

Alexandrian, *Alexandrian* papyri (chronologically between Vaticanus and P 75)**2a,b**

probably began the textual tradition of the Coptic Church in Egypt.

Among Christian documents which during the second century either originated in Egypt or circulated there among both the orthodox and the Gnostics are numerous apocryphal gospels, acts, epistles and apocalypses. Some of the more noteworthy are the Gospel according to the Egyptians, the Gospel of Truth, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Kerygma of Peter, the Acts of John, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistle of the Apostles and the Apocalypse of Peter. There are also fragments of exegetical and dogmatic works composed by Alexandrian Christians, chiefly Gnostics, during the second century. We know, for example, of such teachers as Basilides and his son Isidore, and of Valentius, Ptolemaeus, Heracleon and Pantaenus. All but the last-mentioned were unorthodox in one respect or another. In fact, to judge by the comments made by Clement of Alexandria, almost every deviant Christian sect was represented in Egypt during the second century; Clement mentions the Valentinians, the Basilidians, the Marcionites, the Peratae, the Ophites, the Simonians, and the Eutychites. What proportion of Christians in Egypt during the second century were orthodox is not known.**3**

Rev. Carlo Martini has stated, "But we should remember that the only MSS surviving from the first centuries are in fact all Egyptian."**4**

Much debate currently rages in regards as to how many of the themes from the mystery cults were borrowed and reinterpreted for liturgical use in church worship as well as for the spreading of the gospel during the period of the Kerygma from circa A.D. 30 to A.D. 50. During this period, a minority of scholars suggest that the apostle Paul was trained in the mystery schools during the time he reports of his training that he received from the Lord personally in Arabia. Some of their argument comes from Paul's use of the word *mysteria* to the Ephesian elders. However, he never mentions the virgin birth which was very popular in the mystery schools. It was not the gospel teachings that gave Paul his authority but rather it was his encounter with Our Lord on the road to Damascus. Some scholars feel Paul didn't know Jesus personally but Paul refutes this as the basis of his apostleship. Thus, the focal point of the Pauline corpus is the resurrection of the Messiah as our Captain who will lead us through our death,

burial and resurrection just as the ancient Egyptian schools waited for in the Isis cult.

This cultured, educated Jew, who did not know Jesus personally, identified Jesus as a savior figure of the hellenistic type, a dying/rising god, such as Osiris in the Isis cult, popular in Egypt.⁵

The popular notion that the writers of the New Testament corpus of literature did nothing but revise the Messianic legacy of Our Lord as well as reinvent the paganistic notion of the dying/rising god and incorporate it into the resurrection narratives to pull the world's greatest hoax upon the unbelieving world is a falacy of concept. Literary techniques used by any Near Eastern writer allows them to quote widely and freely in their use of literary and historical data. It was their literary practice to include contemporary and historical events in the narrative so the new revelation would have a familiar order while bringing to light new theological truths.

Gentile Christianity through the auspices of the former Hellenistic and Greco thoughts forms helped phase out almost every remaining strain of Hebrew thought and practice within the first century A. D. due to the fact so many Gentile churches were raised and the sophisticated schools of Neoplatonic Philosophy would govern the debates over theological concepts in the first four centuries of the common era. Different churches in various geographical areas would make these theological shifts from Hebraic thought forms to the Neoplantonic schools at different times and over different theological issues. By the fifth century, different churches in Rome and Alexandria shared in different mystery traditions. Socrates Scholasticus (c. 440) reports,

Although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this. The Egyptians in the neighborhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebais, hold their religious assemblies on the sabbath, but do not participate of the mysteries in the manner usual among Christians, in general; for after having eaten and satisfied themselves with food of all kinds, in the evening making their

offerings they partake of the mysteries.**6**

The Egyptian church did not follow the Roman tradition in making the Jewish sabbath a fast day but rather made it a day of feasting on Sabbath and Sunday. This fact alone shows that early Christianity was not in complete conformity in regards to fasting or related sabbath issues. Furthermore, the facts also indicate that Egyptian monasticism would later influence some of the Roman churchmen by the fourth century A.D.

The revived respect for the Sabbath is clear in *The Lausiatic History*, written by Palladius after he traveled from Palestine in 388 and spent 12 years living among the monks in Egypt. He found monks observing both Sabbath and Sunday. Some celebrated communion on Sabbaths and Sundays. Some monks spent the five days alone, congregating for worship only on sabbaths and Sundays. And two monks in different places fasted five days a week, enjoying food only on Sabbaths and Sundays. (Augustine said in 396 that many monks in monasteries ate only on Sabbaths and Sundays. Palladius's observations are important, for the revival of interest in the Sabbath that begins around the middle of the fourth century coincides with the spread of monasticism out of Egypt about that same time.**7**

Among the School of the Poor in Jerusalem were those who stayed with the Jewish practice of a 24 hour sabbath rest, while the church at Rome reduced the sabbath rest to a fast day by the fourth century, A. D.,

That the early Christians adopted this Jewish custom is implied, for instance by Augustine's rhetorical remark, when referring to the Sabbath, he says: "Did not the tradition of the elders prohibit fasting on one hand, and command rest on the other?". Further support can be seen in the opposition to the Sabbath fast by Christians in the east and in some important Western areas, such as in Milan at the time of Ambrose (d. A.D. 397), and in certain churches and regions of North Africa. The transformation of the Sabbath from a day of feasting and joy to a day of fasting and mourning, as we shall see, represents a measure taken by the Church of Rome. . . .**8**

It has been assumed by traditional historians that the early Sabbath rest was only employed by Christians of the original Hebrew church in Jerusalem. However, modern historical analysis shows the Sabbatarian movement of Jesus entitled "The Way" had many adherents throughout the entire known world. Let us consider the words of

Flavius Josephus,

“Nay, further, the multitude of mankind itself have had a great inclination of a long time to follow our religious observances; for there is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come . . .” (Josephus, *Flavius Josephus Against Apion*, **Bk II**, paragraph 40; cited by M’Cathie, *Notes and Queries on China and Japan* [edited by Dennys], vol. 4, o. 7-8, p. 100)

Another assumption that permeates modern Christian thought to this day is that these early Christian saints were only following the customs that were adopted from contemporary Judaism of apostolic times. However, with closer examination, we see the emphasis had changed from a national application by Old Testament Israel to an application of worshipping Jesus. Athanasius affirms the fact that the early church held religious assemblies on the Sabbath and later states that they were not infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. Epiphanius says the same. (*Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol. II, Book XX, chap 3, Sec. 1 66.1137, 1138.)

At this juncture, let us turn our attention to the known groups who worshipped in the Middle East and examine what the ancient texts reveal about their theology before we interpret specific New Testament passages regarding the transition of biblical Christianity to our present Gentile model.

The Ebionites

Some scholars such as J. L. Teicher of Cambridge, have advanced the notion that the Essenes of Qumran became the Ebionites. They also attempt to link the Ebionites to Torah observance, Judaistic teachings, and the message of the prophets with their ascetical rules of communal life, practices of baptism and other washings and converted to Christianity. According to Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “we have no evidence for this.”⁹ The reason for this confusion regarding the Ebionite identity is due to the fact

both had some sort of communal meal, bread and wine were used at Qumran while the Ebionites used bread, salt and water and celebrated the Christian Eucharist and, as Epiphanius tells us, practiced poverty.¹⁰

Another false assumption is that the Ebionites represent or at least can be related to primitive Jewish-Christians;

It is true that both stressed the importance of the observance of the law, but they differed radically from each other on their view of the nature of Christ. The Ebionites' Christology was in fact like that of the Gnostics, regarding Christ as a plain and common man "who was the fruit of the intercourse of a man with Mary." Such a Christological error can hardly be attributed to the Primitive Jewish-Christians. Therefore, on account of such a fundamental doctrinal difference the Ebionites, as well noted by J. Danielou, "should not be confused purely and simply with the heirs of the first, Aramaic-speaking, Christians who fled to Transjordan after the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70" Marcel Simon, in fact, argues on the basis of information provided by Epiphanius that "the sect of the Ebionites appears to be a result of a confluence between original Jewish-Christian and a pre-Christian Jewish sect."¹¹

Modern scholarship has discovered some documentation regarding the Ebionite movement called the Gospel of the Ebionites. Epiphanius quotes their gospel in *Against Heresies*, XXX.16:5, "I have come to destroy sacrifices; and if you do not stop making sacrifices, the wrath (of God) will not leave you".¹² This statement seems to be in agreement with Messianic Judaism as well as the Qumran covenantors due to the common theme in the Old Testament, "I desire love, not sacrifice." This theme is later developed by Jesus and Paul where Jesus states, the time is coming and now is when they shall not worship in Jerusalem and he is seeking such to worship Him in spirit and in truth (emphasis added) and Paul's letter to the Romans (16:1) takes this theme a bit further by stating we are to commit our bodies as a "living sacrifice" as he is attempting to reconcile these theological misunderstandings.

These Ebionites rejected the writings of Moses, especially the requirement of sacrifice and the use of flesh. they acknowledged only the Gospel of Matthew (which they called the Gospel of the Hebrews), and they rejected Paul as a

deceiver. Baptism was part of their practice, and they took the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper annually, using unleavened bread and water. They also observed the Jewish Sabbath and required circumcision. In other practices, they followed the Essene Ebionites.**13**

Further evidence exists in the New Testament text in Paul's writing to Timothy which speaks directly against the esthetic practice of forbidding to marry as well the practice of using only water in religious rites and ceremonies whereas he prescribes wine in the use of the Lord's supper as well as for medicinal purposes. Many Jewish and esthetic groups rejected the Pauline corpus because they felt Paul was giving the things of God to "dogs" or Gentiles. This same argument against Pauline canonization is even used by the Muslims by whom he is considered to be a traitor. Evidently after Paul's conversion, he faced a great of opposition both personally and theologically.

The Nazarenes

One sect who did continue in Jewish practices under a Messianic heading in the first centuries were the Nazarenes. Their biblical history is found in Acts 24:5- 26:32 where Paul was accused of being a ringleader by Tertullus as Paul was brought before Felix, Festus and Agrippa to stand trial where he declares, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, not yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all." (see Acts 25:8) Epiphanius testifies of them,

The Nazarenes do not differ in any essential thing from them [ie., the Jews], since they practice the custom and doctrines prescribed by the Jewish law, except that they believe in Christ. They believe in the resurrection of the dead and that the universe was created by God. They preach that God is one and that Jesus Christ is his Son. They are very learned in the Hebrew language. They read the law. . . Therefore they differ both from the Jews and from the Christians; from the former, because they believe in Christ; from the true Christians because they fulfill till now Jewish rites as the circumcision, the Sabbath and others.**14**

Its obvious the early Messianic believers had great difficulty in grasping the

transition between Old and New Covenants that was unfolding before their very eyes.

The writer of Hebrews states, “ The Old Covenant is waxing away” (Heb 9) with the conversion of some Jewish households into Hebraic Christianity. Ireneus in *Against Heresies* 1:26, states the following in regards to the Nazarenes,

They practice circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are enjoined by the Law, and are so Judaic in their mode of life that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.**15**

Jewish Christianity had many divergent opinions just as the Gentile church would employ. Many of the Messianic Jewish groups did not embrace the virgin birth as we have indicated. They did not wish to be identified with the mystery cults in their day.

The Elkasaites

The Elkasaites claimed they had received revelations by an angel who came in the company of a female of similar dimensions identified as the Holy Spirit (the word for spirit in Hebrew, *ruah*, is feminine). They also believe that re-baptism and a confession in this new revelation could remit even the grossest of sins. They observed circumcision and the Law of Moses and were involved in magic and astrology. They denied the virgin birth as well as many other Jewish groups. They rejected the major and minor prophets and denied the Pauline corpus altogether.

They believe that Christ had been born in the ordinary way, but that he had been incarnate before and would be incarnate again on future worlds. (This was a Pythagorean doctrine called *metempsychosis*).**16**

An interesting historical observation is the Syrian church at Odessa would continue to worship the Holy Spirit as a feminine entity from the document entitled *The Odes of Solomon* which would influence the Eastern Church for centuries to come.**16a**

The Manichaeans

Beyond Syria, in the land of Persia at the center of philosophical and religious supremacy was Persian Christianity. On one side was Manichaeism which may have contained concepts of Egyptian theology and on the other side was Zoroastrianism. These would have a religious clash and begin a great period of religious persecution of the churches of that region which was recorded in the Syriac Act of the Martyrs and called this the first persecution of Christians in Persia. This was due to the influence of a great teacher named, Mani, who claimed to be an apostle of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Debates over Modalism grew out the teachings of Mani and would effect the verdict of subsequent church councils. Many of his teachings sounded Christian because of their terminology but they employed a mixture of heathenism with Christianity **17a-c** which may have led to the first great persecution. These persecutions would continue until the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. During the period of 276-293 A.D, the Manichaean heretics were attacked for a second time by Kartir and Mobeds. The time of this persecution was during the reign of Mani's successor, Sisin.

The Nestorians

A further fracturing of eastern and western churches would occur through the council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 where the Church of the East was declared anathema and the gulf would continue to widen over the expulsion of Nestorius whom the Persian considered to be a hero and a martyr as well as through the Council at Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The Church of East never accepted the verdict of the Ephesian Council and they may have been right because, according to some historians, the council's legality is questionable. Other modern Church of the East historians claim

Nestorius was not a monophysite theologian but his followers later attributed those teachings to him.**18** This matter continues to be a topic of much debate between Eastern and Western churches to this very day. **19** One Christological point is clear, Nestorius truly believed in the deity of Our Lord Jesus Christ through the doctrine of “deity by *kenosis*”, God “emptying” himself and being born in the likeness of men (Phil 2:7). Then the “exaltation” of man is accomplished. This theological view is as old as Origen and Athanasius and was begun by Monotanus (circa A. D. 155) who claimed to be the paraclete. His proclamations began the controversy over John 14 recording of the high priestly prayer and the giving of the paraclete to the church.. **20** However, there may be a problem with the Nestorian theology as concluded by A. Grillmeier. . .

was neither a theology of a two-headed Christ, nor of a Jesus who earned his way into Godhead, but rather a failure to take the church’s ancient tradition of the *communicatio idiomatum* seriously enough.**21**

The western church would maintain the descent of the Holy Spirit would be from the Father and the Son in a unified purpose. The monophysite and Nestorian churches of the east would hold to the descent of the Holy Spirit from the Father through the Son to the congregations. It is this historical controversy that led to universal theological schisms between east and west over the issues of the substance of the Holy Spirit and the functions of the Godhead. Modern theologians such as Carl Barth believe that God is an ontological trinity who is free to appear to us in an economic form of being.**22**

Meanwhile, the monophysite churches of the East, which originally held the belief in conditional immortality,**23** had been growing at a steady rate with as many as 120 ships yearly sailing for India. Moffett cites Strabo as follows.

Strabo did not exaggerate when he reports that on a visit to Egypt about the time of Christ he found as many as 120 ships a year sailing for Indian from the Egyptian head of the Red Sea. Among the surviving documents of the first

century, in fact, is a mariners' manual, *The Periplus of the Erythraian Sea*, written by an Egyptian Greek about A.D. 60, which corresponds closely to the traditional date for Thomas's mission (between 50 and 72). With the precision of one who had made the voyage himself, the author of the *Periplus* describes the route in detail, with a wealth of helpful hints on wind and tides, harbors and flourishing markets, and local tribes and rulers.**24**

Notice the trade routes which existed between Egypt via the Red Sea to the nations of India. Could trade routes such as these have helped to establish the Egyptian theological schools for the training of Indian priests in Egyptian traditions as discussed by B.J. Wilkenson?

In spite of the diversity of the eastern churches whether Orthodox or Nestorian, a Hebrew church flavor still continues to thrive in their history and liturgy which is their legacy from which the Western Church has much to learn.

The wide application of Hebraic traditions is evident in the early church which extended from Britain to the Far East before the domination of the Roman Empire would take place. These Hebraic literary traditions were much more wide spread than traditional scholars have believed. **25**

According to a tradition cited by Bishop Papias in the mid-second century C. E., the Jew Levi, who later became the apostle Matthew, compiled the "Logia" or sayings of Jesus and edited them "in the Hebrew language." Eusebius also cites the church father Irenaeus as saying: "Matthew published a Gospel for the Hebrews in their own language." And also Jerome, when studying in Antioch about 380, compared the Greek and Latin versions of the Gospels with the Hebrew text which he had found among the Ebionites of Aleppo.

Epiphanius writes that the "Nazoraioi," the second Jewish-Christian sect, "carefully cherished the Hebrew language" in which they read both the old Testament and the Gospel of Matthew. Eusebius relates that Pantaenus found the Hebrew Matthew in use among the people of India. . .**26**

Debates in modern scholarship range from a Hebrew origin of the Gospel of Matthew due to its Jewish emphasis and content but the majority of scholars feel that Aramaic was the original language due to its sociological use in Judian society while first century Hebrew was mainly spoken in the Hebrew Synagogues during liturgical

worship.**27**

There is great unity of spirit between Egyptian and Syriac Christianity. The Syrian churches rejoice in the fact that their language is the closest to the Aramaic spoken by Jesus.**28**

The original language that underlies the Greek recension of Matthew is no doubt Semitic and the Hebraic thought forms would have still been transmitted to Greek the receiver language, through the auspices of the Aramaic tongue.**29**

Coptic Greek which originated in Egypt was commonly used in the early Coptic Church where they employed a *Logia* tradition of the "Sayings of Jesus" , 114 of which are recorded in the Gospel of Thomas. In this tradition, there was also a Greek/Coptic edition of Matthew's Gospel which dated from the first and second century A.D. and it should be noted that when Origen lived in Egypt, he drew up a compilation of the Old Testament Canon consisting of twenty-two books.**30** Both Hebrew and Egyptian *Logia* were believed to be from oral traditions. The Egyptian traditions are held by many scholars to be older than many western textual traditions. **31**

Seven Christian copies of Old Testament texts have been attributed to the second century, and four copies of the New Testament texts. Depending as they do upon paleographic comparison with other papyri, the datings must remain vague. But given that a half-dozen other biblical texts are assigned to the second or third century, and dozens more to the third, the general conclusion is clear. The presence of an active Christian community in Egypt is well established by a strong wave of biblical fragments that precede the emergence of early Christianity in the mid to late third century.**32**

However, some Messianic Jewish sects did believe the report of Matthew's gospel that they felt was ostensibly Jewish and therefore, they accepted the virgin birth of the Jewish Messiah.

In their description of the sects they considered Judaizing the church fathers reported that they did not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, but they thought he was a human being like other men. They kept the law just as other Jews did, to the extent of observing Jewish days and keeping the Sabbath, even if they also observed the Lord's Day as well. They circumcised their males, practiced ritualistic abulations, and believed that the Kingdom of God or Christ would take

place here on earth, centered around Jerusalem. Some of them believed Jesus had not yet been raised from the dead, and many accepted only the Gospel of Matthew as authoritative. Some believed in angels, and some worshipped facing Jerusalem. (see also note p. 19-2)**33**

It appears the Nazarenes continued in their attempts to place Christ as the Son of God under Jewish monotheism. No exact Christological formula has been found in early Jewish Christianity but from the preceding quote we do see every attempt by the School of the Poor at Jerusalem to retain aspects of Jewish monotheism. However, bible scholars should not assume there existed a Jewish purism but rather a syncretism from the blending and reinterpretation of old pagan rites which inter woven within the matrix of Judaism from which Christianity borrowed.

If the old rites were softened into sacraments for the mystical, the hope was till that something would really be effected by them: the devotee would be changes into a Bacchus, a divine being. He would be raised from spiritual death, like the seeds, and -- for there is good reason to assume that the hope included this also -- would be born again as a result of fertilization by the divine fluid which had been earlier been represented by the lether phallus of the primitive rites, or in the orgiastic drinking of wine. the new conception did not entirely replace the old. The old survived, and still ruvives in rural fertility festivals in certain localities. But intelligent men were seeing deeper possibilites -- men of sufficient breadth of view to see the values in the religious ideas of other peoples, and so to be inclined to syncretism. **34**

These new interpretations from the old myths were to bring to new reality elements of truth which the old myths didn't contain. So for Jesus to be seen as a fulfillment of Bacchus was to be the firstborn of many brethen. (Rom 8:29) who would also pronounce judgment upon this "evil and adulterous generation" (Mat 12:39-41) which is a type beginning with the New Year's judgment beginning with the blast of the shofar bringing in the Sabbath rest with the final enthronement of Yahweh. **35** Both the Early Church and Judasim had differing schools of thought regarding the question if the Messiah would be God's agent in the world to come or Yahweh Himself manifesting Himself as Savior. Some scholars have stated the Savior-God concept was only in

Greek tradition and not a Hebraic concept. However, in the Deuterocanonical traditions of Esther's prayer (Esther 15:3, Greek Version, NRSV, Oxford Annotated), the concept is present. But the earliest Jewish formula of monotheism that emerges in history is the great Jewish Monad. The nature of the great Jewish Monad came to be viewed with a triadic nature.**36**

Yet later on, especially in the century of the trinitarian councils, the lack of a trinitarian creedal formula in the NT was felt to be a serious impediment. An attempt to remove this impediment is the so-called '*Comma Johanneun*' - an addition to the I John 5:7f which originated in Spain in the fourth century. The original text of I John 5:7f dealt with the unanimity of the witness of the Spirit, the water and the blood (ch 64). This original form of the text is to be found in the Egyptian and Syrian manuscripts, in the earliest Fathers and the whole of the East.**37**

The church in Odessa worshipped the Great Triad with a feminine spirit while the Gospel of the Egyptians declared from Alexandria by Clement, "I have come to destroy the works of the female" which was a commentary on Matt 19:12. (*Miscellanies* III.9:63).**38** Historians are increasingly aware of the diversity that existed in early Christianity throughout the Middle East. This is not to mention the differing canonical lists which were used in the formation of each community's canon which was standardized by that local church community. While the School of the Poor in Jerusalem did not accept the deuterocanonical Jewish writings as the Jews in the diaspora did, the same canonical problems were inherited by the early church from Judaism. The subject of contention that has always confronted the people of God throughout the centuries is how to determine the point of corruption in the canonical process. The Jewish sects, like the Sadducees, would hold the point of corruption at anything beyond the Torah and would therefore reject the writings of the major prophets as well the sacred writings, whereas the Pharisees would accept all of these documents as being authoritative and would hold the point of corruption at the

beginning of the Messianic Jewish church's canon which Christians called the Greek Bible or the New Testament. And as we have seen, some Jewish groups would only accept the Gospel of Matthew and would see the Pauline corpus as at the point of canonical corruption. Then in later centuries, when the Arabic world be under the conquest of the Muslims, there a different point of corruption would be established under the auspices of Mohammed.

Many western Christian historians have generally accepted the view that Jewish Christianity was "gentilized" into a western tradition very early on in the Christian tradition. But new textual and historical information now reveal the Hebrew Church of the East as well as the North African traditions in Ethiopia and the Coptic Egyptian churches did not just fade away and cease to exist as Western Christian traditions would grow to preeminence.

The world of the Hebrew bible clearly has much in common with African cultures, in the importance placed on dreams and visions, and the felt need to establish boundaries with ritual prohibitions. Many modern African prophetic churches keep the sabbath holy, and adopt dietary and other prohibitions similar to those laid down in Leviticus, as the Ethiopians do.³⁹

And the Sabbath-Sunday controversy would not materialize in Africa until the followers of Tekla Haymanot based on Shoa and those of Ewostatewos, based in Tigre, whereas in the west, the Sabbath-Sunday controversy would have occurred much earlier during the reign of Hadrian with the final expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem. The African also maintained a strong tradition of eliminating the deification of pagan deities while maintaining their social framework given from former world religions that would provide them with that voice from within which would lead them into the fullness of truth contained within the life, death, burial and resurrection narrative.

Sykes, in a thoughtful reflection on these issues writes, 'the contestants are held together by the conviction that the contest has a single origin in a single albeit internally complex performance. . .the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

Contrary to current practices, the Eastern church traditions developed and maintained a strong emphasis on Hebraic worship styles which continued to be practiced and were re-established at the Council of Laodicea in A.D. 365.

Italy and the East. 'It was the practice generally of the Eastern churches; and some churches of the West . . . For in the Church of Milan; . . . it seems that Saturday was held in far esteem . . . Not that the Eastern churches, or any of the rest which observed that day, were inclined to Judaism; but they came together on the Sabbath day, to worship Jesus Christ the Lord of the Sabbath.' *History of the Sabbath*, part 2, pages 73, 74 paragraph 5. Dr. Heylyn, London: 1636.

Council of Laodicea. AD 365. 'Canon 16--On Saturday the Gospels and other portions of the Scripture shall be read aloud.' 'Canon 29--Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day.' Hefele's *Councils*, volume 2, page 6.

The Council of Laodicea was an Eastern gathering which represented Greek Orthodox attitude. An Eastern Church was revising the celebration of the Lord's Supper on the Sabbath at the about the time this council was held. The Council of Laodicea attests to the re-establishment of Sabbath observance in the East. This was one factor which led to the split in Eastern and Western branches of Christianity.**41**

Throughout church history anti-Semitic pressure has driven the Gentile church to separate itself from its Hebrew roots in many theological areas. We have overlooked the original size and influence of the original Hebraic church which reached from India and China in the East, across North Africa to Egypt where Sabbath celebrations continued along with Sunday observance until 300 A.D.**42**

Historians have long recognized the fact that there was less corruption of original biblical faith and practice of the Eastern Churches as opposed to the Western Latin Credo churches. However, Roman Greco concepts would in later centuries work their way East with such influences from the Isis cult of Egypt along with gnostic importations of thought. Where these views obtained a stronghold, it was virtually impossible to maintain in some geographical areas the traditions of early Christianity. The former positions consisting of an Arian Christology were later replaced by an

Eastern formula of the trinitarian nature of God. Biblical hold day observances were later co-exist with the days adopted by Eastern Catholicism. The new birth process from conception to begettal to resurrection was later interpreted to be granted when the Holy Spirit gives the impregnable eternal seed as the convert receives eternal life. (Hippolytus in *Philos.* X.34) And it should be noted that Orthodox theology unto this very day holds the position that we shall have our deification completed in the resurrection when we shall with Christ during His Messianic Reign over the nations.

A Gnostic influence was felt from Egypt according to a treatise called "On Style" ascribed to Demetrius Phalereus who suggests the Egyptian magic ritual was adopted by the Gnostics from the liturgy that the Egyptian priests celebrated to the gods.⁴³ There is very little doubt that the Gnostics had a great deal of influence over Judaism and the early Christian church. Professor Bultmann observes that a former cultic legal tradition was supplanted by an historical tradition⁴⁴ which began with the Osiris Myth and were absorbed by the Gnostics. This resulted in liturgical chanting "show downs" between the School of the Poor and the Gnostics priests. This practice is reminiscent of competing choirs which were extent in temple hymnity from the Psalter and other temple cults. This liturgical practice had a long transmission into Early Church liturgy due to the fact the Early Church was part of the Hebrew temple cult.⁴⁵

In pagan religions transmission is confined primarily to cultic acts and the liturgical formulas which accompany them; there may in addition be a etiological myth which tells of the origin of the cult. In a more developed stage cosmogonic myth may also enter in to replace the old formulas, as in the religion of Egypt or in so-called Orphism or in Gnosticism. Then one may properly speak of doctrine and theology, and these, too, may be transmitted as tradition. However, there are subject to great variability, as is indicated, for instance, in the manifold allegorizations of old myths in the Gnostic systems or in those of the Osiris myth (Plutarch; *de Iside et Osiride*).⁴⁶

They were the first heretical group to whom the apostle Paul targeted his ptomelic

arguments to in his letter to the Colossians. And new evidence seems to suggest the Jerusalem church as well the Churches of the East continued in many of the chants and hymns from the Book of Psalms. It should be noted that in Zoroastrian rituals from Persia, it was believed that chanting from a written document gave magical powers while the Egyptian priests believed according to the cosmological doctrine of

. . .Anaximander adopted and elaborated by Pythagoras and a later generation of his followers, the spheres carry the heavenly bodies in their revolutions around the earth. The vowels therefore are also symbols of the planets. Thus there are following correspondences between planets and tones that have been established by the Gnostic writers. **47**

At this juncture, it should be kept in mind that liturgical planetary worship was part of the battle which Paul confronted in dealing with the Gnostics within the first century Christian church. The theme of Colossians takes the object of worship away from planetary powers and places it in the supremacy of the Son of Man who in Egyptian traditions they call Son of the King.

Egyptian apocryphal traditions were very popular within the Coptic Church. Among the most widely used was the Apocalypse of Peter. This document mentions breast milk becoming sacred substance and the symbolic baptism and hell. Another major document that influenced the theology of Egyptian Christianity was the Apocalypse of Elijah which contains internal evidence from a curious legend of a transmission line of Arabic history of Alexandrian patriarchs,

It is this horror that presumably led to the invention and transmission of a curious legend in the Arabic *History of Alexandrian Patriarchs*, in which a woman baptizes her children by cutting her breast and anointing them with drops of her blood. As in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which describes as sour the milk produced by woman in hell who breasts are tortured by animals, the positive maternal symbolism of breast milk is negated in this martyrdom legend: it is blood that becomes the sacred substance. In these two contexts - symbolic baptism and hell - blood or sour milk from breasts is appropriate. In contrast, \$D.d of ApocEI 2 attributes an entirely negative significance to the drawing of blood from breasts. The power of this image in ApocEI 2 and its evocation of the *Chaosbeschreibung* tradition arises precisely because under the “demon-faced”

king's reign, blood would replace breast milk - because such an inversion as is acknowledged in the stories of the baptizing mother and the hell of the *Apocalypse of Peter* might actually happen in Egypt under a cruel king.

The use of *Chaosbeschreigung* in ApocEl 2 is therefore both explicit and implicit. That these terrors stem directly for vicissitudes in the kingship implies a continuity of Egyptian kingship ideology into the description of woes in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*. The details of the fate of women and maternity in these times also recall a basic motif of social chaos in *Chaosbeschreibung*; although it must be acknowledged that \$D.f bears a form-critical resemblance to some contemporaneous Jewish literature concerning the eschaton.**48**

Even the words in the *Apocalypse of John* have a eschatological liturgy which matches Egyptian literature regarding the order of the seals as well as *Elijah's* Apocalyptic writings that feature a "man of sin" as an "antichrist" figure. **49** Another literary connection in the genre of apocalyptic writings is the term "woes" referring to a latter day alignment of kings. And a "King of Peace" who arises into the west and "who runs over the sea like a lion" and who is a successor to four Asian empires. Then, finally, Alexander is a "Savior King".**50** One could certainly surmise that localized eschatology pioneered by C.H. Dodd in 1935, does have relevance here. The legends begin with a local fulfillment; then changes the actors and players while retaining the motif structure as they take on and embody a world wide fulfillment. This is exactly how the Savior uses the Daniel prophesies in Mat. 24 regarding the "Abomination of Desolation" which took place on Keslev 25 and begins with Jerusalem then extends to all of the known world. However, certain errors did infiltrate Egyptian Christian thought. The gospel of Mark was written to correct those theological errors upon which Peter expounded in his public addresses which Mark recorded using Greek shorthand to be read by an Egyptian audience and audiences other than Judeans. **51** Great attention in this gospel is given to the teacher/disciple cycle which follows the plot of a Platonic rhetorical play. This is the role where Mark leads the student or the reader into the drama based on his oral enactment where he is asking them to take part in the

oral drama.**52**

Even as late as the fifth century in Lister and Iona near the Irish Sea as well as in the British Isles under direction of Patrick and Columbo, Christian groups continued most of the Jewish church practices. This is attested to in part in the document *Liber ex Lege Moisi*, Ms CCCC 279 (part of the *Canones Hibernenses* in the Corpus Christi College Ms. 279) where a partial commentary regarding the Ten Commandments is listed. This manuscript contains the first three commandments and part of the fourth. These commentaries contained a Book of the Law and the Book of the Gospel. One of the most respected scholars in the field of Celtic is Dr. Leslie Hardinge. In his PhD dissertation for King's College in Britain, he asserts the following,

Not only were Patrick and the framers of the *Senchus Mor* interested in the Decalogue, Brigit was also a "keeper of God's commandments", and Columba was likewise credited with teaching "the books of the Law completely", for "Christ's law they used to chant, with mysteries they used to search it out, with their host no heedlessness was found". As Fournier long ago pointed out, this little book apparently played an important part in the framing of the laws of Ina and hence of those of Alfred the Great and later legislators.

The significance of the *Liber ex Lege Moisi* has been overlooked in studies of Celtic beliefs and practices. Not only were laws modified by it, but also theological concepts and many practices show direct dependence upon its regulations.**53**

It was not until the conquest by Roman Catholicism that the Celtic churches' original Jewish position would be virtually eliminated and Patrick would be honored as a saint under their banner.

Therefore it is simply undeniable that the traditions of primitive Christianity were not simply abandoned immediately within the early church for as Dr. Maxwell points out many of the Jewish practices in some form continued in eastern Christianity until the 11th century A.D. and was part of the split of the Eastern and Western Church. Strains of Jewish thinking and Sabbath observance continued in Constantinople. It is in this period where the first use of the term *Christianorum Sabbatum* occurs used by Petrus

Alfonsus which shows that these debates over Jewish/Christian thought still continued did not die out with the early church councils. It is also true that during the church councils, many Old Testament concepts were debated by the church fathers in regards to their application within the New Covenant.⁵⁴

They observed the Sabbath and also the Lord's Day. They celebrated Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan, but they many also have celebrated the resurrection at Easter. They may or may have observed the Jewish Feast of Weeks instead of, or in addition to, Pentecost. It is uncertain whether they observed New Year's Day, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles with popular Judaism in the fall. The number of feasts celebrated may have varied from church to church. At any rate, Jewish-Christians were closer to popular Judaism in their observance than Gentile-Christians were, but Gentile-Christians were just as traditionally Jewish in their calendrical observances as were either Jews or Jewish-Christians.⁵⁵

It is doubtful that unless the early church, if it had not fulfilled the prophesies of the Old Testament in Ruth, Isaiah, and Deuteronomy and grafted in Gentile believers that it would have grown beyond the borders of Jerusalem and Pella.

Notes

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The Witness of the Early Church Fathers and the Exegesis of 1 Peter

Greek philosophical thought had undated the western church during this period far more severely than it had take a foothold in the eastern church. The eastern churches would come under Greco philosophical thought later. One of the theological doctrines which underwent much scrutiny and debate was the doctrine of origins of life. Origen had stated the *logos* became man so man could become god while Justin argued that the process of begettal began the origin of life and all truth came to the church via the prophets rather than from Greek philosophical doctrine.

Now the soul partakes of life, since God wills it to live. Thus, then it will not even partake [of life] when God does not will it ot live. For to live is not its attribute, as it is God's' but as a man does not live always, and the soul is not for ever conjoined with the body, since, whenever this harmony must be broken up, the soul leaves the body, and the man exists no longer; even so, whenever the soul must cease to exist, the spirit of life is removed from it, and there is no more soul, but it goes back to the place from whence it was taken.¹

Many traditional exegists of the church fathers have stated erroneously that all of the patristic fathers held to the Greek philosophical model of death being a separation of soul and body. Until Athenagorus changed his view from his earlier *Plea, mortality of the soul* (c. A.D. 177) to his later *Plea, innate-immortality of the soul* (c. A.D. 187), no major ecclesiastical or historical writer/theologian of the Ante-Nicene fathers advocated this position.² In Justin's exception of this oversight along with the witness of Tatian, ". . .and through death existing no longer. . ." ³, Theophilus, "For God will raise thy flesh immortal with thy soul. . ." ⁴ and Melito, Arnobius of Africa (297-310 A.D.), the last spokesman for conditional immortality, ". . . that that , on the contrary, cannot be immortal which does suffer pain. . ." ⁵ Tertullian, ". . . truth compels us -- that truth which God reveals, but the crowd derides, which supposes that nothing will survive after death." ⁶ Irenaeus of Gaul, ⁷ Novatian of Rome, ⁸ and Clement ⁹ we see the patristic fathers held opposing views regarding the origin of life and the nature of Christian thought in dealing with its completion of Greek dualistic thought or its separation from these philosophical constructs with pleas to abandon the aestic dualistic model and to return to a biblical view. **10a-i** The doctrine of Plato which was rejected was the concept of the reincarnation of the soul but his idea of the immortality of the soul was historically maintained. During the infancy of Egyptian, Arabian and Greek theological development, the "sleep of the dead" was a very common belief as we have seen in the Book of the Dead, The Coffin Text, and the historical references by Eusebius, the Father of Church History, who held the immortal soul position as did Origen whom he quoted regarding Arabian Christians who held "false opinions" regarding conditional immortality. ¹¹ By the time of Mohammed, the Arab communities would adapt the Platonic doctrine of the separation of the soul from the body but maintain a limited duration, *abqab* (meaning years or long years), for the punishment in

Hell. (Surah 4:169, 33:65, 70:23, 78:23)¹² There remain echoes of the sleep of the dead prevalent in the writings of the Quran where the body is seen (Surah 39:20) as having a new starting point in the resurrection which corresponds to Hebraic thought regarding the body, soul and spirit comprising a unity and the destructive hell fire being of limited duration *alam*. The same is true in other Semitic traditions as well. In terms such as *pi* and *hi* meaning “to destroy” and the QRT text (Ugarit), *smd*. These terms show Yahweh is the direct agent of destruction, *baddon* “destruction or ruin”. Also, conditional curse threats from the blessing/curse formula found in Lev 26:38 and Duet 28:20, sermons Deut 4:26, 8:19, 20:11-17, Josh 23:13 and also 1Q22:1-10 are remarkably similar to the Near Eastern texts. They also bear some resemblance to the curse formulas and descriptions applying to man’s destruction (*wy’bd yi*) which have been found in a Phoenician burial inscription from Cyprus. These Semitic burial inscriptions from Nerab near Aleppo, says “and may his posterity perish” (*t’bd pe*). This is an Akkadian curse formula. Prophetic threats are also found in such Old Testament passages as Is 29:14, Amos 1:8; 3:15, Is 26:14, Jer 12:17;

. . . *’bd* and *’baddon* are not yet used in the OT (or in the available texts from Qumran) for an otherworldly, eternal destruction, even when accompanied by expressions for “eternal” (*lanesah* Job 4:20; 20:7; cf also the Mesha inscription *wysr’l ’bd ’bd ’lm* “while Israel hath perished for ever.” ANET 320b: KAI no. 181.7).¹³

The Church’s historical theological views did not always return to the prophets as the final court of arbitration due to the influence of the Neoplatonists. However, one Semitic doctrine through Greek philosophical thought was maintained, namely, the doctrine of the Heavenly Council or the “lessor gods” being under the direction and authority of *Theos*. ¹⁴ “The true God , then, is ‘The God’ and those who are formed after Him are gods, [Λογοι] images, as it were of Him the prototype . . .but admitting

other beings besides the one true God, who have become gods by having a share of God. **15** Origen has often been misunderstood in his explanation of the *Logos* doctrine.**16** It is apparent he believed in lesser gods of The Mighty Council but he also maintained the fact just as the *Logos* was in God, the Father's image and essence, that we were divine beings by having a share in God's divine image, *icon*. Is it possible that Origen helped to reestablish the Orthodox doctrine of deification from man's sharing God's essence in a state of glory. At first the doctrine of death may not seem to have much theological importance in regards to which view the ecclesiastical church or individual theologians may take as long as the resurrection of the dead is maintained. But when we consider the facts of these paradigm shifts that have resulted in blocking the original intent of early theological and patristic writers and historians in each of these cultures. Thus, as Christian theologians we are often at a disadvantage working from an isolated perspective not seeing the historical development and trying to judge these matters by data having only been transmitted to us in recent times having been filtered through eyes of western culture as well as ecclesiastical theology. Another fact often overlooked by proponents on each side of this debate is there was no uniform position that the church as a whole adopted on this theological issue and there was little agreement among church theologians until the Middle Ages. During this period of time debates still continued regarding the question of the soul existing in contrast to the body but the Greco-Roman philosophy held such a stronghold upon Christian theologians as they attempted rapprochement with Greek philosophy especially Platonism. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-74 A.D.) rejected Platonism in favor of a synthesis of Greek and Hebraic notions based on his reliance on Aristotle. But the church in general would follow a Neo-Platonic line of theological development. After the Protestant Reformation in the Neoreform Movement there would once again be a

challenge to the Neo-Platonic theological leanings of the ecclesiastical church. This challenge was generally over the concept of the immortality of the soul due to the fact it was considered unbiblical and led to a depreciation of the body and our physical existence.¹⁷ It would not be until 1522 A.D. that Martin Luther would revive the doctrine of the mortal soul after the 5th Lateran Council of 1512-1517 A.D. had rejected this position in favor of the immortality of the soul. **18**

Today, various attempts are being made to revive the doctrine of the holistic view of resurrection and the doctrine of man **19** that is even effecting our holistic view of deity and man's relationship to Him. These new approaches to biblical studies are resulting in a holistic reading of the text. Hopefully the journey of historians, theologians and scholars will be to find relative material regarding the origins of our suppositions resulting in a new quest for biblical truth.

The Alexandrian schools in the time of Philo may have acted as the capstone which championed a redefinition of Platonic doctrine which found its way into Judaic, Christian and Islamic thought. It is a tenable assumption to make that much of the life, death, burial and resurrection material has been lost and only by exploring new possible paradigms based on new documentation can we even begin to understand these ancient theological shifts from culture to culture. Therefore, it is not a fallacy of concept to advance the notion that original Egyptian and ancient Semitic documentation needs to be revisited through the auspices of the biblical writers who knew of these traditions rather than viewing these ancient doctrines through the eyes of the Platonic/Alexandrian lense that we have inherited. One thing we may conclude is that the biblical writers employed a much wider use of multi-cultural theological beliefs than scholars have previously supposed and in this milieu we are only beginning to

uncover the literary traditions from which they borrowed so extensively to apply to their own interpretation. Therefore the world that shaped our New Testament theology was on a much broader scale than any one of the theological biases which we have inherited contain. Even when great scholars examine these questions they interpret the data to fit the matrix they believe existed in the sociological makeup of the society in which Jesus lived. As Xavier Leon-Dafaur correctly observes, they often overlook the fact that Jesus and the Apostles challenged many of the theological norms of their day. Thus, the sociological norms are often seen by scholars to be in harmony with the biblical text even though there may be appropriate tension between the two.

These rituals, as elsewhere in the East, went to excess, and the Old Testament already struggled against their deviations, perhaps because Yahwist faith and worship was opposed to any worship of the dead. It is a fact that the gospel stories reported the turmoil that went on around the deceased. Jesus, for his part, manifested great calm and tried to make the tumult stop:

He saw a tumult and people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside. (Mk 5:38-40)**20**

It is the opinion of this commentator that when Jesus, through the auspices of New Testament writers, speaks about passing from death unto life, two possibilities exist. Number one, it was a promise to that generation as the preterist claim or; two, the writers may be expressing the belief that all who die in faith possess eternal life as a promise (Heb 11:32). And we also need to remember these eternal concepts deal in a terminology of the eternal with time due to the fact that, as expressed in rabbinic tradition, we have this world (*ha olam hazeh*) and the world to come (*ha olam habba*). Therefore, the community of believers exists truly in this world and attempts to live in the spirit of the age to come. **21**

Just as the fullness of a revelation is revealed from a former social framework derived from a common origin shows us some of the amalgamation of former beliefs

into the new body of truth to express its value. When we add foreign material from outside this paradigm which the western church has done to the life, death, burial and resurrection motifs thus we weaken the very doctrine that the progressive revelation is supposed to provide. By denying the sleep of the dead between the intermediate state of death and resurrection, we have opened the ecclesiastical church to the former pagan practices of and the belief of communication with the dead leading to many of the modern occult revivals in our day. While it is certainly true the Christian church rejects divination as a practice due to the Deuteronomy 18 mandate, and has correctly rejected Plato's doctrine of reincarnation, with this compromise and departure from Hebraic Christinity, we have confused the real essence surrounding the Christ event and His victory over death.

Salmond points that Paul, who gives more 'of a seeming psychology' than any other New Testament writer, 'never contemplates a simple immortality of soul: he never argues for man's survival merely on the ground that there is a mind or spirit in him. He proceeds upon the Old Testament view of man.' that view, Salmond continues, 'is essentially different from the Hellenic idea which ruled the scholastic theory, and has exercised a deep and unfortunate influence on modern systems of doctrine.'²²

M. J. Harris agrees with the eminent scholar Dr. Fudge in stating that the New Testament speaks of the immortal but this concept clearly does not mean endless personal survival through the avoidance of physical death. Rather it involves the participation in the eternal life and therefore immunity from eternal death. This is suggested by the etymology *athanasia* (1 Cor 15:53f; 1 Tim 6:16).

The Gk. pagan of the 1st cent. would probably have understood *he anastasis ton nekron* as "the standing up of corpses" (Acts 17:32a), whereas others in the tradition of Judaism may have had some idea of the new body as a permanent home of the soul which had been preserved intact in the heavenly treasures since the time of death (cf. P. Volz, *die eschatologie der judischen Gemeinde*, 1934, 117-21, 249-55).²³

Ascension and Descension Themes in the Theology of Peter

It was a common practice for the New Testament writers to apply universal themes as a fulfillment of Old Testament expectations in apocalyptic literature. The same hold true for the doctrine of resurrection where it is not just the “standing up of corpses” but this event will include the transformation of the entire person as we are conformed into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit that saves us from the intervention of death. It is this body that is fashioned without hands that is being currently reserved for us in heaven with our reward (2 Cor 3:18, 1 Cor 15:50). It was in this model that Jesus passed through His life, death, burial and resurrection for indeed He was in the heart of the earth just as we are in the intermediate state between this present life awaiting our resurrection (Mat 12:39-40). But the early church fathers advanced a different commentary regarding this event. They used 1 Peter 3:19-21, 4:6, 3:10 in conjunction with the resurrection narratives to show during this intermediate state Christ preached to spirits which were in prison. Dalton states the word proclamation can mean question, however, there is no example anywhere in Greek where it means request. **24** If this alternative meaning is plausible then the traditional interpretation may be questionable. Thus it would be plausible for the pre-existent Christ to have examined the condition of the spiritual personages as opposed to preaching to them in His intermediate state. The only statement of time in 1 Peter was that these spirits were unruly during the days of Noah. No internal evidence suggests that Peter is linking this preaching event during the days of Noah with the resurrection motifs contained in the gospels but rather, he is stating that the eight souls saved by water and the angelic host both received their witness from God during the days of Noah. However the descent clause has long been neglected in the western creeds.

Rufinus records in c. 404 that the Aquilleian Creed contained the descent clause which he connected with 1 Peter 3:19 in his attempts to explain what Christ had accomplished for spirits in prison. It is interesting to note that 1 Peter 3:19 is missing in the oldest Christian manuscripts and no writer before Hippolytus (c. 200) and Clement of Alexandria (A. D. 150-215) and Origen never make an allusion to the descent passages in 1 Peter. According to Prof. Kathleen Thomas this descent narrative may have been transmitted from an ancient Syrian rite which was linked with the rite of baptism which does fit the previously stated material regarding the rite of baptism as representing the saving power by which Christ is now seated at the right hand of the Father; v. 21 contains elements of ascension, exaltation and subjugation.**25a,b** Could these descent passages have been a textual interpolation which found its way into Christian tradition which are not included in the Apostle's Creed in the Forma Recepta which we call the received form neither are there included in the Old Roman and African forms? However it does appear in the Apostle's Creed according to Rufinus and Fortunatus A.D. 390-570, *descendit in inferna* (Ecclesia Aquileiensis circ. A.D. 390), *descendit as infernum* (Venantius Fortunatus circ. A. D. 570)**26** Perhaps a solution can be found in the heavy use Peter employs of the prophet Isaiah, Is 40:6-8 in 1 Peter 1:24-25, then again in Is. 28:16 which is mentioned twice in 1 Peter 2:6-8. Then the puritia of Christ and the atonement is borrowed from Is. 53 and is in 1 Peter 2:22-34. Peter's dependency on the enthronement/servant song of Is 53 is most striking. Other passages which employ enthronement terminology as as follows: death, resurrection, exaltation: Rom 8:35, Acts 5:31; resurrection, exaltation, subjugation, Eph 1:20-21; resurrection ,exaltation, Acts 2:32-33; death, exaltation, Heb 1:3b; 10:12; 12:2; exaltation, parousia, Mark 14:62, Col 3:14 (cf. Heb 9:28); exaltation alone, Acts 7:55, Heb 8:1 (cf. Rev 12:5b). The evidence from the passages just cited is clear that the

New Testaments writers were familiar with the enthronement they attributed to the ascension of Christ to His Father to receive His glorification. In like manner (Acts 1:7-8), He shall descend to meet His elect and share with them His glorification. It is this faith in the parousia which compels Peter to exhort the believers in 1 Peter 3:14-15, not to be afraid but to sanctify the Lord in their hearts. This may be a loose paraphrase from Is. 8:12 and 13 where Judah was commanded to be brave and sanctify the Lord. Perhaps this Isaiah material which surrounds the passages in questions will provide a better hermeneutic for future New Testament expositors.

Notes

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Between Jesus and Paul: That Scripture Might be Fulfilled

The order of events in the trial, the mocking and scourging, the crucifixion followed by the resurrection of Our Lord was by no means accidental especially when we consider, as shown earlier, the cultic legal traditions from the Egyptian temple liturgies being followed by Isaiah in his servant songs (Dr. Ludlow). Thus contained in the statement that “scripture might be fulfilled” may take on a much broader shade of meaning than has been previously realized by traditional exegetes. Therefore, understanding Isaiah’s use of the “Opening of the Mouth” rite (Dr. Gileadi) becomes central to our comprehension regarding how Christ fulfilled the events foretold in the Old Testament and how He announced His kingdom rulership in the New Testament. It is not by accident that the Egyptian background to Matthew’s Gospel has become increasingly investigated by scholars such as Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr. It cannot be overemphasized that the effect of the Hebrew culture was greatly felt within Egypt’s literary traditions as well.

The Prominent Literary Influence of Isaiah and the Psalter in the New Testament Church

It is interesting to note that the two most quoted books in the New Testament from the Hebrew Scriptures are Isaiah and Psalms. It is even more compelling when we consider these two books contain direct references to the Egyptian enthronement

ritual patterns specifically in the Servant Songs of Isaiah and the Enthronement Psalms. Scholars such as Thomas M. Finn in studying early Christianity and ritual combat affirms the fact that early church congregations chanted a combat ritual within an interpretative psalm. In this ritual the exorcist assaults the devil and seeks to drive him out in the name of Christ, the Redeemer.

The New Fulfillment of the Torah

As we have previously established, the meaning “to fulfill” is not to destroy or to dismiss but to bring to pass or to act out in a present fulfillment or with an eschatological completion yet to come. Thus, the salvational acts of God in fulfilling Torah are passed, present and future. Take, for example, Jesus’ statement in Luke 24:44-48,

“Then he said to them, ‘These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled’. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are my witnesses of these things.’²

Terms such as “it is written” and “that scripture might be fulfilled” shows us the role Jesus played as the Messiah fulfilled very ancient prophecies as well as the words he was speaking to his disciples just prior to his death, burial and resurrection.

At this juncture let us turn our attention briefly to the biblical data regarding the meaning of Christ’s death due to the fact that a differentiation of meaning is applied to the death, burial and resurrections motifs between the pagan world view and the biblical text regardless of the fact that many popular writers are trying to combine the two world views from a single source. First, our sins are laid on Christ as opposed to the death, burial and resurrection being a method of righteousness through the ritual

Because Christ is already perfect, He leads us from condemnation to His righteousness (2 Cor 5:21, Heb. 9:28, 1 Pet 2:24) via a substitutionary death for our sins or “ransom”, “redemption” *apolutrosen*, (Eph 1:7, Gal. 3:13, John 11:50, Mark 10:45, Heb 4:15) which was the price paid for the satisfaction of divine justice or “expiation” *hilasmos* (Rom 3:25, p. 451, 1 John 2:2, p. 705, 1 John 4:10 **3** (Heb 2:17, Rom 3:25, 1 John 2:2; 4:10).⁴

In Mk. 10:45 a clear connection is made between the theme of *diakonein* or service on Jesus’ part and that of an expiatory death; ‘For the son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’⁵ The central point of this passage is that Jesus fulfilled the entire body of the law

and the prophets/servant songs and the writings which make up our corpus of Old Testament literature. Therefore, this includes the enthronement literary genre contained in the Psalms but is not necessarily limited to them.

hoti on sum humin ‘viz. that must be fulfilled’, summarizing what Jesus had told the disciples during his lifetime. for *dei* cp. on 9:22; for *plerou* cp. on 1;20.

panta to gegrammena. . .peri emou ‘all that has been written . . .about me’.

en to nomo Mouseos ‘in the law of Moses’, ie, the Pentateuch.

tois phophetais kai psalmois ‘(in) the (books of the) prophets and the (book of) psalms’.⁶

Have we as Christian exegetes failed to notice the literary correlation in this passage, Luke 24:44-48, and the fulfillment of the genre of enthronement Psalms as well as the servant songs of Isaiah? Both of these texts have literary links with the enthronement rituals dedicated to Yahweh as well as the servant songs which were reinterpreted to show our Messiah would open not his mouth. These were identifying signs of his Messiahship in addition to the prophetic message regarding the events that he would suffer as our servant as well as the life, death, burial and resurrection motifs which show him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the only Messiah figure who has

the right to rule and fulfills scripture.

Another example of the reinterpretation of the Psalter found in New Testament literature is contained in Paul's Ephesian letter, Chapter 1, verses 22a, 22b and 23

1:22-23, Vs 22a is quoted with only slight variations from Ps. 8:6 LXX. but vss. 22b -23 move far beyond the psalmist's perspective and set forth the overall theme of Eph.; God has enthroned Christ as the **head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fill all in all**. This particular statement about Christ's relationship to the church has been framed in a way which leads to profound results for an understanding of the nature of the church.⁷

This is a clear indication that Paul of Tarsus possessed the understanding of enthronement theology contained in the Book of Psalms. Psalm 8 is not an enthronement psalm per se but the concept is certainly enthronement theology.

Was Paul a Jewish or a Gentile Theologian?

The greatest contribution to Gentile Christianity would have been from a Jew of Tarsus of the tribe of Benjamin named Saul who would claim to receive a Apostleship from Jesus Christ directly while in the Arabian desert. But not everyone would be totally convinced of the apostle's claim. Some would say he borrowed his theology from the mystery cults during this period, then added his version of a death/burial/resurrection motif and fused it with Hellenistic Judaism to establish his own apostolic authority and develop Gentile Christianity.

According to H. Seyrig, the images on the coins with the alleged pyre which were thought to show that he was a dying and rising vegetation god indicate an architectural structure widespread in this area. Far less was Heracles Sandon a 'mystery god'. Bohlig makes the quite misleading suggestion with 'with this Sandon-Heracles of Tarsus we have in the Augustinian era the same deity who otherwise is designated Adonis in Syria, claiming that the celebration of the burning of his effigy and his ensuing resurrection in Tarsus, is, like that of Adonis in Heirapolis, 'a preliminary stage to a mystery religion'. Such conjectures remain a sheer unprovable construction, typical of the speculations of the history-of-religions school. There were no Heracles mysteries in antiquity, and it is still questionable whether oriental gods already has any kind of

'mystery' character in the first half of the first century.**8**

The Apostle Paul was obviously familiar with Jewish and Gentile theology and philosophy. This is why he felt so free in re-establishing the historical validity of Christ's resurrection while simultaneously employing Greek thought forms and resurrection motifs from the Hellenistic world which he was attempting to evangelize.

For decades scholars have vacillated on the extent of the emphasis of Pauline theology. Some have suggested that Paul's theology as "a Hebrew of the Hebrews and a Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin", would reflect a foundation of Jewish with a transcendent universal Gentile approach at the apex. But one thing is abundantly clear, the writings from this Apostle as well as the historical accounts compiled by Luke the historian in the Book of Acts, do reflect Paul of Tarsus as honoring Jewish times and seasons. In the last chapter we noted in the conclusion the early church continued in their liturgical use of Jewish festivals and Torah readings. Since 1940, scholars have been studying the Palestinian Triennial reading cycle where there is a strong parallel between Our Lord's visit to the synagogue in Nazareth recorded in Luke 4:16-19 where he reinterprets Isaiah 61 and applies it to his own mission. In a similar liturgical manner, Paul of Tarsus in the synagogue at Antioch upon the conclusion of the reading of the Law and the Prophets, he delivers a homily with many allusions to Scripture.**9**

First he quotes verses directly from the book of Psalms, intermingled with a citation from Isaiah (Acts 13:33-35, quoting Ps. 2:7, Is. 55:3; Ps. 66:10), and he concludes the sermon with a discussion of Hab. 1:5. It is an intriguing question of whether Paul's sermon is an example of a formula of citing various parts of Scripture, attested in the later midrashic and liturgical texts. Essentially, however, Paul's speech appears to be a Jewish version of the Hellenistic homily rather than a type of homily found in the Qumran or midrashic texts.**10**

In recent decades, scholars have found that other worship traditions existed in New Testament Christianity along side the formal synagogue service. In the household

codes traditions, when the early church met in private assemblies, it is quite plausible that, in these local traditions, a synagogue type of liturgy was employed. Bernadette Brooten explains,

There is a general tendency among scholars to assume that it is not an actual synagogue service which is meant, but rather some sort of outdoor prayer meeting. The reasons for the hesitancy to translate proseuche as “synagogue” are: 1) the “we supposed” (hou enomizomen) of v. 13; 2) the use of proseuche instead of synagoge, which is the usual term in Acts (Acts 6:9; 9:2; etc.); and 3) the fact that the congregants are women. As to the first reason, it does not seem unusual that the missionaries would not know the site of the synagogue in a strange town. Secondly, the term proseuche perhaps goes back to the sources of the author of Acts (The same term occurs immediately following in 16:16) or is perhaps a simple variant in the author’s usage. It is in any case well-attested as meaning “synagogue.”¹¹

With this broadening of our application of the synagogue order of services being employed in public synagogues as well as previously believed private assemblies which have been shown to be actual synagogue services, gives us more evidence to believe that synagogue services grew into a much wider variation of liturgical styles according to cultural, geographical and religious application.

Paul’s Liturgical and Holy Day Cycle

In this transitional period the early church still continued in telling the stories of the great exodus with a possible reinterpretation of Christ being their captain to lead them out of the spiritual bondage as well as to lead them out of Roman captivity into the Kingdom Age. Christ would have been looked upon as their Passover (I Cor 5:7-8).¹² Traditions within Holy Day observances would have continued to be emphasized along the lines of Christian development as with the day of unleavened bread where the symbol would have been reinterpreted to be the unleavened man with a new nature and a new citizenship and clothed with the new righteousness. Western evangelicals

have de-emphasized Paul's use of the Greek word *ηεροταε*, to keep a feast, and *ηερατιζζο*, the keeping of a festival. While evangelical theologians emphasize the spiritual significance of what the festivals days pointed to in shadows and typology, Paul uses the reality of Christ to deepen their original application for the church age, exemplified by his use of the *present active subjunctive volitive*¹³ in I Cor 5:7-8, with the statement, "Let us continue in the keeping of the festival not with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"-- "*hoste heortazomen en zumei kakias kai ponerias en azumois eilikrinias kai aletheias*".¹⁴

Exegetes have held different opinions regarding the linear action of Paul's thinking when he uses the phrase, "let us celebrate the festival". Even in the Old and Later Latin translations, the Latin counterparts to the Greek convey essentially the same lexical definitions, "**festiuitas**, (= *παινηγυρις*) (*among the Christians or Jews*) feast, sacred day. . .**festiuo**, (*intr.*) keep a feast." ¹⁵, "**festino** (*adv.*)" ¹⁶ Traditional commentators have interpreted this statement to imply that one keeps a festive attitude all year long as he becomes a new lump in Christ. This interpretation has some merit regarding the activity which one pursues in a Christian walk but the term "keeping of a festival" does employ a delineation of time (**7 εκκαθαρατε** aor. imp. act. *εκκαθαιρω* (# 1705) to clean out, to purge thoroughly. For the Jewish regulation regarding the removal of all leaven from the house before celebrating the Passover s. SB, 3:359-60. The prep. in compound is perfective (MH, 309f). Aor. Imp. calls for a specific act w. a note of urgency (RWP). *παλαιος* (# 4094) old; that is, the leaven used in the period before Passover (Barrett). *μτε* pres. subj. act. *ειμι* (#1639) to be. *αζυμος* (#109) unleavened. The purpose is that they might be a people with the leaven of such sin in their midst (Fee; Barrett)¹⁷, as well as liturgical celebration. Classical exegetes Conybeare and Howson deal with this controversy in their footnote of 1 Cor 5:7-8 regarding the time of

the writing of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians because some objections have been advanced regarding the fact Paul must have used the term *paschal lamb* and *feast* metaphorically. This school of thought feels the latter would not have been read at the time of the Passover season.

In spite of the opinion of some eminent modern commentators, which is countenanced by Chrysostom, we must adhere to the interpretation which considers these words as written at the Paschal season, and suggested by it. The words *leaven*, *lump*, *Paschal Lamb*, and *feast* all agree and most naturally with this view. It has been objected, that St. Paul would not address the Corinthians as engaged in a feast which he, at Ephesus, was celebrating; because it would be over before his letter could reach them. Any one who has ever written a birthday letter to a friend in India will see the weakness of this objection. It has also been urged that he would not address a mixed church of Jews and Gentiles as engaged in the celebration of a Jewish feast. Those who urge this objection must have forgotten that St. Paul address the Galatians, (undoubtedly a mixed church) as if they had all been formerly idolators (Gal. iv, 8); and addresses the Romans, sometimes as if they were all Jews (Rom vii.1), sometimes as if they were Gentiles (Rom xi.18). If we take "as ye are unleavened" in a metaphorical sense, it is scarcely consistent with the previous 'cast out the old leaven;' for the passage would then amount to saying, 'Be free from leaven (metaphorically) as you are free from leaven (metaphorically);' whereas on the other view, St. Paul says, 'Be free from leaven (metaphorically) as you are free from leaven (literally)'. There seems no difficulty in supposing that Gentile Christians joined with the Jewish Christians in celebrating the Paschal feast after the Jewish manner, at least to the extent of abstaining from leaven in the love-feast. And we see that St. Paul still observed the 'days of unleavened bread' at this period of his life, from Acts xx.6. Also, from what follows, we perceive how naturally this greatest of Jewish feasts changed into the greatest of Christian festivals.**18**

Most commentators in the Orthodox community correctly observe the term for bread in Christian worship should be leavened because of the new lump that is the result of the leavening process which begins with unleavened bread. So what we have is a paradigm shift between the Messianic church and Gentile Christianity.

An alternative way of reconstructing 5.8 is "When we celebrate our Passover, let us not do it with malice and evil, which are like bread made with yeast, but rather use sincerity and truthfulness, which are like unleavened bread."**19**

At other times, the Apostle Paul simply uses the Jewish holy days as a liturgical

calendar and time reference point as in Acts, “We waited to set sail until after the Days of Unleavened Bread,” in his journeys to Jerusalem. Then, at another time in the Book of Acts, the voice of Paul through the pen of Luke, the historian, uses the term *herotae* when he states, “I must by all means, observe this feast,” although he does not specifically tell us why he must observe this festival. Dr. Bacchiocchi, in his PhD dissertation, also agrees with the fact of Dr. Luke’s respect for Jewish time reckoning in the Book of Acts. In regards to Jewish as well as Gentile Christians, they were observing times and seasons under the Jewish reckoning and not exclusively under the Roman calendar as has been previously supposed.

In Acts also he repeatedly shows his respect for the Jewish calendar and religious customs. He mentions for instance that Herod arrested Peter “during the days of Unleavened Bread” and that he intended “after the Passover to bring him out to the people” (12:3, 4). He reports that he himself left Philippi with Paul on the morrow of the complete rest which marked the last day of the Unleavened Bread (20:6; cf. Luke 22:1,7). He doesn’t not hesitate on repeated occasions to show how Paul respected Jewish customs (Acts 16:1-3; 18:18; 20:16; 21:24). He says, for instance, that Paul was “hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost: (20:16). Later he reports how in that city, the apostle under pressure purified himself, and “went into the temple to give notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled: (21:26). To these could be added Luke’s frequent references to the Sabbath meetings which Paul attended with both “Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4; cf. 17:2; 16:13; 15:21; 13:14, 42, 44). In the light of these indications it would appear that Luke respected the Jewish liturgical calendar and used it quite consistently when reckoning time.**20**

It is also abundantly clear that Dr. Luke as well as Mark and other writers of the New Testament all shared in the use of Jewish theology, literature, and religious practice as the roots of the Christian theology. In later centuries, a growing separation between East and West, Jew and Gentile, would even make this theological bridge much more difficult to maintain. The Apostolic writers never succeeded in closing the Jewish/Gentile gap. Therefore, only since the time of Davies have western commentators sought to give the Apostle Paul his Jewishness at the root of his philosophy which extended into Hellenistic sophistication with his use of transcendent

vocabulary and a reinterpretation of Hebraic metaphors.

And then after his day, when his letters came to be read by Gentiles who little understood Judaism, the misinterpretation of Paul became almost inevitable. These Gentiles often approached the epistles as outsiders incapable of appreciating their setting within what we may call a family dispute, which could explain both their extreme bitterness and, at times, their fine sensibilities. The disputes over the true interpretation of their common Jewish tradition between Paul and his kinsmen, both those who accepted and those who rejected the new faith, were expressed with intensity, not to say ferocity. As long as they were seen as being *intro muros*, they remained endurable. But one removed from this setting they took on a radically negative character. They no longer appeared as attempts at the reinterpretation of a shared tradition but as forages in hostility. In time, though the process was not rapid, what was a disruption among Jews came to be spelled out at the denigration and rejection of Judaism and of the people of Israel as a whole. Paul's criticisms of the Law were intrinsically difficult to understand and, when wrenched from their familial context as read by Gentiles largely untouched by Judaism, were ascribed a rigid coldness and a clinical, a surgical, and a unified antithetical purpose.²¹

With the Torah being disconnected from its original Hebraic culture, the Gentile Christians viewed Christ as the completion of the Torah (τελεις γαζ νομου) Rom 10:4. **22a-c** but with the marriage of Judaism and the Hellenistic world which had created a religious of syncretism and had mysteriously adopted Jewish elements. This would cause a new stream of syncretism which would overlay the Torah with a Hellenistic philosophy.

Modern critics now feel the Greek term νομος is a direct equivalent of the Hebrew term for law the Jews call Torah that in later Judaism would refer to God's entire revelation in the entire Hebrew scriptures. The Pauline use of the term would imply general instructions as well as being summarized with the designation, "the Law of Christ". And with this new interpretation, of the term νομος would have a different application to Gentile Christians. What was once a required national day of rest, such as annual festivals and Shabbat, became a part of the early church's liturgical and eschatological patterns for instructions.

In addition to 1 Corinthians, the portrait of Paul and Christian communities in the book of Acts demonstrates that Christians adhered to the Jewish calendar. Paul enters the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia on several Sabbaths and proclaims the Gospel (Acts 13.14, 44). According to Acts, it was Paul's custom to enter the synagogue on the Sabbath, and in Thessalonica, he reasoned for three Sabbaths from the Scriptures (Acts 17.2). Paul addresses the community at Troas on the first day from Sabbath (Acts 20.7). Concerning feasts, Paul sets sail from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread (Acts 20.6) and intends to arrive in Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost (Acts 20.16). The portrayal of Paul in Acts supplies clear evidence that Christians mark time by the segments of festivals and Sabbaths.**23**

A similar problem exists in Christianity's traditional interpretations of passages such as Rom 14:1, Col 2:16-17, Gal 4:6,

Some scholars regard the Colossian false teachings as an offshoot of the teaching of the Qumran community. They point out that the emphasis on dietary rules, festal calendar and the veneration of the angels, tallies completely with the practices of the Qumran community. The term 'law' (γνομεσ) is absent anyway from the controversy in which Collisions is engaged." The most plausible conclusion held by most scholars is that the false teachings and practices at Colossi were of a syncretistic nature, containing both pagan and Jewish elements. The Old Testament was apparently invoked to provide a justification for their sincerity beliefs and practices.**24**

The Colossian Heresy and Galatian Bondage

Traditional Christian exegesis have long since held that the shadows referred to v. 16 were always viewed to be in the past referring to the Mosaic law and to the sacrificial system employed by ancient Israel. While there is very little doubt that these two divisions of biblical law do overlap in their applications as shadows of the Messiah and His kingdom, Professor Martin points out that there is a present reality to this existing shadow that has fulfillment in the age to come. Therefore, the Church represents the eschatological age to come within this present age we now occupy. So the church is a type of the Kingdom of God whose fulfillment will be consummated at the second coming of Christ when the ultimate reality will fulfill the shadows and types in its totality.

Furthermore, some commentators subtly shift the tense of *εατιν* in the relative pronoun clause at the beginning of v. 17. The tense is present and affirms that these things are now shadows. These commentators translate that past tense and conclude that these stipulations have ended now that the true substance has arrived since they *were* only shadows. This shift of tense is evident when Lohse states, “The regulations *are* merely shadows of things to come. . . . Since reality is with Christ alone, the shadowy appearances *have lost* all right to exist. . . . The reality that exists solely with Christ is shared only by those who, as members of the body of Christ, adhere to the head (2:19). Therefore, for them the shadows *have become* completely meaningless, and the ‘regulations’ to which the arrogant exponents of the ‘philosophy’ refer, *have lost* all binding force. (*Colossians*,117). In spite of this exegesis, the text affirms a present, albeit temporary, validity to the shadow. H.A.W. Meyer correctly argues, “The *μελλουσια* have not been manifested at all, and belong altogether the *αιουν μελλον*, which will begin with the coming again of Christ to set up His kingdom. . . .”**25**

This traditional error has resulted in Christian commentators making the wrong assumptions by presuming that any Old Testament or Jewish practice is the shadow in a past tense and no longer holds any relevance to the Christian experience or our eschatological hope to come.**26a,b** They have oftentimes missed the paganization of times, days, seasons and years that has resulted in a breaking of the biblical canon rather than building the New Testament on its proper foundation of the Old Testament. Therefore it is crucial that we understand why Paul uses neutral verbs that pertain to a participation in a feast or a new moon or a Sabbath. These things are a shadow of future realities. Dr. Bacchiocchi explains,

The verb is neutral and it does not mean “to condemn” but “to judge” whether approvingly or disapprovingly. Paul uses the same verb repeatedly in Romans when dealing with a similar problem; “let him who abstains pass judgment (*μη κρινετω*) on him who eats” (14:3). “One man esteems (*χρινει*) one day as better than another, while another man esteems (*χρινει*) all days alike” (14:5). The meaning of the verb “*χρινει*” according to is common usage is not “to condemn”, but rather “to express an opinion, to resolve, to pass judgment.” Note then that the verb used indicates that Paul is considerably tolerant on this question.**27**

It appears that traditional commentators may have missed the real focal point of Col 2:16-17. The issues Paul raises in these passages are the proper motivation for acts of

worship and Christian conduct as well as a non-judgmental attitude regarding the conviction of others, in addition to dealing with the emphasis on the former shadows becoming the latter realities.

. . .As reason for the warning it is adduced that all the rules and regulations cited in 2:16 are but a shadow of what is to come. That which is to come (τα μελλουτα) is the designation for the future age, for the eschatological completion of salvation (in the framework of the same picture, Heb. 10:1; in apocalyptic e.g., 2 Bar. 4). Both the writer and the opponents were concerned with this reality. Thus the first part of the sentence contains no criticism yet. The opponents, too, viewed their regulations as a shadow of the redemptive reality. In metaphorical language, “shadow” indeed was no derogatory designation. The important issue is to what the shadow points. Shadow and reality are two poles of a semantic axis influenced in antiquity by Platoism and described as σκια and εικων (shadow and archetype) but sometimes also as shadow and body. The contemporary reader has to remember that the reference is to an image and that the shadow has an objective and concrete form, while the archetype, as the true reality was the idea. In the hellenistic environment Jewish conceptions were also interpreted in this manner (cf. Philo, Conf. Ling. 190; Heb. 8:5), and the false teachers evidently also viewed their religion as a way into the spiritual world.**28**

Paul seems to be using an eschatological type and shadow approach as did the Old Testament writers employing a Jewish literary technique while using Greek vocabulary in dealing with Judaizers.

The verb is neutral: “Judge with approval or with disapproval”; to say that only condemning is intended here is not tenable. The Colossians are not only to avoid what such a judge forbids, they are also not to do what such a judge approves. The latter would be as serious a mistake as the former. The reasons for which such a judge approves a thing are just as wrong as the reasons for which he forbids it. For he is not prompted by the gospel nor by Christ’s words but by his vapid philosophy and empty deceit (v. 8) and would make booty of us either way. The main concern is always, not *what* we do or avoid, but the *inner reason* for our conduct.**29**

Dr. Troy Martin provides us with a possible resolution,

The resolution of the grammatical and syntactical problems of the clause το δε σωμα του χριστου, supports the following translation of Col 2:16-17, “Therefore do not let anyone critique you by [*your or her/his?*] eating and drinking or by [*your or her/his?*] participation in a feast, a new moon, or sabbaths, which things are a shadow of future realities, but *let everyone discern* the Body of Christ by [*your or her/his?*] *eating and drinking or by [your or her/his?] participation in a feast, new moon, or sabbaths, which things are a shadow of future realities.*” **30**

Further investigation regarding the exegesis of this parallelism in the final reality is needed. Martin and Bacchiocchi definitely have provided us with strong evidence that our traditional renderings under close scrutiny do not stand due to the tension this places in Paul's subject matter as well as the tension it places within the biblical canon. Furthermore the possibility exists that the Colossian heresy may have borrowed some secret instructions regarding Torah which were hidden from the rest of Israel

The Qumran texts also contain evidence of secret instructions concerning holy sabbath and festivals which remain hidden to the rest of Israel.(cd 3:14; 1 Qs 9-26-10.8).**31**

Again, Professor Martin concludes the following,

In future studies, exegetes should seriously consider the possibility that Christian practices, and not those of the opponents, are criticized in Col 2:16, 15. The exegetical tradition's failure to adequately consider the grammar and syntax of το δε σωμα του χριστου in Col 2:17 results in a misunderstanding of this clause along with the whole of Colossians.**32**

George Eldon Ladd submits that Galatians is a reinterpretation of biblical law recodified and interpreted for a Gentile audience with a Jewish factions but Paul is also striving to protect biblical from corruption of human traditions (Col. 2:8)**33** The beggarly elements referred to in Gal 4:9 is well demonstrated by Orthodox scholar, Paul Nadim Tarazi, over the issue of slavery and the Galatian church's poor decision to return to that yoke.

The "again" evokes the thought that if the Galatians do make the wrong decision they will in effect be returning to their previous condition of slavery. The warning in 4:9 against returning to serve the "weak and base elements" expressed the same thought. In both cases the "wrong decision" Paul has in mind is to endorse the Law as obligatory for Christians. Not only do the following verses provide direct evidence of this but also v. 1 itself provides indirect evidence in the expression "a yoke of slavery". In Paul's day, Jews commonly uses the work "yoke" to refer to one's duty to fulfill the Law's requirements, and this explains why he added it to "slavery" which would otherwise have sufficed by itself.**34**

Paul uses the expression "to know" γιγνωστω,(in Hebrew, *yadah*, *to be known of God*) a

stronger term than the Hebrew, *hikkir*, meaning *to acknowledge*, used in Old Testament literature, *of one who recognizes a relative and redeems him from a strange master*. In context, Paul is simply asking the question to the Galatian church as to why, after having *known*, not merely to acknowledge God's existence, but to be known of God by the election of one's calling, would they return to slavery once again?³⁵ Paul's frequent use of the Midrash in the Book of Galatians is an indication of his desire to see the Galatian church freed from the bondage of slavery and to be transformed into slaves of righteousness as free men. David Daube adds that, "If Paul is familiar with this or a similar Midrash, his choice of argument in Galatians becomes even more understandable", ³⁶ due to the fact the Galatian church was to be freed from bondage under the Law so they could be free among men while they are slaves to God. We cannot arrive at this theological balance unless we are familiar with the Jewish Tractates and other sources that Paul makes reference to in the construction of his epistles.

In summary, both the Colossians and Galatian letters may have been influenced by a document out of the famous philosophy of Pythagoras. Swiss scholar, E. Schweizer, states this text was written a century before Paul in the 500's B. C. This recently seen document goes beyond the geometry into the worlds of spirits and souls. Schweizer endeavors to show us that erroneous worship must be mainly Hellenistic. Another common theme in both letters is the term "elements" *stoicheia*, found in Col. 2:8, 20. This term may be understood in two ways which basic components may refer to an elementary or juvenile doctrine taught either by Jewish or Pagan ritualists. The second component may employ concepts of a pernicious and false philosophy employing "elemental spirits of the universe" (agreeing with the RSV) *stoicheia tou kosmou*. Therefore these letters are not simply an expression of aesthetic dualism as

traditional commentators suggest but confronts with an extreme dramatic opposition of this age ruled by spirit forces versus Christ himself. **37**

Paul Nanos and other contemporary New Testament scholars are still debating over the date of composition regarding the Book of Galatians. Some believe it was written during Paul's first missionary journey and is tied to cities such as Lyster, Pisidia and Lycaonia and is faithful representation of early Christianity. The earlier dating attempts to link Paul's theology to the Acts 15 accord. Those who argue for a later authorship during Paul's last missionary journey link this document to the Gauls in the northern regions of Galatia who racially were more like Greek speaking Italians giving way to a more Gentile church based interpretation. However, it should be noted that such scholars as Nanos, Martin, and Tarazi are leading the pack for a new generation of scholars to re-examine and possibly reverse some of traditional Christianity's conclusions of this powerful epistle. The earliest historical data indicates this epistle was first read outside of Galatia in the land of Syria where it enjoyed a wide reputation as a credible document within New Testament canon. The Syrian church did not read the Book of Galatians as anti-nomian document.

Paul's Battle with Flesh and Spirit and the Desire to Depart

But in a larger context Christianity has been influenced by aesetic dualism. Being caught in this dilema of body and spirit, the Apostle Paul would have rather departed and be with Christ because he longed for His presence during Paul's life's troubles. (Phil 1:21-24) Even though Paul knew the righteous dead all died having not received the promises (Heb.11:13) and both the righteous and unrighteous have the

same sleep [*rephiam*] (Dan 12:2) and know not anything (Ps. 136:4). Paul looked forward to the reward God, who only has immortality (1Tim 6:14-16) would grant him at His coming (2 Tim 4:8) when he would be resuscitated [*neshamah*] (Job 33:4) **3** This anointed God gives life to all of His creatures (Ecc. 9:5); . . .”who gives breath [*neshamah*] to the people upon it, and spirit [*ruach*] to those who walk in it” (Is. 42:5)

Modern scholars such as Clark Pinnock, Dale Bruener, John Stott. L.E. Froom, Hans Kung and Ellis echo some of Dr. Bacchiocchi’s conclusions regarding the conditional view of immortality and hell and the New Testament corpus of literature speaks primarily of our relational position in Christ after death rather than an anthropological one. This growing body of scholarly evidence is bringing New Testament exegesis far closer to the Semitic model of eternal destruction discussed earlier in the covenantal curse concept. **39a-c** As Alan E. Bernstein has stated the excluded die, are destroyed or annihilated **40** While scholars such as Murray J. Harris maintain the historical position against the growing tide of non-traditional interpretators in dealing with the duration and the nature of eternal punishment. **41** Along with these changing eschatological trends our understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven is also under scrutiny by such scholars as R. G. Beasley-Murray, John Bright, and Herman Ridderbos. Theologians such as those stated previously, maintain an eschatological perspective of the Kingdom of God descending from heaven and bringing all nations into the Kingdom of God. (Rev 21:1-2) rather than the redeemed ascending upward into His presence, He will make His home and tabernacle with the redeemed. Dr. Dale Breuner explains,

We moderns, “schooled in Greece,” tend to see in God’s “I am” a present-tense *spiritual* presence of Abraham with God, which need not be disputed since there is in the New Testament a connection of some kind between the faithful dead and the Lord (cf. Lude 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21-23). But even the

Humanist-trained sixteenth-century Calvin was sufficiently at home in Hebraic thought to see Jesus's resurrectionist eschatology here: "God does *not* promise souls the survival of death, glory complete and *immediate*, and [full] enjoyment of blessedness, but delays the fulfilment of their hope *to the last day* [at the general resurrection]"**42**

This moderate view by Bruener is a compromise between the pansoulist position which maintains soul sleep during the intermediate state of death and resurrection.

Bruener's compromise deals with the connection of this intermediate state during this journey in which the Pauline corpus uses figurative language such as a ship departing from a port journeying to a far country. The soul sleep position maintains the travel of the spirit back to God as an act of preservation of the departed one rather than the spirit separate functional entity which is separate from the body. In the final eschaton heaven will not represent a place to which we ascend but the presence of God will bring the heavenly dimension to His people as the waters of healing heal the nations.

Again, Dr. Bruener explains,

Jesus, then does *not* say the faithful will be *in heaven* like angels; he says that they will be "*like angels*," that is, the faithful will become very different from what they now are; they will be wonderfully transformed human beings. (Since Sadducees did not believe in angels at all, Acts 23:8, Jesus' analogy of angels is provocative. Cf. Sand, 444.) The goal of the work of God is not angels or heaven but humanity on earth (schl., *der*, 654).**43**

Our western theological views of the Kingdom of God have garnered a great deal of mystical concepts which have been brought into the western churches' theological frame. When one examines the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* in regards to the judgement scenes which began at the moment our pre-existent soul was assigned a definite body. This theological construct is echoed when a particular appeal is made at the Egyptian ritual to the god Khnemu, the creator of bodies who is fashioning man upon the potter's wheel. And on this wheel we have the four circles of heaven, purgatory, earth and hell. As this cycle of rebirth by ascent into the heaven world and by descent in the hell

world, this timeline is circular **44** where the Hebraic model is linear with a created beginning, ascent to the apex and descent into the final eschatological outcome of all things.

In the second phase, after the general resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgement will ensure that anybody whose name cannot be found written in the Book of Life will be thrown in the burning Lake. The others will be granted eternal life on a renewed earth. The center of this world will be the new and eternal Jerusalem which the visionary sees descend from heaven and situate itself on earth.**45**

Notice once again the common imagery the biblical writers using eschatological language borrow from pagan literary traditions of ancient Egypt and redefine them to fit within the parameters of salvation history. While they reveal a similar literary order, the events are applied to a biblical revelatory timeline which will be completely fulfilled with a recreated heaven and earth.

The Theology of Romans 14: Fasting Before the Gods or Esteeming All Days Alike

Modern studies in Romans 14:1 do indicate that some early Christian congregations were indeed influenced by Hellenistic fast days due to the fact that the original Jewish congregation founded by Priscilla and Aquilla had long since apostatized and by the time of the authorship of Romans 14 A.D. 56 or 57, all vestiges of this Jewish faction were gone leaving only the vegetarians and the planetary worshippers of the Saturnalia. Paul's general counsel to the Roman, Colossian and the Galatian churches was not to fall back into the beggerly elements/pagan lists found in Gal. 4:10, "the years are then grouped into Olympiads of four years or eras of varying lengths. When Paul refers to days, months, seasons, and years in Gal 4:10, he lists categories most characteristic of a pagan time-keeping system"**46**, Neither did he wish to see the corrupt Hellenistic forces within the remaining synagogue congregations seize

control and place a yoke of bondage upon the Galatian church once again. No wonder Paul asks the question, "Oh foolish Galatians, who bewitched you?" (Gal 3:1) which is a hint of the occult forces he felt lay behind the scenes of planetary worship. So Paul counsel continues by saying for the sake of unity in these dividing congregations, let every man fast or esteem one day above another and another man esteem all days alike. Paul's attitude is similar in dealing with the Colossians when he exhorts them to let no man or teacher judge them in regards to their religious practices. One consideration worthy of contemplation is the early church would have been attempting to continue in the time-keeping practices by marking festival seasons with Jewish holy days for the following reasons:

1. A New Year's Day to begin the new life cycle for the community for the purity of their religious life and rituals.
2. All major cultures in the surrounding nations did continue in their appointed times and seasons which were dedicated to their deities.
3. Attempts to prevent further syncretism and integration with pagan cults.
4. The festival days would play a key role in understanding Christianity's biblical identity and destiny as well as preparing the early church in its evangelism to the Jewish people.

Consequently, a reinterpretation of the fulfillment of these Jewish festival days was in the making due to the fact that the Christ event had already happened for the early church and Christ was seen as our Passover who would draw all men to himself thus symbolizing the water drawing rite which was performed in the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles. This symbolic act would correspond with Jesus beginning his public call for all men who are thirsty to come unto him and drink.

4. That the Solemn Worship in the Solemn Assemblies Weekly to be carry'd on after Christ had fulfilld his Week of Tabernacling in the flesh should be on the eighth day of the Weeke. & for this end we man Consider, that on this eighth day of this Feast the last & greate day of the Feast, Christ to draw all to himselfe, & to atten his Gospell Worship on it, Joh. 7.37. stood and cryed Saying, if any man

thirst, let him come unto mee, & drink. v 38. for he that believeth on mee, as the Scripture, saith, out his belly shall flow rivers of living Waters. They had a Custom on this day to fetch much Water out of the River Shilo, a type of Christ, & the Priests poured it on the Altar, & they then Sung Isa. 12.3. With joy shall ye draw water out of the Wells of Salvation. It is thought, that Christ in respect unto that Custom presents himselfe to them now on this day, as being the Day, that Christ, upon his Tabernacling in the Flesh Should have Evangelicall assemblings of his people weekly Constituted to carry on Divine Worship upon. Hence this day was to be kept holy to God & a Solemn assembly was now to be held. & with respect hereunto is that Ezek.43.27. & upon the eighth day, & so forward, the Priests shall make your Burnt Offerings upon the Altar. & your Peace Offering.**47**

This festival was held annually from the 15th to the 21th of Tishri and was celebrated for seven days which ended in a solemn assembly with a Peace offering on the last great day. The eighth day as the Last Great Day pictured the eschatological hopes of Israel as the cisterns from which they drew water would go forth and heal the nations and never run dry. However, by the birth of the Early Church, Israel's cisterns had indeed run dry. Therefore Israel's eschatological hopes would hang in the balance and have to be fulfilled in a victorious Messiah who had previously fulfilled the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles through the development of his church and would later, during the Days of Awe, come to rescue Israel from her tribulation.

“According to Rabbi bar-Kahana (c. A.D. 130) the feast [of Tabernacles] holds within itself the promise of the Messiah. . . Again, the tractate on this feast in Jerusalem Talmud explains the name of the [water] ceremony by referring to the Isaian text. . . explaining the name ‘Place of Drawing’ from the fact that it was ‘from there that they drew the Holy Spirit.’” Most Jews, however, rejected the message of Jesus to “draw water of the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3). Instead they forsook “the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that [could] hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13).**48**

It should be noted that John the Revelator mentions the waters which flow from the rivers of life to heal the nations metaphorically showing these cisterns were replenished through the Messiah.

This, as will be seen is relevant to our interpretation of ‘the last day of the feast, the great day’ (7:37). The leafy huts were seen as an image of eschatological salvation, cf. Pesiqta 187b: ‘If any one fulfills the commandment of the feast of

Tabernacles in this world, God will in the time to come give him a share in *sukkoth* in the territory of Sodom, which God will divide among the tribes of the just. . .(Ps 60:8) 'I will exult', and when I exult, when his kingdom shines forth in the world, then I will divide Sichem, I will divide it among the tribes of my children'(Billerbeck II, 779). But we must not try to accommodate too wide a range of ideas in this third great pilgrimage feast, celebrated with such jubilation; as far as John was concerned, it was the outpouring of water and the use of festal lights which provided symbolic links with the self-revelation of Jesus. cf. the commentary on 7:37-39 and 8:12. **49**

In New Testament literature, again and again we see repeating echoes of salvation history themes which are reinterpreted and given new definition as they placed in their locations in salvation history. These themes include the Tree of Life, recurring themes of light, the symbolic purification of water, the new Eden, the new Exodus, as well as the unleavening process.

Then, as the community grows and becomes unleavened with sin and leavened by the Holy Spirit, we become a new man with a new nature. Pentecost would be seen as the beginning of the liturgical year where the Spirit would fall upon the believers who gathered to hear Peter preach. This would correspond to the giving of the Law at Sinai but fulfilling this prophetically by a grafting in of Gentiles and by writings the laws not on tables of stone, but on men's hearts. The sounding of the *shofar* would not only represent a call to battle as in Ezekial 33 with the work of the watchmen, but the trumpet would represent the sounding of gospel and a call for every man to repent (Acts 17). Christ's atonement would fulfillment *Yom Kippur* by providing a perpetual atonement for all those who believe. Historically, God's people were led as a nation as God tabernacled with them. Today we don't build booths in the wilderness due to the fact that our body is the tabernacle of God. This has been the case since the *logos* became man and tented with us that someday we would also tabernacle with God when he returns to dwell with men in the Last Great Day that fulfills the Holy Day cycle of the New Year.

The references to time in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians exclusively reflect the adoption of a Jewish Calendar. Even in a place like Corinth, Paul speaks of the first day for Sabbath (Κατε μαιν οαββστον; 1 Cor 16.2), not the day of sun. He builds an elaborate argument based upon the festivals of Passover and unleavened bread (1 Cor 5.6-8) in order to exhort the Corinthians, 'Let us keep the festival' (1Cor 5.8). Although the temporal references in Paul's letters are sparse, 1 Corinthians provides strong evidence for the Pauline adoption of the Jewish practice that marked time by Festivals and Sabbaths.**50**

It should be clearly indicated that the New Covenant deals with the Jewish festival days as symbols of the present and future realities which will take place at the final wedding feast which is memorialized by the Lord's Supper. The Jewish festival days are a wonderful illustration of God's redemptive plan of salvation but they are not included in the New Covenant contract between the Lord and His church. This is why the Pauline corpus of literature appears at first glance to be neutral regarding Jewish festival days and other Mosaic practices; but he, himself, uses them as illustrations and as a time-keeping schemes as well as eschatological fulfillment for the church and Israel. For even the rabbis have said that you can add to the revelation of Torah with liturgical practices but you cannot go contrary to it so using this paradigm, the New Covenant is built upon the foundation and the passing of the old. The New Covenant shall someday encompass all Israel.

Notice, Paul does not condemn any Jewish Holy Day practices, but simply shows we are not compelled to observe them, and therefore, adds we are not to set in judgment upon those who may possess a different conviction. In spite of this tolerance, Paul does see the that Old Testament does have a message for Christians. Again, Dr. Bacchiocchi observes,

In this perspective Paul sees that not only the observance of holy days, but that even dietary scruples can serve as a shadow, preparing Christians for the realities of the world to come. Old Testament festivals have a message for

Christians. The Passover (which today we call Easter) commemorates Christ's atoning sacrifice and proclaims His coming (Mark 14:25; I Cor. 11:26); the Unleavened Bread typifies "sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8); Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4); the Sabbath, as we have seen, the blessings of salvation, which are a foretaste of the eternal rest of God's people.⁵¹

In referencing Conybeare and Howson and the Jewish New Testament by Dr. Stern with contributors such as Roy Blizzard and Dr. David Biven, both Hebrew and Semitic scholars, this writer is advancing the following observation. When the terms *ηεροταε* (Acts) and *ηεptaζζο* (1 Cor 5:7-8) are employed in the New Testament this denote a quality of linear action of the party who is being addressed; and in a Middle Eastern frame of reference, they would always associate a feast with a literal meal and a liturgical observance with priestly songs, celebrated at an appointed time;

Among the feasts already mentioned the 'orgies of Maioumas' seem to have occupied a prominent place at Antioch. They were ordered by Commodus in the same edict by which he had instituted the Olympic games. The Orgies of Maioumas were a nocturnal feast connected with scenic performances in honour of Dionysus and Aphrodite. The feast was celebrated every third year in May. In the reign of Theodosius I, the Great (379-95) it was forbidden on account of its orgiastic character, but reinstated by his son and successor Arcadius in A.D. 396. It spread over all the provinces of the Empire and left many traces in several feasts, which were celebrated throughout the whole period of the Byzantine Empire. According to V. Cottas, the *λαγανικον ιπποδρομι*, the 'Hippodrome of Vegetables', described in "Constantine Porphyrogenetus, *De Ceremoniis*, had absorbed some of the features characteristic of the Mauoumas, and of the 'Feast of the Roses' - called *tns hastrns* - a variant of the Moioumas. On the day of the 'Hippodrome of Vegetables' the races were followed by performances by the mimes (*οι του λογιου*). The Hippodrome was adorned for the occasion with a cross of roses, and vegetables and sweets were distributed among the crowd.⁵²

Just as the Feast of Celebrations occurred on the first of March in Rome to begin the new year, the sacred new year would also begin with feasting to the purification and renewal of the emperor worshipped in the imperial cult. This patternism was borrowed from the Greeks when at the beginning of the sacred new

year, Dionysus would be reborn in the wine through symbolic ritual to newness of life.

The preceding examples of Greek and Roman festivals show conclusively that a full liturgical celebration was practiced by followers of the cults in an active ritual. This weakens the position advanced by most evangelical theologians who often suggest that the feast days referred to by Paul have just a marking in time with no permanent theological importance for the early church. If this indeed were the case, then the Apostle John in the Book of the Apocalypse would have never used eschatological symbols such as woes, seals and trumpets in his literary structure around such festival days as the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Trumpets.

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Summary and Conclusion

adopted an anti-nomian approach to scripture. Simultaneously, the Sabbatarian movements were much larger than Sabbatarian scholars such Dr. Herman Hoeh and others have previously supposed. There is evidence that the early church had spread as far east as Japan and far as south as southern Africa and as far north as northern Europe. Modern linguists such Cyrus Gordon and Barry Fell are attempting to link the ancient Celtic church with early settlements in North America. Dr. Leslie Hardinge advances the notion that the Celtic Sabbatarian church would have been the second largest dominant force within Christianity if Rome would not have eventually capsulated it. The Nestorian church of the East missionary enterprise was the dominant force in early eastern Christianity writes Stewart thus proving that there was more to Sabbatarian history than just a few scattered persecuted groups who went underground. There was truly was anti-Semitic pressure which linked both Christians

The ab

and Jews together for persecution especially due to Sabbath observance.

work on that day” (Hefele, Charles

were links inexorably together. Jews and Christians blamed each other for this. The Jewish synagogue added a nineteenth benediction to its synagogue services cursing the Christian church and by AD 115, the Christian church responded by claiming they had superceded from Israel to form a new entity because God had rejected the Jews as a nation for corporately putting the Messiah to death. This is the legacy that modern believers had inherited. May we contend for the faith once delivered to the saints and walk in the fullness of biblical revelation.

c. 364
Joseph

When t