

other end but that of bringing men to share in the divine life that has been made available to them through Christ. And so it is (Constit. 8) that 'in the liturgy we already enjoy on earth a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy which is celebrated above in that heavenly Jerusalem whither this earthly pilgrimage shall lead us, where Christ is seated on the right hand of his Father, as giver of holiness and priest of the true tabernacle; in the liturgy we join with the whole court of heaven in praising the Lord in hymns of glory; we honour the memory of the saints and hope for a share with them in the company of the blessed; we look forward to the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who will in heaven indeed be our life, with whom we shall reign in glory'.

Nothing less than that is the aim of the Liturgy—and hence of the Council's *Constitution* designed to restore it to its true dignity.

Jewish Sabbath and Christian Sunday

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There is a great movement of rapprochement taking place in the world today, not only between Christian and Christian, but also between Christian and Jew. More has been written on ecumenical work among Christians than on the Christian-Jewish dialogue, which is yet in its infancy and is perhaps regarded with the same half-conscious suspicion and diffidence that the Christian unity movement at first aroused; but the most recent news from Vatican II shows that the relation of the Church to the Synagogue is at last receiving serious attention.

It cannot, I think, be too often emphasised that there is no discontinuity between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations. St Paul in Romans II explains the relation between the covenants in terms of the growth of a tree. It is as if, he says, some branches were broken off from an olive tree and a wild olive were grafted into their place. It is not that the old tree was uprooted and a new one planted in its place; there is one

tree only. Christianity has not, to speak accurately, 'replaced' the Jewish religion; rather, the Church is the Synagogue renewed. Non-Christian Jews are branches torn off the one Judeo-Christian tree, living in a schism which in the plan of God will only be temporary, for it is Paul's clear teaching that these separated branches are to be grafted back on to their native trunk, and thus 'all Israel will be saved' (Rom. II. 26). 'Has God rejected his people? By no means . . . Have they stumbled so as to fall? Far from it. But through their trespass salvation has come to the gentiles, so as to stir Israel to emulation. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, if their failure means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean?' (Rom. II. 1, II-12).

If St Paul's message in Romans II is grasped, anti-Semitism surely becomes ludicrous for the Christian. In Pius XI's much-quoted words, spiritually we are all Semites: not merely in the sense that Israel prepared the way for Christianity; no, Israel and the Church are the same thing, the Church is, in the Apostle's phrase, 'the Israel of God'. The Jews of today are separated brothers in schism from the Church, which is their true home, branches broken off, but only temporarily, from the one tree which is both theirs and ours.

It follows from what has been said that the constituent elements of Israel—revelation, covenant, etc.—are not so much 'replaced' in the Church as exist in her in a grown-up form and achieve the maturity and fulness of their meaning. This, I trust, will emerge more clearly from an example, and I propose to devote the remainder of this article to a discussion of the institution of the Sabbath and its relation to the Christian Sunday.

The origin of the sabbath is shrouded in doubt. It may possibly have come from Mesopotamia, where there was certainly a seven-day week, but no real equivalent of the Jewish sabbath. In the Assyrian period the 1st, 7th, 21st and 28th days of the month were days of ill-omen, when certain activities were forbidden to priest and king. But if this inspired the idea of the Sabbath, a considerable metamorphosis was involved, for with the Jews the Sabbath was anything but a day of ill-omen. In the post-exilic period we find the Babylonians calling the 15th day of the month by a name very similar to the Hebrew *shabbāth*, viz. *shapattu*; this was a day of good omen, a 'day when the heart of the gods was appeased', but on the other hand nothing is said of stopping work on that day. It remains, therefore, far from conclusive that Mesopotamia was the home of the Jewish Sabbath. It seems even less likely that it came, as has also been suggested, from the Canaanites, for they do not even appear to

have possessed the institution of the week. As good a claim as any can be made for the candidature of the Kenites, with whom a number of eminent historians (e.g., Martin Noth) believe that Yahwism originated (it was in their territory that Moses received his revelation): 'Kenite' can mean 'blacksmith' and it is perhaps significant that the one thing most strenuously forbidden at first on the Sabbath was the kindling of fires: Exod. 35. 3, 'You shall not light a fire on the Sabbath day in any of your dwellings'. Cf. Num. 15. 32-36, where a man was stoned to death for collecting firewood on the Sabbath.

Wherever it originated, the Sabbath was of great antiquity in Israel, and is found in all four of the Pentateuchal traditions, J, E, P, and D. Doubtless the Sabbath, like circumcision, acquired during the Exile a greater importance than it had enjoyed previously: it was one of the things to which the Jews, cut off from the Jerusalem sacrificial system, would cling tenaciously as a distinctive token of their individuality, a badge marking them off from the heathen peoples among whom they sojourned and with whom they had to take the utmost pains not to be assimilated. Nevertheless, the Sabbath as an institution had become established long before the Exile.

The Sabbath to the Jews was rich in meaning: it was, according to the Priestly idea, a commemoration of God's rest after the work of creation ('in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the Sabbath day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it', Exod. 20. 11; cf. 31. 12-17). It was also considered simultaneously as a humane ordinance to ensure refreshment for those who needed it most, and as a memorial of the 'rest' (Deut. 12. 9) that Israel obtained when after a generation of wandering in the desert they entered the promised land: 'The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner that is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a servant yourself in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore has the Lord God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.' (Deut. 5. 14-15.)

The Sabbath was, then, a piece of humane legislation, a memorial of creation, and of the entry into Canaan. It was also, and perhaps more importantly, 'a perpetual covenant, a sign between me and the people of Israel forever' (Exod. 31. 16-17). Père de Vaux writes that the Jewish

Sabbath's 'distinctive trait lies in the fact that it is a day made holy because of its relation to the God of the Covenant; more, it is an element in that Covenant. Other religions had a day which was *tabu*; in Israel, this became a day "consecrated to Yahweh", a tithe on time'. (*Ancient Israel*, 1961, p. 480.)

By New Testament times, excessive legalism had overlaid the idea of the Sabbath as 'a delight, the holy day of the Lord' (Is. 58. 13). More attention was paid to the *how* of resting than to the *why*. Jubilees 50. 8-12, forbids the use of marriage on the Sabbath, or the preparation of food, and Josephus says of the Essenes that on the Sabbath they 'do not move any household object whatever, or allow the relieving of nature'. The Mishnah tractate *Shabbāth* goes into minute details over, for instance, the things that could not be carried on the Sabbath: it forbids 'the carrying of an article of food the size of a dried fig . . . milk to the quantity of a mouthful, honey sufficient to cover a wound, oil sufficient to anoint a small limb, and water in quantities sufficient for a medical eye-bath'.

We turn now to a discussion of the New Testament treatment of the Sabbath—and of the Sunday. Before we speak of John 5, which contains the most *ex professo* statement on the subject, a word should be said about the Sabbath in the Synoptics. Here the emphasis is on the Sabbath as a means to an end; the Sabbath is not an absolute to which all things must bow; curing a man or even drawing an ox from a pit overrules the Sabbath law, for 'the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (Mark 2. 27). The excessive legalism, Christ is saying, which had come to surround the Sabbath defeated one of the main aims of the law, humanity.

In John 5, the evangelist records how a man paralysed for thirty-eight years was lying at the pool of Bethzatha (the form of the name is uncertain: Bethesda and Bethsaida are also possible readings), and was cured by Christ on the Sabbath day, and how Christ replied to the Jews who quoted the Sabbath law against him.

The whole episode is replete with symbolism and must be treated *in extenso*. The first question to occur to the mind is perhaps why the evangelist mentions the detail of the thirty-eight years. It is not like St John to record a nicety of that sort merely because of its historicity, merely because, so to say, that's the way it happened. If, for instance, he says that the miracle ('sign', *sêmeion*, is the Johannine word) of Cana took place 'on the third day' (2. 1. cf. 11. 6: the raising of Lazarus also occurred on a third day), it is because he wishes to establish a connection between that event and Christ's resurrection 'on the third day': Cana

was where Christ first 'manifested his glory' (2. 11), while the resurrection was *the* manifestation of it. So here John wishes us to see in the paralytic a type of Israel, which according to Deut. 2. 14 spent not exactly forty years in the wilderness, as in other passages, but *thirty-eight years*. The healing of the paralytic is a *sêmeion* of a new exodus and a new entry of a promised land, effected by Christ. Christ at his coming found Israel, in the person of the cripple, lying prostrate and looking to God for intermittent acts of mercy ('for an angel of the Lord went down *at certain times* into the pool'). In contrast to these occasional graces stands the once-for-all healing word of Christ: 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'.

It is important to recall at this juncture a point made before, that in the Old Testament the institution of the Sabbath was thought of as a memorial not only of the divine rest after creation, but also of Israel's rest in Canaan after her years of wandering: 'You shall do no work . . . You were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. *Therefore* the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day' (Deut. 5. 15). The Sabbath rest which Joshua won for his people is summed up in his conquest of Jericho 'on the seventh day' (Josh. 6. 4).

What, if any, is the significance in John 5 of the 'five porches' which the pool had? St Augustine is surely right in seeing in them a representation of the five books of Moses, typifying the Old Dispensation: 'These five porches', Augustine wrote, 'signified the law, which bears the sick but does not heal them, discovers them but does not cure them'.

The paralytic, then, symbolises the whole Jewish people who had made the thirty-eight year exodus from Egypt and had settled in the land of promise, and possessed therefore, in some sort, the Sabbath rest. But, says the evangelist, Canaan was not the real rest that God had in mind for his people (cf. Heb. 4. 8), otherwise, why should the cripple still be waiting?

If the possession of Canaan was not the real rest, was it perhaps the weekly Sabbath day that constituted that rest? Assuredly not, for Christ openly disobeys and sets aside the Sabbath day by telling the cripple to carry his bed, an action clearly opposed to the words of the prophet: 'Bear no burden on the Sabbath day nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem' (Jer. 17. 19-27). Cullmann is surely correct in interpreting this incident to mean that Christ in giving the man the command to carry his bed on the Sabbath was deliberately abrogating Sabbath observance. To quote Augustine again: 'The Lord is clearly saying that

the sacrament of the Sabbath and the symbolic observance of one day in the week had been given to the Jews as a temporary thing; and that the fulfilment of the sacrament had now been realised in himself'.

But what does Christ mean when he goes on to say, in answer to the Jewish protests, 'my Father works until now and I work'? Just this, I think, that God does not keep the Sabbath, therefore why should his Son.

To say that God does not observe the Sabbath may at first appear a truism, until we look at first century Judaism. It was the teaching of the Book of Jubilees, a century before Christ, that the Sabbath was observed not only on earth but also in heaven, if not by God himself at least by his angels, and we know that round about 95 A.D. four distinguished Rabbis, Gamaliel II, Joshua ben Chananiah, Eliezer ben Azariah and Akiba paid a visit to Rome and were asked by the Romans if God observed his own commandments and kept the Sabbath. They replied affirmatively, with qualifications, saying that God continued working—but without violation of the Sabbath: they 'proved that God carried no burden beyond his own dwelling (i.e. heaven and earth), or to a greater distance than his own stature; his work therefore falls within permissible limits' (Dodd).

Christ goes in for none of this equivocation. No, he says in effect, God does not keep the Sabbath, nor does his Son; nor, henceforth, are men to keep it. For the Sabbath has been set aside—or rather has been superseded and fulfilled. The Sabbath, says Christ, is only a foreshadowing of himself, who is (in the words of St Epiphanius) 'the great Sabbath, which is the Lord (Christ) himself, our rest and our Sabbath-keeping'. This notion is already contained in the synoptic gospels, for in Matt. 12 the story of the disciples' breaking of the Sabbath law by plucking ears of wheat is deliberately placed immediately after Christ's words: 'Come to me, you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. It is Christ himself, we are to understand, not the Sabbath day, which constitutes the Sabbath rest that God has to offer.

We may compare the way in which Christ in his own person sums up and supersedes another Old Testament institution, the temple. 'The Word was made flesh, and pitched his tabernacle in our midst' (John 1. 14): this literal rendering brings out the evangelist's idea, to which he reverts again and again, that the place of tabernacle and temple in the old dispensation is occupied in the new by Christ himself. Henceforward, the shrine, the tabernacle of the presence of God with men, would not be a building made with hands, but 'the temple of his (Christ's) body'

(John 2. 21). On the cross, water would flow from the side of Christ, for Christ in his fleshly body was the fulfilment of that temple seen by Ezekiel in his *Vidi Aquam*: 'Behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple . . . wherever the water goes every living creature that swarms will live' (Ezek. 47; cf. Zech. 14. 8, Apoc. 22. 1-2). Already in his lifetime Christ had referred to himself as the meaning of Ezekiel's vision, when at the feast of Tabernacles, at which the text of Ezekiel was one of the set readings, he had cried aloud that out of *himself* streams of living water would flow (John 7. 38); this he said, comments the evangelist, 'about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit was not (or, had not been given) because Jesus was not yet glorified'. Christ, then, in his body was the new temple of God, whence the Spirit of God, typified by water, was to be imparted to the whole world when he was 'raised up' at his crucifixion and resurrection. It is significant that in mentioning the actual moment of death of Christ John does not, like the other evangelists, write that he 'gave up the spirit' (*aphienai*, Matt.) or 'expired' (Mark, Luke: *ekpnein*), both simple statements of fact, but that he 'handed on the spirit' (*paradidonai*; the same word as is used of the handing on of doctrine and traditions); here at the moment of death Christ's glorification has come, his 'hour' has arrived, and he 'hands on' his spirit 'to those that believe in him'; the soldier then pierces his side and water, the visible representation of the spirit which Christ has just handed on, flows forth, proclaiming Christ the temple, the shrine where God and man find their meeting-point.

To return to John 5, just as Christ is the temple of God, so also is he the Sabbath of God. 'My Father is working until now, and I work'. Yes, but the time is coming when Christ will work no longer: 'We must work the works of him that sent me while it is yet day. The night comes, when no man can work' (John 9. 4). The work here spoken of, as the context makes clear, is the work of saving and healing. A time will come when Christ's salvific work will be over—*Consummatum est*, he will cry. At that time the father's work, the father's salvific work, that is, will also have reached its term. This is clear from the fact that Christ's work and the father's is one: 'The son cannot do anything of himself, he can only do what he sees his father doing; whatever the father does, that the son does likewise' (John 5. 19). The time will come, the evangelist implies, when God in Christ will cease from his work, will in fact keep a Sabbath. Christ's death, with its triumphant cry 'It is finished' completes God's salvific works, and Christ's subsequent resurrection ushers in a day of

rest which will continue eternally, a day of rest which is now Christ's already and will be ours too hereafter.

Thus though the old Sabbath now stands abolished, we are not without a Sabbath of our own. In the words of Heb. 4. 9 'there remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God'. Just as we are united to the Christ who is the temple of God ('be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual temple', I Peter 2. 5), so we are united to the Christ who is the Sabbath-rest of God. Christ at his crucifixion-resurrection rested from all his works; in that rest we are privileged to share.

Now we know from the Acts of the Apostles that in Apostolic times the Church was already celebrating the resurrection by setting apart the first day of the week for the holding of the eucharist. The apostles in gathering round a table and 'breaking bread' were commemorating the crucifixion and resurrection, which constituted the 'Sabbath-rest of God'. Each Sunday they celebrated the new Sabbath. 'It is scarcely conceivable', as Cullmann says, 'that the fourth evangelist, in justifying . . . the superseding of the Jewish Sabbath by the new conception of the divine rest, had not already in mind the *Lord's Day* of the Christian community.'

Thus the Christian Sunday came to supersede the Jewish Sabbath; and yet, it is by no means an exact replacement of it. It would be a great mistake to think that the Mosaic Sabbath has by a divine or ecclesiastical ordinance been transferred to a different day of the week. No more do Christian churches 'replace' the temple. What replaces the temple, what occupies the function of the temple in the new dispensation is Christ himself, and it is Christ too who takes the place of the Sabbath. He in his resurrection is the new Sabbath of God, in which we are all to share in the eschatological future: 'The true Sabbath . . . will be the world to come' (Origen). But since Christian eschatology is realised eschatology, and since the kingdom of heaven is a present as well as a future reality, we already in some sort partake of it. One day each week we lay down our tools and commemorate the resurrection, not by a mere 'memorial' of it but by sharing in it inasmuch as we partake of the eucharistic body of the risen Christ, the Sabbath of God. And indeed, not only on Sundays do we partake in that Sabbath, but every day on which we receive Christ is for us a Sabbath day.