

Chapter 2

The Memorial of Israel's Redemption

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

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

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

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

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

THE SABBATH AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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

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

REST AND WORSHIP ON THE MOSAIC SABBATH

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MOSAIC SABBATH IN PALESTINIAN JUDAISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MOSAIC SABBATH IN THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF CHRIST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MOSAIC SABBATH IN THE TEACHING OF PAUL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 2 (pp. 13-29)

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

- to Adam also? Yes, replied Rabbi Jose in the name of Rabbi Hiyya, for, as is universally agreed, that law exists by reason of the precepts imposed upon the world at all eras' (*Jer. Kilaim* 1.7).
7. Cp. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 343. For the papyri references, see LS. Another word of similar meaning used by Philo is *proseuktērion* (*De Vita Mosis* 2.216).
 8. For a discussion of these passages, see the commentaries of Plummer, Strack-Billerbeck, and Geldenhuys, ad loc.
 9. This is the case with Hirsch, in his article 'Sabbath', in *JE*.
 10. The inconsistency in the case of the cripple is aggravated by the fact that the Mishnah permits a man to be carried out on his couch on the sabbath (*Shabbath* 10.5). Yet when Jesus heals such a man, the man is forbidden to carry his couch back again! It should be mentioned here that one act of necessity apart from those that occur in the Old Testament had been clearly recognised by the Jews as permissible since the time of the Maccabees, namely, self-defence (1 Macc. 2:29-41; 9:43-47; Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.4.2f., or 14:63f., etc.). In the case of the satisfying of hunger, this can be regarded both as an act of necessity (when considered as the disciples' own act) and as an act of mercy (when considered as the act of Christ, who sanctioned it). In the latter respect, it is all of a piece with the saving of life, as the remainder of this paragraph shows, and as has already been remarked in note 9 on p. 146.
 11. Rordorf's claim that Christ singled out the sabbath as the day on which to do his healings, in order to show that it had no authority for him (op. cit., pp. 65f.), is quite arbitrary. The fact that six of the healings recorded are on the sabbath simply indicates that they were remembered because of their novel and controversial character and the teaching to which they led. Many healings on weekdays are also recorded, not to mention exorcisms and raisings of the dead.
 12. *Jubilees* and CD also recognise the need to make an exception in the case of the sabbath sacrifices (somewhat grudgingly in the case of the latter work), but this school of thought was less likely to be in the forefront of Christ's mind than Pharisaism, with which he was in continual contact.
 13. This ceremonialism was to a considerable extent based upon a rigorous interpretation of Exod. 16:29 and Jer. 17:21f., divorced from their contexts of gathering the manna and trade. The rabbis pressed these texts to mean that no one must for any purpose leave his city or carry anything out of his house. Christ may well have rejected these interpretations altogether, as he would certainly have rejected the evasion of the 'erub by which the rabbis attempted to mitigate the rigour of their own exegesis.
 14. A different conclusion might be drawn from the saying in Matt. 12:5f., where the temple takes precedence over the sabbath, yet even the temple is being fulfilled and replaced. The inference is that the same is true of the sabbath. But what is in view here is not, as in Mark 2:27, the sabbath in its primeval form, but the sabbath in its Mosaic form, with its appointed sacrifices and its rigid restrictions on work. It is the appointed sacrifices that take precedence over the rigid restrictions

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