

"Tertia Die, Secundum Scripturas"

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BEHIND THE CREDAL AFFIRMATION *tertia die resurrexit*, there is an expression of biblical sentiment which it may be useful to investigate. As this sentence now stands it no longer conveys what it was meant to convey when first formulated.

In our minds we usually associate the Christian Sunday with the Old Testament Sabbath and we regard it as the ecclesiastical equivalent to the weekly rest-day in Judaism. Where Jews, Muslims, and Christians live side by side, the difference in their weekly observance is looked upon as an effort to preserve their respective distinctions. If everyone observed the same day this would create confusion in the minds of the faithful. Jews claim that the Sunday was purposely chosen to forestall "Judaizing." They explain that Christians, desiring not to be mistaken for Jews, specially at the time of Jewish persecution under Hadrian, adopted the Sunday as a distinguishing mark. It is suggested that they did this "to avoid exposing themselves to suspicion."¹

Apart from any definite evidence, the difficulty with this kind of argument is the fact that the first day of the week is embedded in the earliest Christian documents. It is the contention of this paper that the first day of the week carried eschatological significance and had something to do with the fulfilment of the messianic hope. Sunday was an extension of the Sabbath and had little to do with a desire to keep Church and Synagogue separate. That it later served such a purpose is a matter which has no connection with Christian origins.

I. THE THIRD DAY

There is unanimity within the tradition of the New Testament that the Messiah rose on the third day after his crucifixion. This is a fact specially emphasized by the Synoptics. Though there may be some doubt about the exact date of the Last Supper in relation to Passover, there is no doubt whatsoever that Jesus died on the Friday. The early Church claimed that he rose from the dead on the third day, i.e., Sunday, or, according to the Hebrew idiom, the first day of the week. This conviction is already reflected in the passion prophecies (Mark 8:31; Matt. 16:21; Luke 18:33). These prophecies are repeated in two of the Gospels and again "the third day" is specified (Mark 9:31; Matt. 17:23).

The accusation on the part of the "pseudo-martyres" at the trial of Jesus is of special interest. They testify to the fact that Jesus threatened to destroy

1. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, X, 604a.

the temple and to build another one not built with hands (Mark 14:58; cf. Matt. 26:61). But the Fourth Gospel attributes these very words to Jesus himself (John 2:19). The witnesses are called false, therefore, not because they invented a lie but only because of the construction they put upon these words and the motive which prompted them to testify.

The question of the temple plays a part in the condemnation of Jesus and must have been the subject of a prolonged controversy with the representatives of the established order. There is a hidden resistance to the temple cult in the New Testament, which reappears at the trial of Jesus, in the jeering of the passers-by while Jesus hangs on the Cross, and in the speech of Stephen (cf. Matt. 27:40; Acts 6:14).²

The Johannine Gospel provides us with a clue to the theology behind the controversy regarding the cult: "He spoke of the temple of his body" (John 2:21). It is the Messiah's task to reconstitute Israel's worship on a more spiritual basis.³ Reference to the "three days" by John thus confirms the Synoptic tradition regarding the Messiah's resurrection on the day after the Sabbath. The "three days," as we shall see later, is only a different way of saying that the Messiah rose from the dead on the first day of the week. The Synoptics seem to attach special importance to this fact. Thus the angels at the tomb remind the disciples that their Master foretold his rising on the *third* day (Luke 24:7). The risen Christ tells two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Thus it is written that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (Luke 24:46). This passage in Luke is of special importance, for it reaffirms the oldest and most primitive Christian tradition which links the "third day" as the day of the resurrection to the testimony of scripture.

St. Paul tells us that the Messiah "was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4). From the context it is evident that the Apostle is especially concerned to stress that this is a tradition he himself received and is passing on to others. Zimmerli and Jeremias rightly look upon this text as the "primitive kerygma . . . based on a semitic original."⁴ The association of the "third day" with scriptural evidence in Luke may well derive from the same source and represents almost a credal profession.

There is a chronological difficulty involved in the statement. If Jesus rose on "the third day" after Friday, then according to Jewish tradition, which starts the day with the previous night, this would have been Monday morning. It is usually explained, however, that the Sunday tradition presupposes

2. Hans Joachim Schoeps discusses the hostility to the cult on the part of Jewish Christianity. Cf. *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), pp. 220-33. But the present writer is inclined to allow even stronger prophetic influence upon messianic thinking than Schoeps does. Cf. J. Jocz, *The Spiritual History of Israel* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), pp. 82ff.

3. Cf. Leonard Goppelt, *Christentum und Judentum* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1954), p. 65.

4. W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, *The Servant of God* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1957), pp. 88.

the Roman reckoning which counts the day from dawn to dusk. This may well be the case, but it raises a further problem with regard to Matt. 12:40, which reads: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." On neither reckoning can there be three days and three nights between Friday night and Sunday morning.

Commentators seek to resolve the difficulty by reference to a *halakhic* rule whereby part of a day is counted for a whole.⁵ But it seems to us that the more likely explanation is to see in the Matthew passage a typical *midrashic* effort to find a suitable text in the Old Testament which would give countenance to the statement that it all happened "in accordance with the Scriptures."⁶ If this is an admissible assumption it would mean that we find already in this Gospel an effort to provide a proof-text for an otherwise embarrassing statement that the Messiah rose on the third day *according to Scripture*.

This raises two problems: Why is such emphasis placed upon the "third day"? What is the connection with the Old Testament?

II. ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

It has been suggested that the reason for the insertion of the clause the "third day" has something to do with an ancient belief that three days must intervene between two important events.⁷ James Moffatt even points to the custom on the part of Isis votaries who "celebrated the recovery of their deity three days after his murder." The argument seems far-fetched and unconvincing. The same applies to the effort by Strack and Billerbeck to show from a rabbinic source that the "third day" carried special significance in the Jewish mind. They call attention to *Bereshit Rabba* on the text in Gen. 22:4: "On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes." But on verification it transpires that this old *midrash*, in true rabbinic fashion, indulges in the pastime of collecting scriptural texts which record events taking place on "the third day." There seems to be no significance attached to the "third day" as such.⁸ Clement of Alexandria showed greater ingenuity when he turned to Lev. 23:9-11: "As the sheaf was to be lifted on the morrow after the Sabbath so the Son of God was raised on the third day."⁹

There would be no problem about the "third day" had it not been linked to the statement that it happened *kata tas graphas*. It is to be noted that

5. Cf. H. C. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (4 vols., Munich: C. H. Beck, 1922-28), 1922-28, vol. I, p. 649.

6. C. H. Turner regards Matt. 12:40 as nothing but an affirmation that the Messiah rose on the third day, but such simplification does violence to the text. Cf. *New Commentary*, edited by Charles Gore (London: S.P.C.K., 1928), p. 80.

7. So James Moffatt, *First Corinthians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), pp. 237f.

8. Cf. Aug. Wünsche, *Der Midrasch Bereschit Rabba* (Leipzig: Otto Schulze, 1880), Vol. I, p. 265.

9. Alluded to by James Moffatt, *First Corinthians*, p. 238. I have not been able to trace the quotation.

apart from 1 Cor. 15:4 the expression "in accordance with the Scriptures" occurs nowhere else in connection with the "third day" and is only hinted at in Luke 24:46. Acts 10:40 simply states: "God raised him on the third day."

We turn now to the problem of scriptural evidence. There appear to be two methods employed by New Testament writers in their appeal to the Hebrew Bible for verification. These methods frequently overlap and are employed almost simultaneously.

One method is to quote a suitable proof-text irrespective of the original context, in the same way as the rabbis. Such "direct" application of a text has an old-established tradition behind it and was useful in apologetic controversy. Jewish Christians had to justify their faith in the Messiahship of Jesus and this they could only do by an appeal to Scripture. It is unfortunate that the later Church under quite different circumstances still proceeded to employ the same method, which gave the impression that the authenticity of the Christian faith depended entirely on exegetical verification from the Old Testament. This suggestion overlooked the fact that such a direct use of texts made faith in Jesus as Messiah dependent upon exegetical procedure. Such a procedure bypasses the existential challenge in the encounter with Jesus of Nazareth and makes faith a matter of exposition of messianic texts. The tradition that the approach to Jews can only be by way of such texts has been a basic weakness in the missionary endeavour of the Church.¹⁰ Faith in Jesus as Messiah must not depend upon texts, though such texts add meaning and historical background to the Christian faith. But faith must be primary and personal. The disciples first believed and only afterwards found the "proofs" in Holy Writ. The New Testament bears witness to the fact that it is the Messiah who takes the initiative. "Follow me" is the invitation; only subsequently are those who accept the challenge able to say: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45). The recognition of this fact is important not only in missionary strategy, but also in the field of theology where the exegesis of messianic texts is frequently given a disproportionate importance.

The second method treats the Old Testament thematically and in a given context. Here whole aspects of biblical thought are used typologically to illustrate the truth of the gospel. An outstanding example is the Letter to the Hebrews. Moses, Aaron, the temple cult, the priesthood, the Patriarchs, the Suffering Servant, are treated in such a way that the significance and function of the Messiah are illuminated.¹¹ In the case of Paul we find both methods employed interchangeably. But it seems to me that he relied on the second method more heavily. The wandering through the wilderness, the Law, the Covenant, the People of God, the election, redemption, faith,

10. Cf. J. Jocz, "Das exegetische Problem und die Judenmission," *Judaica*, 1 (1956), pp. 1ff.

11. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 6.

and many other subjects are treated with the Old Testament as the proper background. Another example is the speech of defence on the part of St. Stephen, unfortunately never concluded. Here the history of the Hebrew people in its totality as *Heilsgeschichte* is skilfully unfolded as the canvas of God's mighty acts leading to the Messiah at the end of time. Such treatment of the Old Testament does not depend upon isolated texts, which can only serve to illustrate a point, but helps towards a total view of God's purpose with his people.

A special case is the incident when Jesus answers the facetious question about the resurrection (Matt. 22:32). At first sight it would seem that our Lord depends upon a single text or even the tense of an auxiliary verb: *I am* the God of your father, the God of Abraham . . ." (Exod. 3:6). But a closer view reveals a principle underlying the whole record of divine revelation: namely, that God is only in the present. Though the appeal is to one single text, the whole witness of the Bible serves as the background; if God is God, he can only be the living God and therefore death cannot remove us from his reach.

That the Messiah was raised by the mighty hand of God on the third day, "according to Scripture, "has something to do with this idea of totality.¹² There is an obvious embarrassment on the part of those who transmitted the primitive tradition. We have seen that the editor of the Matthaean Gospel was already trying to find a suitable text to meet the case. The difficulty was aggravated by the clause "the third day." Exegetes have struggled with the problem ever since. Here is Calvin's comment on 1 Cor. 15:4: "Now there are many passages of Scripture in which Christ's death and resurrection are predicted, but nowhere more plainly than in Isaiah 53, in Daniel 9:26, and in Psalm 22."¹³ Yet on perusal none of these passages are appropriate. Bengel, who is a most meticulous commentator, evades the difficulty with a generality: "quae non impleri non potuerunt"¹⁴—and this is his only comment on the statement that the Messiah rose on "the third day in accordance with Scripture." Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer obviates the difficulty by reading the text in such a way that the reference to Scripture in v. 4 is merely a repetition of v. 3, which states "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."¹⁵ Other commentators are equally uncertain. Thus Ethelbert Stauffer, as is usual, refers to Hos. 6:2 and explains: "God's people in the last day will be quickened to life. . . . So God's anointed was raised 'on the third day according to Scripture.'"¹⁶ He then proceeds to quote some New Testament references with the cryptic remark, "instead of a Scripture proof," leaving the reader more puzzled than ever. Zimmerli and Jeremias make no com-

12. On the subject of totality in Semitic thought-forms, cf. the valuable remarks by M. E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1962), pp. 59ff.

13. Calvin, *Commentary on Corinthians*, *ad loc.*

14. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, *ad loc.*

15. Cf. H. A. W. Meyer, *Commentary on Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881), *ad loc.*

16. E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955), p. 136.

ment, except to observe that the text derives from a "pre-Synoptic tradition."¹⁷ The marginal reference in the RSV tops the list by pointing to Ps. 16:8-9. This psalm, which breathes supreme faith in God who will not allow his saints to see the pit, would fit any other verse of 1 Cor. 15 equally well. M. E. Dahl has already pointed to the difficulties raised by the "accepted exegesis" and has shown that no text in the Old Testament can be fittingly used as a reference.¹⁸

III. THE SABBATH REST

So far I have been using the phrase "the third day," which delimits the time between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, but the New Testament also uses another expression: "the first day of the week." To my mind both phrases intend to say the same thing: between the Death and the Resurrection of the Messiah there was an intervening day and this day was the Sabbath. It is our conviction that the intervening Sabbath provides the clue to the puzzling statement that the Messiah rose on the "third day according to Scripture." The reason why we find it difficult to see the connection is the fact that we no longer think in the Old Testament categories of the primitive Church. First, we have become accustomed to look for isolated texts of reference. Second, the Sabbath with its awe-inspiring sanctity is a foreign experience to us. It is only when we realize the pervasive importance of the Sabbath rest in the whole psychological and sociological structure of Hebrew society that it becomes possible to appreciate the import of our contention.

Everyone knows that the question of the Sabbath is pre-eminent in the controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees. Tractate *Shabbat* in the oldest code outside the Canon, the *Mishnah*, conveys something of the scrupulous care with which the Sabbath was treated:

A tailor should not go out with a needle [on Friday] near nightfall lest he forget [and find himself carrying a burden], nor should a scrivener [go out] with a pen. . . .¹⁹

A person may not suck vinegar if his teeth pain but he may take vinegar in the usual fashion [i.e., with his meal], and if he is healed, he is healed.²⁰

Healing is forbidden on the Sabbath, except in cases when life is in danger. Toothache does not endanger life; therefore the use of vinegar as a remedy is interdicted. If, however, in the ordinary use of vinegar the pain ceases, so much the better for the sufferer. This gives us some idea of the seriousness with which the Sabbath rest is treated. We meet a somewhat similar attitude in the Gospel: "Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath" (Matt. 24:20). In this passage, set in the context of an

17. W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, *The Servant of God*, p. 90, n. 405.

18. Cf. M. E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body*, pp. 20ff.

19. *Shabbat*, 1:3. Cf. H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 100, n. 2.

20. *Shabbat*, 14:4.

apocalyptic catastrophe, we receive a glimpse of how the primitive Church felt about the Sabbath rest. It is a mistake to think that Jesus abrogated the Sabbath. His contention with the Pharisees was not concerning the holiness of the Seventh Day but concerning the mode of its use in the service of God.

Like Jesus, the rabbis also knew that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.²¹ But in their zeal for the institution they overlooked the most important aspect of charity. There is no question of the validity of the Sabbath as a sacred commandment and nowhere in the New Testament is the Sabbath deliberately broken. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* misunderstands the Pauline attitude when it quotes Col. 2:16 and Gal. 4:10 to prove that the Apostle was an enemy of the Sabbath day.²² Such a position would be utterly unworthy of a God-fearing Jew. St. Paul never questions the holiness of the Law; he only despairs of his ability to keep it. What he questions is not the observance of the Sabbath, but man's conceit in his attempt to justify himself before God by fulfilling the commandments.²³

It is only in the context of the Sabbath rest that the first day of the week as the day of the Resurrection becomes meaningful. For the primitive Church the Sabbath was not just an institution but a day of cosmic importance; God himself rested on the Seventh Day. This day marks the completion of creation and is different in nature from the rest of the week. It has been suggested that the Seventh Day is not an addition to the six days but is a day apart; it points to the ultimate eschatological fulfilment of creation in the divine Sabbath.

Adam's fall constitutes the disruption of God's day of rest. From henceforth participation in the day of rest implies participation in the divine act of redemption as embodied in the Covenant.²⁴ It means that the Sabbath is incomplete while there is still sin and death in this world. The observance of the Sabbath day can only be a faint foreshadowing of the great Sabbath rest which still awaits God's people (Heb. 4:9). It is in this perspective that the Fourth Gospel views the saving work of the Messiah. Jesus heals on the Sabbath day for there can be no real Sabbath while man groans under the yoke of sin. When the Jews object to his breaking of the Sabbath commandment, his answer is: "My Father is still working and so am I" (John 5:17). He, the Apostle of God (cf. Heb. 3:1), must work the work of him who sent him while it is still day (John 9:4). Implied in this utterance is the meaning that there can be no rest for God nor for his Messiah, while the world is unsaved.²⁵ The day will run its course, the night will come, when

21. Cf. *Mekilta*, on Exod. 31:13.

22. Cf. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, X, 603b.

23. Contrast Paul's attitude with that of Simeon b. Yohai, who held that Israel could be redeemed by keeping two Sabbaths perfectly; cf. *Shabbat*, 118b.

24. Andor Szabó notes that the *massoretic* text differs from the LXX in that the creation is completed "on the seventh day" (cf. Gen. 2:2). Szabó's article "Sabbat und Sonntag," *Judaica*, 3 (1959), pp. 161ff., is most stimulating.

25. Cf. A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes* (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1930), p. 146.

no man can work. But the Son of Man is not to be taken by surprise; not until he hung upon the Cross did the cry break from his lips: *tetelestai; consummatum est!* (John 19:30). For the Church the cry marked the completion of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ. The power of sin was broken; reconciliation had taken place; God was now at rest; the Great Sabbath Day had broken upon the world.

The Sabbath between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection must be viewed under three aspects, each carrying a validity of its own.

(a) It would have been utterly impossible for a Hebrew Christian in the primitive Church to think that God would raise the Messiah on the Sabbath day. Such action would set God in contradiction to his own law. This could never be; man may break the Sabbath but God always stands by his word.²⁶

(b) The intervening Sabbath introduces an element of suspense between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, while the messianic community braces itself for the last act in the drama of redemption; the present age is approaching its destined end under the sign of the Law. The Age to Come is breaking in under the sign of redemption. The interval between the two chapters in the divine-human drama is marked by the suspense of the Sabbath. After the clanging noise and the bitter turmoil of the Friday Crucifixion there is a space of silence both in heaven and in earth while the elect wait with bated breath for God to speak his last word.

(c) The end of this age concludes with the last Sabbath day. But it is not a day to pass as was the case with all the other Sabbaths since creation. This last Sabbath is open, pointing towards the *eschaton*,²⁷ the ultimate consummation when the saints of God will rest from all their labours (Rev. 14:13).

IV. THE EIGHTH DAY

People accustomed to symbolic language invest ordinary expressions with esoteric meaning. The first day after Sabbath (John 20:1), when Mary Magdalene met with the risen Christ in the garden, was not just the beginning of another week. This was a special day and this was a special week. In the context of the resurrection-experience it was still Sabbath and more so; this was the Lord’s Day, never to be forgotten.

Once we accept C. W. Dugmore’s contention that the term *hē kuriakē* in the early patristic writings is frequently a reference to Easter and not just to the ordinary Sunday, the question of the Mosaic Sabbath in the observance of the Church is raised all over again.²⁸ It is true that Justin

26. The Church distinguished between the ceremonial laws and the Ten Commandments. There is never a suggestion that the *Ten Words* had been annulled as a result of the Messiah’s coming. Cf. Goppelt, *Christentum und Judentum*, p. 205; J. Jocz, *A Theology of Election* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), p. 73.

27. Cf. Szabó, “Sabbat und Sonntag,” p. 162.

28. Cf. C. W. Dugmore, “Lord’s Day and Easter,” in *Neotestamentica et Patristica, in honour of Oscar Cullmann* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), pp. 276ff.

already hints at the unimportance of the Sabbath observance,²⁹ and that Tertullian plainly says that the Old Testament Sabbath belongs to the temporal order which is destined to be done away with and was never meant to be observed in perpetuity.³⁰ But, on the other hand, Dugmore is able to find enough evidence to claim "as a matter of historical fact" that "the Sabbath did not disappear as a Christian day of worship until the late fourth or early fifth century."³¹ This was specially the case in Hebrew Christian circles, as is evident from the *Apostolic Constitutions* where the Sabbath day and the day of the Lord's resurrection are clearly specified as two consecutive days of worship.³²

That the question of the Sabbath was not conclusively solved even in the Gentile Church is evident from Tertullian's remark that he knew Christians who abstained from kneeling on the Sabbath day. Tertullian has nothing against the custom but he points out that according to his own tradition it is the day of the Lord's resurrection when kneeling ought not to be practised; he obviously refers to Easter, which Christians observe as a day of rejoicing and on which therefore they do not kneel.³³ In view of the fact that within the Jewish tradition the Sabbath carried eschatological significance so that the children of Israel already participated in the '*olam haba*' by observing the day of rest,³⁴ H. Riesenfeld's suggestion that the Sunday was a "prolongation of the Sabbath" is well justified.³⁵

This brings to the fore the fundamental question as to the messianic meaning of Sunday.

It is the view of this writer that "the day after the sabbath" in the original Christian setting indicated the beginning of the "messianic week." The day which goes beyond the last day of creation³⁶, i.e., beyond the seventh day, is not the first day of the usual week, but the eighth day—the day of the New Age. This is how *Barnabas* describes the Day of the Lord. We find preserved for us in this epistle a primitive tradition which treats the Day of the Lord as an eschatological extension of the Sabbath day. Here Sunday does not displace the Sabbath as yet, but only extends it towards the *eschaton*. The Sabbath as such retains its validity because it is the sign of the completion of creation, of the Covenant, and is part of the Decalogue. But the "eighth day" is added for it marks "the beginning of another world."³⁷ The epistle explains the reason why "we observe

29. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 23.

30. Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos*, 4.

31. Dugmore, "Lord's Day and Easter," p. 279.

32. *Apostolic Constitutions*, II, 49.

33. Tertullian, *De oratione*, 23; cf. also *De corona*, 3: "We count fasting or kneeling in worship on the Lord's day to be unlawful." This is an interesting remark and corresponds to the *halakhic* rule in respect to the sabbath: "On a Sabbath day it is forbidden to go without food until midday"; in other words, it is a day of joy. Cf. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, V, 349a.

34. Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, Vol. IV, p. 839.

35. Quoted by Dugmore, "Lord's Day and Easter," p. 280.

36. Cf. Gen. 2:2. It is of interest that *Barnabas* follows the Massoretic text as against the LXX (cf. *Barnabas*, 15).

37. *Ho estin allou kosmou archēn* as the opposite of '*olam ha-zeh*' is a Greek way of translating the Hebrew phrase '*olam ha-b'a*'.

the eighth day with joyfulness," because it is the day "on which Jesus rose from the dead."³⁸ Here, the Sabbath, the eighth day, and the day of the Resurrection form one single whole and all relate to the *eschaton*.

A less reliable document is the so-called "long recension" of the Ignatian epistles. Though Bishop Lightfoot warns against placing "independent value"³⁹ upon this spurious version, the document dates from the fourth century and thus bears witness to a Christian position held at least in some circles of the Church. We therefore feel justified in quoting a passage of this version from the Letter to the Magnesians, though we do so with caution: "After the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days."⁴⁰ That this passage has an unmistakable eschatological flavour is undeniable. The reference to the Lord's Day as the "queen" is an obvious allusion to the rabbinic designation of the Sabbath.⁴¹ But what is more important is the expression, "chief of all the days"; it means that the Lord's day is at the head of all the days and their consummation. There are other indications to show that the Church attached to the Sabbath eschatological significance. We refer, for example to a fragment ascribed to Victorinus, Bishop of Petau, which expresses the hope that "the true Sabbath will be in the seventh millenary of years when Christ with his elect shall reign."⁴²

The Lord's day thus points to the hope of ultimate fulfilment and the eighth day stands as the sign of renewal. The hope of renewal belongs to the very substance of the messianic age. It goes hand in hand with the hope of salvation, which for the Christian is both an experience and a promise. The concept of *apokatastasis* we meet in Acts 3:21 and the verb *apokathistēmi* in Mark 9:12 and Acts 1:6. These are *termini technici* and pregnant with eschatological meaning. The Lord's day as the day of the Resurrection was a constant reminder that the process of renewal had already taken effect as a result of the triumph of the Messiah and that it is only a matter of time till it is completed. St. Paul, in fact, already speaks in the perfect tense: "behold, the old *has become new*" (2 Cor. 5:17).⁴³

The "Eighth day" is the beginning of the new aeon, the beginning of the '*olam haba*'. The weekly occurrence of the Lord's day is the reminder of the new age. Believers already live in the new world.⁴⁴ In the cosmic sense the messianic community lives in the eighth day, the day of salvation. Though the Mosaic Sabbath and the Lord's day fuse, the latter is different by reason of its unbroken continuity. Thus Tertullian, discussing the most suitable time to perform the rite of baptism, suggests Passover or Pentecost, but then significantly adds: "*Every day is the Lord's; every hour, every*

38. *Barnabas*, 15:8f.

39. Cf. J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1893), p. 100.

40. *Magn.* 9 (long version).

41. Cf. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. 194 and references.

42. *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. 18 (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1870), p. 391.

43. RSV reads "the new has come."

44. Cf. Goppelt, *Christentum und Judentum*, p. 56.

time, is apt for baptism; if there is a difference in solemnity, in respect to grace there is none."⁴⁵ This is a genuine Christian sentiment: the eighth day stands for the day of grace stretching from Advent to Advent—from the Incarnation Sabbath to the Parousia. The Great Sabbath which consummated the Mosaic Sabbath and began on Easter Sunday is the token and pledge of God's ultimate triumph over death and sin.

We have thus reached the point of summing up:

1. The phrase "the third day" was prompted by the intention to make room for the intervening Sabbath. Behind this phrase is genuine Jewish sentiment which refuses the suggestion that God would break the Sabbath even for the sake of the Messiah.

2. *Kata tas graphas* in 1 Cor. 15:4 carries no appeal to any particular text but refers to the Sabbath as the primordial principle underlying the act of creation and the Covenant.

3. The Day of the Lord does not replace the Mosaic Sabbath but extends it. It fills the Sabbath with soteriological and eschatological content.

4. The first day is the day of the messianic week or age. It serves as the constant reminder that the transition or the *apokatastasis* has already begun. Believers already live in the eighth day, which is the dawn of the Kingdom of God. The world is already caught up in the process of renewal.

By a peculiar twist of history the Western world is being forced to observe two workless days weekly by reason of its technological advance. This was also the custom of the primitive Church but for quite different reasons. Our secularized age lacks the glow of eschatological fulfilment which characterized the early Church. However, for Hebrew Christians living in Israel today the wheel of history has made a full circle. For Jewish believers in the Holy Land the two days are fused in one holy Sabbath—the national day of rest and the Lord's Day, which carries the promise of ultimate consummation.

45. Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 19. The tradition of the "eighth day" as of special messianic significance is reiterated by Cyprian, who connects it with the circumcision of the Spirit (cf. *Epistle*, 58:4).