

Chapter 7

The Early Church and Sunday in the First Three Centuries (II)

In this chapter we shall endeavour to discover in what way the early Christians looked upon Sunday, that whole day which they observed. The new day, which in some way at least had replaced the Jewish sabbath, was clearly different from it in Christian eyes. They poured scorn on the Jewish observance of the sabbath, as we have seen. So, too, they had refused to allow that one day in the week was God's, or had any holiness in itself. All time was God's. Is there enough information for us to gather the characteristics of the Christian Sunday?

WHAT SORT OF A DAY WAS IT?

On this, there are three main lines of thought among the Fathers.

(1) It seems clear from the letter which Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, wrote to Soter, bishop of Rome (c. AD 168), that the day was treated as a *holy day*. He wrote, "Today we have passed the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your epistle." The Greek reads *tēn sēmeron oun kyriakēn hagian hēmeran diēgagomen*. It could well be translated, "Today therefore we have spent the Lord's day as a holy day." The verb is colourless, though in 2 Macc. 12: 38 it is used of the sabbath. The important words are 'holy day'. When 'holy' is used in the Old Testament of a day, it refers either to the sabbath or to a Jewish feast day, and means a day dedicated to God.¹ To Christians, the Lord's Day clearly would not be looked upon in quite the same way as the Jews looked upon their holy days, but it would imply that the day was seen as devoted to Christ. We have already noted in the last chapter that Origen looked upon the Lord's Days in this way where he says the days are 'his', that is, Christ's. Perhaps this is the explanation of the unusual phrase in *Didache* 14.1, 'each Lord's Day which belongs to the Lord (*kata kyriakēn de kyriou*)'.² It is important to notice that Dionysius is writing in the plural and evidently for the whole church at Corinth. It is the church and not just the individual bishop who has spent the day as a holy day. The letter from Soter would be read to the whole church as had been the custom with the New Testament Epistles.

A passage in the *Didascalía* (c. AD 230) points to the same conclusion. The writer says, 'For not even on Sundays, in which we rejoice and make good cheer, is it permitted to anyone to speak a word of levity or one alien to religion.'³ As the work is directed specially against those who consider the Jewish laws as still binding, this passage is particularly significant.

(2) The Christian Sunday was looked upon as a *feast*, a *festival*. This is very widespread and from the earliest times. It will be found that in the Old Testament certain words are associated with the festivals. Not only are they 'holy' days, but they are feasts (LXX, *heortai*). In them, those participating are to rejoice (*euphrainō, chairō*). On them are held 'holy convocations' (*klētai hagai*). These days then were days of festival in which there was the spirit of rejoicing and on which the people met together for worship and to remember particular blessings, such as historic deliverances or the annual harvest.

When we turn to the patristic evidence we find the same words used with regard to the Christian Sunday, but this time in remembrance of spiritual deliverance, the work of Christ.

In *Barnabas* 15.1, the passage already quoted, the writer says, 'Wherefore we joyfully celebrate the eighth day, the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead. . . .'. The Greek reads *eis euphrosynēn*. We shall examine later the name 'eighth day' as given to Sunday, but meanwhile point out that both 'eighth day' and 'for rejoicing' come in the LXX of Leviticus 23: 36-40, the description of the feast of Tabernacles.

Again, in the passage already mentioned, Tertullian (*De Idol.* 14) blames the willingness of Christians to get mixed up in heathen festivals, and describes the Christian festivals also by the expressions *sollemnitatis* and *festus dies*. He has mentioned previously the heathen Saturnalia and the Kalends of January and other heathen festivals, and then the Jewish sabbaths and 'the other festivals at one time pleasing to God'. He is obviously looking upon the Christian Sundays as 'festivals'. Elsewhere he speaks of 'the festivals of the Lord' (*De fuga* 14; *PL* i. 682) and 'new festivals' (*De jejun.* 14; *PL* ii. 119).

Minucius Felix (second or third century AD), is confronted with the accusation of Caecilius that the Christians gathered on 'a sacred day' (*solemni die*), men, women, and children, for licentious 'banquets' (*epulae*) and carousings (*convivia*). This is refuted by Minucius, and a description is given of the modesty of the Christian 'banquets' (*epulae*). He does however still use the word 'banquets' for their gatherings—

convivial occasions (Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 31; *PL* iii. 262.) Here again the Christian Sunday is described as a festival.

In Clement of Alexandria there are the expressions 'the first day', 'the eighth day', 'a feast' (*beortē*), the verb 'rejoice' (*euphrainō*) and the thought of 'rest' (*anapausis*) (*Strom.* 6.16; *PG* ix. 364). Once again we seem to have echoes of the idea of the Jewish festivals in a description of the Christian Sunday.

WHERE DID THE IDEA OF THE FIRST DAY AS A FEAST SPRING FROM?

In the biblical section we have seen that the Lord's Day was a commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus (a joyful event); and that it is possible, even probable, that the resurrection of Jesus happened on the the feast of Firstfruits, that the Holy Spirit was given on the feast of Pentecost, in that case also a Sunday, and that the feast of Trumpets and the first and last days of the feast of Tabernacles also fell, that year, on the first day of the week. In the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles the feast days are connected with the work of Christ. If all this is true, it would be natural for the Lord's Day to be thought of as a feast. We have seen too that Christians looked upon the day as holy, and feast days were holy days.

But perhaps there is another clue which may throw light on this. The name 'Eighth Day' was given to Sunday.

THE ORIGIN OF THE EXPRESSION 'EIGHTH DAY'

We must now, and in this connection, examine the origin of a very early name for Sunday, 'the Eighth Day'. It may well be as early as, or even earlier than, the name 'Lord's Day'.⁴ No adequate explanation of its origin has been suggested. Some have proposed a Persian origin.⁵ Others have connected it with circumcision on the eighth day and Christian Baptism (Rordorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 271ff.). It occurs in the Slavic *Enoch*,⁶ but it seems certain that this is a Christian interpolation into the original work and is more likely to come from a time when 'the eighth day' was in regular use as an eschatological term. It seems more probable that we must look for the origin of the word in the Old Testament, inasmuch as the early church, having accepted 'the first day' as the occasion of the resurrection and of Christian worship, saw the connection of passages in the Old Testament in which 'first' and 'eighth' are linked together. The most likely passage is one that has already been mentioned, Lev. 23 : 36-39. It is the description of the

feast of Tabernacles. The first day and the eighth day are special days. On the first and eighth days there are to be 'holy convocations'. There is to be no 'laborious work' (*opera servilia; pan ergon latreuton*). The days are 'feasts' (*beortai*) to the Lord, and there is to be 'rest' (*anapausis*). The people are to 'rejoice' (*LXX, euphranthēnai*) before the Lord. The days are to be days of 'offerings' to the Lord. There are other references to 'the eighth day' in other connections. It is of course connected with circumcision and entry into the Covenant. As Pentecost in later Jewish eyes represented the establishment of the Covenant, so the eighth day was the individual entrance into the Covenant, Gen. 17 : 14 and Lev. 12 : 3. In Exod. 22 : 30 it is connected with the offering of the firstborn.

It seems likely, therefore, that it was the influence of the Old Testament references to the eighth day and its accompanying festal character of joy and rest that affected early Christian thinking. According to a Jewish scholar, the *LXX euphrosynē*, which is equivalent to the Hebrew *nabat rūah*, portrays the atmosphere of the sabbath observance.⁷ In *Barnabas* 15.9 we get the same combination of 'the eighth day' with this word 'rejoicing', which, as we have seen, is to be the atmosphere of the eighth day (and the first day) in the feast of Tabernacles, but especially of the eighth and 'great day' (John 7 : 37), the conclusion of the whole ceremonial. Is it too much to see in the second appearance of Christ to the gathered disciples in the Upper Room a hint of what set their minds in this direction? For it was on the eighth day that Jesus appeared to his disciples as a group for the second time, when Thomas was with them, and confirmed their faith, and Thomas confessed, 'My Lord and my God' (John 20 : 28).

If this suggestion of the origin of the name is correct, we have one more evidence of the close connection which the early Christians saw between the Christian Sunday and the Jewish festivals, so that the Sunday was a feast in their eyes.

THE FATHERS VIEWED SUNDAY AS A HOLY DAY AND A FEAST.

(3) DID THEY ALSO VIEW IT AS A DAY OF REST?

We can now begin perhaps to answer this question, both from what we have already seen and from further evidence available. It has been argued from certain sayings of the Fathers⁸ that their antipathy to indolence (*argia*) shows that they must have meant ordinary work to be continued on Sundays. In a later section we shall endeavour to show that in fact there may be quite a different explanation of this attitude.

A *holy* day to the Jew was a day on which the time belonged to God in a special way, just as a holy place was one devoted to God. The sabbath was a holy day; feast days were holy days. If then the word 'holy' still carried even something of this meaning, it would imply that ordinary work was not carried out on the day.

The *feasts* differed from the sabbath in that on the feast days only laborious work (*opera servilia*) was forbidden, while on the sabbaths all work was forbidden. Now, it is interesting that in the later thought of the church it was laborious work (*opera servilia*) which was forbidden on the Sunday, and not all work. In either case, ordinary work was laid aside. So it was, too, in the case of pagan festivals, with which Tertullian, as we have seen, compared the Christian Sunday. Macrobius (AD 400) tells us that work was laid aside for pagan festivals.⁹

So when Tertullian makes the comparison between the Christian sacred days and those of Jews and pagans it seems certain that he implies that in all these ordinary work was laid aside.

We have seen that Sunday very early took the title 'eighth day'. When we examine the applications made by the Fathers of the conception of the eighth day, we find that it stands for the final rest in the world to come. From *Barnabas* onwards this is the eschatological meaning given to the 'eighth day' (Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, pp. 266ff.). Sometimes the sabbath is considered to be the picture of the final rest, and sometimes the eighth day is.¹⁰ Sometimes it is the sabbath leading into the eighth day (Augustine, *Ep.* 2.55, 9.17; *PL* xxxiii, 212). Now, it seems certain that this could not have developed unless Sunday had been treated as a day of rest. If sometimes it was the sabbath and sometimes Sunday, then the idea of rest must have been connected with both days. It is true that the Augustine passages quoted in evidence come after the decree of Constantine, but they reflect only what had already been the conception long before that time.

This is borne out by an interesting sideline in Gnostic thought. Instead of a time sequence, Gnostic thinking is in terms of stages of advance in spiritual development. The eighth or highest stage is 'rest' (*anapausis*). An early Gnostic writing of before AD 160 states, "The rest is on the Lord's Day, the eighth, which is called the Lord's Day" (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 63). It seems clear that this conception could not have arisen unless the Lord's Day had been a day of rest. It agrees with the eschatological view that the eighth day was the final rest.

Further evidence: Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria,¹¹ in dealing with the Ten Commandments, says, "The third [fourth] commandment is that which intimates that the world was created by God and that he gave us a seventh day as a rest on account of the trouble there is in life. For God is incapable of weariness and suffering and want. But we who bear flesh need rest. The seventh day therefore is proclaimed a rest, by leaving off evils, preparing for the primal day, the true rest of ours which in truth is also the first, the creation of light. For from this day there shines out the first wisdom and gnosis for us. For the light of the truth is the first light. . . ."

This passage will be looked at again in studying the Decalogue, but meanwhile there are certain points which need to be examined here. As it is written about the sabbath commandment, it clearly has in view the days of the week and, at least to begin with, not in a spiritual but a physical sense. The reference to 'the flesh' shows this. What Clement is saying is that men with bodies need relaxation and rest for their bodies. This is all the more remarkable when we realise how much more interested Clement was in the gnostic, the spiritual man. He is not here allegorising in what he says of the need for rest. The first reference to the seventh day is without the article, and it is applied to 'us'. He obviously is not referring here to the Jews, but to mankind generally and this includes Christians, 'us': 'A seventh day has been given to us.' He has in mind the wording of the third [fourth] commandment and suggests that for 'us' a seventh day has been granted for the rest we need, as we 'bear flesh'. He goes on to say that the sabbath conception was preparing us for the 'primal day' (*archēgonon hēmeran*). Some refer this to Christ (*ANCL* 12, p. 386 note), but it may well refer to the first day of the week, the first day of creation, for it is used in connection with both the first and the eighth day.¹² What Clement is saying, then, in this first passage is that man ('we') need a rest day. God has given us one in seven, and this is the principle lying behind the commandment. The seventh day was a preparation for the first day.

We pass to another passage a little further on. Here Clement deals with the relationship of seventh and eighth. The passage is difficult and unless we had the section already mentioned it would be impossible to see any meaning in it. He says, 'For it may be that the eighth (*hē men ogdoas*) is properly the seventh, the seventh manifestly the sixth (*hexas de*), and it (*hē men*) properly the sabbath, but the seventh a work

day.' The last part of the sentence has been translated, 'And the latter (viz, the sixth) properly the sabbath, and the seventh a work day' (ANCL 12, p. 386). But this does not make any sense. If we take the second *hē men* as referring to the first *hē men ogdoas*, then it will make sense and mean, 'The eighth is properly the seventh day (of the commandment) and the seventh day of the week the sixth of the commandment. And it (the eighth day) properly the sabbath, the rest, and the seventh (day of the week) a day of work.' This makes very good sense.

Perhaps this is explained by another passage shortly afterwards. Clement says, 'But in the manner of the letters *ζῆτα* is six and *ἒτα* seven, but the sign (*episēmos*) having slipped in,¹³ I know not how, into the writing, if we so say, the sixth becomes the seventh and the seventh the eighth' (Strom. 6.16; ANCL 12, p. 388). The Sign (*episēmos*) is used of Christ (PGL, in loc.). So that with the coming of Christ there is a new reckoning and the seventh day, the sabbath, becomes the eighth. What Clement seems to be suggesting, if the passage is to make any sense, is that by the coming of Christ the day of rest has now been altered to the eighth day, that is the Sunday. As Clement has been explaining the meaning of the third (fourth) commandment, he is suggesting in these two passages that the seventh day mentioned in the commandment is now, by the advent of Christ the Sign, the eighth day, that is Sunday.

There may be again a reference to this idea in another passage where Clement speaks of 'the eighth region, the world of thought' (Strom. 5.6, PG ix. 62). Later, in yet another passage he speaks again of the 'church on high . . . the philosophers of God, who are Israelites indeed, who do not remain in the seventh seat, the place of rest (*anapausis*), but are promoted to the eighth grade' (Strom. 6.14). He seems to have in mind something like the Gnostic idea of development of Christian character, of two rests, the Jewish in the seventh and beyond that a perfect rest in the eighth grade. Here again we have much the same conception of an advance from seventh to eighth, from Judaism to Christianity, the latter being 'Israelites indeed'.

There is one more passage which carries a rather different slant. Clement says, 'The gnostic carries out the evangelical command and makes that the Lord's Day on which he puts away an evil thought and assumes one suited to the gnostic, doing honour to the Lord's resurrection in himself' (Strom. 7.12 (76); GCS 3.54). The same thought appears in Origen, Clement's pupil. Origen says, 'to the perfect Christian who is ever serving his Lord . . . all his days are the Lord's and

he is always keeping the Lord's Day' (Contr. Cels. 8.22; PG xi. 1549). These passages have been taken to suggest that the Christians made no difference between the days of the week. All were alike. But in fact another explanation is more probable. What both Clement and Origen, both of them Christian theologians and teachers, are thinking of is the possibility for the gnostic, the perfect Christian, to be always contemplating the divine. The gnostic is attempting to keep every day as a day of devotion and worship, while the ordinary Christian, engaged in daily work, can only keep the one day for this. While the ordinary Christian treats one day as concentrated on God, the gnostic attempts to treat all days as concentrated on God.¹⁴ Instead of this meaning that the Sunday was to be treated as any other day, it rather meant that every day was to be treated by the gnostic as a Sunday. The inference then was that Sunday was a day devoted to spiritual things.

Tertullian in North Africa

In a passage already referred to, Tertullian is speaking about the habit of not kneeling but standing for prayer on the Lord's Day (*De Orat.* 23; PL i. 1191). He says, 'We however, just as we have received, only on the day of the Lord's resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling, but every posture and office (*officium*) of anxiety, deferring also (*differentes etiam*) our businesses (*negotia*) lest we give place to the Devil. Similarly (*tantumdem*) in the period of Pentecost, which period we distinguish by the same solemnity of exultation.' Evans translates, 'even putting off our business', but it could just as well read, 'as we also lay aside our affairs'. It has been suggested that, since the author goes on to say that the same is done throughout the period of Pentecost, this cannot refer to any giving up of work on a Sunday; if so, work would be given up for six weeks, an impossible suggestion (Rordorf, op. cit., p. 264). And so it must only mean the giving up of work for the period of worship. But if we examine the passage carefully we shall see that Tertullian is not dealing with the time of worship, the meal, but with the church's practice of not kneeling throughout the day. It is surely this that is continued both on Sunday and throughout Pentecost, as we know from other sources.¹⁵ The 'also' (*etiam*) introduces an extra thought: 'We do not indulge in anxious habits of mind either, as we also lay aside our affairs.' In what sense are we to take 'businesses' (*negotia*)? In the Vulgate of the New Testament *negotia* is used in 2 Tim. 2 : 4 for 'the affairs of this world', and refers to the

Christian soldier not getting involved in these. The sense is similar here.

Hippolytus (Rome) and Origen (Alexandria and Caesarea)

In a passage attributed to Origen, but possibly from Hippolytus, the author says, "The number fifty contains seven sevens, or a sabbath of sabbaths, and also, over and above these full sabbaths, a new beginning in the eighth of a really new rest that remains above the sabbaths".¹⁶ The Greek reads *en ogdoadi alēthōs kainēs anapauseōs*. Here, after the sabbath, on the eighth day, is a new rest, that is, a rest not known before—very much the same thought as in Clement. If this comes from Hippolytus, it comes from Rome, another area. The meaning is surely that, as the sabbath was a rest, so the day after the sabbath has become a 'new' rest.

In the *Homilies on Numbers* (PG xii. 749 (3)), an undisputed work of Origen, there is a long passage dealing with the 28th and 29th chapters of that book. Unfortunately it is extant only in a Latin translation. Origen is discussing the Jewish feasts and their meaning for Christians. In these chapters, the first section deals with the daily offerings, then comes the sabbath, and later the annual feasts. Origen follows this order, and commences with the daily worship of Christians, spiritualising the offerings as prayer and praise. He then goes on to ask what is the Christian observance (*observatio*) of the sabbath, and after quoting Heb. 4:9, "There remaineth therefore a sabbath-keeping to the people of God", he goes on to mention the ceasing from secular work and the going to worship and the hearing of the word of God and spiritual exercises. His words are:

Leaving the Jewish observance of the sabbath, let us see how the sabbath ought to be observed by a Christian (*qualis debeat esse Christiano sabbati observatio*). On the sabbath day all worldly pleasures ought to be abstained from. If therefore you cease from all secular works (*saecularia*) and execute nothing worldly, but give yourself up to spiritual exercises, repairing to the church (*ad ecclesiam*), attending to sacred reading and instruction, thinking of celestial things, solicitous for the future, placing the judgment to come before your eyes, not looking to things present and visible, but to those which are future and invisible, this is the observance of the Christian sabbath. But these things the Jews ought to have observed. In fact, among them if there were a mason or builder, or if there should be labour of this sort, let him give it up on the sabbath day. But the

reader of the divine law, or the teacher, does not desist from his labour and does not pollute the sabbath. For so our Lord said to them, 'Have you not read that the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are without crime.' He who therefore ceases from worldly works and is free for spiritual, he it is who celebrates the sacrifice of the sabbath and the festal day of the sabbath . . . What we have spoken of are true sabbaths, but if we should seek deeper what are the true sabbaths, the keeping of the sabbath is beyond this world.

The most varied explanations have been given of this passage. It has been suggested that it is spurious, but without any evidence; that it refers to the whole Christian life; that it refers to an observance of the Jewish sabbath by Christian Jews in Alexandria, in contrast to the non-Christian Jews, who observed their sabbath in licentiousness.¹⁷ Others have suggested that it is a simple identification of the Christian day of worship with the Jewish sabbath. All these seem to be misconceptions of its meaning. It cannot refer to the Jewish observance of the sabbath, for elsewhere Origen clearly states that there is no manna from heaven on the seventh day (*Hom. Exod. 7.7f.*; PG xii, 347), that is, that there is no preaching of the word or spiritual food.

Is it possible that it refers to a Christian observance of Saturday as well as Sunday? We know that by the middle of the next century there was a Saturday observance, as well as the Sunday, in Syria and Asia Minor, the sabbath as a memorial of creation and the Sunday as a memorial of the Resurrection (*Apost. Const. 2.36, 5.15, 7.33*). But it is more than doubtful if it was ever observed in Alexandria. Origen could be referring to something in Syria, but the *Didascalia* is against this, as we have already seen. It is doubtful if as early as Origen there was such an observance anywhere.¹⁸

As other Christian festal days, such as Pentecost, are mentioned by Origen in this context, but there is no mention of the Christian Sunday, it is natural to infer that this must refer to the Christian Sunday. If we look at a passage quoted earlier, we see that it closes by Origen saying that only the unmarried man can offer the perpetual sacrifice of prayer. He goes on, 'But there are other festal days for those who are not able to offer the sacrifice of chastity.'¹⁹ In other words, the unmarried can spend all their time in worship and prayer, but for those who have household cares there are fixed days. Such appears to be his meaning. In fact, if we compare the passage we have already seen where he almost apologises for Christians having special days (*Contr. Cels. 8.23*;

PG xi. 1662) it seems that this passage must refer to the Christian Sunday. It is almost impossible to believe that when Origen speaks of 'repairing to the assembly' and the 'reader' and 'teacher' he can be giving it a wholly mystical meaning. We shall probably get nearer to Origen's meaning if we put the word sabbath in inverted commas; the Christian 'sabbath', that is the Sunday of the Christians, is a sabbath in one sense, but not in the Jewish sense. It is difficult to see any other meaning in the passage than as referring to the Christian day of worship. The *Homilies* are not meant to be erudite theological works, but practical talks to ordinary Christians, and so are likely to have a practical bearing. It is significant that, before giving this explanation, Origen quotes Heb. 4: 9, 'There remains therefore a sabbath to the people of God.'

If we have been right in interpreting the passages in Clement, it will not be difficult to see their influence on Origen. If we were right in suggesting that Clement saw in 'the Lord's Day' a 'sabbath', though not the Jewish sabbath, this passage would show how Origen, building on these thoughts, felt the day should be spent. While elsewhere Origen clearly saw the sabbath as a type of the rest from sin and evil works of all kinds, here he is dealing in a practical way with the observance of the Christian festal day.

The Didascalia - Syria (AD 230?)

There are one or two sections which are important for our present inquiry.²⁰ Perhaps the best approach is to give the passages in full and then discuss them. The author says, 'Do you, the faithful, therefore, all of you, daily and hourly, whenever you are not in the church (at the gathering), devote yourselves to your work, so that in all the conduct of your life you may either be occupied in the things of the Lord or engaged upon your work, and never be idle. . . . Therefore be always working, for idleness is a blot for which there is no cure'.²¹ And again, 'If God willed that we shall be idle (*Latin, vacare*) one day in six, first of all the patriarchs and righteous men and all they that were before Moses would have remained idle, and God himself also with all his creatures. But now the governance of the world is carried on continually. . . .'²² In another passage he states, 'Make not your worldly affairs of more account than the word of God, but on the Lord's Day leave everything (*omnia seponentes*) and run eagerly to your church (the gathering), for she is your glory. Otherwise what excuse have you, if you do not assemble on the Lord's Day to hear the word of life and

be nourished with the divine food? . . . If the heathen keep their festivals . . . and the Jews remain idle one day and assemble in their synagogues . . . if then they who are not saved bestow care at all times on those things . . . what excuse has he who withdraws himself from the assembly of the church? Let him know that the trades of the faithful are called works of superfluity, for their true work is religion. Pursue your trades therefore as a work of superfluity, but let your true work be religion.'²³ And again, 'For neither in the common assembly of rest on the Lord's Day, when they have come, are such . . . watchful.'²⁴ And lastly, in the fragments from the Latin: 'For not even on Sundays, in which we rejoice and make good cheer, is it permitted to speak a word of levity or one alien to religion.'²⁵

At first sight these passages would suggest that, as soon as the ordinary service was over, the church members were to go back to their ordinary work on the Sunday. No time was to be unoccupied. The author is fearful of any form of laziness. He seems desperately concerned that the Christians will fall into the Jewish habit of leaving their sabbath empty. But does this mean that he suggests that Christians should spend part of their Sundays in work? We can see that he considers that Christian worship is the most important part of the Christian life. A person's trade is only of secondary importance. All else is to be laid aside in favour of worship. This does not suggest that the author felt that the worship was unimportant. But there are two hints which point perhaps to quite another explanation than that which appears at first sight. He mentions the word 'rest' in connection with the Sunday observance. This may of course refer only to the relaxation while the service was on, but in view of what we have seen in other authors it seems to suggest the observance of a day, and especially as it is compared here both with pagan and with Jewish religious practice. The other hint is in the last passage quoted. Here the author says that throughout Sunday no word alien to religion is to be spoken, nor any word of levity, though the day is to be a day of rejoicing. How are these passages to be reconciled? I would suggest that in fact what took place was that the gathering involved most of the day. We shall be examining this in chapter 9, and will there discuss the possibility that the first passage does not refer to Sunday at all. If this was so, then the advice to be engaged either in the things of the Lord, or in their work, would suggest exactly what is commanded in the fourth commandment, 'Six days shalt thou labour', the other day being devoted to 'the things of the Lord'.

Gnostic Writings

There is still further evidence, this time in two Gnostic writings, from which we may get some light.²⁶ In the *Pistis Sophia*, a Gnostic work, probably of the third century AD and coming from Egypt, there is an interesting conjunction of ideas: the number eight and the thoughts of light, rest, and resurrection. While this is not a time sequence but the development of the Gnostic's spiritual advance, it seems to link the thought of rest with the eighth day and the day of light and resurrection. Theodotus suggests the same (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 63).

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE FROM THESE SOURCES

It is possible now to collect together the information which we have obtained from various sources and different parts of the Christian church. The evidence is cumulative. While evidence from one source only might not carry weight, if it comes from several, and especially if it comes from different parts of the world, it should be conclusive. And the conclusion to which we come is that the Christian church in the first three centuries looked on its Sunday as a festal day, a holy day and a day of rest on which ordinary tasks were laid aside. At the same time they differentiated it from the Jewish sabbath in ways which we shall explore in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 7 (pp. 62–74)

1. See BDB under *kdš* (pp. 871ff.). For Dionysius, cf. Eusebius, *HE* 4.23.
2. P. Schaff (*Church Manual*, p. 208) says the word is used pleonastically. Other translations give 'the Lord's Day' and 'the Lord's own day'. For a different explanation, see p. 32 above.
3. *Didascalia* 5.10.1 FXF, p. 264; Connolly, op. cit., p. 178.
4. It occurs in *Barnabas* 15. The date is uncertain, but in *ODCC* it is given as AD 70–100. Altaner gives before AD 140.
5. Dumaine, op. cit., p. 880 (the idea of eternity following time).
6. Morfill and Charles, *Secrets*, p. 45 (2 *Enoch* 33.1); Fotheringham, 'Slavic Enoch', p. 252.
7. Hirsch, 'Sabbath and Sunday', claims that the word *euphrosynē*, which appears in *Barnabas* 15.9 and is used often by the Fathers, applied to Sunday, is the equivalent of the Hebrew words already given, and is the spirit of the sabbath.
8. See Justin, *Dial.* 12.3; 29.3; *Ep. Diognetus* 4.3, and many other passages, esp. in the *Didascalia*.
9. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.16.9; Strabo, *Geography* x. 467. See Dumaine ('Dimanche', p. 916), who points out that a cessation of manual work especially was the mark of all feasts, pagan, Judaic, and Christian. See also Socrates (*HE* v. 22) 'Inasmuch as all men have festivals, for they provide them with cessations from labour' (*PG* lxvii. 625).
10. Augustine, *Sermo*, 94 (*A. Mai Bibliotheca patr. nov.*, Tom. 1, 1852, pp. 183f.).
11. *Stromata* 6.16 (*PG* ix. 364b). The meaning of *archēgonos*, here translated 'primal', will be discussed in the next paragraph, but whether we take it as referring to Christ or to the first day of the week of creation, it is connected with rest in this passage.
12. See under *archēgonos* in *PGL*.
13. There is a variant reading, 'slipped out'.
14. The monastic system which grew up later seems to have been an attempt to carry this out. Both Clement and Origen feel that the true gnostic should be contemplating God all the time. Philo (*Decalogue* 20) suggests rather that a rhythm is needed; 'Let us then not neglect the great archetype of the two best lives, the practical and the contemplative' (the six days and the one).

15. A list of passages in the Fathers can be found in *DCA* 1, p. 724, art. 'Genuflexion'.
16. *Introd. to the Pss.* 4 (*PG* x. 713; *ANCL* 6, p. 500). Quasten (*Patrology* 2, p. 175) maintains that the preface is almost identical with Origen's.
17. Dugmore, *Influence*, p. 31. By contrast, Daniélou (*Bible and Liturgy*, p. 239) argues that it refers to the whole Christian life.
18. The Ebionites, and the Nazarenes, if they were different, observed both in early times, but this was considered strange.
19. It will be remembered that Origen made himself a eunuch.
20. This work was written originally in Greek, but has survived only in a Syriac translation. Parts of the Greek text appear in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, but only in an approximate form. Parts exist in a Latin translation.
21. FXF 2.63.1, p. 178; Connolly, op. cit., p. 128.
22. FXF 6.18.16, p. 362; Connolly, ibid., p. 236.
23. FXF 2.59.2, p. 170; Connolly, ibid., p. 124.
24. FXF 3.6.5, p. 192; Connolly, ibid., p. 134; *Apost. Const.* 3.6.
25. FXF 5.10.1, p. 264; Connolly, ibid., p. 178.
26. *Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften*, ed. C. Schmidt and W. C. Till, vol. 1 (*GCS* 43, *Die Pistis Sophia*, Berlin, 1962), pp. 134, 336, 341, 350f., 353, 360, 366f.