

THE EIGHTH DAY ARGUMENT: A JEWISH RATIONALE FOR THE REJECTION OF THE SEVENTH DAY SABBATH

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ABSTRACT

Building from the assumption of the Sabbath's obsolescence much has been argued for the prominence of Sunday gatherings already in the New Testament corpus, or even that Jesus, though a Sabbath keeper, paved the way for the substitution of the seventh day Sabbath, which is by no means self-evident and therefore deserves further investigation. Ad interim, irrespective of the proper biblical interpretation of the continuity of the seventh day Sabbath, only voluntary blindness would deny the clear presence of the Sunday as a day to gather and worship within the Apostolic Fathers' literature only a few decades after the last documents of the New Testament were written, at the pace that rejecting that which is Jewish was on vogue. Undoubtedly, the post apostolic treatment of the Sabbath is unprecedented given the Jewish origins of most New Testament writers, at the pace that the resurrection of Jesus became the main reason to account for the novelty of either worshiping on or keeping the Sunday. But how? What was the theological route that brought about such a phenomenon, i.e., that the Old Testament Sabbath became void on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus. Whereas Bacchiocchi, and many in his footsteps, find in the confluence of paganism, anti-Jewish sentiment and the prominence of the church in Rome as reasons that account for the suppression of the Sabbath in favour of the Sunday or Lord's Day, there remains a need to explore the process through which such a belief came to be in the first place, hence the question: how did the resurrection of Jesus become the hermeneutical framework for the rejection of the Sabbath? It is on the elucidation of this question that the goal for this article is to be found.

Keywords: Sabbath. New Testament. Seventh-day Adventists.

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RESUMO

Construindo a partir do pressuposto da obsolescência do sábado, muito tem sido argumentado a favor da proeminência das reuniões dominicais já no corpus do Novo Testamento, ou mesmo que Jesus, embora um observador do sábado, abriu o caminho para a substituição do sábado do sétimo dia, que é por não é de forma alguma evidente e, portanto, merece uma investigação mais aprofundada. Ad interim, independentemente da interpretação bíblica adequada da continuidade do sábado do sétimo dia, apenas a cegueira voluntária negaria a clara presença do domingo como um dia de reunião e adoração na literatura dos Padres Apostólicos apenas algumas décadas após os últimos documentos do Novo Testamento foram escritos, no ritmo em que estava na moda rejeitar o que é judaico. Sem dúvida, o tratamento pós-apostólico do sábado não tem precedentes, dadas as origens judaicas da maioria dos escritores do Novo Testamento, ao passo que a ressurreição de Jesus se tornou a principal razão para explicar a novidade de adorar ou guardar o domingo. Mas como? Qual foi a rota teológica que provocou tal fenômeno, ou seja, que o sábado do Antigo Testamento se tornou nulo com base na ressurreição de Jesus. Embora Bacchiocchi, e muitos que seguem seus passos, encontrem na confluência do paganismo, do sentimento antijudaico e da proeminência da igreja em Roma as razões que explicam a supressão do sábado em favor do domingo ou do dia do Senhor, permanece uma É necessário explorar o processo através do qual tal crença surgiu, em primeiro lugar, daí a questão: como é que a ressurreição de Jesus se tornou o quadro hermenêutico para a rejeição do sábado? É na elucidação desta questão que se encontra o objetivo deste artigo.

Palavras-chave: Sábado. Novo Testamento. Adventistas do Sétimo Dia.

INTRODUCTION

The resurrection of Jesus, which took place on a Sunday, gradually, but relatively fast, changed the relationship of the flourishing first Christian communities with the seventh day Sabbath that became ever more attached to Judaism and therefore not bidding for Christians. Thus, have reasoned many Christian thinkers through the centuries that separate us from the post apostolic era¹, becoming the paradigm through which, most Christians relate to the Sunday and Sabbath. Building from the assumption of the Sabbath's obsolescence much has been argued for the prominence of

¹ The Epistle of Barnabas 15.8 seems to be the starting point of such rationale on the early second century: "Therefore, we also celebrate with joy the eighth day on which Jesus also rose from the dead, was made manifest, and ascended into heaven". In Francis X. Glimm, The Letter of Barnabas, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M.-F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh, vol. 1 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), p. 216. Justin Martyr still in the mid second century affirms "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things". In Justin Martyr, The First Apology of Justin, in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 186. The Didache 14 mentions the eucharist ceremony on the "Lord's day" which may not have biblical warrant to be the Sunday, the fairly widely accepted in the post apostolic era. Didache 14 reads: "And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure". In Joseph Barber Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., 1891), p. 234. Ignatius clearly connects the abandonment of the Sabbath with the resurrection "If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny – a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher –² if this be so, how shall we be able to live apart from Him? seeing that even the prophets, being His disciples, were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit. And for this cause He whom they rightly awaited, when He came, raised them from the dead"¹ (LIGHTFOOT; HARMER, 1891, p. 145).

Sunday gatherings already in the New Testament corpus (BRUCE, 1954, p. 407-408), or even that Jesus, though a Sabbath keeper, paved the way for the substitution of the seventh day Sabbath (RORDORF, 1968)², which is by no means self-evident (GULLEY, 2016) and therefore deserves further investigation. Ad interim, irrespective of the proper biblical interpretation of the continuity of the seventh day Sabbath, only voluntary blindness would deny the clear presence of the Sunday as a day to gather and worship within the Apostolic Fathers' literature³ only a few decades after the last documents of the New Testament were written (PORTER, 2000, p. 207), at the pace that rejecting that which is Jewish was on vogue.

As well argued by Samuele Bacchiocchi, the resurrection of Jesus became the prime reason for Sunday worship after the second half of the second century, which beginning with Barnabas (Bar.15.8) passing through Justin Martyr (1 Apol. 67) and Ignatius of Antioch (Ign. Magn. 9.1) met its climax in Augustine (BACCHIOCCHI, 1977, 275): "The Lord's Day, however, has been made known not to the Jews, but to Christians, by the resurrection of the Lord, and from Him it began to have the festive character which is proper to it" (SCHAFF, 1886, p. 310) (Aug., Ep. 55.13.23). Thus, Augustine fully elaborates the issue that earlier Christian writers had only rudimentarily alluded to⁴ if at all they did⁵, which naturally raises serious questions such as: 1) How did the resurrection of Jesus justified the supplantation of the seventh day Sabbath for the Sunday? 2) How did first Christians of Jewish origin relate to the Sunday? 3) what was the relation of other cults in the Mediterranean region and the Sunday? In my estimation, Bacchiocchi has satisfactorily answered these questions describing the historical routes that shaped the novel regard with which the Sunday came to be regarded by Christians, but does not shed light onto the origin of the argument for the Sunday on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus, which is precisely the issue at stake here.

Undoubtedly, the post apostolic treatment of the Sabbath is unprecedented given the Jewish origins of most New Testament writers⁶, at the pace that the resurrection of Jesus became the main reason to account for the novelty of either worshipping on or keeping the Sunday. But how? What was the theological route that brought about such a phenomenon, i.e., that the Old Testament Sabbath became void on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus. Whereas Bacchiocchi, and many in his

² See also D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999).

³ For a comprehensive discussion on the Apostolic Fathers corpus see Joseph Barber Lightfoot, Apostolic Fathers, ed. William Smith and Henry Wace, *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines* (London, UK: John Murray, 1877-1887), p. 147. Also William R. Schoedel, Apostolic Fathers, ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), p. 313. Also Thomas H. Olbricht, Apostolic Fathers, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 81.

⁴ E.g. Ignatius's *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:1: "If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny" (LIGHTFOOT; HARMER, 1891, p. 145).

⁵ Ranko Stefanovic (2011) argues eloquently that early sources to mention, or purported to mean Sunday as the Lord's day, lack the word day *ἡμέρα* in the original text and the addition of the word *ἡμέρα* to the translation seems to be more of a doctrinal stretch than direct translation, though the very existence of the latter is questionable. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3139&context=auss>

⁶ The only exception to this seems to be Luke, a gentile converted to Christianity. Mark J. Keown, *Discovering the New Testament: An Introduction to Its Background, Theology, and Themes: The Gospels & Acts* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), p. 223.

footsteps, find in the confluence of paganism, anti-Jewish sentiment and the prominence of the church in Rome as reasons that account for the suppression of the Sabbath in favour of the Sunday or Lord's Day, there remains a need to explore the process through which such a belief came to be in the first place, hence the question: how did the resurrection of Jesus become the hermeneutical framework for the rejection of the Sabbath? It is on the elucidation of this question that the goal for this article is to be found.

HOW RELEVANT IS THE SABBATH?

The importance of the Sabbath and Sunday issues could be hardly overstated. The Sabbath was an integral part of the Jewish religion as it was first installed at the end of the creation week when "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Gen 2:3), though many years of Egyptian captivity had atrophied the Hebrew religion, even before the decalogue God instructs Moses to tell the people to gather twice as much mana on the sixth day as not to gather on the sabbath (Exodus 16:3). Then the Sabbath appears at the very heart of the ten commandments (Exodus 20:8) it is restated when Moses is offering his last addresses to the Hebrews (Deut 5:12). It is a major element of pre and post exile Judaism as Hasel (1992, p. 853) suggests that "Assyrians and Neo-Babylonians utilized the seventh-day sabbath rest of the Israelites to accomplish their military-political goals". The Maccabeans preferred to be attacked on the Sabbath than to fight on the holy day (1 Macc. 2:34)⁷ and many other instances where the place of importance of the Sabbath is all the more evident. On the other hand, the Jewish Sabbath was utterly abandoned by many Christian groups from the late second century on, embracing the Sunday as a major rallying point of religious life.

The vast majority of Christian denominations and traditions have included in their way of experiencing Christianity the allocation of special meaning or even sabbatical significance to the Sunday⁸, most often citing New Testament texts⁹ as evidence of a transition from the seventh day sabbath to the Sunday as a day of special importance for the flourishing Christian communities and more specifically the resurrection of Jesus that unmistakably took place on a Sunday morning¹⁰. Knowing how an idea or biblical fact becomes an apologetic device for the next generations of Christians is of incalculable value as in every sincere Christian heart the words of Peter should ring loud: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Given the vastness of the topic and the objectives of the current academic effort, the epistle of

⁷ But they said, "We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and so profane the sabbath day". *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 1 Mac 2:34.

⁸ A lifewayresearch.com research survey revealed that 56% of church goers in the United States of America believe that observing a weekly sabbath day is still binding while 25% said it is not binding for the Christian, nevertheless, it is taken for granted that the sabbath day to be observed is the Sunday instead of the seventh day Sabbath. See <https://lifewayresearch.com/2018/12/04/most-churchgoers-see-sunday-as-sabbath/>

⁹ Biblical scholarship that is in favour of the Sunday as the truly Christian day of commemoration deal with the themes "Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath", Resurrection of Jesus, *post mortum* appearances of Jesus on the first day and texts related to supposed Sunday Christian liturgy or celebration "Mark 16:1-2; 1. John 20:19-23; Acts 20:6-7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10". See Gulley (2016, p. 950).

¹⁰ See Matthew 28:1-17, Mark [16:1-20](#), Luke [24:1-53](#) and John [20:1-29](#).

Barnabas will be the starting point due to the great likelihood that it is the earliest Christian document to directly connect the resurrection of Jesus and the rejection of the Sabbath¹¹. Barnabas 15.9 reads: “Therefore, we also celebrate with joy the eighth day on which Jesus also rose from the dead, was made manifest, and ascended into heaven” (GLIMM, 1947, p. 216) (Ep. Bar.15.9). From this hint we shall pursue and investigation of the “eighth day argument”, which sits at the foundation of his rejection of the literality of the Sabbath alongside most of the Old Testament.

Before delving into the text of Barnabas, a brief scanning of the available literature reveals that there is no shortage of divergent views on the relationship Jesus had with the Sabbath prior to His resurrection and how early Christians related to the Sabbath and the Sunday as R. K. MacIver (2015) contends that there should be no doubt that Jesus and the disciples kept the Sabbath and there was no sign of challenging it, in the other there are those who, on the basis of various ancient texts (most frequently the *Didache* 14:1¹², *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:1¹³, *Gospel of Peter* 9:35¹⁴ and *Barnabas* 15:9) advocate an early rejection of the Sabbath in favor of a purely Christian day of celebration: the Sunday (ELWELL; BEITZEL, 1988, p. 1348).

Trafton (1996, p. 488) expresses well the widely accepted idea that even in the New Testament corpus there is already evidence that “by the 50s” of the first century, “if not earlier, Christians were attaching special significance to Sunday”. Nonetheless, the most popular interpretation of the place the Sunday took after the resurrection of Jesus and even before is far from hegemonic. Closely followed by Brattston (2017), who assumes that the epistle of Barnabas voices the early theological understanding that the resurrection of Jesus was indeed the basis upon which the Lord’s day, Sunday, should be preferred over the Jewish seventh day Sabbath.

González (2017, p. 24) argues that while all those who argue for a direct correlation between the resurrection of Jesus and the elevation of the Sunday as a special day for Christians wrestle to find first century hard evidence, nevertheless, there is firm second century evidence that the resurrection became the prominent reason for the eighth day. On the other hand McIver (2015, p. 24) contends that “there is no hard, or even probable, evidence that the practice of regular Sunday observance was widespread in the early church during the time that the New Testament works were

¹¹ Other patristic sources such as Justyn Martyr’s first apology chapter 66, Ignatius’s *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:1, and the *Didache* 14 as well as Jewish pseudepigrapha literature will inevitable be alluded to though no thorough appreciation of those sources is presently feasible.

¹² “And on the Lord’s own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure” (LIGHTFOOT; HARMER, 1891, p. 234).

¹³ “If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord’s day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny” (LIGHTFOOT; HARMER, 1891, p. 145).

¹⁴ “And in the night in which the Lord’s day was drawing on, as the soldiers kept guard two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in the heaven; and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with great light and approach the tomb. And that stone which was put at the door rolled of itself and made way in part; and the tomb was opened, and both the young men entered in”. See Allan Menzies, ed., *The Gospel according to Peter*, in *The Gospel of Peter, the Diatessaron of Tatian, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Visio Pauli, the Apocalypses of the Virgil and Sedrach, the Testament of Abraham, the Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena, the Narrative of Zosimus, the Apology of Aristides, the Epistles of Clement (Complete Text), Origen’s Commentary on John, Books I-X, and Commentary on Matthew, Books I, II, and X-XIV*, translated by J. Armitage Robinson, vol. 9, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (New York, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1897), p. 8.

written”.

Tonstad (2009, p. 303) in keeping with the view espoused by most apologists of the biblical Sabbath as opposed to the Lord’s day on Sunday, affirms that “The drift away from the Sabbath may early on have been due to voiceless, subliminal factors. In the course of time, however, the Church registers that the Sabbath has been supplanted”. As it is natural, the mere attestation that the Sabbath has been historically supplanted, does not provide as answer as to the why it was and still is the case for many Christians, reason why we here attempt to deal with a small fraction of the issue which is the very beginning of the phenomena.

Bauckham (1999, p. 236) argues that Sunday as a special day for Christians, though not directly referred to in the New Testament, could already have been the case of the Palestinian Christian church that was in Jerusalem, for he argues that the gentile mission could very hardly invented something as consequential as the abandonment of the Jewish Sabbath in favour of the Sunday without much dissention, thus he claims that it “seems irresistible that all of the early missionaries simply exported the practice (of Sunday worship) of the Palestinian churches”. Bauckham’s argument is based on the canonical assumption or transition from the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday, however, there is no direct evidence of the claim and he himself has noted, any affirmation of the kind is “guess work” (BAUCKHAM, 1999, p. 236).

Kevin Condon (1960, p. 344) argues that what the sabbath was for the Jews the day of the Lord’s resurrection became for the Christians, thus establishing some sort of equivalence, nevertheless, as evidence suggests, that the Lord’s Day had its religious and cultural origins far from any equivalence with the Jewish sabbath.

The Jewish Sabbath has a deliberate vertical nature. It was not derived from pre-existing socio-cultural elements but was vertically given by God, in the other hand the place of importance of the Lord’s Day within early Christianity seems to have surged in opposite direction, i.e., it sprung up from the socio-cultural and religious milieu.

Following Tonstad’s hint that the issues surrounding the sabbath and the Lord’s day remained underground, simmering for centuries (TONSTAD, 2009, p. 304) until they were elaborated more clearly in Augustine by the second half of the fourth century (PORTALIÉ, 1907-1913) we shall begin to deal with what is likely to be the first sprouts of a seed that would flourish centuries later, i.e. the eight day argument in Barnabas.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE EIGHTH DAY: THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

“Therefore, we also celebrate with joy the eighth day on which Jesus also rose from the dead, was made manifest, and ascended into heaven.” (*Barnabas* 15:9) (GLIMM, 1947, p. 216)

Date and provenance

The anonymously written (GLIMM, 1947, p. 187)¹⁵ document known as *Letter of Barnabas* has been variously dated to the last decade of the first century and the first decades of the second century (WRIGHT, 2003, p. 489), or from the days of Vespasian, AD 69-79¹⁶ to the Bar-Cochba revolt, AD 132 (GLIMM, 1947, p. 187)¹⁷. At the earliest, Barnabas is contemporary to late New Testament texts, Justin the Martyr¹⁸ and Ignatius of Antioch¹⁹ and the latest Barnabas was composed by the end of the first half of the second century. Regardless of the precise date, Barnabas later than the main corpus of the New Testament and certainly prior to the full elaboration of the theology of the Sunday as can be seen from the fourth century onwards.

Like 1 Clement and Ignatius, Barnabas shows great reliance on the Old Testament (GLIMM, 1947, p. 195), but with markedly distinct hermeneutics as the Jewish imagery and conclusions on the letter may suggest (HAGNER, 1997, p. 85). However, the allegorical interpretation of such matters as the dietary laws of *Leviticus* 11 and *Deuteronomy* 14 is in sharp contrast with the rabbinical

¹⁵ Lightfoot affirms that in fact it is impossible to know how the name Barnabas came to be associated with the *Letter of Barnabas* since it does claim authorship or can be connected with the Barnabas, companion of Paul. See Lightfoot and Harmer (1891, p. 239).

¹⁶ Ramsay argues that a date from 70-79 may be reached through the reference to the ten kings of the book of Daniel. Vespasian therefore was the eighth, Titus the ninth, and Domitian the tenth king; and three kings reigning together between 70 and 79 were according to widespread belief destined all to perish together at the hands of the expected Nero. See W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893), p. 308-309.

¹⁷ See also Michael R. Licona. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2010), p. 257.

¹⁸ Born around 100 CE. See Robert M. Grant, Justin Martyr (Person), ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), p. 1133. Justin's stance is found on his First Apology chapter 67: Weekly Worship of the Christians which reads: "And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability,² and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration". See Justin Martyr, The First Apology of Justin, in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 185-186.

¹⁹ "Born in Syria, around the year 50; died at Rome between 98 and 117". See John Bonaventure O'Connor, St. Ignatius of Antioch, ed. Charles G. Herbermann et al., *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York, NY: The Encyclopedia Press; The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1907-1913).

interpretation (ZAHAVY, 1992, p. 1083)²⁰ and in consonance with the allegorical school of Alexandria, not least with Philo of Alexandria (TAULMAN, 2003, p. 1294) himself who wrote less than a century prior to the *Letter of Barnabas*²¹. Interestingly, the *Letter of Barnabas* antagonizes Judaism without necessarily engaging with anti-Judaic heresies of the second century or discarding Jewish scripture (LIGHTFOOT; HARMER, 1891, p. 239). As Lukyn Williams (2012, p. 19) categorically affirms, Barnabas “never shows bitterness against the Jews or Judaism”.

Whatever is the case, it is safe to say that Barnabas employs a profoundly allegorical methodology and his audience was most likely familiar with the Alexandrian Christian theology if they were to effortlessly embrace Barnabas argumentation (POPE CLEMENT I *et al.*, 1912-1913, p. 337)²².

Barnabas concludes chapter 15 with the “eighth day” argument (BULLINGER, 2018, p. 195) which might be, as we will argue, the earliest explanation why Christians should no longer keep the sabbath on the grounds of the resurrection (GLIMM, 1947, p. 216) but framed within the conscripts of second temple Jewish apocalyptic literature. The resurrection as the reason for Sunday worship was not uncommon among the writings of the apostolic fathers (EASTON, 1915, p. 1919). Thus, in Barnabas the adoption of the Sunday as opposed to the seventh day Sabbath is unequivocal, but its rationale is not as clear as the positive attitude towards Jewish literature may indicate.

The author of Barnabas employs a threefold argument for the, arguably weekly commemoration of the “eighth day”; thus, because Jesus “rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into Heaven” (POPE CLEMENT I *et al.*, 1912-1913, p. 397) that Christians should not continue with the Jewish institution of seventh day Sabbaths but Sundays. The very first reason for Sunday or “eighth day” is the resurrection of Jesus. But how did Barnabas come to the conclusion that theological importance was to be placed on the “eighth day” and how did it connect with the Sunday at all? For that we must try to understand Barnabas background and how it might shed light on his theology.

The author of Barnabas was probably a convert from Judaism and at pain of *ad nauseum* argumentation, contended that Christian should not accept the Old Testament in its literal sense, especially when it might indicate the permanence of Judaic religious institutions (GLIMM, 1947, p. 188). What is fascinating in the structure of Barnabas’ argumentation is that it relies on a markedly allegorical methodology, nevertheless, the resurrection of Jesus was widely believed to be literal as opposed to the docetic heresy (GARRETT JR., 2014, p. 614)²³ that flourished parallel to the possible

²⁰ See also J. Ross Wagner, Piety, Jewish, in *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 802.

²¹ The Alexandrian argument for the place of composition of Barnabas on the basis of his allegorical methodology is common but by no means the only. A. Lukyn Williams argues that early patristic scholars established a connection between the allegorical method and Alexandrian Judaism for lack of Knowledge of the Talmud and Rabbinic literature which, according to Williams, reason scripture in a similar fashion when compared to Philo or Barnabas. See A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²² Bauckham also defends the Egyptian origin of Barnabas to argue that the Sunday was already widely accepted among Egyptian Christians. See Bauckham (1999, p. 236).

²³ See also Lightfoot and Harmer (1891, p. 273).

dates of Barnabas while the author also seems to take the resurrection as literal²⁴ as the expression *ἐν σαρκί* (IGNTP, 2012) in reference to the resurrection of Jesus indicates: “But He Himself endured that He might destroy death and show forth the resurrection of the dead, for that He must needs be manifested in the flesh (*ἐν σαρκί*)” (*Barnabas*, 5.6).

The lack of animosity against the Jews in Barnabas and the general positive attitude towards Jewish literature, may indicate that the author of Barnabas had philosophical and/or theological reasons to argue in favour of what he called the eight-day having the resurrection as an apologetic device. From his allegorical approach it is rather natural that a symbolical reading should be employed and that may shed light onto the how in Barnabas the resurrection came to be an argument for the abandonment of the Sabbath but no light seems to be shed onto the why it is the case. Thus we suggest that Barnabas had theological reasons to abandon the weekly observance of the seventh day Sabbath rather than anti-Judaic sentiments.

Paget (2006, p. 444) suggests that Barnabas’ takes the “monolithical” position with regards to the reference point of the Christian Old Testament, i.e. Jewish scripture which is that the whole corpus of Jewish scripture referred to a Christian fulfilment and that there is only one true covenant, the Christian covenant, suggests a polemical circumstance, thus Barnabas’s revisionism of Jewish interpretation sets him for the rejection of the Sabbath but interestingly also for the literal acceptance of the Sunday on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus, which he considers literal. Given the seemingly exotic thesis Barnabas embraces, how was Barnabas considered by later Christianity? This question is of crucial importance if we are to establish that Barnabas helped shape the Christian Sunday/Sabbath controversy.

Acceptance of Barnabas

The epistle of Barnabas though considered hermeneutically tortuous by modern interpreters, was in all likelihood a popular Christian text right from its composition date²⁵ as its presence on the Codex Sinaiticus (IGNTP, 2012), “the oldest complete manuscript of the New Testament” (ANDERSON; WIDDER, 2018, p. 132) indicates, while Clement of Alexandria accepts the epistle as apostolic (ROBERTS; DONALDSON; COXER, 1885) as the multiple references to Barnabas may suggest²⁶ at the pace that Origen arguing for the existence of evil and good angels, places Barnabas alongside David and Paul²⁷. All these references conjure great esteem for Barnabas as a whole and

²⁵ There seems to be a consensus among interpreters of Barnabas that the reference to the rebuilding of the temple firmly places the epistle from 70AD to 132AD. “Furthermore He saith again; *Behold they that pulled down this temple themselves shall build it*. So it cometh to pass; for because they went to war it was pulled down by their enemies. Now also the very servants of their enemies shall build it up” (Barnabas 16:3-4). See Lightfoot and Harmer (1891, p. 284).

²⁶ *Strom.* 2.6:31; 2.7:35; 2.15:67; 2.18:84; 2.20:116; 5.8: 51–52; 5.10:63. See Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe (1885).

²⁷ “David testifies in the Psalms [...] The Apostle Paul also will bear testimony [...] The same is declared by Barnabas in his Epistle” (*Origen, De Princi.* 3.2:4) Origen, “De Principiis,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 332.

naturally for his arguments for a symbolic Sabbath and the acceptance of the literal Sunday on the eighth day as the basis of the commemoration of Jesus' resurrection and the inauguration of a new era.

Having established that the eighth day argument is at the heart of Barnabas' theology of Sunday it is vital to ask: What does "eighth day" refer to? Is it a term of his own making or is it borrowed from elsewhere?

The eighth day motif

The eighth day motif in Barnabas is naturally part of a larger context where the author creatively weaves arguments for the abandonment of any literal interpretation of the Old Testament and the full embrace of the Christian interpretation of the Jewish Scripture as pointing solely to Christ. Barnabas contends that Jewish institutions such as animal sacrifices (*Barnabas*, 2.4), circumcision (*Barnabas*, 9.4), dietary laws (*Barnabas*, 10), the Sabbath (*Barnabas*, 15) and the temple (*Barnabas*, 16) were always meant to be understood spiritually and that the Jewish people "erred because an evil angel was misleading them" (*Barnabas*, 9.4) (POPE CLEMENT I *et al.*, 1912-1913, p. 371-373). It is not surprising that Barnabas using such a generalizing interpretive method with a clear goal of discarding any literal interpretation of the Jewish scriptures, would also interpret the seventh day sabbath, that was so important part of second temple Judaism, as being, since the beginning, meant to be figurative, spiritual in nature and by influence of an evil angel Jews regarded the sabbath commandment a bidding order from the Lord to be observed on a specific day of the week.

Barnabas relativizes the literal seventh day Sabbath due to his hermeneutical presuppositions and creative imagination thus it should be no surprise that he does not consider the forth commandment as bidding for the Christian as it was never even meant to be bidding for the Jews, nevertheless, the historical and theological way from which the resurrection became so intricately connected with apologetic arguments for the Sunday, is not so obvious in my estimation, therefore we shall try to investigate the motif of the eighth day to trace probable sources Barnabas used to get to the eighth day argument of (*Barnabas*, 15.9) which seems to be, as we shall argue, in direct connection with the writings of 1 and 2 Enoch which fit within the larger context of Jewish Apocalypses and Pseudepigrapha.

In the letter of Barnabas, both the allegorical treatment of the Sabbath and the conclusion that the seventh day was a preparation for the eighth day on which Jesus was raised from the dead, is unequivocally advocating for the embrace of the Sunday as opposed to the seventh day Sabbath, nevertheless it is unclear whether his reference to the eighth day should be taken allegorically as the sabbath.²⁸

²⁸ "Almost all commentators would agree with Bacchiocchi that the combination of the disparagement of the Sabbath and the promotion of the day on which the Lord was resurrected in *Barnabas* XV is clear evidence that a move from the worship on Sabbath to the worship on Sunday is being advocated. See McIver (2015, p. 28).

THE EIGHTH DAY MOTIF IN THE ENOCHIC TRADITION

One of the most prominent features of the Christianity found in the apostolic fathers is that, as Hagner (1997, p. 85) puts it, it has a “remarkably Jewish cast”, thus showing great reliance upon, later considered, canonical Jewish writings but also extracanonical. Thus, unsurprisingly, references and allusions to Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are not uncommon, having the writings of the Enochic tradition, and many others such as Maccabees, 4 Ezra, among others, as usual material guiding religious life. From among the Jewish extracanonical corpus, the book of 2 Enoch, at first glance, bears striking theological and literary similarities with the eighth day motif found on chapter 15 of the epistle of Barnabas. 2 Enoch 33:1-2 reads:

And I appointed the eighth day also, that the eighth day should be the first-created after my work, and that *the first seven* revolve in the form of the seventh thousand, and that at the beginning of the eighth thousand there should be a time of not-counting, endless, with neither years nor months nor weeks nor days nor hours (CHARLES, 1913, p. 451).

Given the noticeable similarities between Barnabas 15 and 2 Enoch 33, the latter must be dealt with in certain depth if we are to avoid confusions and impart onto the text a direct correlation or even implying causation without reasonable cause. Thus, a brief examination of 2 Enoch is imperative if we are to argue that here is any correlation or even causation relationship between Barnabas and 2 Enoch.

Enoch

The ancient piece of literature known as 2 Enoch or the Secrets of Enoch or even Slavonic Enoch (ANDERSEN, 1992, p. 516), has been argued by J.T. Milik to be a late medieval composition for it is only available in Slavonic language²⁹, nevertheless “the consensus is that it was Jewish, because of the importance attached to animal sacrifice” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 316), as well as the apparent connection with Philo of Alexandria (ANDERSEN, 1992, p. 519). Furthermore Charles (1913, p. 426) argues that at least “part of this book – possibly the main part – was written for the first time in Greek”, thus dismissing Milik’s argument and much of the literary context suggests that 2 Enoch was “written in Egypt, and probably in Alexandria” (CHARLES, 1913, p. 426).

Milik’s argument is dependent on late semantic analyses and falls short in contrast with the first century arguments (COLLINS, 2000, p. 316), moreover the “parallels to Philo and allusions to Egyptian mythology” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 316), and the descriptions of “the crocodile form of the *chalkydri* (chap. 12) and the Egyptian month names (chap. 73)” (ANDERSEN, 1992, p. 519) could

²⁹ See J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1976), p. 107-116. His main argument concerns the use of a late Greek word *syрмаio-grapha*, but this word could have been introduced secondarily in the course of transmission. In John Joseph Collins “The Apocalyptic Imagination An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, 2nd Edition (The Biblical Resource Series), p. 243.

hardly be argued away. Thus, it seems safe to assume that 2 Enoch is best located in the first century Alexandria as Andersen (1992, p. 519) has affirmed, so we will follow this estimation as it seems to be the one that best makes sense of the text itself the date available about it.

2 Enoch is often categorized as pseudepigraphic Jewish which is, as John Collins (1998, p. 3) apocalyptic in literary genre and firmly within the 1 Enoch tradition, though Andersen (1998, p. 3) has argued that the overlapping themes of 1 and 2 Enoch may have emerged independently as they belonged to a larger religious and cultural context (ANDERSEN, 1992, p. 517). Either way the theological similitude between the works known as Enochic betray that they pertain to a certain theological tradition that has its main themes extricated from the book of the Genesis, but elaborate on them quite creatively.

The text of 2 Enoch , (2 Enoch 50:2; 65:6) is alongside a few other Jewish Apocalypses (2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, Animal Apocalypse and Daniel) interested in the thematic of the resurrection and since 2 Enoch seems to be of Egyptian provenance, it would not be surprising that the author oof Barnabas had access to the Enochic tradition present in 2 Enoch with its theological framework (COLLINS, 1998, p. 7) if we accept Barnabas, on the basis of his connections to Philo, the Egyptian provenance.

The heart of the issue here at stake can be found, fairly elaborated in the creation account of 2 Enoch which goes from chapter 25-32 and concludes with the eighth day, the new era that will last, as the other eras of creation, one thousand year.

And I appointed the eighth day also, that the eighth day should be the first-created after my work, and that *the first seven* revolve in the form of the seventh thousand, and that at the beginning of the eighth thousand there should be a time of not-counting, endless, with neither years nor months nor weeks nor days nor hours (2 Enoch 33:1-2) (CHARLES, 1913, p. 451).

It is also noticeable that, also in an eschatological context, the theme of an eighth phase or era can also be found on 1 Enoch, on which 2 Enoch is either dependent or springs from the same religious tradition. As John Joseph has argued, the apocalyptic genre and shared religious tradition as well as imagery places 2 Enoch “firmly a part of the 1 Enoch tradition” (COLLINS, 1998, p. 3).1 Enoch 91:12 reads:

And after that there shall be another, the eighth week, that of righteousness, and a sword shall be given to it that a righteous judgement may be executed on the oppressors, and sinners shall be delivered into the hands of the righteous (CHARLES, 1913, p. 264).

Date and provenance

Although Milik claimed that it was a late, Christian work (MILIK 1976, p. 107-116), the consensus is that it was Jewish, because of the importance attached to animal sacrifice. Egypt is the most likely place of composition, because of parallels to Philo and allusions to Egyptian mythology

(COLLINS, 2000, p. 316). Milik's argument is dependent on late semantic analyses and falls short in contrast with the first century argument³⁰.

At one extreme, R. H. Charles thought that it was written about the beginning of the Christian era, by an Alexandrian Jew, and in Greek (though certain parts of it 'were founded on Hebrew originals'); at the other extreme, it has been argued that it is a *Bogomil work, written in Bulgarian between the 12th and 15th cents. As an intermediate view may be instanced that of A. Vaillant, that the author was a Jewish Christian, who was concerned to produce a Christian counterpart to the Jewish 1 Enoch, and wrote in Greek, prob. in the 2nd or early 3rd cent (CROSS; LIVINGSTONE, 2005, p. 551).

The result of these observations seems to be that the Book of Enoch must be regarded as a collective work, consisting of various parts, about the composition of which it will be difficult to form a certain judgment until the Hebrew original, or at any rate the Greek version from which the Ethiopic is derived, shall have been recovered (LIPSIUS, 1877-1887, p. 128).

"Charles is convinced of the Egyptian provenience of *2 Enoch*; for him, the author was an Alexandrian Jew in the 1st century B.C. he pointed to such details as the crocodile form of the chalydri (chap. 12) and the Egyptian month names (chap. 73) (ANDERSEN, 1992, p. 519). Part of this book – possibly the main part – was written for the first time in Greek (CHARLES, 1913, p. 426). This book in its present form was written in Egypt, and probably in Alexandria (CHARLES, 1913, p. 426).

The striking similarities between *2 Enoch* and *Barnabas* cannot be simply attributed to an incredible literary and theological coincidence, thus there must be a relationship between both documents which I propose is either because *Barnabas* had access to the material of *2 Enoch*, or both being from the same region, Egypt, borrows from the same literary/religious tradition, either way *Barnabas* and *2 Enoch* are theologically connected and literarily related.

Relevance and importance

The writings of Enoch certainly exerted certain influence both on second temple Judaism and early Christianity. Collins (2000, p. 317) has argued that the presence of several 1 Enoch components and themes were preserved at Qumran and it is quite possible that it was regarded as scripture by the Essenes. He also argues that 1 Enoch did not enjoy scriptural status in rabbinic Judaism but enjoyed great status among some Christians groups (COLLINS, 2000, p. 317). The canonical epistle of Jude alludes to the story of the Watchers and seems to regard the story as authoritative. If Collins is right, there is no reason to say that the clear references to Enochic writings are not an evidence that it was read authoritatively, as it seems to be the case in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (COLLINS, 2000, p. 317). Later *1 Enoch* was still considered and mentioned as Scripture by Tertullian at the end of the second century, arguable many decades after the composition of *Barnabas* (COLLINS, 2000, p. 317). Additionally, Collins (2000, p. 313) also argue that "for Jews of the Babylonian exile, Enoch would

³⁰ See Milik (1976, p. 107-116). His main argument concerns the use of a late Greek word *syrmaio-grapha*, but this word could have been introduced secondarily in the course of transmission. In Collins (1998, p. 243).

likely have been viewed as a Jewish counterpart to both the Sumerian hero-king and the Babylonian flood hero”.

Barnabas quotes Enoch alongside other authoritative scriptural texts thus hinting to the high regard in which Enochic literature enjoyed in the epistle of Barnabas

“The context in Barnabas 4 also includes references to Daniel", Exodus", Isaiah, "Matthew" and allusions to some New Testament epistles. The setting, then, shows that Enoch's words are among those *γέγραπται* and they are aligned with references to other books widely recognized as scriptural. (VANDERKAM; ADLER, 1996, p. 38)

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The creation account of 2 Enoch is crucial for the understanding of the eighth day motif for the seven days of creation are interpreted on the basis of a deformed day-year principle (SHEA, 1992, p. 85) in which one day is taken to represent one thousand years, thus 2 Enoch reads “And I blessed the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, on which he rested from all his works. ‘God shows Enoch the age of this world, *its* existence of seven thousand years, and the eighth thousand is the end, neither years, nor months, nor weeks, nor days” (CHARLES, 1913, p. 451). Thus Charles is able to affirm that in 2 Enoch “the world was made in six days, so its history would be accomplished in 6,000 years, and as the six days of creation were followed by one of rest, so the 6,000 years of the world’s history would be followed by a rest of 1,000 years” (CHARLES, 1913, p. 430) which logically prepared the way for the Eighth day to be added and taken to be the day in which the new creation, the new era would begin.

“Then God himself tells him how he created the world. The account is very different from that of Genesis. "All creation" that God wished to create is contained in a stone in the belly of "the very great Adoil," and the foundation of creation is brought forth by another mythical monster Arouchaz. Enoch is then given thirty days to transmit what he has learned to his children (2 Enoch 25-30). (COLLINS, 1998, p. 245)

Though interesting, the creation account of 2 Enoch bears only superficial resemblance with the mosaic tradition while in the other hand bears visible similitude to the Egyptian context of creation myths (CHARLES, 1913, p. 426) from which both Barnabas and 2 Enoch probably come from. It also bypasses any notion of mosaic covenant between God and His people which is so foundational for the whole story of Jewish religion and the subsequent Christian reading of the mosaic tradition (COLLINS, 1998, p. 246). As Henry Charles affirms, the entire body of messianism present in the Old Testament does not find a single echo in 2 Enoch, the allusions to the Phoenix bird Chalkydries³¹, “monstrous serpents with heads of crocodiles” are pertinent to an Egyptian context but has nothing to do with the Genesis account which in the 2 Enoch version is markedly syncretic.

³¹ “seemingly a transliteration of Χαλκύδραι, brazen hydras or serpents. These are classed with the Cherubim in 1 En. 20:7” (CHARLES, 1913, p. 436).

CONCLUSION

Barnabas is a case of throwing the baby with the bath's water. While doing a great effort with an apparent lovingly heart in order to exhort and guide newly converts, the author of Barnabas lost grip of scripture and ventured into the risky job of doing hermeneutics detached from scripture adopting popular interpretive methods available at his time.

Barnabas took his eighth day argument day from the pseudepigraphic work of 2 Enoch or was influenced by the same religious tradition that oriented the eighth day argument of 2 Enoch 33. Either way, Barnabas' adoption of the eighth day argument was done at the loss of attachment with mainstream Jewish tradition and scripture which led the author not only to reinterpret the entirety of the Old Testament corpus to embrace a tradition and hermeneutical presuppositions derived from a fringe form of Judaism which was marked by the influence of Egyptian mythology and that was incompatible with the foundational creation account of Genesis and its literal days, strong monotheism and rejection of neighbouring ancient near eastern mythologies.

The Author of Barnabas bypassed scripture and in a fantastic move, inserted, into his Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, elements that were alien to the same scriptural corpus from which Christianity emerged, i.e., Jewish scripture. My contention is that Christianity is the reorganization of second temple Judaism around the discovery that Jesus is the Messiah. Such a discovery was subsequently found by Christians to be supported by scripture, Jewish Scripture. Thus, what Barnabas did was to insert into a Christian interpretation of the Jewish scripture, elements that were at the margin from where Christian first rose and grew.

The exotic argument of the eighth day, especially as the basis for the rejection for the seventh day Sabbath and its connection with the resurrection of Jesus, is the product of a fringe form of syncretic Judaism which was divorced from the mosaic creation tradition and which was adopted by Barnabas with no filtering. Barnabas elevated to the category of authoritative what rabbinic Judaism rejected, he used extrabiblical hermeneutical and texts to reach his conclusion, therefore it should come a little surprise that his conclusions were not only in contradiction with canonical texts but represent a direct attack on proper biblical hermeneutics

Lastly, the Messianic interpretation of the eighth day mixed with extrabiblical eschatology led to the distortion of the eighth day argument as the reason for the rejection of the Sabbath and the reception of the Sunday or eighth-day as the day for Christians to celebrate. Thus, a form of marginal Judaism, mixed with Egyptian elements, divorced from the mosaic tradition and dependent on 2 Enoch or a common source, was one of the affluents that led, over the time to the massive abandonment of the Sabbath and the embrace of the Sunday on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus.

A proper assessment of Justin Martyr's argument against Trypho would be fitting, nevertheless, it was not feasible for the present work, hence we conclude with the aforementioned suggestion.

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