The Inheritance of Israel the Influence of the Synagogue Liturgy on the Worship of the Early Church

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THE INHERITANCE OF ISRAEL
THE INFLUENCE OF THE SYNAGOGUE LITURGY
ON THE WORSHIP OF THE EARLY CHURCH

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Marjorie S. Matney
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THE INHERITANCE OF ISRAEL

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SYNAGOGUE LITURGY

ON THE WORSHIP OF THE EARLY CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will undertake a study of the worship practices of two major religions, Judaism and Christianity, as they existed during the early days of the Christian Church. Through an examination of specific aspects of worship, historical developments, and especially the prayers of the two communities, I wish to demonstrate that the worship of the Synagogue community had a definite influence upon the liturgy and theology of the church.

It is no slight undertaking to go back nineteen centuries in history and attempt to portray the situations of certain individuals and communities. The study of ancient history, as fascinating as it may be, is nevertheless fraught with uncertainties; there are no answers, only alternatives and possibilities. A study of ancient religious groups is all the more difficult. We are dealing herein with the unfolding of God's revelation to a certain group of people. We are concerned not only with human actions and secular historical developments, but with the individual and collective responses to God's activity in the world, and the multitude of forms which these responses took. When we step out of the realm of secular history into the progression of God's communion with man during the first years of his church, we are walking on holy
I have attempted to be as objective as possible in this work, in view of my beliefs and educational background. Philip Schaff recognizes that the historian cannot become a tabula rasa: "no man is able, nor should attempt, to cast off the educational influences which have made him what he is." The fact that I have been brought up in the Christian faith, and have studied church history as my first academic love, have undoubtedly colored my discussions of Christianity and my interpretation of history in the pages to follow.

In order to clarify the scope of certain discussions in this work, a few definitions of significant concepts are called for. The term "early church" recurs frequently throughout this paper. Historians differ on what constitute the years of the "early" church; for me they extend to the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Essentially we will be dealing with the first two hundred years of the church's existence, when most of her theological and christological concepts were still being formulated.

The Jewish Synagogue, sometimes referred to as the building in which the Jews congregated for services, also alludes to the worshipping community, similar to the way in which the term "church" can denote both the

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Christian community and the church building. The definition of "worship," which will form the background for this work, will hopefully be clarified in Chapter I.

This study is concerned with worship, as practiced by the Jewish and Christian communities. In much of this discussion, I have over generalized the historical scene to a great extent in order to focus primarily on religious developments. I have concentrated on the Synagogues and churches in Palestine, while recognizing that there are many schools of Judaism, and many types of Synagogues. I have attempted to present a generalized picture of Jewish worship which is representative of Judaism as whole, but has not taken into consideration distinctions imposed by various tribal customs, geographical locations, and other factors which were responsible for varieties in Jewish worship practices.

A generalized picture of the Christian Church is also presented. I have attempted to emphasize primarily the Christian community as it developed its various forms of worship, but have not dealt with the journeys of Paul and the mission to the Gentiles. There were variations in Christian worship, as there were in the Synagogue, but the sources indicate that the view of Christian worship portrayed in this work is representative of the broad spectrum of Christianity at this time.

I have only dealt with specific aspects of worship: primarily Scripture reading and prayer. I have purposely omitted a discussion of the sacraments, since
works on baptism and the Lord's Supper are numerous. While I recognize that they were a significant aspect of the early church worship service, I do not propose to discuss them here. Neither have I taken it upon myself to discuss the various theological developments with which the church was concerned in its early years; I have mentioned them only when they were appropriate to the discussion. Various questions such as nature of Christ, the concept of the atonement, and other Christological issues were being raised. It is essential to keep in mind that for the early Christians Jesus Christ was the resurrected Son of God, the Savior who had come to establish God's kingdom, and bring to an end the present age. Whatever the nature of our own Christology in this day and age, if we endeavor to do justice to a study of church history we must not lose sight of this significant fact.

A variety of sources are available for a study of this period. Outside of the sacred writings of Judaism there are few primary sources on Jewish worship. Josephus and Philo both make references to forms of Jewish worship, but even this material is scanty. Modern scholars have described Jewish worship during this period, but often in the context of discussions concerning more recent periods of Jewish history. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the ancient from the more modern forms.

We are a bit more fortunate in source material for early Christian worship. There are numerous works
available on the history of the church in this era, and the extant writings of the Christian fathers have provided firsthand accounts of the activities of Christian gatherings and worship experiences during the church's early days. I am grateful for access to materials in the Western Kentucky University library and the Kessler Circulating Library at Vanderbilt University, where quite a bit of source material on this subject is available. I was hindered somewhat in using some modern scholarly works written in unfamiliar languages, although most of the ancient texts have been translated into English.

It is hoped that the following discussion will present a picture of two forms of worship: Jewish and Christian, and in turn illustrate the influences that certain elements in the Jewish Synagogue service had upon early forms of Christian worship. A study of these influences will hopefully contribute to a clearer understanding of Christianity's heritage and her place in the ongoing march of God's kingdom through the ages, which was first revealed to the nation of Israel.
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Elements of the liturgy of the early Christian Church (first-third centuries A.D.) are examined and compared with aspects of the Synagogue liturgy of the same period. Major theological concepts and particular aspects of community life of the two religions are discussed. Significant influence of Judaism upon Christianity is found in the concept of God, the order of worship, and the times and places for worship. There are also similarities in such liturgical practices as the reading of Scripture, preaching, and the language and style of many of the early prayers.

As a result of these comparisons, the conclusion is drawn that the early Christians did not entirely abandon the worship practices and theological concepts inherent in the Synagogue, but built upon them and adapted them to new ideas called for by the Christian experience. Many of the Jewish forms and ideas were retained, but given new emphasis and content which reflected the message of salvation which Christ proclaimed.
CHAPTER ONE

THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Since the dawn of time man has worshipped his gods. Throughout history we find evidences of man's adoration of the almighty: the moon, the sun, the mountains, all that man has called "God" has been throughout the ages revered and worshipped.

It benefits us little to attempt to define and categorize the term "worship." Definitions abound; and they depend to such a great extent upon such factors as the period in history, the subject in question, and the object(s) of adoration.

Perhaps it is something within us, some primal instinct, by which we are called to acknowledge that someone is "out there," that we are not alone in the universe. In one sense, this mere act of acknowledgement is a type of worship. J. C. Davies states that worship is "...recognition of God's majesty and the acknowledgement of his sovereignty; it is reverential homage issuing in the adoration of and devotion to a personal God."  

Descriptions of worship range from such definitions

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as "holy meeting"² and "recognition of God's worth"³ on one hand, to elaborate and detailed schemes of objectives, goals, and expressions of varied worship experiences on the other.

We cannot here become involved in a discussion of the meaning of worship per se. However, C. E. B. Cranfield's concept of the three uses of the word "worship" provides a helpful background for our discussion.⁴ The first meaning that Cranfield gives to the term "worship" is 1) a particular element of that which is generally referred to as worship, i.e., adoration. This is a narrower use of the term than is called for in this paper, but perhaps the one to which we are most accustomed. Cranfield next considers worship as 2) public worship of the religious community gathered together. It is primarily in this sense, in an examination of the Jewish community and the liturgy of the Synagogue, that the worship life of Judaism will be discussed. The worship of the early church will, of course, be in this sense, but will also include the third use; 3) the wider sense

of worship, denoting the whole life of the community or of individuals viewed as service to God.

Thus throughout this paper the word "worship" will be used in a fairly broad sense: not only is it the adoration of the almighty, the gathering of the community at intervals for public acts of prayer and praise, but it is related also to the complete life of the community. For "...any divorce between worship in the sense of church service, private prayers, etc. and worship in the sense of the whole offering of our lives to God is intolerable." This concept will be made more distinct in our discussion of Christian worship in Chapter Three.

We are concerned here with the Judeo-Christian tradition: the tradition of one transcendent God, who is active in history and rules as Lord of his people. Perhaps the most significant theological concept that Christianity inherited from Judaism was the worship of one God, and centuries of changing worship practices and theological disparities have done little to alter this particular concept. Through their worship of Jehovah the Israelites were able to define and understand themselves as a nation, as a people; through their worship of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, Christians were able to give expression to the gospel of Christ and to their claims that he was indeed the Messiah.

5 Ibid.
Any sort of accurate picture of life in the first century A.D. depends upon the contents of the extant source material. It is difficult enough to study the "secular" history of the ancient world; to examine the religious and worship practices of communities so many centuries removed presents additional problems for the student of history. As Gregory Dix reminds us, historians and even theologians tend to forget that "religions pray." As he states,

Behind all the individual actors and events and documents of the first Christian century we can never forget the multitude of anonymous Christian men and women scattered in groups thickly or thinly all over the Mediterranean world, believing, "the Gospel," living by "the Gospel," suffering for "the Gospel," handing on "the Gospel," worshipping by "the Gospel," which they had received by a multitude of different channels. . . .no single individual, not Peter or Paul, or Mark or John, was ever in a position entirely to control the Gospel by his own understanding of it. It is in "the life of the church". . . .that the real springs of the history lie. And to this our most direct clue lies in the worship by which the church lived.6

Thus it is in the worship traditions of the Jewish and Christian communities that we are able to find some answers to the questions with which we are concerned in this paper:

1) What exactly did Christianity "inherit" from Judaism in the way of theological beliefs and worship practices?

2) In what specific materials do we find significant

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influence of the Jewish Synagogue upon the worship of the Christian Church?

In order to discuss with any accuracy the influence of one religion upon the other, it is first of all necessary to examine in a somewhat generalized manner the worship practices of both Judaism and Christianity as they are found soon after the beginning of the Christian Church.
CHAPTER TWO

JEWSH SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP IN THE TIME OF JESUS

The Synagogue played a significant role in the life of the Jewish community. The New Testament writers assume that it was an established institution by the time of Christ, and its origins may go back centuries earlier.

The exact date and circumstances of the Synagogue's origin are unknown; there are many theories. Some scholars maintain that it arose to replace the Temple during the Babylonian exile, while others take its beginnings back to before the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar. Some of the ancient writers whom we will examine contend that the Synagogue was instituted by Moses himself.¹

It is not our purpose to investigate this issue, but rather to present a picture of Synagogue practices during Christ's day, and consequently, determine their influence on the liturgy of the early church. Jews living outside Palestine were cut off geographically from the Temple ceremonies, and the Synagogue fulfilled for them a function that the Temple could not. The Synagogue may

have been established, in fact, primarily as a center of learning, and only later evolved into a worship center. One of the primary functions of the Synagogue was the reading and teaching of the Law. Philo, one of the few ancient writers who describes Synagogue worship, tells us that the Synagogue was first of all an educational center, where the people would come
to pursue the study of wisdom with the ruler expounding and instructing the people what they should do, while they received edification and betterment in moral principles and conduct. . . . for what are our places of prayer throughout the cities but schools of prudence and courage and temperance and justice and also of piety, holiness and every virtue by which duties to God and men are discerned and rightly performed?²

Philo goes on to say:

He (the lawgiver) required them to assemble in the same place on these seventh days, and sitting together in a respectful and orderly manner hear the laws read so that none should be ignorant of them. . . . Some priest who is present or one of the elders reads the holy laws to them and expounds them point by point till about the late afternoon, when they depart having gained both expert knowledge of the holy laws and considerable advance in piety.³

T. W. Manson maintains that one could become a complete Jew without ever witnessing a Temple service,⁴ and the Jewish historian, Josephus, also gives credence to the idea that Synagogues were primarily places for

²Philo, Moses II. 39, 215-216.
³Philo, Hypothetica, 7.
instruction in the Law:

He (the Legislator) appointed the Law to be the most excellent and necessary form of instruction, ordaining, not that it should be heard once for all or twice or on several occasions, but that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it, a practice which all other legislators seem to have neglected.

Although the primary function of the Synagogue seems to have been to instill a deeper knowledge of the Law through religious instruction, it eventually became a place of worship. According to Daniel-Rops:

the synagogue certainly governed the daily life of its members... saw to the teaching of the children and even constituted in itself a little university for the people; but it did so because it was primarily a... house of prayer, where men met to hear God speak by means of the words of His law.

Very few extant sources provide a clear picture of Synagogue worship during the first century. In addition to isolated passages in Josephus and Philo, the Mishnah gives an indication of the elements of the worship life of the Jews. Many of the daily prayers, readings, and the recitation of the Shema, which all had their origin in the Temple, had a prominent place in the service of the Synagogue. T. W. Manson states, "What is specially characteristic of the Synagogue service is the place given to the reading and exposition of scripture and to prayer."

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5 Josephus, *Against Apion*, II. 17. 175.
7 Manson, "The Jewish Background," p. 38.
Mourant also agrees that the characteristic features of the Synagogue service were "the elimination of the Temple sacrifices and offerings and a renewed emphasis upon the other elements in the service, namely, readings from the Torah and the prophets, Psalms, and prayers." All of these elements were especially dear to the first century Jews.

The Shema, which consists of three paragraphs from Deuteronomy and Numbers (See Appendix I) was recited morning and night by every adult male Jew. Women, slaves, and children were not required to recite it. The tractate Berachoth in the Mishnah specifies the regulations for reciting the Shema; it details the definite hours of "morning" and "evening," and defines distinctions between different schools within Judaism. One school considers "evening" to be before midnight; another until the "end of the first watch" (Ber. 1:1). The School of Shammas instructs that all are to recline when reciting in the evening, but stand erect in the morning. The School of Hillel states that everyone is to recite in his own way. (Ber. 1:3) The Shema is to be said in correct order, with no errors. There are certain exemptions: a bridegroom is exempt on the first night, or until the close of the next Sabbath, if the marriage has not been consummated.

(Ber. 2:4) Those whose dead lie unburied are exempt, as are the pallbearers. (Ber. 3:1)

The Shema is not only a prayer, but also a type of confession of faith. Its "confession" of the Lord as "one God" had no small bearing on the theology of the early church.

The Tefillah, or Eighteen Benedictions, (also referred to as the Amidah, which literally means "Standing,"}) was recited three times daily by every Israelite (including women, slaves, and children). There have been many variations on these prayers, and they may not have attained their final form until after 70 A.D.9 Cesterley, who refers to these as the prayers "par excellence of the Synagogue," maintains that there were only six in the original form, and that the 12th and 15th Benedictions were added toward the end of the first and second centuries, respectively.10

But parts of this prayer are very ancient, and it is also cited in the Mishnah. The morning Tefillah could be said anytime until midday, the afternoon one until sunset. There was no specific time set for the evening prayer, although it was some time toward the close of the day. An

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additional one was to be said at anytime during the day. (Ber. 4:1) Some schools maintained that this additional prayer could be said only with a local congregation, while others said that it was to be recited even in the absence of a congregation. (Ber. 4:7) The Tefillah was to be said only in a sober mood; one could not return a greeting, even for a king, or interrupt the recitation even for a snake. (Ber. 5:1)

The first three Benedictions were ascriptions of praise, the last three were thanksgivings, and the middle three were petitions. (See Appendix II for text of all eighteen.) The first three and the last three were invariable, and recited every day. The middle three were recited only on weekdays; on Sabbath days and holy days, special petitions relating to the particular day or season were said in their place. These last (or middle) three were not of a fixed form, and aside from their subject matter, the words were left up to the individual leader. 11

There were many other prayers in the early Jewish community; meal blessings, prayers for special days, and special Psalms for each day of the week. Cesterley maintains that some of these prayers, like the Benedictions, were originally variable in form, if not in content, but that frequent repetition led to a fixed form of the words. The prayers were probably in their fixed form before the

11 Ibid., p. 59.
Christian era, although they may not have been written down until a century or so later.\textsuperscript{12} The Jews, afraid that the sacred script might fall into the wrong hands, apparently heeded the words of Rabbi Simeon, a first-century Jewish sage: "He who writes down prayers sins as though he burned the Torah."\textsuperscript{13}

The prayers of the Synagogue were characterized primarily by praise and thanksgiving to God: for his creation, the deliverance of his people out of Egypt, and his guardianship of them throughout history. Less frequently, but nevertheless present, says Cesterley, was a sense of sin, expressed by confession and a prayer of forgiveness, such as the one found in Nehemiah:

\begin{quote}
Yet thou hast been just in all that has come upon us, for thou hast dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly; our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept thy law or heeded thy commandments and thy warnings which thou didst give them... Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that thou gavest to our fathers to enjoy its fruits and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. And its rich yield goes to the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins..."
\end{quote}

(\textit{Neh. 9:33-37}).\textsuperscript{14}

Another crucial aspect of the Synagogue prayers, also carried over from the Temple liturgy, was the response

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 51.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 52.

\textsuperscript{14}All Bible quotations are taken from \textit{The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha}, Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).
of "AMEN," by which the listener affirmed the prayer of blessing (or even an oath or a curse) which was being said or recited. We find this practice throughout the Old Testament, following speeches by Moses (Deut. 27:15f), Ezra (Neh. 8:6), and David (I Chron. 16:36); and a wife hearing her husband pray would join him by saying AMEN (Tob. 8:8). This response may have been used in the Synagogue from its very beginnings. It was said by the entire congregation after the prayers and blessings, was considered a crucial part of the service, and was so important:

that in the large Synagogue in Alexandria, where there was a difficulty for all members of the congregation to hear when the end of a prayer or a benediction was reached, an official stood up on a platform in the centre of the Synagogue and waved a flag as a sign to the congregation to make the response. 16

The Kaddish prayer, which originally had nothing to do with the liturgy, was recited by teachers at the conclusion of discourses. The first half of this prayer, the older portion, reads as follows:

Magnified and hallowed be His great name in the world which He created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your life-time and in your days, and in the life-time of all the house of Israel speedily and in a near time. And say ye, Amen. May His great Name be blessed for ever and to all eternity. 17

16 Oesterley, Jewish Background, p. 71.
17 Ibid., p. 73.
In the Synagogue service itself, prayers were not usually said by the entire congregation. He who said the prayers stepped in front of the chest on which lay the scrolls of the Law. Every adult member of the congregation was competent to lead the community in prayer, and individual members frequently participated in turn. Additional prayers included in the Synagogue liturgy will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The reading of the Law and the prophets was also of central importance to the Synagogue service. The Torah was read on Mondays and Thursdays and Sabbath days, for we mentioned above that the Synagogue may have been established primarily for instruction in the Law. The lesson from the Torah was arranged so that the whole Pentateuch, divided into 154 sections, was read consecutively in cycles of three years. Various members of the congregation (ranging in number from four to seven) took part in the reading. Each had to read at least three verses, and the Mishnah adds that one had to read the scroll from memory, in Aramaic or other language. But if one read them piecemeal, or drowsily, his obligation was still

18 Schurér, The Jewish People, p. 79.
19 Cesterley, Jewish Background, p. 37.
20 Schurér, The Jewish People, p. 79.
21 There were usually four readers, but on feast days there were five, on the Day of Atonement, six; and seven readers on the Sabbath. (Meg. 4:2)
fulfilled. (Meg. 2:1-2) Everyone was eligible to read the scrolls, except an imbecile, a deaf person, or a minor (under age 13), although some schools maintained that minors were eligible. (Meg. 2:4) He who read the Law always read standing, but the reader of the prophets was allowed to stand or sit. (Meg. 4:1)

In the ancient world, the reading of the Law was usually followed by a paragraph from the prophets, read by one person. A reader could omit sections from the prophets, but not from the Law. (Meg. 4:4) In the beginning of the months, the Law was read by four people, but was not followed by the prophets. (Meg. 4:2) The concluding reader of the prophets recited the Shema with the Benedictions, went before the Ark and lifted up his hands. A minor could read the Law, but could not recite the Shema or go before the Ark and lift his hands. (Meg. 4:6)

An edifying discourse, which was usually an explanation of the scripture reading, very often followed the scripture in a form of a lecture or sermon, although this was not an invariable element in the service. Philo makes mention of an exposition of sorts:

Then one takes the book and reads aloud and another of especial proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood. For most of their philosophical study takes the form of allegory, and in this they emulate the tradition of the past.23

22 Schürer, The Jewish People, p. 81.

23 Philo, Every Good Man Is Free, 12:81-82.
Cesterley has referred to this phenomenon as the "first step in preaching the word." The "preacher," who could also be "any competent member of the congregation," sat in the front at an elevated place.

The Synagogue service was closed with a blessing, pronounced by a priestly member of the congregation. If no priest was present as was often the case, since there was no formal priesthood outside of Jerusalem, the blessing was made into a prayer.

It is evident from this discussion that the two primary elements in the Synagogue service were the prayer and the reading of Scripture. However, at least ten adult males were required for these two acts to be performed. According to the Mishnah, if there were less than ten present, they could not recite the Shema, go before the Ark, lift up their hands, or read the prescribed portions of the Law or the prophets. (Meg. 4:3)

In the Synagogue, the congregation sat in appointed order, the most distinguished and influential on front seats, and the younger ones behind. Philo refers to them as "arranged in rows according to their ages, the younger

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24 Cesterley, Jewish Background, p. 41.
25 Shurer, The Jewish People, p. 82.
26 Ibid., p. 83.
below the elder. . . ."27 It is probably true also that the men and women sat apart.

Each village had its own Synagogue; larger towns had several. Jerusalem is said to have had between four and five hundred!28 We have already alluded to the Synagogue's function as an educational center, where the scriptures were read and the Law was taught. Each Synagogue had a "house of the book" for reading the Scriptures, and a "house of study" for studying the Mishnah.29 The latter may have developed into a parallel institution, but the fact that in the New Testament Jesus and the disciples taught in the Synagogue makes this theory doubtful, at least for the era with which we are concerned. The Synagogue also was significant in the instruction of children, although its role as a school in the strict sense of the word is debatable.30 However, this function of the Synagogue is not of crucial importance to our discussion.

During the New Testament period, the Synagogue building was to a large extent modelled on the Temple. The entrance was from the east, the Ark and the scrolls were on the opposite wall, in the west. (This is reversed in

29 IDEB, vol. 4, p. 487.
30 See IDEB, vol. 4, p. 487.
the modern Synagogue.) Articles borrowed from the Temple retained their Semitic names, while those peculiar to the Synagogue had Greek names (ex. lecturn—εναλγία; reading platform—βῆμα). The Synagogue was always built on the most elevated spot; no visible building was allowed to top it.

The key to the meaning of worship in the Old Testament is the phrase: THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD. For the Jewish Community, the unity of God was not an abstract concept, but a declaration of God’s transcendence. Muhlenberg says, "... in worship she (Israel) has discerned the course of her existence and the destiny to which she is called... her historical life is ordered and steadied by the rule of a transcendent Lord."

The Jews sang praises not only to God as Creator and ruler of the universe, but also as redeemer and deliverer of his people, Israel. The great acts of God on behalf of his people were an integral part of the proclamatory testimony of the Jewish Community. "Israel

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32 Manson, "The Jewish Background," p. 38.


praises God because in her worship she is given direction and guidance for her way through history."\(^{36}\) The Kingship of Yahweh and the servanthood of Israel are important concepts toward understanding the worship of the Jews. The idea of the unity, the "oneness" of God, comes through again and again in their prayers and other liturgical writings.

The worship of God as the God of history was important to the Jews, but the God of history was also the God about to come. The God who had performed great acts in history on behalf of his people was also a God of the future; and from this concept of the God of the future came the Messianic hope; the hope in the intervention of God to come and bring the present age to an end. A new golden age was envisioned when God's kingdom would be established. "In the faith and worship of Israel hope is the greater word, not love. Hope is a duty and a dogma; the warfare of faith is the battle of hope."\(^{37}\)

The attitude of the Jews toward the Law, especially during the time of Jesus, is difficult for one outside the Jewish heritage and tradition to comprehend. Historians differ concerning the exact attitude of the Jews toward the Law. No one disputes the universal importance and authority of the Law within the Jewish community, and

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 108.

Josephus cites the significance of the Law as the ultimate ruler in every area of life:

...starting from the very beginning with the food of which we partake from infancy and the private life of the home, he left nothing, however insignificant, to the discretion and caprice of the individual. ...for all this our leader made the law the standard and rule, that we might live under it as under a father and master, and be guilty of no sin through willfullness or ignorance.38

Some interpret the covenant legalistically, seeing the Law as a type of divine retribution in the strictest sense. The people had to obey the Law of God; under a strict code of living adherence to the Law was almost a type of coercion.39 The exile had given the Jews a deep sense of sin; they had disobeyed God, and were duly punished for their failure to obey divine commands. This sense of sin gave the Jews an earnest desire to know and do the divine will, which resulted in the codification of the Law.40

But the Law holds a far richer meaning than this for the Jew. It does not merely mean a blind obedience to a written document, but expresses "the whole of the Divine Will for, and thought about, man."41 The Law was more than a legal requirement; it was a gift of God. God

38 Josephus, Against Apion II. 17.173.
39 Davies, Early Christian Church, p. 2.
40 Ibid.
41 Rylaarsdam, "Matrix of Worship," p. 36.
gave this gift, through love and grace, to His chosen ones. "Israel had been chosen by God and then had been given the Torah; God's choice was not based upon obedience to Torah."  The Law was not a burden imposed upon the Jew, but an instrument by which man might do everything in order to please God, and thereby attain salvation.

The Law, as the greatest of God's gifts, was a source of delight for the Jews. This becomes evident in the Psalms. Psalm 19 begins with praises to the God of nature, and continues with praise of God's Law:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. (Ps. 19:7-8)

Psalm 1 and Psalm 119 also illustrate this idea:

...his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Ps. 1:2)

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the Lord! (119:1)

I will meditate on thy precepts, and fix my eyes on thy ways. I will delight in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word. (119:15-16)

Make me understand the way of thy precepts, And I will meditate on thy wondrous works. (119:27)

...for I find delight in thy commandments, which I love. I revere thy commandments, which I love, And I will meditate on thy statutes. (119:47-48)

This entire Psalm resounds with joy and delight in God's Law, love and gratitude for the gift of the Law, and eagerness to obey it diligently.

We have already touched on the fact that the Jews, individually and as a community, had a deep sense of history. Their concept of God was to a great extent historical in nature, and some scholars maintain that the Jews' allegiance to and practice of the Law contributed in no small measure to giving meaning and direction to this history. Such an opinion is evident in the following:

Israel is a holy people if she keeps covenant and obeys Torah. . . . It is a summons to faithfulness and allegiance. Without it, Israel would be lost in her perplexities as to what she ought to do in the midst of a confused and deeply troubled history. . . . But Israel rejoices in the gift of the Torah. It is no burden to be borne with resignation, but a divine vade mecum to direct her on her course through life.3

We have only been able to touch on the concept of God which the Jews held, and the significance of the Law within the Jewish community. But some knowledge of these traditions and attitudes is a necessity if an adequate study of the influence of the Synagogue liturgy upon the worship of the Christian Church is to be made. We turn now to a study of the church itself.

CHAPTER THREE

EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

We possess much more material concerning the advent of the Christian church, and the details of its early community and worship life, than we do of the Synagogue of the same era. Scores of volumes have been written which relate the activities of the first Christians; some in bare outline, others in great detail. The works of numerous writers in the beginning days of the church have survived the centuries, and are rich in the knowledge and spirit of their times. It is within the writings of the great historian Eusebius, and Justin Martyr, Clement, Tertullian, Jerome, and others, that contemporary scholars have found authentic source material for studying the first centuries of the Christian Church.

It is not the purpose of this paper to "retrace" the development of the early church. Were it even possible in a paper of this length, it would be nonetheless very impractical. Our emphasis here is on WORSHIP, and the question that must be answered is: How did the first Christians worship their God? We have already dealt with this question in part, for the first Christians were Jews who participated in the life of the community as described in Chapter Two, who followed the law of Moses regularly.
and who worshipped the God of Israel in the Synagogue. This fact is crucial for our discussion of the influence of Jewish liturgy on Christian worship. We must never lose sight of the fact that the earliest Christians brought to their new religion many of the worship practices and traditions to which they had been accustomed in the Synagogue.

R. F. Martin states:

The earliest believers who were all Jews entered the church with no tabula rasa of spiritual experience, but as those who stood in a long and developed cultic tradition, with forms of divine service and liturgical offices and language already known to them.¹

But these people were Jews who had been touched, more in spirit than in person, by Jesus Christ. For them he was the Son of God, the Messiah, come to bring life to his people. And out of this life there arose a new generation—a people who believed that the Messiah long-awaited had indeed come—a people called Christians. Outside of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, there is little primary information concerning the first century of the Christian people. The Book of Acts, however, gives us some indication of this.

The worship life of Acts opens with the event of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). From this point on the Holy Spirit (which is discussed below at greater length) is a significant presence in the life of the first Christians. Much

of the activity of the disciples consists of preaching the baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and testifying that Jesus was the risen Lord, the fulfillment of the prophets.

The picture that Acts presents to us is one of the early Christians meeting in the Temple and Synagogues, and at the same time gathering in small groups for prayer and the breaking of bread. They continued to observe the hours of prayer and customs of Synagogue worship, but there was much praying and fasting in small groups as they met to celebrate the event of the risen Christ and the gift of the Spirit. The picture of worship in Acts provides a basis for the discussion to follow: the emergence of a new religion and the continuing relationship of this religion to the worship community out of which it came.

What of the God of the Christian people? It is indeed difficult to draw a fine line between the Old Testament God of the Jewish nation and the New Testament God of the Christian. In one sense, the concept of the God of Israel gave rise to the God of Christians, as revealed by Jesus Christ. That is not to say that they are two different Gods, for they are not. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of Jesus Christ. The Christians did not repudiate the heritage of the Jewish God and claim the title of People of God for themselves.

The God of creation is also the God of redemption; the God who has spoken in his Son is the same as he who spoke to the fathers by the prophets; the
God of the gospel of Christ is also the God who gave the law through Moses.\(^2\)

As Henry Chadwick states about the new revelation of God through Christ: "If something new had happened, it was the action of one and the same God, Creator of the world, Lord of history, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs."\(^3\)

The historical tradition of Judaism provided the faith in one God "who was encountered in history and revelation and apocalypse as a living God. He and no other was the 'Father' of our Lord Jesus Christ."\(^4\) And it was in the content of the use of Jewish scripture and teachings about God that the Christian tradition about triumph and the victory of God in Jesus Christ were first formulated and given shape, although the relationship of the Christian with his God was much more intimate than that between Jehovah and the Jew. Philip Carrington emphasizes the importance of the monotheistic foundation by remarking that as the church began to grow and expand throughout the pagan world, it was actually forced "to provide courses in elementary Judaism, and so lay the foundation of faith in


the living God." 5

Thus we return to the question, How did the first Christians worship their God? For the purpose of this study, this question should not be examined in isolation, but against the background of Synagogue worship which has been already described. In other words, we are really asking the question: How did the first Christians, who were raised as Jews in a Synagogue community, worship their new God, whom they saw revealed in Jesus Christ?

The starting point of the Christian tradition is what God has done in Christ. It is this fact which initially distinguished the early Christians from their Jewish contemporaries. At this point, also, it is important to remember two significant facts: First of all, Christ came, as he said, not to destroy, but to fulfill. In the same way, the Christian Church did not propose to tear down its Jewish heritage and start anew out of nothing, but built on the rich foundation of Jewish history and teachings, transforming the people of Israel into the people of Christ.

Maurice Goguel refers to the Christian Church as "a church without a past" and one that was "not tied to any tradition." 6 Nothing could be further from the truth. Both primary documents and the work of more recent scholars attest to the fact that Christianity owes a tremendous debt

5Ibid., p. 390.

to the tradition of Judaism, especially in the area of its worship. P. W. Beare remarks that Christianity has always been a syncretistic religion, defying all the best efforts of theologians to keep it free from accretions from other faiths. The faith to whom she owes her greatest debt, historically, is Judaism.

The second thing we must remember when studying the life of the early church is related to the first: Initially, Christianity was not a separate religion, distinct from Judaism. Christianity was for several decades merely a "sect" within Judaism. This fact is essential to any study of early Christian and Synagogue worship. In the beginning, followers of Jesus differed from their orthodox Jewish friends only in their acceptance of Jesus as Messiah, just as the Pharisees were a party differing in their beliefs in the resurrection from the more conservative body of the Sadducees.

For as Jesus worshipped and taught in the Synagogue

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7 Beare, "Christianity and Other Religions in the Graeco-Roman World," p. 205.

8 Marcion, well-known Gnostic, put the figure of Christ in conflict with the previous revelations of God, and attempted to prove that the God of the Jews was indeed different from the Father of Jesus Christ. As a consequence, this "heretic" Marcion was excommunicated from the church in Rome in A.D. 144. For further discussion see Schaff, vol. II., pp. 483-487.

throughout his life, the first generation of Christians continued to participate in Synagogue worship and to keep the Law. The apostles themselves took part in Jewish worship before any specific worship of the church had emerged, "For in doing this, they did not simply adapt themselves to Judaism, but obviously considered Jewish worship to have gained a new import since the coming of the Messiah."  

Aside from The Book of Acts, there is little information about early Christian worship prior to the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70). Many contemporary scholars take this lack of specific details of first century Christian worship to indicate the great influence of Jewish liturgy upon it. A. B. MacDonald states:

One main reason for the scarcity of direct reference to worship in the New Testament lay in its being so simple and pliable in form, and altogether so much the natural and congenial thing that it called for no special comment from those who were steeped in it. No one thinks or talks much about the air he breathes, so long as it is fresh and pure.

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10 All four Gospels contain references to Jesus attending and preaching in the Synagogue: Matt. 4:23; 12:9; Mk. 1:21, 39; 3:1; 6:2; Lk. 6:6; 4:16; Jn. 6:59; 18:20.  


Oesterley states:

... if the mode of worship to which the earliest Christians were accustomed had been altered, we might reasonably expect some mention of it as being something new, and ... the one respect in which the accustomed mode of worship did differ from the traditional use is given very pointed mention. ...  

Thus some scholars agree that this silence concerning worship modes at this point attests to the fact that the earliest Christians continued to worship in the traditional way, and that the practices of the Synagogue provided the pattern for early Christian worship when it did emerge as a distinct religion.

But Goguel maintains that Jewish liturgy influenced Christian worship after the fact, i.e., at the end of the second century, when the church desired to give its worship a "transcendent character and a divine origin," the idea developed that the rituals of the Old Testament could be applied to it.  

It seems, however, to have been the other way around. The fact that the Christians continued to attend the Synagogue (why would they do so, if their religion was completely separate from Judaism?), and the relatively meagre material we have of first century Christian worship give credence to the supposition that early Christian worship was very close to, and sometimes indistinguishable from, Synagogue worship. Also, the prayers and

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14 Oesterley, Jewish Background, p. 84.
15 Goguel, Primitive Church, p. 261.
some of the early church practices derived from Judaism, which will be examined later, give additional proof to the above statement.

The writings of the New Testament make it clear to us that it was mainly in the Synagogue that the apostles carried on their teachings. The Synagogue as a center of learning for the Jewish community became a logical place for the exhortation of the new gospel on the part of Christ's followers. They maintained contact with the Synagogue, presumably, until they were expelled from it. (John 9:22, Acts 18:61)

Cesterley states, "Thus, the first Christians offered up the same prayers that all pious Jews did, visited the Temple for worship, attended the Synagogue, kept the Sabbath, and observed the festivals." So we are led to conclude that being a Christian in the first century did not involve a withdrawal from Synagogue or Temple worship, for there was nothing in the central elements of Synagogue worship in which the Christian could not join. For several decades, the Christian community was merely a supplement to the Jewish. J. C. Davies goes so far as to say that initially, Christianity was almost indistinguishable from its parent, Judaism.

The picture we have painted thus far has portrayed

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16 Cesterley, Jewish Background, p. 97.
17 Davies, Early Christian Church, p. 30.
the early Christian church as an adjunct to the Jewish Synagogue community, hardly distinct from it. Were this the entire picture, Christianity no doubt would have disappeared in a few decades. It is true that the early Christians were a part of the Synagogue community, but they also were a part of another worship group, which met in private homes, desert places, and the famous catacombs. These small informal meetings were characterized by prayer, fasting, and reading from specifically Christian writings (Paul and the Apostles) which were finding their way into Christian circles. These meetings were of a different nature, not only in form and content, but also in the object of their adoration. While it is true, as mentioned earlier, that a belief in the God of the Old Testament tradition was presupposed by the Christian community, the God of Jesus Christ called for new forms and types of worship (Acts 2:46-7). While the God of the Jews was essentially a God of history, the Christian deity was a God of the future. Jesus had taught that the Kingdom was coming soon, and the early Christians looked for it. For Christians, the present reality of God's eschatological event made it impossible for them to embrace Synagogue worship in toto. Although they continued to follow their traditions in a variety of ways,

...nowhere could one ignore the fact that what mattered was no longer the law and a promise for the future: now the saving and fulfilling act
of God in Christ was the focus of attention for the community as it offered praise, thanksgiving, and intercession.18

We have no complete, "classic" description of a service of worship in the earliest days of the church. One of the earliest discussions of Christian worship that we do have is found in the First Apology of Justin Martyr, written about A.D. 150. He says:

\[\ldots\text{and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.}\ldots\]

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There is large agreement with the Synagogue service evident here: readings from the prophets, exhortation, prayer and thanksgiving, even the "Amen." The only distinctive aspect is the distribution of bread and wine. Justin also implies that there was no fixed amount of scripture reading ("as long as time permits"), which is also reminiscent of Jewish services. The Apostolic Constitution relates in more detail the practice of scripture reading.


19 Justin, Apol. 1.67.
readings:

...In the middle, let the reader stand upon some high place: let him read the books of Moses, of Joshua the Son of Nun, of the Judges, and of the Kings and of the Chronicles, and those written after the return from the captivity; and besides these, the books of Job and of Solomon, and of the sixteen prophets. But then there have been two lessons severally read, let some other person sing the hymns of David, and let the people join at the conclusions of the verses. Afterwards let our Acts be read, and the Epistles of Paul our fellow-worker, and afterwards let a deacon or a presbyter read the gospels, ... and while the Gospel is read, let all the presbyters and deacons, and all the people stand up in great silence; for it is written: "Be silent, and hear, O Israel. . . ." 20

There is curious mixture of old and new in this narrative. The letters of Paul, Acts, and the Gospels are being read from the pulpit, along with the Old Testament scriptures. The last sentence is directly from the Synagogue service.

The seating arrangements in the church also seem to be based on Jewish traditions. Everyone sat in his own place, and was rebuked if he was seen out of place. Young people sat by themselves, and if there was no place to sit, they stood. Married women with children were seated by themselves, while virgins, widows, and elder women were in front of the rest. Men and women were seated apart. 21 The deacons were appointed to oversee the people, that nobody may whisper, nor slumber, nor laugh, nor nod; for all ought in the church to stand wisely, and

20 *Apostolic Constitution* II:7.

soberly, and attentively, having their attention fixed upon the word of the Lord.\textsuperscript{22}

Although we see clear evidences of Jewish antecedents which were integrated into portions of the Christian worship experience, the formal liturgy of the church began to develop along lines of its own. As it grew away from the Synagogue, aspects of worship which were uniquely "Christian" became more evident. We must mention some of these.

The early Christians remained Jews in many ways, for "... in becoming Christians they did not cease their worship of the covenant God nor cast off their former manner of worship, however much they might seek to fill the old forms with a new content."\textsuperscript{23} This "new content," of course, was the conviction that the Messiah had come, and his name was Jesus of Nazareth. The presence of the risen Lord had replaced the cultic presence of God in the temple. Although still dependent on Jewish precedents, Christian worship was adapted to the new faith of the followers. Christ was seen as a fulfillment of the promise of the Old Testament, in which the Christian community continued to believe, but he also transcended it. The Christians revered not only what God had done in the past, but the vision of his continuing presence, seen in Jesus Christ, and the promise of what he could do in the future.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23}Martin, "Aspects of Worship", p. 8.
The continuing presence of Christ apart from his earthly existence, the presence of the living Lord in the midst of his people, was what set Christianity apart from other religions. This was one factor that caused the followers of Jesus to meet in small, informal groups, apart from the regular worship of the Synagogue community. "They had become as sons of God, not as those being saved out of a perishing world but as those who knew that the world was being saved." 24

The concept of the Messianic promise being fulfilled in Christ gave to the Christians an entirely new focal point and a new idea of worship. So did the presence of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament illustrates the significance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. 25 Paul himself regarded the presence of the Spirit as the distinguishing mark of Christianity.

The Holy Spirit has been the subject of ridicule, praise, misunderstandings, and spirited debate throughout the long centuries of the church's existence. 26 That need not concern us here; to the followers of Jesus, who gathered in that upper room on the day of Pentacost (Acts 2:1ff),

24 Harshbarger and Mourant, Judaism and Christianity, p. 304.

25 1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 8:26; Eph. 5:18, 19; 6:18; Jude 20.

it was very real. And it was real to the first generation of Christians and those who followed. Harshbarger and Mourant give a beautiful description of the Holy Spirit:

Mostly, like the air, it is always present but not always noticed. It is mostly quiet, entering life to keep it alive. Sometimes it rushes into the great moments of history, but mostly it works hiddenly in daily encounter.27

Thus to the early Christians God was present not only as the God of history, not only as the Messiah already come, but also as the one who remained as a very real source of comfort and inspiration in his Spirit.

Also characteristic of this new attitude toward worship was the concept of sacrifice—now significantly altered by the event of Christ's death and resurrection for the sins of man. It was no longer man who gave back to God, but God who gave to man. Reiche states that "It is not a question of sacrifice performed by individuals, but of one performed by Christ for his congregation."28 The emphasis in the New Testament is on what God has done for man, and only one gift is asked in return: man's offering of his entire person in service to God. Paul alludes to this concept of sacrifice in his letter to the Romans: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1)

27 Harshbarger and Mourant, Judaism and Christianity, p. 306.
The Epistle to the Hebrews, written prior to the destruction of the Temple, illustrates this concept. Christ's sacrifice has taken the place of previous sacrifices:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come...he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (9:11-14)

The sacrifice which the priests repeat does not abolish sin, but it is Christ's own offering that sanctifies. "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14)

It was Jesus who fulfilled in his own person the meaning of true service to God; he did not reject sacrifice; but,

Our Lord perceived what the prophets had adumbrated, that cultus can be substitutional objectification of an act which, properly, can only be a personal commitment, that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a humble and a contrite heart.29

The gifts of God are many, and are acknowledged in the word and the sacraments,

a prolongation of what He has given in Christ on Golgotha, a manifestation of what He gives in the

29 Robert E. Cushman, "Worship As Acknowledgement," Worship In Scripture and Tradition, p. 33.
Lord who is always present in his community, and an anticipation of what He will give in the world to come.30

Thus the Christians did not reject the concept of sacrifice, but altered it to meet the needs of their faith in the crucified Messiah. To the important institution of the Sabbath the Christians did the same. They changed it to fulfill their needs as a community who worshipped the risen Lord. The New Testament refers to the Christian community as meeting on the "first day of the week," i.e. Sunday. (Acts 20:7)31 Paul also instructs Christians to make contributions on the "first day of every week." (I Cor. 16:2)

Exactly when and how Sunday came to be the Holy Day of the Christian church is not entirely known. We know that the Jewish Christians continued to worship on the Sabbath in the Synagogue, and the habit of meeting on Sunday may have arisen out of the desire of Christians to have a separate day exclusively for their smaller, informal assemblies. The first day of the week was also the day of the resurrection, and may have been observed as the continued renewal of the Easter event. The first day looked forward, as the beginning of the new age revealed in the resurrection.

Unlike the Jewish Sabbath, Sunday was not

31Also Rev. 1:10 and Didache 14:1.
considered a "taboo" day by some scholars.

It gathers into itself. . . the meaning of all days. It is symbol of millenium at the end of time, when a thousand years are but as a day that is past and as a watch in the night. Sunday makes every week an Easter week, and is a sacrament of time that makes present the beyond-time.32

It is probable that the early church continued to observe both the Sabbath day and Sunday as "special" days for several decades. Justin Martyr, who wrote in the middle of the second century, stated:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place. . . 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.33

Also, the Epistle of Barnabas, written at the end of the first or beginning of the second century, states:

The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make the beginning of an eighth day, that is the beginning of another world. Wherefore we also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into heaven.34

On the other hand, The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles (whose date is undetermined but is perhaps contemporary or later than Justin) exhorts Christians to come


34Barnabas, 15:8-9.
to church morning and evening every day:

...assemble yourselves together every day, singing psalms and praying in the Lord's house. ...and on the day of the Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus. ...

The early Christians met frequently, perhaps daily, for worship, and it may have taken several centuries and a definite split between Christianity and Judaism, for this daily worship to give way to Sunday meetings.

Speaking of these frequent gatherings for worship, A. B. MacDonald states:

It was out of this rich and vigorous worship-life that the special celebrations of Sunday emerged, and it would only be by degrees, as the enthusiasm cooled, that the Sunday would succeed in draining away the worship activities from the other days of the week, and concentrating them upon itself.

Another significant feature of Christian worship that distinguished it from Jewish worship was the concept of the "coming together" of the faithful. The New Testament is replete with references to Christians coming together (synerchesthai) and being gathered together (synagesthai), in the name of Jesus, and in Didache 16:2 we find the statement: "But be frequently gathered together seeking the things which are profitable

35 Apostolic Constitution II. 7.
36 MacDonald, Christian Worship, p. 66.
The early church did not retain the requirement that at least ten persons be present in order for worship to take place, but rather adopted the idea that "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) As Ferdinand Hahn states, "Where the community comes together, God is praised, his mighty acts are proclaimed, prayers are said, and the Lord's Supper is celebrated."³⁸

This concept of "coming together" also implied another aspect of worship not specifically found in Synagogue worship. "Worship" began to take on a meaning of far more breadth; worship in the New Testament was not just one element among many in the life of the believers, but characterized the whole of life. "Worship" and "life" were not split into two distinct areas.³⁹ This is a difficult distinction to comprehend, since it is one with which Christians live, but it better approximates the definition of worship in the third sense in Chapter One, page 36 than in the second. Hahn indicates that there was no longer any distinction, in principle at least, between assembly for worship and the service of Christians in the world. The presence of Christ in their midst was not to drive them into seclusion, but to call them forth into the

³⁸Hahn, Worship of the Early Church, p. 36.
³⁹Davies, Early Christian Church, p. 57.
world. The essential uniqueness of Christian worship, according to Hahn, was that it belonged in the midst of life.\textsuperscript{40}

The above discussion illustrates that Christian worship was to a great degree determined by Jewish precedents, adapted by the followers of Jesus to their new Messianic form of faith. The elements of the Old Testament service were transferred, but "divested of their national legal character, . . .and transformed by the spirit of the gospel."\textsuperscript{41} Thus the Messianic hope became fulfilled in Jesus, the passover and pentecost invoked celebrations of Christ's resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, the Sabbath became Sunday, and the temple sacrifices gave way to a remembrance of the cross and the sacrifice of the Lord's Supper.

The small, close meetings of the Christian community imply the beginnings of a separate organization and government, independent of the Jewish Synagogue. But "official" separation of Christianity from Judaism did not take place until near the end of the first century, A.D.

The two faiths existed side by side for decades, "in open hostility," according to Beare. But I would not characterize the relationship between the Christians and

\textsuperscript{40}Hahn, Worship of the Early Church, p. 386.

\textsuperscript{41}Schaff, History, vol. 1, p. 461.
Jews in the early days of the church to be primarily hostile; most of the anti-Jewish sentiment in the Christian literature comes at a later date. Christians and Jews lived together and often worshipped together. As Jocz states, "Those who accepted the faith in the crucified and risen Messiah were faithful and pious Jews. Not for one moment did they intend to separate themselves from the rest of the people." But as the church continued to define its own distinctive attitudes toward God, the community, and Scripture, it was faced with the difficult and delicate problem of understanding its relation to Judaism. Dialogue between the Christian and Jews continued, even as the church grew to be more and more a separate community with a separate worship life.

But the final "split" between the two religions was inevitable; by the latter years of the first century the community of believers was no longer merely a "sect" within Judaism. How did this separation come about? The exact causes of this separation are not entirely known, although certain contributing factors and historical events can be recognized.

One of the factors that undoubtedly led to the split between the church and the Synagogue was the attitude of the two groups toward the literal observance of the Law. For some historians, this question of the Law

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was the primary cause for conflict. We know that the Jewish community was extremely tolerant of the Christian religion in the early days. Christians were allowed to attend the Synagogue and participate fully in the life of the Jewish community, as long as they kept observance of the Law. This, of course, presented conflicts.

Much has been written on the attitude of Jesus toward the Law, and this is not the place to recapitulate the arguments. The New Testament tells us that Jesus had both a critical and positive attitude toward the tradition of his people, including the Law. (Matt. 5:20; 23:23) We know that he grew up attending the Synagogue with his family, and made the customary visit to the Temple when he was twelve years of age. It would indeed be incorrect to state that Jesus did not have a deep appreciation of the customs, traditions and teachings of the Jewish people; he himself was a Jew. Yet at the same time he challenged tradition at many points. (Matt. 5:21f) Jesus kept company with people of 'ill repute,' and refused to let the Law of the Sabbath dictate many of the practical aspects of life. Jesus' statement, "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17), demonstrates that he was not repudiating the laws of his heritage, but building on what was already in existence, and interpreting through the eyes of love rather than blind obedience.
The church which followed Jesus attempted to do the same; but the more involved the church became with its own community of Christians, and the more developed its liturgy, the more difficult was the observance of the Law as required by the Jewish community. To many Christians, the rites and ceremonies of the old religion were no longer binding; they had been given to the Jews because of the "hardness of their hearts," and were superceded by the advent of the Messiah.\(^3\)

As the first century began to draw to a close, there was an increase of anti-Jewish sentiment among the Christians. This anti-Jewish attitude can be discerned in the writings of Eusebius, who says that the Jews were being punished by God for their crimes against Christ. Also Ignatius, in his letter to the Magnesians, states that "It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism. . . ."\(^4\) Thus it is apparent that these Christians, as many others, were no longer content to be a part of the Jewish worshipping community.

The growing tension which resulted from this attitude is seen by many historians as a primary factor in the separation of Judaism and Christianity. The Law, not the crucifixion, was the basis for the separation. James Parkes states:

\(^3\) Carrington, First Christian Century, p. 488.

\(^4\) Ignatius to the Magnesians, X.
It is only later that the words..."His blood be on us and on our children" came to assume their terrible importance, and that the Christian hostility to the Jews was based upon the cross. It is evident that the Pharisees were decided not to accept the authority of Jesus. But it is a long step from the refusal to accept the teaching of a new preacher to the plotting of his death.\(^5\)

Another cause of conflict, although not as acute, between the church and the Synagogue during this period, was the issue of the messiahship of Jesus. According to Jocz, "The essential difference between the believers and non-believers was that they first saw in Jesus the Messiah, in whom all promises were fulfilled, while the others were still waiting for the Messiah."\(^6\) The Christians had seen this Messiah in Jesus, who had been sent from God to save men. This attitude was also at first tolerated by the Jewish leaders, as a peculiarity of the sect of Christianity. But as the church grew, gaining not only confidence as an organized entity within the Roman world, but converts as well, the beliefs of these converts posed no minor threat to the Jewish community.

Internal conflicts were not the only causes of tension; there were also political and historical factors. The destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 had a significant affect upon the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Aside from abolishing Jerusalem as a religious


center for the Jewish Christians, many Christians saw the destruction of the Temple as a judgment of God upon the Jews. Justin implies this in his statement, "...even when your city is captured, and your land ravaged, you do not repent, but dare to utter imprecations on Him and all who believe in Him." As the death of Jesus was considered to replace the Temple sacrifices, the way was opened for the attitude that God himself allowed the destruction of the Temple to occur.

According to Philip Schaff, the destruction of the Temple marked the final breach between Judaism and Christianity. He states:

Henceforth the heathen could no longer look upon Christianity as a mere sect of Judaism, but must regard and treat it as a new, peculiar religion. The destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, marks that momentous crisis at which the Christian Church as a whole burst forth forever from the chrysalis of Judaism, awoke to a sense of its maturity, and in government and worship at once took its independent stand before the world.

As momentous as the war with Rome was for these two religions, Christians continued to worship in the Synagogue in many places. This is proven by the new declaration against heretics that was added to the daily blessing in A.D. 90. Despite widespread anti-Jewish sentiment, many Christians must have at this time still

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47Justin, Dial., 168.
considered themselves Jews, and continued to attend the Synagogue. No matter how much they may have disagreed on questions of the Law and the Messiahship of Jesus, it must have been possible for Jews and Christians to fellowship with one another.

They (Christians) must have been generally accepted, or it is incredible that they should have continued to frequent the Synagogue. They were evidently there as ordinary members, since it needed the introduction of this formula to detect them."\textsuperscript{50}

The purpose of this declaration, most probably, was to detect heresy and achieve a greater unity among the orthodox. This addition to the 12th Benediction, composed by Samuel the Small, and known as the Birkath ha-minim, was so worded that Jewish Christians and Gnostics could not recite it. The formula reads as follows:

For apostates let there be no hope, and the dominion of arrogance do thou speedily root out in our days; and let Christians and heretics perish in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of the living and let them not be written with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant.\textsuperscript{51}

It is obvious that inclusion of this declaration was a direct challenge to the Christian party within Judaism. Letters which included this statement were sent to all Jewish congregations in the Diaspora, and by the end of the first century all the Synagogues had been

\textsuperscript{50}Parkes, \textit{The Conflict}, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{51}Dugmore, \textit{Influence of the Synagogue}, p. 4.
notified of this new malediction, and warned to have no dealings with Christians.\textsuperscript{52} This letter contained a formal denial of the basic truth of Christianity: the teachings and resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection, it implied, was false, for Jesus' followers had stolen his body from the tomb. Christians should be excommunicated, for it was impossible for the Jews to have anything to do with such teachings. Therefore, Jews were to avoid all discussion of any kind with Christians.\textsuperscript{53}

We can ... legitimately conclude that it was a dignified but firm denunciation of the Christians, accompanied by an order to have no fellowship with them, and a copy of the new passage to be included in the service of the Synagogue.\textsuperscript{54}

Many scholars cite the distribution of this strongly worded declaration as the "official" break between Judaism and Christianity, while some agree with Schaff that it occurred in A.D. 70, and others place it as late as the war of Bar Cochba in 135.

But whatever the exact causes of this separation, the nature of the two communities made it inevitable. In the words of Jocz, "History has its own logic and goes its own ways. The parting of the road became a historical necessity."\textsuperscript{55} The crucial question which should be raised

\textsuperscript{52}\textit{Parkes, The Conflict}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 80.
\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Jocz}, p. 163.
by this issue is exactly what Christianity inherited from Judaism. As we saw above, although the organization and worship of the church was developing to a certain extent along its own lines, the services of the Christian church were in large part molded by the liturgy of the Synagogue.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SYNAGOGUE INFLUENCE ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

In the preceding chapters we have examined the worship life of the Synagogue and the church as they existed in the ancient world. The primary elements in the worship services of the two faiths and their particular theological and historical differences have been discussed and outlined. We have seen that to a certain degree Christianity inherited many of her worship elements from Judaism, such as: meeting on a particular "holy day," certain physical and seating arrangements, some theological concepts, and specific elements of the liturgy. To a discussion of this last element, especially prayers and scripture, we will now turn.

One of the greatest legacies that the Synagogue gave to the church was the practice of the reading and exposition of Scripture. Christian writings were beginning to be read in the church, but it would be another century before all of these writings attained canonical status as sacred and inspired books. In the meantime, holy "Scripture," for the early Church, was the Old Testament.

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1Col. 4:16 - "And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the Church of the Laodicians; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea."
There is evidence that many of the early Christian scholars assumed that their readers were familiar with the writings of the Old Testament. In his First Epistle, Clement of Rome states "For it is written thus..." (I Clem. IV:1). Throughout this Epistle, Clement appeals to the Old Testament for confirmation of what he is expounding: I Clem. XIII:1 - "...let us do that which is written..." In XLIII:1 Clement refers to: "the sacred books" and "the other prophets," which obviously refer to the Old Testament, and in LIII:1 he says, "you have a good understanding of the sacred scriptures."

According to the testimony of his epistle, pseudo-Barnabas also assumed a familiarity with the Old Testament scriptures on the part of his readers. He says, "It is good therefore that he who has learned the ordinances of the Lord as many as have been written should walk in them" (21:1).

As in the Synagogue, knowledge of the Scriptures in the early church was gained from reading and expounding them in the service. As we saw in the passage from the I Apology of Justin, cited above, after the reading of the Scriptures, "the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things" (Apol. 1:67). Dugmore states: "The custom of expounding the portion of scripture just read, which we find in the church from the very beginning, was directly derived from the practice of
the Synagogue."

The references in the New Testament to the celebration of the church in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19) indicate that from its beginnings the practice of the recitation and singing of Psalms was customary for the church. The Apostolic Constitution speaks of the church assembling frequently "singing Psalms and praying in the Lord's House" (II.59).

In speaking of the visions of a Montanist sister in the service of the church, Tertullian gives evidence of the reading of Scripture and chanting of Psalms: "Whether it be in the reading of scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons... matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions" (De Anima 9).

Thus the evidence suggests that the church maintained this practice of the Synagogue. In both the services of the Synagogue and the church, Psalms were sung and the scriptures were read and expounded. The early Christians did not disregard the Old Testament, but built upon it. Even as the writings of the Apostles and Paul were read with increasing frequency in public Christian services, the Old Testament was still revered as sacred scripture. Dugmore states:

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2Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 74.
3They rejected Marcion's attempt to do so.
The Old Testament was everywhere regarded as divinely authoritative, and the canon of the New Testament books was evolved through the need of what was described as 'lawful and diligent exposition' in harmony with the scriptures.4

On the same note, C. F. D. Moule states:

On the foundation of Old Testament words, there arose a structure of teaching and incident recalled from the past, and of inspired contemporary utterance, to form a distinctive edifice, at once continuous, and yet also in striking contrast, with its Jewish antecedents.5

The influence of the Synagogue liturgy upon the worship of the Christian Church is also clearly evident in the prayers of these two faiths. Many prayers of the early church have been preserved in the Christian literature which has survived the centuries.

The power of prayer was of crucial importance to the early Christians.6 These prayers were largely informal and spontaneous, and exhibited many of the same elements as the prayers of the Synagogue: praise and thanksgiving, intercession, confession, and concluding doxology. As we saw in Chapter Two, many prayers of the Synagogue, including portions of the Amidah, were not of a fixed form, but were recited extemporaneously by the leader. MacDonald maintains that the prayers of the early Christians "were the same prayers they had been taught to pray before they

4Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 73
had heard of Jesus." This may be somewhat exaggerated, but the indisputable fact remains that the early Jewish Christians brought to their new religion many of the prayers they learned and recited in the Synagogue.

Dugmore states:

It must be of considerable interest to every student of early Christian worship to know what happened to the liturgy of the Synagogue, which undoubtedly provided the ordinary vehicle of prayer for Jesus, Paul and the first disciples.

Extempor prayers had an important part in the life of the church, and in these many of the historical reminiscences of the Jewish prayers were taken over by the church and given Christian meaning and content. They were prayers, according to Schaff, "offered in childlike confidence to a reconciled Father in the Name of Jesus Christ."

The early Jewish Christians continued to follow the custom of observing three hours of prayer daily (Acts 3:1; 10:9), and the Didache exhorts Christians to pray the Lord's Prayer three times a day. (VIII: 2-3) We have seen that the church adopted many of the customs and practices of the Synagogue; is it possible to find definite evidence of influence in specific prayers of the church?

The Shema, discussed in Chapter Two, was as close as Judaism has ever come to a creed. Can any marks of its

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7 MacDonald, Christian Worship, p. 59.
8 Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 10.
influence be found in the early church?

There is evidence, discussed below, to indicate that the doctrine of the unity of God, which the Shema proclaimed, is revealed in many of the prayers and writings of the early church. The first Jewish Christians, accustomed to reciting the Shema three times a day, were strongly influenced by its teaching.¹⁰ It would be remarkable, indeed, if we did not find evidence of it in the Christian liturgy. Oesterley maintains that in some of the early Christian literature there is evidence that the figure of Christ was subordinated. The First Epistle of Clement illustrates this tendency: "And again he says to him, 'Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool of thy feet'' (XXXVI:5).

Oesterley maintains that in narrative portions of the first Gospel, Mark, Christ is rarely called "Lord." References to him as "Lord" are from a relatively late date. Most prayers were not addressed to Christ, but to God the Father.¹¹ There are, of course exceptions,¹² but in many cases the Apostolic Fathers did not speak of Christ as God. The church was still in the process of developing its Christology; debate over the true nature of Christ characterized the anti-Nicene Christian community. The

¹⁰ Oesterley, Jewish Background, p. 122.
¹¹ Ibid.
¹² See the Epistles of Ignatius, and Polycarp to the Philippians, XII.2.
doctrine of the unity of one God revealed itself in this debate. There were the Arians who emphasized Christ's humanity as a safeguard against the idea of more than one God; the Docetists stressed his divine nature intending to preserve the doctrine of the unity of God. The influence of the Shema is clearly visible behind the motives of both groups.

Dugmore, however, is reluctant to see the influence of the Shema in Christian worship. Since it was so central to the daily Synagogue service, he asks, why do we not find its counterpart in the church? The reason, states Dugmore, is apparent. It is his claim that during the Hadrianic persecutions the Romans forbade the Jews to recite the Shema, at least as a separate prayer. (It was perhaps included as part of the Amidah at that time.) Consequently, the Jewish Christian community was restrained from reciting the Shema and "by the time that the Jews were free to restore the Shema to their daily service, the Christian Church was developing along lines of its own."

Thus, Dugmore maintains, the Shema is absent from most of the literature of the early church because it had already disappeared. He also contends that the recitation

13Cesterley, Jewish Background, p. 124.
14Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 102.
15Ibid., p. 103.
of the Shema by Christians would constitute a complete
denial of the pre-eminence of Christ.

The latter point has been discussed above; in its
earliest days the church was reluctant to refer to Jesus
as Lord, and the Christological debates arose in part from
the desire to keep the doctrine of the oneness and unity
of God intact. Dugmore may be accurate in his claim that
the early Jewish Christians were forbidden to recite the
Shema, but Hadrian did not become emperor until A.D. 117,
which leaves the first century of Christianity free from
the prohibition against reciting it. It seems probable
that during this century the Shema could have remained a
primary element in the worship life of the Jewish and
Christian communities. This would account for many of the
early Christian writings which echo its doctrine of God.
We find an echo of the Shema in the words of Jesus himself:
"Hear, 0 Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one;"
(Mk. 12:29). Since Jesus attended the Synagogue through-
out his life, the influence of the Shema found in his
teachings is hardly remarkable.

Dugmore states that "the Shema has left no trace
upon the liturgy of the church. . ."16 This, it seems, is
certainly not the case. It is true that there is no exact
counterpart to the Shema in the writings of the early
church, but to say that it "left no trace" is to deny

16Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 110.
that the Jews carried any of their assumptions about the nature of God over to the new theological and Christological systems which developed within Christianity. The evidence shows that they certainly did.

Oesterley states:

When...we remember how deeply rooted and venerated the Shema and its teaching were among the Jews, and therefore among the Jewish Christians, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the controversies of the church during the earliest Christian centuries regarding the doctrine of God must be ultimately traced back to its influence. 17

The influence of the Amidah (Eighteen Benedictions) upon the prayers of the early church is more evident than that of the Shema. Although the Amidah cannot be treated as an entity, since the Benedictions were composed at different times and all of them are not pre-Christian, 18 many of them did have a definite influence on the liturgy of the early church. Although the language itself is often quite different, and the Christian prayers are usually somewhat more expanded, the general content remains the same. One must, of course, be extremely cautious in examining material of such antiquity, and must not see verbal parallels between the two religions where none actually exist. A discussion of the texts, however, will clearly demonstrate the similarity of subject matter between many of the prayers.

17 Oesterley, Jewish Background, p. 124-5.
18 See discussion above, p. 10.
The First Epistle of Clement (Ca. A.D. 80-100) contains one of the earliest Christian prayers available to us. (LIX:3-LXI:3) The words of Clement, borrowed from the Old Testament prophets and Psalms, clearly point to the influence of the Amidah. The prayer, of course, is Christian, but it continues to draw heavily upon the Jewish theological tradition and maintains the central idea of the holiness and majesty of God.

The Third Benediction can be seen reflected in the first petition of Clement's prayer:

Grant us to hope on thy name, the source of all creation, open the eyes of our heart to know thee, that thou alone art the highest in the highest and remainest holy among the holy. (LIX:3)

The Third Benediction reads as follows: "Holy art Thou and Thy Name is to be feared, and there is no God beside Thee; Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the holy God."

The next portion of the prayer can be compared to the Second Benediction:

Thou dost humble the pride of the haughty, thou dost destroy the imaginings of nations, thou dost raise up the humble and abase the lofty, thou makest rich and makest poor, thou dost slay and make alive, thou alone art the finder of spirits and art God of all flesh, thou dost...thou art the helper of those in danger, the saviour of those in despair, the creator and watcher over every spirit... (LIX:3)

The Second Benediction:

Thou art mighty, who bringest low the proud, strong, and he that judgeth the ruthless, that livest forever, that raiseth the dead, that maketh the wind to blow, that sendeth down the dew; that sustaineth the living, that quickeneth the dead; in the twinkling of an eye thou makest salvation to spring forth for us. Blessed art Thou, O Lord,
who quickenest the dead.

Carrington says the following of Clement's prayer:

Faith in God through Christ had taken the place of works, as Clement knew; but the continuity of feeling with Judaism was perfect. Clement draws on the treasures of the Hebrew traditions without reserve. The patriarchs, prophets, and priests of Israelite history are the saints, heroes and progenitors of the Christian Church. The church has taken possession of them through Christ.19

Dugmore reminds us that the Amidah was not complete at the time of Clement's writing. This is certainly true, but the Second Benediction, which we have seen reflected in his prayer, was composed before the birth of Christ,20 and the Third Benediction was written probably before the middle of the first century.21 Clement was undoubtedly familiar with both of them, although there is debate over the Kadushah, which was very early attached to the Third Benediction.22 This prayer was recited antiphonally, and reads as follows:

Reader: We will sanctify Thy Name in the world even as they sanctify it in the highest heavens, as it is written by the hand of Thy prophet: And they cried one to the other and said,

Congregation: Holy, holy holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.

Reader: To those over against them they say, Blessed.

Congregation: Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place.

Reader: And in Thy holy words it is written, saying,

19 Carrington, First Christian Century, p. 388.
21 Ibid., p. 115.
22 Oesterley, Jewish Background, p. 142.
Congregation: The Lord shall reign for ever, thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord.

Reader: Unto all generations we will declare Thy greatness, and to eternity we will hallow Thy holiness; and Thy praise, O our God, shall never depart from our mouth, for a great and holy God and King art Thou. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the holy God.²³

Cesterley maintains that the Hadushah was used in the Christian worship services, and that it is evident in Clement's work:

For the Scripture says "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood by him, and thousand thousands ministered to him, and they cried Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Sabbath, the whole creation is full of his glory." Therefore, we too must gather together with concord in our conscience and cry earnestly to him as it were with one mouth, that we may share in his great and glorious promises... (XXXIV:6-7)

Dugmore contends that the Hadushah has undergone so many changes that it is impossible to discover whether it is actually embedded in this prayer or in other Christian writings. The original form of the Hadushah, says Dugmore, bore no resemblance to Clement's prayer.²⁴

As cautious as Dugmore is, he does maintain that the early Christians followed the Synagogue liturgy to a great extent in the thought and language of prayer. "If the church did not always borrow the actual words from the Synagogue, it embodied familiar phrases in its own petitions, and the subjects of prayer were the same in

²³Ibid., p. 143.
²⁴Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 108.
The Tenth Benediction is similar to a prayer for the consecration of the eucharistic elements found in Did.

IX.4:

As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

This prayer is similar to the Tenth Benediction:

Blow the great horn for our liberation, and lift a banner to gather our exiles. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gatherest the dispersed of thy people Israel.

As was usually the case, the Christian prayer was expanded and more elaborate.

Did. X.5,6 is also similar:

Remember, Lord, thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in thy love, and gather it together in its holiness from the four winds to thy kingdom which thou hast prepared for it.

The phrase "Hosannah to the God of David" (X.6) is also of Jewish influence.

Oesterley contends that the prayer of thanksgiving (Did. X.2-4) is also an adaptation of a Jewish prayer:

We give thanks to thee, O Holy Father, for thy Holy Name which thou didst make to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy Child. To thee be glory for ever. Thou, Lord Almighty, didst give food and drink to men for their enjoyment, that they might give thanks to thee, but us hast thou blessed with spiritual food and drink and eternal light.

\[25\] Ibid., p. 109.
through thy Child. Above all we give thanks to thee for that thou art mighty. To thee be glory for ever.

Oesterley states that "it is only the addition of the words, 'through thy Servant Jesus,' which give it a Christian character." 26

The Sixth Benediction is characterized by confession of sin and forgiveness:

Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against thee; blot out and cause our transgressions to pass from before Thine eyes, for great is thy mercy. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who dost abundantly forgive.

We find the same expression in I Clement:

...O "Merciful and compassionate," forgive us our iniquities and unrighteousness, and transgressions, and short-comings. Reckon not every sin of thy servants and handmaids, but cleanse us with the cleansing of thy truth, and "guide our steps to walk in holiness of heart, to do the things which are good and pleasing before thee" and before our rulers (IX:1-2).

Each of the Eighteen Benedictions concludes with a doxology, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord..." In the Christian Church, the doxology usually referred to the name of Jesus Christ. Clement's prayer concludes with:

we praise thee through Jesus Christ, the high priest and guardian of our souls, through whom be glory and majesty to thee, both now and for all generations and for ever and ever (IXI.3).

In reading the Kaddish (cited above, p. 13), the similarity between this prayer and the Lord's Prayer becomes evident. Some of the Jewish benedictions for

26 Oesterley, Jewish Background, p. 132.
the evening and morning service may be the basis for part of the Lord's Prayer. These are not conclusively proven to be pre-Christian, but there is a great possibility that they are. 27 One of the morning benedictions is as follows: "Our Father which art in Heaven, show mercy towards us for Thy great Name's sake whereby we are called;" and a benediction from the evening service reads: "Our God, which art in Heaven, assert the unity of thy Name, and establish thy kingdom continually, and reign over us forever and ever." 28 A benediction from the morning service (also not definitely pre-Christian) reads: "O lead us not into the power of sin, or of transgression or iniquity, or of temptation, or of scorn." 29 Although there is not sufficient evidence to prove these prayers to be of pre-Christian origin, the possibility that they are must certainly be presented. The Sixth Benediction may be behind the petition for forgiveness, although there is no condition for forgiveness attendant to it. 30

The Yotzer is a Jewish benediction whose original form is ancient, but to which later phrases have been added. Cesterley contends that the early version reads

27 Ibid., p. 152.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p. 154.
as follows:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who fornest light and createst darkness; who makest peace and createst all things; who givest light in mercy to the earth and to those who live thereon, and in goodness renewest every day continually the work of creation. Be thou blessed, O Lord our God, for the excellency of the work of Thy hands, and for the bright luminaries which Thou hast made; let them glorify Thee. Selah. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who fornest the luminaries. 31

This prayer is similar to a section of the Prayer for the Ordination of a Bishop found in the Apostolic Constitutions:

O Thou the great Being, O Lord God Almighty, who alone art unbeginning, and ruled over by none; who always art, and wast before the world; who standest in need of nothing, and art above all cause and beginning; whose knowledge is without beginning; who only art good, and beyond compare; who knowest all things before they are; whose providence provides for and takes the care of all; the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation; who dwellest in the highest heavens, and yet lookest down on things below (VIII.2).

Part of the Geullah, a long pre-Christian prayer, is as follows:

Wherefore the beloved praised and extolled God, and the chosen ones offered hymns, songs, praises, blessings, and thanksgivings to the King—God who liveth and endureth, who is high and exalted, great and awe-inspiring; who bringeth low the haughty, and setteth on high the meek; who leadeth forth the bound, and redeemeth the lowly; who helpeth the poor, and answereth His people when they cry unto him. Praises to God Most High; blessed be He, yea blessed. 32

31 Oesterley, Jewish Background, p. 48.
32 Ibid., p. 139.
This prayer may have formed a basis for portions of Clement's prayer:

Thou dost humble the pride of the haughty, thou dost destroy the imaginings of nations, thou dost raise up the humble and abase the lofty, thou makest rich and makest poor, thou dost slay and make alive. . . (IIX:3).

Cesterley maintains that this latter prayer of Clement's is an adaptation of the Geullah. He states,

When it is realized how the echoes of this Christianized Jewish prayer resound in all the ancient liturgies, the indebtedness of the church for many of her forms of prayer to the Synagogue will be readily granted.33

Confession, which we have seen is characteristic of some of the Jewish prayers, was evident in many prayers of the Christian Church. For example: "The Master, brethren, is in need of nothing; he asks nothing of anyone, save that confession be made to him" (I Clem. LII.1); "In the congregation thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and thou shalt not betake thyself to prayer with an evil conscience" (Did. IV.1б); and "On the Lord's Day of the Lord come together, break bread and hold Eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your offering may be pure" (Did. XIV.1).

The use of the congregational response AMEN is derived directly from the Synagogue.34 The response AMEN invariably followed the prayers of the early church, and

33 Ibid., p. 140.

34 Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 109
as in the Synagogue, he who said AMEN meant thereby that he associated himself with what was said by the other. We see evidences of AMEN in the New Testament (I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20), and Clement's prayers conclude with it. (LXI.3, LXIV.1, LXV.2) So does a short prayer in the Didache (X.6), and many prayers in the Apostolic Constitutions. (VIII.3.)

Justin Martyr makes mention of this practice, "Then we all rise together and pray, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen."35

It is unwise, as we said above, to make general statements about the influence of Jewish prayers upon the Christian liturgy. Much of the extant literature certainly suggests similarities, which are more than mere coincidence. As the above examples have illustrated, the parallels and similarities between the Synagogue and the Christian Church can be seen more clearly in the subjects of the prayers than the language. As Dugmore states, "But the Christians' debt to the past is revealed rather in the subject of their prayers and the general framework of their services than in the phraseology employed in their petitions."36 The Christians merely took over Jewish ideas, and gave them different meanings. The outstanding mark of God's mercy

35 Justin Martyr, Apol. I. 67.
36 Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, p. 113.
is portrayed in the prayers of both communities: for the Jews it was the deliverance from Egypt; for the Christians it was the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ. In both cases, the spiritual atmosphere of the prayers was largely the same.
CONCLUSION

Jesus was born into a first century world; his first followers were Jews. They attended the Synagogue, observed the Law, read the Scriptures, and recited the prayers of the Jewish community. It is not at all remarkable, therefore, to discover marks of these Jewish customs within the church's prayers and worship practices. The early Christians were in no way compelled to abandon the worship methods which they had followed throughout their lives, which were indeed dear to them. These forms and traditions began to be modified and some slowly abandoned, when the early Christians found that other forms and newer methods were better suited to their needs.

The Christians were able to retain many of their Jewish customs since they did not repudiate their Jewish heritage. As mentioned above, their doctrine of God was not significantly altered; the unity of God was a major dogma not only of Judaism, but also of Christianity. The monotheistic religion of Judaism, characterized by the supremacy and majesty of God, remained the same for Christians. Their theology was of course modified by the concept of God as seen through Jesus Christ, but the hymns and prayers of the Synagogue had been addressed to this same Father God. As Cushman maintains, there is "no
radical discontinuity" between worship in the Old Testament and the New. There is only the "mystery of godliness," the mystery of the fulfillment of true worship in Jesus Christ.1

As there was nothing in the worship of the Synagogue which the Jewish Christians could not accept, so the Christians posed no great threat to the Synagogue Jews. We have seen that initially the Jews of the first century did not object, as far as we know, to the presence of Christians in their midst; they were considered merely another Jewish sect. It was many years before Christianity and Judaism were to find themselves too far apart to continue to worship together in the Synagogue. In the words of Gregory Dix:

The theologian rather tends to forget that Christianity presented itself to the pagan world as a superstition, not a system of opinions but a worship embodying a dogma. And it is becoming clear in our own generation that the forms of that worship, like the substance of that dogma, have all their roots on the Jewish and not the Hellenic side of the gulf which divided the first-century world.... Jewish Christianity had been a religion for half a generation before Paul was fetched to Antioch by Barnabas, and religions worship, and live and grow by worshipping, long before they argue.2

It is impossible to conclude from the evidence presented that the worship forms of the Synagogue had little or no influence upon the liturgy of the Christian Church. Many of the worship elements were the same, or

1Robert E. Cushman, "Worship As Acknowledgement,"
p. 32.
2Dix, Jew and Greek, p. 92
very similar: readings from the Scriptures and the Psalms, expository sermons, specific prayers. There were differences also: for Christians, Jesus had come to fulfill the Messianic prophecies; a redeemer of Israel had been born, had died, and had risen from the dead. The Jews continued to wait.

It was inevitable that this attitude and others should eventually lead the two groups in different directions, but the marks of Judaism had already been left upon Christianity. We cannot help but see evidences of these marks in the doctrine of the supremacy of God, the concept of hope, and the gift of salvation, even in a Christ-centered religion. The difference Christ makes is that salvation has already come.
The Shema

Deut. 6:4-9: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul; and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deut. 11:12-21: And if you will obey my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be full. Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, and the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the Lord gives you. You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house, and upon your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Num. 15:37-41: The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, and bid them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their
generations, and to put upon the tassel of each corner a cord of blue; and it shall be to you a tassel to look upon and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow after your own heart, and your own eyes, which you are inclined to go after wantonly. So you shall remember and do all the commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God.
APPENDIX II

The Eighteen Benedictions - (Palestinian Version)*

I. Pre-Maccabean.
Blessed art Thou O Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, the great, mighty, and revered God, God most High, who art the Possessor of heaven and earth, our Shield and the Shield of our fathers, our confidence from generation to generation: blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Shield of Abraham.

II. First Century, B.C.
Thou art mighty, who bringest low the proud, strong, and He that judgeth the ruthless, that liveth for ever, that raiseth the dead, that maketh the wind to blow, that sendeth down the dew; that sustaineth the living, that quickeneth the dead; in the twinkling of an eye thou makest salvation to spring forth for us. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who quickenest the dead.

III. A.D., 10-40
Holy art Thou and Thy Name is to be feared, and there is no God beside Thee; Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the holy God.

IV. A.D., 10-40.
O favour us, our Father, with knowledge from Thyself, and understanding and discernment from Thy Torah. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who vouchsafokest knowledge.

V. A.D., 10-40.
Cause us to return, O Lord, unto Thee, and let us return anew in our days as in the former time. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who delightest in repentence.

VI. 20 B.C.-A.D. 10
Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against Thee; blot out and cause our transgressions to pass from before Thine eyes, for great is Thy mercy. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who dost abundantly forgive.

VII. A.D., 40-70.
Look upon our affliction and plead our cause, and redeem us for the sake of Thy Name. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Redeemer of Israel.

VIII. First Century, B.C.
Help us, O Lord our God, from the pain of our heart; and weariness and sighing do Thou cause to pass away from us; and cause Thou to rise up healing for our wounds. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who healest the sick of Thy (His) people Israel.

IX. 149-30 B.C.
Bless for us, O Lord our God, this year for our welfare, with every kind of the produce thereof, and bring near speedily the year of the end of our redemption; and give dew and rain upon the face of the earth and satisfy the world from the treasuries of Thy goodness, and do Thou give a blessing upon the work of our hands. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who blessest the years.

X. A.D.
Blow the great horn for our liberation, and lift a banner to gather our exiles. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who gatherest the dispersed of Thy (His) people Israel.

XI. A.D. 40-70
Restore our judges as at the first, and our counsellors as at the beginning; and reign Thou over us, Thou alone. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who lovest judgment.

XII. A.D. 90-117.
For apostates let there be no hope, and the dominion of arrogance do Thou speedily root out in our days; and let Christians and heretics perish as in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of the living and let them not be written with the righteous. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant.

XIII. A.D. 90-117.
Towards the righteous proselytes may Thy tender mercies be stirred; and bestow a good reward upon us together with those that do Thy will. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the trust of the righteous.
XIV. 168-165 B.C.
Be merciful, O Lord our God, in Thy great mercy, towards Israel Thy people, and towards Jerusalem Thy city, and towards Zion the abiding place of Thy glory, and towards Thy temple and Thy habitation, and towards the kingdom of the house of David, Thy righteous anointed one. Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of David, the builder of Jerusalem.

XV. Pre-Maccabean
Hear, O Lord our God, the sound of our prayer and have mercy upon us, for God gracious and merciful art Thou. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hearest prayer.

XVI. Pre-Christian
Accept (us), O Lord, our God, and dwell in Zion; and may Thy servants serve Thee in Jerusalem. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, whom in reverent fear we serve.

XVII. Pre-Christian
We give thanks to Thee Who art the Lord our God and the God of our fathers, for all the good things, the lovingkindness, and the mercy which Thou hast wrought and done with us and with our fathers before us; and if we said, Our feet slip, Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, uphold us. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, unto Whom it is good to give thanks.

XVIII. Bestow Thy peace upon Israel Thy people and upon Thy city and upon Thine inheritance, and bless us, all of us together. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makest peace.
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