

magical world view of the pagans. Rather the pagans converted the Christians to their world view.<sup>459</sup>

But the mystical and magical world view began to give way under the influence of the word of God. The gnostics could not really deliver on their promises of enlightenment, and so little by little more and more gentiles returned to the texts and found a more orthodox faith there. And they had to exercise their minds counter to the allegorical atmosphere in order to find it. It was at this point that Christian scholars, having come through the filter of Gnostic interpretation, made an attempt to explain "first of the Sabbaths" by recourse to history, context, and languages, but the official effort only tolerated scientific inquiries that would give a traditional result. Therefore, the explanations were merely to satisfy those who asked the historical questions that their Gnostic fathers would not have considered. The party line developed as we have explained before; "first day to/of the week/Sabbath" was considered a Jewish or Hebrew method of reckoning the days of the week. But this explanation would not be often needed because few would bother to question the provenance of the ecclesiastical Greek and Latin used in the second to fifth centuries. And in these Church dialects, "sabbath" meant "week".

This viewpoint did not succeed in finding its way into the early Greek or Latin biblical texts, but when the Syriac texts were made, it was after the majority had been deceived. When the translations were made, they used the local idiom for "first in the seven" but not first "in the Sabbath" since that was not the usual idiom, but only an anachronistic theory imposed on the origin of the phrase. And if ever a faithful translation had been made, it would have been burned as heretical after being viewed with suspicion and distrust. For the Jews were not in power, but the Hellenized Christians were.

In the Greek world, the exposure to "first of the sabbaths" came quickly, and the Gnostic need to allegorize it followed soon. But by the fourth century, the dialects of ecclesiastical Greek and Latin were imposed on Christian usage. With the fall of the Roman empire, Latin and Greek died as living languages, except among scholars. Among the Greek orthodox, the dialect survived in the east. This obviated the need for explanations because people immersed in a usage cannot see their way out of the pit.

As an illustration of how the allegorical method works, let us look at a rather recent twenty-first century example. Harold Camping maintains that "first of the Sabbaths" makes Sunday the new Sabbath. Here is a summary of his influential paper.

Camping proceeds to point out the errors in "first day of the week" while confusing the issue with his own grammatical and historical errors. He accuses the translators of introducing the word *day* and the singular into the text of Matthew 12:1, "on the sabbath day" (KJV). Camping is right about this. The text says "on the Sabbaths". Again he points out the error of "day" in Matthew 12:2, "the sabbath day" (KJV). The Greek text merely says "on sabbath". Again he is correct. He then proceeds to Matthew 28:1, where the KJV says "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the

<sup>459</sup> This was not without purpose however. God's word, though misinterpreted was being spread among the nations. At some point in time, the Word of God would slowly infuse the nations until they had a more scientific worldview. In the end of days, then, God will remove the deceptions and harvest the crop.

first day of the week". Here he affirms the translation "In the end of" and denies the insertion of "day" and is wrong on both points<sup>460</sup>. He correctly refers to the Semitism of *mia* = 'first', but overlooks the gender reference either as Greek or as a Semitism.<sup>461</sup>

He then notes the error of translating "sabbath" singular in Mat. 28:1, "in the end of the sabbath", but wrongly criticizes "week" in the singular.<sup>462</sup>

Next, Camping appeals to the received chronology of the Friday crucifixion and the Sunday resurrection, courtesy of his Gnostic fathers. He drives the argument toward the conclusion that "Sunday" = "Sabbath". Next he asserts that the Pharisee in Luke 18:12 said "I fast twice a Sabbath" in order to dispense with the meaning "week" for "Sabbath". This is about the weakest argument that can be made, and in fact may be a sole exception.<sup>463</sup> The Pharisees, it is known, fasted on Mondays and Thursdays.<sup>464</sup> Camping makes the valid point that the Hebrew words for week **שָׁבִיעַ** and Sabbath **שַׁבָּת** are different.

Next he proceeds to allegorize. "In the end of the Sabbaths"<sup>465</sup> he says means "the Old Testament Sabbaths End". He makes the break at the between the death and resurrection of Christ, like all good Gnostic dispensationalists. He reinterprets "rest", saying physical rests ends and spiritual "rest" begins from "spiritual work". He then confounds good works with "works for atonement" by saying we must rest from the latter (true) while equating it with the former (false).

Next he references that Sabbath is a "sign" (Ex. 20:12) that salvation is "entirely of Jehovah"<sup>466</sup>, and thus contradicts his thesis that Jesus was the necessary end of the "Old Testament Sabbaths", and the introduction of the new spiritual sabbath without works.<sup>467</sup> For if the Sabbath is a sign that

<sup>460</sup> The literal translation of the text from pure Greek is "Later yet of Sabbaths at the dawning for one day of Sabbaths". The Greek word *mia* requires *hemera* "day" to be added to the sense because of the gender construction. As a Semitism, however, it is *first of the Sabbaths*, **אַחַת הַשַּׁבָּתוֹת**, and the *mia* is feminine in imitation of the liturgical Hebrew. The Greek word *opse* (ὀψέ) means "later" and not "end". It refers to the latter of (two) Sabbaths.

<sup>461</sup> The feminine gender of *mia* must refer to either "day" to be understood in the sense, or it is a Semitism due to **הַשַּׁבָּתוֹת**. If "day" is understood, then "day of the Sabbaths" always means the "sabbath day", and "first" only modifies this kernel phrase.

<sup>462</sup> He can only criticize the singular of "week" if he regards **σαββάτων** as a Semitism for **שַׁבָּתוֹת**. However, since he surely is not aware of this, his critique is illegitimate. The full Greek *day of the Sabbaths* is the exact idiom for one sabbath day, the plural regularly being put in reference to many sabbaths, and the genitive *day of* being a genitive of source, i.e. a "day" of (from or out of, having its source, or belonging to) the Sabbaths. Therefore, the plural is not without meaning!

<sup>463</sup> See footnote 450.

<sup>464</sup> According to this tradition, it might be possible to translate **ὑποστύω δις τοῦ σαββάτου** into **אַנִי צִם פַּעַמִּים לַשַּׁבָּת** because Monday and Thursday was exactly two days from the Sabbath either way. If the choice of days was motivated by flanking the Sabbath with fasts, then the genitive could be construed in the sense "after/to the sabbath"

<sup>465</sup> On the later of the Sabbaths.

<sup>466</sup> Note: note the correct name of God.

<sup>467</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi (251.9, page 218-223) points out the same sort of contradiction in the Epistle of Barnabas, "While, on the one hand, he repudiates the present Sabbath ... he justifies the observance