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CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY BETWEEN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN LITURGY¹

G. ROUWHORST

Monshouwer's article on the reading of the Scriptures in the early Church addresses a number of important issues. He confronts us with questions of great importance for our insight in the genesis of early Christian liturgy. How did the Old Testament, the Tenakh, function in early Christian liturgy? More especially: can any traces of the reading of the Torah and the Prophets be found, as it must have been practiced in the Jewish Synagogue at the beginning of our era? It should be made clear that in the background of this, questions play a role which reach much further than the reading of the Tenakh alone and which are connected with the complicated relationship between early Christian liturgy on the one hand and its Jewish roots on the other. To what extent can early Christian liturgy, as an in itself already complicated and in any case pluriform phenomenon, be explained from its Jewish roots? Which elements from the Jewish liturgy of the beginning of the Christian era have been preserved and which ones have not? And as far as the Jewish elements which have been taken over by the Christians are concerned, to what extent can it be said that in Christian usage they have preserved their original Jewish meaning and to what extent must we conclude that they have undergone a transformation, that they have been christianized? Finally these questions concerning the history of the liturgy cannot be considered apart from a more general question, namely that of the relationship between Jews and Christians, between Church and Synagogue in the first centuries of Christianity, for in the liturgy this relationship is reflected in all its complexity.

However, the merit and value of Monshouwer's article is not only found in his choice of subject, but also in the way he deals with it. First of all, his approach is characterized by a remarkable and gratifying openness towards the Jewish liturgy. In contrast with many other authors writing about the same or a similar theme in the past, basing themselves on typically Christian convictions – for example concerning the uniqueness of Christ or of the Church, or the relationship between the Jewish law and grace – he does not create an opposition between Jewish and Christian worship on beforehand. In as far as certain theo-

logical presuppositions play a role with Monshouwer also, these seem to have their roots in a benevolent attitude towards, even a sympathy for Judaism and for the Jewish liturgy: Monshouwer appears to hold fast to a continuity between Judaism and Christianity as long as possible and he only appears to conclude to discontinuity, a breach between both traditions, when the sources force him to and not before. This approach may be called remarkable, refreshing and gratifying indeed in the midst of countless publications which in the last resort are strongly determined by the theological presuppositions of their (Christian) authors. Moreover, Monshouwer's line of research deserves the predicate 'remarkable' for one other reason, namely for the fact that it is neither concerned primarily with the New Testament period about which a massive amount of literature has appeared, nor with the fourth century about which relatively much research has been done and about which we know fairly much, but with the period in between, the second and third century. This period has received relatively little attention in scholarly research and in any case it is shrouded in mystery in many respects, but it is the period in which nevertheless utterly crucial developments must have taken place in the area of Christian liturgy.

In spite of all this, Monshouwer's article raises a certain number of questions to my regard. First of all I cannot avoid the impression that in the last resort the hypothesis put forward by the author is based on an extreme paucity of factual historical evidence. In itself, this would not have to be an obstacle: the number of sources which contains information about the Christian liturgy of the second and third centuries is extremely small and it cannot be held against someone that he nevertheless undertakes an attempt to reconstruct the development of Christian worship as best he can. However, the problem is that the hypothesis put forward by Monshouwer is not only based on a very small number of hard facts, but moreover that it does not fit at all well into the global picture which emerges when we try to order the evidence about the development of Christian liturgy in the first four centuries and especially that it is hard to reconcile with what we know about the continuance or discontinuance of the Sabbath in second and third century Christianity.

My contribution to the debate which Monshouwer wants to create with his publication will first of all consist in identifying the historical evidence which appears to contradict Monshouwer's hypothesis. Then I shall undertake an alternative attempt to reconstruct the development of the reading of the Tenakh in early Christianity.

1. The development of Christian liturgy from the first to the fourth century

The most important objection that can be raised to Monshouwer's reconstruction is that on a number of important points it does not match that which the available evidence teaches us about the development of Christian liturgy in the first four centuries.

Broadly speaking, Christian liturgy in the period concerned must have developed as follows.² There can hardly be any doubt that the first Christians, who were of Jewish origin, preserved the Jewish rituals with which they were familiar. The same goes for Jewish Christian groups which are known from the somewhat later period of Church history (Ebionites, Nazoraeans etc.). As is generally known, the situation was different for Christians from paganism: they were not bound by the liturgical traditions of the Jews.

Now this last observation can easily cause misunderstanding. It does not imply, as one might be inclined to think at first sight, that Christians from paganism did not preserve any Jewish liturgical traditions at all. The opposite is true. Christians from paganism too knew a number of rituals, like the Eucharist, the Passover festival and Baptism. To their own understanding and perception these were specifically Christian rituals, but in fact they were of course largely derived from Judaism. The striking thing however was that the process of taking over or preserving Jewish liturgical traditions was a highly selective one. Apart from certain liturgical forms with a fairly neutral character (hours and forms of prayer etc.) which were preserved by at least some Christians from paganism, Jewish liturgical traditions were taken over only – and even then in a Christian form – if there was a particular reason for this, if these traditions had received a specific Christian meaning for Christians. The early history of the liturgical year can clarify this³: the Passover festival was not only taken over from the Jews by Jewish Christians, but also by Christians from paganism.⁴ However, this happened only because already at a very early stage the Jewish Passover festival had received a very special significance as the day on which the passion and death of Christ, who was put to death during the Jewish Passover festival, was remembered. That this was the only reason why the Christians from paganism continued to celebrate the Passover festival, becomes clear from the fact that we find no traces with them of other Jewish festivals, especially not the great autumn festivals.

Yet another observation must be made in this connection. We may assume that

fairly soon, in any case in the middle of the second century, the largest part of the Christian communities existed of Christians from paganism. Nevertheless some churches seem to have preserved more Jewish traditions – and that for a longer period of time – than others. In Rome for example the liturgy appears to have become detached from its Jewish roots at a fairly early stage. Furthermore we may assume that the consequence of the breakdown of the Bar Kokhba rebellion in 135 was that Jews and Jewish Christians were refused admission to Jerusalem⁵ and that this in turn had its consequences for the celebration of the liturgy in that city, in the sense that it became less Jewish. On the other hand it is certain that in the churches east of Antioch which were partly and in many cases mainly Syriac speaking, a large number of Jewish liturgical traditions was preserved for a long time.⁶ This becomes clear once more from the history of the Christian Passover festival. In the second half of the second century the churches of Rome and Jerusalem – just like others from other areas of the Roman empire – had given up the early Christian custom of celebrating the festival on the Jewish date, in the night of the fourteenth to the fifteenth of Nisan.⁷ In the churches east of Antioch however the Jewish date was kept until the Council of Nicea.⁸ In the latter churches other Jewish liturgical traditions were also preserved for a fairly long time. Thus in early Christian churches in Mesopotamia and Northern Syria a bema can be found from which the ministry of the word was conducted⁹ and the Syriac anaphora of Addai and Mari has preserved the structure of the Jewish birkat ha-mazon – the blessing after the meal – more clearly than eucharistic prayers of other traditions.¹⁰ To this we may add that the Syriac churches have also preserved remarkably many Jewish traditions in other areas than that of the liturgy, e.g. in those of exegesis and theology.¹¹

This picture of the development of Christian liturgy in the first centuries deviates on some crucial points from the course of affairs which Monshouwer proposes with regard to the reading of the Torah and the Prophets on the Sabbath.

1. Setting out from the picture outlined above, we are inclined to suppose that Christians from paganism already at a very early stage did not know a celebration of the Sabbath. And this supposition is corroborated by other historical evidence (see below). Monshouwer however assumes that Christians from paganism in some way continued to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath, namely in the sense that just like the Jews they continued to read from the Torah and the Prophets on that day.

2. In Monshouwer's reconstruction precisely those churches preserved the

reading from the Torah on the Sabbath during the longest period of time, which on the contrary must on other grounds be supposed to have given up different Jewish liturgical traditions at an early stage, namely the churches of Rome and of Jerusalem. Conversely, according to Monshouwer precisely those churches which appear to have preserved a number of Jewish liturgical traditions during the longest period of time – those of Antioch and the areas around that city where the Apostolic Constitutions must have originated, which most probably do indeed refer to a reading from the Torah and the Prophets – must have been the first to move the reading from the Tenakh from the Sabbath to the Sunday.

2. The survival of the Sabbath in the early Church

Monshouwer's reconstruction becomes even more improbable, if we look at the evidence we have for the survival of the Sabbath in the early Church. Above we argued that it seems highly improbable that Christians from paganism continued to celebrate the Sabbath in one way or another. This supposition is corroborated by a series of early Christian sources in which the Sabbath is discussed. From these sources, two things become perfectly clear:

1. Several Jewish Christian groups continued to celebrate the Sabbath for a long time,¹² in addition to the Lord's Day, the Sunday.¹³

2. The communities of Christians from paganism did not celebrate the Sabbath. This becomes evident in the writings of Paul, Justin, Irenaeus, Ignatius of Antioch, the Letter of Barnabas and other writings¹⁴ in which we even find polemics against the observance of the Sabbath (which does of course indicate that there were Christians from paganism on whom the Sabbath exerted a certain or even a great attraction).

Here the following observations must be made:

- In itself it would not be unthinkable, as Monshouwer seems to suppose, that Christians from paganism would have abolished the Sabbath as a rest day, but nevertheless would have continued to come together for the reading from the Torah and the Prophets. In itself an assumption like this cannot really be disproved (although it is even harder to prove it). However, we must realize that in none of the writings mentioned above, which sometimes do discuss the Sabbath at great length, there is even a single hint at a liturgical gathering or a reading from Scripture on the Sabbath! Also it must be called very remarkable that in none of the early Christian sources which contain evidence about the

celebration of the liturgy, mention is made of such a liturgical tradition (in Justin's *First Apology* for example, which gives a rather lengthy description of the liturgy and also discusses the reading of Scripture [on Sunday] we do not hear a word about it).

- From the third century onward we find in sources which clearly stem from Christians from paganism, more and more signs which indicate a growing attention among Christians for the Saturday. Thus Tertullian polemizes against Christians who do not kneel on Saturday and likewise against some who fast on that day¹⁵ (this last practice, the custom to fast on Saturdays, would become common usage in the West for a time¹⁶). Furthermore a number of fourth century sources mention liturgical gatherings on Saturdays¹⁷ (it is not impossible that this is also the case in the passage from Origen's homily referred to by Monshouwer, if indeed we have an allusion to the reading of Scripture on the Sabbath here¹⁸). According to certain authors this particular attention for the Sabbath would be a remainder of an older Christian observance of the Sabbath (which then would not have been abolished by Christians from paganism).¹⁹ Ultimately, this hypothesis does not appear to be very probable.²⁰ On the one hand it is hard to reconcile it with the sources mentioned above which on the contrary polemize against the observance of the Sabbath. On the other hand it is possible to explain the growing attention for the Saturday from specifically Christian developments.²¹

This evidence with regard to the Sabbath appears to exclude the possibility that during a certain period of time (the majority of) the Christians from paganism came together on the Sabbath to read from the Torah and the Prophets.

3. Antioch and the Syriac speaking churches

It might be possible however that the last conclusion does not apply to one particular area, namely to Antioch and the Syriac speaking areas east of that city. The possibility can at least not be excluded that Monshouwer's hypothesis does apply there, at least to certain groups, that during a certain period of time these groups did read from the Torah and the Prophets. The following facts might point into this direction.

a. To begin with it is certain that during an extensive period of time there continued to live Christians in the areas mentioned who observed the Sabbath. In this connection special mention should be made of the fact that the author of the Syriac Didascalia polemizes against Jewish Christians²² who held the

Sabbath higher than the first day of the week.²³ Furthermore the Apostolic Constitutions (Antioch, end of the fourth century) testify to a very high appreciation of the Sabbath (II,36,1 and 59,3; VI,23,3; VII,23,3 and 36,1; VIII,33,1-2 and 47,6-4). The seventh book of this work (36) even contains an elaborate blessing of the Sabbath which can best be characterized as a christianized Sabbath blessing.²⁴ It is certainly not unthinkable that in these passages of the Apostolic Constitutions (which stem from a milieu of Christians from paganism) we are confronted with traces of a Jewish Christian Sabbath tradition.

b. It is remarkable that we know precisely of Antioch and the Syriac speaking churches that already at an early date and with great regularity there were readings from the Old Testament during the Eucharist. This becomes abundantly clear in John Chrysostom²⁵ and also – once again – in the Apostolic Constitutions.²⁶ The latter writing even seems to know two Old Testament readings for every Eucharist, the first of which is taken from the Law and the second from the Prophets.²⁷ In any case we do find the latter custom with the Nestorians²⁸: they always have two Old Testament readings, the first of which is taken as a rule from the Torah and the second from the Prophets.²⁹

The observation must be made here that there is no obvious reason to assume with G. Kunze that the custom to read from the Torah and the Prophets during the Eucharist was introduced only at a later stage, for example in the third century.³⁰ On the contrary it is very well possible that this liturgical tradition in the said areas would have very ancient roots, that ultimately it would go back to the first century. The presence of numerous other Jewish traditions in this region can only reinforce this surmise.

When these facts are combined, the conclusion imposes itself that it is quite possible that during an extensive period of time in Antioch and the Syriac speaking churches there continued to live Christians who came together on the Sabbath in order to read from the Torah and the Prophets. Naturally these Christians will first of all have been Jewish Christians. But we cannot exclude that these people exerted great influence in the churches concerned (which might possibly become manifest from the place which the Sabbath occupies in the Apostolic Constitutions) and that supposedly numerous groups of Christians from paganism participated in these Jewish Christian gatherings.

It should be clear that we can only make guesses on this issue and that nothing can be proved, but if there ever were Christians from paganism anywhere who

together with Jewish Christians read from the Torah and the Prophets on the Sabbath according to one or other synagogal system of readings, it must have been in Antioch or in the Syriac speaking areas east of that city.

4. An alternative hypothesis

The conclusion which needs to be drawn from the above is clear: the hypothesis formulated by Monshouwer appears to contradict a great deal of liturgical and historical evidence and therefore it is not a very likely hypothesis. In any case it seems to be rather improbable that, with the possible exception of Antioch and the Syriac speaking churches, there have been Christians (from paganism) who until the second or even the third century came together on the Sabbath to read from the Torah, the Prophets and the Gospels.

Naturally therefore the question is whether it is possible to formulate an alternative hypothesis, a reconstruction of the developments with regard to the reading of the Tenakh in the early Church which fits better into the global picture of the history of early Christian liturgy.

At the end of my contribution I now want to undertake an attempt to make such an alternative reconstruction. The reader will have to judge whether this attempt may be called successful, whether the reconstruction which I shall propose is more acceptable than Monshouwer's.

Broadly speaking the development of the reading of the Old Testament in the early Church may have developed as follows.

In the first decades after Christ's death and resurrection, Christians held fast to the liturgical traditions with which they were familiar on the basis of their Jewish background – or perhaps we ought to rather say 'as Jews'. This implied that they continued to go to the Synagogue on the Sabbath day and read from the Torah and the Prophets according to the system which was in use with the Jews (while we must observe that for that period there is great uncertainty about the precise character of that system of readings).³¹ Apart from that they came together on the first day, the Lord's Day, for 'the Lord's Supper', the Eucharist.

Through several causes this situation changed. The most important of these causes was the numerical growth of the Christians from paganism. Everything

indicates that these, unlike the Jewish Christians who remained faithful to Jewish liturgical traditions, did not observe the Sabbath and did not come together on the Sabbath day to read from the Torah and the Prophets. The question is what consequences this development had for the reading of the Torah and the Prophets in the communities of Christians from paganism. In itself it would be imaginable that Christians from paganism did not consider the Sabbath as a rest day any longer, but that they nevertheless – during a certain period of time – did come together, possibly with Christians of Jewish origin, to read from the Torah. Unfortunately however it is extremely difficult to decide whether this was the case or not. We would have to assume that it was the case if we could establish with certainty that there was a clear coherence between one or more of the Gospels and the lectionary system which was in use in contemporary Judaism. And indeed a number of authors, among whom Monshouer, are of this opinion, but it cannot be denied that their theories have a strongly hypothetical character. On the other hand there is no reason to exclude the possibility on beforehand that at least some Christians from paganism did indeed continue to read from the Torah and the Prophets on the Sabbath.

As far as further developments are concerned, from the second century onwards, it is especially important to distinguish between different regions and cities, as Monshouer indeed does.

- In the middle of the second century the Christians of Rome knew neither a Sabbath, nor a reading from the Torah on the Sabbath/Saturday. On the Lord's Day there were readings from 'the apostles' and 'the prophets' as the passage from Justin's *First Apology* quoted by Monshouer shows. This latter designation is indeed rather vague. Yet it seems obvious that at least a reading from the prophetic, i.e. typologically interpreted Old Testament is meant. About the further development of the Roman lectionary system – or lectionary systems – little can be said with certainty. Although the later Roman liturgy has no reading from the Old Testament on Sundays, we do not know when this reading was dropped (assuming that it had been in use during a certain period of time, which at least the passage in Justin makes us believe).

- In 135 at the latest, after the Bar Kokhba insurrection, the Sabbath must have been abolished in the church of *Jerusalem*. If until that time there had been a reading from the Tenakh on the Sabbath, this must have dropped out of use at that moment, together with the Sabbath itself. The fact that the Armenian lectionary which follows the Jerusalem tradition of the fifth century, indicates no Old Testament readings for the Eucharist, leads us to suppose that in Jerusa-

lem there never was a reading from the Old Testament during the Eucharist, at least not after 135.

- The passage from Origen's homily quoted by Monshouer might just indicate that in the third century in *Alexandria* there were liturgical gatherings on the Sabbath. On the other hand it is unclear whether this passage really alludes to a liturgical gathering on *Saturday*. Even so it would not be exactly clear what was being read on the Saturday, nor in fact whether the Old Testament was read at all. All in all therefore nothing certain can be said about the reading of the Old Testament in the liturgy of Alexandria either.

- The situation seems to be a little different in *Antioch and in the Syriac speaking areas east of that city*. At least we cannot exclude the possibility that there Jewish Christians continued to read from the Torah and the Prophets on the Sabbath during a longer period of time, that groups of Christians from paganism participated in the reading of Scripture on the Sabbath and that (but this is very speculative indeed) the later Syriac custom to read with great regularity from both the Torah and the Prophets in the Sunday Eucharists finds its origin in that old initially Jewish Christian Sabbath tradition.

Notes

- 1 The author thanks his colleague Prof. M. Parmentier for translating this text into English.
- 2 For what follows cp. R. Beckwith, 'The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church in Relation to its Jewish Antecedents', in: R. Beckwith and others, *Influences juives sur le culte chrétien*, Louvain 1981, p. 89-122; The Same, 'Daily and Weekly Worship: Jewish and Christian', *Alcain/GROW Liturgical Study 1*, Nottingham 1987; G. Rouwhorst, 'De joodse wortels van de christelijke liturgie', *Tijdschrift voor Liturgie* 72(1988)395-402.
- 3 Cp for what follows: G. Rouwhorst, 'De joodse wortels ...', p.398-402.
- 4 For the history of the genesis of the Passover festival, see also: B. Lohse, *Das Passafest der Quartaederaner* (BTChTh.M 54) Gütersloh 1953 and: T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, New York 1986, p.1-78.
- 5 Cp. in this connection e.g. W. Friend, *The Rise of Christianity*, London 1984, p.162, also Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* IV,6 and *Hieronymi Chronicon* ed. R. Helm, CCS 24, 1913, p.201.
- 6 Cp. in this connection G. Rouwhorst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Éphrem de Nisibe. Analyse théologique et recherche sur l'évolution de la fête pascale chrétienne à Nisibe et à Eléase et dans quelques Églises voisines au quatrième siècle*, Leiden 1989, I, especially p.3-4 and 204-205. Cp. also G. Kretschmar, 'Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden. Forschungsprobleme der ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten', in: J. van Amersfoort & J. van Oort, *Juden und Christen in der Antike*, Kampen 1990, p.9-43, especially p.39.
- 7 Cp. for Rome: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V,23-25 and also T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* p.18-26. The latter work also deals with the developments with regard to the date of Easter and the Passover festival in Jerusalem (p.24-25).
- 8 Cp. G. Rouwhorst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Éphrem de Nisibe* I, especially p.191-193 and 204-205.

- 9 Cp. D. Hickley, 'The Ambo in Early Liturgical Planning', *Heyl* VII, 1966, p.407-422; R. Tafel, 'Some Notes on the Bema in the East and West Syrian Traditions', *OrChrP* 34, 1968, p.325-359; C. Peeters, *De liturgische dispositie van het vroegchristelijke kerkegebouw*, Assen 1969, p.44-58.
- 10 Cp. H. Wegman, 'Pleidooi voor een tekst; de anaphora van de apostelen Addai en Mari', *Bijdragen* 40(1979)15-43; G. Rouwhorst, 'Benedictio, action de grâces, supplication. Les oraisons de la table dans le judaïsme et les célébrations eucharistiques des chrétiens syriaques', *QulI* 1980, p.211-240, esp.231-239.
- 11 Cp. G. Rouwhorst, *Les hymnes pascales d'Éphrem de Nisibe* I, p.3-5.
- 12 Cp. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 47,2; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III,27,2-5; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* IX,16,3; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29,7,5; 30,2,2. The passages from Epiphanius can be found in GCS 25. English translations F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Leiden 1987, p.117-118 and 120; Ph. R. Amidon, *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis*, New York 1990, p.93 and 94. The other texts can be found in W. Rordorf, *Sabbath und Sonntag in der alten Kirche*, in: *Traditio Christiana* 2, Zürich 1972.
- 13 Thus in any case the Ebionites (cp. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III,27,3,3).
- 14 In this connection cp. eg. H. Auf der Maur, *Feiern im Rhythmus der Zeit*, in: *Gottesdienst der Kirche* 5, Regensburg 1983, p.33 and W. Rordorf, *Der Sonntag. Geschichte des Ruhe- und Gottesdiensttages im ältesten Christentum*, Zürich 1962, p.127-140.
- 15 Cp. *On Prayer* 23,1-2 and *On Fasting* 14,3. Cp. for these passages W. Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p.140-143.
- 16 Cp. M. Dietl, 'Zaterdag', in: *Liturgisch Woordenboek* II, Roermond 1968, 2973-2976.
- 17 For the relevant passages cp. H. Auf der Maur, *Feiern im Rhythmus der Zeit*, p.34 and W. Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p.144-146.
- 18 This does not seem to become quite clear in the passage in question however. It would also be feasible to think that the allusion is to visiting the church and listening to readings and sermons on other days than on the Sabbath. Cp. also W. Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p.149 note 131; R. Bauckham, 'Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church', in: D. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, Grand Rapids 1982, p.251-298, esp. p.278-280.
- 19 Thus eg. C. Dugmore, *The Influence upon the Divine Office*, Oxford 1944, p.28-37; C. Mosna, *Storia della domenica dalle origini fino agli inizi del v. secolo*, *Analacta Gregoriana* 170, Roma 1969, p.201-206.
- 20 Cp. W. Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag*, XIII. Perhaps an exception must be made for the observance of the Sabbath in the Apostolic Constitutions (see below).
- 21 At least the custom to fast or not to kneel on Saturdays, which Tertullian mentions, can easily be explained. Both customs must have been derived from the Christian Passover festival during which there was fasting on the Saturday before Passover and no kneeling in the Pentekoste. We can imagine that it occurred to certain Christians to fast not only on the Saturday before Passover, but on every Saturday (the Saturday fast could then be seen as an extension of the Friday fast) or to count the Saturday before Passover already to the Pentekoste.
- 22 The liturgical services on Saturdays which come into use from the fourth century onward could have originated from a spiritual interpretation of the commandment to keep the Sabbath (cp. W. Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, p.149).
- 23 For the characterisation of these Jewish Christians and the influence which they appear to have exerted in the churches from which the *Didascalia* originated, see: G. Strecker, 'On the Problem of Jewish Christianity', in: W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, London 1972, p.241-285, especially p.254-257.
- 24 Cp. A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* II, CSCO 407/408, Louvain 1979, p.251 (233).
- 25 Cp. W. Bousset, 'Eine jüdische Gebetsammlung im siebennten Buch der Apostolischen Konstitutionen', in: *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse*, 1915, p.435-485. Reprinted in: *The Same, Religionsgeschichtliche Studien. Aufsätze zur Religionsgeschichte des hellenistischen Zeitalters*, Hrsg. von A. Verbeule, Leiden 1979, p.231-286.
- 26 Cp. F. van de Paveld, *Zur Geschichte der Messliturgie in Antiochia und Konstantinopel gegen Ende des vierten Jahrhunderts*, in: OCA 187, Roma 1970, p.106-108. Cp. II,39,6; 57,5; 59,4; VIII,5,11.

- 27 Cp. II,39,6 and 59,4 and VIII,5,11-12. The often held opinion that the Apostolic Constitutions know both a reading from the Law and one from the Prophets, is however contested, on the basis of a comparison with John Chrysostom, by F. van de Paveld (*Zur Geschichte der Messliturgie*, p.106-108). It does indeed seem possible to interpret the said passages of the Apostolic Constitutions in the sense which Van de Paveld proposes (one reading only which is sometimes taken from the Law and sometimes from the Prophets). On the other hand it is of course not necessary to assume that the church in which the Apostolic Constitutions originated followed the tradition of Antioch in all respects.
- 28 For the strongly interrelated pericope systems of the Nestorians see: P. Kannookadan, *The East Syrian Lectorary. An Historical-Liturgical Study*, Rome 1991.
- 29 We may point here to an interesting passage of the so-called Doctrine of the Apostles, a Syriac writing which probably dates back to the fourth century, in which we read that the apostles had determined that on the bema of the church nothing else should be read except the Old Testament, the Prophets, the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles (ed. W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, Edinburgh 1864, p.27; cp. also A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, in: CSCO 401/402, p.44 (38)). It seems highly probable that the text hints at a regular fourfold reading from Scripture which included a reading from the Torah (Old Testament) and a reading from the Prophets. It is practically certain that the same usage is envisaged in the Syriac Doctrine of Addai (early fifth century?) where we read that every day passages from the Torah, the Prophets, the Gospel, the Letters of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles are read to the people (ed. G. Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai*, London 1876, p.46).
- 30 G. Kunze, 'Die Lesungen', in: *Leiturgia* II, Kassel 1955, p.87-179, here especially p.135-138. Kunze however does not adduce any compelling arguments for this proposition. One cannot avoid the impression that he argues on the basis of a specific conception of Christianity from paganism. This conception seems to be incorrect because Christianity from paganism probably possessed a greater pluriformity than Kunze allows for.
- 31 For a recent survey of the state of the question, see: Ch. Perrot, 'The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue', in: M. Mulder (ed.), *Mikra. Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen/Maastricht 1988, p.137-159.

Summary

Monshouwer's hypothesis in his article on the reading of the Scriptures in the early Church meets with a number of fundamental objections. It is difficult to fit into the global picture of the history of early Christian liturgy as it can be reconstructed on the basis of numerous liturgical-historical evidence. Furthermore it is hard to reconcile with the fact that Christians from paganism did not take over the observance of the Sabbath from the Jews and the Jewish Christians.

Perhaps Monshouwer's hypothesis could apply to one region, namely Antioch and the Syriac speaking churches in the areas east of that city. There are a number of signs which indicate that in those areas the Sabbath was observed by Jewish Christian groups for an extensive period of time and that this Jewish Christian Sabbath practice exerted an important influence on Christians from paganism. Furthermore it is precisely in these churches that at least from the fourth century there are regular readings from the Old Testament during the Eucharist and that a number of sources originating from these churches know the custom to read first a passage from the Torah and then a pericope taken from one of the Prophets. Therefore we cannot exclude the possibility that during a longer period of time in Antioch and the Syriac speaking area, Jewish Christians came together on the Sabbath to read from the Torah and the Prophets, according to some synagogal system and that certain groups of Christians from paganism also participated in this reading of Scripture on the Sabbath.