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THE SYNAGOGUE AND ITS INFLUENCES

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A Thesis presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by  
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June, 1954

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Reader

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Was the synagogue greatly influenced by the surrounding cultures in which it existed, and was the synagogue influential to any extent upon the surroundings in which it existed?" The purpose of this thesis is to give some directives in order that a correct and factual answer might be obtained to these questions.

The word "synagogue" is sometimes used in a wide sense meaning "all Hebrew people". "Synagogue" is also used to describe the Hebrew institution which might be compared to the local Christian congregation. This thesis is concerned with the latter narrow definition of the word.

This dissertation does not propose to treat or mention every influence which came upon the synagogue from the cultures which surrounded it. Those which are chosen have been done to point out that the synagogue was not a sudden, previously unheard of, self-made institution which had no connection with the circumstances or customs in which the Hebrew people lived. This partial list of influences is an attempt to demonstrate that the synagogue was a unique institution with roots in the surrounding situation, taking significance in and shaping its form from this situation.

The number and intensity of the influences which came

out of the synagogue upon those associated with it are also not exhaustively treated in this thesis. The primary concern is the influence the synagogue had upon the Jewish and Christian life in the first centuries after Christ. There is some discussion about other cultures and later times, but such facets as the modern situation are only mentioned in the hope that they will be guides to future development.

The thesis begins with some observations concerning the possible dates of origin of the synagogue. This is done because it is natural to begin any study by considering its beginning. It is also done because it seems wise to determine how long something existed before determining its influence. Three different possibilities are suggested for a general date of origin. The thesis suggests that the seed of the synagogue was to be found as early as pre-exilic Israel. There is room for recognized differences of opinion about this thesis.

The third chapter deals with the synagogue's location and architecture and art, inside and outside. The fourth chapter discusses the worship leaders, the liturgy of the service, and the place of women in the worship; those facets are treated which have been most influential on Christianity. At the end of Chapters III and IV short discussions are added concerning the relation of the temple to the synagogue. These are quite brief since this is not the major burden of the thesis, and the question is considered only that the

reader should not overlook this obvious influence upon the synagogue.

The fifth chapter attempts to point out how the foregoing descriptions were influenced by the surrounding cultures, and how the synagogue influenced these cultures. The sixth chapter follows this same procedure with Christianity and synagogue as the theme. This discussion includes several of the influences the synagogue had upon Christ's life, the New Testament expressions, and the early situations of the Church. Mention is also made of the liturgical, architectural, and artistic influences of the synagogue upon the Church. Many things such as bells, confirmation, colors, etc., are not discussed because they were more closely related to the temple than to the synagogue. Little is said about St. Paul's association with the synagogue because this was treated in a previously written dissertation.

The bibliography has been limited to the offerings of Fritzlaff Memorial Library of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Only English works and those found in translation have been used.

It is hoped that this thesis will lead to an affirmative answer of the introductory questions, and that the reader will conclude that the synagogue was of such importance and influence that its setting in Biblical history cannot be ignored by the Christian scholar.

## CHAPTER II

### ORIGIN

#### Definition of the Word

The word "synagogue" is a Greek word meaning "assembly" and in its Hebrew sense might be defined as "the house of the assembly".<sup>1</sup> In most instances the Septuagint translates the word "congregation", when used in the Prophets, with "ecclesia"; in the Pentateuch and earlier books "congregation" is translated most frequently with the word "synagogue".<sup>2</sup> The Septuagint translates  $\text{קָהָל}$  130 times with the word "synagogue".  $\text{עֵבֶרֶת}$ , on the other hand, is translated 70 times with "ecclesia" and 37 times with "synagogue". From this one might conclude the  $\text{עֵבֶרֶת}$  is the spiritual body of Israel as the Church is the spiritual body of Christianity; the  $\text{קָהָל}$ , most often rendered "synagogue", is probably the congregation as the congregation is the physical body of Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

One of the earliest usages of the word "synagogue" in

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert May, "Synagogues in Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (February, 1944), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Emil Schuerer, The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, translated by Sophia Taylor (Edinburg: T and T Clark, 1890), II, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Alfred Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life (New York: The Fleming H. Revell Co., c.1876), p. 251.

the Septuagint is that in Deut. 33:4 which is rendered "synagogue of Jacob" from the Hebrew word  $\text{סִינַגֻּגָה}$ .<sup>4</sup> Herbert May, like many others, connects the phrase in Psalm 74:8, "synagogues of God", with the modern synagogue because God is thought of as being surrounded by the assembly in the modern synagogue; it must be questioned whether this is correct, however, for the Septuagint does not use the word "synagogue" in its translation of this passage.<sup>5</sup>

Philo uses the word "synagogue" interchangeably with "houses of instruction".<sup>6</sup> There is also a Targum interpretation of Gen. 33:17 equating the house Jacob built with "an house of instruction".<sup>7</sup> George Moore is of the opinion, however, that the synagogue and school were independent in origin and never organically connected although they did work in harmony and had a unity of instruction.<sup>8</sup>

The phrase, "house of prayer", as a synonym for the word "synagogue", meets with the disfavour of Alfred Edersheim for the reason that houses of prayer are generally located outside

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<sup>4</sup>Robert H. Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times; With an Introduction to the Apocrypha (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 374.

<sup>5</sup>May, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>8</sup>George F. Moore, Judaism; In the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), I, 283.



the town in the later period.<sup>9</sup> It has also met with opposition because the houses of prayer were built on higher ground, and not all synagogues have been found on high places. It is Humphrey Frideaux who postulates the theory that these houses of prayer were the "high places" of the Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> It is the opinion of Heinrich Graetz, however, that there was a connection. The inhabitants of towns introduced in their own congregations an exact copy of the divine service at Jerusalem, and in this way "houses of prayer were established" in which was introduced the order of prayer which is the ground work of the divine service of the present day.<sup>11</sup> It is also pointed out that Philo in Flaccius 6 calls synagogues "houses of prayer".<sup>12</sup>

#### Date of Origin

##### Post-Exilic Existence of Synagogue.

As one of the scholars who is of the opinion that the synagogue had its origin in post-exilic times, Floyd Wilson

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<sup>9</sup>Eilersheim, op. cit., p. 261.

<sup>10</sup>Humphrey Frideaux, The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845), II, 308.

<sup>11</sup>Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941), I, 401.

<sup>12</sup>W. O. E. Oesterley, A History of Israel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, c.1932), II, 411.

writes:

Archaeological evidence for the synagogue prior to the first century A.D. is meager. At Alexandria in Egypt a synagogue inscription has been found which dates from the reign of Ptolemy III (246-221 B.C.). On the Island of Delos, in the southern Aegean Sea, excavations uncovered the remains of what appears to have been a synagogue. . . . This structure may be dated in the 2nd century B.C.<sup>13</sup>

The Capernaum synagogue is claimed by Father Orfali, one of the excavators who worked at Capernaum, to be from the first century A.D. There is also a strong possibility that another synagogue inscription which has been unearthed in Corinth dates to the time of Paul.<sup>14</sup> An inscription has also been found in Jerusalem which, according to many archaeologists, belonged to the Libertine synagogue of New Testament times.<sup>15</sup> Any dating of the synagogue is difficult, for occasionally one has been superimposed upon another.<sup>16</sup>

The worship situation existing at the time also indicates a post-exilic presence of the synagogue. Graetz is of the opinion that after the return from captivity the Council of Seventy was formed in Jerusalem and ordered regular readings of the Law to be begun on the Sabbath day to the assembled congregations in the towns. He, therefore, concludes that

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<sup>13</sup>Floyd Filson, "Temple, Synagogue, and Church," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (December, 1944), 78 f.

<sup>14</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>15</sup>May, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

synagogues must have been in existence at this time.<sup>17</sup> The hours of prayer are thought to have synchronized with those of the temple which were indicated in Psalm 55:17.<sup>18</sup> It is also proposed that there is a possibility that the newly organized Pharisees may have been the founders of the synagogue. It is impossible, however, to conclude with any surety whether the Pharisees or the synagogue came first in time. Both did have the same interests.<sup>19</sup>

The circumstances found in connection with Ezra's preaching in Nehemiah 8 casts light on the possibilities of a post-exilic presence of the synagogue. In Neh. 8:1 the place selected for the sermon, the water gate, might be the foreshadowing of later events since synagogues were frequently found near the gates of cities. In Neh. 8:4 Ezra stood upon a tower built of wood, and this is perhaps a forerunner of the synagogue bema. The people stood at the reading of the law in verse 5. Ezra then blessed the Lord before the beginning of the reading as was later prescribed by the Mishna. The Amen response of the people is also a later portion of the synagogue service.<sup>20</sup> The "caused to

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<sup>17</sup>Graetz, op. cit., p. 395.

<sup>18</sup>Frideaux, op. cit., pp. 304 f.

<sup>19</sup>R. T. Herford, The Pharisees (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 94.

<sup>20</sup>Cesterley, op. cit., pp. 137 f.

understand" of verse 8 might be the translation of the message as was customary in synagogue services for the reading of the law and prophets.<sup>21</sup> It has been stated by May that "the returning exiles needed a place of worship" and fellowship, and "the synagogue answered this need".<sup>22</sup> So the worship situation existing after the exile seemed to make a synagogue service necessary.

#### The Possibilities of the Synagogue in the Exile

The synagogue is usually thought of as having been originated by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. The pro-Jewish author Filson has written:

The actual origin of the synagogue as an institution for regular worship and instruction is usually dated in the exile. The temple had been destroyed, and the people of Israel had no center of worship. . . . Moreover, those in exile were the real leaders of the people, possessing native resourcefulness and initiative. It is quite reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the synagogue was organized in the Exile.<sup>23</sup>

There is no positive evidence, however, that the synagogue was organized in the exile. It is true that one would conclude that worship during the exile must have had some order, and that upon the return, "as sacrifices could be

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<sup>21</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 303.

<sup>22</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

offered only in the central sanctuary at Jerusalem, the form of worship would be modeled on what had originally been introduced by the returned exiles." This is Cesterley's view of the problem.<sup>24</sup> The Jewish scholar, Kohler, in contradiction to the Scriptural account, attempts to prove that the synagogue originated during the exile because the word "sabbath" is of Babylonian origin.<sup>25</sup> It is obvious that the captivity was not the first association the Jews had with the Babylonians, however.

There are allusions to synagogue customs in events described during the exile. In Dan. 6:10 we find Daniel with "his windows being opened in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed". This follows later synagogue orientation.<sup>26</sup> The fact that the synagogues were frequently located near water, and the seeing of visions by Daniel and Ezekiel while near rivers has prompted some people to find seeds of the synagogue in this also.<sup>27</sup> In post-exilic writings mention is made of the fastings "made those seventy years". If fastings were being held in Babylon, it would seem that there was some system of

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<sup>24</sup>Cesterley, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>25</sup>K. Kohler, Jewish Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), pp. 455 f.

<sup>26</sup>May, op. cit., pp. 12 f.

<sup>27</sup>E. L. Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 50.

worship during the exile.<sup>28</sup>

### The Possibilities of Pre-exilic Synagogue Worship

The early stages of synagogue development are unknown. It does not emerge into clear view until the time of the New Testament. R. T. Herford says, "To attempt a conjectural history would be a waste of time, for where nothing is known, anything is possible. All that can be said is that it is ancient."<sup>29</sup> It is the purpose of this section to set down a few of the possibilities showing pre-exilic hints of a synagogue. The nineteenth century historian-theologian Frideaux claims that there was no synagogue before the captivity, for before the captivity very few books of the law existed. Where there were no book of the law, there could be no synagogue. To substantiate his claim he alludes to II Chron. 17:9 which says that "the book of the law was with them as teachers went all about Judah". The writer considered this to mean that the law was not present in these places and had to be carried there by the teachers. Since it was not present, there could have been no synagogue.<sup>30</sup> Such an opinion is to be judged.

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<sup>28</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 303.

<sup>29</sup>Herford, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>30</sup>Frideaux, op. cit., p. 298.

One of the first times the word "synagogue" is used in the Septuagint translation is in Deut. 33:4.<sup>31</sup> According to Paul Levertoff such a passage as "only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord until those days," must also be considered as a possibility of synagogue connection.<sup>32</sup> He says that "it may seem paradoxical to compare the synagogue with the Bamoth, i.e., the local sanctuaries at high-places, condemned by Deuteronomic legislation, but, with the lapse of time and the coming of new conditions, it became necessary to revert to local religious centers".<sup>33</sup> The outside "houses of prayer", equated later with the synagogue, are probably high-places, and in evidence of this Psalm 52:8 is cited which mentions "trees in the house of God."<sup>34</sup> These "houses of prayer" are equated with the synagogue in Apion and used as proof for this possibility by Sukenik.<sup>35</sup>

Pre-exilic indications of prayer orientation as found in the later synagogue might be surmised from Solomon's prayer, "If thy people go out to battle against their enemy,

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<sup>31</sup>Supra, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup>1 Kings 3:2.

<sup>33</sup>Paul Levertoff, "Synagogue Worship in the First Century," Liturgy and Worship, edited by W. K. L. Clarke (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 60.

<sup>34</sup>Frideaux, op. cit., p. 308.

<sup>35</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 51.

whithersoever thou shalt send them and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and towards the house that I have built for thy name. . . ."36

There is a recognized difference of opinion concerning centralized worship in Jewish religion at an early date, but worship apart from the temple was not unknown. The Jewish writer Filson says that "in the days of the divided monarchy the rulers of the northern kingdom naturally provided places of worship within the borders of their realm (cf. 1 Kings 12:26-29)."37 The propriety of such worship cannot be admitted however. But since the prophets, who are some of the most highly respected of God's messengers, gave their messages apart from the central sanctuary at times, this would also indicate that it was not impossible to meet God elsewhere than at the temple. This probably influenced the attitude concerning place of worship in the minds of the people.<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, non-sacrificial worship was not unknown in pre-exilic times, although it was seldom practiced.<sup>39</sup> In the synagogue religious exercises were carried on without benefit of sacrifice.<sup>40</sup> If the religious reform of Josiah was

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<sup>36</sup>1 Kings 8:44.

<sup>37</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>W. O. E. Cesterley, "Worship in the Old Testament," Liturgy and Worship, edited by W. K. L. Clarke (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 50.

<sup>40</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 79.



the concentration of sacrifice to one locality, it is thought that one of the first results of Jewish piety would be to find another means of worship expression for those living some distance from Jerusalem. Although this did not become manifest until after the exile, this beginning helped lead to the establishment of synagogue worship.<sup>41</sup> Later rabbis who intended to explain the possibility of non-sacrificial worship interpreted Psalm 51:16 ff. as showing that the reading of the law was to be regarded as a substitute which was acceptable in place of the actual sacrifice.<sup>42</sup>

In view of the position of bemas in the later synagogues, several passages from the period of the kings are significant. Eli was found seated "by a post of the temple of the Lord" at Shiloh.<sup>43</sup> Athaliah came into the temple and saw young King Joash standing by "a pillar as was the manner."<sup>44</sup> In the time of Josiah, 11 Kings 23:3, we find reference to the pillar, and there the king was making "A covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments." Early bemas are lost, but the earliest found had been placed near the second pillar from the south on the eastern row.

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<sup>41</sup>W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development (Second revised edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), pp. 256 and 331.

<sup>42</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>43</sup>1 Sam. 1:9.

<sup>44</sup>2 Kings 11:14.

This was in the Beth Alpha remains.<sup>45</sup> So the significance of the bema in relation to the pillar has some foreshadowing already in the time of the kings.

There are scholars who protest the presence of the synagogue at an early date with the argument that it would conflict with the temple. But Filson has pointed out quite well that as long as the temple stood, the synagogue kept alive the loyalty to the temple. The law was read, which gave great honor to the temple.<sup>46</sup> That the two helped one another might be deduced from the fact that country synagogues were begun before those in Jerusalem. This might indicate that synagogues were used only where it was not possible to worship at the temple.<sup>47</sup>

The worship of the synagogue was a development.<sup>48</sup> It was probably the result of voluntary private religious assemblies.<sup>49</sup> There is some merit to the observation of Frederick Aston:

The origin of the synagogue is commonly ascribed to the period of the exile and to Ezra, who is thought to have developed and solidified this institution, but it appears . . . that the synagogue had already existed when the temple stood.

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<sup>45</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>46</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>47</sup>Edersheim, op. cit., p. 266.

<sup>48</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>49</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 284.

Josophus and Philo, as well as some later Jewish scholars, believe that the origin of the synagogue may go back to Moses.<sup>50</sup>

The above mention of Moses is based on an interpretation of the New Testament passage "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach Him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Frederick Aston, "Background of Early Christianity," The Evangelical Quarterly, VIII (1936), 256.

<sup>51</sup>Acts 15:21.

## CHAPTER III

### ARCHITECTURE AND ART OF THE SYNAGOGUE

#### I

#### Location of the Synagogue

Although the locations of synagogues differ to a great extent, the direction of orientation is quite regular. This has caused Herbert May to remark:

In general the facade of the synagogue was on the side towards Jerusalem. In the later type the entrance was on the side opposite Jerusalem, but one might say that the apse or the side towards Jerusalem reached out to the Holy City. The background on this general orientation towards Jerusalem is the tradition that prayer should be directed towards the city. . . . The exiles apparently prayed three times a day before windows opened towards Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Apion has said that "Moses . . . erected prayer houses open to the air, in various precincts of the city, all facing eastwards."<sup>2</sup> The Beth Shearim synagogue, for example, had a terrace on the front and was orientated towards Jerusalem, in this case southeast.<sup>3</sup>

Synagogues at Gerasa, Mt. Carmel, and Hammath-by-Gadara all stood on high ground; that of Gerasa overlooked the temple of Artemis. Synagogues have even been discovered by

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert May, "Synagogue in Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (February, 1944), 12 f.

<sup>2</sup>E. L. Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>May, op. cit., p. 5.

first going to the highest ground and there beginning digging operations. The Talmud has stipulated that the synagogue should be on the highest site in the town. To undergird this, the warning is given that a city whose roofs overtop the synagogue is given to ruin.<sup>4</sup> If the synagogue was not on the highest place, a pole was to be connected to the synagogue which would reach beyond the highest house.<sup>5</sup> The synagogue was probably not always able to be built on the highest ground, for the Jewish people did not always have opportunity to acquire this ground.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the rule was not always followed, and synagogues were sometimes built near water. Capernaum is an example of this.<sup>7</sup> The proseuche-synagogues are generally outside towns and in the vicinity of water according to Josephus.<sup>8</sup> Synagogues in Hellenistic countries in particular are usually near water.<sup>9</sup>

Synagogues were also built at corners of street and at

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 14 f.

<sup>5</sup>Alfred Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life (New York: The Fleming H. Revell Co., c.1876), p. 254.

<sup>6</sup>Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Erdmans, 1947), I, 432.

<sup>7</sup>May, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 261.

<sup>9</sup>Bukenik, op. cit., p. 50.

gateways.<sup>10</sup> A very late synagogue had been super-imposed over a former private house at Dura-Europos on the Middle Euphrates. "Unlike most synagogues it was in the midst of other dwellings."<sup>11</sup> It is also found that where the number of Jews was small, a large room in a private house was set apart for synagogue purposes.<sup>12</sup> The Mishna refers to a synagogue in the very Temple itself. It was probably in the House of Hewn Stones where the Sanhedrin convened.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Style of Synagogues' Architecture

The Capernaum synagogue was approximately 72 feet by 58 feet. Its walls were about 2 feet in thickness and had 27 pilasters.<sup>14</sup> The Beth-Shearim synagogue consisted of an interior court and basilica.<sup>15</sup> Synagogue entrances were usually on the east.<sup>16</sup>

All Palestinian synagogues found had a nave and two

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<sup>10</sup>A. Hausrath, New Testament Times, the Time of Jesus, translated by C. T. Foynting and P. Quenzer (London: Williams and Morgate, 1878), I, 86.

<sup>11</sup>May, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 259.

<sup>13</sup>R. T. Herford, The Pharisees (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 95.

<sup>14</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>May, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Henry H. Milman, The History of the Jews (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., c.1909), II, 161.

aisles, but those found in Greece and on the islands did not have the dividing columns.<sup>17</sup> In Capernaum the basilica style is found. Rows of columns supported a gallery which ran around the north, east, and west sides of the building. Its main entrance was on the south end toward Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> The height of the balcony was about 11 feet.<sup>19</sup> Edersheim writes that two rows of pillars were found on each side of the Capernaum synagogue, but he does say "at present, a single pillar is marked in the plan of the synagogue."<sup>21</sup> Each pillar was about ten feet from the wall on each side, and the space between the pillars was the nave of the synagogue. The two front corner pedestals and columns differed from all the others in that they were heart-shaped.<sup>22</sup>

The windows of the synagogue were numerous in the facades.<sup>23</sup> There were windows on the south above the main entrance, a window above the east entrance, and window of the north. The lack of a window on the west was probably

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<sup>17</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>18</sup>May, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>20</sup>K. Kohler, Jewish Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), p. 472.

<sup>21</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I. 454.

<sup>22</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>May, op. cit., p. 15.

due to the climatic conditions.<sup>24</sup> The windows above the central arch were large with iron gratings running vertical to guard against anyone falling out.<sup>25</sup>

A porch in front of the synagogue can be found at Chorazin, Kefer Bir'im, Eshatna, Jericho, Umm el-Qanatir, and other places. Sometimes there were unroofed platforms such as at Capernaum, Gischla. In place of the porch, there were vestibules at Hammath-by-Cadara, Gerasa, Naaran, Beth-Alpha, and other places.<sup>26</sup> Along with the platform at the Capernaum synagogue, a trapezoid-shaped court with a portico was to be found on the east side of the synagogue.<sup>27</sup> The possibility of worship in an open synagogues has been mentioned above and may have some connection with the courts of the synagogue.<sup>28</sup> The courtyard might be situated on any side of the synagogue. The laver for cleansings was most likely to be found out there.<sup>29</sup> It is possible that in this court was located a bath. This has been deduced from the "water reservoir" inscriptions found on a Jerusalem synagogue.<sup>30</sup> At

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<sup>24</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., pp. 12 f.

<sup>25</sup>May, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>28</sup>Supra, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>30</sup>Gustav Dalman, Jesus--Jeshua, translated by F. Levertoff (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 43.



Dura-Europos the colonnaded court had a cesspool in the corner which was used when draining the lavar basin.<sup>31</sup> In the forecourt of the Gerasa synagogue, stones with channels have been found, and these were probably the drain of the lavar. In the Capernaum court's center there was a fountain.<sup>32</sup>

Small annexed rooms are also to be found in synagogues. At the northwest corner in Capernaum was annexed a small square chamber. Staircases on each side led up to the roof of the annex and into the gallery.<sup>33</sup> This staircase was always on the outside of the annex building proper.<sup>34</sup> There were several uses of the annex. It was probably used as a store room, for inside vessels have been found, probably containers for oil. The women used the stairs to ascend into the gallery.<sup>35</sup> It may be taken with some certainty that they had been classrooms for children and probably guest chambers for strangers.<sup>36</sup> This is said with the realization that according to rabbinical law, only rabbis were allowed to eat or drink and perhaps sleep in the synagogue.<sup>37</sup> At

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<sup>31</sup> May, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 13 f.

<sup>33</sup> Bukenik, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 48 f.

<sup>37</sup> Idersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 437.

Dura-Europos, the annex may also have been a place of worship for women.<sup>38</sup>

### Inside Characteristics of Synagogues

#### The Building Arrangement of the Synagogue

A general picture might be obtained from the Dura-Europos synagogue of the 3rd century. There the main room is furnished with two tiers of benches along the walls. Benches along the left wall were without footrests. The niche for the Ark was on the west wall with the elder's seat beside it. A canopy over the niche supported a curtain or veil hung before the Ark. The ceiling was tiled.<sup>39</sup>

The seating arrangement of the main floor at Capernaum was composed of benches on the three sides, north, east and west, and mats in the middle nave facing the entrance. At Dura-Europos benches ran around all four sides.<sup>40</sup> It is found that when necessity arose, extra benches were installed later. This was done at Beth-Alpha.<sup>41</sup> Benches in the synagogue were tapered for comfort to the legs.<sup>42</sup> The seats for

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<sup>38</sup>May, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 55 f.

<sup>41</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

the elders were beside the Ark and the lampstands.<sup>43</sup> These seats were nearest the side of orientation. At Beth-Alpha and Dura-Europos, elders were seated immediately to the left and right of the niche. The seat of Moses, for the most distinguished elder, was the seat nearest the Ark. Inscriptions on this special seat have been found at Tiberias and Chorazin.<sup>44</sup> In most synagogues such seats were facing opposite the direction of orientation, but this is not an unbreakable rule as seen at the Delos Synagogue.<sup>45</sup>

The Ark was at first a portable chest containing the scrolls of Law. It was probably kept in a closet to be brought out only for the service. The absence of such arks leads one to believe that they were made of wood at first and have disintegrated with time. The Ark was shaped like a gabled house with swinging doors. This is said on the basis of pictures of the Ark which have been found on glass fragments from catacombs. The scrolls were placed on shelves within this ark.<sup>46</sup> The Ark later became part of the architecture of the building itself.<sup>47</sup> At Dura-Europos the niche for the ark was opposite the main entrance whereas it usually

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<sup>43</sup>May, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>45</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 52 f.

<sup>47</sup>May, op. cit., p. 15.

was on the side of the main entrance.<sup>48</sup>

The candlesticks were and are today called Menorah. These lampstands were placed at either side of the Ark. The candlesticks were really seven-branched lampstands in most cases. There were hollow places on the top in which the pottery lamps or metal lamps were to be placed. At Dura there were spouted lamps above the niche, while cylindrical lamps were at the sides. The latter may have been candles. Beth Alpha's were also lamps rather than candles. Hammath-by-Tiberias has stone lampstands with hollowed grooves for pottery vessels containing oil.<sup>49</sup> Those at Hammath were approximately 23 inches wide, 16 inches high and 6 inches thick. The top was a solid bar so that there was no space between the branches of the lampstand at the top.<sup>50</sup> The synagogue's annex is thought to have been to store room for the jars of oil.<sup>51</sup> On the basis of Exodus 27:20, Rabbinic law claims that a light was to be kept burning perpetually in the Jewish synagogue.<sup>52</sup>

The veil used in the synagogue was not hung over the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>50</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>52</sup>F. E. Warren, The Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church (Revised second edition; New York: E. S. Gorham, 1912), p. 193.

doors of the ark in the original synagogues as is done today. The entire apse was veiled. The curtain was suspended before the apse from two posts. Screens, some made of marble, have also come to light in several places. These were used for the same purpose as the veil.<sup>53</sup>

The pulpit or bema of the synagogue occurs as early as Nehemiah's day.<sup>54</sup> Nehemiah stood upon a tower which was made of wood in order to read the law.<sup>55</sup> The bemas were probably made of wood, for none of the earliest have been found today. The earliest bema intact is from the sixth century and is found on the east side of the Beth Alpha synagogue.<sup>56</sup> In Capernaum the excavations have disclosed that the bema was probably on the east side, next to the pillar. The bema of stone at Beth Shearim was near the northwest wall of the nave, and peculiarly occupied a space which was enclosed by walls.<sup>57</sup> That the modern bema is centrally placed is based on the fact that the bema was usually in the center of the synagogue.<sup>58</sup> The lectern was at first very light,

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<sup>53</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>54</sup>Hausrath, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>55</sup>Neh. 8:4.

<sup>56</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>57</sup>May, op. cit., pp. 5 f.

<sup>58</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 193.

and, when not in use, was hung upon the wall or stored away.<sup>59</sup>

### The Art inside the Synagogues

The art in the synagogue was most profuse. At Dura-Europos was depicted the temple, the seven branched candlestick, story of Abraham offering Issac on an altar; two other representations of ark on same wall to the left and right of the niche, one to the Aaronic priesthood and the other a scene within the temple; murals around walls represented scenes from careers of Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Solomon, David, and incidents connected with the Exodus. Lower on the walls decorations of masks, leopards, lions and tigers in circles were to be found. Scenes are titled in Greek and Aramaic.<sup>60</sup> Also unearthed are egg and dart patterns, garlands, rosettes, acanthus leaves, vine branches, grapes, ivy, date palms, shell designs, pentagrams, hexagrams, amphorae, lions, eagles, animals suckling young, birds, cupids, centaurs, seahorses, zodiac signs and pomgranates.<sup>61</sup>

That being the general picture, there now arise difficulties in the dating of synagogue art. There is doubt

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<sup>59</sup>Sukonik, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>60</sup>May, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

concerning the ages of the synagogues themselves.<sup>62</sup> Synagogues have been dated by two major classifications. The first, such as that at Capernaum; the second, at Chorazin.<sup>63</sup> Dating is done on assumption that the second period had only mosaics and no mural work.<sup>64</sup> The statement has been made that no murals have been found in synagogues, but such is not the case.<sup>65</sup> It seems possible to look at the art with only an over-all glance and not posit any definite date.

A seat of honor has been discovered, which has a rounded back and a relief of a head with disheveled hair on the front of the back rest.<sup>66</sup> This round back seems to have been the custom, for in the fourth century a scholar could say "the top was round behind like the seat of Moses".<sup>67</sup> In one Jerusalem synagogue the unction of David by Samuel is depicted on the wall above this seat for the "ruler of the synagogue" was named Samuel in this place.<sup>68</sup>

On a cornice on the north wall at Capernaum is a small

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<sup>62</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ: Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 256.

<sup>63</sup>May, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>64</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>68</sup>Jacob Leveen, The Hebrew Bible in Art (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 52.

temple standing on wheels which has caused much consideration. Some have taken it to be a representation of the Ark, but the Ark was never pictured as being on wheels although it was occasionally taken out of doors. Other authors have thought it to be a Roman carruca used for carrying dignitaries, and that it was placed above the seat of honor to show honor to the person occupying the chair. E. L. Sukenik thinks that it is a case of "the sculptor has simply chosen the finest and most honored type of chariot as his model". Within the permanent arks there were also carved stones.<sup>69</sup>

Lions were frequently associated with the Ark. Representations of lions have been found at Dura-Europos and Hammath-by-Gadara on either side of the niche. Gilt glass pieces found in the catacombs have pictured lions and other images near the ark. At Capernaum, Chorazin and Kefr-Bir'im lions in image form flanked each side of the ark.<sup>70</sup>

The representation of people on murals about 245 A.D. in the Dura-Europos synagogue shows the people in the Isaac Sacrifice having a black spot for the face. In the later synagogues Moses' face is distinct and, in this instance, beardless.<sup>71</sup> Other animal representations are found in the form of two eagles with backs to each other on the north wall cornice at Capernaum. These are holding a garland between

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<sup>69</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>70</sup>May, op. cit., pp. 15 f.

<sup>71</sup>Loveen, op. cit., pp. 22 f.



their teeth. There is also found there a goat's head with an inverted body. This last group is also seen on the candlestick from the temple which Titus brought back to Rome.<sup>72</sup> At Beth-Alpha the Isaac story pictures God as a projecting hand reaching out of a radiant cloud.<sup>73</sup>

Floral designs have been found in the annex at Dura-Europos. This is in distinction to the many geometric designs in the main room.<sup>74</sup> Palm branches and willows have been found in most synagogues.<sup>75</sup> At Carthage a synagogue of the fifth century has a scene with two peacocks and two trees around a fountain. In a sixth-century synagogue at the same place, two stages join the same scene. At Beth-Alpha two rods in the shape of trees are seen; one is at each side of the Ark. The rod on the left is barren and the other has foliage.<sup>76</sup>

Geometric designs on a frieze are found at Chorazin.<sup>77</sup> Capernaum is the only synagogue that had pentagrams and hexagrams, however.<sup>78</sup> On some of the marble from the walls and

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<sup>72</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>74</sup>May, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>75</sup>George F. Moore, Judaism; In the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), I, 14.

<sup>76</sup>Leveen, op. cit., pp. 63 and 65.

<sup>77</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

floor at Beth Shearim there have been discovered, in relief, signs of the zodiac. This is also true of some of the tiles of the ceiling at Dura-Europos.<sup>79</sup> At Dura-Europos the periscope system is thought to have been followed in the art arrangement on the walls.<sup>80</sup> The walls are very colorful, and it was probably stucco work which was done.<sup>81</sup>

Various inscriptions are also to be found on the walls. The most common is that a person "be remembered for good". Jericho has one such inscription for those who made the mosaic work; their names should be "written in the book of life". Hammath-by-Gadara has one for a family which gave five denarii to synagogue. At Beth Alpha there is an inscription for craftsmen who built the building. This bears close semblance to the request found in Neh. 13:14.<sup>82</sup>

### The Influences of the Temple

The arrangements of the synagogue internally and externally as unearthed in Palestinian archaeological finds indicate that after the temple destruction, the synagogue used much of the pattern which had been found in the temple. There is no reason to believe that these things were not

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<sup>79</sup>May, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>80</sup>Leveen, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>81</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>82</sup>May, op. cit., pp. 18 f.

part of the synagogue before the destruction of the temple, for the description we have of the Alexandrian synagogues from Philo could lead to such an interpretation.<sup>83</sup> The synagogues looked towards the temple. In general the facade of the early type of synagogue was on the side towards Jerusalem. The apse reached out to the Holy City.<sup>84</sup> The chamber of Daniel had its opening towards Jerusalem in the exile.<sup>85</sup> Later a synagogue was found in the very precincts of the temple itself.<sup>86</sup>

The corner synagogues found a basis in the Old Testament passage of Proverbs: "At the corner of busy streets does wisdom call, at the entrance of the gates of the city she uttereth her words".<sup>87</sup> It is also possible that Ezra's preaching was basis.<sup>88</sup> The building on high places has been connected with the Isaiah passage, "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills".<sup>89</sup> There is a tradition in Josephus that in 142 B.C. Simon, the Maccabee, leveled the

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<sup>83</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 290.

<sup>84</sup>May, op. cit., pp. 12 f.

<sup>85</sup>Dan. 6:10

<sup>86</sup>Herford, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>87</sup>Prov. 1:21.

<sup>88</sup>Neh. 8:1.

<sup>89</sup>Isaiah 2:2.

mountain on which the Jerusalem citadel stood, so that the temple might be higher than it.<sup>90</sup> So the synagogue had this in common with the temple.

Archaeologist Filson writes, "The synagogue was always basically different in plan from the temple. . . . The synagogue differed radically in that the assembly was held inside the building".<sup>91</sup> Notice should be given to the section concerning open houses of prayer treated above.<sup>92</sup> The temple and synagogue both had their open courts. Also layer basins for ritual ablutions, such as hand washing before prayers, have been found in the courts of both. 1 Kings 7:38 ff. and the Middoth III, 6 both bear this out.<sup>93</sup> The entrance of the synagogue on the east side was from the temple influence.<sup>94</sup> The porch which was found at various places was also a feature of the temple.<sup>95</sup>

The inside of the synagogue had temple traits also. Sukonik has the suggestion that the two posts from which the veil was suspended were symbols of the Jachin and Boza

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<sup>90</sup>May, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>91</sup>Floyd Filson, "Temple, Synagogue, and Church," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (December, 1944), 84.

<sup>92</sup>Supra, p. 17.

<sup>93</sup>May, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>94</sup>H. H. Milman, The History of the Jews, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1909), II, 161.

<sup>95</sup>May, op. cit., p. 14.

pillars of Solomon's temple.<sup>96</sup> The Ark, although not a fixture in the post-exilic temple, supplies one of the closest links with the pre-exilic temple. The tablets of the law were replaced by the scrolls of the law. It also took the form of a similar small building. The fact is to born in mind also that the ark was at first portable.<sup>97</sup>

It is also to be remembered that at Dura the assembly looked towards three prominent representations of the temple since, in this case, they had no windows looking towards the Holy City.<sup>98</sup> The controversial but possible ark on wheels in the Capernaum synagogue has also been mentioned in connection with the Old Testament chariot which is mentioned in Ezekiel, chapters one and ten.<sup>99</sup> The use of lions is also referred back to the Temple and Old Testament in 1 Kings 6 and 7 and 2 Chron. 3 and 4 where bulls, lions and cherubim are to have been in Solomon's Temple.<sup>100</sup>

The vegetation of palm branch and willow depiction are carried over from the tabernacles.<sup>101</sup> The barren rod and

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<sup>96</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>97</sup>May, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>99</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>101</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 14.

the flowering rod are to represent the rod of Aaron.<sup>102</sup> The vine-tree art work has been related to Psalm 80:8, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt"; another possibility presented is Philo's reference to the golden vine in the temple of Herod. Another temple and Old Testament connection with the tree is to the Prov. 3:18 passage which makes of the tree of life the law.<sup>103</sup>

The shape of the seat of Moses, that it was round, has been based on the 1 Kings 10:18 passage which states that Solomon's throne was round on the top.<sup>104</sup> The candlesticks are temple influences, as was also the veil. The candlesticks are seen on the booty scene in Titus destruction of the temple.<sup>105</sup> 1 Kings 7:49 mentions ten candlesticks, with five on the left and five on the right of the Holy of Holies. Zech. 4:2 has a lampstand with seven-lipped lamps and seven bowls. 1 Macc. 4:49 tells about the lighting of such lights on the rededication in 165 B.C.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Loveen, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>104</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>106</sup>May, op. cit., p. 16.

## CHAPTER IV

### SYNAGOGUE SERVICE

#### Leaders of the Synagogue

The synagogue service was conducted by various men with various duties. The government was composed of the archisynagogos who was to supervise the worship, control the positions of leaders of praise and the steward, and be responsible for order; the archontes, or elders, constituted the authority in religious and civil matters, had the power to excommunicate, and sentenced to flogging; the prefect or ruler was the civil official representing the government; the deacon served the poor; the chazzan led in prayer and reading of law, was in charge of property, particularly the scrolls of law; the steward was a paid official supervising interior management.<sup>1</sup>

The elders were elected by the congregation and were given general supervision of community life. That included both the secular and religious affairs of the community.<sup>2</sup> They appointed the officers of the synagogue and were in

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<sup>1</sup>F. A. Aston, "Background of Early Christianity", The Evangelical Quarterly, VIII (July, 1936), 256.

<sup>2</sup>H. E. Dana, The New Testament World (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1937), p. 109.

charge of excommunications.<sup>3</sup> Their official name was the Sanhedrin, or elders, and they were the trustees of the synagogue. Their business sessions were conducted in the synagogue, and the officials they appointed were the ruler of the synagogue and the chazzan or sexton. The scourgings, which they commanded, were carried out in the synagogue. The elders, also called archons, were to have done a great deal of study before they became archons. It is thought by the local or Great Sanhedrin that met in Jerusalem, and with the permission of the Roman and Herodian governments.<sup>4</sup>

In the Jerusalem excavations, an inscription was found calling a certain Theodotos "priest" and archisynagogos. Naaran has a memorial inscription mentioning Phineas the "priest" who gave a mosaic and a basin to the synagogue.<sup>5</sup> The part the priest played must be looked at, and the relation, if any, to the archisynagogos. In a study by Filson the statement is made:

The priest is not essential in the synagogue. When present, he is shown deference and given prominent parts in the service, but he is not needed. The synagogue is essentially a lay institution. In fact, it is the greatest and

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<sup>3</sup>Emil Schuerer, The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, translated by Sophia Taylor (Edinburg: T and T Clark, 1890), II, 59-62.

<sup>4</sup>B. S. Easton, "Jewish and Early Christian Ordination," Anglican Theological Review, V (March, 1923), 313 f.

<sup>5</sup>H. G. May, "Synagogues in Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (February, 1944), 17 f.



most durable system of lay leadership and education in religious history. . . . This radical departure from the priest-controlled religious life of antiquity was unique and permanently significant.<sup>6</sup>

It was a gathering place of laymen.<sup>7</sup> The archisynagogos, a layman, was to have the care of external order in the synagogue and supervise in general. He was not a preacher or reader. He was to appoint people for prayer, Scripture, and preaching. He was to see that nothing unfit took place in the synagogue and he had charge of the building. Generally there was only one to a synagogue, but upon occasion there were two or more.<sup>8</sup>

The next officer in the synagogue was the chazzan or minister. He is sometimes referred to as deacon, although so is the almoner given this title. His duty was to call out the readers, first the priest and then the Levite if present.<sup>9</sup> He brought out the Scriptures, scourged those who were condemned and took charge of the instruction of the children.<sup>10</sup> Edersheim states that he was chosen by the congregation. His family was to be irreproachable. Humility was to be an

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<sup>6</sup>Floyd Filson, "Temple, Synagogue, and Church," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (December, 1944), 84 f.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., pp. 63-65.

<sup>9</sup>Humphrey Frideaux, The Old and New Testament Connected In the History of the Jews (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), II, 307.

<sup>10</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., pp. 66-f.

asset of his as well as a knowledge of scriptures.<sup>11</sup> Easton, the Anglican, says he was appointed by the elders.<sup>12</sup> The minister was a salaried officer. It was the minister's duty to give the signal of the sabbath with the trumpet from the roof of the synagogue. Both its close and beginning were thus noted. He brought out from the Ark, the Torah and displayed it before the people.<sup>13</sup> In the Mishna instructions are given that the scourging be done with all his strength while the judges read aloud passages from the Scriptures.<sup>14</sup>

The next office considered is that of the "angel of the congregation". He was the minister of the congregation who officiated at the service primarily through prayers. Sheli-ach Zibbor is the Hebrew word for him.<sup>15</sup> He was the person who read the prophets and conducted the greater part of the Shema, the whole of the Eulogies, and the greater part of the entire devotions.<sup>16</sup> Henry Milman claims that in the second century a legate was sent around by the Jewish Patriarch of

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<sup>11</sup>Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1947), I, 438.

<sup>12</sup>Easton, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>13</sup>G. F. Moore, Judaism; In the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), I, 289.

<sup>14</sup>Adolf Deissmann, St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, translated by L. R. M. Strachan (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), p. 63.

<sup>15</sup>Frideaux, op. cit., p. 306.

<sup>16</sup>Edersheim, op. cit., p. 439.

Tiberias to the synagogues supposedly under his care. "These legates were called apostles. The office probably existed before the fall of Jerusalem. The apostles collected contributions for the Temple. They had authority to regulate any differences which existed". He was also sent about to anathematize Christians in various synagogues. The name used for him was "messenger of the congregation".<sup>17</sup> Edersheim takes the view that the "angel" of the people had the job of representing the people in the synagogues and to make the connection with this second century office is not valid.<sup>18</sup> Considering Milman's opinions about the "angel" or "Bishop" being the chief religious functionary of the synagogue and the person who read the prayers and pointed out the passages to be read and saw that they were read properly, Edersheim possibly has a clearer understanding of the synagogue situation.<sup>19</sup>

A person of minor importance in the synagogue was the collector of alms. It is likely that such an office did not even exist before 70 A.D.<sup>20</sup> Two men were to collect the alms

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<sup>17</sup>H. H. Milman, The History of the Jews (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, c.1909), II, 160 f.

<sup>18</sup>Alfred Edersheim, In the Days of Christ: Sketches of Jewish Social Life (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company,

<sup>19</sup>Milman, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>20</sup>Paul Levertoff, "Synagogue Worship in the First Century," Liturgy and Worship edited by W. K. Lowther Clarke: (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 65.

and three men were appointed to take charge of the distribution of the alms.<sup>21</sup>

Inscriptions in Rome in the Jewish catacombs make mention of the office many of the deceased held in the synagogue while alive. Among these inscriptions are such as "ruler priest" and "ruler child". It is not likely that these were directly connected with the synagogue. One of interest is the protestas of the synagogue or patron. It is possible that this person was the official representative of the synagogue before the governing authorities.<sup>22</sup>

#### Ordination in the Synagogue

Ordination in the synagogue was conferred upon scribes. The scribes and rabbis, if not one in the same at least closely connected with one another, were masters of the law. They collected disciples around themselves and taught in their own homes or the synagogue. When the younger student was thought competent, he was called a "companion" of the instructor. As such, he sat at his right hand. When desiring to found a school of his own, he was sent to the synagogue and became a candidate for ordination. There he took or was given a seat as one of the teachers. A key was presented to

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<sup>21</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>22</sup>W. C. E. Cesterley, A History of Israel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, c.1932), II, 419.

his as a symbol of his ability in exposition of the Scriptures. With solemn imposition of hands the dignity of rabbi was conferred upon him. His duties were then recited to him.<sup>23</sup> There is some question as to the exact time of origin of such an ordination service, for at first scribes were too scarce to form a regular college of their own. By 70 A.D. we hear of scribes being ordained with the imposition of hands. However, already at that time they had generally replaced the elders.<sup>24</sup> The ordination of rabbis was done as successors to the 70 elders of Moses, in Num. 11:16. The rite was called "the laying on of hands".<sup>25</sup> Neither the leader of the devotions, translator, or preacher were to be ordained. Only rabbis and rulers in doctrine and discipline had such an honor.<sup>26</sup> The rabbi still remained a layman, however.<sup>27</sup> Ordination of an elder seems to have been a slightly different process for the Mishna says as follows:

Before them sat three rows of disciples, each knowing his own place. If necessity arose to ordain, they ordained from the first row. One of the second row came then into the first and one out of the

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<sup>23</sup>A. Hausrath, New Testament Times, the Time of Jesus, translated by G. T. Foynting and P. Quenzer (London: Williams and Morgate, 1878), I, 89 f.

<sup>24</sup>Easton, op. cit., p. 316.

<sup>25</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 64 n.

<sup>26</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 445.

<sup>27</sup>R. T. Herford, The Pharisees (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), pp. 96 f.

third came into the second, and they chose one more out of the congregation and set him in the third row. This word for ordain is the same one used of Joshua's ordination in Num. 27:18,23.<sup>28</sup>

Those who were ordained unto the Sanhedrin in the synagogue were thought to bring the divine majesty into the midst of the Sanhedrin.<sup>29</sup>

The question arises, was the synagogue originally connected with the school? The chazzan is often called the teacher, and upon occasion the ruler of the synagogue was also called teacher.<sup>30</sup> H. E. Dana says that under Ezra's reform the synagogue was to provide a systematic study of the law while the temple provided the worship. The teaching was done by rabbis and scribes.<sup>31</sup> In the 420 supposed synagogues at Jerusalem there was to be a place of study for the Scriptures and a place for the study of oral tradition in each where the children were to be instructed and become full observers of the law.<sup>32</sup> To these statements Dana adds another writing that the Jewish elder did not have to teach the children until later in the Christian era.<sup>33</sup> George Moore

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<sup>28</sup>Easton, op. cit., p. 314.

<sup>29</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ: Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 282.

<sup>30</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 438.

<sup>31</sup>Dana, op. cit., p. 108

<sup>32</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., pp. 50-52.

<sup>33</sup>H. E. Dana, Jewish Christianity (New Orleans: Bible Institute Memorial Press, 1937), p. 101.

has remarked that Philo not only refers to the synagogue as a "place of instruction", but also as "places of prayer", and that their work did not exclude worship. It is brought out by this author that the school is as old as or older than, the synagogue, and to some extent the synagogue was always dependent upon it.<sup>34</sup> However, the discussion may be summed up by saying that the synagogue and school were independent in origin and never organically connected; yet they worked in a harmony which resulted in a substantial unity of instruction.<sup>35</sup>

#### The Synagogue Liturgy

In order to have synagogue worship, ten men were necessary. Where ten men were praying together, the Shekinah or presence was in the midst of them.<sup>36</sup> It was the custom in some of the more numerous and well-to-do communities to appoint ten men of leisure to see that they were on hand to form such a congregation.<sup>37</sup> The number ten seems to have been chosen because in Numbers 14:27, "the evil congregation" was the ten false spies who went with Joshua and Caleb. Also

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<sup>34</sup>Moore, op. cit., pp. 307 f.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., II, 222 n.

<sup>37</sup>Milman, op. cit., p. 161.

ten was picked on the basis of the ten righteous at Sodom.<sup>38</sup> If there were only nine present, it was possible that upon occasion an under-aged male could be used as the tenth person.<sup>39</sup> A homilist of the third century writes:

And whence that where ten are praying together the presence is with them? Because it is said, 'God standeth in the congregation of God'. And whence that when three are sitting as judges the Presence is with them? Because it is written, 'In the midst of the judges will he judge'. (Psalm 82:1b). And whence that when two are sitting and studying the Law the Presence is with them? Because it is written 'Then those who feared the Lord spoke to each other, and the Lord hearkened and heard', etc. (Malachi 3:16). And whence that even when one is sitting and studying the Law the Presence is with him? Because it is written, 'In every place where I cause mention to be made of my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee'. (Exodus 20:21).<sup>40</sup>

The worship itself began the evening previous to the day of meeting. It was the duty of the minister of the synagogue to go to the roof of the synagogue and blow three blasts on the trumpet. This was the signal for the opening of the sabbath.<sup>41</sup> It is claimed by some that trombones and trumpets were used only on New Year's and other feast days.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 253.

<sup>39</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 434.

<sup>40</sup>Moore, op. cit., I, 436 f.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>42</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 75.



After the blowing of the trumpets, the Sabbath lamp was lit in the synagogue and in each home.<sup>43</sup>

The Shema was preceded by recitation of Deut. 11:13-21. The rabbinic explanation which has given for this is that "we might 'take upon ourselves the yoke of the commandments !'"<sup>44</sup> Preceding the saying of the Shema and the Prayer, was the washing of hands.<sup>45</sup> The Shema then followed which is composed of Deut. 6:4-9, perhaps sections of 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41. This is actually a creed rather than a prayer. This confession has certain opening and closing benedictions. It is thought that the Shema was in use already at Christ's time. This is based on deduction from New Testament writings.<sup>46</sup> The person who read the Shema was the same person selected for the reading of the prophets and most of the devotions and all of the benediction eulogies.<sup>47</sup>

Then this "angel" of the congregation ascended the tribune and repeated or perhaps chanted the prayers. His

<sup>43</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 77.

<sup>44</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 270.

<sup>45</sup>Gustav Dalman, Jesus--Jeshua, translated by Paul Levertoff (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 43.

<sup>46</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>47</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 439.

head was covered with a veil.<sup>48</sup> The prayers were composed of eighteen Benedictions which were really nineteen in number. The person praying would stand before the ark and, while the congregation stood, recite the prayers.<sup>49</sup> F. E. Warren makes the observation found nowhere else in the books read, that while the prayers were being said there was slight swaying motion in the congregation.<sup>50</sup> The first three and the last three benedictions or prayers were to be said on every Sabbath day and the person praying did so with bent body.<sup>51</sup> On feast days the prayers were extended with insertions between the appointed six prayers.<sup>52</sup> Some of these prayers are doubtlessly from the time of Jesus.<sup>53</sup> The content of the prayers is to be considered. A substitute portion for the mid-section of the eighteen benedictions is a Triumphal hymn called the Kedusha.<sup>54</sup> It is also to be noted that two prayers of Daniel are also taken up in the synagogue's prayer section: the song of three children and

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<sup>48</sup>Milman, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>49</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>50</sup>F. E. Warren, The Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church (Revised second edition; New York: E. S. Gorham, 1913), p. 219.

<sup>51</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 272.

<sup>52</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 440.

<sup>53</sup>Hauerath, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

the Litany of Penitence. The second of eighteen benedictions in the synagogue liturgy is interesting because it contains the words, "Thou revivest the dead"; also that God is addressed as He who "keepest . . . faith to them that sleep in dust". This is in opposition to the Sadducean theology.<sup>55</sup> Sections of these benedictions also contained the anathematizing of Christians in later worship.<sup>56</sup> It was later recorded in rabbinic law that prayer, to be effectual, must be offered in the synagogue.<sup>57</sup> The response of the Amen by the congregation was given to each benediction. Amen was the response found in Deut. 27:15 ff: Neh. 8:6 and 1 Chron. 16:3.<sup>58</sup> This Amen has caused considerable controversy as to its meaning and usage. It has been stated that it was used to confirm an oath, or to end a prayer or benediction which was one of praise. It was supposedly not used unless the prayer was one of praise, and to end one's own prayer or private prayer with the Amen would have been considered "a sign of ignorance" at that time.<sup>59</sup>

Immediately preceding the last eulogy, the blessing was

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<sup>55</sup>K. Kohler, Jewish Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), p. 285.

<sup>56</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., pp. 59-62.

<sup>57</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 437.

<sup>58</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>59</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 30.

to be pronounced. According to Edersheim, if no priest was present, the reader of the devotions would repeat the benediction with uplifted arms and say it in three divided sections.<sup>60</sup> Schuerer claims that the blessing was pronounced by the priest unless none was present. If that would be the case, the service would simply close with a prayer. He also places the benediction in a different place in the service than does Edersheim. Edersheim has a greater number of authorities in agreement with his conviction. The officiant's hands were lifted as high as the shoulder in the country synagogues and as high as the head in the city during the blessing. After the destruction of the temple, the benediction was to be pronounced with the shoes off.<sup>61</sup>

Now the chazzan, overseer, deacon, or minister called out the readers who were to step forward. If a priest were present he was given first opportunity; than a Levite.<sup>62</sup> This order was followed simply for sake of peace, says a rabbi.<sup>63</sup> Even a minor was allowed to read Torah except on the feast of Purim. The reader stood, although he was allowed to sit for all except the Purim reading.<sup>64</sup> The roll of the

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<sup>60</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 442.

<sup>61</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>62</sup>Frideaux, op. cit., II, 307.

<sup>63</sup>May, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>64</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 79.

Torah was brought forward by the minister from the press and delivered to the reader before all the people. It was the custom to hold it up before all once again before returning it to the Ark.<sup>65</sup> The roll of the ark was to be unrolled behind the curtain and not in sight of the congregation.<sup>66</sup> The procession of the roll of the law was significant.<sup>67</sup> Before the reading of the Torah people would respond to the reader, "Blessed are thou, O Lord, who gavest us the Torah of truth and plantest eternal life in our midst".<sup>68</sup> The blessing of the Lord with a response is found already in Ezra's time in Neh. 8:6. The people stood during the reading of the Law.<sup>69</sup> It was to be read by one most learned.<sup>70</sup> The reading was done from the bema. At first there was no pericopic system for the reading, but it was the choice of the ruler of the synagogue. Later on, the regulation was passed that the reading should not skip from place to place in the Pentateuch.<sup>71</sup> It became customary to read through the Pentateuch in three years with 154 sections making up the

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<sup>65</sup>Moore, op. cit., I, 289.

<sup>66</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>67</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>68</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>69</sup>Oesterley, op. cit., pp. 137 f.

<sup>70</sup>Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941), I, 395.

<sup>71</sup>Moore, op. cit., I, 298 f.

pericopal system. At a later time it was to be read through once a year. Seven readers were used, and the first and last were to say words of thanksgiving. The lessons were not to be read or said from memory as were the prayers and benedictions.<sup>72</sup> The translator translated each verse of the Torah one verse at a time.<sup>73</sup> In the matter of the language used, there are two schools of thought. It is claimed that in Palestine the lessons were read in the Hebrew, and there is no hint of an Aramaic Targum being used. In Hellenistic synagogues the lesson was also to be read in Hebrew or recited by one person.<sup>74</sup> Jocz states that Septuagint was prohibited reading.<sup>75</sup> Dalman says the Septuagint was used in the readings of the synagogue.<sup>76</sup> It is interesting to note that at one period the Ten Commandments and certain other sections of the Pentateuch were eliminated from the readings by legislation of rabbis.<sup>77</sup>

Following the reading of the Law came a reading from the prophets. The historian-theologian Frideaux makes the claim that when Antiochus Epiphanes began to persecute the

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<sup>72</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>74</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>75</sup>Jakob Jocz, The Jewish People and Jesus Christ (London: Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1949), p. 47.

<sup>76</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>77</sup>Jocz, op. cit., p. 48.

Jews and banned their reading of the Law, he also destroyed or polluted their books of the Law. In order that these teachings be continued, the reading of the prophets began. They were selected from the themes of the Law which were to be read on that day. Then it was that the reading of the prophets began and they continued to be read after the Law was once more instituted.<sup>78</sup> Edersheim says this idea is false. They probably would have destroyed the prophetic writings as well as the Torah. There were also no lectionaries at the time of Jesus so they were probably not organized already in the time of Antiochus.<sup>79</sup> The reader of the prophets was allowed to pick out those passages which he wanted to read and skip those which he didn't care to read.<sup>80</sup> The prophets were translated after every three verses read. They were read only at the Sabbath services and not at the two other services during the week.<sup>81</sup>

To the readings was added a discourse about a subject. Philo considered the discourse the main portion of the synagogue service.<sup>82</sup> The teacher of the discourse sat in a high place. The teaching seems to have been open to any competent

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<sup>78</sup>Frideaux, op. cit., I, 125.

<sup>79</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 278.

<sup>80</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>81</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

member of the congregation.<sup>83</sup> The sermon could be independent of the Scripture text which was read.<sup>84</sup> It is possible that in the first age of the institution the translation and the homily were not differentiated, and the interpreter was also the expository preacher. Later on, however, this became a separate function. The preacher would close his homily with a brief prayer in the language of the discourse itself. After this was done the ascription followed, "May his great name be blessed forever and for ever".<sup>85</sup> When the sermon was delivered by a learned theologian, it was sometimes whispered in the ear of an amora or speaker. He, in turn, expounded this message of deep thought to the people in their language in a popular manner.<sup>86</sup>

The place of the festivals in the synagogue is also to be considered. The celebration of the festivals as national memorial days was perhaps the main purpose of the synagogues in the exile.<sup>87</sup> The stirring notes of the trumpet for the New Year's festival were to strike the hearts of the people with fear. This was that they might repent of their sins

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>84</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>85</sup>Moore, op. cit., I, 304-06.

<sup>86</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 279.

<sup>87</sup>W. O. E. Cesterley, "Worship in the Old Testament," Liturgy and Worship (Edited by W. K. Lowther Clarke; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 50.



and improve their ways during the New Year which was to come. Basic to this is the Jewish idea that the judgment does not take place after death, but at the beginning of the year. When the synagogue became the dominant religious place in Judaism, the Day of Atonement was invested with a higher meaning in accord with the prophets of old. Atonement was to come through the repentance of the sinner, leading him back from the path of error to the way of God. As the high priest in the Temple, so every Israelite was to spend the day in the house of prayer, confessing his sins before God, awaiting the promise to Moses "I have pardoned according to Thy Word" (Numbers 14:20).<sup>88</sup> The New Moon festival survived only in the liturgy of the synagogue. This was done with the Hallel psalms and the addition of prayers.<sup>89</sup>

The question of the Psalms in the synagogue has been the cause of the observation of H. G. May:

Some think that many of the Psalms were written for use in the synagogue, and it has been suggested that the priestly legislation in the Pentateuch was written for reading in the synagogue as a substitute for temple sacrifices, but there is no direct evidence for this.<sup>90</sup>

The place of the Psalms in the synagogue therefore cannot be fully determined. The importance of the Pentateuch has been brought out above, but it is to be questioned

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<sup>88</sup>Kohler, op. cit., pp. 465-67.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 460.

<sup>90</sup>May, op. cit., p. 2.

whether or not the observation of May is in any way valid concerning the origin of the priestly legislation.

Some facts of the time of worship might be considered. The attendance at the synagogue on the Sabbath formed no part of obligatory observance of the Sabbath prescribed in Scripture or in Scribes formulas. It later became the accustomed way of spending the day.<sup>91</sup> Three times a day, people would gather in the synagogue while the priest was offering sacrifices in the temple; when special sacrifices were offered up, they would gather four times. This was, of course, during the existence of the Temple.<sup>92</sup> The Rabbinic law stated that services were also to be held on Thursdays and Mondays. These were the market days. It was also at this time that people came in from the country for court sessions. Since this court was the Sanhedrin which usually met in the synagogue, services were held, and the country folks would be able to attend. These services came to be officially known as "the days of the congregation".<sup>93</sup> The service of the synagogue was long and continued usually until evening according to A. Hausrath. Debates broke out concerning matters on which the preacher spoke. After the service this was frequently discussed outside the doors of

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<sup>91</sup>Moore, op. cit., II, 38.

<sup>92</sup>Graetz, op. cit., p. 401.

<sup>93</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 432.

the synagogue.<sup>94</sup>

During certain days of prayer the ark was brought out to an open space and services were held there. On one of these occasions it is recorded that they were praying for rain. An exhortation began with Lam. 3:41, "Let us lift up our hearts on hands to God in heaven". Although this was not always said, the idea of lifting up of hands is found in other exhortations also.<sup>95</sup>

The seating arrangements of the synagogue has been discussed to some extent above, but a few more words might be added in relation to the liturgic situation of the seating.<sup>96</sup> The more distinguished members of the synagogue sat in the front seats and the younger behind them. It is odd that Philo says the younger sat "below" the elder.<sup>97</sup> Another position has been mentioned for the elders; that is, beside the Ark and Lampstands.<sup>98</sup> This need not be contradictory, as the elders could sit on the sides nearest the ark and lampstands. So also Dalman, although he says "opposite the congregation," could mean in the front of the synagogue and not towards the rear with the rest of the congregation.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Haukrath, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>95</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>96</sup>Suora, p. 23.

<sup>97</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>98</sup>May, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>99</sup>May, op. cit., p. 17.

A few observations in general about the synagogue might be included here. There was a collection of some sort, either in goods or coinage.<sup>100</sup> The phylacteries were worn by pious men and women all day as was the blue-fringed garment. These originated during the passover sacrifice and were later used only during times of prayer.<sup>101</sup> There was a degree of missionary work in that "proselytes" and "fearers of God" were brought into the synagogue.<sup>102</sup>

#### The Place of Women in the Synagogue

It was the spirit of orientalism that affected the women in particular. She was excluded from regular service in the synagogue. She did not count as a member of the religious community. She had to sit in the gallery behind a trellis during the service and was prohibited from joining in prayers. The first break from this yoke came in the eleventh century A.D.<sup>103</sup> With this background we look at the details.

The women in the Herodian temple worshipped in the court of women and were prohibited from entering the inner court of Israel. It is thought that this court of women was

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<sup>100</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 77.

<sup>101</sup>Kohler, op. cit., p. 454.

<sup>102</sup>Moore, op. cit., I, 233.

<sup>103</sup>Kohler, op. cit., p. 472.

a later addition to the temple. It is a matter of conjecture whether this separation was influenced by the synagogue or the synagogue system influenced by it. There were balconies in the court of women. However, even before the construction of this special court, the females stayed outside the Court of Israel.<sup>104</sup> Sukenik writes that the court of women was at first without a balcony. During the Water Drawing Celebration which took place upon the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebration was held in the Women's Forecourt, a regulation became necessary. The Babylonian Talmud says that women would at first be within the court and men without and "frivolity" would result. This was then changed around, and men were within and women without. That did not help matters. Finally, it was ordained that men should sit below and women above.<sup>105</sup> Thus a balcony was either installed or put to use.

This being the background of the synagogue we find at Capernaum a gallery for the women. They entered the gallery from a staircase which was attached to the annex in the corner of the building.<sup>106</sup> That women were to be separated completely might be seen in that the staircase was always on

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<sup>104</sup>May, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>105</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>106</sup>May, op. cit., p. 5.

the outside of the building proper.<sup>107</sup> It has been found that at Dura-Europos women sat downstairs, but they were seated in a different section than were the men; their seats had no footrests as did the mens. They also had to use a smaller door to the left than the men who were able to enter by the central door.<sup>108</sup> That this separation was the general situation can be surmised from the story of the destruction of the Diplostoon in Alexandria during a rebellion under Trajan. Trajan, after killing the men, offered mercy to the women at the price of their honor. At this request they replied, "Do to these above as you have done to those below". Although it might be right or wrong that they were sitting in a higher place and doubtful if there was an "up" and "down" there, it shows that this was the thought current in the Palestinian mind.<sup>109</sup>

Philo, in de Vita Contemplativa, describes the Essenes as having a partition in their synagogues dividing men from women for two purposes. First, the female sex has a natural modesty which is thus protected. Second, they can hear what is said in the synagogue and still not mix.<sup>110</sup>

There are differences of opinion concerning this matter.

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<sup>107</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>108</sup>May, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>109</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>110</sup>Prideaux, op. cit., I, 233 f.

Paul Levertoff, the Jewish writer, says that contrary to what we might expect, there was no special gallery for women in the early synagogues, and women were sometimes asked to read the lessons. This latter he gets from rabbinic writings.<sup>111</sup>

W. M. Ramsay states that we are able to gather from a Smyranean inscription older than 70 A.D. that men and women were both included among the archisynagogoi. He uses many cross references and attributed this to the Hellenistic attitude of the diaspora.<sup>112</sup> Finally, Josef Nielen says that women were allowed a greater place in synagogue worship perhaps due to the idea that God was to be worshipped in spirit. Women as yet had no obligation to prayer, however, to observe the liturgical prescriptions. They were allowed to read, and Nielen thinks this might have been a carry-over from the days of the prophetesses.<sup>113</sup>

Moore points out that although women were able to frequent the synagogue, they could not be counted as part of the quorum. Also, although the regulation was there that they were able to read the lessons, "no instance of it is recorded, and it was disapproved on grounds of propriety".<sup>114</sup> The

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<sup>111</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>112</sup>W. M. Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912), p. 480.

<sup>113</sup>Josef Nielen, The Earliest Christian Liturgy, translated by Patrick Cummins (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1941), p. 367.

<sup>114</sup>Moore, op. cit., II, 131.

reason for women being excused from the obligations of men in worship cannot be explained "unless it be that woman was considered not her own mistress but subject to others, or else the husband and wife were regarded as one, so that his merits and prayers applied to her as well".<sup>115</sup>

#### Temple Influences

A detailed comparison of the temple and synagogue would be impossible in a few words, but that some connections or disconnections be established, it must be dealt with when considering the influence of the synagogue. Floyd Filson writes:

The Ark of the Law became almost a substitute for the most Holy Place of the Temple. However, the synagogue was always basically different in plan from the temple. The latter was never entered by a layman. . . . It was a gathering place of laymen. It replaced rather than imitated the temple. . . . The priest is not essential in the synagogue. When present, he is shown deference and given prominent parts in the service. But he is not needed. The synagogue is essentially a lay institution. . . . This radical departure from the priest-controlled religious life of antiquity was unique and permanently significant.<sup>116</sup>

That there was a connection might be gathered since the synagogue served in place of the temple service and was held at the time of sacrifice in the temple. On feast days in the temple, the number of prayers was increased in the

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<sup>115</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 147.

<sup>116</sup>Filson, on. cit., pp. 84 f.



synagogue.<sup>117</sup> Heinrich Graetz, the Jewish historian, writes that the two forms of divine service were blended into one; they completed and helped one another.<sup>118</sup>

The memory of the temple was retained in the synagogue's service as is seen by the position of the hands during the benediction.<sup>119</sup> There was also an annual temple tribute that went to Jerusalem from the synagogues.<sup>120</sup> The gathering of "proselytes" and "God-fearers" was also done at the temple.<sup>121</sup> The terms of the sacrificial cultus were taken over into the prayers of the synagogue.<sup>122</sup> The blowing of the trumpet on festivals was of early origin, but when the temple was destroyed, the introduction of such things in the synagogue became more widespread.<sup>123</sup> The Temple's New Moon festival is retained in the liturgy of the synagogue.<sup>124</sup> The Day of Atonement was to be spent in the synagogue as it had

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<sup>117</sup>Hausrath, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>118</sup>Graetz, op. cit., p. 401.

<sup>119</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>120</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 77.

<sup>121</sup>Moore, op. cit., I, 233.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid. p. 103.

<sup>124</sup>Kohler, op. cit., p. 460.

been in the temple.<sup>125</sup> The washing before prayer and Shema were also of temple background.<sup>126</sup> This was also the case with the use of phylacteries.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., p. 467.

<sup>126</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>127</sup>Kohler, op. cit., p. 454.

## CHAPTER V

### INFLUENCES FROM AND UPON THE SYNAGOGUE

#### The Influence of the Synagogue upon Jewish Unity

Since the days of Jeremiah the Jewish people had become a nation scattered throughout the Near East and Mediterranean World. Despite this fact they did not and have not lost their identity as a separate people, and they have preserved a remarkable unity. How was this possible, and what has been the greatest contributing factor in this through the years? H. E. Dana writes that "in the days of Jesus and Paul there was not in Judaism an institution more influential than the synagogue".<sup>1</sup> That the synagogue was a tremendous influence upon the people is brought out when considering the role it played in the success of the Pharisees. It was the synagogue which was the chief instrument in the hands of the Pharisees in their judaizing of Galilee. There were so few strict Jewish folks in Galilee in the days of Judas Maccabeus that Simon found it necessary to transport the faithful to Jerusalem for safety because the heathen, who had recently been suppressed in battle, would have been able to rise

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<sup>1</sup>H. E. Dana, The New Testament World (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1937), p. 109.

against and conquer the local faithful.<sup>2</sup> It was the Pharisees' doctrine which made them the natural leaders and most influential within the synagogue. The Sadducees were not keen about spreading the Torah among the people. This was the major concern of the Pharisees. They said the Torah belonged to the people. H. R. Travers says that although there were few Pharisees in Josephus' day compared to the number of Sadducees, by means of the synagogue the Pharisees were able to bring the majority of the people to their side.<sup>3</sup>

In the opinion of Floyd Filson, the synagogue was more influential upon Jewish life in the dispersion, than the temple would have been if it had remained intact. When the synagogue became the central point of worship, the Jewish religion was freed from geographical limitations.<sup>4</sup> The synagogue proceeded to unite all facets of life about itself. During the dispersion the Jewish elders controlled both the religious and political affairs of the community from the synagogue. This was true especially when they were in the majority among the natives of a community. It is possible that the historian Schuerer is correct in the thought that

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<sup>2</sup>G. F. Moore, Judaism: In the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), I, 287.

<sup>3</sup>R. T. Herford, The Pharisees (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 98.

<sup>4</sup>Floyd Filson, "Temple, Synagogue, and Church," The Biblical Archaeologist, V, (December, 1944), 85.

the post-exilic Jew knew no political community apart from the religious community.<sup>5</sup> This situation influenced the work of the synagogue as well as the people upon whom the synagogue "worked". In Jerusalem the temple synagogue, which was held in the House of Hewn Stones within the temple proper, served as the Jewish Supreme Court as well as a place of worship. The Diplostoon in Alexandria was not only the place of synagogue worship but was the center of all Jewish activity and administration.<sup>6</sup> At Beth Shaerim, inscriptions have been found substantiating the fact that the synagogue had there become a court-house.<sup>7</sup> That such a situation existed, and that such an influence upon the synagogue's purpose and value was a problem, can be gathered from the fact that a later rabbinic law proclaimed that the synagogue was to be used for nothing but religious purposes. At this time, however, the synagogue drew together all Jewish life around this one center.<sup>8</sup>

The unifying influence of the synagogue was probably

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<sup>5</sup> Emil Schuerer, The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, translated by Sophia Taylor (Edinburg: T and T Clark, 1890), II, 57.

<sup>6</sup> E. L. Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> H. G. May, "Synagogues in Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (February, 1944), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Levertoff, "Synagogue Worship in the First Century," Liturgy and Worship, edited by W. K. L. Clarke (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 62.

more important in the Gentile lands than in Palestine itself. The law was the central rallying point. The center was not a diety, but it was the law which was most important to the synagogue worship. The synagogue symbolized both the faith and the loyalty of the isolated Jewish community. It was the rallying point to sustain and unite all Jews in the midst of pagan civilizations. This is the opinion of Floyd Filson.<sup>9</sup> The services on Monday and Thursday were specifically arranged to draw in those in the country areas.<sup>10</sup> The founders of the synagogue included in the second of the Eighteen Benedictions, a prayer which read: "Thou keepest thy faith to them that lie in dust". One great influence of this has been called "the national hope of restoration promised to the fathers".<sup>11</sup> The individual who partook of the full life of the synagogue became part of the unity of the nation. Kohler says that all times of joy and sadness such as weddings and funerals were given attention in the synagogue. This not only linked the individual with the communal life of Israel, but his joys and sorrows were viewed in relation to the past sadness and future glory of Jerusalem. The whole life was to be placed with the social group.<sup>12</sup> Nor was

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<sup>9</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>10</sup>Dana, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>11</sup>K. Kohler, Jewish Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), pp. 284 f.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 470.

the individual synagogue a completely local affair. This can be seen from the ruling that no city synagogue could be sold because some stranger might have contributed to it and therefore has something to say about it.<sup>13</sup>

The fall of the temple in 70 A.D, helped to determine the amount of influence the synagogue was to have. The temple was the altar of the Jews, but the synagogue has been called the hearth. It was a family and neighborly gathering around the synagogue and due to Jerusalem's fall became more important and permanent for the Jewish people.<sup>14</sup> When the temple was destroyed and Jupiter Capitolinus' temple built on its site, the synagogue became the one seat of Jewish worship. Then introduction of temple customs and service became even more wide-spread than before.<sup>15</sup> When the temple was destroyed, the hope of its resurrection was kept alive in the synagogue. The law which called for a sacrificial system continued to be the synagogue's central core.<sup>16</sup> This importance of the synagogue grew "beyond all bound of moderation" according to Edersheim. Prayer soon became effectual only when said in the synagogue. By missing one service one

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<sup>13</sup>Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1947), I, 437.

<sup>14</sup>Herford, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>15</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>16</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

was held accountable to God. There was eternal anger where there were fewer than ten in worship. By not entering the synagogue for prayer a person promoted exile upon himself and neighbors. One would live long by attending the synagogue.<sup>17</sup> That the meaning and influence of the synagogue to the Jews was considerable and of early origin, the existence of four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem itself seems to be ample witness.<sup>18</sup>

#### The Influence of the Synagogue from and upon Jewish Theology

The influence of the temple upon the synagogue has been discussed several times in Chapters III and IV. In the subjective opinion of the writer Filson, who looks at the situation as a modern Jew, the temple "was never the most fitting or adequate expression of the distinctive features of Judaism . . . it was compromised by elements which made its worship imperfect and incomplete".<sup>19</sup> Edersheim, on the other hand, finds that the synagogue was the sign of improper worship of God. He correctly points out that the presence of a synagogue on the premises of the temple in Jerusalem attested to the "poor religious outlook" of the people at

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<sup>17</sup>Alfred Edersheim, In the Days of Christ: Sketches of Jewish Social Life (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1876), pp. 249 f.

<sup>18</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 86.



Jesus' time.<sup>20</sup>

The doctrine of the synagogue was that mainly of the Pharisees. In the second benediction the words "thou revivest the dead" are clear testimony of the fact that the Sadducees' doctrine found little voice in the synagogue.<sup>21</sup> The inscriptions unearthed at Naaran, Jericho, and Beth Alpha all indicate that a salvation-through-works theology was a main doctrine, for all those who had helped to build the synagogue were to have their names written in the book of life and remembered for good as a result of their labors.<sup>22</sup> The main object of Sabbath day services was not public worship in its stricter sense but religious instruction in the Law. Josephus says, "our lawgiver commands us . . . to hear the law and learn it accurately".<sup>23</sup> The Theodotus inscription of Jerusalem says that the synagogue was built for reading of the law and instruction in the commandments.<sup>24</sup> The Jerusalem Talmud affirms that each of the proposed synagogues had a school house for the study of the Scriptures and one for the Mishna.<sup>25</sup> Filson says

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<sup>20</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ: Sketches of Jewish Social Life, pp. 266 f.

<sup>21</sup>Supra, p. 65.

<sup>22</sup>May op. cit., pp. 18 f.

<sup>23</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>24</sup>Gustav Dalman, Jesus--Jeshua, translated by Paul Levertoff (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 43.

<sup>25</sup>May, op. cit., p. 12.

concerning the importance of the law:

The synagogue gives Jewish worship a new focus by making the Law rather than the sacrifices the center of thought and devotion. It is true that the sacrifices were performed to fulfill the Law, and that the study of the Law led to loyalty to the sacrificial system. But it is also true that the center of attention is decidedly different in the synagogue, which stresses the study and daily practice of the Law.<sup>26</sup>

This problem of Torah and its influence on the synagogue and type of worship causes the Jewish author, Travers Herford, much concern. He says there is no evidence found to substantiate the sometimes proposed idea that the Torah importance which was promoted by the synagogue sterilized the Jewish religion. The synagogue rather grew with the Torah, and this makes a "sterile" thesis untrue. It is his claim that the synagogue kept Jewish religion alive and the law and all of the Old Testament was studied not only "for legal hair-splitting" but for practical conduct and edification.<sup>27</sup> The emphasis on law in the theology of the synagogue is seen when it is considered that the reading of Law concerning sacrifices was considered equal to the sacrifice.<sup>28</sup> Also to be remembered is the central position of the Torah shrine.<sup>29</sup> The success and influence these synagogues had with the Torah might be gathered from

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<sup>26</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>27</sup>Herford, op. cit., pp. 100 f.

<sup>28</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>29</sup>May, op. cit., p. 12.

Josephus' Contra Apion, when he says that while Romans had to take procurators and proconsuls to provinces as experts of the law, every Jewish household had maid-servants who knew their laws from the reading of Moses in the synagogue.<sup>30</sup> Philo adds, "Our houses of prayer in the several towns are none other than institutions for teaching . . . every virtue which the human and the divine recognizes and enjoins".<sup>31</sup>

A variety of opinions is found concerning the theological attitude against the Jewish synagogues. Some are of the opinion that the general rule of rabbinical Judaism in the synagogue was to ban representational art which projected from the surface of material.<sup>32</sup> Rabbi Jochanan ben Nappaha lived about 250 A.D., and it was at his time that permission was given allowing mural decoration. This was at the time of the Dura synagogue.<sup>33</sup> However, from the spots for heads and faces of people at that time it would seem that there was still some hesitance on the part of the people to allow human representation.<sup>34</sup> This same author states that although the Babylonian Talmud claims there was no plastic art in the

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<sup>30</sup>A. Hausrath, New Testament Times, the Time of Jesus, translated by G. T. Foynting and F. Quenzer (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), I, 89.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>32</sup>Jacob Leveen, The Hebrew Bible in Art, the Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

synagogue, even the cherubim being prohibited, there were painted pictures in the temple. Some of these found their way into the synagogue and show some signs of devacing in an iconoclastic movement.<sup>35</sup> Sukenik thinks that living creatures were first depicted on the mosaics in 325 A.D. although this had perhaps been allowed in private homes before this time. This is on the basis of a fragment from a Palestinian Talmud which no longer is found in the accepted Talmud today.<sup>36</sup> His interpretation on Ex. 20:4 and Deut. 5:8 is:

Clearly the intention of the Lawgiver, whose language is here juridically precise, was to qualify this verse by the following one, and only prohibit the worshipping of images for purposes of worship.<sup>37</sup>

#### Influences of Synagogue from and upon Neighboring Cultures

The relations between the Gentiles and the synagogues worked in two directions. The gathering of "proselytes" and "fearers of God" was done by the propaganda of the synagogue upon those Gentiles coming in contact with it.<sup>38</sup> The regular worship of the reading of the law was open to all pious Gentiles.<sup>39</sup> Herbert May is of the opinion that there are

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>36</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., pp. 27 f.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>38</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

findings in archaeology which would lead us to the conclusion that relations were not always peaceful.<sup>40</sup>

### The Influences of Intercourse with Hellenistic Culture

The synagogues in Hellenistic countries were placed near water for cleansing purposes since the Jews considered the Gentiles ritually impure.<sup>41</sup> R. A. S. Macalister points out that all the efforts of the Jewish leaders to remain completely separate from the culture of the Hellenists were not successful. Although the leaders took a stand against the infusion of classical art, Macalister states that the synagogues "in architectural detail are nothing more than clumsy imitations".<sup>42</sup>

But the synagogues were also influential upon those who lived about it. Although the influence began in Palestine, it is clearly seen in the Hellenistic world.<sup>43</sup> Sometimes the impression given was not what might have been hoped for by the leaders of the synagogue. For example, they impressed many of those in the community about them as simply having a

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<sup>40</sup>May, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>41</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 76.

<sup>42</sup>R. A. S. Macalister, A Century of Excavation in Palestine (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1925), p. 312.

<sup>43</sup>H. E. Dana, Jewish Christianity (New Orleans: Bible Institute Memorial Press, 1937), p. 99.

different philosophy than the usual Hellenistic person.

Even the Hellenistic Jew, Philo, echoes this sentiment when he writes for his Greek readers that the Jews "lay aside all their ordinary occupations not to take the time for sports and shows, but to devote themselves wholly to philosophy--real philosophy".<sup>44</sup> The name "synagogue" was itself borrowed either from one group or the other. This is said, for it is found that the word synagogue was used by pagan neighbors for festival gatherings and for religious bodies of pagan worshippers.<sup>45</sup>

The influence of other nationalities brought a separation of synagogues in Jerusalem into groups of Greeks, Alexandrians and Romans as each had its own synagogue in the city.<sup>46</sup> At a synagogue in Alexandria an inscription has been found from 37 B.C. which dedicated the synagogue in honor of the king and queen. In this instance they are probably Cleopatra and her brother.<sup>47</sup>

The building style is Hellenistic as seen from the Capernaum synagogue which has the Herodian style.<sup>48</sup> All

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<sup>44</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 285.

<sup>45</sup>Robert Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times; With an Introduction to the Apocrypha (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 180.

<sup>46</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>47</sup>W. O. E. Cesterley, A History of Israel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, c. 1932), II, 511.

<sup>48</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 255.

Palestinian synagogues found have the nave and two aisles. Just as the public buildings of the Jewish people were basilica style, so was this Hellenistic influence found in the synagogue.<sup>49</sup> The window frames frequently had Attic bases and Corinthian capitals.<sup>50</sup>

The readings and inscriptional writings of the synagogue are to be looked at also. The possibility of the prophets first being read as a result of Hellenistic activity has been viewed above.<sup>51</sup> Concerning the Septuagint translation G. F. Moore writes:

It is now the opinion of scholars that the Greek translation of the Pentateuch early in the third century B.C. was undertaken, not to enrich Ptolemy's library as the fictitious letter of Aristæus narrates, but for the use of the Jews among whom knowledge of Hebrew was becoming rare: though it does not follow that it was made especially for public reading in the Alexandrian synagogues.<sup>52</sup>

Although there is a difference of opinion regarding the reading in the synagogue, no less scholar than Edersheim says that prayers were said in Greek.<sup>53</sup> Greek inscriptions

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<sup>49</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>50</sup>Adolf Deismann, St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, translated by L. R. M. Strachen (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), p. 11.

<sup>51</sup>Suora, p. 52.

<sup>52</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 288.

<sup>53</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, pp. 29 f.

were written above synagogues at Gaza and Ashdod, and these places we know were used by Palestinian worshippers.<sup>54</sup> At Dura-Europos the murals on the walls are titled in Greek and Aramaic.<sup>55</sup>

Art itself bears the Hellenistic influence. At Dura the synagogue decoration is almost exactly like that of the temple of the Palmyrene gods and of the temple of Zeus Theos.<sup>56</sup> Karl Kraeling, the Lutheran scholar, is quoted as saying that "there can be no doubt that the Jewish people did have art and that it drew its current traditions from the pagan neighbors".<sup>57</sup>

Before the destruction of the temple the songs used in the synagogue were constantly being watched for inroads of Hellenistic characteristics. Religious music only was encouraged. After the destruction of the temple, nationalism increased the antagonism which had existed before that time.<sup>58</sup> The success of the fight against the influences might be gathered from the fact that strict Jews found it necessary

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<sup>54</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>55</sup>May, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>56</sup>Leveen, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>58</sup>A. Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Music; In Its Historical Development (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1948), p. 92 f.



to denounce the latitudinarian practices of Hellenized Jewish people who prayed to gods such as Pan and Zeus.<sup>59</sup>

#### The Influences from Intercourse with Other Near-East Culture

It is the opinion of the Jewish scholar, Kohler, that the weakness of the synagogue was its orientalism. "Amid all the changes of time and environment, it remained separated from the surrounding work to such an extent that it could no longer exert influence to win outsiders for its great truths".<sup>60</sup> There is some doubt whether such a statement is valid in the light of the preceding. This orientalism, however, was born out in the synagogue art forms such as the vine and trees. A Babylonian cylinder, dated to 2850 B.C., has the tree and vine similar to that of the synagogue. The Babylonian form is also to depict the Tree of Life as was that in the synagogue art.<sup>61</sup> A Nabataean Arab temple of the first century B.C. at Khirbet et Tannur has the zodiac sign which is also found in synagogues. This was probably passes along to the Jews via the Greeks.<sup>62</sup> The pentagrams, hexagrams, and heptagrams are

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<sup>59</sup>Rfeiffer, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>60</sup>Kohler, op. cit., p. 470.

<sup>61</sup>Leveen, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>62</sup>May, op. cit., p. 20.

considered magic symbols. Perhaps these are an influence of the mystics about Capernaum.<sup>63</sup>

The porch type architecture of the synagogue was known in the third millenium B.C. in Palestinian-Syrian circles. This was also used by the Jews.<sup>64</sup>

The name of archisynagogus has been found in heathen worship although it is actually impossible to determine which type of art influenced which.<sup>65</sup> The Oriental influence upon the women in the synagogue was discussed in the last chapter.

#### The Influences from Intercourse with Rome

Once again art form shows us the influence of an outside culture, this time the Roman. The animal form used on the synagogue walls are of Roman origin.<sup>66</sup> Even the Jewish author Sukenik admits that there is a possibility of Roman influence in this respect. He attributes such animal representations either to a liberal Galilean Jewry or claims that they were introduced forcibly under a patrization of the synagogues by the Roman Severan Caesars who were known to be interested in Jewish synagogues. Sukenik goes on to point out that there is no definite evidence that the Severan

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<sup>63</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>64</sup>May, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>65</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>66</sup>Macalister, op. cit., p. 312.

Caesars introduced such art by force or by friendly methods.<sup>67</sup> An obvious Roman influence on art is the eagle over the doorway at Capernaum.<sup>68</sup> The possibility of the small temple on wheels at Capernaum being a type of chariot used by the Romans at the time.<sup>69</sup> There have been two valuable discoveries from Roman inhabited areas. On the island of Malta, excavations have uncovered a mosaic of Samson and Delilah which pictures the nude Samson lying reclined while Delilah is shearing off his hair. This has been dated from a period about 40-54 A.D. At Pompeii, also found in a Roman villa, a fresco has come forth showing the judgment of Solomon concerning the two mothers. Since Pompeii was destroyed in 70 A.D., this was put on the wall before this time. It is the opinion of art scholars that the Jewish art was begun by artists preparing murals for pagan neighbors, and when art was later permitted in the synagogue, it came back to the Jewish houses of worship as the style to be used.<sup>70</sup>

There is an attempt in many Jewish writings today to

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<sup>67</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 17 f.

<sup>70</sup>Leveen, op. cit., pp. 60 f.

shift the guilt for hard feelings between the synagogue and the Roman government onto the government. For example, the author Sukenik attempts to convince a reader that the demolishing of the eagle over the temple gate was not due to any narrow-minded attitude about the eagle, but it was offensive because it was Roman.<sup>71</sup> I think there is some merit in this.

#### A Note About the Influences of the Synagogue in Modern Life

The place of the modern synagogue in Jewish life has been expressed with various opinions. Thus said Filson:

The synagogue gathered to itself much of the loyalty which had been given to the Temple. This process was never completed. To great numbers the Temple is still the mental rallying point and its ancient site a geographical expression of the unity of Judaism. But the synagogue became the practical substitute for the Temple in the religious life of the Jews.<sup>72</sup>

In this light, orthodox Judaism is entirely consistent in maintaining the importance of every item of the traditional Jewish life as it follows this tradition without inquiring into the purpose of the laws. Reform synagogues on the other hand, believe that the humanitarianism emphasis of the present time is a realizing of the Messianic hope.<sup>73</sup> Kohler

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<sup>71</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>72</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>73</sup>Kohler, op. cit., p. 453.

continues to say that after the political equality had been gained for the Jewish people in the nineteenth century, it became necessary for the Jew to realign his religious position. Then he stood apart from the rest only in religion. The synagogue liturgy, expressing hope for a return to Palestine, formation of a Jewish state under a king, and restoration of temple sacrifices no longer expressed the hope of the western Jew. This then is the chasm between the reformed Jew and the orthodox, and there is at present an attempt to reform and reinterpret the liturgy of the synagogue by the reformed wing.<sup>74</sup> So customs, such as phylacteries, have become nothing more than "meaningless forms" to the reformed Jew. This is a result of the Jew opening his synagogue to invite non-Jews into the synagogue according to Kohler.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 455.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH UPON THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE SYNAGOGUE'S INFLUENCE UPON THE CHURCH

#### Christian Influence upon the Synagogue

There are numerous problems which arise when one considers the question: "how great was the influence of the synagogue?" This is because opinions expressed on both sides are influenced by theological lines. There are Jewish authorities which claim the Founder of the Church, Jesus, did not oppose the Pharisees because they refused Him as the Messiah, but that He opposed them because they failed to live up to the "standards" which they themselves had set. This makes of Christ a social reformer. Three reasons have been given, and more are possible, why such a thesis is false. Jesus and the Church had to conflict with the Pharisees and the synagogue theology firstly, because Jesus brought on the Messianic age; thirdly, Jesus opposed the Pharisaic teachings as contrary to much of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle which then arose between Christ's Church and the synagogue was even more bitter, for it came at a

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<sup>1</sup>Jakob Jocz, The Jewish People and Jesus Christ (London: The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1949), p. 31.

crucial time in Hebrew history. It was the period of the destruction of the Temple. At this time the Jewish people were looking for the Messianic age. The rise of Bar Cochba was another point of stress. The Jews had political as well as religious trouble; and through this period the Church was having success while the Jewish people were meeting with failures.<sup>2</sup> This attitude might be reflected in the statement of the modern Jew, Sukenik, who says that "the presence of synagogues everywhere in the most prominent spots in cities was provoking" to the Christian populations.<sup>3</sup> His reference is to the building on high places.

With the differences of doctrine between Jesus and the Pharisees, it would be but natural that the Church and synagogue reflect some differences. It is the differences which contribute the most to the influence of the Church upon the synagogue, and one of the first things to be effected is the synagogue service. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the chief prayer of the Israelites, the Shemoneh Esreh, took on a section which opposed "slanderers". It read, "To slanderers, let there be no hope, and let all workers of wickedness perish in a moment; and let all of them speedily be cut off." The early Church Fathers, Hieronymos, Justin and others took this as a direct reference

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>E. L. Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 49.

to the Church. They claimed that following the recitation of this prayer a curse was uttered upon the Christians.<sup>4</sup> They also claimed that this was said and done three times each day.<sup>5</sup> The Jewish-Christian writer, Jocz, claims that the minim who were cursed were not the Gentile Christians and not Christians in general, but the synagogue curse was against the Jews who had become Christian for they were the greatest threat to the synagogue's survival. He continues by claiming that the synagogue did not become vitally interested in the Gentile Church until they had come into a position of authority in the empire. It is to be admitted that there was a considerable amount of persecution of Christian's incited by the synagogue, but Jocz points out that the synagogue was the "main cause" of persecution.<sup>6</sup> It is known, however, that the synagogues did send around legates whose purpose it was to anathematize the Christians.<sup>7</sup> What this anathematizing all included is not known.

Of interest is the comment of the Hebrew author Paul Levertoff that the Ahabah prayer, or prayer of love, is thought to have been written as an obvious polemic against

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<sup>4</sup>Emil Schuerer, The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, translated by Sophia Taylor (Edinburg: T and T Clark, 1890), II, 85-89.

<sup>5</sup>Jocz, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Milman, The History of the Jews (New York: The E. F. Dutton Company, c.1909), II, 181.



Gal. 4:21-31 and Eph. 2:4. This prayer which stresses the love of God was written, he thinks, to show that Paul was wrong.<sup>8</sup> The prayers of the synagogue were influenced in another way by the Church and Christians. A prayer of the synagogue ascribed to a certain Rabbu reads, "May thy will be done in heaven above, and give spiritual satisfaction to those who fear thee below, and do what is good in thine eyes." There are Jewish scholars which point out that the Lord's Prayer contains a similar statement; they propose that the Lord's Prayer was copied from this. It is, however, admitted that Rabbu lived late in the first century.<sup>9</sup> Christ lived early in the first century, and it might be possible that Rabbu wrote this synagogue prayer after being influenced by Jesus' prayer. There were not only elements included in the synagogue prayer as a result of the Church's activity, but there were also elements eliminated from the synagogue service. The Decalogue was dropped from the readings in the second century because the Church was thought to claim a special emphasis on the Decalogue. The last part of that idea might be questioned, but the fact that the Decalogue was dropped from Christian influence is of merit.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Paul Levertoff, "Synagogue Worship in the First Century," Liturgy and Worship, edited by W. K. L. Clarke (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 69.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. p. 77.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

The presence of the Christians in the synagogue at the outset of the Church also influenced the leaders of the synagogue. The exegetical problems were the major source of trouble to the rabbis. Particularly challenging was the Trinitarian doctrine in relation to Gen. 1:1 and Deut. 4:32. There is evidence that some Christians still entered the synagogue as late as the third century to question the leaders in regard to the three-fold name of God in Jos. 22:22.<sup>11</sup> That the Church made the leaders of the synagogue become more attentive to Scripture rather than to the customs and human ordinances is seen from a story of the fourth century. Some Christians asked one rabbi why he was able to answer more questions about Scripture than another. The rabbi said, "We who are frequently with you, set ourselves to the task of studying it (scripture)".<sup>12</sup> Dana is of the opinion that the duty of teaching the children did not come into existence until the Christians had innovated this custom.<sup>13</sup> There is question if this is a completely acceptable statement, however.

It is very debatable whether or not the synagogue borrowed any of its art forms from the Church's art forms.

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<sup>11</sup>Jocz, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>13</sup>H. E. Dana, Jewish Christianity (New Orleans: The Bible Institute Memorial Press), p. 101.

The Jewish scholar Jacob Leveen says that the Jews held themselves aloof to the Christians and would not use their mode of art presentation. He also claims the Jews had a nucleus of art work to build upon before the Christians had any at all.<sup>14</sup> Although it is doubtful if it can be definitely that the Church did influence the synagogue, there were mutual iconoclastic movements about the sixth century.<sup>15</sup>

There is some archaeological evidence that the Church made an impression upon the synagogue. An inscription has been unearthed in north Africa which states that the ruler of the synagogue himself had assumed a position of importance in the congregation in that area. This agrees with the success the apostles had in their first preaching in the synagogues of Palestine.<sup>16</sup> There were places, such as at Gerasa in Transjordan, where the Church building was a renovated synagogue. This demonstrates a literal influence 'upon' the synagogue.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Jacob Leveen, The Hebrew Bible in Art, the Schweich Lectures of the British Academy (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 121 f.

<sup>15</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>16</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>17</sup>H. G. May, "Synagogues in Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (February, 1944), 1 f.

## The Influence of the Synagogue on Christianity

Once again problems and opinions of various kinds are forthcoming when considering the extent the synagogue influenced the speech, service, and thought of the Church. Looking at some of these opinions we find Gotthard Lechler who says that the synagogue was a major influence upon the Church. The prophetic type of truth taught in the Temple was not able to be fulfilled in every detail without aid from the synagogue. He gives the synagogue the honor of innovating the idea that God should be worshipped in spirit. This, he says takes nothing away from the Church, but is said to point out that the Christian worship which was promised in the prophets and Moses had a "common ground" in the synagogue.<sup>18</sup> F. E. Warren, on the other hand, says that there are reasons why the Christian service does not have its cradle in the synagogue. The medieval synagogue liturgy demonstrates that hostility was too great and long standing to have allowed for influence. Christ had warned against the synagogues as places in which they would be persecuted. Also, they were places of persecution and not places which would offer things to be copied.<sup>19</sup> Floyd Filson says the Church was clearly

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<sup>18</sup> Gotthard Lechler, The Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times, translated by A. J. K. Davidson (Edinburg: T and T Clark, 1896), I, 56.

<sup>19</sup> F. E. Warren, The Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church (Revised second edition; New York: E. S. Gorham, 1912), pp. 191 f.

related to the synagogue.<sup>20</sup> Josef Nielen states that before the time of Paul, a Jew became a Christian simply in order to become a more perfect Jew, and there was no question whether or not the synagogue and church were essentially different.<sup>21</sup>

#### The Synagogue's Influence on the Christians' Place of Worship

The synagogue is influential in the New Testament simply because the word "synagogue" occurs over sixty times in the New Testament writings.<sup>22</sup> The first Christians in Jerusalem taught in synagogue; Stephen probably encountered Paul in a synagogue (cf. Acts 6:9). Paul began his work in most every city by first visiting the synagogue (cf. Acts 13:14; 14:1).<sup>23</sup> The early Christians did not separate themselves from the synagogues. It was in Damascus, Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus that Paul used the synagogues for preaching purposes.<sup>24</sup>

Indirect evidence that the Christians were closely connected with the synagogue is found in Acts 9:2 where

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<sup>20</sup>Floyd Filson, "Temple, Synagogue, and Church," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (December, 1944), 87.

<sup>21</sup>Josef Nielen, The Earliest Christian Liturgy, translated by Patrick Cummins (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1941), p. 113.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1919), p. 951.

<sup>23</sup>Filson, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>24</sup>Nielen, op. cit., p. 107.

papers are demanded for having Christians brought from the synagogue in Damascus to Jerusalem. This would indicate that these Jewish Christians were still under the political and perhaps religious supervision of the synagogue.<sup>25</sup> That the first Church did not cut itself off from the Jewish worship life is also seen from Acts 20:16 where St. Paul is eager to return for the feast in Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup> One of the reasons that the apostle Paul visited and made contact with the synagogues when on his travels might also have been that it was customary to permit visitors to stay and sleep in the synagogue annex.<sup>27</sup>

The names used for the church also show an influence of the synagogue. In the Church Fathers ekklesia is usually used for the Christian congregation and synagogue is used for the Jewish congregation. Now, however, it is found that the Ebionites retained the word "synagogue" for the Christian service, says, "Let Church synagogues be held frequently". The Shepherd of Hermas adds, "When a man having the divine spirit comes into a synagogue of just men. . . ." This is in reference to the Christian service. Theophilus of Antioch remarks that the synagogues are also called holy churches.

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<sup>25</sup>Lechler, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>26</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>27</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., pp. 48 f.

<sup>28</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 58.

The gnostic Marcionite Church on Mt. Hermon dating as late as 308 A.D. still bears the name synagogue on an inscription.<sup>29</sup> A north African Church has been unearthed which had the inscription "synagogue" above its door also.<sup>30</sup> H. E. Dana is of the opinion that the New Testament in James 2:2 the word "synagogue" is used by the writer when he refers to the assembly to whom the letter is addressed.<sup>31</sup>

The place and position of the first churches also seem to have been influenced by the synagogue. There are archaeological proofs that synagogues were turned into churches.<sup>32</sup> The synagogue was sometimes turned into a Christian Church, but at Jerash, the superimposed church has changed the direction of orientation from Jerusalem in the west to the east.<sup>33</sup> The church spire is also thought to show the synagogue influence. This is probably from the pole which was to be connected to the synagogue when it was unable to be built on the highest ground.<sup>34</sup> The meeting of the Christians at Philippi near water in Acts 16:12-13 was in keeping with the fact

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<sup>29</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>30</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>31</sup>Dana, op. cit., p. 104..

<sup>32</sup>Supra, p. 88.

<sup>33</sup>Sukenik, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>34</sup>Alfred Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., c.1876), p. 257.

that synagogues were often built near rivers.<sup>35</sup> The meeting of early Christians for worship services in private homes would not seem strange either. The synagogues met in private homes at times, and the Acts 2:46 and 5:43 passages show that the Church also met in such places. It is the opinion of the scholar Edersheim that the phrase "the Church in the House" as used in Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15 and Philemon 2 is used with this characteristic of the synagogue in mind.<sup>36</sup> The place of the synagogue probably influenced some of the expressions used in the Gospels. Since synagogues are known to have been built on corners and near gates it is easy to understand how the situation where Christ was going to be cast out could easily exist as told in Luke 4:29.<sup>37</sup> This corner location finds expression in Matt. 6:5 where Christ speaks of praying on street corners. It was the custom of the Jew to pray before entering the synagogue, and if the synagogue were on the street corner, it would be public and thus meaningful in Christ's expression.<sup>38</sup>

The ultimate separation of synagogue and church was perhaps due to circumstances on both sides. In Luke 4 we

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<sup>35</sup>May, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>36</sup>Edersheim, op. cit., pp. 234 f.

<sup>37</sup>A. Hausrath, New Testament Times, the Time of Jesus, translated by G. T. Foyning and F. Quenzer (London: Williams and Morgate, 1878), I, 86.

<sup>38</sup>Edersheim, op. cit., p. 254.



read how the Jews cast out Jesus. It was also easier for the Christian worship to exist in a place separate from the synagogue. There the Lord's Supper could be celebrated, and Christ could be acknowledged openly as the Messiah.<sup>39</sup>

#### The Influence of the Synagogue Service on Christianity

The prayers of the synagogue influenced the expressions of the New Testament and also the Church of the New Testament. The Kedusha, a substitute prayer for portions of the Eighteen Benedictions, has found its way into a portion of the Anglican Christian Liturgy in the Torsanctus or Triumphal hymn.<sup>40</sup> There are also numerous similarities between the Benedictus of the Eighteen Benedictions and the Magnificat of Mary which has found a place in the Christian liturgy.<sup>41</sup> An invocation found for an outside synagogue service, "lift up your hearts on hands to God in heaven", would also seem to have a connection with the latter Christian invocation.<sup>42</sup>

The synagogue service influenced the speech of Christ, the founder of the Church. The pro-Jewish author Levertoff

Jewish scholars claim the Kaddish influenced the Lord's prayer of Christ. The first paragraph of the Kaddish reads, "Magnified and hallowed be his

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<sup>39</sup>Nielen, op. cit., pp. 335 f.

<sup>40</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 234 f.

<sup>42</sup>Gustav Dalman, Jesus--Jeshua, translated by Paul Levertoff (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 22.

great name in the world which he created according to his will. May he establish his Kingdom in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of all the house of Israel, speedily and in the near time. And say ye, Amen.<sup>43</sup>

There is also a possibility that the numerous prayers which were inserted between the first three and the last three benedictions were the things Jesus had in mind when he commented about the long prayers in Luke 20:47.<sup>44</sup>

The position of the congregation in the synagogue during prayers seems to have been taken over into Christian customs. The standing position with a somewhat swaying motion is thought to be the foundation for the stately minuets of the cloisters in Christian worship in Spain.<sup>45</sup> The bent position of the body during the first benediction has also been accepted into Christian custom.<sup>46</sup> The responsive Amen found its place early in Christian worship as is seen by 1 Cor. 14:6. It has, of course, continued as part of the Christian service through the centuries.<sup>47</sup>

The Shema of the synagogue was known and respected by Jesus for in the New Testament He alludes to part of it and

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<sup>43</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>44</sup>Edersheim op. cit., p. 272.

<sup>45</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>46</sup>Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, c.1883), I, 140.

<sup>47</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 78.

calls it the "first commandment".<sup>48</sup> The next time we find it playing a direct part in the New Testament Gospels is when a lawyer recites a verse of it when asking Christ a question.<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to see that the rabbinic explanation of the exhortation in the Shema was "that we might take upon ourselves the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, and only after that the yoke of the commandments". It is thought by some that Jesus knew of this interpretation and had it in mind when he spoke the words of Matt. 11:28-30. It was there that He told the people that by taking upon themselves the kingdom of heaven and then the commandments, they would find His yoke easy and the burden light.<sup>50</sup>

The manner in which the readings were carried out has also come down into Christian customs and service. The procession to the reading desk in the synagogue resembles the ceremonial procession of the Eastern Church known as the Little or Lesser Entrance.<sup>51</sup> Since there is no way to determine the date of origin of the pericopic systems of the synagogue, it is impossible to say if this custom in the Church is an influence of the synagogue. However, the fact that there were readings in the early Church is from synagogue

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<sup>48</sup>Mark 12:29.

<sup>49</sup>Luke 10:26,27.

<sup>50</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 270.

<sup>51</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 209.

influence.<sup>52</sup> The response to the reading which was given before the Torah was read possibly finds its counterpart in the Church's response to the Gospel announcement, for the expression "Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gavest us the Torah of Truth and plantest eternal life in our midst" is certainly a response of praise for the reading which was to follow.<sup>53</sup>

Christ Himself frequently took part on this portion of the service, as did many others in the Gospel account. This is seen from Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16; 6:6; 13:10 and other sections.<sup>54</sup> The fact that Jesus in Luke 4 read Is. 61:1,2,6 might be proof that the reader of the prophets was permitted to skip and pick out the sections he preferred to read.<sup>55</sup> It is also interesting to note that Jesus in Luke 4:16 stood up to read as is still the custom today in the synagogue service.<sup>56</sup> The response that the law was "planting eternal life" in the midst of the people might have been in the mind of Jesus when He said in John 5:39 that they searched the Scriptures because they found eternal life in them.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Nielsen, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>53</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>54</sup>May, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>55</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 453.

<sup>56</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>57</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 74.

It was the brief discourses and homilies in the synagogue which led to the homily or sermon in the Church. This influence has been of such great importance that Arthur Stanley, the historian, has observed, "We can hardly imagine them ([churches]) to have existed without it".<sup>58</sup> What Jesus' disciples had known of Scripture and its meanings, they had learned from the readings and homilies of the synagogue. There is much value in this conclusion of Moore.<sup>59</sup> From John 18:20 we find from Jesus own lips that it was a favorite place of His in which to teach.<sup>60</sup>

The fact that Jesus sat down after the reading in Luke 4 when He was in the Capernaum synagogue was the customary signal that he intended to speak about a subject.<sup>61</sup> Another custom in reference to the sermon has possibly influenced a statement concerning Christ. When a very learned person had spoken it was sometimes proper that a "speaker" would relay the message to the people in their words. It was perhaps because of this that people were able to hear Jesus preach in John 7:46 and not believe and yet honor Him

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<sup>58</sup>Arthur Stanley, Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), III, 409.

<sup>59</sup>G. F. Moore, Judaism: In the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), I, 288.

<sup>60</sup>Nielsen, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>61</sup>Dalman, op. cit., p. 45.

by saying, "never man spake like this man".<sup>62</sup>

The discussion of the sermon either inside or outside the synagogue proper is probably the reason the apostles were called upon in the synagogue in Acts 13:15.<sup>63</sup> Another custom of the synagogue sermon which has perhaps come down to us in our day in the Christian Church is a result of the exhortation following the address, "May his great name be blessed forever and forever". This may be where the liturgical prayer at the conclusion of the sermon originated.<sup>64</sup>

The next topic which might be considered is the benediction of the synagogue. There are certain mannerism of the synagogue which have carried over into Christian customs. The shoes were taken off following the destruction of the temple each time the benediction was said. So also the Irish ecclesiastics are said to have taken off their sandals at the chancel rail whenever they went in to celebrate or pray at the altar. This was also the practise of the eastern coptic church. Cassian also reports that such was the custom among the Egyptian monks.<sup>65</sup>

Not too much can be said regarding the influence of the synagogue music upon the Church. It is known that each had similar attitudes towards pagan Greek music and particularly

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<sup>62</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 280.

<sup>63</sup>Hausrath, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>64</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 306.

<sup>65</sup>Warren, op. cit., pp. 207 f.

in opposition to instrumental music. In fact, by the fourth century all traces of instrumental music had been removed in both the church and the synagogues.<sup>66</sup> There is obviously a connection between the two in the singing of hymns and psalms.<sup>67</sup>

The excommunication and anathema's of the synagogues are also significant in the New Testament and the Church. Schuerer is of the opinion that there were two kinds of excommunication in the synagogue, one more permanent than the other. He thinks that Christ's words in Luke 6:22 about being blessed when men "separate you from their company and cast your name out as evil", were spoken with the synagogue excommunication in mind. Such casting out is specifically spoken of in John 9:22. This last passage even substantiates the fact that it was the elders who were responsible for the excommunication of people. After Christians had been discharged by the synagogues, the term "anathema" remained in their language. This word is probably the permanent type of excommunication of the Jews.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>A. Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Music; In Its Historical Development (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1948), pp. 92 f.

<sup>67</sup>Nielsen, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>68</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., pp. 59.f.

## The Influence of the Personnel of the Synagogue

The attitude of the synagogue in respect to the "Presence" (God) being in a worshipping group is developed in a previous section.<sup>69</sup> Bearing this in mind, it would seem that the Christian doctrine that God is present in the assembly of the congregation and also where the individual is in secret prayer, was not strange in the synagogue. This is the opinion of Moore, the Jewish scholar.<sup>70</sup> Considering this attitude, it becomes quite understandable how the words of Christ, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them", would fit well into the Jewish thought.<sup>71</sup>

Throughout the New Testament references are made to the fact that the synagogue court, the sanhedrin, met in the synagogue. To mention only a few cases one might cite Mark 13:9 and Matt. 10:17 and Acts 15:4. It was within the synagogue that the scourgings were administered.<sup>72</sup>

The rulers of the synagogue is also mentioned frequently in the New Testament. Jairus was such a person as found in Mark 5:22 and Luke 8:41. In Acts 18:8 Crispus the ruler was converted by St. Paul. It was the archisynagogos who called

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<sup>69</sup>Supra, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup>Moore, op. cit., pp. 436 f.

<sup>71</sup>Matt. 18:20.

<sup>72</sup>B. S. Easton, "Jewish and Early Christian Ordination," Anglican Theological Review, V (March, 1923), 313.



Acts 13:15 says the archisynagogos called on Paul and Barnabas to preach.<sup>73</sup> The question as to how many there were in the synagogue is reflected in the Scriptures for in Corinth there was one and in Mark 5:22 and Acts 13:15 we would gather there are more than one.<sup>74</sup>

The Chazzan or minister was to have qualifications which more than resemble the list of qualifications mentioned by Paul for positions in the church. A few of these are humility, modesty, knowledge of Scripture, irreproachableness, and coming from an irreproachable family.<sup>75</sup> The minister's care over the books is brought out in Luke 4:20 as Christ returned the book to him when he had finished reading.<sup>76</sup>

The "legate of the church" or person who read the Scripture and did the majority of the officiating has been connected to some degree with the word "apostle".<sup>77</sup> In Revelation the writer refers to the bishops or ministers or leaders of the seven congregations in Asia Minor as "Angela". The connection is probably with the person who officiated at the service of the synagogue.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup>May, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>74</sup>G. T. Wood, The Life, Letters, and Religion of St. Paul (Edinburg: T. and T. Clark, c.1925), p. 117.

<sup>75</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 438.

<sup>76</sup>Schuerer, op. cit., pp. 66 f.

<sup>77</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 283.

the service of the synagogue.<sup>78</sup>

The receiver of alms finds his place also in the church in Acts 6. It has been pointed out that the receiver of alms did not come into being until about 70 A.D.<sup>79</sup> The Christian church's diakonos is probably a combination of the minister and the almoner of the synagogue.<sup>80</sup>

Even the protestates or patron is thought to have found a place in the early Christian Church. This person was the official representative of the people before the Romans. In Rom. 16:2 Gnechrea is called a person who has "succoured" Paul, and it is thought that this possibly has such a connection.<sup>81</sup>

The similarity of the ordination points up the influence which the synagogue had upon the Christian church. The presence of three rabbis is similar to the three bishops necessary for regularity in the ordination of the Anglican communion.<sup>82</sup> The ordination ceremonial use of the Num. 11:16 text with reference to the Seventy Elders of Moses time was also used in the ordination of the presbyter in the first

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<sup>78</sup>Humphrey Frideaux, The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845), II, 306.

<sup>79</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>80</sup>Dana, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>81</sup>W. O. E. Cesterley, A History of Israel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, c.1932), II, 419.

<sup>82</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 215.

Church Order. The right was also called "laying on of hands".<sup>83</sup> The ceremonial presentation of the key at ordination bears strong allusions to Christ's statements in Matt. 23:2,13 and Luke 11:52 where the key is mentioned in the closing of the kingdom by the scribes to whom the key was given.<sup>84</sup> The key is also mentioned in the disciple's commission in Matt. 16:19. Those who were ordained, although not possessing any special qualities, were thought to bring the presence of the divine majesty into the sanhedrin.<sup>85</sup> The special significance of the ordination also influenced the Christian Church for only those in the synagogue who had authority over doctrine and disciple were ordained.<sup>86</sup>

The women's place in the synagogue probably influenced the writings of Hippolytus who dictated that they be separated in the church and that they be covered with a veil. This might be an allusion to the screen set in front of the balcony. The veil was also used when dedicating a virgin to God.<sup>87</sup> The segregation of women in the synagogue may also

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<sup>83</sup>Levertoff, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>84</sup>Hausrath, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>85</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 262.

<sup>86</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 445.

<sup>87</sup>Warren, op. cit., pp. 209 f.

have some relation to early Christian worship in explaining 1 Cor. 14:34,35; also that Paul talked to the women at Philippi outside the synagogue in Acts 16:13.<sup>88</sup> Nielsen observes that St. Paul found equality in men and women, but probably tempered it due to the customs of the people. A different interpretation than the usual of Philemon 4:2 has been offered by Nielsen. He states that Evodia and Syntyche had distinguished themselves as preachers as did Clement. This, he says, then had its counterpart in that women were allowed to be readers in the synagogue.<sup>89</sup>

#### The Influence of the Appointments of the Synagogue

The ceremonial cleansings with the lavars of the synagogue also influenced the Christian liturgy with the lavabo and baptistries. The former custom is not the only influence, but the washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday in some circles might also be an influence of the synagogue by way of Christ's washing of the disciples feet.<sup>90</sup>

The reading desk, or analogion, is found on early Christian gilt-glass dishes. Where usually prophets and apostles are pictured in the synagogue manner of holding scrolls, there are also occasions where this desk is found

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<sup>88</sup>May, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>89</sup>Nielsen, op. cit., pp. 257 f.

<sup>90</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 209.

in connection with apostles.<sup>92</sup> The Bema or elevation finds its counterpart in the pulpit of the Christian church, and even its position is perhaps an innovation influenced by the synagogue.<sup>93</sup>

The use of candles and lights in the Church can be seen from the double use in the synagogue. The Sabbath lamp was lit for the services.<sup>94</sup> Also the perpetual light of the Christian churches may be associated with the perpetually burning light in the Jewish synagogue.<sup>95</sup>

The Matt. 23:2 ff. criticism of Christ concerning the Pharisees liking of front seats in the synagogue referred to three possibilities in the synagogue. The seats nearest orientation was one honor place. The Dura-Europos and Beth Alpha seats to the left and right of the niche are also places of honor. The Seat of Moses is the position of greatest honor.<sup>96</sup> The assignment of seats mentioned in James 2:2,3 to men of high standing in goodly apparel or with a gold ring points to these places.<sup>97</sup> The picture in

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<sup>92</sup>E. L. Sukenik, "Designs of the Lecturn (analogeion) in Ancient Synagogues in Palestine," The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society, XIII, 225.

<sup>93</sup>Hausrath, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>94</sup>Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 77 and 430.

<sup>95</sup>Warren, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>96</sup>May, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>97</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 264.

Rev. 5:2-8 is from synagogue influence. There the enthroned deity is surrounded by elders and seven lamps. In the synagogue the elders were seated beside the Ark and lampstands.<sup>98</sup>

If Jewish Picture cycles were in use at the time of Christian origination of art, it would be going against human nature to imagine that they would develop a system of art on their own when they had such ready made materials.<sup>99</sup> That this is the case might be demonstrated from the early Christian art which deals with Old Testament themes exclusively thus showing the Church took its art as well as service form from the synagogue.<sup>100</sup> The difference between the art of the Christian catacombs and that of the Jewish is that the emphasis in the Jewish is placed on the law, while in the Christian, on redemption and salvation themes.<sup>101</sup> The manner of showing Moses as beardless in the Dura synagogue is also the way the early Christian and Byzantine art favour him.<sup>102</sup> The church at Dura which stood twenty years before the very colorful second synagogue had only a mural of Adam and Eve decorating the baptistry. This might show that the early Christians did not have a very developed art of their own,

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<sup>98</sup>May, op. cit., pp. 16 f.

<sup>99</sup>Leveen, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>100</sup>Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece, p. 67.

<sup>101</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>102</sup>Leveen, op. cit., p. 32.

but slowly borrowed from the Jewish cycle.<sup>103</sup>

Other direct influences are seen in the rod of Aaron. According to Christian legend as well as the synagogue interpretation, this rod is a fragment of the tree of knowledge. So connections can also be found in both religious places of worship to the vine as being a tree of life, and identical scenes were used to picture both. The picture of the hand of God at Beth Alpha has found an offspring in the Christian identical method of portraying God. The Carthaginian picture of Paradise with a fountain in the middle might be vaguely reflected in Rev. 21.<sup>104</sup> Another direct connection to the New Testament might be found in the pot of manna symbol above the door at Capernaum for in John 6:31 Jesus refers to the fact that the fathers did eat manna in the dessert. Edersheim would connect this passage with the building.<sup>105</sup>

#### The Doctrinal Influence of the Synagogue on the Church

Attempts have been made to find a close relation between Christianity as nothing more than a fashionable Judaism. Such a sentiment might underlie the opinion that the "synagogue was a protest against materialism in religion.

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., pp. 63 f.

<sup>105</sup>Edersheim, In the Days of Christ; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 254.

As such the synagogue stands as a testimony for the true spiritual religion and has that in common with the Christian church".<sup>106</sup> That there are similarities can be seen from their emphasis upon the resurrection in the Eighteen Benedictions.<sup>107</sup> That there are vast differences can be seen from the fact that there were constant exegetical differences concerning the Trinity, creation and Christ as Messiah which were fundamental issues.<sup>108</sup> The judgment issue was different for the Christians believe in judgment after death and the Jewish people thought it took place before the beginning of each year.<sup>109</sup> The mission of the Christian Jew was to Gentile and Jew; the mission of the synagogue was to the Jew.<sup>110</sup>

The teachings in the synagogue did have their influence, however. The events surrounding the birth of Christ such as Zacharias sacrificing in the temple, Anna keeping the hours of prayer, Jesus being brought for circumcision were all things of praise for the keeping of the

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<sup>106</sup>W. O. E. Cesterley and T. H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development. (Second revised edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 332.

<sup>107</sup>K. Kohler, Jewish Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), pp. 284 f.

<sup>108</sup>Jocz, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>109</sup>Kohler, op. cit., pp. 465 f.

<sup>110</sup>R. T. Herford, The Pharisees (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 215.



law.<sup>111</sup> In John 7:49 the statement that "this people who knoweth not the law are cursed" is reference to those who heard and believed on Jesus doctrine. An influence from or upon Christ's statements might be found in a later Pharisaic writing that "man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man".<sup>112</sup>

Although there is no influence upon one another in respect to the attitude against Hellenization and worship of pagan gods, it is interesting to see how both synagogue and church met and answered the problem in similar ways. Just as Jewish leaders found it necessary to denounce those who prayed to Zeus and Pan, so the writer of Revelation also had to warn his Christian readers. Pfeiffer suggests that "satan's seat" mentioned in Rev. 2:13 alludes to the fact that the altar of Zeus was located at Pergamum, and it was the Church in this area which was addressed. He then goes on the link this phrase with "synagogue of Satan" mentioned in 3:9.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Nielsen, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>112</sup>Kohler, op. cit., p. 457.

<sup>113</sup>Robert H. Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times; With and Introduction to the Apocrypha (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 183.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

There is strong evidence that the synagogue was already a well-founded institution immediately after the exile. The use of certain words in the Old Testament, plus the worship situation of a central sanctuary would lead one to conclude that there were seeds of local worship in pre-exilic time which preceded to develop into the synagogue service as it is known in the later period.

The type of worship, plus the appointments and officers which went into the formation of the service would show that the synagogue was an institution formed and adapted to meet the Jewish needs as they came up in various surroundings. When in Rome, they did some things which the Romans did. When in Hellenized towns, they did what the community did. These things were done, but in each case the Oriental traditions and the Old Testament explanations were never lost. It was adapted to fit into the surroundings. It was permissible to use an eagle to decorate the synagogue, but when this eagle was used by someone who became their enemy or opposed them for some reason, the eagle became a sign of offense.

The influence that Christianity played upon the synagogue was of no small significance, but difficult to determine in an objective manner, for theories and dates which make a vast difference in interpretation are quite naturally

prejudiced. Certain elements of the service were altered; certain elements such as anathemas added as the synagogue met the Church.

The influence of the synagogue upon the Church has been there since the Church was in embryonic form and is still found today. H. E. Dana writes;

Gentile Christianity should never lose sight of its debt to Judaism. The Christian religion began its history in the land of Judaism, and made its initial contact with the Gentile World through the Jewish Dispersion.<sup>1</sup>

It is this debt which this thesis has attempted to bring into focus a bit more clearly. The service, building, officiants, readings, customs, some doctrines, and other points are held in common. The connection of the New Testament Church with the Old Testament Church can probably best be seen, next to Christ's fulfillment of prophecy, through the institution of the synagogue.

What Christianity has done about noticing and "repaying" this debt to Judaism and the synagogue in the wider sense has been commented on by Jacob Jocz, a convert from Judaism.

Generations of Jews have lived and passed into oblivion, and though surrounded by Christianity on every side, have never actually faced the truth about Jesus. Equally little have they known about Christianity itself. To the son of Israel, his Christian neighbor remained a Gentile who believed in three gods, worshipped the cross and hated the

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<sup>1</sup>H. E. Dana, Jewish Christianity (New Orleans: The Bible Institute Memorial Press, 1937), p. 97.

Jews. A large measure of the guilt for this state of affairs falls upon the Church itself; an equally large measure falls upon the spiritual leaders of Judaism.<sup>2</sup>

It is obviously a fact that solely by the recognition of the similarities of synagogue and church liturgy and building, it is not likely that this quotation will someday be classified as no longer meaningful and true. Only when those who worship within each, the synagogue and the church, fully appreciate the Messiah of the Old and New Testaments will the characteristics held in common be as meaningful as they were meant to be in God's providence. Each has a "debt" to the other in this Messiah.

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<sup>2</sup>Jakob Jocz, The Jewish People and Jesus Christ (London: The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1949), p. 64.

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