

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WORD

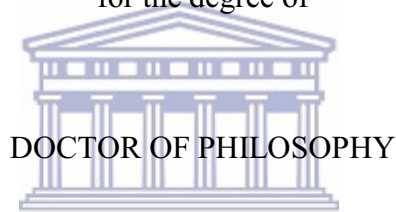
ΣΑΒΒΑΤΩΝ IN COLOSSIANS 2:16

by

RONALD ALWYN GERALD DU PREEZ

a thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of



DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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PROMOTER: PROF DG LAWRIE

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WESTERN CAPE

ABSTRACT

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Across the centuries, and especially in the more recent past, the question of the observance of the weekly Sabbath has been an ongoing matter of discussion and debate among scholars and Bible commentators of various religious backgrounds, particularly among seventh-day Sabbatarians. Since the only place that the lexical Greek term *σάββατα* appears in the New Testament, after the Gospels and the book of Acts, is located in Colossians 2:16, this passage has become the focus of much attention – more so, since the text seems to suggest that Sabbath-keeping is an optional issue.

Due to the fact that, in both Hebrew and Greek, the basic term for “sabbath” has more than one possible meaning, the major challenge has surrounded the question as to whether Colossians 2:16 refers to the weekly seventh-day Sabbath (as noted in the decalogue of Exod 20), or to the ceremonial sabbaths (as in the ritual code of Lev 23:4-37). To a large degree, based on the notion that this epistle includes an allusion to an oft-occurring trilogy of terms in the Old Testament, a majority of scholars have concluded that the seventh-day Sabbath is in view here. The minority maintain that the context shows that Colossians 2:16 is dealing with annual cultic sabbaths, that were fulfilled at the Cross.

Approaching the final form of the canon, from a Protestant perspective, and operating within the essential principles of the historico-grammatical hermeneutic, this thesis seeks to meticulously analyze the meaning of *σάββατα* (especially as it appears in the triad of “feast, new moon, sabbath”). Taking into account the theme and setting of this epistle, it seems there is sufficient contextual, inter-textual, etymological, lexical, linguistic, semantic, syntactical, structural and typological data to reasonably conclude that the *σαββάτων* of Colossians 2:16 does not refer to the seventh-day Sabbath.

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ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIBLES

AET	Holy Bible: From the Ancient Eastern Text ¹
AmpB	Amplified Bible
ANT	Holy Bible: A New Translation ²
ASV	American Standard Version
BBE	Bible in Basic English
BLT	Bible in Language of Today ³
BV	Berkeley Version
CBAT	Complete Bible: American Translation ⁴
CCNT	Christian Counselor's New Testament ⁵
CEB	Common English Bible
CEV	Contemporary English Version
CJB	Complete Jewish Bible ⁶
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
CW	Clear Word ⁷
CWK	Clear Word for Kids ⁸
DBY	Darby Bible
DCB	Douay-Confraternity Bible
DRA	Douay-Rheims: American Edition
ESV	English Standard Version
EVD	English Version for the Deaf
GNT	Good News Translation
GNV	Geneva Bible
GW	God's Word
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
ICB	International Children's Bible
ISV	International Standard Version
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPS	Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text (by the Jewish Publication Society)



¹George M. Lamsa, *Holy Bible: From the Ancient Eastern Text* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1961).

²James Moffatt, *A New Translation of the Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Harper & Row Brothers, 1954).

³William F. Beck, *The Holy Bible in the Language of Today: An American Translation* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1976).

⁴John Merlin Powis Smith, and Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

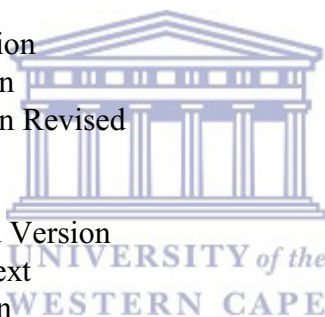
⁵Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's New Testament: A New Translation in Everyday English with Notations, Marginal References, and Supplemental Helps* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977).

⁶David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B'rit Hadashah (New Testament)* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998).

⁷Jack J. Blanco, *The Clear Word Bible: A Paraphrase to Nurture Faith and Growth* (Collegedale, TN: Jack J. Blanco, 1994).

⁸Jack J. Blanco, *The Clear Word for Kids: A New, Simplified Paraphrase* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005).

KJ21	21 st Century King James Version ⁹
KJIV	King James II Version ¹⁰
KJV	King James Version
LB	Living Bible ¹¹
LEB	Lexham English Bible
LXX	Septuagint Version
LXXEng	Septuagint (with English translation) ¹²
MEV	Modern English Version
MLB	Modern Language Bible
MSG	The Message (Bible in Contemporary Language) ¹³
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NABrev	New American Bible Revised
NASB	New American Standard Version
NASBrev	New American Standard Version Revised
NCV	New Century Version
NEB	New English Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIRV	New International Reader's Version
NIV	New International Version ¹⁴
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NLTrev	New Living Translation Revised
NLV	New Life Version
NOG	Name of God Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NU	Nestle-Aland Greek Text
NWT	New World Translation
OJB	Orthodox Jewish Bible
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SS	Sacred Scriptures, Bethel Edition
TEV	Today's English Version
TNIV	Today's New International Version
TR	Textus Receptus
TVB	The Voice Bible
YLT	Young's Literal Translation



⁹*The Holy Bible: 21st Century King James Version* (Gary, SD: Deuel Enterprises, 1994).

¹⁰Jay P. Green, *King James II Version of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1971).

¹¹*Living Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971).

¹²*The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha with an English Translation and with Various Readings and Critical Notes* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, nd).

¹³Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002).

¹⁴This is the original New International Version, published in 1989.



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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Background of the Issue¹

For centuries Bible students have wrestled with the meaning of the Greek word σαββάτων as located in Colossians 2:16. The English word “sabbath” in the New Testament is translated from either lexical term σάββατον or σάββατα. These terms show up frequently in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as in the history of the early church in the book of Acts. However, there is only one mention of the term “sabbath” in the theological section of the New Testament – the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16.² As such, it has become the focus of much discussion.³

It is a generally accepted principle of biblical interpretation that a major doctrine should not usually be developed on the basis of any single portion of Scripture. However, it also is well-recognized that there are specific, key passages without which it would be difficult, if not impossible, to establish an entire doctrinal teaching. Such is the case, for example, with the Millennium, which is specifically mentioned only in Revelation 20:2-7.⁴ Colossians 2:16 has similar import for the issue of seventh-day Sabbatarianism.⁵

At least as far back as 1880 the gravity of Colossians 2:16 was recognized by William Love, who noted: “Some seventh-day Sabbatarians acknowledge that if the word ‘Sabbaths’ in this verse does refer to the seventh day, then that settles the case against them. And all non-sabbath Lord’s day men *might* well acknowledge that if this verse does not teach that the fourth commandment is

¹This section is an expanded and updated revision of selected parts of Ron du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008), 1-16.

²As Hamilton noted back in 1886: “The word Sabbath (σαββατα) occurs but once in the Epistles;” (Thomas Hamilton, *Our Rest-Day: Its Origin, History, and Claims, with Special Reference to Present-Day Needs* [Edinburgh: James Gemmill, 1886], 161). Incidentally, the recognition that Colossians is the only place in the theological section of the New Testament where the concept “sabbath” is discussed does not mean that nothing can be learned from the narrative portions of Scripture. But the direct theological instruction of Scripture is generally understood to hold more weight for doctrinal concepts than do the chronicles of the Bible. As Cloud stated: “In all the instruction God gave the churches in the epistles, there is only one mention of the Sabbath – Colossians 2:16;” (David W. Cloud, *Avoid the Snare of Seventh-day Adventism* [Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1999], 30).

³Besides the hundreds of references discovered by means of library research, a quick check of a major search engine on the Internet reveals that there are hundreds more articles and/or references regarding this matter online. The sources used in this thesis are in the Representative Bibliography at the end of this thesis.

⁴While various views regarding the Millennium have been held by different churches over time, orthodox Christianity continues to maintain a belief in a millennium, based upon this pivotal passage in Revelation 20:2-7.

⁵While in some cases the term “Sabbatarianism” is used to refer to “the practice of keeping Sunday holy and free of work and pleasurable activity” (see <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Sabbatarianism>, accessed July 11, 2008), throughout this thesis the terms “Sabbatarian/s” and “Sabbatarianism” will be used solely in reference to the seventh-day Sabbath, i.e., Saturday – the entire day of which is held sacred by some religious groups (e.g., Seventh-day Adventists); and which is generally observed as such from sunset on Friday evening until sunset on Saturday evening.

abolished, then the case is settled against them.”⁶ Thus, with good reason, Love averred: “This text, by its true meaning, has a key to the right understanding of the Scriptures pertaining to the Sabbath.”⁷

History of Colossians 2:16 Interpretation

For hundreds of years Colossians 2:16 has been repeatedly interpreted to mean that the weekly seventh-day Sabbath has been abolished and is no longer binding on Christians. In a fragment attributed to Irenæus (ca. AD 130-200), the ““feast day, or the new moons, or the sabbaths”” of Colossians 2:16 are referenced so as to discourage Christians from keeping “these feasts and fasts,” which Irenæus contended are “displeasing to the Lord.”⁸ Writing around AD 400, the respected Augustin continued this trend, claiming that this Colossian text “shows we are no longer bound to observe them,”⁹ that is, the feasts, as well as the weekly Sabbath. Augustin then concluded: “The rest of the Sabbath we consider no longer binding as an observance, now that the hope of our eternal rest has been revealed.”¹⁰

Though he broke away from many of the traditions and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, on this matter of the alleged abrogation of the weekly Sabbath, Protestant Reformer Martin Luther asserted that he based his teaching of the abolition of the Sabbath on New Testament passages such as Colossians 2:16.¹¹ In keeping with this kind of interpretation, John Calvin claimed that the weekly ““sabbath was a shadow of things to come,””¹² and that “Christians therefore ought to depart from all superstitious observance of days,”¹³ for “the sabbath is abrogated.”¹⁴

This general interpretation has continued over the ensuing centuries. For example, in a 1595 publication, Nicolas Bownde alleged: “Christ hath set us free from all the ceremonies of the Jews.... We are not bound to that distinction of meats and days, that they were: no not of the *Sabbath days*.”¹⁵ About four decades later, in 1636, in a treatise against Sabbatarianism, it was argued that “all ancient and modern expositors of holy Scripture, who are men of note and authority, in the Church, expound

⁶William DeLoss Love, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” Article II, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 37 (July 1880): 425 (emphasis added).

⁷Ibid.

⁸Irenæus *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus XXXVIII, The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, 575.

⁹Augustin *Reply to Faustus the Manichæan VI, 3, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, IV, 168.

¹⁰Ibid., VI, 4, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Father*, IV, 168.

¹¹See R. J. Bauckman, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition,” in D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 314.

¹²John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk. II, chap. VIII, sec. XXXI.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., sec. XXXII.

¹⁵Nicolas Bownde, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath, Plainly Laid Forth, and Soundly Proved by Testimonies Both of Holy Scripture, and Also of Old and New Ecclesiastical Writers* (London: Orwin Bownde, 1595), 52 (spelling updated).

Saint Paul's¹⁶ text," in Colossians 2:16, as referring to "weekly *Sabbaths*."¹⁷ In 1729, John Meredith claimed that Paul "here uses *Sabbaths* or *Sabbath days*; which according to the language of those days, doth chiefly if not always and only signify the *seventh-day Sabbath*."¹⁸

As time moved on, the arguments against the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, based on Colossians 2:16, became more focused. For instance, in 1899 R. A. Torrey wrote: "The Sabbath obligation is plainly and explicitly and unmistakably declared not to be binding upon the Christian. There is nothing in the whole New Testament plainer than this. Look at Col. 2:16, 17."¹⁹ In 1973, Paul Jewett declared: "Paul made it very plain that the Gentile Christians had no obligation to observe the Sabbath."²⁰ After asserting that "for Paul the observance of feasts, new moons, and the sabbath are irrelevant,"²¹ Thomas Schreiner stated, "Literal observance of the sabbath on Saturday is no longer required."²² Eduard Lohse categorically asseverated: "The Christian community is definitively freed from the Sabbath commandment."²³ B. H. Carroll declared: "This passage is the *death blow* to all sects which observe the seventh day sabbath."²⁴ As the late cult critic Walter Martin

¹⁶There is still scholarly debate regarding the authorship of this epistle, despite the fact that Col 1:1, 2 (NKJV) states: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Wilson acknowledged that "the authenticity of Colossians [as a Pauline epistle] is still maintained by quite a number of scholars, particularly in the English-speaking world;" (Robert McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* [London: T & T Clark International, 2005], 58). The question of authorship is addressed at length in Chapter Two below. This thesis basically adopts the stance taken by Arnold, who stated in his monograph: "Throughout this volume I will therefore refer to Paul as the author of the letter (in line with a fairly strong stream of scholarship);" (Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995], 7). Thus, whenever "Paul" or "Pauline" is mentioned in this thesis, it is used in the sense of Colossians being one of the epistles which the apostle wrote.

¹⁷Francis White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath-day; Containing a Defence of the Orthodoxall Doctrine of the Church of England, Against Sabbatarian-Noveltie* (London: R. B., 1636), 165 (spelling and punctuation updated). While White added "and annual," the seventh-day Sabbath was included in his explanation.

¹⁸John Meredith, *A Short Discourse Proving That the Jewish or Seventh-day Sabbath Is Abrogated and Repealed* (Philadelphia: New Printing-Office, 1729) (spelling and capitalization updated).

¹⁹R. A. Torrey, "Ought Christians to Keep the Sabbath?" (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1899), 29. See also Vogel, who maintained that "the sabbath is specially named as abrogated, in Col. ii:16-17;" (J. H. Waggoner and Peter Vogel, *A Written Discussion upon the Sabbath* [Quincy, IL: Gospel Echo and Christian, 1872], 97).

²⁰Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 44. Thomas posited: "'A sabbath day' clearly indicates the Jewish Sabbath;" (W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], 94).

²¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 170.

²²Ibid. See also, John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), s.v. "Sabbath," who states: "Paul affirms that no one may be called to account for Sabbath observance (Col 2:16), thus finally and completely liberating Christians from the obligations of the Sabbath law."

²³Eduard Lohse, "σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), VII:30.

²⁴B. H. Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews, An Interpretation of the English Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1948), 51 (emphasis added). Similarly, Riggle alleged: "Here is a clear, positive statement that the Sabbath was taken out of the way by nailing it to the cross, and therefore no one has a right to judge us for its non-observance. This single declaration of Paul's refutes all the theories of Sabbatarians;" (H. M. Riggle, *The Sabbath and the Lord's Day* [Guthrie, OK: Faith Publishing, 1980], 100).

concluded: “In the light of this Scripture alone, I contend that the argument for Sabbath observance collapses.”²⁵ In the year 2000 a former Sabbatarian professor, Jerry Gladson proclaimed: “The Sabbatarian perspective is clearly negated in view of this remarkable passage.”²⁶

These representative statements illustrate that throughout the history of the Christian church Colossians 2:16 has been regularly regarded as a text which teaches that the seventh-day Sabbath was abrogated and therefore is no longer binding on Christians.

The Challenge of Colossians 2

Though Colossians is considered “one of the most profound letters in the New Testament,”²⁷ Barry Crawford observed that the passage in Colossians 2:16-23 is “among the most obscure in the NT.”²⁸ Concurring, Troy Martin spoke of the “enormous exegetical problems in this passage.”²⁹ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez went further, indicating that “Colossians 2:16-23 is exegetically one of the most difficult passages to interpret in the New Testament.”³⁰

Curiously, it appears that when the passage in Colossians 2 is handled perhaps too casually, diametrically opposed perspectives are then proposed with equal fervor. For example, promoting the “ceremonial sabbath” view, a nineteenth-century Sabbatarian, Uriah Smith asserted: “There is *scarcely* a portion of Scripture in the New Testament *simpler* and *easier* to explain than Col. 2:14-17.”³¹ In contradistinction, Craig Blomberg similarly contended that, “There could *scarcely* be a *clearer* pair of verses proving that Sabbath observance is optional for believers.”³²

²⁵Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1997), 576; see also Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 166. In a similar vein, Laurin challenged: “Modern Sabbath-keepers must revise their estimate of things in the face of this scripture;” (Roy L. Laurin, *Colossians: Where Life Is Established* [Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1954], 99). More gently, Moulton stated: “Seventh Day Adventists might well be reminded of this verse;” (Harold K. Moulton, *Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians*, Epworth Preacher’s Commentaries [London: The Epworth Press, 1963], 40).

²⁶Jerry A. Gladson, *A Theologian’s Journey from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 2000), 336. F. F. Bruce challenged that “the *onus probandi* lies on those who argue that the weekly sabbath is not included in this reference;” (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, F. F. Bruce, ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 115, footnote #105).

²⁷Gene Lacoste Munn, “Introduction to Colossians,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 16:1 (Fall 1973): 20.

²⁸Barry S. Crawford, review of *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as a Response to a Cynic Critique*, by Troy W. Martin, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (April 1997): 387.

²⁹That is, in Col 2:16-19; see Troy W. Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 118 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 34.

³⁰Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Biblical Sabbath: The Adventist Perspective,” <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/sabbath-catholic2002.htm> (accessed August 19, 2002).

³¹Uriah Smith, as quoted in George I. Butler, *Replies to Elder Canright’s Attacks on Seventh Day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1895), 26 (emphases added).

³²Craig L. Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 342 (emphases added). Former Sabbatarian professor, Richard Fredericks has similarly argued for “the clarity of Colossians 2:16-17;” and, that “it couldn’t be clearer” that the seventh-day “Sabbath is a shadow;” (Richard Fredericks, “A General Response to Dr. Bacchiocchi and Dr. Ford,” September

Exaggerations aside, it seems Christopher Beetham’s acknowledgment of “the exegetical difficulties” of Colossians 2:16-23 as being “numerous and infamous,”³³ is more accurate. In his 2002 Master’s project on the history of the interpretation of σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16-17, Choung Shik Kim affirmed that this “passage is one of the most difficult as well as most important texts to interpret in the book of Colossians.”³⁴ While it is true that “this passage is a conundrum for Sabbatarians,”³⁵ yet, because so “much depends upon the meaning of this one verse,”³⁶ it would seem a worthy enterprise to engage in a careful examination of it.

Review of Literature

As already noted, the translation and interpretation of the Greek term σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16, and the concomitant implications for the weekly seventh-day Sabbath have been mentioned in a multiplicity of sources over the course of centuries. However, as elaborated below, an exhaustive search has shown that, there has apparently been a paucity of serious research devoted to any careful linguistic study and/or detailed literary analysis of the σαββάτων in Colossians. Fortunately, much has been written regarding the weekly Sabbath; thus, these materials have been extensively explored, with the result that valuable insights have been discovered, with implications for the present thesis.

Academic Research Regarding the “Sabbath”

For example, though his doctoral thesis was specifically on the “sacred times prescribed in the Pentateuch,” Ross Cole concluded that, “from the Christian perspective, the findings of this study have immediate implications for the interpretation of Col 2:16, 17.”³⁷ At times, the broader approach has provided a better foundation from which to operate, such as the question regarding whether the lexeme σάββατα is singular or plural. As recently as 2009, a New Testament professor argued that “the word in Col 2:16 is *sabbatōn*, which is not ambiguous: it is a genitive plural and cannot be singular.”³⁸ Yet, 60 years earlier, in-depth research for a master’s degree had already aptly concluded that “the evidence certifies that the plural form occurs frequently under contextual circumstances

1999, TMs [photocopy], Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI).

³³Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 196.

³⁴Choung Shik Kim, “Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16-17: Interpretations from 1837 to 1996” (MA thesis, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2002), 2.

³⁵Jerry Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath? A Response to Ron du Preez,” in Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, rev. ed. (Glendale, AZ: LAM Publications, 2010), 369.

³⁶Love, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” Article II, 424.

³⁷H. Ross Cole, “The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch: Old Testament Indicators of the Extent of Their Applicability” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 1996), 355.

³⁸Edwin Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47 (Autumn 2009): 277.

which demand that the singular meaning be understood.”³⁹ Pertinent information, such as the above, has been discovered in various master’s and doctoral research projects, which are footnoted here.⁴⁰

“Sabbath” in Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

Since it features quite prominently in biblical literature, the subject of the “Sabbath” has been included in both popular dictionaries and encyclopedias as well as more scholarly theological lexica. It seems that, almost invariably, these articles discuss the “sabbath” in Colossians 2:16. Generally, it is held that this passage teaches that the weekly Sabbath “was abrogated,” as S. R. Driver stated in 1911.⁴¹ More recently, some have acknowledged that “the meaning of this verse is disputed; it does not necessarily teach that Christians should not assemble on the sabbath.”⁴² It is this very factor which will be further scrutinized in Scripture, with insights from multiple reference works.⁴³

³⁹Lucille Harper-Knapp, “A Critical Study of the Greek Words Σάββατον and Σάββατα” (MA thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1949), 35.

⁴⁰Mathilde Frey, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: An Exegetical and Theological Study” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2011); Erhard H. Gallos, “Κατάπαυσις and Σάββατισμός in Hebrews 4” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2011); Myron Gene Heavin, “The Seventh Day of God’s Rest” (MBTS thesis, Talbot School of Theology, 2008); Jean-Paul André Heldt, “The Missiological Significance of the Biblical Sabbath and Jubilee as a Judeo-Christian Worldview” (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2002); Edward Martin Allen, “Rest as a Spiritual Discipline: The Meaning and Manner of Sabbath Observance” (DMin dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991); Richard James Griffith, “The Eschatological Significance of the Sabbath” (ThD dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990); Francis A. Regan, “*Dies Dominica* and *Dies Solis*: The Beginnings of the Lord’s Day in Christian Antiquity” (DST dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1961). So also, George William Lewis D’Sena, “The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day” (BDiv thesis, Talbot Theological Seminary, 1961).

⁴¹S. R. Driver, “Sabbath,” *Dictionary of the Bible, Dealing with Its Language, Literature and Contents Including the Biblical Theology*, James Hastings et al, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 4:322.

⁴²C. A. Evans, and S. Westerholm, “Sabbath,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig A. Evans, and Stanley E. Porter, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 1031-1035.

⁴³Willard M. Swartley, “Sabbath,” *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, Joel B. Green, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 695-696; E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת *šabbāt*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., Douglas W. Stott, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), XIV:387-397; Verlyn Verbrugge, ed., “σάββατον,” *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 1133-1136; Hendrik Bosman, “Sabbath,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Willem A. VanGemeren, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:1157-1162; Don F. Neufeld, ed., “Sabbath,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia: M-Z*; 2nd ed. rev.: Bobbie Jane Van Dolson, and Leo R. Van Dolson (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 488-507; Barbara J. Bruce, “Sabbath,” *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1216; John H. Tullock, “Sabbath,” *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, Watson E. Mills et al, eds. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 779-781; J. C. McCann, Jr., “Sabbath,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Geoffrey Bromiley et al, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:247-252; *Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible*, Geoffrey Wigoder et al, eds. (New York: Macmillan, 1986), s.v. “Sabbath;” Wilfred Stott, “Sabbath, Lord’s Day,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:405-415; Eduard Lohse, “Sábbaton,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. and abridged in one vol. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 989-992; W. E. Vine, “Sabbath,” *The Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984), 983-984; Gerhard F. Hasel, “Sabbath,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman et al, eds. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:849-856; Lohse, “σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή;” R. North, “Sabbath,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), XII:778-782; McKenzie, “Sabbath,” 751-752; J. Skinner, and J. Muilenberg, “Sabbath,” *Dictionary of the Bible*, James Hastings et al, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), 866-867; Walter Lewis Wilson, “Sabbath,” *Wilson’s Dictionary of Bible Types* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 392; J. S. Clemens, “Sabbath,” *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, James Hastings et al, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 2:422-424; *Dictionary of the Bible*, Samuel W. Barnum, ed. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), s.v. “Sabbath;” Henry Rogers, “Sabbath; Lord’s Day,” *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, William Lindsay Alexander, ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Adam and Charles Black, 1869), 3:708-722. See also, E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת *šabbāt*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck, and Helmer Ringgren, eds.,

Books Dealing with “Sabbath” Matters

There is evidence, since at least the late sixteenth century, that Colossians 2:16 was being discussed in books dealing with the Sabbath.⁴⁴ While this text has continued to be scrutinized, as seen in the plethora of publications,⁴⁵ it has recently become more prominent in discussions regarding

Douglas W. Stott, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), XIV:381-386; J. C. Laansma, “Lord’s Day,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, Ralph P. Martin, and Peter H. Davids, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 679-686; F. Stolz, “שבת,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds., Mark E. Biddle, trans. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1297-1302.

⁴⁴Bownde, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 52. A recent critical edition of Bownde’s work confirms this. See, Nicholas Bownd, *Sabbatum Veteris et Novi Testamenti: or The True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, A Critical Edition with Introduction and Analysis, Chris Coldwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Naphtali Press & Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 117, 147-151.

⁴⁵Clinton Baldwin, *The Person of Jesus: God’s Obligatory Sabbath* (Silver Spring, MD: Dikaioma Publishers, 2017); Elce-Junior Lauriston, *All Foods Are Clean and Every Day Is the Sabbath: A Response to Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi and Seventh-day Adventism on Romans 14* (Camp Verde, AZ: LAM Publications, 2017); Daniel Knauft, *Sacred Time unRemembered: How the Original Sabbath Was Lost – And Why It Matters* (Fall City, WA: Torchlight Intelligence Publishing, 2014); Clinton Baldwin, *The Sabbath: More Than a Day – A Person* (Spanish Town, Jamaica: Lithomedia, 2012); Michael H. Burer, *Divine Sabbath Work* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012); Terence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete; and The Ascendancy of First-Day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); John K. Lee, *Sabbath and Redemption*, Felix S. Liew, trans. (Hong Kong: Global Chinese Evangelism, 2010); Dennis T. Olson, “Sacred Time: The Sabbath and Christian Worship,” in *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture*, Edward O’Flaherty, S.J., Rodney L. Petersen, with Timothy A. Horton, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 43-66; *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest* (Milford, OH: United Church of God, 2009); Allen Walker, *The Law and the Sabbath* (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2009); Shawn Boonstra, *The Sign* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2008); Ronald Myung Soo Cho, *The Biblical Lord’s Day and Its Purpose* (Silver Spring, MD: Np, 2006), 28-40; Klaus Issler, *Wasting Time with God: A Christian Spirituality of Friendship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Danny Shelton, *The Forgotten Commandment* (West Frankfort, IL: Three Angels Broadcasting Network, 2001); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath Under Crossfire* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1998); Richard B. 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Shea, eds., *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis* (Applegate, CA: Life Assurance Ministries, 1990); Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath: A Comprehensive Exegetical Approach*, Beiträge zur Biblischen Exegese und Theologie, Band 21 (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1988); Russell Holt, *The Saturday-Sunday Shuffle: God’s Day or Man’s?* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1987); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985); Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1983); Robert D. Brinsmead, *The Sabbath and Genesis 2:2, 3; The Heart of New Testament Ethics: A Reply to Desmond Ford’s Sabbatarian Arguments* (Fallbrook, CA: Verdict, 1982); D. A. 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(London: Independent, 1960); H. B. Porter, *The Day of Light: The Biblical and Liturgical Meaning of Sunday* (Greenwich, CT: Seabury, 1960); Theodore H. Epp, *The Sabbath or the Lord's Day – Which?* (Lincoln: Back to the Bible Broadcast, 1958); Herman Peichl, *Der Tag des Herrn: Die Heiligung des Sonntags im Wandel der Zeit* (Vienna: Verlag Herder, 1958); D. R. Dungan, *Sabbath or Lord's Day? Which?* (Nashville: Harbinger Book Club, 1952); Calvin Edwin Moseley, Jr., *The Lord's Day* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1949); Kenneth E. Coombs, *The True Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday* (Salt Lake City: Kenneth E. Coombs, 1948); Horace G. Cowan, *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1948); Eugene S. Smith, *The Smith-Shuler Debate on the Law, the Sabbath, the Lord's Day: A Bible Discussion* (Dallas: Gospel Broadcast Publication, 1948); Walter E. Straw, *Sunday or Sabbath, Which Should Christians Observe? 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Gray, *Eight Studies of the Lord's Day* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891); Frederick Mutschmann, *Sabbath or Sunday: Which?* (Allentown, PA: Church Messenger, 1890); James Bailey, *Sabbath Commentary: A Scriptural Exegesis of All the Passages in the Bible That Relate, or Are Supposed to Relate, in Any Way, to the Sabbath Doctrine* (New York: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1888); M. C. Briggs, *The Sabbath: What – Why – How* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1888); Alvin Marsh, *Review of Gitchell: A Reply to His Reasonings Concerning the Sabbath, the Covenants, and the Law* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1888); J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. rev. (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887); D. T. Bourdeau, *Refutation of Forty-Four So-Called Objections Against the Ancient Sabbath; Also Critical and Practical Thoughts on the Law and Sabbath, and on the Greek of Certain Passages* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887); Hamilton, *Our Rest-Day*; A. M. Weston, *The Evolution of a Shadow: or, The Bible Doctrine of Rest, from the Standpoint of a Believer in the Divine Authority and Paramount Importance of the Religious Observance of the First Day of the Week* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1886); W. W. Everts, *The Sabbath: Its Permanence, Promise, and Defence* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1885); E. Hopkins, *The Law and Sabbath, The Gospel and Lord's Day. Why I Quit Keeping the Jewish Sabbath* (Mount Morris, IL: Brethrens, 1885); T. H. Woodward, *Which Is the Sabbath? Saturday or Sunday? A Check on Adventism* (San Francisco: H. G. Parsons, 1883); George Blagden Bacon, "Six Sermons on the Sabbath Question," in *The Sabbath Question* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1882); H. T. Besse, *The Sabbath: A Memorial of Different Events, with the Corresponding Changes of the Day, and the Manner of Its Observance; Together with the Chronology of the Ages* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist, 1881); Wm. Armstrong, *Is Saturday or Sunday the Christian Sabbath? A Refutation of Sabbatarianism* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1880); James Augustus Hesse, *Sunday: Its Origin, History, and Present Obligation* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1880); D. M. Canright, *The Morality of the Sabbath* (Oakland, CA: Np, 1875; reprint: Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1986); J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, 2nd ed., enl. (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1873); W. H. Littlejohn, *The Constitutional Amendment: Or the Sunday, the Sabbath, the Change, and Restitution* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1873); Waggoner, and Vogel, *A Written Discussion Upon the Sabbath*; Thomas B. Brown, *Thoughts Suggested by the Perusal of Gilfillan, and Other*

the “sabbath,” as noted from the fact that this one passage of Colossians 2:16 appears on 30 pages of a 411-page book, *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*.⁴⁶

In addition, several works dealing with the Ten Commandments (or biblical law in general), have addressed the topic of the “sabbath” in Colossians 2, with differing conclusions. For instance, in 1864 a Sunday-keeping scholar named William Plumer stated that Paul “speaks *not* of the weekly Sabbath, nor any institution of the decalogue, but of matters besides the moral law.”⁴⁷ More than 150 years later, in a slightly ironic twist, a seventh-day Sabbatarian concluded that Colossians 2:16 is *indeed* discussing the weekly Sabbath.⁴⁸ Together with chapters dealing with the “Sabbath” in other

Authors, on the Sabbath (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1870); A. H. Lewis, *The Sabbath and the Sunday* (New York: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1870); John Kelman, *The Sabbath of Scripture* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1869); James Gilfillan, *The Sabbath: Viewed in the Light of Reason, Revelation, and History, with Sketches of Its Literature* (New York: American Tract Society, 1862); William Domville, *The Sabbath or, An Inquiry into the Supposed Obligation of the Sabbaths of the Old Testament* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1855); E. W. Hengstenberg, *Über den Tag des Herrn* (Berlin: Ludwig Oehmigke, 1852); Peter M’Owan, *Practical Considerations on the Christian Sabbath* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851); William Domville, *The Sabbath; or, An Examination of the Six Texts Commonly Adduced from the New Testament in Proof of a Christian Sabbath* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1849); George Carlow, *A Defense of the Sabbath, in Reply to Ward on the Fourth Commandment* (New York: Paul Stillman, 1847); Seth Williston, *Five Discourses on the Sabbath, Preached at Durham, N. Y.* (New Haven, CT: William G. Hooker, 1847); Robert Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart, 1845); T. M. Preble, *A Tract, Showing That the Seventh Day Should be Observed as the Sabbath Instead of the First Day; “According to the Commandment”* (Nashua, NH: Murray & Kimball, 1845); Charles John Ellicott, *The History and Obligation of the Sabbath* (Cambridge: University Press, 1844); Harmon Kingsbury, *The Sabbath: A Brief History of Laws, Petitions, Remonstrances and Reports, with Facts and Arguments Relating to the Christian Sabbath* (New York: Robert Carter, 1840); Robert Burnside, *Remarks on the Different Sentiments Entertained in Christendom Relative to the Weekly Sabbath* (London: Joseph Stillman, 1827); George Carlow, *Truth Defended: Or Observations on Mr. Ward’s Expository Discourses, From the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th Verses of the 20th Chapter of Exodus, Concerning the Sabbath* (Stonington-Port, CT: Samuel Trumbull, 1802); Thomas Chafie, *A Brief Tract on the Fourth Commandment, Wherein Is Discover’d the Cause of All Our Controversies, About Sabbath Day, and the Means of Reconciling Them* (London: Bible and Three Crowns, 1692); John Owen, *Exercitations Concerning the Name, Original, Nature, Use and Continuance of a Day of Sacred Rest* (London: Nath. Ponder, 1671); White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath-day*; Ned S. Ashton, *The Bible Sabbath: A General Review of the Sabbath Controversy* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, nd); J. Thos. Butler, *The Sabbath Question: Is the Christian Under the Mosaic Law and Must He Observe the Jewish Sabbath?* (Jacksonville, FL: np, nd); Robert Lewis Dabney, *The Christian Sabbath: Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*, vol. 1 (Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books, nd); Elam J. Daniels, *Proof That Sunday Is the New Testament Worship Day and That Sunday Keeping Is Not “The Mark of the Beast”* (Winter Garden, FL: Bible Echo Press, nd); Norman C. Deck, *The Lord’s Day or, The Sabbath* (London: Pickering & Inglis, nd); M. R. De Haan, *The Sabbath or the Lord’s Day, or The Seventh Day or the First* (Grand Rapids: np, nd); A. G. Hobbs, *Should the Sabbath Be Observed Today?* (Kansas City, KS: np, nd); Charles Walter Irwin, *The Sabbath in Greek*, Bible Truth Series (Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, nd); M. Joblin, *Law or Gospel – Which? A Popular Discussion of the Sabbath Question* (Cleveland, OH: np, nd); Matthew Larson, *Is the Old Covenant Binding Upon Christians? Should Christians Observe the Ancient Jewish Sabbath?* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, nd); Frederick George Smith, *Die Sabbat und Sonntag-Frage im Lichte des Wortes Gottes* (Anderson, IN: Christian Unity, nd); Timothy D. Scott, *Sunday, the Christian Sabbath: A Brief Discussion of the Sunday Question* (Springfield, OH: Whyte Printing Co., nd); I. C. Wellcome, *The Seventh-day Sabbath Claims Examined: The Lord’s Day Vindicated; History of Seventh Day Keeping and First Day Keeping During the Gospel Dispensation* (Boston: Advent Christian, nd).

⁴⁶See Christopher John Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 16, 29-31, 39, 75, 76, 79, 86, 102, 128, 146, 174, 176, 191, 207, 210, 287, 310, 311, 341, 342, 348, 369-372, 385, 401, 408.

⁴⁷William S. Plumer, *The Law of God as Contained in the Ten Commandments, Explained and Enforced* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education, 1864), 307 (emphasis added). He, nevertheless, concludes that Sunday should be observed (*ibid.*, 308-309).

⁴⁸Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 358 (footnote #43). Gane’s fuller argument, however, is that “in this context it appears that ritual activities of eating and drinking (participating in typological shadows) performed on weekly Sabbaths are in view;” (*ibid.*). Similarly, by overlooking several significant linguistic and contextual factors (which are to be addressed in this

volumes,⁴⁹ all books such as those noted above,⁵⁰ will be taken into consideration, as relevant to this thesis.⁵¹

Articles and Essays Regarding the “Sabbath”

In one of four major articles about the “Sabbath,” which he got published in 1880, William DeLoss Love concluded as follows regarding Colossians 2:16: “Whatever the true interpretation, this passage is the Rosetta stone.... This text by its true meaning, has a key to the right understanding of the Scriptures pertaining to the Sabbath.”⁵² In this vein, earlier articles by seventh-day Sabbatarians maintained, for example, that “Paul is *not* talking about the seventh-day Sabbath in Colossians 2:14-17,”⁵³ but rather the “ceremonially significant sabbaths.”⁵⁴ Others, however, especially some former Sabbatarians,⁵⁵ have been proposing that “Paul tells the Colossians that sabbathkeeping is no longer

thesis), Sabbatarian New Testament scholar Papaioannou has recently claimed that the weekly Sabbath is in view here in Col 2:16; (Kim Papaioannou, *Israel, Covenant, Law: A Third Perspective on Paul* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017], 129-139).

⁴⁹G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), (see chap. 23: “The Church’s New-Creational Transformation of Israel’s Distinguishing Marks: The Sunday Sabbath Observance of the Church as an ‘Already and Not Yet’ New-Creational End-Time Reality”), 775-801; Kenneth A. Strand, “The Sabbath,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Raoul Dederen, ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 493-537; Gerhard F. Hasel, “‘New Moon and Sabbath’ in Eighth Century Israelite Prophetic Writings (Isa 1:13; Hos 2:13; Amos 8:5),” *Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums*, Band 13 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), 37-64; Gerhard F. Hasel, and W. C. G. Murdoch, “The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 44-56.

⁵⁰Such as, Kathryn Greene-McCreight, “Restless Until We Rest in God:” The Fourth Commandment as Test Case in Christian ‘Plain Sense’ Interpretation,” in *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness*, William P. Brown, ed., Library of Theological Ethics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 223-236; Michael S. Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom* (Chicago: Moody, 1993); Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*; Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, vol. One: *The Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (USA: Craig Press, 1973); Owen M. Weatherly, *The Ten Commandments in Modern Perspective* (Richmond: John Knox, 1961); Lehman Strauss, *The Eleven Commandments* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1955); R. H. Charles, *The Decalogue* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1923); George Jackson, *The Ten Commandments* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1898); George Dana Boardman, *The Ten Commandments* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1889); E. A. Washburn, *The Social Law of God: Sermons on the Ten Commandments* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1881). So also, William Edwin Richardson, *Paul Among Friends & Enemies* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992); Charles Horne, “The Fourth Commandment,” in *God Speaks to an X-Rated Society: Are the Ten Commandments Still Valid?* Alan F. Johnson, ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1973), 37-44; Willard Allan Colcord, *Reply to D. M. Canright’s Attacks on Seventh-day Adventism* (Melbourne, Australia: Echo Publishing, 1904).

⁵¹While there are additional materials available online, other than a couple of examples noted, these will not be listed here; but, as needed, they may be referenced later on: Michael Morrison, *Sabbath, Circumcision, and Tithing: Which Old Testament Laws Apply to Christians?* 4th ed. (Arcadia, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 2003); “Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters,” Presented to the Fortieth (1973) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; <https://www.opc.org/GA/sabbath.html> (accessed 22 August 2017).

⁵²Love, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” Article II, 424-425.

⁵³Ross Johnston, “A Discussion of the Sunday-Sabbath Subject,” *Bible Advocate* (August 1973), 16 (emphasis added).

⁵⁴Willmore D. Eva, “Why the Seventh Day? Part 2,” *Ministry* (September 1999), 8. So also, Robert Coulter, “Is All Time Sacred?” *Bible Advocate* (December 1999), 14-16; Reo M. Christenson, “Questions Often Asked on the New Testament Sabbath,” *Bible Advocate* (December 1971), 5-6, 20; Burt F. Marrs, “Questions on the Sabbath Answered,” *Bible Advocate* (2 July 1951), 11-14.

⁵⁵See, for example, Dale Ratzlaff, “Was Sabbath Created: A Look at Adventism’s Use of Mark 2:27,” *Proclamation* 16/3 (Fall 2015); <http://www.lifeassuranceministries.org/proclamation/2015/3/wassabbathcreate.html> (accessed 11 August 2017); idem, “The Sabbath: A Shadow of Grace,” *Adventist Today*, July-August 1996, 18-21;

significant.”⁵⁶ More recently, several Sabbatarians, believing that the weekly Sabbath is in view in Colossians 2, have alleged that this passage is *not* against the Sabbath per se, but rather against its legalistic observance,⁵⁷ it being kept as a Christless day,⁵⁸ etc.⁵⁹ – issues to be dealt with in this thesis.

Articles and Essays Dealing with Colossians 2

Since at least the early 1850s articles on Colossians 2:14-17 have appeared in Sabbatarian magazines, specifically addressing challenges to the validity of observing the weekly Sabbath – articles which generally concluded that the term “sabbath” here, refers to ceremonial sabbaths.⁶⁰

Joseph W. Tkatch, “The Sabbath Rest in Christ,” *Plain Truth* (August 1995), 1, 24; “Answers to Questions on Law and Sabbath,” *Evangelica* 3/3 (August 1982): 33-37; Alan Crandall, “Jesus Gives Us Rest: A Study Guide,” *Evangelica* 3/3 (August 1982): 4-10; “The Sabbath in Christian History,” *Evangelica* 3:3 (August 1982): 28-29; Bart Willruth, “The Sabbath and the Covenants,” *Evangelica* 3/3 (August 1982): 19-24; Robert D. Brinsmead, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 3: The Pauline Epistles,” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 16-17; idem, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 4: Galatians 4:10, 11,” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 18-24; idem, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 8: What About the Ten Commandments?” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 39-43; idem, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 12: The Reality of the Sabbath,” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 56-60; idem, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 14: The Liberty of the Gospel,” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 66; idem, “Jesus and the Sabbath, Chapter 1: The Wisdom of Jesus,” *Verdict* 4/5 (September 1981): 6-7; idem, “Jesus and the Sabbath, Chapter 2: The Sabbath Sayings of Jesus,” *Verdict* 4/5 (September 1981): 8-11; idem, “Jesus and the Sabbath, Chapter 3: The Sabbath Deeds of Jesus,” *Verdict* 4/5 (September 1981): 12-14.

⁵⁶Alan Crandall, “Paul and the Sabbath,” *Evangelica* 3/3 (August 1982): 25. In articles on the Sabbath in general, many have concluded that Col 2:16 indicates that the weekly Sabbath is abrogated and/or optional; see, for example, Joel T. Williamson, Jr. “The Sabbath and Dispensationalism,” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 11/32 (March 2007): 77-95; Merrill F. Unger, “The Significance of the Sabbath,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123 (1966): 51-59; William DeLoss Love, “The Sabbath in the Old Dispensation, and the Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 37 (January 1880): 153-178; idem, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” Article I, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 37 (April 1880): 355-389; idem, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day: Testimony of the Fathers,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 37 (October 1880): 661-685; idem, “The Sabbath: Did the Early Fathers Hold That the Fourth Commandment Is Abolished?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 38 (April 1881): 254-286; idem, “A Christian Sabbath in the New Dispensation: Biblical and Patristic Evidence,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 38 (July 1881): 524-552; L. Coleman, “Historical Sketch of the Christian Sabbath,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1 (August 1844): 526-552.

⁵⁷See Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Under Fire: A Look at Recent Controversy over the Sabbath,” *Adventist Review* (June 1999), 20-24; Roy Branson, Andy McRae, and Charles Scriven, “The Meaning and Role of the Sabbath,” *Ministry* (May 1997), 22-25; Norman L. Shoaf, “Lord of the Sabbath,” *Plain Truth* (August 1994), 4-5, 9-10; Calvin Burrell, “Paul’s Sabbath Theology,” *Bible Advocate* (May 1983), 14-17.

⁵⁸See Gudmundur Olafsson, “God’s Eternal Covenant and the Sabbath,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16/1-2 (2005): 155-163; Ivan T. Blazen, “Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully,” *Spectrum* 27/3 (Summer 1999): 39-40.

⁵⁹This includes Robert K. McIver, “When, Where, and Why Did the Change from Sabbath to Sunday Worship Take Place in the Early Church?” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53.1 (2015): 15-35; Roy E. Gane, “Is the Sabbath Part of the ‘New Covenant’?” *Reflections: A BRI Newsletter* (April 2010), 4-10; Frank B. Holbrook, “Did the Apostle Paul Abolish the Sabbath?” *Perspective Digest* 14/2 (2009): 22-32; Herold Weiss, “New Testament Sabbaths,” *Spectrum* 33.4 (Fall 2005): 45-48; Tim Crosby, “The Apostolic Council and the Ten Commandments,” *Ministry* (April 2005), 14-15; Roy E. Gane, “Sabbath and the New Covenant,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10/1-2 (1999): 311-332; Desmond Ford, “Sabbath or Sunday?” *Bible Advocate* (February 1992), 4-6, 17; Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Answers to Sabbath Questions,” *Liberty* (September/October 1991), 24-27. See also, Jerry A. Gladson, “The Sabbath in Christian Life: A Reconsideration,” *Adventist Today* (July-August 1996), 15-17; André Pelletier, “Σαββατα: Transcription Grecque de L’Arameen,” *Vetus Testamentum* XXII (1972): 436-447; Herold Weiss, “The Law in the Epistle to the Colossians,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (July 1972): 294-314; Roy L. Aldrich, “The Mosaic Ten Commandments Compared to Their Restatements in the New Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 118 (July 1961): 250-258; Charles Lee Feinberg, “The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 95:378 (Apr 1938): 172-194.

⁶⁰For example, Ron du Preez, “No ‘Rest’ for the ‘Sabbath’ of Colossians 2:16: A Structural-Syntactical-Semantic Study,” *Ministry* (January 2015): 11-15; Marvin Moore, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times*, February 2003, 28; Marvin Moore, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times*, February 1995, 14; Russell Holt, “By the Book,” *Signs of the Times*, September 1994, 21; Kevin L. Morgan, “Crucifixion Nails Through the Sabbath? Another Look at a Controversial Passage,”

When one writer in 1934 suggested that “sabbath” identifies both ceremonial sabbaths as well as ceremonies performed on the seventh-day Sabbath,⁶¹ he was so challenged that he later apologized, that what he had written was “unfortunately worded.”⁶² Curiously, virtually the same Old Testament references (e.g., 1 Chron 23:31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; etc.) were highlighted more than 35 years later, in the same magazine, as purported evidence of “a well-established OT time sequence of religious days,”⁶³ which allegedly shows that Colossians 2:16 refers to the weekly Sabbath. While some Sabbatarian academics had already begun to promote this calendric trilogy as supposed proof that Paul was dealing with the weekly Sabbath,⁶⁴ from this point in time, this notion began to appear in public, in magazines and journals. These scholars, nevertheless, claimed that Colossians 2 is actually against a misuse of the weekly Sabbath;⁶⁵ hence, it is still valid.⁶⁶ In the meantime, former Sabbatarians were seeing, in Brinsmead’s words, “Colossians as the final word on this matter;”⁶⁷ and, that “we cannot escape Paul’s declaration that the regulations of the Mosaic law [including the weekly Sabbath] have been nailed to the cross.”⁶⁸ Several research-oriented, academic papers, which

Ministry, March 1993, 15-16, 18; Frank B. Holbrook, “Frank Answers: Did Christ Abolish the Sabbath,” *These Times*, August 1977, 22; W. E. Read, “More on Colossians 2:14, Part 1,” *Ministry*, January 1973, 46-47; D. E. Mansell, “Thoughts on Colossians 2:14-17,” *Ministry*, December 1971, 27-29; Don F. Neufeld, “Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days?” *Review and Herald*, 15 April 1971, 13; Earle Hilgert, “‘Sabbath Days’ in Colossians 2:16,” *Ministry* (February 1952), 42-43; J. N. Andrews, “Colossians II, 14-17,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, 7 November 1854, 100; E. R. Seaman, “The Sabbath and the Law,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, 16 May 1854, 134-135; J. B. Frisbie, “The Seventh-day Sabbath Not Abolished,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, 14 March 1854, 51; James White, “The Sabbath Law in the New Testament,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, 11 August 1853, 52; J. N. Andrews, “The Sabbath: Letters to O. R. L. Crozier—No. 1,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, May 1852, 1-4; James White, “Remarks in Kindness,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, 2 March 1852, 100-101; J. N. Andrews, “Remarks of O. R. L. Crozier on the Institution, Design and Abolition of the Sabbath,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, February, 1852, 81-86; Joseph Bates, “The Seventh Day Sabbath Not Nailed to the Cross,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, January 1851, 31-32; James White, *Present Truth*, March 1850, 52; idem, *Present Truth*, August 1849, 10.

⁶¹W. E. Howell, “‘Sabbath’ in Colossians 2:16,” *Ministry*, September 1934, 10, 20-21.

⁶²W. E. Howell, “Anent Colossians 2:16,” *Ministry*, April 1936, 18-19.

⁶³Richard W. Coffen, “Feedback: Colossians 2:14-17,” *Ministry*, August 1972, 13-15.

⁶⁴See, for example, Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 358-364; Paul Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16” (MA thesis, Loma Linda University), 29-40; William Edwin Richardson, “A Study of the Historical Background and the Interpretation of Colossians 2:14-17” (MA thesis, Andrews University, 1960), 73-83.

⁶⁵Edwin Reynolds, “‘Let No One Judge You:’ Col 2:16-17 in Exegetical Perspective,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 20/1-2 (2009): 208-222; Marvin Moore, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times*, June 2003, 28; Frank B. Holbrook, “Did the Apostle Paul Abolish the Sabbath? Colossians 2:14-17 Revisited,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13/2 (Autumn 2002): 64-72; William E. Richardson, “Sabbath: Nailed to the Cross?” *Ministry*, May 1997, 13-15, 29. Similarly holding that it *is* the weekly Sabbath, see: Calvin Burrell, “Questions & Answers,” *Bible Advocate*, April-May 2008, 7; Richard Wiedenheft, “Is the Sabbath a Shadow? A Commentary on Colossians 2:16,” *Bible Advocate*, June 2000, 14-16; David C. Jarnes, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times*, October 1998, 28.

⁶⁶Some maintained that the implied focus was sacrifices: Kim Papaioannou, and Mxolisi Michael Sokupa, “Does Colossians 2:16, 17 Abolish the Sabbath? A Fresh Look at a Difficult Text,” *Adventist Review*, <http://archives.adventistreview.org/article/5139/archives/issue-2012-1506/does-colossians-2-16-17-abolish-the-sabbath> (accessed 3 July 2017); Paul Giem, “*Sabbatōn* in Col 2:16,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 19/3 (1981): 195-210.

⁶⁷Robert D. Brinsmead, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 5: Colossians 2:16,” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 29.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 28.

have been prepared so as to find answers to the various questions raised, may prove helpful;⁶⁹ though it does seem to be true that “there are now amongst Sabbath-keepers four or five contradictory explanations of Colossians 2:16, 17.”⁷⁰ In addition, various scholarly studies on other issues in Colossians 2 (such as the χειρόγραφον of vs. 14,⁷¹ or the σκιά and σῶμα of vs. 17⁷²), will be taken into account as well.⁷³

⁶⁹Sanghoon Jee, “Interpretation of Σαββατων in Colossians 2:16: Weekly Seventh-day Sabbath or Yearly Ceremonial Sabbath or Weekdays,” Paper Presented at the 3rd International Scholars’ Conference, Adventist University of Indonesia, October 21-22, 2015; John R. Treat, “Does Col. 2:16 Do Away with Sabbath?” October 2008, TMs [photocopy], A Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for LEAD535 Graduate Writing, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Norman H. Young, “Romans 14:5-6 and Colossians 2:16 in Social Context,” Paper Presented to the Biblical Research Institute Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Andrews University, October, 2007; Leo S. Ranzolin, Jr., “The Sabbath in Colossians,” 2006, TMs [photocopy], A Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Washington, DC; Martin Pröbstle, “Exegese von Kolosser 2:16,” April 1988, TMs [photocopy], Semesterarbeit für das Unterrichtsfach, NT 120 Einleitung NT, Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, Austria; Jon Paulien, “An Exegetical Overview of Col 2:13-17: With Implications for SDA Understanding,” August 1983, TMs [photocopy], www.andrews.edu/~jonp (accessed 21 April 2006); Seizou Wagatsuma, “Christ’s Ministry Today and Shadow: The Exegesis of Col 2:16-17,” 1982, TMs [photocopy], Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; David Colheart, “An Examination of Colossians 2:14-17,” 1974, TMs [photocopy], Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Salim Japas, “Feast, New Moon, Sabbath in Colossians 2:16,” 1974, TMs [photocopy], Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Woodrow W. Whidden, “Colossians 2:14-17,” 1968, TMs [photocopy], Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Walter F. Specht, “The Sabbath in Colossians with Particular Reference to Col. 2:16, 17,” nd, TMs [photocopy], Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁷⁰Anthony Buzzard, “Colossians 2:16 and the Sabbath Question,” Restoration Fellowship, 2001. See <http://www.mindspring.com/~anthonybuzzard> (accessed 25 July 2001). Online there are documents directly arguing that Col 2:16 shows that the Sabbath has been abrogated. See, for example, *ibid.*; Michel Morrison, “Bible Study: Fully Forgiven in Christ: A Study of Colossians 2:6-17,” See http://64.233.167.104/custom?q=cache:JgSZ0RbnT50J:wcg.org/wm/99AUGUST/bible_stu... (accessed 2 October 2005). Other online essays, mainly by feast-keepers, seek to show that *all* festivals and the weekly Sabbath need to be kept; for example, Scott Ashley, “Does Colossians 2:16 Show the Sabbath Is No longer Necessary,” see http://www.io.com/~robinson/1995/06_23_1995/sabbathnecessary.html (accessed 25 July 2001); Larry Ray Hafley, “Queries and Explications: What Is the Sabbath of Colossians 2:14-16?” *Watchman Magazine* 1/10 (October 1998); see <http://www.watchmanmag.com> (accessed 25 July 2001); Fred R. Coulter, “Understanding Paul’s Difficult Scriptures Concerning the Laws and Commandments of God,” Christian Biblical Church of God; <http://www.henkrijstenberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/TORAH-PAULS-DIFFICULT-SCRIPTURES.pdf> (accessed 13 August 2017).

⁷¹Roy Yates, “Colossians 2,14: Metaphor of Forgiveness,” *Biblica* 71 (1990): 248-259; Nikolaus Walter, “Miszellen: Die ‘Handschrift in Satzungen’ Kol 2 14,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 70 ½ (1979): 115-118; Wesley Carr, “Two Notes on Colossians,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1973): 492-500; Oliva A. Blanchette, “Does the *Cheirographon* of Col 2,14 Represent Christ Himself?” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961): 306-312. Though not in scholarly journals, see also, R. K. McGregor Wright, “The Unity of the Law: What was ‘Nailed to the Cross?’” *Proclamation*, July-August 2005, 6-12; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Epistles: Twisting Scripture?” *Perspective Digest* 5/2 (2000): 4-5.

⁷²Troy W. Martin, “But Let Everyone Discern the Body of Christ (Colossians 2:17),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114/2 (1995): 249-255; W. C. Vergeer, “Σκιά and Σῶμα: The Strategy of Contextualisation in Colossians 2:17; A Contribution to the Quest for a Legitimate Contextual Theology Today,” *Neotestamentica* 28(2) (1994): 379-393.

⁷³This includes the following: Mxolisi Michael Sokupa, “The Calendric Elements in Colossians 2:16 in Light of the Ongoing Debate on the Opponents,” *Neotestamentica* 46/1 (2012): 172-189; H. Ross Cole, “The Christian and Time-Keeping in Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39:2 (Autumn 2001): 273-282; Troy Martin, “Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal 4.10 and Col 2.16,” *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 105-119; Holly Diane Hayes, “Between Text and Sermon: Colossians 2:6-19,” *Interpretation* 49 (July 1995): 285-288; Gregory T. Christopher, “A Discourse Analysis of Colossians 2:16-3:17,” *Grace Theological Journal* 11/2 (1990): 205-220; T. C. G. Thornton, “Jewish New Moon Festivals, Galatians 4:3-11 and Colossians 2:16,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 40/1 (1989): 97-100; C. S. Rodd, “Salvation Proclaimed: XI. Colossians 2⁸⁻¹⁵,” *Expository Times* 94 (1982): 36-41; Ian A. Moir, “Some Thoughts on Col. 2, 17-18,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 35 (November/December 1979): 363-365. See also the pamphlet, Uriah Smith, *What Was Nailed to the Cross? An Exposition of Colossians 2:14-*

Book Chapters Focused on Colossians 2:16

Rarely does it appear that an entire chapter in a book is devoted to the *σάββατα* in this epistle. Other than chapters by the researcher, in four scholarly works,⁷⁴ only two other chapters have been found.⁷⁵ It is particularly the more recent essay, “The Riddle of ‘Sabbaths’ in Colossians,” which appears to offer more helpful insights.⁷⁶ After some valuable contextual reflections and exegetical work, the author cautions that “a clear-cut and definitive account of the *sabbata* in Colossians may be out of reach”⁷⁷ – a goal that this thesis will hopefully contribute towards. In addition, a short appendix, “The ‘Sabbath Days’ of Colossians 2:16, 17,”⁷⁸ from a pro-Sabbatarian perspective does provide a few insights that could be of use in this study.

Just over a decade ago, after the researcher of this thesis had self-published a booklet on the identity of the “sabbath” in Colossians 2:16, the Director of Andrews University Press recommended that a larger work for a broader readership be prepared as an academic publication. The result was a document titled *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*,⁷⁹ which has been recognized as “the most complete and detailed scholarly study of the biblical phrase ‘feast, new moon or Sabbath’ in Colossians 2:16.”⁸⁰ At least seven book reviews of this study – the

17 (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, nd). A few chapters, directly addressing matters in Col 2, have also proven helpful: Allan R. Bevere, “The *Cheirographon* in Colossians 2:14 and the Ephesians Connection,” in *Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honor of James D. G. Dunn for His 70th Birthday*, B. J. Oropeza, C. K. Robertson, and Douglas C. Mohrmann, eds. (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 199-206; Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, “Τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Colossians 2:17,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*, Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, ed. (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 222-238; Demetrios J. Constantelos, “Religious Cultural Diversity and Christian Unity in the Church of Colossae: An Exegesis of Colossians 2.16 to 3.4,” in *Agape and Diakonia: Essays in Memory of Bishop Gerasimos of Akydos*, Peter A. Chamberas, ed. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 53-61. It should be noted that feast-keepers generally hold that Col 2:16 refers to the weekly Sabbath; but, that *all* the levitical festivals as well as the seventh-day Sabbath must be observed; see the pamphlet: Voy Wilks, *Colossians 2:14 to 17* (Eastland, TX: Grady’s Printing, 1990).

⁷⁴Ron du Preez, “The Sabbath of Colossians 2:16: Reflections on a Debated Text,” in *The Sabbath and the Bible*, Theological Symposium, vol. 1 (Nairobi, Kenya: Adventist Theological Society, Adventist University of Africa, 2017), 77-101; idem, “Σάββατα in Colossians 2:16: Singular or Plural?” in *Meeting with God on the Mountains: Essays in Honor of Richard M. Davidson*, Jiří Moskala, ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2016), 421-464; idem, “The *Sabbata* of Colossians 2:16: Reflections on a Debated Text,” in “*The End from the Beginning: Festschrift Honoring Merling Alomia*, Benjamin Rojas, Teófilo Correa, Lael Caesar, and Joel Turpo, eds. (Lima, Peru: Universidad Peruana Unión, 2015), 455-470; idem, “Is the Seventh-day Sabbath a ‘Shadow of Things to Come’?” in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, Gerhard Pfandl, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 391-397.

⁷⁵Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009); Herold Weiss, *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath Among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

⁷⁶See Tonstad, 257-277.

⁷⁷Ibid., 274.

⁷⁸Kenneth H. Wood, “The ‘Sabbath Days’ of Colossians 2:16, 17,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 338-342.

⁷⁹Du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*.

⁸⁰Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Ministry: An International Journal for Scholars*, November 2009, 26.

only known entire volume devoted to this passage – have been found,⁸¹ all of which have provided valuable feedback that has contributed to the present doctoral thesis.⁸² Though not a book review as such, nor directly labeled an “appendix,” a 30-page essay by Old Testament academic Jerry Gladson, has raised some thoughtful challenges in regard to the research done in *Judging the Sabbath*.⁸³ This serious critique by a former Sabbatarian will be taken into account, as needed, in this research work.

Master’s and Doctoral Research on Colossians 2

One of the earliest-known academic investigations on Colossians 2 with a focus on the term “sabbath” was produced for a master’s degree in 1960, called: “A Study of the Historical Background and Interpretation of Colossians 2:14-17.”⁸⁴ Though he dedicated an entire chapter to “an exegetical investigation of Colossians 2:14-17,” the researcher, William Richardson, barely even considered the very terms indispensable for understanding the word “sabbath” here. Regrettably, instead of doing textual and linguistic analysis, the writer glibly accepted the conclusions of others, then made assertions about what “seems obvious,” or “does not seem logical,” leading to his own conclusions.⁸⁵

Several years later, in 1977, Paul Giem focused his 49-page, master’s research on a study of “σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16.”⁸⁶ While Giem’s study is helpful in that he categorized the various views on the meaning of “sabbath” in this passage, and engaged in some useful reflections, it is his inter-textual analysis of “ἡ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἡ νεομηνίας ἡ σαββάτων,” that merits attention.⁸⁷ He

⁸¹Joel Musvosvi, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Dialogue* 23.1 (2011): 29-30; Joseph D. Fantin, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:1 (Jan-Mar 2011): <http://www.dts.edu/reviews/ron-du-preez-judging-the-sabbath> (accessed 9 July 2017); Jason C. Meyer, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Themelios* 35, no. 1 (2010): 75-76; P Gerard Damsteegt, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47 (Autumn 2009): 272-275; Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath*: 275-281; Marcus B. Witzig, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 13.2 (2010): 180-182; Rodriguez, review of *Judging the Sabbath*, 26-27. In addition, this volume has generated various online critiques, that are taken into account, as relevant to this thesis.

⁸²In addition to other issues, these book reviews raised matters that appeared of great import. For example, Reynolds alleged: “The word in Col 2:16 is *sabbatōn*, which is not ambiguous: it is a genitive plural and cannot be singular. Here, scholars, including Du Preez [*sic*], indulge in a careless substitution of something from outside the text for what is actually in the text. Du Preez then follows through the rest of his argument with this false assumption, weakening the rest of the argument. This is a weak link in his study, casting doubt on some of his other conclusions;” (Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath*, 277). This claim by Reynolds has resulted in a major investigation, which has now become Chapter Six of this thesis. In his review, Meyer posited that the analysis of *Judging the Sabbath* was “problematic for three reasons,” the foundational one being his claim that the term *ἑορτῆς* in Leviticus 23 “serves as an inclusive term for the wider Jewish system, which includes the Seventh-Day Sabbath;” (Meyer, 76). This view of Meyers brought about the addition of Chapter Four in this thesis.

⁸³Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 369-399.

⁸⁴Richardson, “A Study of the Historical Background and the Interpretation of Colossians 2:14-17.”

⁸⁵See *ibid.*, 73-75.

⁸⁶Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word *Σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16.” The 49-pages includes his bibliography of five pages; which makes the entire study even more brief.

⁸⁷These nine pages exclude his discussion as to whether *σάββατα* is singular or plural, as well as his research on extra-biblical materials.

stated that, “with the possible exception of Hosea 2:11,”⁸⁸ there is a focus on “burnt offerings” in virtually all passages outside of the Pentateuch in which some type of a “feast, new moon, sabbath” order, or its reverse, seems to appear.⁸⁹ When he addressed Numbers 28-29, he summed up: “Notice the sequence of offerings: first the *daily*, then the *weekly*, then the *monthly*, then the seasonal or *yearly*.”⁹⁰ Based on the textually substantiated four-part calendric sequence, Giem then concluded: “It is evident that this is the source of the expression *σάββατον ... νεομηνία ... ἑορτή*.”⁹¹ Later, he ignored the “daily,” and inverted these three terms, so that they then appear in the same sequence as in Colossians 2:16. He finally concluded that this phrase is “a slogan” for “the sacrificial system.”⁹² In brief, Giem contended that the seventh-day Sabbath is identified by the use of the term *σάββατα*; however, he averred that the mention of it does not affect its sanctity, since he believed that “the primary meaning of the text is that the sacrificial system pointed forward to Christ and is no longer necessary now that He has come.”⁹³ While Giem’s study does provide some valuable insights, it seems there is a need for a more careful investigation of alleged antecedents to the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase in Colossians 2:16, especially in light of the possible pentateuchal origins, and later prophetic usages.

In 1991 a doctoral study, titled “*Τὰ Στοιχεία Του Κοσμου and Life with Christ: An Exegetical Study of Col 2:6-3:4*,” was completed.⁹⁴ Lamentably, in his thesis Robinson Radjagukguk devotes less than eight pages to Colossians 2:16 and 17.⁹⁵ Moreover, in spite of the title purporting to be an “exegetical study of Col 2:6-3:4,” the researcher does no exegesis whatsoever in connection with the three crucial lexical terms (*ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα*) in verse 16, but merely asserts that these terms “often occur in the OT in this combination (annual, monthly, and weekly) to describe special days dedicated to God.”⁹⁶

A rather different approach was taken in a 2002 master’s study: “*Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16-17: Interpretations from 1837 to 1996*.” The researcher, Chung Shik Kim, set out to provide

⁸⁸Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word *Σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16,” 30.

⁸⁹He explicitly points this out for the following passages: 1 Chron 23:30-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Ezek 45:17; and 46:3-11; he implies basically the same for Isa 1:11-14.

⁹⁰Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word *Σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16,” 34 (emphasis added).

⁹¹Ibid. He does go on to admit: “In the majority of cases, that phrase is linked with the continual burnt offering or the offering morning and evening;” (ibid.).

⁹²Ibid., 39.

⁹³Ibid., 44.

⁹⁴Robinson Radjagukguk, “*Τὰ Στοιχεία Του Κοσμου and Life with Christ: An Exegetical Study of Col 2:6-3:4*” (ThD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1991).

⁹⁵Ibid., 159-166.

⁹⁶As a footnote allegedly supportive of his claim in the main text of his doctoral work, Radjagukguk simply states: “Cf. (LXX) Hos 2:13; Ezek 45:17; 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:3; 31:3;” (ibid., 161, footnote #308).

a description of interpretations of σαββάτων in this text, covering about 160 years. Dividing this time-frame into two periods, Kim concluded that from 1837-1908 the following three distinct views were held as to the meaning of the σάββατα here: (1) It refers to ceremonial sabbaths and to sacrifices on the weekly Sabbaths; (2) It identifies ceremonial sabbaths only; (3) It is used to refer to the weekly Sabbath, which is abolished.⁹⁷ During the second period (1909-1996), five divergent views regarding the meaning of the σάββατα are noted: (1) It abrogates the Old Testament Sabbath; (2) It transfers the solemnity to Sunday; (3) It refers to ceremonial sabbaths and Sabbath sacrifices; (4) It indicates perverted Colossian practice; (5) It identifies legitimate Christian observance.⁹⁸ While interesting from an historical overview, this study does not appear to have much to contribute to this thesis.

More recently, in 2009, a PhD thesis in New Testament studies, “*Skia Tōn Mellontōn in Col 2:16, 17: An Interpretation*,” was successfully defended.⁹⁹ While Mxolisi Sokupa asserted that his “study examines σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων,”¹⁰⁰ he frankly admitted that “the study of the phrase is important for elucidating the understanding of ... the Sabbath in Col 2:16, 17, the focal point of this study”¹⁰¹ – from which he concluded that the word σάββατα is used to focus on sacrifices on the weekly Sabbath.¹⁰²

Bible Commentaries on the Epistle to the Colossians

In their Anchor Bible commentary on Colossians, Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke state: “The enumeration of ‘feast days, new moons, sabbaths’.... serves as a summary of all feasts that Israel was to celebrate according to the prescriptions of the law. *Heortē* thus designates the yearly feasts, *noumēnia*, as the name already indicates, the feast at the beginning of the month and *sabbata* the weekly holy day.”¹⁰³ Going a step further, J. B. Lightfoot posited: “The same three words occur together, as an exhaustive enumeration of the sacred times among the Jews.”¹⁰⁴

Since the idea of a calendric sequence seemed quite commonly accepted, this research project set out to investigate how Bible commentaries, produced by scholars of various denominations and differing hermeneutical perspectives dealt with it. Of 182 available commentaries, it was discovered

⁹⁷Choung Shik Kim, 116-117.

⁹⁸Ibid., 119.

⁹⁹Mxolisi Michael Sokupa, “*Skia Tōn Mellontōn in Col 2:16, 17: An Interpretation*” (PhD dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2009).

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 1.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁰²Ibid., 208, 218.

¹⁰³Markus Barth, and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Astrid B. Beck, trans., Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 339.

¹⁰⁴J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (London: MacMillan, 1884), 193.

that at least 18 simply did not address the meaning of these three terms at all; hence they will not be included here.¹⁰⁵ Of the remaining 164, one hundred and thirty-eight sought to deal with the term “sabbath” in the context of the trilogy of terms. The other 26 commentaries did not address this calendar sequence, though they did state or imply their belief that the seventh-day Sabbath is being referred to in Colossians 2:16.¹⁰⁶

Perspectives of Majority on the Triad

Of the 138 commentaries that sought to address this calendric string, 133 of them concluded that the *σάββατα* here refers to the weekly Sabbath. However, of these 133, seventy-six commentaries engaged in no careful exegesis or linguistic analysis on this matter; they merely asserted their claim that Colossians 2:16 has a yearly-monthly-weekly triad, which they alleged includes the seventh-day Sabbath.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Then there also may be a lack of clarity as to what is being communicated. For example, Trevethan states: “In Colossians, dietary regulations, feasts, new moons and sabbath days (all ceremonial regulations) have passed away with the coming of Jesus;” (Thomas L. Trevethan, *Our Joyful Confidence: The Lordship of Jesus in Colossians* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981], 85). Trevethan’s conclusion seems ambiguous – is he indicating that the “sabbath days” being referred to are the ceremonial ones (such as the Day of Atonement), or does he believe that the weekly Sabbath itself is being classified as a ceremonial one?

¹⁰⁶See R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon: The Fellowship of the Gospel and the Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 288-289; Peter H. Davids, *Colossians, Philemon*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 278; George H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of Graeco-Roman Cosmology, with a New Synopsis of the Greek Texts*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe 171 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 138; David M. Hay, *Colossians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 104; Roy Yates, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth, 1993), 58; Jürgen Becker, Hans Conzelmann, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Der Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon*, Das Neue Testament Deutsch, Teilband 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 192; Andreas Lindemann, *Der Kolosserbrief*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare, NT 10 (Zürich, Switzerland: Theologischer Verlag, 1983), 47; Ernest R. Campbell, *Colossians & Philemon* (Silverton, OR: Canyonview Press, 1982), 108; Werner de Boor, *Die Briefe des Paulus an die Philipper und an die Kolosser*, Wuppertaler Studienbibel, Reihe: Neues Testament (Darmstadt, Germany: R. Brockhaus Verlag Wuppertal, 1982), 235; Theodore H. Epp, *The All-Sufficient Christ: Studies in Colossians* (Lincoln: Back to the Bible, 1982), 102-105; James M. Efrid, *Christ, the Church, and the End: Studies in Colossians and Ephesians* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1980), 70; John Gill, *Gill’s Commentary*, vol. VI: *Romans to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 523-524; Homer A. Kent, *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 93; Everett F. Harrison, *Colossians: Christ All-Sufficient* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 65; James L. Houlden, *Paul’s Letters from Prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians*, Pelican New Testament Commentaries (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), 196; Paul S. Haik, *Complete in Christ: Studies in Colossians* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1965), 3; Stephen Neill, *Paul to the Colossians*, World Christian Books No. 50 (New York: Association Press, 1964), 47; Moulton, *Colossians*, 39-40; Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 210; Otto H. Schmidt, *Saint Paul Shows Us How* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1950), 54; Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 51; Henry A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians* (New York: Loizeaux, 1928), 91; Frederick Brooke Westcott, *Colossians – A Letter to Asia: Being a Paraphrase and Brief Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Believers at Colossæ* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 118; John Rutherford, *St. Paul’s Epistles to Colossæ and Laodicea* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), 67; William Lincoln, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians* (Kilmarnock, Scotland: John Ritchie, 189-), 31; Edwin Charles Dargan, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*, An American Commentary on the New Testament (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 35.

¹⁰⁷See Paul Foster, *Colossians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 280-282; Constantine R. Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 42; Nijay K. Gupta, *Colossians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2013), 99; C. Marvin Pate, *Apostle of the Last Days: The Life, Letters and Theology of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 212-213; John Woodhouse, *Colossians and Philemon: So Walk in Him*, Focus on the Bible Commentary Series (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2011), 149; John

Paul Heil, *Colossians: Encouragement to Walk in All Wisdom as Holy Ones in Christ*, Society of Biblical Literature: Early Christianity and Its Literature, number 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 122 (footnote #50); Michael F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon*, A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 83-84; *Colossians: Navigating Successfully Through Cultural Chaos* (Nashville: Serendipity House Publishers, 2009), 55; Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 151; Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 215-216; Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul's Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 117; Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 171; Clinton E. Arnold, "Colossians," *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 3: Romans to Philemon, Clinton E. Arnold, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 388-389; Thomas Schaff, *Colossians: A Study of Authority* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2002), 92; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Letter to the Colossians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, The New Interpreter's Bible, vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 631; John B. Polhill, *Paul & His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 335; Daniel J. Harrington, *Paul's Prison Letters: Spiritual Commentaries on Paul's Letters to Philemon, the Philippians, and the Colossians* (New York: New City Press, 1997), 112; Henry A. Ironside, *Colossians*, rev. ed. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1997), 65; Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 214-217; Anthony L. Ash, *Philippians, Colossians & Philemon*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 187; Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 96 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 56; Herbert E. Douglass, *Philippians & Colossians: His Mind in You*, Adult Sabbath School Lessons (Teacher's Edition), July-September 1994 (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists), 116; Robert G. Bratcher, and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 65-66; Ernest D. Martin, *Colossians, Philemon*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1993), 118; Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 121; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," in Andrew T. Lincoln, and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 5 (footnote #6); John MacArthur, Jr., *Colossians & Philemon*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 118; Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 93-94; Thomas J. Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 53 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 162-163; David K. Bernard, *The Message of Colossians & Philemon* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1990), 95; R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ*, Preaching the Word Series (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989), 82; Carol K. Stockhausen, *Letters in the Pauline Tradition: Ephesians, Colossians, I Timothy, II Timothy and Titus*, Message of Biblical Spirituality (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 25-26; Doris W. Greig, *Power for Positive Living: Studies in Philippians and Colossians*, Joy of Living Bible Study Series (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1988), 116; Neal Flanagan, *Friend Paul: His Letters, Theology and Humanity* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986), 185; Lloyd John Ogilvie, *You Are Loved & Forgiven: Paul's Letter of Hope to the Colossians* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1986), 128; John A. Knight, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Beacon Bible Expositions (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 206; John H. Reumann, *Colossians*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 145; E. Schuyler English, *Colossians: Christ Above All* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 120; Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 115; Arthur G. Patzia, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, A Good News Commentary (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 47; Jean Daille, *An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1983), 377; Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*, Andrew Chester, trans. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 155; Richard C. Lucas, *Fullness & Freedom: The Message of Colossians & Philemon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 113; Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians and Philemon*, Bible Study Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 82; Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, vol. III: *Galatians-Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976), 224-225; G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) in the Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: University Press, 1976), 197; William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, The Daily Study Bible Series, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 145; Josef Ernst, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser*, Regensburger Neues Testament (Ingolstadt, Germany: Verlag Friedrich Pustet Regensburg, 1974), 208-209; Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, 94; Hugedé, *Commentaire de l'Épître aux Colossiens*, 143; George Johnston, ed., *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*, The Century Bible, new ed. (London: Nelson, 1967), 63; G. H. P. Thompson, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 147-148; Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 79; Paul S. Rees, *The Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Proclaiming the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 89; Herbert W. Cragg, *The Sole Sufficiency of Jesus Christ: Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962), 67; Herschel H. Hobbs, *Christ in You: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians*, Evangelical Pulpit Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961), 97; A. S. Peake, "The Epistle to the Colossians," W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 531; Archibald M. Hunter, *The Letter of Paul to the Galatians, The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians, The Letter of Paul to the Philippians, The Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, The Layman's Bible Commentary, vol. 22 (Atlanta: John Knox, 1959), 134; James T. Hudson, *The Pauline Epistles: Their Meaning and Message* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1958), 267; Laurin, *Colossians*, 99; W. R. Nicholson, *Oneness with Christ:*

The other 57 commentaries did engage in some exegesis, such as determining whether the term *σάββατα* should be rendered as a singular or a plural.¹⁰⁸ However, in all of the published sources available, thus far no evidence has been found to indicate that any of these 133 commentaries did any detailed exegesis of the vital three terms of this calendar sequence, nor any critical analysis of the purported Old Testament linguistic antecedents.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, though 133 of 138 Bible commentaries

Popular Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1951), 202; J. W. Shepard, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 521; E. Schuyler English, *Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians* (New York: Arno C. Gaebelein, 1944), 79; E. A. Gardiner, *The Later Pauline Epistles* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), 90; E. Y. Mullins, *Studies in Colossians* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935), 85; Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1933), 72; W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Christ Pre-Eminent: Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1923), 82-83; George W. Clark, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Clark's Peoples Commentary (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), 283; George Currie Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, & Philippians*, The Century Bible, Walter F. Adeney, ed. (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1902), 142; D. Dawson-Walker, *The Epistle to the Colossians and the Epistle to Titus*, A Devotional Commentary (London: Religious Tract Society, 1900), 108; Alexander Maclaren, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Colossians and Philemon* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899), 227; Alfred Barry, *The Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, A Bible Commentary for English Readers, vol. VIII: *Ephesians to Revelation* (London: Cassell and Company, 1897), 109; M. F. Sadler, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Colossians, Thessalonians, and Timothy, with Notes Critical and Practical* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), 44; H. von Soden, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser, Epheser, Philemon, Die Pastoralbriefe, Der Hebräerbrief, Die Briefe des Petrus, Jakobus, Judas*, Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament, Dritter Band (Freiburg, Germany: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. C. B. Mohr, 1891), 52; James Fergusson, *Brief Exposition of the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (London: Thomas Ward & Co., 1978; reprinted from the Original Editions, 1656-1674), 352; William Kelly, *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians, with a New Translation* (London: G. Morrish, nd), 58-59.

¹⁰⁸Some also referred to Gal 4:9, 10, while others referenced texts, such as those in 1 and 2 Chron.

¹⁰⁹See Christopher R Seitz, *Colossians*, Brazos' Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 134-135; David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 185; Murray J. Harris, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Colossians and Philemon* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 105; Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 197-198; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 220; Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 64; Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, 216-219; Paul E. Deterding, *Colossians*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 113; John Phillips, *Exploring Colossians & Philemon: The Expository Commentary*, John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 135-136; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 17 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 110; David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 30-31; Charles R. Hume, *Reading Through Colossians and Ephesians* (London: SCM, 1998), 47; Martha King, *An Exegetical Summary of Colossians* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1998), 179-180; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 175; Bonnie B. Thurston, *Reading Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 41; Barth, and Blanke, 338-339; Jean-Noël Aletti, S. J., *Saint Paul: Épitre aux Colossiens – Introduction, Traduction et Commentaire* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993), 193; Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Kolosser; Der Brief an Philemon* (Würzburg, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993), 143; Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 268; Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 118; Petr Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary*, Siegfried S. Schatzmann, trans. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 143; Daryl Ellis, *Galatians Through Colossians*, Randall House Bible Commentary (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 1988), 416; N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 119; Francis W. Beare, "The Epistle to the Colossians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 200; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 139; Robert G. Gromacki, *Stand Perfect in Wisdom: An Exposition of Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 118-119; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 90; Joachim Gnilka, *Der Kolosserbrief*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Band X: Faszikel 1 (Freiburg, Germany, 1980), 145, footnote #9; Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 204; H. C. G. Moule, *Studies in Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 109; Peter S. Ruckman, *The Books*

(covering centuries, through 2016) did conclude that the three terms in Colossians 2:16 indicate a yearly-monthly-weekly calendar sequence, with the weekly Sabbath being the final part of the triad, this conclusion needs to be evaluated in light of any evidence that arises from an appropriate analysis of all relevant terms and pertinent passages.

The Commentaries That Diverge

Over the course of time, a few scholars have come to differing conclusions regarding the meaning of the “sabbath” in Colossians 2:16. As early as 1831 it was proposed that the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16 actually refers to Sabbatical Years.¹¹⁰ Twenty years later, in 1851, Albert Barnes proposed that these were ceremonial sabbaths, since he believed that this is what was meant by the allegedly plural Greek word for “sabbaths.”¹¹¹ Twenty years after Barnes, A. R. Fausset produced a commentary that posited that these “sabbaths” referred to the Day of Atonement and the eighth day

of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Bible Believer’s Commentary (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1973), 561; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church’s Lord and the Christian’s Liberty* (Wiltshire, England: Paternoster, 1972), 90; William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 123; Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, William R. Poehlmann, and Robert J. Karris, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 115 (footnote #10); Michael R. Weed, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Philemon*, Living Word Commentary (Austin, TX: R. B. Sweet, 1971), 76; Herbert M. Carson, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 72; Edmund K. Simpson, and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 244-245; John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, Classic Commentary Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 176; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1946), 123; Lewis B. Radford, *The Epistle to the Colossians and the Epistle to Philemon, with Introduction and Notes*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen & Co., 1931), 242-243; Ernest F. Scott, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 52; Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Paul and the Intellectuals: The Epistle to the Colossians* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1928), 130; Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3: *The Epistles of Paul* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1924), 494; D. Paul Ewald, *Die Briefe des Paulus an die Epheser, Kolosser, und Philemon*, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Band X, Zweite verbesserte Auflage (Leipzig, Germany: A. Deichert’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1910), 391-393; A. Lukyn Williams, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1907), 103; H. C. G. Moule, *Colossian Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon*, 4th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), 174; H. C. G. Moule, *Colossian Studies*, The Expositor’s Library (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 170, 174-175; T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, International Critical Commentary, C. A. Briggs, S. R. Driver, and A. Plummer, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 264; J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1886), 191-192; Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon*, John C. Moore, trans. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 312; Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (1884), 193-194; Henry Cowles, *The Shorter Epistles; viz: Of Paul to the Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; Thessalonians; Timothy; Titus and Philemon; also, of James, Peter, and Jude* (New York: D. Appleton, 1879), 173; James Spence, *Sunday Mornings with My Flock, on St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1875), 227-230; Karl Braune, *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, M. B. Riddle, trans. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1870), 57; Hermann Olshausen, *Biblical Commentary on St Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1864), 352; C. J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon* (London: Parker, Son, and Bourn, 1861), 166-167.

¹¹⁰John Davenant, *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, vol. 1 (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1831), 479. He opined Paul said “that Christians are not to be condemned ... [for violating] the ceremonial law.”

¹¹¹Albert Barnes, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851), 279.

related to the Feast of Tabernacles.¹¹² In the mid-twentieth century, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, basing its view on contextual factors, concluded that Colossians 2:16 refers to “ceremonial sabbaths.”¹¹³

In 1979, after rightly pointing out that the Greek term for “sabbath” can be appropriately translated as a single seventh-day Sabbath or as an entire week, Gordon Clark cautioned: “Hence no conclusion can be certainly drawn from the plural word alone in our passage [in Col 2:16]. But if this ‘no conclusion’ prevents us from deciding that *Sabbaths* means special [ceremonial sabbath] days, it also prevents us from deciding that the regular weekly Sabbath is meant.... These special [ritual sabbath] celebrations were now prohibited, but ... the weekly Sabbath is required.”¹¹⁴ Clark further pointed out: “The context speaks of food and drink, feasts, and new moons. All this is ceremonial. Then are not the Sabbaths, here condemned, ceremonial Sabbaths?”¹¹⁵

Unfortunately, along with the other 133 commentaries that promote the notion of the weekly Sabbath being an integral part of the ostensible triad, these five volumes nowhere engage in any in-depth exegesis of the crucial three terms – “feast, new moon, sabbath” – as located in Colossians 2:16. As Walter Martin has stated: “If a commentator’s opinion is not in accord with sound exegesis, it is *only an opinion*.”¹¹⁶ Since there is no evidence in the volumes themselves that any of these 138 commentaries have done any linguistic analysis or exegetical examination of the three crucial terms in this text, this thesis will undertake a meticulous investigation of these terms (as part of a calendar sequence, as well as individual words), taking into account the relevant scriptural passages.

Statement of the Problem

“Colossians 2:16 is a pivotal text for understanding the Sabbath;”¹¹⁷ yet, “the meaning of this verse is disputed.”¹¹⁸ While other views have been postulated,¹¹⁹ the English Standard Version’s

¹¹²A. R. Fausset, *1 Corinthians – Revelation, A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 448. As support for his conclusion, Fausset noted that there is no definite article “the,” in Col 2:16; also, he referenced Lev 23:32, 37-39, as a textual basis for his position; (ibid.).

¹¹³Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols., rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 7:205-206.

¹¹⁴Gordon H. Clark, *Colossians: Another Commentary on an Inexhaustible Message*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 94 (emphasis original).

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 573 (emphasis original).

¹¹⁷Dale Ratzlaff, and Verle Streifling, “The Undivided Law: The Law of Moses and the Law of God Are One” (*Proclamation*, October-December 2010), 22-27.

¹¹⁸Evans, and Westerholm, 1035.

¹¹⁹Besides the two major perspectives noted above from the *ESV Study Bible*, Hasel mentions that the “sabbath” here is taken to refer to “some aspect of the sabbath without denying true sabbath-keeping; perverted sabbath-keeping in honor of the elemental spirits of the universe; weekdays that were designated to be sabbaths; or sabbath sacrifices prescribed in Num 28:9-10;” (Hasel, “Sabbath,” 855).

Study Bible highlighted the two major perspectives, when it stated that “it is debated whether the Sabbaths in question included the regular seventh-day rest of the fourth commandment, or were only the special Sabbaths of the Jewish festal calendar.”¹²⁰ Based on the profusion of materials examined, it appears that many interpretations are based on unidentified assumptions, and that these conclusions are derived from reliance on selected translations of Scripture. Thus the specific problem addressed in this thesis is as follows: What is the most defensible understanding of the lexical term *σάββατα* in Colossians 2:16, based on an intensive investigation of the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament, while taking into account presuppositions and delimitations?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this investigation is to critically analyze the Greek lexeme *σάββατα*, in its immediate setting of the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase in Colossians 2:16, and from its wider context. This will include contextual, inter-textual, etymological, lexical, linguistic, semantic, syntactical, structural, and typological factors. Ultimately, the goal is to establish the weight of evidence as to what *σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16 refers to – whether the seventh-day Sabbath (as in the decalogue of Exod 20) or any of the ceremonial sabbaths (as in the ritual codes of Lev 23-25).

Justification of the Project

As indicated, by means of the Review of Literature, while there is a plethora of materials related to the possible identity of the lexeme *σάββατα* in Colossians 2, as far as is known, there has never been any sustained scholarly research to identify the meaning of this word in context. Also, as pointed out, though there has been a general consensus among Bible commentators (with a few exceptions), that the term *σάββατα* here refers to the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, it seems that this conclusion has too often been merely asserted, instead of proven from the passage itself. In fact, in all of the published sources available, thus far no evidence has been located to indicate that any of the total of 138 Bible commentaries that deal with this passage, have engaged in any meticulous investigation of the vital three lexical terms (*ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα*) in this epistle.

While valuable contributions have been made by scholars regarding the background, content, structure, and interpretation of the epistle to the Colossians as a whole, there is currently a paucity of in-depth studies available as to the precise, contextually-oriented meaning of *σάββατα*, as well as a lack of careful comparative study of potential Old Testament antecedents for the tripartite phrase.¹²¹ Decades ago, Craig Blomberg pointed out that “perhaps the single most significant New Testament

¹²⁰*ESV Study Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2297.

¹²¹A classic example of this paucity of in-depth studies can be seen from the fact that, while he devoted seven-and-a half pages to discussing Col 2:14, Hugedé (133-143) covered all of verse 16 in less than two pages.

text for understanding the Sabbath becomes Colossians 2:16-17.”¹²² Since “a proper understanding of these verses, with their express mention of ‘sabbath,’ is crucial to a right view of the Fourth Commandment today,”¹²³ it seems that a critical analysis of the *σάββατα* in this epistle could make a valuable contribution.¹²⁴

Scope and Delimitations

Whereas there has been continued discussion as to what the heterodox philosophy in Colossae may have been, as well as to who the false teachers possibly were, only limited attention will be paid in this project to this matter. From a Protestant perspective, this research will focus on an inner-biblical and inter-textual analysis of the threefold phrase “*ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα*” in Colossians 2:16; hence, deuterocanonical and pseudepigraphical materials will be addressed only in an appendix. Furthermore, in view of the acknowledged “numerous and infamous” “exegetical difficulties”¹²⁵ of the Colossians 2:16-23 passage, this study will not attempt to resolve these long-standing challenges; but it will instead focus on contextual lexical and linguistic analyses, inter-textuality and literary structures for interpretation. This study will deal with all of Scripture in its final form.

Research Methodology

The foundational principles for the interpretative approach used in this thesis are as follows: (a) *Sola scriptura* – thus affirming the Reformation battle cry of “the Bible and the Bible only as the final norm for truth;”¹²⁶ (b) *Tota scriptura* – which accepts all of Scripture (both the Old and New Testaments) as fully authoritative and “profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim 3:16); (c) *Analogia scripturae* – an understanding of the fundamental harmony and unity among the various parts of the Bible, based on a belief that all of it is the inspired Word of God. This third principle includes the concepts that Scripture is its own interpreter, that there is a consistency in Scripture in regards to its teachings, and that the Bible is clear enough to be understood (i.e., the “perspicuity of scripture” principle).¹²⁷

¹²²Craig L. Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ: A Response to S. Bacchiocchi and J. Primus,” in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington, and William H. Shea, eds. (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 126. Twenty years later, Blomberg similarly noted that “this passage may also be the most important one in all of the NT;” (Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath*, 341).

¹²³“Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters,” see comments under sub-section “6. Colossians 2:16-17.”

¹²⁴This study may be of benefit to various denominations that believe in the sanctity of the seventh-day Sabbath, including the Assemblies of Yahweh, Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh Day Baptists, and the United Church of God.

¹²⁵Beetham, 196.

¹²⁶Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Raoul Dederen, ed., Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 61. Davidson (ibid., 60-68) outlined four “foundational principles,” three of which are mentioned here. The fourth principle he noted is “‘Spiritual Things Spiritually Discerned,’” in which he explained the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual life of the interpreter – factors basically impossible to concretely deal with in a doctoral research project.

¹²⁷Admittedly, it seems this axiom of the “perspicuity of Scripture” is perhaps not widely accepted. For example, rather than rely on *scriptura sui ipsius interpres*, Fantin says “successful Bible interpretation” requires “an understanding of the original context;” and that if one holds that “Scripture is its own interpreter,” one cannot rightly interpret the Bible.

These basic principles seem affirmed by concerns raised regarding research specifically done on the so-called Colossian philosophy. For example, Ian Smith stated: “The most obvious weakness of recent study on the Colossian philosophy is that it does not give sufficient attention to the *text of the letter*.”¹²⁸ John Barclay, while noting the puzzle of this “Colossian heresy,” proposed: “We may simply have to accept that that is an unsolved, and insoluble, mystery, and redirect our attention to the content of the letter’s response ... to a body of evidence, the *letter itself*.”¹²⁹

These proposals of Smith and Barclay, to consider more seriously the text of the letter to the Colossians itself, synchronize well with the recent comments of other scholars, who have likewise been essentially attesting the dictum that “Scripture is its own best interpreter.” For instance, in his review of Clinton Arnold’s volume on Colossians, Gerald Hawthorne pointed out that an overarching weakness of the book is “its dependence on a great deal of evidence drawn from a period later than the NT.”¹³⁰ Hawthorne continued, appealing for “a close examination of every scrap of information provided by the *text itself*.”¹³¹ While the above concerns focus specifically on the matter of the heresy that was infiltrating among believers in Colossae, the paramount concern is still relevant – that is, the recognition of the utterly indispensable need to examine seriously the actual biblical text itself, and not being so dependent upon extra-biblical documents, assumptions, or speculations.

In addition to the above, this thesis endeavors to use the following key procedures of biblical interpretation in its research work:

1. A contextually-valid analysis of all passages and pericopes under consideration. The context considered includes not just the literary setting of the passage, but also its linguistic, semantic, structural, theological, historical, and religio-cultural frameworks, as deemed pertinent.
2. As necessitated by the material being evaluated, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and units are taken into account in order to better understand the issue under investigation.
3. Difficult passages are interpreted by reference to clearer passages. Thus, by comparing and contrasting different texts treating on similar subjects, the most plausible meaning of the passages examined will be accepted as appropriate and reliable.
4. An attempt is to be consistently made to avoid reading into the Bible ideas not clear from the text itself, and to refrain from arguments from silence, when such inferences are not clearly warranted by the passage under consideration.¹³²

¹²⁸Ian Smith, 38 (emphasis added). In his monograph, Smith admitted: “This study is indebted to those who have gone before.... These advances in research, however, have also led to a level of confusion as more and more solutions are offered in order to solve the puzzle of the nature of the Colossian error.... *This study has sought to forge a way ahead by returning to a detailed study of the text of Colossians itself;*” (205, emphasis added).

¹²⁹John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 53.

¹³⁰Gerald F. Hawthorne, review of *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, by Clinton E. Arnold, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (March 1999): 157.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 158.

¹³²The English translation to be used in this project is the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted. As deemed appropriate, recourse to the original languages of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Testament will be made.

In his *Anchor Bible Dictionary* article on “Exegesis,” Douglas Stuart expounded on issues vital for an analysis, such as being undertaken in this thesis:

In all lexical study, it is imperative that the meaning in the present context be given precedence over all other considerations. The fact that a word may be used 99 percent of the time it is found in ancient writings to mean one thing is essentially irrelevant if in the context of the biblical passage under study it is used to mean something else. Any author may choose to use even a common word in an unusual way. Thus the final question must always be “How is it used here?”¹³³

One more matter, that of nomenclature relating to the categorization of biblical law, needs attention. The issue of the definition, meaning, and relevance of biblical law for the Christian is an ongoing enterprise, as recent publications attest.¹³⁴ While there has been some discussion as to the legitimacy of dividing up the requirements articulated in the Old and New Testaments into various groupings,¹³⁵ Kent Van Til recently indicated that “theologians have often understood the laws of Scripture under the categories of moral, civil, and ritual.”¹³⁶ As Mark Rooker succinctly summed up: “Moral laws are understood to have permanent validity.... The ceremonial laws [including ‘sacrifices, feast days,’ etc., ‘for the Israelites’] symbolize and foreshadow the nature of Christ’s redemptive work on the cross.... The civil laws pertain to those laws given to Israel by which they are to be governed as a nation.”¹³⁷ While this thesis will not become engaged in this discussion regarding how to identify the traditional categories of legal codes in Scripture, it will proceed along the generally accepted perspective that there is a distinction “between permanent and temporary”¹³⁸ legislation in

¹³³Douglas Stuart, “Exegesis,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, ed., vol. 2: D-G (New York: Doubleday), 1992. Stuart (ibid.) adds that the primary question in lexical analysis is “the question of meaning in its immediate context.”

¹³⁴See, for example, Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians*, 2017; Papaouannou, *Israel, Covenant, Law*, 2017; David W. Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, B & H Studies in Christian Ethics (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2013); Joel B. Green, ed., *The New Testament and Ethics: A Book-by-Book Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Joel B. Green, and Jacqueline E. Lapsey, eds., *The Old Testament and Ethics: A Book-by-Book Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Mark F. Rooker, *The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010).

¹³⁵For example, Geisler has alleged that “the whole division of commands into civil, ceremonial, and moral is postbiblical, questionable, and probably of late Christian origin;” (Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989], 92). See also, Ratzlaff, and Streifling, 22-27.

¹³⁶Kent A. Van Til, *The Moral Disciple: An introduction to Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 113. Jones basically concurred noting that “within the Protestant tradition the terms *ceremonial law*, *civil law*, and *moral law* have been used as interpretive categories;” (57, emphasis original).

¹³⁷Rooker, 185. Kaiser likewise identified a “threefold distinction,” and then explained the “civil,” “moral,” and “ceremonial” laws, respectively: “The ‘Covenant Code’ had a heading that referred to its laws as מִשְׁפָּטִים, ‘judgments’ or ‘cases’ for the *judges* to use as precedents (Exod. 21:1). Furthermore, they [i.e., the ancients] could see that the Decalogue carried with it no socially recognizable setting with its laws, and that the tabernacle material from Exodus 25 through Leviticus 7 (at Least) had an expressed word of built-in obsolescence when it noted several times over that what was built was only a model (‘pattern,’ תבנית, e.g., Exod. 25:9, 40);” (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], 46, emphasis original).

¹³⁸At the end of his PhD, Cole noted: “In summary, this dissertation confirms that even if it is inappropriate to speak of three clear-cut literary divisions between moral, ceremonial, and judicial corpora, the Old Testament itself does

the biblical materials – the former being seen as moral law, while the latter is applied to ceremonial regulations.¹³⁹ David Jones noted that “the *ceremonial laws* are also called religious laws, ritual laws, [and] cultic laws.”¹⁴⁰ This project will use all of these four terms interchangeably, in view of the fact that “the ceremonial law are laws given for the functioning of the sacrificial system, including tabernacle/temple operations, [as well as] religious festivals.”¹⁴¹

Brief Overview of the Thesis

This first Chapter seeks to provide the overall framework for the thesis. Hence, it includes an explanation of the background and relevance of the issue of the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16, a comprehensive review of applicable literature, the statement of the problem addressed, the purpose and justification of this project, its scope and delimitations, as well as its research methodology.

Chapter Two addresses background and introductory matters. Thus it deals with the issue of the authorship of the Colossian epistle, its relationship with the letter to the Ephesians, an overview of the complexity of theories regarding the philosophy that had been making inroads among the believers in Colossae, as well as the theory preferred by the researcher, together with reasons to validate the choice made.

The foundational matter of the perspicuity of Scripture is dealt with indirectly in Chapter Three. In other words, this chapter attempts to show that, because the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* and its Greek equivalent *σάββατον/σάββατα* are multivalent terms, the writers of both Old and New Testaments provided sufficiently clear linguistic indicators, so that the reader and/or hearer could reasonably easily have understood what was being communicated. In short, distinct linguistic markers provide invaluable assistance in identifying, for instance, whether the seventh-day Sabbath or the ritual sabbaths are being addressed.

Chapter Four delves into the question of the relationship between the seventh-day Sabbath and the festal calendar (as seen in Lev 23:4-37). Since the weekly *שַׁבָּת* does appear with other ritual occasions, and since it is mentioned in Leviticus 23, some have concluded that this sacred day is an integral part of the “festivals.” Contextual, etymological, linguistic, and structural factors are taken into account to resolve this dilemma.

distinguish between permanent and temporary aspects of the law, at least in the case of the Pentateuchal sacred times;” (Cole, “The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch,” 352). Papaioannou (142), similarly recognizes two parts, which essentially coincide with Cole: the “legal code,” and the “ritual aspect.” Gane likewise seems to emphasize the aspect of a “transcultural” law (e.g., chap. 7, 137-161), and later on the “ritual laws” (e.g., chap. 16, 367-397).

¹³⁹The aspect of (temporary) civil or judicial laws will not be addressed here, as it is not germane to this thesis.

¹⁴⁰Jones, 57 (emphasis original).

¹⁴¹Ibid.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the appearance of *σάββατα* in Colossians 2:16 relates to the tripartite phrase (“feast, new moon, sabbath”) in which it is located. In an age in which inter-textuality is flourishing, it is no surprise that many have alleged that somewhat similar phrases in the Old Testament may furnish the solution to the question of which “sabbath” is in view in Colossians. Chapter Five explores this matter intensively, building upon recent inter-textual research, as well as studies in Hebrew literary structures, to discover the most likely antecedent to the Colossians triad.

Chapter Six explores a traditional approach used in order to “prove” that Colossians 2:16 has “ceremonial sabbaths” in view. Sabbatarians over time have alleged that “sabbaths” here is a plural term (*σάββατα*); so it must be identifying the annual festal sabbaths, not the seventh-day Sabbath. This extensive investigation covers more than 2,250 years of the usage of the word *σάββατα*: first, it deals with the Septuagint translation, the κοινή Greek Testament, and the Modern Greek Bible; second, it considers the extra-biblical works of Zenon, Philo, Josephus and Plutarch, before looking at deuterocanonical writings. The most feasible etymological origins are taken into account as well.

The apex of this thesis is Chapter Seven, as it directly examines the threefold phrase “*ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα*” in Colossians 2:16. Several significant terms, such as *κρίνω*, *βρώσις*, *πόσις*, *σκία*, and *σῶμα* are examined in view of immediate and wider contexts. Likewise, key phrases, such as *χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν*, and *τῶν μελλόντων*, are similarly analyzed. Then, based on linguistic, semantic, conceptual, inter-textual, and structural factors, a plausible interpretation is proposed.

Chapter Eight undertakes to provide a summary and final conclusions as to what has been discovered through this research. In addition, recommendations for further research are proffered.

A brief Appendix examines the claim that a “triad” similar to Colossians 2 is to be found in multiple extra-biblical documents. The representative bibliography rounds out this project.

Referring to Colossians 2:16, Sabbatarian Calvin Burrell recognized that “for Sabbathkeeping Christians, it is the *Achilles’ heel* of the Sabbath defense, just as it is often the kingpin in the argument of those who oppose God’s weekly rest day.”¹⁴² It is the sincere desire of the researcher that this study will shed valuable light on this “Achilles’ heel.”

¹⁴²Burrell, “Paul’s Sabbath Theology,” 15 (emphasis added).

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Before delving into matters directly dealing with the question of the $\sigma\alpha\beta\beta\alpha\tau\alpha$ in Colossians 2, some significant foundational issues need to be addressed. First, is the subject of who the author may have been of this epistle to the Colossians. While Pauline authorship was a given for most of the history of Christendom as far as is known, since the nineteenth century, various scholars have been raising serious challenges to this view – concerns that deserve adequate attention. If there is enough substantial information supportive of the author being Paul, then this could allow for potentially helpful comparisons with any other material produced by the apostle.

In the same vein, since many commentators have recognized a great affinity between the epistles to the Ephesians and of that to the Colossians, the possible relationship between these two letters will be explored, with potential implications considered for this thesis. Next the perennially debated topic regarding what specific teaching motivated the Colossian epistle will be considered. Rather than attempting the daunting (if not impossible) task of enumerating and evaluating each of the proposed theories, a selected overview will be provided, with some analyses, as well as the preferred option, together with reasons for the choice made. The Chapter will then end with a brief summary and conclusions.

The Issue of Authorship

Over the past two centuries many scholars have challenged the notion that the apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians. James Dunn went so far as to suggest that the question as to who wrote this short letter “is probably the most contentious of the introductory issues facing the student of Colossians.”¹

This matter regarding authorship is discussed in commentaries, introductions and various books with a broad variety of perspectives. In his 2007 commentary on Ephesians and Colossians, Charles Talbert pointed out that, in antiquity, the idea of authorship “was complex and covered a broad spectrum of practices.”² First, “authorship” could mean that the author himself actually wrote the material with his own hand, as noted in Philemon 19a: “I, Paul, am writing with my own hand.”

¹James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 35.

²Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 7. The following six points are based upon what Talbert (7-9) has outlined.

Second, it could be that the author dictated the document, as distinctly implied by a comparison of Romans 1:1-7 and Romans 16:22, which reads: “I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.”

Third, collaborators may have functioned as coauthors, as in Philippians 1:1: “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” Fourth, someone could have authorized the writing, causing it to be written, as seen in Esther 8:7-10, 17a: “Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew,... You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring;... And he [i.e., Mordecai] wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king’s signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback,... And in every province and city, wherever the king’s command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness.”³

Fifth, a letter could be written “as if” by one individual but actually composed by a disciple, who assumes the identity of another and attempts to speak in his vocabulary, style and values. In this manner, and without any authorization from Atticus, “Cicero once dictated a letter to himself, using the secretary of Atticus,” yet writing under Atticus’s name.⁴ Sixth, a document can be a blatant forgery, in which someone may claim authenticity, yet which clearly distorts fundamental teachings, as seen in the warning of 2 Thessalonians 2:2b (REB): “Do not be alarmed by any ... letter purporting to come from us, alleging that the day of the Lord is already here.”⁵

In connection with the epistle to the Colossians, the above six concepts may be grouped into essentially three major categories:⁶ (a) Full support for Pauline authorship; (b) An attempt to preserve

³A similar circumstance can be seen, relating to Haman’s attempt to destroy the Jews, as recorded in Esther 3:10-15a: “So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman,... And the king said to Haman,... ‘do with them as seems good to you.’... In the name of King Ahasuerus it [i.e., the death decree] was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring.... The couriers went out hastened by the king’s command.”

⁴Talbert, 7. For example, holding the view that Paul was not the author of Colossians, Mark Kiley claimed that “the picture of the deuter-Pauline school available to us” in the book of Colossians, is that “they used two genuine prison letters of Paul’s [i.e., Philippians and Philemon] to construct a letter purporting to be by Paul from prison;” (Mark Kiley, *Colossians as Pseudepigraphy* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1986], 106).

⁵Petr Pokorný’s discussion of his position (that Colossians is deuter-Pauline) highlights the fact that the final two views enumerated above tend to conflate into one category. In line with view five, he stated: “The letter to the Colossians was written in the name of the apostle;” (Petr Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991], 10). But then, regarding “the ethics of false authorial references,” Pokorný (14) admitted that the “various personal references in the text” (such as in Col 4:7-18), “create the impression of an authentic writing. According to modern criteria, this is forgery,” a concern that appears more in line with view number six above, and which will be discussed further below.

⁶Robert Wilson proposed that there are four broad classifications (see R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* [London: T & T Clark International, 2005], 9, footnote #15). However, his third and fourth categories (both of which deal with the idea that the author was a disciple of Paul, one during his life and one after his death) seem better combined into one group. Arland Hultgren similarly held that “in general there are three major views;” (Arland J. Hultgren, “Colossians,” in *The Deuter-Pauline Letters: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus*, Gerhard Krodel, ed., Proclamation Commentaries, rev. ed. [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 27). However, his second view is also pseudonymous (without apparent connection to Paul), though during the lifetime of Paul.

some connection with Paul (such as by postulating a coauthor, or perhaps someone charged by Paul to write the letter); and (c) The contention that Paul had no direct connection at all with this letter.

Challenges to Pauline Authorship

Raymond Collins maintained that the first to publish challenges to the Pauline authorship of Colossians was Edward Evanson in 1805.⁷ Nevertheless, there seems to be a general scholarly consensus that Ernst Mayerhoff in 1838⁸ was the first to offer any substantial arguments against Pauline authorship.⁹

In his monograph on Colossians, Ian Smith provided a helpful summary of Mayerhoff's main four points:

- (1) the difference of language in Colossians from 'other' Pauline letters;
- (2) the difference in style and 'way of thinking' (*Denkweise*) from genuine Pauline correspondence;
- (3) the dependence of Colossians on Ephesians (which Mayerhoff believed was Pauline), on the presupposition that Paul would not use one of his own letters to construct another;
- (4) the nature of the Colossian error which pointed to a later date than the life of the apostle Paul.¹⁰

⁷Raymond F. Collins, *Letters That Paul Did Not Write: The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline Pseudepigrapha*, Good News Studies, Volume 28 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 171-172.

⁸E. T. Mayerhoff, *Der Brief an die Kolosser, mit vornehmlicher Berücksichtigung der drei Pastoralbriefe kritisch geprüft* (Berlin: Herman Schultze, 1838).

⁹See, for example, the following who recognize Mayerhoff's initial role: Wilson, 9; Kiley, 37; Hultgren, 26; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 30, footnote #8; Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul's Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 6; John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 20; Bonnie Thurston, *Reading Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians*, Reading the New Testament Series (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 5; Markus Barth, and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 119; Charles B. Puskas, Jr., *The Letters of Paul: An Introduction*, Good New Series, vol. 25 (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1993), 116, footnote #3; Victor Paul Furnish, "Colossians, Epistle to the," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, A-C, David Noel Freedman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1093; David J. Williams, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 8; George E. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 1; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), xli; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, The New Century Bible Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 32; Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Howard Clark Kee, trans. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 340; Gene Lacoste Munn, "Introduction to Colossians," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* XVI#1 (Fall 1973): 11; William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 29, footnote #17; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970), 551; John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, Classic Commentary Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), xxiv; Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. III, The Epistles of Paul: Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), xxxiv; H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1902), 38; T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), li; Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon* (New York: Funk & Wagnalis, 1885), 200; Charles J. Ellicott, *St Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon: With a Critical and Grammatical Commentary, and a Revised Translation* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865), 110. Perhaps because of his influence, F. C. Baur is sometimes seen as the forerunner of those challenging Pauline authorship; see, for example, John B. Polhill, *Paul & His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 334; Lewis B. Radford, *The Epistle to the Colossians and the Epistle to Philemon* (London: Methuen & Co., 1931), 3. Apparently ignoring Mayerhoff, C. F. D. Moule refers to Baur as "among the earlier sceptics on this matter;" (C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon* [Cambridge: University Press, 1957], 13, footnote #1).

¹⁰Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 6. Kiley's summary (37-38) of Mayerhoff's four main points differs somewhat, in that he inverted arguments two and four, and incorrectly identified the matter of "style" as part of point number one.

It was, however, only after the famous and influential German critic Ferdinand Baur's rejection of Pauline authorship of Colossians that the matter became a topic of scholarly debate.¹¹ While Mayerhoff had claimed that Colossians contained "evidences of disputation with the second-century Cerinthus,"¹² the earliest known Gnostic writer, Baur and the Tübingen school which he founded alleged that this letter was written to combat Ebionitism, a Jewish type of Gnosticism, which was likewise outside the range of Paul's time.¹³ Furthermore, Baur suggested that the so-called "exaggerated claims" for Paul's apostleship, and the unusual Greek style of Colossians further "confirmed his sense that the theology"¹⁴ of this letter "belongs to a totally different historical era."¹⁵

Though more than 160 years have elapsed since these issues were first raised, it appears as though there are essentially four fundamental challenges regarding the authorship of Colossians. These matters will be taken up below, in the following order: (a) The charge that this letter deals with, or is related to, Gnosticism (or any other post-apostolic philosophy), which belongs in the post-Pauline era; (b) Questions related to the uniqueness of vocabulary, as well as alleged absence of certain key theological concepts; (c) Concerns about the style or manner of thinking of the writer of Colossians in contrast with other critically accepted Pauline letters; and (d) The novel and distinctive theological perspectives that seem to appear only in this epistle.¹⁶

Gnosticism and Historical Backgrounds

The discussions of the relationship between Colossians and Gnosticism have taken some intriguing directions over the past two centuries. For example, Edgar Mullins noted that "some opponents of the Pauline authorship assert that the Epistle *combats* a form of teaching much later

¹¹Moo, 30.

¹²Guthrie (1970), 551.

¹³See, for example, Wilson, 9; Guthrie (1970), 551; John Barclay, 20; Abbott, liv; H. Dermot McDonald, *Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1980), 16. Additionally, Radford (5) noted that paradoxically "the main objection of Baur himself was that the theology of the epistle showed signs of a departure in the direction of Gnosticism." Likewise, Abbott (liv) noted that for Baur, Colossians was "written from an early Gnostic point of view."

¹⁴John Barclay, 21.

¹⁵Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine: A Contribution to the Critical History of Primitive Christianity*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., A. Menzies, trans. (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1875 [1845]), 2:7.

¹⁶Admittedly, the relationship, if any, between Colossians and disputed as well as undisputed Pauline epistles, is also considered by some as an issue in the discussion of the authenticity of Pauline authorship of Colossians. This matter will be addressed later, especially as it relates to the matter of authorship. This will also focus on possibly crucial inter-connections between Colossians and Ephesians, so as to highlight any probable concomitant implications, which will be considered in this thesis. Essentially echoing the above current (and former) criteria by which the Pauline authorship of Colossians has been challenged, Kenneth Neumann stated: "Scholars have generally reached conclusions regarding authenticity on the basis of five kinds of arguments: (1) the language (vocabulary) of the letters; (2) the style; (3) the theology; (4) the close literary relationship of certain letters (suggesting an imitation); (5) the historical background for the letters;" (Kenneth J. Neumann, *The Authenticity of the Pauline Epistles in the Light of Stylostatistical Analysis*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, number 120 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 4).

than Paul's day, while others claim that it is an attempt to *incorporate* Gnostic speculations into Christianity."¹⁷

Many scholars, accepting the Gnostic hypothesis as fact, have concluded that Colossians contains only the "germs of later Gnosticism."¹⁸ According to William Barclay "the essence of the Colossian heresy ... was in existence centuries before Christianity entered the world."¹⁹ Lewis Johnson noted that modern critics "have discovered that the distinguishing features of the heresy were present in pre-Christian movements."²⁰ Herbert Carson concluded that the usage of terms such as "fullness" (πλήρωμα, 1:19; 2:9) and "knowledge" (γνώσις, 2:3) "in this Epistle is quite consistent with a first-century writing."²¹ Yet, a significant question has been raised as to who was actually quoting whom.

Less than 25 years after Mayerhoff first proposed that Colossians was combating second-century Gnosticism, Professor J. B. Lightfoot stated that the language of Paul "often proves that the Gnostics borrowed *their* language, though no doubt perverting it."²² As recently as 2005, almost a century and a half after Lightfoot's suggestion, Robert Wilson's research has brought to light the fact that "in some instances indeed the Gnostics would seem to be quoting from Colossians itself."²³ If this is so, then "instead of rejecting the authenticity of passages of the N. T. where we find traces of Gnosticism, we must sometimes reason inversely, and seek in these passages [indications of] the origin of Gnostic ideas of the second century."²⁴

¹⁷E. Y. Mullins, *Studies in Colossians* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1935), 18 (emphases added). Radford (4, 5) claimed that the former view was held by the Tübingen school, while Baur himself held the latter view.

¹⁸Vincent, xxxv. See the following, who hold essentially the same view: Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 228; Ernest D. Martin, *Colossians, Philemon*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 24; David K. Bernard, *The Message of Colossians & Philemon* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1990), 13; Robert G. Gromacki, *Stand Perfect in Wisdom: An Exposition of Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 11; Wilbur Fields, *Philippians-Colossians, Philemon: A New Commentary, Workbook, Teaching Manual* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1969), 118; Herbert M. Carson, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 12. This concept of incipient Gnosticism is even held by some who do not believe that Paul wrote Colossians. See, for example, Puskas, 119, 122. Already in 1885 Meyer (202) categorically claimed that, "the assertion that [the Gnostic] Cerinthus is assailed [in Colossians] is erroneous." A century later, Kiley (63) similarly concluded: "Mayerhoff's suggestion that Col is inauthentic because it protests against second-century Cerinthianism is questionable."

¹⁹William Barclay, *The All-Sufficient Christ: Studies in Paul's Letter to the Colossians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 141. So also, Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 32; Guthrie (1970), 553; Munn, 12; McDonald, 16.

²⁰S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 118 (July 1961): 243.

²¹Carson, 12.

²²H. C. G. Moule, 40, footnote #1 (emphasis added), quoting transcribed sentences from memoranda of a Cambridge lecture on Colossians by Lightfoot in May, 1862.

²³Wilson, 9. See especially footnote #16.

²⁴H. C. G. Moule, 40, footnote #1, was here quoting from M. Renan (*Saint Paul, Introduction*, x, xi).

In addition to the question of priority and dependence, “no complete agreement has been achieved concerning the nature of the Colossian heresy,”²⁵ as Werner Kümmel observed back in 1975. About a decade later, Mark Kiley concurred, noting that, “while finding several ‘parallels’ and ‘connections’ between the Colossian and other heresies, we have yet to be able to identify this particular group portrayed in Col.”²⁶ Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke agreed, stating that the Colossian heresy “remains an unsolved puzzle.”²⁷ Kümmel contended that “the broad designation of the Colossian error as an early form of gnosis or as gnosticizing Judaism is not really helpful.”²⁸ In fact, since at least 1966 some scholars have concluded that “it is no longer fitting to discuss a possible influence of ‘Gnosticism’ upon the Colossian Religion or its refutation.”²⁹ With some apparent hyperbole, Heinrich Meyer has rightly cautioned that, if Colossians “is nothing more than a pseudo-apostolic movement of Gnosis against Ebionitism, then every other Epistle is so also, since every other writing in the N. T. may, with almost equal justice, be brought under some such category of subjective presupposition.”³⁰

With such significant, yet dissonant perspectives, the question naturally emerges: How do these factors impact the matter of Pauline authorship? While the more extensive issues relating to the Colossian heresy will be addressed later in this Chapter, some interim conclusions need to be made. First, this epistle cannot reasonably be combating as well as promoting the same theory. Since the matter of priority and/or dependence appears an open issue, it seems questionable to draw any significant conclusions relevant to authorship. And, while the Colossian heresy remains essentially an unsolved puzzle, it is unwise to make any substantive deductions pertaining to the alleged sources of the epistle, its date of composition, or its possible author.

Peter Davids, in his 2008 commentary on Colossians, perhaps best summed up the entire issue, after 170 years of discussion and debate:

While many earlier scholars and a number of more recent ones favored models involving Gnostic thought patterns that developed decades after Paul’s martyrdom, much recent scholarship favors models involving thought patterns with which Paul was very much at home—that is, some form of Jewish spirituality rather than Gnostic speculation or mystery cult initiation. These Jewish models for the background of Colossians fit quite well within Paul’s lifetime, which is significant for authorship.³¹

²⁵Kümmel, 339.

²⁶Kiley, 62.

²⁷Barth, and Blanke, 39.

²⁸Kümmel, 339.

²⁹Barth, and Blanke, 32.

³⁰Meyer, 203.

³¹Peter H. Davids, *Colossians, Philemon*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House,

Thus, the claim that Colossians is inauthentic, because it purportedly combats (or reflects) the Gnosticism of the second century must, at minimum, be considered dubious, and hence unacceptable. The validity or inadmissibility of Pauline authorship of this epistle must therefore be decided upon other more substantial and demonstrable grounds.

Unusual and Absent Vocabulary

In his 2008 commentary on the epistle to the church at Colossae, Douglas Moo stated:

Debates about the authorship of disputed New Testament books invariably involve discussion of the Greek in which they were written. The issue is a simple one: could the person ... who wrote Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon (the seven-book “critical canon” of Paul as determined by current scholarship) also have written Colossians? A number of scholars answer “no.”³²

Moo noted that, according to these scholars, “Colossians uses a number of words that are not found in any of these other letters: 87, to be exact.”³³ Ian Smith provided the actual breakdown of these 87 terms, as follows: “In Colossians there are *thirty-four* words that appear nowhere else in the New Testament (hapax legomena) and *twenty-eight* that do appear elsewhere in the New Testament but not in the other Pauline letters, *ten* words which are in common only with Ephesians, and *fifteen* words that appear in Colossians and Ephesians as well as the rest of the New Testament but not in the other Pauline letters.”³⁴

These differences in vocabulary are frankly admitted by scholars from basically every persuasion; however, the issue is the meaning attributed to these facts.³⁵ From the time of Mayerhoff onwards various scholars have claimed that such language is too unPauline; hence, the apostle Paul could not be the author of Colossians. The most vital terms frequently referred to are the 34 hapax legomena listed here:

ἄθυμειν (3:21), αἰσχρολογία (3:8), ἀνεψιός (4:10), ἀνταναπληροῦν (1:24), ἀνταπόδοσις (3:24), ἀπεκδύεσθαι (2:15; 3:9), ἀπέκδυσις (2:11), ἀπόχρησις (2:22), ἀρεσκειά (1:10), ἀφειδία (2:23), βραβεύειν (3:15), δογματίζεσθαι (2:20), ἐθελοθησκεία (2:23), εἰρηνοποιεῖν (1:20), ἐμβατεύειν (2:18), εὐχάριστος (3:15), θεότης (2:9), καταβραβεύειν (2:18), μετακινεῖν (1:23), μομφή (3:13), νεομηνία (2:16), ὄρατός (1:16), παρηγορία (4:11), πιθανολογία (2:4), πλησμονή (2:23), προακούειν (1:5), προσηλοῦν (2:14), πρωτεύειν (1:18), Σκύθης (3:11), στερέωμα (2:5), συλαγωγεῖν (2:8), σωματικῶς (2:9), φιλοσοφία (2:8), χειρόγραφον (2:14).³⁶

2008), 229. See, for example, Allan R. Bever, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 226 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 255, where he concluded in favor of the theory that “the Colossian philosophy was essentially Jewish.”

³²Moo, 30.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 8 (emphases added).

³⁵Munn, 12.

³⁶See Wilson, 12, footnote #24.

It is significant that of these 34 hapax legomena, 18 occur in Colossians chapter 2, “where the novel form of error is discussed and refuted, and the majority of them are characteristic terms.”³⁷ Gene Munn indicated that “it would be surprising if a letter like Colossians did *not* contain some words not found in the other writings of Paul. The church in Colossae presented a new combination of problems and the writer needed words which dealt specifically with the crisis.”³⁸ Many scholars thus recognize that some of these unique terms are technical words which apply to the erroneous teaching. As Edgar Mullins opined: “Surely a writer must be permitted to employ new words if he is expressing new ideas; and besides, in the case of a writer so gifted and resourceful as the Apostle to the Gentiles, we must allow something for his own wealth of language as well as of ideas, and his love for variety in the expression of his ideas.”³⁹

This is actually what can be seen in Paul’s correspondence with other churches.⁴⁰ Charles Hume observed that other accepted Pauline letters contain equally high numbers of hapax legomena: “around 100 in Romans, 108 in I Corinthians, 95 in II Corinthians and 33 in Galatians.”⁴¹ Even so short a letter as Philemon, which is accepted as one of the seven in the “critical canon,” has several hapax legomena; for example, ἀποτίνω (19), ἄχρηστος (11), ἐκούσιος (14), ὀνόματι (20), and προσοφείλειν (19).⁴²

David Bernard noted that “an author often uses unique words to address a unique situation, and the specific heresy at Colossae caused Paul to employ some specific words he did not have occasion to use in other letters.”⁴³ John Barclay observed that the statistics regarding hapax legomena in Colossians “might be simply explained by reference to the unique situation addressed in Colossians, as an analysis of Philippians would show still higher [statistical] figures (without proving anything about its authorship).”⁴⁴

³⁷Eadie, xxvi.

³⁸Munn, 12 (emphasis added). Similarly Wilson, 12, footnote #24; Ernest Martin, 24.

³⁹Mullins, 15.

⁴⁰Davids (231) indicated that such was the case “in both the Corinthian correspondence and Galatians.”

⁴¹C. R. Hume, *Reading Through Colossians and Ephesians* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 4. Hume included 42 in Ephesians (ibid.), but many scholars do not accept this as an authentic Pauline epistle. Ernest Martin (24) claimed that Galatians has 31 hapax legomena, not 33. So also, Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 9; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii. William Barclay (139) maintained that Galatians and Corinthians contain “almost exactly the same proportion of new words.” Marvin Vincent (xxxv) similarly noted the hundreds of hapax legomena found in the critically accepted Pauline letters. See also, Meyer, 201.

⁴²As per Wilson, 13.

⁴³Bernard, 13. So also William Barclay, 139-140; Johnson, 242; Eadie, xxiv. Wilbur Fields (118) concurred, noting that, just as in the case of Romans, the hapax legomena of Colossians are due to Paul “discussing matters not dealt with in other epistles, and hence different words were required.”

⁴⁴John Barclay, 29.

Bonnie Thurston corroborated this matter, explaining that according to “the Nestle text Colossians has 1,577 words, 10.6% of which are also found in the uncontested letters.... While the vocabulary of Colossians would appear to be unusual, Philippians, about which there has been no question of authorship, has 1,629 words in Nestle, only 3.9% of which agree with the vocabulary of other uncontested letters. So the lexical evidence alone does not weigh heavily against the Pauline authorship of Colossians.”⁴⁵

Indeed, as Kiley noted, if one were to draw a conclusion on the basis of hapax legomena, Philippians would actually be less authentic than Colossians. “That avenue of approach, then, is inconclusive.”⁴⁶ Not only that, but John Eadie observed that the absence of such unique terms “would be the surest proof of spuriousness.”⁴⁷

The author’s use of such unique and distinctive vocabulary in Colossians may be due to his extensive use of traditional materials (such as hymns, confessions, vice and virtue lists, and household codes) which have been incorporated into the letter or it may be due to him quoting the arguments of the false teachers.⁴⁸ Ian Smith pointed out that “it is widely held that hymnic material appears in the letter.”⁴⁹ Furthermore, as George Cannon has demonstrated from his study of traditional materials in Colossians, Paul accommodates himself to his audience whom he has never met, by making use of the theological idioms that are familiar to them, in order to make the gospel message more meaningful to them.⁵⁰

Moreover, as a learned Jewish scholar (Acts 22:3),⁵¹ Paul possessed a large vocabulary, had a keen mind, and had had varied experiences across the Mediterranean world.⁵² Also, the language

⁴⁵Thurston, 5. Victor Furnish (1093) confirms the figures for the unique vocabulary in Philippians by noting that “76 words are used in no other Pauline letter and 36 of these are present nowhere else in the NT.”

⁴⁶Kiley, 44.

⁴⁷Eadie, xxiv.

⁴⁸Thurston, 5. So also Peter T. O’Brien, “Colossians, Letter to the,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Gerald F. Hawthorne, and Ralph P. Martin, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 150; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii. See, also Ralph Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 98; Ralph Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, 39; Michael F. Bird, *Colossians, Philemon*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 6-7.

⁴⁹Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 9.

⁵⁰Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 17. See Cannon’s book, especially, chapter 6. Cannon (49) stated: “Based on the United Bible Societies’ text of Colossians, of the 114 lines of text in the first two chapters, thirty-four (or thirty percent) of them are drawn from traditional material and twenty-five of them are careful applications of the traditional material. This means that over fifty percent of the first two chapters of Colossians are influenced by words, ideas, and modes of expression that were already existing in the early church.” Incidentally, Wall (17-18) reminded us that “this literary strategy of restating his readers’ central beliefs in order to comment on their legitimacy for a particular situation is characteristic of Paul’s preaching and writing. In fact, in his portrait of Paul’s missionary work in Acts, Luke shows how Paul always presents his message in the idiom of his audience, whether Jewish (e.g., Acts 17:1-15) or Greek (e.g., Acts 17:16-33).”

⁵¹Smith, *Heavenly Perspective* (9) observed that “in view of Paul’s Pharisaic and Rabbinic education (Acts 22.3) it is not surprising that he could draw on a large pool of vocabulary.”

⁵²Mullins, 15. So also Munn, 13. Dermot McDonald (18), discussing the “enlarged vocabulary” of Paul, stated:

of a writer may change significantly during his lifetime.⁵³ Taking all of the above into account, Munn is correct in this conclusion that “it is linguistically naïve to reject Pauline authorship on the basis of vocabulary.”⁵⁴

In addition to the concern of unique terminology, some have challenged the authenticity of Pauline authorship because this short letter neglects to mention particularly Pauline terms such as ἁμαρτία, ἀποκάλυψις, δικαιοσύνη, δικαίωσις, δοκιμάζω, ἐλευθερία, ἐπαγγελία, κατεργάζομαι, καοχάομαι, κοίνος, λοιπός, νόμος, πιστεύω, πείθω, σῶζω, σωτηρία, and ὑπακοή.⁵⁵

Peter O’Brien, addressing the challenge of such “missing terms,” stated:

The nonappearance of certain Pauline theological terms such as “sin” (in the singular), “righteousness” and related words, “law,” “salvation,” “believe,” etc., is *not* decisive. In other Pauline letters, occasionally one or more of these words does not appear or is strikingly infrequent: “righteousness” turns up in 1 Corinthians only at 1:30 and not at all in 1 Thessalonians. The verb “justify” does not occur in 1 Thessalonians, Philippians or in 2 Corinthians while “law” also is absent from 2 Corinthians. Likewise “salvation” does not appear in Galatians or in 1 Corinthians.⁵⁶

Eadie perceptively inquires: “Who would reject 1st Corinthians because the favourite and almost essential term *σωτηρία* is not to be found in it, or throw Philippians out of the canon because words so significant and Pauline as *σῶζειν* and *καλεῖν* do not occur in it?”⁵⁷ Also, the term *σταυρός* is not found in Romans. Yet, as Lewis Radford noted, “these omissions are not cited as evidence of non-Pauline authority.”⁵⁸ In brief then, the lack of certain terms may quite easily be explained by the fact that the author is addressing a different subject.⁵⁹

Moo points out that “most contemporary critics admit that the argument [against Pauline authorship] from vocabulary is not very convincing.”⁶⁰ Even Victor Paul Furnish, who alleged that Colossians is pseudonymous and post-Pauline,⁶¹ admitted that “most of the lexical differences between Colossians and the letters that are certainly Paul’s do *not* weigh heavily against Pauline

“A similar instance of this expansion is noted by British classicist J. Mahaffy concerning Xenophon’s later writings. They are, he has shown, full of non-Attic words picked up from Xenophon’s changing surroundings, and in each many words occur only once.” So also, Mullins, 16; Radford, 3-4; Abbott, lii-liiii.

⁵³Pokorný (4) admitted this, though he held (10ff) that Colossians is pseudonymous.

⁵⁴Munn, 13.

⁵⁵This list combines “missing words” as noted by Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 8; and Wilson, 13.

⁵⁶O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii (emphasis added). Michael Bird (6) basically corroborated these “missing words.”

⁵⁷Eadie, xxv.

⁵⁸Radford, 3.

⁵⁹O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii. So also John Barclay, 29. Eadie (xxv) noted that “the words *νόμος* and *πίστις* do not occupy a prominent place; and no wonder, for the object of the writer is not, as in Romans and Galatians, to explain the nature and relations of faith and law.”

⁶⁰Moo, 30.

⁶¹Furnish, 1094.

authorship.”⁶² David Garland’s statement effectively summarizes the essence of this matter of the issue of the vocabulary of Colossians:

We should not expect Paul to express himself in the same way with the same ideas in every circumstance. This argument against Pauline authorship assumes he was incapable of theological innovation in a fresh situation. How do we limit the parameters of what Paul could or could not have said? How do we make judgments about what ideas Paul could or could not have entertained, particularly since he claimed that he could become all things to all men that he might save some (1 Cor. 9:22)? Distinctive vocabulary is an unreliable criterion to rule out Paul’s authorship.⁶³

The Literary Style of the Epistle

For some time it has been observed that some of the sentences in Colossians are extremely long, that their style is rather loose, with repetitions, close synonyms, and the piling up of expressions.⁶⁴ In other words, “the style, particularly the grammar, of Colossians is different in some respects from Romans, Galatians, or the Corinthians literature.”⁶⁵ Walter Bujard in 1973⁶⁶ was the first to attempt to give a more scientific basis to the analysis of the syntax of this epistle (i.e., specifically, how its phrases and sentences are put together).⁶⁷ Kiley’s more comprehensive study, building on Bujard’s initial work, similarly concluded that “the style of the letter is sufficiently divergent from the seven-letter corpus to suggest that Col is *not* by Paul.”⁶⁸ Eduard Schweizer alleged that such a stylistic analysis leads to only one uniform result: “The letter can neither have been written nor dictated by Paul.”⁶⁹ These matters will be considered below in greater detail.

William Hendriksen observed that “Colossians contains well-nigh endless sentence-chains. Thus, chapter 1 has only five sentences in the original, and one of these, verses 9-20, is a sentence of 218 words [in Greek].”⁷⁰ In addition, Colossians 2:9-15 forms a single sentence in the original;⁷¹

⁶²Ibid., 1093 (emphasis added).

⁶³David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 19.

⁶⁴Hume, 30. Similarly Thurston, 5; Hultgren, 26; Radford, 4.

⁶⁵Dauids, 230.

⁶⁶In *Stilanalytische Untersuchungen zum Kolosserbrief: ein Beitrag zur Methodik von Sprachvergleichen* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck, 1973). Schweizer (18, footnote #14) provided a summary of challenges to Pauline authorship, based on stylistic analyses.

⁶⁷Hume, 30. So also, Furnish, 1093. See Kiley’s summary (55-59) of Bujard. Hume (33) considered the question, meaning and usage of stylistic tests, and then cautioned: “The results of these statistical analyses will depend to a degree on the ways the material is fed in, and the presuppositions with which the statistics are read.”

⁶⁸Kiley, 73 (emphasis added).

⁶⁹Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*, Andrew Chester, trans. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 19.

⁷⁰Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 30. Two of the other long sentences are in 1:3-8; and 1:23-26.

⁷¹Wilson, 13. Similarly, Kümmel, 341.

and the writing style has been classified as “cumbersome, wordy, overloaded.”⁷² In response to this challenge, already in 1897, T. K. Abbott pointed out that “the long sentences, such as [Colossians] i. 9-20,... are not without analogy in other Epistles, e.g. Rom. i. 1-7, ii. 5-10, 14-16, iii. 23-26; Gal. ii. 3-5, 6-9; Phil. iii. 8-11.”⁷³

A second concern raised is regarding occasions where expressions that belong to the same stem are combined. For example, Colossians 1:11 has ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι; 1:29 has κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην; 2:11 has περιετιμήθητε περιετομῇ ἀχειροποιήτω; 2:19 has αὔξει τὴν αὔξησιν τοῦ θεοῦ.⁷⁴ However, as Ian Smith indicated, this type of repetition “also occurs in an undisputed Pauline letter such as in 1 Cor. 7.20: ἐν τῇ κλήσει ἢ ἐκλήθῃ; 1 Cor. 10.16: τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν; and 1 Cor. 11.2: καθὼς παρέδωκα ὑμῖν τὰς παρέδόσεις.”⁷⁵

Third, the author of Colossians tends to heap up synonyms, such as “praying and asking” (1:9); “in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (1:9); “patience and longsuffering” (1:11); “holy, faultless, and blameless” (1:22); “grounded and steadfast” (1:23); “ages and generations” (1:26); “rooted, built up, and established” (2:7).⁷⁶ However, Hendriksen noted that such heaping up of synonyms can be found in the undisputed epistle to the Romans.⁷⁷ For example, “ungodliness and unrighteousness” (1:18); “worshiped and served” (1:25); etc. Similarly, Philippians has “full knowledge and keen discretion” (1:9); “pure and blameless” (1:10); “glory and praise” (1:11); “envy and rivalry” (1:15); “eager expectation and hope” (1:20); etc.⁷⁸

Fourth, a concern has been raised regarding the verbose use of dependent genitive constructions in Colossians. For example, “the word of the truth of the gospel” (1:5); “all the riches of the full assurance of understanding” (2:2); “putting off of the body of the flesh” (2:11); “the faith of the working of God” (2:12).⁷⁹ These kinds of dependent genitives do, however, appear in other accepted Pauline letters, such as “a day of wrath and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:5); “a seal of the righteousness of the faith” (Rom 4:11); and “the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2:6).⁸⁰

⁷²Kümmel, 341.

⁷³Abbott, liii. Similarly, Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 30; Mullins, 17.

⁷⁴Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 10. Similarly, O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii.

⁷⁵Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 10.

⁷⁶See Kümmel, 341; Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 30; Wilson, 13; Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 10; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii.

⁷⁷Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 30.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹See Wilson, 13. Similarly, O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii.

⁸⁰Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 11.

Fifth, the joining of substantives to a phrase by the preposition ἐν, has been flagged as a matter of concern. For example, Colossians 1:6 has τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ; 1:8 has τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the same use of ἐν, to connect a phrase to a substantive, also occurs in Romans 14:17: εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ; and 15:13, etc.⁸²

Sixth, concern has been raised in connection with the loosely joined infinitive constructions that show purpose or result, such as περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου (Col 1:10).⁸³ However, as Ian Smith noted, similar “infinitive constructions showing purpose occur in Rom. 1.28; 2 Cor. 11.2.”⁸⁴

Seventh, as noted in the early part of this chapter, one of the major reasons for Mayerhoff’s rejection of Paul as author of Colossians was what he considered the difference in style and way of thinking from genuine Pauline correspondence. Part of these grammatical differences was the apparent absence of certain terms, such as μέν ... δέ constructions, and a sparse use of δέ.⁸⁵ John Eadie’s observations on these missing terms bears consideration:

Some connective particles are absent in this epistle; but ἄρα, one of them referred to by him, is not found in Philippians, nor does δίο, another one of them, occur in Galatians; while οὐχι, which occurs fourteen times in 1st Corinthians, is not found in Philippians, nor here [in Colossians], nor in Galatians. On such irregularities no argument can be founded. Thus, the particle τέ, which occurs often in Romans, is found neither in Galatians nor 1st Thessalonians. The conjunction ἐάν, occurring twenty times in Romans, is found forty-five times in 1st Corinthians, but is absent from Philippians.⁸⁶

Based on such information, Eadie concluded that “there is nothing peculiar in the forms of construction adduced by Mayerhoff.”⁸⁷

Eighth, Colossians also differs in its very tone. As Marianne Thompson observed: “Gone are the sharp polemics, the rapid fire series of biting questions (Rom 3:27-4:1; 6:1-3; 7:7; 8:31-35; 1 Cor 3:3-5; Gal 3:1-5), and the direct and pointed appeals to the readers such as ‘O foolish Galatians!’ (3:1), ‘Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!’”⁸⁸

⁸¹See *ibid.*, 10. More examples are seen in Col 1:12, 29.

⁸²*Ibid.* Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, pointed out that there are many examples of this in the book by Ernst Percy, *Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe* (Lund: Gleerup, 1946), 27-31.

⁸³See Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 10.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵See *ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁶Eadie, xxvii. See also Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (31), who stated: “The relative infrequency of οὐν in Colossians as contrasted with its frequency in Romans and in 1 Corinthians is easy to explain. It arises from the fact that in these epistles of earlier date the apostle is arguing with those whom he addresses, whereas in Colossians he is warning against a heresy.”

⁸⁷Eadie, xxvii.

⁸⁸Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 2. Similarly, Williams, 9; N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1986), 32. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon* (34) challenged this suggestion of a “more mellow” Paul. He posited that “Colossians can be seen as simply one more example of that vivid and brilliant theological writing which characterizes, uniquely, everything Paul himself wrote.”

Admittedly, the tone in Colossians appears rather pale in fervor when compared to Galatians, or Corinthians.

Various explanations have been proposed as to the possible reason for this shift in tone. Thompson suggested that this distinction can be explained in part “by Paul’s closer personal connections to the congregations of Galatia and Corinth: he had personally labored to establish congregations there, as he had not at Colossae.”⁸⁹ In other words, Paul’s lack of personal familiarity with the believers at Colossae may account for at least part of his softened rhetoric.⁹⁰ Hence, its reasoning is more dispassionate and detached.⁹¹

Ian Smith pointed out that the difference in tone may also be due to the fact that Colossians was written when Paul had gotten a bit older, and apparently a bit more mellow.⁹² Even though “the old spirit of fire can still be seen whenever he senses danger for the church,” as in Colossians 2:8, 16-23, “in his old age, the apostle becomes calmer. His language is milder, more serene, richer and more winsome.”⁹³

William Barclay stated: “Perhaps the most important point of all to bear in mind is that Paul wrote this letter in prison.... It was written when he had all the time in the world to write it, or to dictate it. One would expect on perfectly general grounds that the style would be more elaborate than the style of letters written at white heat in the middle of a journey.”⁹⁴ Hence, “there is nothing in Colossians that would preclude the belief that Paul wrote it.”⁹⁵

Kümmel suggested that “the different mode of expression is in part explicable by reason of the strong use of liturgical-hymnic style.”⁹⁶ He noted further that, “the peculiarities of speech and mode of expression are most evident in those sections of Col in which Paul is polemicizing against

⁸⁹Marianne Thompson, 2. In her commentary Thompson (3), recognized that “Paul had never visited the Roman congregation either, and yet his rhetorical strategies there are more like those of Galatians and the Corinthian correspondence than like Colossians.” Hence, her “in part” qualification is apropos.

⁹⁰Ibid. Similarly, Garland, 21; Thurston, 5; Munn, 13; William Barclay, 140; Donald Senior, “Letter to the Colossians,” *The Bible Today* 23 #1 (January 1985), 13.

⁹¹Ralph Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 99.

⁹²Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 11.

⁹³Ibid., 11-12. He was here quoting his own translation of Karl Staab, *Die Thessalonischerbriefe: Die Gefangenschaftsbrieife*, RNT, 7.1 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1969), 7.

⁹⁴William Barclay, 140. Furthermore (140), Barclay noted: “In any event, style is always a dangerous criterion. Are we to argue that because Shakespeare wrote *The Midsummer Night’s Dream* he could not have written *Lear* or *Hamlet*? A man is not an automaton geared to write only in one way; his style will alter with circumstances.”

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Kümmel, 341. Regarding the possible influence of liturgical-hymnic materials on the style of Colossians, see also, Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 10; Polhill, *Paul & His Letters*, 334; Thurston, 5; Sappington, 22-23; Williams, 9; Ralph Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, 39. Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (30) indicated that the use of liturgical-hymnic material in Colossians also helps to explain the richness of appositional clauses, which “are frequently found in ancient hymns in praise of Jehovah, God, Christ, in brief confessions of faith, and in doxologies.”

the false teachers, or when, with it in view, he sets forth his own ideas in hymnic form (1:10-20; 2:16-23).⁹⁷

Wall astutely observed: “The apostle adapts the unchanging convictions of his gospel to the actual problems facing a particular congregation in practical and concrete ways.”⁹⁸ Concurring, Radford noted that “the differences and difficulties of style are not too great to be explained by the special circumstances of the epistle, are not in any way conclusive against its Pauline authorship. Genius cannot be restricted to one type of verbal expression in all cases.”⁹⁹

As N. T. Wright indicated, other accepted Pauline epistles demonstrate that this was not the only style that Paul could adopt: “Themes are stated briefly or poetically, and then later developed further: in [Colossians] 1:15-20 and 2:6ff., for instance, we find a very similar pattern (poetic statement, followed later by detailed application) to Philippians 2:6-11 and 3:2ff., and other similar passages.”¹⁰⁰

It must be emphasized, however, that Colossians does reveal some clear “stylistic idiosyncracies of Paul,”¹⁰¹ which can be paralleled only in the undisputed letters. Kümmel succinctly summarized this as follows:

pleonastic *καί* after *διὰ τοῦτο* (1:9) is found elsewhere in the NT *only* in Paul (I Thess 2:13; 3:5; Rom 13:6; cf. also Rom 9:24 [and in Eph 1:15, in dependence on Col 1:9]); *χαρίζεσθαι* = “forgive” in 2:13; 3:13, and *only* in II Cor 2:7, 10; 12:13 (and Eph 4:32 = Col 3:13) elsewhere in the NT; *ἐν μέρει* (2:16) = “with regard to” and *only* in II Cor 3:10; 9:3 elsewhere in the NT.¹⁰²

Additional similarities between Colossians and the other accepted Pauline letters includes the following: (a) Colossians begins with an introduction, Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ ... (1:1), which is identical to 2 Corinthians, and similar to Romans and 1 Corinthians. (b) Colossians ends with ἡ χάρις μεθ’ ὑμῶν (4:18), which is similar to 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. (c) The author of Colossians includes a listing of messages and greetings (4:7-18), which is similar to Romans 16:1-16, 21-23, 1 Corinthians 16:5-20, Philippians 4:15-18, and Philemon 23-24. (d) Common also between Colossians and other accepted letters is the use of Pauline expressions such as ἐν Χριστῷ. (e) Also, statements about the contrast between the

⁹⁷Kümmel, 341.

⁹⁸Wall, 18. Similarly, Vincent, xxxvi; Johnson, 242; Ernest Martin, 24; Senior, 11. Furnish (1093) noted that the stylistic differences “are present throughout the letter, not just where one may suspect the use of traditional materials.” Similarly, Thomas J. Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 53 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 23.

⁹⁹Radford, 4.

¹⁰⁰Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 32.

¹⁰¹Kümmel, 341.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 341-342 (emphases added). Similarly, Wilson, 14; Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 11; Puskas, 117.

old and the new person can be found in both Colossians (3:5-17), and in 2 Corinthians 5:17, etc.¹⁰³

(f) Furthermore, the careful analysis of the thanksgiving section of Colossians indicates that it manifests the characteristic features of Pauline style.¹⁰⁴ Regarding the matter of thanksgiving, Terence Mullins pointed out: “Structurally Colossians is a unit with thematic relationships appearing in a manner typical of Paul.”¹⁰⁵

Based on things such as the opening greetings, the thanksgiving section, the closing salutations, and the presence of typical Pauline expressions throughout Colossians, Michael Bird, in his 2009 commentary on Colossians, aptly concluded that “there are some genuine stylistic and grammatical affinities with Paul’s other letters.”¹⁰⁶

Finally, as Moo observed, “there is a further factor that complicates any argument” about the grammatical style of Colossians.¹⁰⁷ Thomas Sappington explained this issue as follows: “The question of the role of an amanuensis is more telling with regard to arguments from style. The words of 4.18. ‘I, Paul, write this greetings in my own hand’, point unmistakably to the use of an amanuensis in the composition of the letter.”¹⁰⁸ Though the letter may have been dictated, the amanuensis may have fleshed out the general theme as suggested by the author, who then approved the content of the letter by adding his own signature. Moo posited that it is possible that a scribe “is responsible for some of the word choices and style of the letter. The amanuensis variable, along with the natural variability in word choice and style that pertains to any author, means that the Greek of Colossians offers little basis for judgments about authorship.”¹⁰⁹ As recently as 2008, Moo noted that “this is now generally admitted by scholars of various persuasions.”¹¹⁰

For example, Kenneth Neumann’s published dissertation, *The Authenticity of the Pauline Epistles in the Light of Stylostatistical Analysis*, based on sophisticated modern computer research, concluded: “Many older arguments based on a different language and style for disputed letters are shown essentially invalid.”¹¹¹ Similarly, Hendriksen declared: “When all the facts are examined,

¹⁰³See Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 11; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliii. O’Brien, “Colossians, Letter to the” (150), pointed out that the similar terminology between Colossians and other accepted Pauline epistles includes statements like “in the Lord,” being united with Christ in baptism, and being freed from the power of regulations.

¹⁰⁴Garland, 20, footnote #13. Garland was here commenting on the research done by Terence Y. Mullins, “The Thanksgivings of Philemon and Colossians,” *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 288-293.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. Similarly, Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 11.

¹⁰⁶Bird, 6.

¹⁰⁷Moo, 31.

¹⁰⁸Sappington, 23. Similarly, Polhill, *Paul & His Letters*, 334; Garland, 20; Thurston, 5; Senior, 13.

¹⁰⁹Moo, 31.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

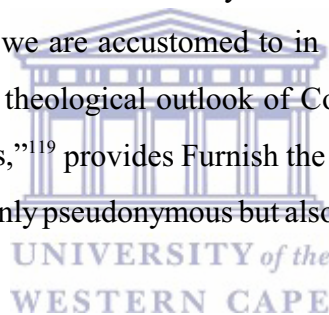
¹¹¹Neumann, 215. Arnold (6-7) concluded: “When one takes into consideration the Apostle Paul’s ability for varied manners of expression, the arguments against the authenticity of the letter based on stylistic matters, and *hapax*

therefore, it is clear that nothing in the language or style of Colossians can be used as an argument against its authenticity.¹¹² In brief then, it appears that many scholars, after examining the issues of both vocabulary and style, have concluded with Kümmel that “there is no reason to doubt the Pauline authorship of the letter.”¹¹³

Novel and Distinctive Theology

O’Brien observed that “for some scholars such as Lohse the supposed theological differences between Colossians and the generally accepted Pauline letters are decisive against the apostolic authorship of Colossians, even if the grounds of language and style were not.”¹¹⁴ Specifically, the apparently distinctive Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, axiology and authority are seen as evidently coming from someone other than Paul.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the alleged lack of “any discussions of law, justification, sin, and the role of the Spirit in relation to baptism (2:12), the new life (3:9-17), and ‘in checking the indulgence of the flesh’ (2:23),”¹¹⁶ are taken as additional evidence that “the letter is pseudonymous.”¹¹⁷

Dunn maintained that “it is difficult to deny that the theological and paranetic content is significantly different from what we are accustomed to in all the undisputed Paulines.”¹¹⁸ These “striking differences between the theological outlook of Colossians and Paul’s views as they are known from the undisputed letters,”¹¹⁹ provides Furnish the evidence which “strongly supports the conclusion that Colossians is not only pseudonymous but also post-Pauline.”¹²⁰ All of these concerns are considered below.¹²¹



legomena are somewhat blunted.”

¹¹²Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 31. Cannon (228) concluded, that “the large amount of traditional material in Colossians makes a lexical and stylistic analysis of the letter of little value for establishing authorship.”

¹¹³Kümmel, 342. Williams (9) thus noted: “In spite of the differences in vocabulary and style, however, nearly all scholars agree that these factors alone cannot decide the question of authorship.”

¹¹⁴O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlv. Moo (32) stated that scholars on both sides of the debate “generally agree that the critical evidence in deciding the issue [of authorship] is the theology of the letter.”

¹¹⁵Sappington, 23. See also, Moo (32), Williams (9), Wall (18), Polhill, *Paul & His Letters* (334), and Fields (118), who noted various theological challenges. Sappington (23), after noting most of these concepts that have caused some to reject Pauline authorship, still chose (24) the “traditional designation of the author as ‘Paul.’”

¹¹⁶Hultgren, 26.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹⁸Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 36. For Dunn (38), “the data are somewhat confusing, and no hypothesis fits it all with equal comfort.” Hence (39), he chose to leave the issue of authorship “fairly fluid, sometimes referring to the author as Paul and Timothy, sometimes simply as Paul to avoid tedious repetition.” Furthermore, Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (39) has no problem with pseudonymity, accepting the possibility of a Pauline disciple writing after Paul’s death, but who was “seeking to be faithful to what he perceived would be the master’s thought and concerns in the situation envisaged in the letter.”

¹¹⁹Furnish, 1093.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 1094.

¹²¹Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon* (33) added the infrequently noted challenge of the “ironic critique of Judaism, and the argument for seeing Christians as the true covenant people.” He noted that this

The christological teaching of the letter to the Colossians does clearly move beyond what is seen in other undisputed Pauline works.¹²² The issue is not so much the centrality as the exalted terms by which Christ is characterized in Colossians, whereby “Christ is accorded a cosmic role in the creation and reconciliation of the universe (1.15-20).”¹²³ In a nutshell, it is contended that Colossians contains a greater reflection on the nature of Christ and His role in the universe than in any of the critically accepted letters.¹²⁴ While it is agreed by scholars on all sides that there are partial parallels between the Christology here and that of Philippians 2:6-11, and 1 Corinthians 8:6 (including additional hints in Rom 8:38, and 1 Cor 15:20-28), many scholars aver that the fixation of the author on the cosmic Christ, and “the celebration of Christ as *already* exalted over the powers is too far out of step with the cautious assertion of his future rule in 1 Cor. 15.20-28.”¹²⁵

Hendriksen countered, explaining that the emphasis on Christ’s uniqueness arose due to the denial of such by the Colossian heretics.¹²⁶ Then, he opined: “Surely, the Christology found here, though more detailed, is not any ‘higher’ than that found in other epistles written by Paul,” both earlier (Rom 9:5; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 4:4), and later (Phil 2:6).¹²⁷ Explaining further, Ian Smith noted that “similar language about Christ being the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ is seen in 2 Cor. 4.4.”¹²⁸ Also, “the fact that Christ is victorious over the angelic realm is evident in Rom. 8.29-39 and Phil. 2.9-11.”¹²⁹ Radford unpacked this concept, saying: “In Col. i. 20 the Cross is the reconciliation not only of mankind but of the universe, angels and all. But there is a pointer in this direction already in 2 Cor. v. 19, ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself’.”¹³⁰ In sum, the writer is anxious to redirect the attention of the Colossian believers from their fear of evil cosmic forces and their concomitant fixation on heavenly angels back to the person of Christ.¹³¹ Since there are so many

theology links itself to arguments already seen in Rom 2:17-29, 2 Cor 3, Galatians as a whole, and Phil 3:2-11.

¹²²Moo, 33. Similarly, Furnish, 1093.

¹²³John Barclay, 25.

¹²⁴Smith, *Heavenly Perspective* (12) pointed out that for Lohse the Christology in Colossians is “seen as a Christianizing of Gnostic beliefs, implying that a profound development has taken place,” beyond the time of Paul. Since the matter of Gnostic beliefs has been addressed above, it will not be considered again here.

¹²⁵John Barclay, 25-26.

¹²⁶Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 32. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective* (12) plainly declared: “The cosmic Christology of Colossians is directly related to the philosophy being disputed.”

¹²⁷Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 32. Similarly, Kümmel, 343; Radford, 6; Guthrie (1970), 554; Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 34; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlv; O’Brien, “Colossians, Letter to the,” 151. Bird (8) added “2 Cor 8:9” to the lists of texts. William Barclay (141) stated: “All that is in Colossians in fuller form exists in embryo and in germ in I Cor 8:6.”

¹²⁸Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 12.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Radford, 6-7.

¹³¹Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 12.

passages in the accepted Paulines that clearly anticipate the direction of Christology in Colossians, Moo rhetorically asked: “Is it easier to attribute this teaching to an anonymous and unknown follower of Paul’s shortly after his death or to Paul himself, an acknowledged genius?”¹³²

In the undisputed Pauline epistles “church” refers to local gatherings of Christians, and this local church is at times compared to a body, or the body of Christ, as in 1 Corinthians 12. However, in Colossians 1:18 and 24 the “church” becomes a universal phenomenon, which is identified with Christ’s body.¹³³ Christ is now portrayed as the head of the body (κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος), that is, the church (τῆς ἐκκλησίας), both universal (1:18, 24), and local (4:15).¹³⁴ This “new” theological concept is alleged to be a novel development beyond Paul’s teaching.¹³⁵

Contrary to the local/universal contrast indicated above, Bird noted that “Paul viewed the churches as a pan-Roman Empire movement who were in close association with one another; [hence] there is nothing inconceivable about him referring to ‘Church’ in this more trans-local sense.”¹³⁶ There is good reason for the “head” imagery to be slightly different in Colossians; for here the author is teaching cosmic rule, while in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Romans 12:4-5 he is teaching interdependence among Christians.¹³⁷ Paul definitively “knows the concept of Christ’s identity with the ἐκκλησία as his ‘body’ (I Cor 1:13; 12:12c, 13; Gal 3:28).”¹³⁸ While there is a development in thought, from the language of simile (in 1 Corinthians and Romans) to that of real interpersonal involvement (in Colossians),¹³⁹ as Moo indicated, “calling the church the ‘body of Christ’ is not that great an advance on the idea of individual Christians as making up the ‘body of Christ’ that we find in 1 Corinthians [10:16; 12:27].”¹⁴⁰

Paul’s eschatology in the undisputed letters is characterized by a temporal dualism, in which what God has “already” accomplished in Christ is counter-balanced by what has “not yet” happened.

¹³²Moo, 33-34.

¹³³Ibid., 34.

¹³⁴Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 12, 13.

¹³⁵Moo, 34. Similarly, Ralph Martin (*Colossians and Philemon*, 34), and Smith, *Heavenly Perspective* (13) noted this challenge.

¹³⁶Bird, 8.

¹³⁷Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 13.

¹³⁸Kümmel, 344.

¹³⁹O’Brien, “Colossians, Letter to the,” 151.

¹⁴⁰Moo, 34. Similarly, Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 33; John Barclay, 26-27; Kümmel, 342. Based on statements in other undisputed Paulines, Radford (7) went so far as to claim that “the headship of Christ in and over the Church in *Colossians* is not a new conception but the combination of earlier conceptions.” Ralph Martin (*Colossians and Philemon*, 34) suggested that “the emphatic cosmic dimension of Christ’s headship may well have been evoked by Paul’s partial agreement with and partial correction of the false teaching on this theme.” In basic concord, O’Brien (*Colossians, Philemon*, xlv) postulated that this theological statement “may well have been stimulated by Paul’s reflection on the issues involved, in the Colossian heresy.”

In place of the temporal expectation of future hope the epistle to the Colossians substitutes the spacial system of “below” and “above” (3:1-4), and teaches a “realized” eschatology, ignoring the normal Pauline temporal tension.¹⁴¹ For example, in Romans 6:4 baptism is a sign that the believer who has died to sin now lives a life oriented towards the future resurrection, whereas Colossians speaks of the Christian as already raised.¹⁴² These matters of eschatology are frequently put forward as the clearest contrast with genuine Pauline letters.¹⁴³

Contrary to the allegedly distinctive eschatology, Garland indicated that while believers enter the resurrection life when they are joined to Christ, its final consummation still lies in the future.¹⁴⁴ In other words, Colossians 2:11-12 is not suggesting that the resurrection has already taken place, but it simply utilizes resurrection language to speak about a believer’s conversion, union, and transformation through Christ.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, Colossians emphasizes the realized eschatology in order to nullify any doubt among the Colossian believers as to whether they had already attained a heavenly dimension through Christ, and so as to invalidate any mortification of the flesh offered by the rival philosophy to reach a higher spiritual plane (2:18).¹⁴⁶ However, as O’Brien aptly stated, this does not suggest that the “not yet” part of Paul’s tension is missing. For “there is future eschatology at chapters 3:4, 6, 24,” etc.¹⁴⁷ A future resurrection of believers is implied by Colossians 1:18, where Jesus is spoken of as the “firstborn from among the dead.”¹⁴⁸ In short, while it retains a credible amount of congruity with the recognized Pauline writings, “the differences of emphasis can be satisfactorily explained by the particular circumstances of the letter.”¹⁴⁹

In recent years a new challenge has emerged – that of the use of a “household code” in which the “ethos is one of hierarchy and subjection.”¹⁵⁰ The question is asked: Is the information given here regarding husbands and wives (3:18-19) compatible with that of 1 Corinthians 7, and is it in line with Paul’s letter to Philemon?

¹⁴¹Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 14.

¹⁴²Ibid. See also, Ralph Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, 34.

¹⁴³Moo, 34. See also, Furnish, 1093.

¹⁴⁴Garland, 19. Kümmel added (344) that “although there is no clear mention of the near expectation, yet the genuine eschatological tension as in Paul is present in Col as well.”

¹⁴⁵Bird, 8.

¹⁴⁶Garland, 20. Moo (35) concurred, noting: “The eschatology of Colossians is strongly tilted toward the ‘already’ side.... But this is not unexpected in a letter that must make the case for the sufficiency of Christ’s work for spiritual victory and fulfillment in the present.”

¹⁴⁷O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlvii. See also, O’Brien, “Colossians, Letter to the,” 151.

¹⁴⁸Bird, 8. See also, Moo, 34.

¹⁴⁹O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlvii. Moo (35) indicated that it is true that “Colossians does not refer to future eschatology to the degree that many of Paul’s other letters do.” However, as he pointed out (35), there is likewise “very little future eschatology in Romans, a much longer letter than Colossians.”

¹⁵⁰John Barclay, 28.

Bird correctly indicated that “the household code of 3:18-4:1 is not the sexist regulations of a Pauline disciple who did not share the apostle’s egalitarian view of women, but stands as part of a natural trajectory from other elements of Paul’s letters about women and households (e.g., 1 Cor 7:1-40; 11:3-16; 14:33-35).”¹⁵¹ While modern scholars are now less prone to consider Paul’s thought as consistent and systematized, there is still a strong tendency to regard the seven undisputed epistles as representing the limits of what Paul could possibly write. Such a view gravely underestimates the apostle Paul’s versatility and intelligence.¹⁵²

Regarding the portrait of Paul that emerges from Colossians, Furnish made two salient points: First, presented as an apostle without peer in the church, Paul’s “apostleship transcends the particularities of time and place and encompasses the world.”¹⁵³ This is seen as considerably different from the undisputed epistles, where there is no such universalist conception, and Paul regularly refers to other apostles.¹⁵⁴ Second, a concern is raised regarding the sufferings of the writer (1:24) – sufferings that “are interpreted as having a vicarious function.”¹⁵⁵ Kiley posited that such a statement, which without some qualification to “prevent the possible inference that the crucifixion of Jesus was somehow inadequate,” is inconceivable for Paul.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Kiley argued that the description of the writer as a διάκονος ἐκκλησίας (1:24-25) is unknown in the critically accepted epistles of Paul, where he is known as Θεοῦ διάκονος (2 Cor 6:4), or as διάκονος Χριστοῦ (2 Cor 11:23).¹⁵⁷ Also, he alleged that it is very surprising that the writer reverses the normal order,¹⁵⁸ by referring to the “Greek and Jew” (Col 3:11), which seems to strengthen the case that the writer of this epistle can not be Paul.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵¹Bird, 8.

¹⁵²John Barclay, 28. Bird (8) note that “the question of how much difference and development it takes to illegitimize Pauline authorship is unquantifiable and is therefore grossly subjective.”

¹⁵³Furnish, 1094. Similarly, Kiley, 60-61. Kiley (61) did admit, though, that “many other attempted distinctions between Paul’s self-portrayal and the one in Col are problematic.” This includes the false charge that it is unPauline to legitimize his apostleship by his sufferings (cf. 2 Cor 11:12-33), and the incorrect idea that Paul does not use ἐγὼ Παῦλος to assert his authority (cf. Gal 5:2).

¹⁵⁴Furnish, 1094. Similarly, Thurston (6), and Moo (32) noted this challenge of authority. Moo (33) also addressed the claim regarding the elevation of Epaphras in Colossians. He noted that “it is not Epaphras that Paul is so concerned to elevate but the message of the gospel that Epaphras brought to them.”

¹⁵⁵Furnish, 1094.

¹⁵⁶Kiley, 59-60.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 60.

¹⁵⁸As seen, for example, in Gal 3:28; and 1 Cor 12:13.

¹⁵⁹Kiley, 60. Kiley, who finds the portrayal of Paul in Colossians to be quite dissimilar to other undisputed Pauline writings (59-61), clearly rejected this epistle as genuine, to a greater degree, on what he believes is an indispensable mark of a true Pauline letter – the absence of any reference to financial transactions connected with Paul’s mission (72-73): “The lack of such mission finances in Col (as well as in Eph, 2 Thess, and the Pastorals) suggests that they are spurious.” Wilson (19), however, after examining Kiley’s so-called evidence challenged his proposal, pointing out that this is “not so strong an argument as he thinks,” and that “Kiley’s suggestion thus appears to stand in need of considerable qualification.” John Barclay (24) concurred: “Kiley’s argument that the lack of reference to financial

John Barclay wondered whether Paul could have described himself as one “who ‘completes what is lacking in Christ’s affliction for its sake (1:24)?”¹⁶⁰ Then he pointed out that one finds the use of not dissimilar language in 2 Corinthians 4:7-15.¹⁶¹ In basic accord, Wright indicated that this “difficult verse about suffering (1:24) can be understood only if we line it up with 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; 4:7-18 and Romans 8:17-25.”¹⁶² Moo asserted that “the claim that the letter elevates Paul to a role that he did not claim in his lifetime is simply wrong (cf. Rom. 1:5-6; 15:14-33).”¹⁶³ While Kiley’s additional arguments may on the surface appear significant, closer examination provides countervailing factors. Since Colossians 1:18 recognizes that Christ is the “head of the body, the church,” and that “His body” “is the church” (1:24), it would not be inconsistent for the apostle to identify himself as “a servant of the church” (NET).¹⁶⁴ Moreover, since this epistle is addressed to a “predominantly Gentile membership,”¹⁶⁵ where Jews were also present,¹⁶⁶ it seems quite appropriate for the author to mention Greeks before Jews in this communication.

As noted above, the lack of discussion of justification is seen as evidence that Paul could not have produced this epistle.¹⁶⁷ However, Wright observed that the doctrine of justification is frequently implicit (as in Col 3:10-13).¹⁶⁸ Moreover, the true center of Paul’s life was not justification, but “the crucified and risen Jesus;” hence, the matter of justification can not be used as the measuring rod of Paul’s entire thought.¹⁶⁹ Also absent from this epistle are any explicit references to the return of Christ or to the coming judgment. Yet, both of these vital doctrines, as Moo observed, “are clearly presupposed in Colossians. Christ’s return is alluded to in 3:4, where Paul says that Christians will ‘appear with him in glory.’”¹⁷⁰ The approaching judgment is clearly

transactions is suspicious can hardly be taken seriously.” Smith, *Heavenly Perspective* (13-14) agreed with the above, and pointed out that Kiley’s “thesis must be rejected,” essentially for lack of genuine textual evidence.

¹⁶⁰John Barclay, 27.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 33. Regarding the “sufferings” of Paul, O’Brien pointed out that “his service of the gospel finds expression in suffering (1:24) and imprisonment;” (O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlviii). There is nothing vicarious about it.

¹⁶³Moo, 33. He went on to state (ibid.): “There is nothing in Colossians, then, about authority that can even be called an advance on what we find in the teaching of the seven critically accepted letters.”

¹⁶⁴Significantly, while the other two phrases (Θεοῦ διάκονος and διάκονος Χριστοῦ), as noted above, do actually occur in Scripture, the phrase διάκονος ἐκκλησίας does not, but is actually a composite, apparently conceived of and constructed by Kiley.

¹⁶⁵Wilson, 8.

¹⁶⁶Wall, 21. Davids (235) agreeing with the above assessment, stated: “It is thus probable that Jews were part of the church, even though it appears that the majority of the church were converted Gentiles.”

¹⁶⁷Similarly, Furnish, 1093.

¹⁶⁸Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 33.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁷⁰Moo, 34-35.

employed “as a warning to encourage holy living in 3:6: ‘because of these [sins], the wrath of God is coming.’”¹⁷¹ Furthermore, in view of the legalistic tendencies of the false teachers, the failure to develop a theology of grace,¹⁷² or to refer to the Spirit in connection with Christian obedience is particularly surprising.¹⁷³ One should not expect, on the other hand, “a letter as brief as Colossians to develop every point of Paul’s theology.”¹⁷⁴ And this truism applies to all the other allegedly “missing” theological concepts, especially in view of the unique circumstances of this epistle.

As John Polhill observed: “The main reason for the differing emphases and omissions is surely the contextual factor. Paul’s agenda was in large part dictated by the nature of the problem at Colossae itself.”¹⁷⁵ Correspondingly, Radford noted: “This development of St. Paul’s theology may have been quickened or even occasioned by the demands of the Colossian heresy.”¹⁷⁶ In brief, and especially since he had such a brilliant mind, and had been well-trained in the Torah, it must be recognized that “Paul’s thought was not static, but he was able to adjust and change to meet each new situation.”¹⁷⁷ Additionally, Hume has highlighted the striking resemblance between Colossians and the kind of literature produced by writers whose view of the world and God has been shaped by the experience of incarceration. Hume then proceeded to ask: “Could it be that this is the basic reason why we feel that these letters are so different?”¹⁷⁸

Granted there is a greater focus in the epistle to the Colossians on the cosmic aspects of Christology, a larger universal view of the church, less emphasis on futuristic eschatology, a developing trajectory of ethical instruction, a somewhat unusual manner of self-reference, and some absent or merely implied theological concepts, in contrast to the undisputed Pauline letters. Yet, Wall

¹⁷¹Ibid., 35.

¹⁷²Though grace is mentioned in the formulas in 1:2, 6, and 4:18.

¹⁷³Though the Spirit is mentioned in 1:8, 9, and 3:16.

¹⁷⁴Moo, 36.

¹⁷⁵Polhill, *Paul & His Letters*, 334. Similarly, Wilson, 16; Meyer, 201; Williams, 9.

¹⁷⁶Radford, 7. Similarly, Thurston, 6; Polhill, *Paul & His Letters*, 334; Vincent, xxxv; Meyer, 201; Johnson, 243; Wall, 19; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlix. C. F. D. Moule (13-14) observed: “Contents, vocabulary, and elevated style are all explainable by the circumstances: the Colossian error is ... easily imaginable as early as St Paul’s lifetime; and Paul, the martyr-apostle, is addressing unknown Christians in solemn tone about this menace.” Hultgren (27) recognized that, in Colossians, “familiar Pauline themes are found, but they have been extended or modified.” Yet (27), he basically concluded that “they mark transitions that fit better into a post-Pauline situation.” Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (36) appears to hold a similar view: “Here again one could speak of the development of Paul’s own thought, but again that would simply indicate that there is a later ‘Paulinism’ that can be attributed to the late Paul or to a close Pauline disciple.”

¹⁷⁷Munn, 14. Similarly, William Barclay, 141. A somewhat different response to this concern is given by Wall. In accord with Cannon’s extensive research, he propounded (19) that “the theological adjustment takes place within the letter’s ‘traditional’ sections, where the Colossian voice (rather than Paul’s) is heard.” He went on to claim (19) that, “where Paul departs from the tradition of his readers and addresses them as their apostle, both his content and his intent conform to his other letters.” See also, Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 16, who said this could account for theological differences. O’Brien (*Colossians, Philemon*, xlv), however, indicated that “these differences, it is asserted, are not limited to the passages that argue against the ‘philosophy,’ but also turn up in sections that are free of polemic.”

¹⁷⁸Hume, 6-7.

eloquently inquired: “When does a new emphasis in his teaching about Christ or a different dimension to his understanding of salvation actually contradict a fundamental of his previously held faith?”¹⁷⁹ Davids accurately affirmed:

None of the themes found in Colossians is entirely missing from those earlier works, nor are the perspectives of those works entirely missing from Colossians. The difference is only a matter of emphasis. To draw a black-and-white picture of contrast between Colossians and earlier Pauline literature is misleading.¹⁸⁰

Finally, the aspect of the ultimate source of these theological concepts needs to be briefly considered. Based on passages such as 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and 2 Peter 1:19-21 many have concluded that the Scriptures find their final foundation in the Godhead.¹⁸¹ Hence, those who accept that Paul was divinely inspired to communicate needed information to the church at Colossae, “will have no difficulty in accepting ‘advanced’ ideas from the pens of tentmakers like Paul or fishermen like Peter. The ideas did not have to evolve in men’s thinking; God revealed them.”¹⁸² Johnson goes so far as to claim that “new and fresh insights into God’s truth on every page are the rule, not the exception, in the letters of Paul.”¹⁸³

Thus, when all of the above are taken into account, it appears that Donald Guthrie was correct several decades ago when he determined that “we may safely conclude that the apostle [Paul] could have expressed all the doctrinal ideas of the Colossian Epistle.”¹⁸⁴ Since the theological perspectives of Colossians are “not irreconcilable with the main lines of Paul’s thought,”¹⁸⁵ and since the omissions are not inexplicable,¹⁸⁶ these “so-called differences between Colossians and the generally

¹⁷⁹Wall, 19.

¹⁸⁰Davids, 230. Williams (9-10) noted that “Cannon faults Lohse for neglecting the interrelatedness of these theological categories and failing to see that many of the ideas that he labels deutero-Pauline can be found in Paul’s chief letters and in the theological affirmations of the traditional material that Colossians uses.” Ultimately, Cannon ended up concluding (229) that “it seems justifiable to believe that the author of Colossians was Paul the Apostle.”

¹⁸¹Wall (17) opined: “Both the church that formed the Christian Bible and the church that continues to read it recognize that when Colossians is picked up as a witness to the person and work of Jesus Christ and read by generation after generation of believers, it is inspired by God and therefore profitable for ‘teaching, rebuking, correcting and training’ (2 Tim 3:16).”

¹⁸²Fields, 119. While not directly addressing the issue of divine inspiration, Ernest Martin’s perspective (24) affirms basically a similar point, as he rhetorically asked: “Who is to say what Paul could or could not have understood about Christ at a given time?”

¹⁸³Johnson, 243.

¹⁸⁴Guthrie (1970), 554. In a footnote (ibid.), Guthrie added: “The theological background of the Epistle is so thoroughly and characteristically Pauline that to attribute the Epistle to an author other than Paul becomes highly improbable.” Interestingly, though Schweizer (*The Letter to the Colossians*, 18-19) claimed that Colossians is pseudonymous, he maintained that this unknown author was “following Paul completely in vocabulary and theological concepts.”

¹⁸⁵Senior, 14.

¹⁸⁶Moo, 36, stated that these omissions are not “sufficient to overturn the very strong indications that the letter was, in fact, written by Paul.”

accepted Pauline letters do not constitute sufficient grounds for rejecting the [Pauline] apostolic authorship of this epistle.”¹⁸⁷

Significance of an Amanuensis

There is a general scholarly consensus that “Paul used an amanuensis (or scribe) to write his letters, and Paul’s ‘signature’ in 4:18 suggests that this may have been the case in Colossians.”¹⁸⁸ Based on his understanding and interpretation of Colossians 1:1, Wall proposed that “in all probability Paul wrote Colossians with Timothy’s help.”¹⁸⁹ This seems justifiable from Colossians 1:1-2, which reads: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae.” However, the pivotal question is: Does the fundamental content of this epistle echo Paul’s thinking and theology (as in a directly dictated letter), does it communicate concepts from a combination of the “co-writers,” or does it reflect Pauline theology while perhaps “sounding” to some degree like Timothy? In other words, how much freedom did Timothy have in the actual writing process, and what impact would that factor have on the language, style, and perhaps even theology of the letter?

Philippians 1:1 reads: “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and the deacons.” Similarly, in language more reminiscent of Colossians 1:1-2, the opening words of 2 Corinthians state: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia.” While at first glance it appears that “Timothy was indeed a cowriter with Paul,”¹⁹⁰ why then, as Davids recognized, is “the style of Colossians different from that of 2 Corinthians?”¹⁹¹ Secondly, as Furnish aptly queried: Why would the biographical notices at 1:23, 24-25, 29; 2:1-5; and 4:7-8 be recorded employing the first person singular?¹⁹²

Already in the late nineteenth century, Meyer began to raise challenges regarding the significance of Timothy’s role in the composition of Colossians. Among other concerns, he noted that if Timothy had been given free reign, he “could hardly have appropriated or imitated the completely Pauline stamp in such measure.”¹⁹³ Moreover, such freedom of formulation “can scarcely

¹⁸⁷O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlix.

¹⁸⁸Moo, 31. Similarly, Bo Reicke, *Re-examining Paul’s Letters: The History of the Pauline Correspondence* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 126.

¹⁸⁹Wall, 15. Similarly, Bevere, 258. The New Living Translation thus paraphrases this verse (emphases added): “This letter is *from Paul*, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, *and from our brother Timothy*.”

¹⁹⁰Davids, 232.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Furnish, 1094.

¹⁹³Meyer, 203.

be reconciled with the high value and authority, well understood by the apostle, which an Epistle from him could not but possess for any Christian church, especially for one not founded by himself.”¹⁹⁴ Also, the dangerous character of the heresy at Colossae, “which had to be opposed in the Epistle, was precisely such as to claim the undivided personal action of the apostle.”¹⁹⁵

On the question of compositional freedom, Moo frankly admitted that “we cannot know.”¹⁹⁶ While it seems quite an accepted fact that Timothy did indeed write at Paul’s behest, Dunn indicated that he clearly did so “with Paul’s approval of what was in the event written,”¹⁹⁷ as appears evident from the added “signature” in Colossians 4:18. Taking these issues into account, the following is postulated regarding the most probable role played by Timothy, the “cowriter” of this epistle. Paul dictated the entire letter, and apparently read it through, before adding his signature of approval in Colossians 4:18. In the process of writing, Timothy may have, after consultation with Paul, used specific language or a style not necessarily originally dictated by Paul, but nonetheless approved of by him. Ultimately, though, the entire letter must be considered truly Pauline, despite its unique features.

External Witness to Pauline Authorship

More than a century ago H. C. G. Moule observed that “the external evidence for the Pauline authorship of the Epistle as we have it is abundant.”¹⁹⁸ More pointedly, Radford indicated that “the tradition of the Pauline authorship of *Colossians* rests on indisputable evidence from the *second* century.”¹⁹⁹

To begin with, distinct allusions to Colossians (though without mentioning Pauline authorship)²⁰⁰ appear in the works of Ignatius (about AD 110),²⁰¹ Polycarp, Barnabas, and Justin Martyr.²⁰² Outside of the specific statement in the epistle itself, the earliest direct identification of Paul as the author of Colossians occurred about AD 140. Marcion, the anti-Judaic Gnostic, “included an epistle to the Colossians in his *Apostolicon*, his own revised canon or list of Pauline epistles which

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 204.

¹⁹⁶Moo, 31.

¹⁹⁷Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 38.

¹⁹⁸H. C. G. Moule, 37.

¹⁹⁹Radford, 1 (emphasis added).

²⁰⁰This according to Radford, 2.

²⁰¹This date according to H. C. G. Moule, 38.

²⁰²Abbott, 1. See also, Meyer, 199; Kümmel, 346; Puskas, 116; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xli; Moo, 30, footnote #6. H. C. G. Moule (38) also included Clement of Rome and Theophilus of Antioch as possibly alluding to Colossians.

he regarded as representing the true Gospel.”²⁰³ In a similar vein, the Latin fragment (known as the Muratorian Canon), which consisted of a survey of New Testament books, “definitely names Paul as the author of Colossians.”²⁰⁴

In the West, Irenæus (ca. AD 180-190), the Asiatic bishop of Lyons, became the first to actually name Paul as author of Colossians.²⁰⁵ He stated: ““Paul has himself declared.... “Only Luke is with me.”... And again he says in the Epistle to the Colossians, “Luke, the beloved physician greets you.””²⁰⁶ Irenæus also wrote: “They say that for this reason Paul said explicitly: *But he is all*; and again: *To him and from him are all things*; and further: *In him the whole fullness of deity dwells*; and: *All things are recapitulated in Christ* through God.”²⁰⁷ Perceptively, Hendriksen asserted that Irenæus’ “testimony should carry considerable weight,” since “he had traveled widely, was intimately acquainted with almost the entire church of his day, and was living in a day and age in which the earliest apostolic traditions were still very much alive.”²⁰⁸

In the East, Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 190-210) “quotes Col. ii. 8 as a warning addressed by St. Paul ‘to Greek converts at Colossae’.”²⁰⁹ That Clement firmly accepted the authenticity of Pauline authorship can further be seen from the following example. First, he said, “as the Apostle puts it” (while quoting from 1 Corinthians 9:20-21), and then added, “In the letter to the Colossians he writes ‘We admonish every one; we instruct them in all wisdom, so that we may produce every single human being perfect in Christ’ [Col 1:28].”²¹⁰

Tertullian of Carthage (ca. AD 193-216) frequently quoted and occasionally named the epistle.²¹¹ Hendriksen documented Tertullian’s acceptance of Pauline authorship, noting that he quotes “again and again” from Colossians, and specifically ascribes “the warning against ‘philosophy and vain deceit’ (Col. 2:8),” as from ““the apostle,”” “whom he calls ‘the same Paul’ (*Prescription*

²⁰³Radford, 1-2. H. C. G. Moule (38) referred to him as “the heretic Marcion.”

²⁰⁴Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 36. Hendriksen (ibid.) dated this fragment “about 180-200,” whereas Radford (2) claimed it is “not later than A.D. 170.” Davids (236) added: “Textually it is found in Alexandrian, Western, and of course Byzantine traditions; in other words, it is well represented in all of the manuscripts – papyrus, uncial and minuscule – containing the Pauline Epistles.” Later (ibid.), he added that, “the text is well preserved.”

²⁰⁵According to Meyer, 199.

²⁰⁶Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 36, quoting Irenæus *Adversus Haereses* III. xiv. 1. See also, Radford (1), and H. C. G. Moule (37) who similarly quoted Irenæus *Adversus Haereses* III. xiv. 1.

²⁰⁷Irenæus *Adversus Haereses* i. 1.

²⁰⁸Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 36.

²⁰⁹Radford, 1, quoting Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* vi. 8.

²¹⁰Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* i. 1. Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (36) concurred, noting that, to Clement “the author of Colossians is ‘the apostle.’” See also, H. C. G. Moule, 37.

²¹¹Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (36) dated Tertullian “fl. 193-216,” while Radford (2) referred to him as being early third century.

against Heretics VII, and cf. VI).”²¹² A little later, Origen of Alexandria (ca. AD 210-250), commented: “In Paul..., in the (Epistle) to the Colossians, we read as follows, “*Let no man beguile you of your reward*” (and so throughout Col. ii. 18, 19).”²¹³ Finally, mention must be briefly made of Eusebius, who, “writing at the beginning of the fourth century, knew that the entire orthodox church accepted Colossians as having been written by Paul.”²¹⁴

In view of the preponderance of evidence, such as that provided above, Radford commented:

Two things emerge from these evidences taken together, viz. (1) the existence of this epistle (without any mention of its author or its destination) as a doctrinal authority or a formative influence not much more than fifty years after its traditional date; (2) the identity of this epistle to the Colossians quoted expressly as Pauline.... Such evidence would be held more than sufficient to establish the authenticity of any classical literature.²¹⁵

In brief then, even before Eusebius, the early second through early third century witnesses of Marcion, the Muratorian Canon, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen routinely assumed and accepted Pauline authorship of Colossians.²¹⁶ This “ancient, continuous, and general”²¹⁷ attestation by the early Christian church, to the authenticity of Colossians as a genuine Pauline epistle, therefore stands on good ground.²¹⁸ As Johnson noted: “There is no historical evidence that the Pauline authorship of Colossians was ever suspect in the early church.”²¹⁹ In other words, as Guthrie categorically stated: “There is no shred of evidence that the Pauline authorship of the whole or any part of this epistle was ever disputed until the nineteenth century.”²²⁰

²¹²Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 36. See also, H. C. G. Moule, 37.

²¹³H. C. G. Moule, 37-38. See also, Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 36. This was a quote from Origen *Contra Celsum* v. 8. While Moule (37) dated Origen “about A.D. 185-A.D. 254,” Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (36) dated Origen as “fl. 210-250.” Hendriksen (ibid.) further noted that “Origen, in his several works, quotes from every chapter of Colossians.” See also, Radford, 2.

²¹⁴Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 36. He quoted Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* III. iii. 4, 5: “But clearly evident and plain are the fourteen (letters) of Paul; yet it is not right to ignore that some dispute the (letter) to the Hebrews.” See also, John MacArthur, Jr., *Colossians & Philemon*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 3.

²¹⁵Radford, 2. Radford’s quote (2) includes the following statement: “The external testimony to its genuineness is the best possible: ever since a collection of Pauline letters existed at all, *Colossians* seems to have been invariably included’ (Jülicher, in *Encycl. Bibl.* i. 865).”

²¹⁶Meyer, 199-200. See also, Davids, 236; Hultgren, 24; MacArthur, 3; Ellicott, 110; Johnson, 241; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xli; Abbott, 1-li; Moo, 30, footnote #6.

²¹⁷Meyer, 199.

²¹⁸O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xli. Meyer (200) noted that “no well-founded doubt can from this quarter be raised.” See also, MacArthur, 3. MacArthur (ibid.) observed: “From apostolic times until the rise of liberal higher criticism in the nineteenth century, the church accepted the Pauline authorship of Colossians.”

²¹⁹Johnson, 241. Moo (29) observed that “no early Christian doubted Paul’s authorship.” Abbott (1) concurred: “About its early and uncontroverted reception as the work of St. Paul, there is no doubt.” Furthermore, Abbott (li), noted that “the external evidence for the genuineness is in no wise defective.”

²²⁰Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. rev. (Leicester, England: Intervarsity, 1990), 576. Concurring, MacArthur (3) stated: “There is no evidence that anyone doubted Colossians’ authenticity before the nineteenth century.”

Some Internal Evidences of Authenticity

While it is not within the purview of this thesis to make an exhaustive examination into all the possible internal evidences of Pauline authorship of Colossians, a few selected pertinent observations, from the research and reflections of other scholars, will be noted. For example, in his 2008 commentary on Colossians, Davids stated: “It seems clear from the very first verse of Colossians (1:1) that Paul of Tarsus, the much-traveled missionary, was the author. Furthermore, the structure of the letter, including the rhetoric, is very similar to those letters that almost everyone accepts as being written by Paul.”²²¹ Actually, as Hultgren pointed out, “the letter itself asserts Pauline authorship three times (1:1, 23; 4:18),”²²² that is, at the beginning and at the end. Schweizer admitted that “Colossians has every appearance of being a genuine Pauline epistle,”²²³ including being similar to 2 Corinthians 1:1 and Philippians 1:1 as to who is sending the letter, namely Paul and Timothy. Also, similar to Colossians 1:23, the actual author (Paul) is identified in 2 Corinthians 10:1, while he ends with his personal signature in Colossians 4:18, just as in 1 Corinthians 16:21, Galatians 6:11, and Philemon 19.²²⁴

Schweizer provided a useful overview of the manner in which “the structure of the Epistle to the Colossians roughly corresponds to that of Romans,”²²⁵ one of the undisputed Paulines. This includes a “dogmatic section, which lays the foundation of the letter and ends with the discussion of a special problem of contemporary concern.”²²⁶ Then, there follows an ethical section, which is introduced by reference to the first part, both sections of which are framed by the introduction and the concluding passage, with some personal notes and greetings.²²⁷

According to Puskas, there is “noteworthy internal evidence for maintaining that the apostle Paul was the author.”²²⁸ He proceeded to identify several internal similarities with the undisputed Philemon, which lends additional support for the authenticity of Colossians.²²⁹

²²¹Davids, 229.

²²²Hultgren, 24. See also, O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xli. Hultgren (27), nevertheless, concluded that Colossians is pseudonymous.

²²³Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 15. He still, concluded (24) that Colossians is pseudonymous.

²²⁴Ibid. Schweizer (*The Letter to the Colossians*, 15) explained further: “The letter also begins, as is customary with Paul, with the experiences of the community, and seeks to proceed from there, without basing its argument on established formulas of Christian teaching. The imperative of ethical admonition is, as in Paul, founded on the indicative of the promise of salvation (2:6; 3:1-4).”

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷Ibid., 15-16.

²²⁸Puskas, 116. Yet, despite this admission, Puskas (119) concluded that “it is more plausible that Colossians was the work of a later interpreter who sought to update the Pauline tradition for a new situation, i.e., Deutero-Pauline authorship.”

²²⁹See also, Kümmel (345), and Davids (229), who have recognized the similarities between Colossians and

- (1) Both contain Timothy's name with Paul's in the opening greeting (Col 1:1; Phlm 1).
- (2) Greetings are sent in both letters from Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, who are clearly with Paul at the time (Col 4:10-14; Phlm 23, 24).
- (3) In Phlm 2, Archippus is called "fellow soldier," and in Col 4:17 he is directed to fulfill his ministry.
- (4) Onesimus, the slave about whom Paul writes to Philemon, is mentioned in Col 4:4 as being sent along with Tychicus and is described as "one of you."²³⁰

One other major comparative analysis, between Colossians and yet another of the critically accepted Pauline epistles, deserves to be mentioned – that done by Hendriksen. His tabulated findings, as related to the parallels between Colossians and Philippians, can be summarized essentially as follows: (a) Both have a summary of the prayer the apostle uttered for those he addressed (Col 1:9-11; Phil 1:9-11); (b) Similarities between the two prayers include his wish that his friends may *grow* or *abound* in grace, may *bear fruit* abundantly, and may possess an increasingly genuine personal *knowledge* of God; (c) In both letters, those who have been reconciled to Christ, are to be *without blemish* (Col 1:22; Phil 2:15); (d) An important means to that end is the *word* or *message of God* (Col 1:25; Phil 1:14); (e) *Perfection* is always the goal (Col 1:28; Phil 3:12); (f) Christ's *Spirit* is the Energizer (Col 1:18, 29; Phil 1:19; 3:21); (g) To continue increasing in fruitfulness the Philippians (4:9) must continue in the truth *as they learned it* from Paul, just as the Colossians (1:7) must, *as they learned it* from Epaphras; (h) In both letters Paul mentions the gigantic *conflict* being engaged in (Col 2:1; Phil 1:30); (i) Paul's *physical absence* does not prevent his spiritual fellowship with the Colossians (2:5), and should not prevent the Philippians from remaining faithful (1:27); (j) In both Colossians (2:18, 23; 3:12) and Philippians (2:3) the somewhat unique term *ταπεινοφροσύνη* occurs, meaning "self-abasement," or "humility;" (k) Then, there is also the frequent use of the term *πληρώω* ("I make full," "fill" or "fulfill"), found in Colossians 1:9, 25; 4:17; Philippians 1:11; 2:2; 4:18, 19; (l) The *heavenward* direction of Colossians 3:1, 2 is in line with the *heavenward* call of Philippians 3:14; (m) The *things that are upon the earth* (Col 3:2) which should not absorb our interest, are in line with the *earthly things* (Phil 3:19) of the unbelievers; (n) The *heart of compassion* demanded of us (Col 3:12), is similar to the *tender mercy and compassion* of Philippians 2:1; (o) Both epistles reference the *peace of God* (Col 3:15; Phil 4:7); (p) Mention is

Philemon.

²³⁰Puskas, 116. Schweizer (*The Letter to the Colossians*, 24), who, like Puskas alleged that Colossians is pseudonymous, speculatively theorized as follows (20) regarding the customary notes and greetings in this letter: "They must have been gathered together in an extraordinarily artificial fashion from the material in the Epistle to Philemon in order to give Colossians the appearance of authenticity." More recently, Reicke (130) has seriously challenged such a view, saying: "It is questionable whether any member of the early church would have found it worthwhile to restore or construct such antiquities in a later situation."

made in both to the *bonds* (Col 4:18; Phil 1:7, 13, 14, 17); and (q) Both have a rather terse command towards the end of each epistle (see Col 4:17; Phil 4:2).²³¹

The above comparative analyses, showing the multiple resemblances between three undisputed Pauline epistles and Colossians, seem to furnish supplemental evidence for the authenticity of this letter. However, perhaps the strongest internal evidences can be seen when the claim of Colossians 1:1 of Pauline authorship is “fleshed out with considerable personal and circumstantial detail,”²³² as Moo spelled out in his 2008 commentary on Colossians:

The author speaks at length of his special ministry as a “servant” of the gospel (1:23), a representative of Christ in his suffering (1:24), and a steward of the “mystery” revealed in the last days (1:25-26). He requests prayer that he might be able to continue, even in prison, to proclaim Christ boldly (4:3-4). Timothy is his “brother” (1:1), he names six other men, with some degree of circumstantial detail, as his ministry associates (4:7-15), and he urges one man to “complete” his work (4:17). He mentions that he “contends” for Christians in both Colossae and the neighboring Laodicea, even though he has never met them personally (2:1). He is sending a letter to Laodicea that he wants the Colossians to read after they have, in turn, shared their letter with the Laodiceans (4:16). And he concludes the letter by saying “I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand” (4:18).²³³

Moo explained further: “We list these details so that we might have a full picture of the matter before us. The letter’s claim to be written by Paul is no casual matter, it is a claim that is built into the warp and woof of the letter, elaborated with detail after detail.”²³⁴

Various Implications of Pseudonymity

Hume lamented: “We cannot prove the authorship of *any* ancient document to the satisfaction of the determined sceptic, who, when faced with a passage clearly resembling other works generally accepted as those of the author under consideration, claims that it must be an imitation, and when a passage is dissimilar, argues that the dissimilarity proves that someone else must have written it. This is a ‘heads, I win; tails, you lose’ argument.”²³⁵

²³¹Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, 32, 34-35. Abbott (lviii-lix) referred to V. Soden’s work: “Thus as to language he compares *πληρῶν* in Col. three times, in Phil. four times: *σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ*, Col. iii. 12, Phil. ii. 1: *λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, Col. i. 25, Phil. i. 14: *περιτομή* (figurative), Col. ii. 11, Phil. iii. 3: *ἀγών*, Col. ii. 1, Phil. i. 30: *ἀπειναι*, Col. ii. 5, Phil. i. 27: *δεσμοί*, Col. iv. 18, Phil. i. 7, 13f., 17: *τὰ κατ’ ἐμέ*, Col. iv. 7, Phil. i. 12: *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, Col. ii. 23, iii. 12, Phil. ii. 3: *καρποφοροῦντες*, Col. i. 10, *πεπληρωμένοι καρπῶν*, Phil. i. 11: *ἄνωμος*, Col. i. 22, Phil. ii. 15: *τέλειος*, Col. i. 28, Phil. iii. 15: *κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν, κ.τ.λ.*, Col. i. 29, Phil. iii. 21: *ἄνω*, Col. iii. 1, Phil. iii. 14: *τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*, Col. iii. 2, *ἐπίγεια*, Phil. iii. 19: *βραβεῖον*, Phil. iii. 14, *καταβραβεύειν*, Col. ii. 18. As to style, he compares the brevity of Col. iv. 17 and Phil. iv. 2; the introduction of a judgment by a relative, Col. ii. 23, Phil. i. 28, iii. 19: the sentences, Col. i. 9, Phil. i. 11: the prayer for *ἐπίγνωσις*, Col. i. 9f.; Phil. i. 9: the wish *καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη, κ.τ.λ.*, Col. iii. 15, Phil. iv. 7: the similar ideas, Col. i. 24 and Phil. iii. 10; Col. ii. 18 and Phil. iii. 3; Col. i. 24 and Phil. ii. 30: the references to what the readers had heard, Col. i. 7, Phil. iv. 9: and, lastly, the close correspondence of some peculiar dogmatic expressions; see i. 19ff.”

²³²Moo, 28.

²³³Ibid.

²³⁴Ibid., 28-29.

²³⁵Hume, 3.

Despite the evidence considered above, and in spite of the fact that an impressive list of reputable scholars have maintained that the apostle Paul was the author of this epistle,²³⁶ Wall observed that the majority of modern scholars “have concluded that Colossians was not written by Paul but by a pseudepigrapher.”²³⁷ Concurring, Raymond Brown estimated that sixty percent of current scholars hold that Paul did not write this epistle.²³⁸

In support of this perspective, many commentators maintain that viewing Colossians as deutero-Pauline does not mean that this letter is to be understood as simply an example of forgery.²³⁹ Extensive pseudepigraphical literature from the ancient secular world reveals that such pseudepigraphers sought to heighten the reputation of religious figures and to circulate their teachings.²⁴⁰ In accord with this type of thinking, Kiley theorized that in Colossians “they used two genuine prison letters of Paul’s [i.e., Philippians and Philemon] to construct a letter purporting to be by Paul from prison.”²⁴¹ This speculative hypothesis appears to be discredited by the actual evidence from history, as Wilson recorded: “Tertullian tells us (*De Baptismo* 17) that the presbyter who wrote the *Acts of Paul* was removed from office when he confessed, although he said that he did it ‘out of love for Paul.’”²⁴² Moo contended that if the literary device of pseudonymity were so widespread, “we would have expected early church fathers to recognize it and identify the letter accordingly.”²⁴³ There is not a single shred of evidence that any of these early Christian leaders ever did so. On the contrary, just as in the case provided us by Tertullian, “the comment of Serapion, Bishop of Antioch (c. 200), seems to represent the universal viewpoint of the early church on the issue of pseudepigraphy: ‘We receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but as experienced men we

²³⁶In his 1995 tome on Colossians, Arnold (7, footnote #10) identified among others, the following scholars: N. T. Wright, P. T. O’Brien, G. Fee, F. F. Bruce, M. Barth, W. G. Kümmel, F. W. Beare, E. Percy, and M. Dibelius.

²³⁷Wall, 15, footnoted.

²³⁸Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 610. Brown’s list includes Mark Kiley, Joachim Gnilka, Petr Pokorný, Andrew Lincoln, Outi Leppä, Walter Bujard, Wolfgang Schenk, and Raymond Collins.

²³⁹See Wilson (11), who noted that, on this matter, we are “not to transplant a modern attitude, a modern way of thinking, back into the first century, where attitude and outlook in such matters may have been very different.” Note, however, that Wilson was cautious in stating that, in the first century, the “attitude and outlook in such matters” only “may” have been different from modern thinking.

²⁴⁰Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 17 (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2000), 8.

²⁴¹Kiley, 106. Davids (232) pointed out that “theories of pseudepigraphy have yet to come up with a convincing reason for why someone would create this letter ostensibly addressed to a then-unimportant city that Paul was never known to have visited rather than a letter to Antioch or Berea or Athens or some other city more directly associated with the Pauline mission.”

²⁴²Wilson, 11.

²⁴³Moo, 38.

reject the writings falsely inscribed with their names, since we know that we did not receive such from our fathers.”²⁴⁴

Therefore, since we are dealing with sacred literature, since there is no unequivocal example of acceptable pseudepigraphical practice in either the Old or the New Testament,²⁴⁵ and since available historical evidence plainly suggests that early church leaders repudiated and rejected pseudonymous and pseudepigraphical literature, David Garland’s fundamental logic must be thoughtfully taken into account:

If Paul had nothing to do with the writing of Colossians, it must then be regarded as a deliberate forgery. The counterfeiter deliberately lifted names from Philemon to give verisimilitude to Colossians and to defraud readers into thinking that it was a genuine letter from Paul. In contrast to Philemon, which has simply a list of names, the Colossians author supplies further remarks for each name, summarizing their circumstances and work in the churches. The hoax is intentional; ‘a clever trickster is a work.’²⁴⁶ Apparently the forger did not believe that the command not to lie to one another (3:9) applied in such a case.²⁴⁷

In summing up this entire issue of pseudonymity and pseudepigraphy, Moo stated: “The notion of an innocent, ‘transparent’ literary device of epistolary pseudepigraphy, in other words, appears to be largely a modern scholarly invention, designed to reconcile a ‘false’ claim of authorship in a letter with the acceptance of that letter as an authoritative and canonical witness to the *truth* of Christ.”²⁴⁸ Recognizing this dilemma, Lewis Donelson expressed it clearly: “The embarrassment of pseudepigraphy strikes at the heart of scriptural authority.”²⁴⁹

A Brief Reflective Termination

Finally, the ultimate question is, Why is this matter of the authorship of Colossians so vital? First, if Paul did write this epistle, then one can more easily compare its theological concepts with that of other works of Paul. Second, if the letter is pseudonymous, while claiming to be authentic, then it is difficult to accept its contents as truthful and worthy of emulation. For, “deceptive authorship, bordering on fraud, must inevitably raise questions about authority.”²⁵⁰ Third, “those who

²⁴⁴Ibid. Moo was here quoting Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 6. 12. 1-6. In basic accord, in 1865 Ellicott (110), referring to Davidson (*Introd.* Vol. II. P. 427 sq.), noted a major challenge with pseudonymous literature: “As the latter writer very justly observes, the fabrication of such an Epistle would be ‘a phenomenon perfectly inexplicable’ (428).”

²⁴⁵There are some who may contend that certain Psalms, as well as 2 Peter and the Pastorals are of the pseudepigraphic genre. However, transparent scholarship will admit that such claims are essentially speculative. For example, though speaking positively regarding the supposed acceptability of New Testament pseudepigrapha, Wilson theorized (31, emphases added) that “the judgment as to their authenticity *may* have been mistaken, but it *may* have been their orthodoxy that carried the day.”

²⁴⁶Barth, and Blanke, 144.

²⁴⁷Garland, 22.

²⁴⁸Moo, 38 (emphases added).

²⁴⁹Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, HUT 22 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1986), 201.

²⁵⁰Moo, 39, footnote #29. Moo (40) aptly asserted that “the degree of hypocrisy involved [in pseudepigraphical

reject Paul's authorship of Colossians tend to undervalue its religious significance for today's church."²⁵¹ Hence, the most value and benefit will be derived from this power-packed epistle if it is accepted as authentically Pauline. As Garland commented: "The problem [of pseudonymity] is eliminated if Paul is the author of the letter" to the Colossians.²⁵²

In more recent times, the rigorous research of some contemporary scholars has afforded a measure of authentication for the view that Paul was the author of Colossians. Wilson acknowledged in his 2005 exegetical commentary that, "the authenticity of the letter is still maintained by some scholars, and is a perfectly reputable position."²⁵³ Such is the position of Ian Smith in his 2006 volume, when after a meticulous and extensive investigation of the challenges, he reported "that there is insufficient evidence to deny Pauline authorship of Colossians."²⁵⁴ In his 2008 commentary, Moo concluded that, despite the serious arguments against Pauline authorship, nothing has been proven "sufficient to overturn the very strong indications that the letter was, in fact, written by Paul."²⁵⁵ Thus, Moo definitively declared: "Paul must be seen as the real author."²⁵⁶

Comparison of Colossians with Ephesians

For many decades it has been recognized "that there is some literary connexion between Ephesians and Colossians."²⁵⁷ As Carol Stockhausen put it: "Even a cursory reading of Colossians and Ephesians reveals that the two letters bear some sort of relationship to each other."²⁵⁸ Over time there has been some debate as to whether Colossians was dependent on Ephesians or vice versa.²⁵⁹ While few passages exhibit direct verbatim accord, "the real affinities between the two letters are to be found in numerous short parallels in concept and wording."²⁶⁰ For example, Stanley Porter and

literature] makes it difficult to give the writer any credibility at all."

²⁵¹Wall, 15.

²⁵²Garland, 22.

²⁵³Wilson, 32.

²⁵⁴Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 16.

²⁵⁵Moo, 36.

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 41.

²⁵⁷F. C. Synge, *Philippians and Colossians: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1951), 53. Synge alleged (*ibid.*) that this relationship was "so tangled that a simple explanation will not do."

²⁵⁸Carol K. Stockhausen, *Letters in the Pauline Tradition: Ephesians, Colossians, I Timothy, II Timothy and Titus*, Message of Biblical Spirituality (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 15.

²⁵⁹Best succinctly summarized the various options: E. Best, "Who Used Whom? The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians," *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 74-75. Schweizer (*The Letter to the Colossians*, 15), for example, argued that Ephesians was dependent on Colossians; but held that the latter "can neither have been written nor dictated by Paul;" (*ibid.*, 19). Talbert contends (6), though, that "if literary dependence is assumed, it is virtually impossible to detect which letter is the source for the other. The case for dependence can be argued for either side." Barr maintained that "there is no evidence of direct literary dependence," between the two letters; (George K. Barr, *Scalometry and the Pauline Epistles*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 261 [London: T & T Clark International, 2004], 73).

²⁶⁰John B. Polhill, "The Relationship Between Ephesians and Colossians," *Review and Expositor* 70 (Fall 1970),

Kent Clarke pointed out that, “34% of the words of Colossians reappear in Ephesians (and 26.5% of the wording of Ephesians appears in Colossians).”²⁶¹ John Polhill noted that “apart from actual verbal and conceptual parallels, there is an affinity between the *style* of the two epistles,” as well as in “the *general structure* of the two;”²⁶² and that, “a full third of the text of Colossians is paralleled in Ephesians.”²⁶³ Some commentators, such as G. H. P. Thompson, have included columns in their writings so as to visually illustrate “the striking similarities between the two letters.”²⁶⁴

More than a century ago, H. C. G. Moule, listed more than 30 “chief doctrinal parallels,”²⁶⁵ between these two epistles, all of which “perfectly fit the hypothesis of one author.”²⁶⁶ Polhill aptly concluded that “there is a demonstrable relationship between these two epistles, an affinity which is greater than the relationship between any other two Pauline epistles.”²⁶⁷ Bird opined: “The literary parallels between Colossians and Ephesians are numerous.”²⁶⁸ Porter and Clarke observed that, in line with what can normally be expected in any Pauline letter, there are at least 10 major points of organization, including the message about alienation and reconciliation, “head and body relations, comparison of the old and new persons, the household code, [and] the exhortation to prayer.”²⁶⁹

439.

²⁶¹Stanley E. Porter, and Kent D. Clarke, “Canonical-Critical Perspective and the Relationship of Colossians and Ephesians,” *Biblica* 78 (1997): 77.

²⁶²Polhill, “The Relationship Between Ephesians and Colossians,” 440 (emphases original). Smith indicated that besides the fact that both epistles include dozens of hapax legomena, “both Ephesians and Colossians have very long sentences;” (Ian K. Smith, “The Later Pauline Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon,” in *All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*, Mark Harding, and Alanna Nobbs, eds. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013], 305). See also, Wessels, who argued for a similar futurist eschatology in Colossians and Ephesians; (G. F. Wessels, “The Eschatology of Colossians and Ephesians,” *Neotestamentica* 21/2 [1987]: 183-202).

²⁶³Polhill, *Paul & His Letters*, 335. Similarly, MacDonald (4) pointed out that “more than one third of the words found in Colossians are also in Ephesians.”

²⁶⁴G. H. P. Thompson, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 9; see *ibid.*, 9-11. See similarly, G. W. Garrod, *The Epistle to the Colossians: Analysis and Examination Notes* (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1898), 20-22. Obviously, since mention has been made of many similarities, it is clear the “they also have some differences;” (Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943], 239).

²⁶⁵H. C. G. Moule, 47-49.

²⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 49. See also, Hubert Richards, *St Paul and His Epistles* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), 119-141.

²⁶⁷Polhill, “The Relationship Between Ephesians and Colossians,” 440.

²⁶⁸Bird, 3.

²⁶⁹Porter, and Clarke, 77. Talbert, giving credit to Abbott (xxiii), provided a long list of the parallels, despite the order not being identical in these two epistles: Eph 1:7 // Col 1:14; Eph 1:10 // Col 1:20; Eph 1:15-17 // Col 1:3-4; Eph 1:18 // Col 1:27; Eph 1:21 // Col 1:16; Eph 1:22 // Col 1:18; Eph 2:1, 12 // Col 1:21; Eph 2:5 // Col 2:13; Eph 2:15 // Col 2:14; Eph 2:16 // Col 2:20; Eph 3:1 // Col 1:24; Eph 3:2 // Col 1:25; Eph 3:3 // Col 1:26; Eph 3:7 // Col 1:23, 25; Eph 3:9 // Col 1:26; Eph 4:1 // Col 1:10; Eph 4:2 // Col 3:12-13; Eph 4:3-4 // Col 3:14-15; Eph 4:16 // Col 2:19; Eph 4:22-23 // Col 3:8-10; Eph 4:25-26 // Col 3:8-9; Eph 4:29 // Col 3:8; 4:6; Eph 4:31 // Col 3:8; Eph 4:32 // Col 3:12; Eph 5:3 // Col 3:5; Eph 5:4 // Col 3:8; Eph 5:5 // Col 3:5; Eph 5:6 // Col 3:6; Eph 5:15 // Col 4:5; Eph 5:19-20 // Col 3:16-17; Eph 5:22 // Col 3:18; Eph 5:25 // Col 3:19; Eph 6:1 // Col 3:20; Eph 6:4 // Col 3:21; Eph 6:5-8 // Col 3:22-25; Eph 6:9 // Col 4:1; Eph 6:18-20 // Col 4:2-4; Eph 6:21-22 // Col 4:7-8. See also, the comparison in Puskas, 130-131; Bird, 4; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 6-26, 28-29; Charles N. Pickell, *The Epistle to the Colossians: A Study Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 16; Karl Braune, *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, M. B. Riddle, trans. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1870), 2, footnoted.

Intentionally employing a canonical-critical perspective, in contrast to a historical-critical approach, Porter and Clarke concluded, among other things, that “in terms of authorship, it appears that the Pauline usage of reconciliation language points to authentic Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians.”²⁷⁰ Commentator Moo also highlighted the similarity in theology, general content, and even “exact wording” in places; and concluded that “this kind of relationship also fits extremely well with the hypothesis that Paul had written both letters at about the same time.”²⁷¹ Decades earlier Lewis Radford stated more emphatically: “The only satisfactory reconciliation of this fact [that each epistle ‘has a literary unity and a literary individuality’] with the fact of their mutual resemblances is to accept both as the work of one and the same author.”²⁷²

As part of the “remarkable similarity”²⁷³ of these two epistles, Oliver Greene specifically mentioned the “striking resemblance” between “Ephesians 2:11-22 and Colossians 2:11-15,”²⁷⁴ two linguistically connected passages investigated in Chapter Seven, as part of the preliminary matters leading into the heart of the threefold phrase of Colossians 2:16. Stating it more precisely, commentator Hume mentioned that “Eph. 2.15 throws some light on” the “difficult expression”²⁷⁵ of the τοῖς δόγμασιν as found in Colossians 2:14.²⁷⁶ In brief, accepting Paul as author of Colossians and Ephesians may serve to furnish valuable comparative information for the broader study of the tripartite phrase of Colossians 2:16.

Selective Overview of Theories About the “Heresy”²⁷⁷

Ordinarily it would be expected that a detailed understanding of the background about the epistle to the Colossians be known so that the specific passage can be better interpreted. Considering its apparent polemic tone, these questions naturally arise: What was the apostle Paul combating?

²⁷⁰Porter, and Clarke, 81. Smith (“The Later Pauline Letters,” 308), indicated that he was working “on the assumption that” both Ephesians and Colossians “were written by the Apostle Paul.”

²⁷¹Moo, 36-37. Pao, likewise, acknowledged a “significant overlap of content of Colossians and Ephesians;” (David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 22). See also, Ellicott, 110; Marcus L. Loane, *Three Letters from Prison: Studies in Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon* (Waco, TX: Word, 1972), 20.

²⁷²Radford, 8. He maintained (8-9) that the author is Paul. Similarly, Bernard, 14. Ernest Martin (27) asserted that “the affinity between these two letters is greater than one finds between any other two Pauline letters.”

²⁷³Oliver B. Greene, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians* (Greenville, SC: Gospel Hour, 1963), xi. Foster’s 2016 commentary recognized that “there are numerous ... parallels between these two epistles;” (Paul Foster, *Colossians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries [London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016], 86); he outlined and explained (85-90) his understanding of this relationship.

²⁷⁴*Ibid.*, xv.

²⁷⁵Hume, 44.

²⁷⁶Recently Oropeza noted that there was “a problem in Ephesus similar to Colossians regarding the misuse of Torah and ascetic practices;” (B. J. Oropeza, *Jews, Gentiles, and the Opponents of Paul: The Pauline Letters, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities*, vol. 2 [Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012], 245-246).

²⁷⁷This section is an expanded and updated revision of selected parts of Ron du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008), 5–8.

What was the primary purpose of this letter? In fact, some such as Schweizer have insisted: “It is impossible to understand this letter without understanding the situation which had arisen in Colossae, first of all the kind of heresy which had broken into the congregation there.”²⁷⁸ Troy Martin, after stating that “identifying the Colossian opponents is the central exegetical issue in Colossian studies,” went further, contending that “failure to adequately ascertain the opponents not only renders specific passages such as 2.4, 8, 16-23 unintelligible but also obscures the relevance of the doctrinal and ethical portions of the letter.”²⁷⁹

However, the interpreter is faced with a daunting task, as there is no direct statement made to identify the specific teaching or philosophy or heresy being addressed by the writer of the epistle. Roy Yates noted: “It is notoriously difficult to determine what occasioned Paul to write the Epistle to the Colossians.”²⁸⁰ One has to read between the lines and guess, since it is similar to “the problems of listening to ‘one end of a telephone conversation.’”²⁸¹ Under these conditions, “there is danger in this of reading into the text solutions to problems that never existed.”²⁸²

In his 2005 commentary on Colossians, Wilson acknowledged that “there has been vigorous discussion of the Colossian ‘heresy’ for more than a hundred years, and various theories have been propounded.”²⁸³ By 1973, J. J. Gunther had provided “a fascinating listing of no less than 44 different suggestions made to identify Paul’s opponents in Colossae;”²⁸⁴ at present they are “legion.”²⁸⁵ Wilson noted: “At the one extreme it has been regarded as a purely local phenomenon, confined to Colossae itself; at the other it has been seen as a more or less developed form of incipient Gnosticism.”²⁸⁶

Based on his survey of the significant reconstructions of the Colossian heresy, in the mid-1990s Richard DeMaris concluded that “there appear to be five distinct schools of interpretation.”²⁸⁷

²⁷⁸Eduard Schweizer, “Christ in the Letter to the Colossians,” *Review and Expositor* 70 (Fall 1973), 451.

²⁷⁹Troy W. Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as a Response to a Cynic Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 11.

²⁸⁰Roy Yates, “Colossians and Gnosis,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27 (1986), 55.

²⁸¹Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 181.

²⁸²Yates, “Colossians and Gnosis,” 55.

²⁸³Wilson, 35.

²⁸⁴James D. G. Dunn, “The Colossian Philosophy: A Confident Jewish Apologia,” *Biblica* 76/2 (1995): 153, footnote #2. See also, H. Wayne House, “Doctrinal Issues in Colossians, Part 1: Heresies in the Colossian Church,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (January-March 1992), 45. By 1978, Burgess claimed there were “approximately fifty different theories;” (Joseph Burgess, *The Letter to the Colossians*, Proclamation Commentaries [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978], 41).

²⁸⁵Todd D. Still, *Colossians*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, rev. ed., *Ephesians ~ Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 267.

²⁸⁶Wilson, 61.

²⁸⁷Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, vol. 96 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 38.

Ascetic, Apocalyptic, Mystical Judaism; Hellenistic Syncretism; Hellenistic Philosophy; Jewish Gnosticism; and Gnostic Judaism.²⁸⁸ More recently, Ian Smith sought to organize these approaches into four distinctive groupings:²⁸⁹ Essene Judaism and Gnosticism; Hellenism; Paganism; and Judaism.²⁹⁰

Edwin Yamauchi noted that it was J. B. Lightfoot who, in the late nineteenth century, had proposed that “the Colossian heresy was an incipient ‘Gnostic’ movement with links with the Essenes.”²⁹¹ However, Yamauchi also pointed out that in the 1950s and 1960s Pauline studies were “largely under the influence of students and followers of Bultmann who assume the pre-Christian existence of Gnosticism.”²⁹² Yet, as noted above, ironically it was Lightfoot himself who stated that Paul’s language “often proves that the Gnostics borrowed *their* language, though no doubt perverting it.”²⁹³ About one and a half centuries after Lightfoot’s suggestion, Wilson’s research revealed that “in some instances indeed the Gnostics would seem to be quoting from Colossians itself.”²⁹⁴ Regarding the Gnosticism proposal, Ian Smith, in his 2006 monograph, challenged: “Although they argue for an *oral* prehistory to written material, this is ultimately an argument from silence and supposition.”²⁹⁵ As Werner Kümmel observed back in 1975: “The broad designation of the Colossian error as an early form of gnosis or as gnosticizing Judaism is not really helpful.”²⁹⁶

Explaining somewhat at length, Yates provided a specific example of the danger of glibly accepting the Gnostic hypothesis:

²⁸⁸Ibid., 38-39. By 1870, Braune (7) already noted that there were more than a dozen theories around. MacDonald (11) lists additional theories, such as Stoicism, Pythagoreanism, Cynicism, etc.

²⁸⁹Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 21.

²⁹⁰Ibid. Royalty stated: “Scholars have claimed that the Colossian opponents were Jewish, Gnostic, mystical, visionary, apocalyptic, philosophers, and of course syncretistic. The early Christians were all these;” (Robert M. Royalty, “Dwelling on Visions: On the Nature of the So-Called ‘Colossian Heresy,’” *Biblica* 83 [2002]: 357).

²⁹¹Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidence*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 44-45.

²⁹²Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 26. These students include G. Bornkamm, U. Wilckens, and W. Schmithals. Interestingly, Yamauchi himself drew the following conclusion (in a 1964) article: “We are left then with a heresy with elements that resemble Jewish heterodoxy, on the one hand, and with elements that anticipate the later development of *Gnosticism*;” (“Qumran and Colosse,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121 [April 1964]: 152, emphasis added). Somewhat similarly, Bernard, 20-21.

²⁹³H. C. G. Moule, 40, footnote #1 (emphasis added), quoting transcribed sentences from memoranda of a Cambridge lecture on Colossians by Lightfoot in May, 1862.

²⁹⁴Wilson, 9. See especially footnote #16. Addressing the Gnostic theories in the mid-1950s, Casey noted: “The New Testament offers no ground for using documents of the second and third centuries A.D. to explain it. The New Testament requires no explanation, either as a whole or in any of its parts, in terms of an hypothetical primitive Gnosticism;” (R. P. Casey, “Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament,” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: In Honour of Charles Harold Dodd*, W. D. Davies, and D. Daube, eds. [Cambridge: University Press, 1956], 80).

²⁹⁵Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 37 (emphasis original).

²⁹⁶Kümmel, 339.

It has been claimed that “fullness” is a technical term taken over from Gnosticism. Certainly it was used in the second century in Valentinian Gnosticism for the totality of aeons emanating from God. But according to Valentinian teaching the *pleroma* is the heavenly fullness to which God does not belong. Hence this understanding of the word cannot contribute anything to the explanation of Col 1:19, where God himself is called the *pleroma*. It is a mistake to try to read such ideas back into the New Testament. The more likely background for the phrase “all the fullness” is the Old Testament, which recognises that God himself (or his glory) fills the whole universe (Jer 23:23).²⁹⁷

Since at least 1966 some scholars have concluded that “it is no longer fitting to discuss a possible influence of ‘Gnosticism’ upon the Colossian Religion or its refutation.”²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, for decades now, the Gnosticism hypothesis is still being advocated, and used as an interpretive framework for Colossians.²⁹⁹

Talking about the “tremendous amount of time and energy” expended in an effort to pinpoint the precise nature of the heresy, Todd Still noted in 2006: “Thus far, no one reconstruction of the ‘philosophy’ has convinced a majority of the scholarly community, and it currently seems unlikely that a consensus will emerge anytime soon.”³⁰⁰ Thus, Wilson’s comment seem apropos: “The very variety of these proposals prompts to caution: we are not yet in a position to affirm with confidence that we have finally identified the nature and origins of the Colossian ‘heresy.’”³⁰¹ O’Brien observed that “nowhere in the letter does the apostle give a formal exposition of the ‘heresy.’”³⁰² Moreover, Thomson pointed out that “no-one has adequately demonstrated the existence of a contemporaneous

²⁹⁷Roy Yates, “A Reappraisal of Colossians,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 [New Series] (1992): 100-101. Such a somewhat naïve acceptance of a so-called “early form of Gnosticism” can be found in Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 7 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 7:184.

²⁹⁸Barth, and Blanke, 32.

²⁹⁹See, for example, Frank B. Holbrook, “Did the Apostle Paul Abolish the Sabbath?” *Perspective Digest* 14/2 (2009): 28-32; idem, “Did the Apostle Paul Abolish the Sabbath? Colossians 2:14-17 Revisited,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13/2 (Autumn 2002): 69-72; William E. Richardson, *Paul Among Friends & Enemies* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 163-167; Williams, 5-6; W. Duncan Eva, “Christ and the Colossian Christians,” *Adventist Review*, 23 August 1984, 8. In concluding his article, Moyo alleged: “The background to the theology which was evolving at Colossae must be sought within a gnostic frame of thought;” (Ambrose Mavingire Moyo, “The Colossian Heresy in the Light of Some Gnostic Documents from Nag Hammadi,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 48 [September 1984]: 44); McDonald, 131; Munn, 16-21; Referring to Colossians 2:16-23, Barclay claimed: “This passage has certain basic Gnostic ideas intertwined all through it. In it Paul is warning the Colossians not to adopt certain Gnostic practices;” (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, The Daily Study Bible Series, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 144); Thomas H. Olbricht, “Colossians and Gnostic Theology,” *Restoration Quarterly* 14 (2nd Quarter 1971): 67.

³⁰⁰Still, 267. Moyo (30), stated in 1984 already: “There is still no unanimity in New Testament scholarship on the question of the historical identity of the so-called ‘Colossian heresy.’” As DeMaris (39) pointed out: “None of the reconstructions of the Colossian philosophy commands a consensus of scholarly opinion at the present.” Wayne House (59) stated: “No single view has arguments that can lead to its being endorsed exclusively.” As noted by Craig A. Evans, “The Colossian Mystics,” *Biblica* 63 (1982): 188: “No reconstruction of the heresy or error which prompted the writing of the epistle to the Colossians has yet been offered that has won the assent of the majority of scholars.” Wilson (61) concurred, observing that “none of these has yet commanded the general consent of scholars.”

³⁰¹Wilson, 61.

³⁰²O’Brien, “Colossians, Letter to the,” 148.

system that exactly accords with the categories cited by Paul.”³⁰³ This may account for the fact that “several recent scholars have questioned whether these counterarguments [in this epistle] point to the existence of a ‘Colossian heresy’ at all.”³⁰⁴ For example, Dunn concluded that “to describe this as a ‘heresy’ is quite inappropriate.”³⁰⁵ Instead, after protesting that the important evidence “from the letter itself had been neglected,”³⁰⁶ Dunn concluded that “the main proponents of the Colossian ‘philosophy’, therefore, almost certainly have to be understood as belonging to one of the Colossian synagogues,” [and] that “the cumulative evidence seems to point more and more to a Jewish denigration of the Colossian Christians’ claim to participate in Israel’s heritage.”³⁰⁷ In the words of Allan Bevere:

Since the Colossian church was [primarily] Gentile and there is nothing in the letter to suggest an internal division between Jews and Gentiles in the church, it is likely that the ‘judging’ was coming from the synagogue in Colossae against the Colossian Christians who claimed to share in Israel’s inheritance without ‘taking on all that was most distinctive of that heritage’, particularly in their worship.³⁰⁸

Over the past few decades, it appears that, as more and more regard has been accorded the text of Colossians itself, an ever-increasing amount of commentators have begun to echo to some degree the renewed direction proposed by Dunn. “Renewed,” as this understanding had already been promoted at the time of the Protestant Reformation, according to F. F. Bruce: “John Calvin’s acute and well-informed mind led him to identify the proponents of the heresy as Jews – but Jews of a speculative tendency.”³⁰⁹ While cautioning that views as to what the heresy was, “can be a little more than guesswork because of the fact that the heretics left no written record,” Roy Smith observed that “there is, however, some reason for saying that there was a Jewish element in the idea.”³¹⁰ While

³⁰³Thomson, 181.

³⁰⁴O’Brien, “Colossians, Letter to the,” 148. Wedderburn has similarly noted: “One might argue that specific threat is unlikely because of the sheer variety of the suggestions proposed;” (A. J. M. Wedderburn, “The Theology of Colossians,” in *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters*, Andrew T. Lincoln, and A. J. M. Wedderburn, eds. [Cambridge: University Press, 1993], 4).

³⁰⁵Dunn, “The Colossian Philosophy,” 181. He noted that calling it a heresy “reduces that teaching to its controverted features and completely fails to appreciate the strength and attractiveness of a confident Jewish apologia;” (ibid.).

³⁰⁶Ibid., 154.

³⁰⁷Ibid., 179-180. Somewhat similarly Bird (25) has suggested that “perhaps a circle of Jewish teachers from a local synagogue immersed in Jewish mystical traditions and Hellenistic thought have come into contact with Christians in Colossae and are commending this form of ‘Judaism’ to them.” Bevere pointed out that “there has been a resurgence of the view that Colossians is addressed to meet a challenge to the Colossian church originating from the synagogue;” (13).

³⁰⁸Bevere, 77. He was here also quoting “Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 174.”

³⁰⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 19.

³¹⁰Roy L. Smith, *Paul Writes Scripture in Prison: Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, Ephesians*, Know Your Bible Series, Study Number Nine (New York: Abingdon, 1945), 20. Houlden asserted: “Colossians gives no evidence of certain elements which were integral to the Gnostic outlook, [but there is evidence] that the teaching is adequately

seeking to “understand from the text of Colossians itself ... as far as can be determined, the situation that gave rise to this response” of Paul,³¹¹ Ian Smith did not ignore the actual setting into which the epistle was sent, noting: “An important feature of the Lycus valley was the presence of a substantial Jewish minority.”³¹² Thus, David Garland’s deduction seems plausible: “Newly formed Gentile Christians in Colossae are being badgered about their faith by contentious Jews.”³¹³

Objecting to Clinton Arnold’s syncretistic proposal, Gerald Hawthorne suggested that “a close examination of every scrap of information provided by the text itself might suggest instead that the teaching Paul opposed had in fact a strong and thoroughly Jewish stamp to it that might have characterized any of the synagogues in Colossae (cf. 1:12, 21-22; 2:11-13, 16, 21).”³¹⁴ In agreement, Thomas Schreiner noted that “evidence from the letter itself must be primary in identifying the opponents.” Then he added: “And the crucial verses to my way of thinking are Col 2:16-17, for these verses specifically delineate what the opponents taught.”³¹⁵ After positing a “Jewish background” based on his view of verse 16, Schreiner stated: “A Jewish background is also confirmed by v. 17.”³¹⁶ In his exegetical commentary, after pointing out that the “shadow of things to come” of Col 2:17 is best paralleled by Heb 10:1, David Pao similarly concluded: “This strengthens our understanding of the significance of the Jewish context of the false teachers plaguing the Colossian believers.”³¹⁷ As Peter Davids affirmed: “These Jewish models for the background of Colossians fit quite well within Paul’s lifetime.”³¹⁸ Also, by considering the text of Colossians itself, Moo concluded that “an Old

explained on the basis of contemporary Judaism;” (J. L. Houlden, *Paul’s Letters from Prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians*, Pelican New Testament Commentaries [Middlesex: Penguin, 1970], 311).

³¹¹Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 2.

³¹²Ibid., 3. Pokorný (21) confirmed this Jewish presence, noting: “There were Jews in the Lycus valley. They were descendants of the two thousand Jewish families resettled from Babylon to Asia Minor by Antiochus III as protection along his territorial boundaries.” For documentation, Pokorný references Cicero, *Flacc.* 28, 68. Tidball, likewise, pointed out: “Colossae had a significant Jewish population [due to Antiochus III’s activities];” (Derek J. Tidball, *In Christ, In Colossae: Sociological Perspectives on Colossians* [London: Paternoster, 2011], 19).

³¹³David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 27. Moo agreed, noting that, “An Old Testament/Jewish derivation for the false teachers’ insistence on keeping certain religious ‘days’ is much more likely.... There is, then, universal agreement that the false teachers’ insistence on observance of days was influenced by Judaism;” (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 220).

³¹⁴Gerald F. Hawthorne, review of *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, by Clinton E. Arnold, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (March 1999): 158. In parallel fashion, while reviewing Arnold’s work, Schreiner has noted: “The evidence from the letter itself must be fundamental in reconstructing the Colossian philosophy;” (Thomas R. Schreiner, review of *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, by Clinton E. Arnold, in *Trinity Journal* 20 [Spring 1999], 201, emphasis original).

³¹⁵Schreiner, 102.

³¹⁶Ibid., 103.

³¹⁷Pao, 186.

³¹⁸Peter H. Davids, *Colossians, Philemon*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 229. See, for example, Allan R. Bever, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 226 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 255,

Testament/Jewish derivation for the false teachers' insistence on keeping certain religious 'days' is much more likely.³¹⁹ Bevere succinctly noted: "The Colossian philosophy was essentially Jewish."³²⁰ More than 30 years ago already, N. T. Wright asserted "that all the elements of Paul's polemic in Colossians make sense as a warning against Judaism."³²¹ Then he contended: "This means that those theories which find parallels to certain aspects of the Colossian 'situation' in gnosticism, mystery religions or other philosophies, such as Stoicism and Pythagoreanism, are not necessary."³²² In his 1,000-page tome on Paul, Wright somewhat recently rejoiced: "Certainly there is no way back to the eager 'gnostic' hypotheses of earlier days."³²³

Margaret MacDonald suggested: "On account of the difficulty of determining the precise identity of the Colossian opponents, it seems safer to remain open to the possibility that Colossians is responding to several groups that share similar characteristics rather than one specific group."³²⁴

Arthur Patzia, however, deduced that, as "it is impossible to identify the heresy with any precision," it must be that "identifying the heresy is not essential for understanding Paul's basic message."³²⁵

John Barclay suggested that New Testament scholars should simply admit "that this puzzle is

where he concluded in favor of the theory that "the Colossian philosophy was essentially Jewish." Similarly, Sokupa concluded that "after examining various views on the opponents" in the early Colossian congregation, "evidence has revealed that the Jewish element is dominant throughout;" (Mxolisi Michael Sokupa, "The Calendric Elements in Colossians 2:16 in Light of the Ongoing Debate on the Opponents," *Neotestamentica* 46/1 [2012]: 186). From his 2010 survey of new commentaries on Colossians, Gupta concluded that the theories about the Colossian heresy, while tending "to shy away from simplistic answers," has led scholars to conclude that this teaching can be seen "as either representing diversity *within* Judaism or combining Jewish and non-Jewish elements;" (Nijay Gupta, "New Commentaries on Colossians: Survey of Approaches, Analysis of Trends, and the State of Research," *Themelios* 35.1 [2010]: 12, emphasis original).

³¹⁹Moo, 220.

³²⁰Bevere, 255. Others, such as the following, also hold to some form of Jewish philosophy: Oropeza noted: "*The philosophy threatening the church in Colossae seem [sic] to be identified with the teachings of a Jewish group;*" (250, emphasis original). See also, Reicke, 78; Cannon, 228; Wilson, 216; Wall, 21-23; Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1933), 73; John H. Tullock, "Sabbath," *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, Watson E. Mills et al, eds. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 781; W. Saumarez Smith, "Colossians," in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. VI (New York: Werner Company, 1899), 165; Gordon D. Fee, "Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians: Reflections on Pauline Christology and Gentile Inclusion in God's Story," in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*, Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, ed. (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 207; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, Commentary on the New Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1961), 123; Edmund K. Simpson, and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 166. Van Kooten, though, challenged the notion that the tripartite phrase in Col 2:16 shows that the issue was "unquestioningly" and "exclusively" Jewish, as he held that non-Jews kept all three; (George H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of GraecoRoman Cosmology, with a New Synopsis of the Greek Texts*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe 171 [Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 138).

³²¹Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 27.

³²²Ibid.

³²³N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Book I, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 993.

³²⁴MacDonald, 12. More recently, Pate claimed: "In Colossians the realized eschatologies of Hellenistic religion, *merkabah* Judaizers, and the imperial cult combined to deliver a knockout punch to the Christian faith there at Colossae;" (C. Marvin Pate, *Apostle of the Last Days: The Life, Letters and Theology of Paul* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013], 218).

³²⁵Arthur G. Patzia, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, A Good News Commentary (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 46.

insoluble.”³²⁶ Acknowledging that the Colossian heresy “remains an unsolved puzzle,”³²⁷ Barth and Blanke contended that “the only way to explain the subject is by close examination of every scrap of information provided by the *text* of the *epistle*.”³²⁸ Or, as Bruce aptly indicated: “The *only* source of information about their false teachings is the Epistle to the Colossians itself.”³²⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, especially as it aims at doing inter-textual analyses, and since “it is quite probable we will never know for sure the precise views of the false teachers,”³³⁰ it does seem best to employ the *scriptura sui ipsius interpret* dictum – and ultimately, it should not matter whether the Colossian “heresy” puzzle is *ever* resolved.³³¹

Moo has perhaps best summed up this entire matter of the heresy by stating: “The false teachers were appealing to spiritual beings, visions, and rules to find security in this very uncertain universe. In doing so, they were questioning the sufficiency of Christ.... Here is the essence of the false teaching: it is ‘not according to Christ’ ([Col] 2:8).”³³² In this context, John Woodhouse’s proposal is noteworthy: “We do not need to reconstruct a supposed false teaching, which Paul was combating, in order to understand him. We need to ask what it is about faith in Christ Jesus that made *this* a danger.”³³³ In Daniel Harrington’s words: “What was the problem? It was the attractiveness of Judaism to Gentile Christians at Colossae. Why was this a problem? Because it

³²⁶John Barclay, 53.

³²⁷Barth, and Blanke, 39. On this matter, Hultgren (29) noted: “Precision seems elusive.” Similarly, Thurston (37), opined that this heresy “is nearly impossible to define precisely.”

³²⁸Ibid. (emphasis added). Smith (38, emphasis added) complained that, “The most obvious weakness of recent study on the Colossian philosophy is that it does not give sufficient attention to the *text of the letter*.” In his monograph, Smith (205) admitted: “This study is indebted to those who have gone before.... These advances in research, however, have also led to a level of confusion as more and more solutions are offered in order to solve the puzzle of the nature of the Colossian error.... *This* study has sought to forge a way ahead by returning to a detailed study of the *text* of Colossians *itself*,” (emphasis added). Likewise, William Barclay, *The All-Sufficient Christ*, 33, concluded that he needed to “turn to the letter itself to see if we can deduce from it the nature of the trouble that threatened the life and faith of the church at Colossae.”

³²⁹F. F. Bruce, “Colossian Problems, Part 3: The Colossian Heresy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (Jul-Sep 1984): 196 (emphasis original). Likewise, Barling avouched: “As for the nature of the Colossian heresy, we have but one sure source of information: the letter itself;” (Thomas J. Barling, *The Letter to the Colossians* [Birmingham: Frank Jukes, 1972], 25). Bruce explained (“Colossian Problems,” 196): “Paul does not give a detailed account of it, because his readers were presumably familiar with it already; he contented himself with pointing out some of its defects and assessing its character in the light of the gospel.” Similarly, Marianne Thompson (6) noted: “It is not easy to reconstruct the situation of the church that Paul addresses, since Paul does not specifically spell it out.”

³³⁰Senior, 16.

³³¹Contra Troy Martin’s contention noted above, about the alleged “central exegetical issue” of “identifying the Colossian opponents,” and the supposed impossibility of rendering passages such as the one under consideration in this thesis – Col 2:16 – as “unintelligible” without this information; (see Troy Martin, 11).

³³²Moo, 60.

³³³John Woodhouse, *Colossians and Philemon: So Walk in Him*, Focus on the Bible Commentary Series (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2011), 151.

threatened the basic principle of the Pauline gospel: ‘Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised ... but Christ is all, and in all’ ([Col] 3:11).”³³⁴

Summary and Conclusions

As seen in the first part of this Chapter, during the past two centuries several significant challenges have been raised against the authenticity of Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Colossians, including unusual vocabulary, the divergent literary style, as well as novel and distinctive theology. Nevertheless, having considered the relevant factors, there seems to be sufficient plausible evidence (both internal and external) to conclude that Paul was most likely the author of Colossians.

Many scholars have engaged in comparative analyses of the relationship between Ephesians and Colossians. Though the matter of dependence is viewed from various perspectives, there seems to be a general recognition that both books were most likely the work of one and the same author. Hence, if one accepts Paul as author of both epistles, such may provide opportunity for significant comparative analysis as needed.

Fortunately, since this thesis will undertake an inter-textual analysis, it was not considered indispensable to enumerate and evaluate the particulars of the plethora of proposals that have been made regarding the heterodox teaching making inroads among believers in Colossae. Nevertheless, a selective overview sought to create an awareness of the complexity of the challenges, as well as the acknowledgment (by some) that this may be an insoluble puzzle, despite the general consensus of much current scholarly work – that “the Colossian philosophy was essentially Jewish.”³³⁵

Having considered essential preliminary matters, the following four chapters will now seek to provide a solid textually-oriented foundation from which Chapter Seven can draw, as it focuses on the directly-related materials so as to hopefully uncover the most likely meaning of the σαββάτων as located in Colossians 2:16.

³³⁴Daniel J. Harrington, “Christians and Jews in Colossians,” in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel*, Andrews Overman, and Robert S. MacLennan, eds. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 159.

³³⁵Bevere, 255. See, also Oropeza, 250; Reicke, 78; Cannon, 228; Wilson, 216; Wall, 21-23; Erdman (1933), 73; Tullock, 781; W. Saumarez Smith, 165; Fee, 207; Lenski, 123; Simpson, and Bruce, 166. Beale wrote that the “‘philosophy’ (Col. 2:8) focuses on keeping regulations about ‘food or drink ... a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths’ (2:16), which concern ‘decrees such as “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch”’ (2:20b-21). That this language is Jewish and not pagan is apparent also from the Let. Arist. 142: God ‘helped us [Jews] round on all sides by rules of purity, affecting alike what we eat, or drink, or touch, or hear, or see;”’ (G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011], 792, footnote #37).

CHAPTER THREE

A STUDY OF LINGUISTIC MARKERS FOR “SABBATH”

In a somewhat lengthy footnote in his “theological guide to the Christian day of worship,”¹ Paul Jewett stated: “The argument that Paul’s statement in Col. 2:16 refers to ceremonial sabbaths, not the weekly Sabbath, an argument generally held by the Puritans, is seldom found today.”² Jewett then posited that “such an interpretation is untenable, since the Hebrew for Sabbath (*shabbath*), the equivalent of the Greek σάββατον which Paul uses in writing to the Colossians, occurs about a hundred times in the Old Testament and refers *without exception to the weekly Sabbath*.”³ In his article on שַׁבָּת in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, E. Haag likewise asserted: “In the OT the noun *šabbāt* refers *consistently* to the weekly day of rest.”⁴ Based on this notion, Jewett stated: “Hence, Paul’s statement comes as near to a demonstration, as anything could, that he taught his converts they had no obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament.”⁵

Other well-recognized scholars have made statements which appear to stand in tension with the above claims. For example, in his article in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Eduard Lohse stated that “the OT speaks of a Sabbath which is to be kept after each six years,”⁶ thus suggesting that the Hebrew term שַׁבָּת has a broader meaning than referring to only the weekly Sabbath.⁷ In a similar manner, Jacob Milgrom proposed that שַׁבָּת was used in Leviticus for the Day of Atonement – an annual ceremonial sabbath.⁸ In view of such apparently mutually exclusive claims, this chapter will set out to consider the inner biblical evidence, by means of a complete

¹This is the sub-title of his book dealing with the Sabbath: Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord’s Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).

²Ibid., 44 (footnote #20).

³Ibid. (emphases original).

⁴E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת *šabbāt*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., Douglas W. Stott, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), XIV:394 (emphasis added); hereafter *TDOT*.

⁵Jewett, 45 (footnote #20).

⁶Eduard Lohse, “σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), VII:5; hereafter *TDNT*.

⁷Lohse (“σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή,” *TDNT*, VII:6), directly states that “the whole land was to keep a Sabbath to Yahweh in the seventh year.”

⁸See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 2026, where he showed that the phrase “your sabbath” does not refer to the seventh-day Sabbath, but is used of the Day of Atonement. Essentially challenging Milgrom’s conclusion regarding the use of שַׁבָּת, Jewett states: “There were seven annual feast days in the Old Testament involving rest from labor, and sometimes scholars refer to these as ‘sabbaths,’ but Scripture *never* reflects such usage;” (Jewett, 45 [footnote #20, emphasis added]). This chapter will investigate which view, if any, has the best weight of evidence in its support.

survey of all uses of the Hebrew שַׁבָּת of the Old Testament, the Greek terms σάββατον and σάββατα of the New Testament, as well as the related compound Hebrew expression שַׁבָּת שַׁבְּתוֹן (with its Greek renderings in the Septuagint).⁹

שַׁבָּת in the Hebrew Old Testament

The “שַׁבָּת Without Qualification” Theory

Some writers have claimed that throughout the entire Hebrew Bible the word שַׁבָּת *by itself* is never used to refer to any ceremonial sabbaths. For example, in 1880 William Love stated: “The word שַׁבָּת, unqualified, is in no case applied to any day but the weekly Sabbath.”¹⁰ In 2011, in a newly-released volume dealing with the Sabbath, Craig Blomberg asserted similarly that the seventh-day Sabbath was “what Jews universally meant the overwhelming majority of the time when they used the word *Sabbath* without qualification.”¹¹ If this is an accurate concept, then it is unlikely that the similarly unqualified σάββατα of Colossians 2:16 will refer to any ceremonial sabbaths.

In order to assess the accuracy of claims such as noted above, one needs to consider the actual content, as illuminated by the context, of all relevant passages in the canonical Scriptures. As Skip MacCarthy, in that newly-released book on the Sabbath, aptly pointed out: “Some NT texts, Col 2:16 among them, can be understood only through an accurate understanding of their OT counterparts.”¹² Hints of the unique language directly linked to the weekly שַׁבָּת can be seen in the writings of some

⁹As is well-recognized by scholars such as Haag (E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת *šabat*,” *TDOT*, XIV:386), and as illustrated in various footnotes in this chapter, the Septuagint is not always a very reliable indicator of what is found in the Masoretic Text. Hence, the investigation of the meaning of the term שַׁבָּת has been specifically and intentionally delimited to that which is found in the Hebrew of the Old Testament (and if verified by any translation), as well as the Greek of the New Testament.

¹⁰William DeLoss Love. “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” Article I, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 37 (April 1880): 368. Love (ibid.) alleged that “the word *Shabbath* simply, is not even applied to the day of atonement” – a claim that will be addressed below in this chapter. See also William DeLoss Love, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” Article II, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 37 (July 1880): 427. Similarly, Bacchiocchi has alleged “that the word ‘Sabbath’ by itself is never used in the Bible to refer to an annual feast;” (Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History: Part I: The Spring Festivals* [Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1995], 169).

¹¹Craig L. Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in Christopher John Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 343. Blomberg adds a footnote, referencing J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1996), 174-175. However, there is no evidence in Dunn’s work that corroborates this view of Blomberg regarding the alleged “*Sabbath* without qualification” view. In another place in this volume, Blomberg posits that “Paul [in Col 2:16] speaks of ‘sabbaths,’ pure and simple, without any qualification,” which he alleged points to the seventh-day Sabbath; (Craig L. Blomberg, “Responses to Joseph A Pipa,” in Christopher John Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011], 191). Basically supportive of the above idea, Sabbatarian Roy Gane alleged that “the historic SDA insistence that *sabbaton* in Colossians 2:16 cannot include weekly Sabbaths appears forced because it [purportedly] goes against the ... original Hebrew *šabat* throughout the Bible;” (Roy Gane, “The Role of God’s Moral Law, Including Sabbath, in the ‘New Covenant,’” Andrews University, 2003, <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Gane%20God’s%20moral%20law.pdf> [accessed 9/11/05], 33). Bernard made a similar claim: “Every Old Testament and New Testament use of ‘Sabbath’ refers to the weekly Sabbath unless otherwise specified;” (David K. Bernard, *The Message of Colossians & Philemon* [Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1990], 95).

¹²Skip MacCarthy, “Responses to Craig L. Blomberg,” in Christopher John Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 371.

scholars. For example, based on her doctoral research on the seventh-day Sabbath in the Pentateuch, Mathilde Frey concluded that “it is *only* the weekly Sabbath that is called a *holy day*, a day made *holy* by God, or a day to be kept *holy* by the people.”¹³ In his seminal work on Leviticus, the Hebrew exegete Jacob Milgrom pointed out that “the verb *šāmar* is *never* used with the holidays [i.e., the *mô ‘ăḏîm*].”¹⁴ Milgrom’s categorical claim, that “the [weekly] sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the *mô ‘ēd* in all the biblical sources,”¹⁵ implies that the text of Scripture provides lucid language for the reader and/or listener to be able to recognize this clear distinction. Statements such as the above, especially regarding linguistic markers possibly related to the substantive שַׁבָּת, need further investigation, which will be done in this Chapter.

Approaching the text of the Hebrew Bible in its final canonical form, it may be instructive to consider the שַׁבָּת, in the context of the pericope of the giving of the manna, especially since, as F. Stolz noted, “the narrative material of the Pentateuch reflects the Sabbath commandment in Exod 16.”¹⁶ Within just nine verses (vss. 22-30) various linguistic markers appear in connection with the weekly שַׁבָּת. These include the adjective “holy” (קֹדֶשׁ, in vs. 23); the sequencing of the ordinals “the sixth” and “the seventh” (הַשְּׁבִיעִי and הַשֵּׁשִׁי, in vs. 29 [see also, vs. 26]); the attached definite article (הַ, as in הַשַּׁבָּת, of vs. 29); and even the occurrence of the substantive “day” (as in הַיּוֹם, of vs. 25), as employed in its immediate context. In brief, if the above observation is correct, it may prove valuable to analyze all of the 111 uses¹⁷ of שַׁבָּת in the Hebrew Old Testament¹⁸ in outline form,¹⁹ with footnotes that provide additional insights, as well as representative resources, as appropriate.

Linguistic Markers for שַׁבָּת as the Seventh-day Sabbath

Investigation of all appearances of שַׁבָּת reveals that the Bible writers may have intentionally connected the seventh-day Sabbath with various identifying linguistic markers. Thus, each time the

¹³Mathilde Frey, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: An Exegetical and Theological Study” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2011), 91 (emphases added).

¹⁴Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 1611 (emphasis added).

¹⁵Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1954.

¹⁶F. Stolz, “שַׁבָּת,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1300.

¹⁷This count is confirmed by others, such as Stolz, 1301; and Gerhard F. Hasel, “Sabbath,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman et al., eds. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:849.

¹⁸Some have called for the שַׁבָּת to be studied in the books of the Maccabees, such as in 1 Macc 1:39-45. However, since the first book of Maccabees (though written in Hebrew about the latter part of the second century BC) survives only through the LXX translation, and since 2 Macc was written in Greek, neither of these books can be examined to directly understand the manner in which the actual Hebrew noun שַׁבָּת was utilized in ancient times.

¹⁹The freestanding term שַׁבָּתוֹן (Lev 23:24, 39 [2x]; 25:5), as well as the seven compound expressions relating to שַׁבָּת (i.e., שַׁבָּת שַׁבָּתוֹן [Exod 31:15; 35:2; Lev 16:31; 23:3, 32; 25:4], and שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבָּתוֹן [Exod 16:23]) will be addressed subsequently, where the manner in which the LXX has rendered these passages will be thoroughly considered.

word שַׁבָּת appears with these markers, the reader or listener can reasonably easily recognize it as the weekly day of rest, and not as any of the other occasions also known by the same Hebrew noun שַׁבָּת.

The following table identifies which linguistic indicators are used and where they occur; also, it provides additional contextual support for understanding and interpreting the term שַׁבָּת in these references to mean the seventh-day Sabbath. Note that the “Cyclical” column includes times when the passage identifies a regular Sabbath-to-Sabbath action, or when the monthly New Moon and the weekly Sabbath are mentioned together as a connected couplet since they are the only occasions that recur regularly throughout the year. [Square brackets indicate that a term is implied in the text].

Exod.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My²⁰	Cyclical	Context
16:23				קֹדֶשׁ	לַיהוָה		הַשְּׁשִׁי (vs. 22)
16:25		הַיּוֹם	הַיּוֹם		לַיהוָה		
16:26		וּבַיּוֹם	וּבַיּוֹם				שֵׁשֶׁת ... הַשְּׁבִיעִי
16:29		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				הַשְּׁשִׁי ... הַשְּׁבִיעִי
20:8		הַשַּׁבָּת	יוֹם	לְקֹדְשׁוֹ			
20:10			וּיּוֹם		לַיהוָה		הַשְּׁבִיעִי
20:11		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם	וּלְקֹדְשׁוֹ			הַשְּׁבִיעִי
31:13	תִּשְׁמְרוּ			מִקְדָּשְׁכֶם	שַׁבְּתַתִּי ²¹		יְהוָה (vs. 12)
31:14	וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם	הַשַּׁבָּת		קֹדֶשׁ			
31:15		וּבַיּוֹם	וּבַיּוֹם	קֹדֶשׁ			הַשְּׁבִיעִי
31:15		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				

²⁰In addition to the possessive suffix “My,” Frey’s doctoral research (47, footnote #78) noted that the term לַיהוָה (“of Yahweh”), as well as יְהוָה (contextually, “of Yahweh”), identifies the weekly שַׁבָּת.

²¹Some claim the plural of שַׁבָּת (as in Exod 31:13; Lev 19:3, 30; and 26:2) identifies the weekly Sabbath and the annual sabbaths. But research (as by Haag, in “שַׁבָּת,” *TDOT* XIV:394-395, and Lohse, in “σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή,” *TDNT* VII:2) indicates otherwise. Since this is the first appearance of the plural of שַׁבָּת (in the final form of the Pentateuch), it needs consideration. Immediately after the call to “observe my Sabbaths” (Exod 31:13, NIV), one finds the statement that “this is a sign [singular] between me and you,” suggesting that the focus is a single type of sacred occasion. The following three verses (14-16) confirm this fact, in that the singular הַשַּׁבָּת (“the Sabbath”) is mentioned four times (as seen in Table 1 above), while it is once referred to as the “seventh day” שַׁבָּת. (See also, Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17-22, 1610). In short, when read in context, Exod 31:13-16 provides a strong case for recognizing that, in the Hebrew language, the plural of the word שַׁבָּת can and does identify the seventh-day Sabbath – and this appears more so, when connected with the identifying linguistic marker “My,” as spoken by Yahweh. In discussing the weekly שַׁבָּת, Frey’s doctoral research (192) indicates that “both the Sabbath and the sanctuary are exclusively under YHWH’s authority and connected in some way, as shown by the words: ‘You shall keep my Sabbaths (שַׁבְּתַתִּי) and revere my sanctuary (מִקְדָּשִׁי); I am YHWH’ (Lev 19:30; 26:2).” Frey (ibid., 238) directly states: “The book of Leviticus addresses the seventh-day Sabbath on five occasions: Lev 19:3, 30; 23:3; 24:1-9; 26:2.” For more textual support, by Frey, showing that the plural שַׁבָּת is used to refer to the weekly Sabbath, see ibid., 4, 141 (footnote #19), 189, 239, 245, 247, 248, 265, and 295.

Exod.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
31:16	וּשְׁמְרוּ	הַשַּׁבָּת					הַשַּׁבְעִי (vs. 17)
31:16		הַשַּׁבָּת					הַשַּׁבְעִי (vs. 17)
35:2		וּבַיּוֹם	וּבַיּוֹם	קֹדֶשׁ	לַיהוָה		הַשַּׁבְעִי
35:3		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				

Lev. ²²	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
19:3 ²³	תִּשְׁמְרוּ				שַׁבְּתַי		אֲנִי יְהוָה
19:30 ²⁴	תִּשְׁמְרוּ				שַׁבְּתַי		אֲנִי יְהוָה
23:3		וּבַיּוֹם	וּבַיּוֹם		לַיהוָה		הַשַּׁבְעִי
23:3		[וּבַיּוֹם]	[וּבַיּוֹם]				הַשַּׁבְעִי

²²There are various views regarding the meaning of the plural שַׁבְּתַי as seen in Lev 19:3, 30; 26:2. For example, Kleinig asserted that, in these three verses, “the plural is used because this refers to the *weekly* Sabbaths (e.g., 23:3), the festive [*annual*] Sabbaths (e.g., 16:31), and the [*septennial*] Sabbatical Years (e.g., 25:4);” (John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture [Saint Louis: Concordia, 2003], 395, emphases added). Then there is the claim that, though Lev 19:3 identifies the weekly Sabbath, Lev 19:30 refers to the [*annual*] festivals, while Lev 26:2 deals with the Sabbatical Years; (see A. Cohen, ed. *The Soncino Chumash – The Five Books of Moses with Haphtaroth: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Exposition Based on the Classical Jewish Commentaries* [Surrey: Soncino Press, 1947], 723, 728, 773). Another alleged that “my sabbaths” of Lev 26:2 “refer to holy occasions such as weekly sabbaths, the Lord’s appointed times, the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee;” (Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, Apollos Old Testament [Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2007], 476. Yet another holds to a somewhat allegorical interpretation of Lev 26:2; (see Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible [Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008], 275). Also, there is the notion that, while Lev 19:3, and 30 identify the weekly Sabbath, in Lev 26:2 “the sabbath included not just the *weekly* sabbath day, but all the days of holy convocation in the total sabbatical system in chaps. 23 [*annual*] and 25 [*septennial*];” (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *The Book of Leviticus*, The New Interpreter’s Bible [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994], 1131, 1178-1179, emphasis added); see also, R. Laird Harris, *Leviticus*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 2: *Genesis-Numbers* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 608, 642); Horace D. Hummel, *Ezekiel 21-48*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2007), 683; F. C. Cook, *The Holy Bible, According to the Authorized Version (A.D. 1611), with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary*, vol. I, part II: *Leviticus-Deuteronomy* [London: John Murray, 1877], 604, 637). In view of the divergence of commentators, the footnotes connected with Lev 19:3, 30; and 26:2 will cite scholarly conclusions, based on internal textual considerations. Many commentators who support understanding one or more of these three verses as being the weekly שַׁבָּת, are included in footnote #33 dealing with the plurals in Ezekiel.

²³Providing textual and inter-textual support, Milgrom (*Leviticus 17-22*, 1600-1602) concluded that “there is a strong basis for maintaining that vv. 3-4, 30-32 reflect nos. 1, 2, 4, and 5, and that vv. 2, 36b had the prologue of the Decalogue (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6) in mind.” Chapman and Streane likewise recognized that verses 3 and 4 “have a kinship with the first part of the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 3-12);” (A. T. Chapman, and A. W. Streane, *The Book of Leviticus*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges [Cambridge: University Press, 1914], 106); and, as Balentine aptly stated, “all the instructions in this chapter [i.e., 19] function as commentary on the Decalogue;” (Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching [Louisville: John Knox, 2002], 161).

²⁴As to the use of the plural *sabbaths*, Milgrom (*Leviticus 17-22*, 1610) noted that “the plural and first-person suffix *always* refers to God;... In other texts, the plural occurs as an absolute, referring to only the seventh day.” Significantly, “the same phrase occurs in Exod 31:13;” (ibid., 1610), where the context reveals that the weekly שַׁבָּת is being discussed. Péter-Contesse and Ellington suggested that “the plural *sabbaths* merely points up the habitual nature of the requirement;” (René Péter-Contesse, and John Ellington, *A Translator’s Handbook on Leviticus*, Helps for Translators Series [New York: United Bible Societies, 1990], 284; or, as Gerstenberger suggested, “the plural form ‘sabbaths’ is possibly already referring to the series of weekly worship days;” (Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 278).

Lev.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
23:11 ²⁵		הַשַּׁבָּת					Marking off Pentecost
23:15		הַשַּׁבָּת					Marking off Pentecost
23:16		הַשַּׁבָּת					Marking off Pentecost
23:38					יְהוָה		In contrast with the ceremonial ²⁶
24:8		הַשַּׁבָּת	בְּיוֹם			בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת	
24:8		הַשַּׁבָּת	בְּיוֹם			בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת	
26:2 ²⁷	תִּשְׁמְרוּ				שַׁבְּתֵי		אֲנִי יְהוָה

²⁵To what does this שַׁבָּת refer? “The meaning of this phrase [‘on the day after the sabbath’] has been the subject of much controversy;” (Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 304). Wenham (ibid.) stated that “orthodox Judaism and most modern commentators favor” the view that the seventh-day Sabbath is not in view here. Baruch Levine noted that “the accepted rabbinic interpretation is that the *shabbat* does not refer to the Sabbath day;” (Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Commentary: Leviticus* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 158). For example, Rashbam held that “the morrow of the ‘sabbath’” of Leviticus 23:11 was “the morrow of the first day of Passover;” (*Rashbam’s Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers: An Annotated Translation*, Martin I. Lockshin, ed. [Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001], 122). Lockshin noted: “Rashbam follows the standard rabbinic/Pharisaic interpretation of this phrase;” (ibid.). However, Lockshin noted that “classical rabbinic opposition to the ‘plain’ meaning of this phrase was very strident;” (ibid.). Concurring, Baruch Levine (158) stated that the accepted rabbinic interpretation “does not convey its simple sense.” Fuerst pointed out that, while the Talmud and others saw this שַׁבָּת here as referring to first Passover day, it “was taken in former times,” especially “by the Sadducees” to refer to the weekly Sabbath; (Julius Fuerst, *A Hebrew & Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* [Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz, 1867], 1340). See also, Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 93 (footnote #12). Gane deduced that, since “the timing of elevating the sheaf is tied to the actual beginning of the harvest, the date of which can fluctuate,” “the Sabbath here seems to be the seventh-day weekly Sabbath;” (Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers, NIV Application Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004], 389). Grabbe noted that “the most natural reading of the Hebrew text” is “that which interpreted it as the weekly sabbath;” (Lester L. Grabbe, *Leviticus* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 90). One could argue that, if the שַׁבָּת in Lev 23:11 were intended to refer to the Passover (or any such identified lunar-dated occasion), then there would have been no need to “count off” weeks to reach the Feast of Weeks; it would have been identified as the 5th of Sivan. Gane (ibid., 390) added: “The fact that in Leviticus 23:15 ‘Sabbaths’ [i.e., the plural of שַׁבָּת] are weeks buttresses the argument that ‘the day after the Sabbath’ earlier in the same verse refers to the weekly Sabbath rather than a yearly ceremonial rest day.” Thus, as Gane (ibid., 389) noted, “because we are simply interpreting the text of Leviticus, unencumbered by later tradition, the solution seems simple” – the weekly שַׁבָּת is in view here in Lev 23:11, as also at the beginning of vs. 15. Hence, the above view that the Hebrew Testament often uses the linguistic indicator of the definite article הַ (in any of its forms) to identify the weekly Sabbath, and that the definite article הַ is never directly used for a ceremonial sabbath, still remains valid (contra a 2018 article by Bradford Maris, which is discussed in footnote #60).

²⁶Highlighting the distinction between the weekly and the ceremonial sabbaths, Keil and Delitzsch comment as follows on Lev 23:3 and 38: “As a weekly returning day of rest, the observance of which has its foundation in the creative work of God, the Sabbath was *distinguished* from the yearly feasts ... which were generally called ‘feasts of Jehovah’ [23:5] in the stricter sense, and as such were *distinguished* from the Sabbath [vers. 37, 38];” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. James Martin, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. II, *The Pentateuch* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], 438).

²⁷Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 2285) stated that “the entire verse is a repetition of 19:30, where the sabbath of creation is intended.” As proof that Lev 26:2 refers to the weekly שַׁבָּת, Milgrom (ibid., 2275-2276) included a table which elucidates how the first two verses of the chapter (which give only the main facts) are “rephrasing the introduction and first, second, and fourth commands of the Decalogue.” In a similar manner, Mays concluded concerning vss. 1-2, that “by a summary statement of laws already given; they cover the first four commandments of the Decalogue;” (James L. Mays, *The Book of Leviticus, The Book of Numbers, The Layman’s Bible Commentary* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1982], 69).

Num.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
15:32		הַשַּׁבָּת	בְּיוֹם				
28:9		הַשַּׁבָּת	וּבְיוֹם				
28:10						שַׁבָּת־	עַל־עֵלֶת הַתְּמִיד
28:10						בַּשַּׁבָּתוֹ	עַל־עֵלֶת הַתְּמִיד

Deut.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
5:12	שָׁמֹר	הַשַּׁבָּת	יוֹם	לְקַדְּשׁוֹ			
5:14			וְיוֹם				הַשַּׁבְּעִי
5:15		הַשַּׁבָּת	יוֹם				

2 Kgs.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
4:23		הַיּוֹם	הַיּוֹם			(שַׁבָּת & חֹדֶשׁ) ²⁸	
11:5		הַשַּׁבָּת					Sabbath duties
11:7		הַשַּׁבָּת					Sabbath duties
11:9		הַשַּׁבָּת					Sabbath duties
11:9		הַשַּׁבָּת					Sabbath duties
16:18		הַשַּׁבָּת					Canopy: Sabbath

1 Chr.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
9:32						שַׁבָּת־	Bread for Sabbaths
9:32						שַׁבָּת־	Bread for Sabbaths
23:31		לְשַׁבְּתוֹת					Sabbath sacrifices

2 Chr.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
2:4		לְשַׁבְּתוֹת					Sabbath sacrifices
8:13		לְשַׁבְּתוֹת					Sabbath sacrifices

²⁸Delitzsch noted: "As for new-moon and Sabbath (the latter always signifies the weekly Sabbath when construed with *chodesh*);" (Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. I, James Martin, trans., Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 4th Series, vol. XIV [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], 93). Carmichael stated: "The Sabbath and the New Moon feast are commonly cited together;" (Calum Carmichael, *Illuminating Leviticus: A Study of Its Laws and Institutions in the Light of Biblical Narratives* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006], 107); Hummel, 1318. Lohse noted that "the Sabbath and the new moon are often mentioned together, since they are the *only* festivals to recur regularly throughout the year;" (Lohse, "σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή," *TDNT* VII:4, emphasis added).

2 Chr.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
23:4		הַשַּׁבָּת					Sabbath duties
23:8		הַשַּׁבָּת					Sabbath duties
23:8		הַשַּׁבָּת					Sabbath duties
31:3		לַשַּׁבָּתוֹת					Sabbath sacrifices

Neh.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
9:14				קֹדֶשׁ	(קֹדֶשׁ) ²⁹		יְהוָה (vs. 7)
10:31		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				
10:31		בַּשַּׁבָּת	וּבַיּוֹם	קֹדֶשׁ			
10:33		הַשַּׁבָּתוֹת					Sabbath sacrifices
13:15		בַּשַּׁבָּת					בַּיּוֹם
13:15		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				
13:16		בַּשַּׁבָּת					בַּיּוֹם (vs. 15)
13:17		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				
13:18		הַשַּׁבָּת					בַּיּוֹם (vs. 19)
13:19		הַשַּׁבָּת					
13:19		הַשַּׁבָּת					
13:19		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				
13:21		בַּשַּׁבָּת					בַּיּוֹם (vs. 22)
13:22		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם	לְקֹדֶשׁ			

Ps.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
92 (MT:1)		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				

Isa.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
1:13 ³⁰						(חֹדֶשׁ & שַׁבָּת)	וּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם (in vs. 14) versus שַׁבָּת

²⁹Specifically addressing Yahweh, Nehemiah speaks of “your holy Sabbath” (i.e., the weekly Sabbath), which is why it is included here under the category of “My,” i.e., as the day Yahweh refers to in other places as “My Sabbath.”

³⁰Some versions render a key phrase as, “in your New Moon Festivals or your Sabbaths” (CEV, emphases added). Louis R. Torres, *Bothersome and Disturbing Bible Passages* (Gaston, OR: TorresLC Ministries, 2013), 145, claimed that the שַׁבָּת here is a ceremonial sabbath; but, the italicized “your” is not in the original Hebrew. Evidence that this is the weekly שַׁבָּת is in footnote #31 below.

Isa.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
56:2	שָׁמֵר						יְהוָה (vs. 1)
56:4	יִשְׁמְרוּ				שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		יְהוָה
56:6	שָׁמֵר						יְהוָה
58:13			בְּיוֹם	קִדְשֵׁי			יְהוָה
58:13		לַשַּׁבָּת		לְקֹדֶשׁ			יְהוָה
66:23						שַׁבָּת ³¹	יְהוָה
66:23						בְּשַׁבָּתוֹ	יְהוָה

³¹Since Isa 66:23 does include the phrase “from new moon to new moon,” right before “and from Sabbath to Sabbath,” some see this passage as also directly linking the weekly Sabbath with the New Moon. While this is a possible perspective, others challenge the notion, as follows: “New moon” here is a translation of the Hebrew noun חֹדֶשׁ, a term that appears 283 times in the Old Testament – a count confirmed by Claus Westermann; (“חֹדֶשׁ, *hādāš*, new,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997], 1:394). So also, Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 5:38; hereafter *NIDOTTE*. More than 90% of the time (as seen in major English versions, such as NASB, NKJV, RSV, etc.) חֹדֶשׁ is contextually rendered as the general word “month.” This translational trend is corroborated by well-respected Hebrew dictionaries. For example, *NIDOTTE* 5:38 indicates that, “its most common meaning” is “month,” while only “a second meaning” is “new moon.” In connection with the special grammatical construction of this verse, the preferred translation is “from month to month,” as noted in Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Study Edition (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:219. Beginning with the LXX (which used μήν, i.e., “month”), various versions have translated חֹדֶשׁ here as month, including Geneva Bible (1599), Young’s Literal Translation (1898), Common English Bible (2011), and The Voice (2012). By contrast though, when חֹדֶשׁ appeared in a different grammatical structure, and in a ritual setting, in Isa 1:13, 14, the LXX employed a different Greek word – νεομηνία (i.e., “new moon”). In brief, despite the many English versions that render חֹדֶשׁ as “new moon” in Isa 66:23, such a rendering is less than reliable; hence, this text is not considered one in which “Sabbath” and “New Moon” are coupled together. (The weekly שַׁבָּת is identified, by means of it being stated in a cyclical pattern).

In contrast to Isa 66:23, Isa 1:13 does have a couplet of שַׁבָּת and “new moon,” an issue already addressed in footnote #28 (relating to 2 Kgs 4:23). Furthermore, “as indicated by references throughout the span of the biblical period,” the weekly שַׁבָּת is always listed as distinct from the מועדים; (Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, 1956); see, for example, 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12-13; Neh 10:33; Ezek 46:1-15; etc. Thus, the fact of the שַׁבָּת/“new moon” couplet, together with the notion that the seventh-day שַׁבָּת is always distinct from the מועדים (as appears to be the case in Isa 1:13-14), provide plausible evidence that the שַׁבָּת in Isa 1:13 does refer to the weekly Sabbath. A quick reading of Isa 1:13 may make it appear that Yahweh hates the weekly שַׁבָּת, but research shows otherwise. Otto Kaiser noted: “Given the state of the people, what is in fact required by Yahweh has become blasphemy [and] meaningless cultic activity.... [Thus], Yahweh finds intolerable the juxtaposition and combination of conduct which injures the community (cf. also 10.1; Micah 2.1; Prov 6.18) with the festive assemblies which are ... pious affectation;” (Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library, 2nd ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983], 30-31). Kaiser added: “He even turns a deaf ear to prayer [Isa 1:15, due to] its uselessness and even harmfulness as a result of the breach of the covenant relationship;” (Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972], 14-15). Motyer stated: “The inclusion of the Sabbath shows that Isaiah is condemning not the thing itself – how could he dismiss the Sabbath as lacking divine authority? – but its misuse;” (J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity], 1993), 47. The above basic understanding of שַׁבָּת in Isa 1:13 is held by many. See, for example, J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, Peter Machinist, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 23; Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 60-63; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 19; John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 36; Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 17; Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles’ Wings*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 43; David Stacey, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth Press, 1993), 8; John H. Hayes, and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, The Eighth-Century Prophet: His Times & His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 75; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 96-97; Joseph Jensen, *Isaiah 1-39* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 44-47; Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), 87; M. L. Andreasen, *Isaiah, the Gospel Prophet: A Preacher of Righteousness* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1928), 19.

Jer.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
17:21		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				
17:22		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				
17:22		הַשַּׁבָּת	יוֹם	וְקִדְשָׁתֶם			
17:24		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				יְהוָה
17:24		הַשַּׁבָּת	יוֹם	וְלִקְדָשׁ			
17:27		הַשַּׁבָּת	יוֹם	לִקְדָשׁ			
17:27		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				

Lam.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
2:6 ³²					[מוֹעֵדוֹ]		שַׁבָּת versus מוֹעֵד

³²Milgrom's comment (*Leviticus 23-27*, 1956), that the weekly שַׁבָּת is always "listed as distinct from the מוֹעֵדִים," applies here. Similarly, Baruch Levine (154) noted: "Biblical usage regularly differentiates between *shabbat*, 'the Sabbath,' and *mo'ed*, as in verses 37-38 of our chapter [i.e., Lev 23], which speaks of the 'set times of the Lord' as being 'apart from the Sabbaths of the LORD.'" Moreover, Hasel and Murdoch stated: "The context is the destruction of Israel and Zion through the blazing wrath of God on the day of Yahweh (verses 1, 21, 22). Yahweh has caused 'feast [מוֹעֵד] and sabbath [שַׁבָּת]' to be forgotten. The holy city and its holy temple is destroyed. Therefore the celebrations of the appointed feasts and the weekly Sabbath have been terminated. This passage is part of the description of the fulfillment of the conditional threats of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 17:19-27; 22:1-9);" (Gerhard F. Hasel, and W. G. C. Murdoch, "The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982], 50).

Other than the superscription of Ps 92 (where הַשַּׁבָּת, the weekly Sabbath appears), Lam 2:6 is the only other time that שַׁבָּת occurs in Old Testament poetic books. Some see this as a "difficult Hebrew verse;" (Étan Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations* [New York: Hermon, 1976], 112). Gottlieb claimed that "the three first words on v. 6 must be regarded as text-critically uncertain;" (Hans Gottlieb, *A Study on the Text of Lamentations* [Denmark: K. J. Odder, 1978], 27). While Albrektson acknowledged that "the passage is regarded as corrupt by most commentators," he concluded that the "MT seems to be quite clear and intelligible as it stands;" (Bertil Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations; With a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text* [Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963], 95). In addition to the challenges regarding the first three words of Lam 2:6, a later section is also problematic, as Provan noted: "The LORD has brought to an end in Zion appointed feast and sabbath: the Piel of the Heb. root *škh* (*RSV's* has brought to an end) occurs only here in the *OT*, and its precise nuance is therefore unclear;" (Iain W. Provan, *Lamentations*, New Century Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 66). Besides the translational difficulties of this passage, there is some debate as to which שַׁבָּת is being addressed here. In 1887, Andrews held that these were "annual [ceremonial] sabbaths," for "the Lord's Sabbath did not cease;" (J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*, 3rd ed. rev., vol. 1 [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887], 91). Writing almost a century later, House speculated that the Hebrew term שַׁבָּת here "refers to weekly Sabbaths and to special Sabbaths associated with the festivals;" (Paul R. House, *Lamentations*, Word Biblical Commentary [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982], 381, emphasis added). The current consensus, however, seems to be that this term probably does refer to the weekly Sabbath. However, it "does not [necessarily] mean to imply that God had purposed a cessation of Sabbath observance by His people;" (Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols., rev. ed. [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-1980], 4:551). In brief, because God's judgments on Judah had brought about the destruction of the temple, there would be a "discontinuance of Sabbath and feast-day services in the Temple;" (ibid). So also, A. Cohen, ed., *The Five Megilloth: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* (Surrey: Soncino Press, 1946), 78. Contra Lee's claim that Yahweh wiped the festivals and Sabbaths from memory (see Nancy C. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo...* [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 141), perhaps Renkema best captured the essence of the meaning of this passage: "Now that the place of assembly has been destroyed, feast and sabbath can no longer be celebrated [at the Temple]: YHWH has 'abolished' them. It is clear that the *pi'el* of שָׁכַח (only in Lam 1:26) does not imply that YHWH has caused the festivals of long ago to disappear from the memory of his people. On the contrary, they remain quite alive in the memory of the poets (cf. 1:4a). Indeed, it is precisely the fact that feast and sabbath cannot be celebrated which constitutes the core of the present complaint;" (Johan Renkema, *Lamentations* [Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998], 242).

Ezek. ³³	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
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³³As can be seen from the table, the term נַּבֻּשׁ appears 15 times in Ezekiel. Some, such as Block, have suggested that “the plural form [which appears 10 times in Ezek] indicates that the charge extends beyond the violation of the weekly Sabbaths to sacred [annual] days (and [septennial] years) as well;” (Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 709). See also Fisch, who inaccurately alleged that “the plural includes [annual] festivals which are given in the Pentateuch the designation of *sabbath*; cf. Lev. xxiii. 24, 39;” (S. Fisch, *Ezekiel: Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*, Soncino Books of the Bible [London: Soncino, 1950], 123). While Cooper does not include the annual, he suggested נַּבֻּשׁ , in addition to the weekly, “may include reference to the Sabbatical Year and Jubilee Year;” (Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr., *Ezekiel*, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994], 205). So also Hummel, 683. The question about the plural word נַּבֻּשׁ has already been addressed above, in the footnotes related to Exod 31:13, and Lev 19:30; and hence, needs minimal comment here. Hasel and Murdoch (54, endnote #26) noted that it cannot be correct to see “in the plural a reference to all festivals,... because in Ezekiel 45:17 the plural ‘sabbaths’ appears and the other festivals are mentioned separately.” Perhaps Cole, in his doctoral research, summed it up best when he noted that this Hebrew construction (“My Sabbaths”), “in Ezek 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21 [etc.], is a technical designation for the weekly Sabbath;” (H. Ross Cole, “The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch: Old Testament Indicators of the Extent of Their Applicability” [PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 1996], 319, footnote #2). It should be noted that the following commentators, while addressing several of the above texts, conclude that the weekly נַּבֻּשׁ is indeed in view here in Ezek: Haag (*TDOT* XIV:395-396); Lohse (“σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή,” *TDNT* VII:4-5); Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 252; Steven Tuell, *Ezekiel*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 145, 156, 157, 310; Mark F. Rooker, *Ezekiel*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2005), 158, 159, 163; Brandon L. Fredenburg, *Ezekiel*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), 202, 207, 217, 387; Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, The New Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 1283, 1309, 1329; Robert K. McIver, *Ezekiel: Through Crisis to Glory*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1997), 120, 123, 125; Gerstenberger, 278; Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 36, 264; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 221; Douglas Stuart, *Ezekiel*, The Communicator’s Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1989), 210; Ralph Alexander, *Ezekiel*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 6: *Isaiah–Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 836, 847, 857, 859; F. B. Huey, Jr., *Ezekiel, Daniel*, Layman’s Bible Book Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 53, 109; Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. II: *Isaiah–Malachi* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 1539, 1541, 1544, 1593; Herbert G. May, and E. L. Allen, *Ezekiel*, The Interpreter’s Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1980), 168, 312; Nichol, 4:655; Ralph Alexander, *Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 71, 75; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 463, 484; John T. Bunn, *Ezekiel*, The Broadman Bible Commentary, vol. 6: *Jeremiah–Daniel* (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 289; Walter Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 315, 566; John W. Wevers, ed. *Ezekiel*, The Century Bible (London: Nelson, 1969), 156, 177; Milgrom (*Leviticus 17-22*), 1612, 1698-1699; Carl G. Howie, *The Book of Ezekiel, The Book of Daniel*, The Layman’s Bible Commentary (Atlanta: John Knox, 1961), 56, 83; C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, vol. II, James Martin, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 316; E. H. Plumptre, T. Whitelaw, and W. F. Adeney et al, *Ezekiel*, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 391; A. B. Davidson, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, rev. A. W. Streane (Cambridge: University Press, 1924), 366; John Skinner, *The Book of Ezekiel*, The Expositor’s Bible (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1908), 441.

Though נַּבֻּשׁ appears as a plural in Lev 19:3, 30; 26:2, scholars such as the following have concluded that at least one, if not all, of these passages are referring to the weekly נַּבֻּשׁ : Haag (*TDOT* XIV:394-395); Lohse (“σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή,” *TDNT* VII:2); Clyde M. Woods, and Justin M. Rogers, *Leviticus-Numbers*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2006), 119, 125; Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 335, 341, 451; Balentine, 161, 197; Fredenburg, 202; Glen S. Martin, *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2002), 222, 224; Darr, 1329; Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 253, 262, 314; Gerstenberger, 278; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1992), 310, 312, 313, 321, 450; Gary W. Demarest, *Leviticus*, The Communicator’s Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 216-217; Lloyd R. Bailey, *Leviticus*, Knox Preaching Guides (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 228, 236-237, 312-313; Ralph Alexander, (1986), 857; Samuel J. Schultz, *Leviticus: God Among His People*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 96, 128-129; Mays, 59; A. Noordtjiz, *Leviticus*, Raymond Togtman, trans., Bible Student’s Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 193, 206, 263; G. A. F. Knight, *Leviticus*, The Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1981), 116, 158; Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. I: *Genesis–Song of Solomon* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 169, 177; May, and Allen, 168; R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1980), 196, 231; Roy Lee Honeycutt, Jr., *Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Layman’s Bible Book Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 51-52; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 263, 329; Nichol, 1:788, 791; Ralph Alexander (1976), 75; J. R. Porter, *Leviticus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), 153, 207; Clifton J. Allen, ed., *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 2: *Leviticus–Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 68; Greenberg, 484; C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the*

Ezek.	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
20:12					שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		אֲנִי יְהוָה
20:13					שַׁבְּתַתִּי		יְהוָה (vs. 12)
20:16					שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		יְהוָה (vs. 12)
20:20				קִדְשׁוֹ	שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		אֲנִי יְהוָה
20:21					שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		יְהוָה (vs. 20)
20:24					שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		יְהוָה (vs. 26)
22:8					שַׁבְּתַתִּי		יְהוָה (vs. 12)
22:26					וּמִשַׁבְּתוֹתַי		יְהוָה (vs. 23)
23:38		בַּיּוֹם	בַּיּוֹם		שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		יְהוָה (vs. 36)
44:24				וּקְדֻשׁוֹ	שַׁבְּתוֹתַי		יְהוָה (vs. 27)
45:17		וּבִשְׁבֹתוֹת					Sabbath sacrifices
46:1		הַשַּׁבָּת	וּבַיּוֹם			(שַׁבָּת & חֹדֶשׁ)	
46:3		בִּשְׁבֹתוֹת				(שַׁבָּת & חֹדֶשׁ)	לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
46:4		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם			(שַׁבָּת & חֹדֶשׁ)	Vss. 4 & 6 seem to be connected
46:12		הַשַּׁבָּת	בַּיּוֹם				

Amos	Keep	The	Day	Holy	My	Cyclical	Context
8:5		וְהַשַּׁבָּת				(חֹדֶשׁ & שַׁבָּת)	Sabbath regulations

In brief then, a comprehensive consideration of the Hebrew Bible reveals that every time the noun שַׁבָּת is accompanied by the above-mentioned linguistic indicators, it can be identified as the seventh-day Sabbath. In some cases there may be just one linguistic marker to identify the weekly

Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol. I: *The Pentateuch*, James Martin, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 419, 425, 469; Robert Jamieson, *Genesis–Deuteronomy*, A Commentary: Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), 505; Adam Clarke, *The Old Testament*, vol. I, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1938), 596; Chapman, and Streane, 145; S. H. Kellogg, *The Book of Leviticus*, The Expositor's Bible (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906; New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1908), 393, 411; W. Harvey Jellie, and Frederick W. Brown, *A Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Old Testament (New York: Funk & Wagnalis, 1892-1896), 242; *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. I: *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 518, 552. The textual support for interpreting שַׁבָּת as the weekly seventh-day Sabbath in these texts has been provided above in individual footnotes connected with each passage.

Sabbath; however, in each of these cases such a conclusion is always corroborated by the context. Sometimes as many as four identifiers may serve to indicate that in these cases שַׁבָּת refers to the seventh-day Sabbath. Of these 95 uses of שַׁבָּת,

- ten were linked to the term *keep* (i.e., “observe”) this day;
- 65 were connected in the immediate context with the definite article *the*;
- 38 times there was a connection of שַׁבָּת with the word *day*;
- in 18 references the שַׁבָּת is classified as being *holy* (or to be “hallowed”);³⁴
- 21 times Yahweh referred to שַׁבָּת as *My day* (or it was classified as being Yahweh’s);³⁵
- in six passages (as couplets), the monthly New Moon is directly linked with the weekly Sabbath,³⁶ as occasions that occur with cyclical regularity throughout the year;
- in eight appearances of the term שַׁבָּת (in four specific pairs) a cyclical linguistic pattern is used so as to indicate a pattern of unvarying weekly Sabbath-keeping; and,
- 66 times there was additional contextual evidence that the seventh-day Sabbath was in view.

Markers That Identify Other Occasions

In contrast, when the writing prophets sought to convey the idea that שַׁבָּת was not intended to be understood as the weekly Sabbath, they set in place other distinctive linguistic indicators by which to understand the meaning of these words. For example, these ritual sabbaths (including at least the Day of Atonement) are never connected with any of the above linguistic links, but are rather referred in other distinctive ways, such as “your” sabbath,³⁷ or “her” sabbath. Table 2 contains a categorized list of all the other sixteen references to the term שַׁבָּת, outlining the additional ways in

³⁴Commenting on the fact that the Pentateuch has “other days and festivals that are called ‘holy convocations,’ ... including the seventh-day Sabbath,” Frey points out that “it is *only* the weekly Sabbath that is called a *holy day* [Exod 16:23; 31:14, 15], a day made *holy* by God [Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11], or a day to be kept *holy* by the people [Exod 20:8; Deut 5:12];” (91, emphases added; included above are references from footnotes #37, #38, and #39). Frey (169) concludes that “only the Sabbath is to be kept *holy* but not the Passover festival, because *only* the Sabbath is the day ‘of YHWH your God’ (Deut 5:14; cf. Exod 20:10);” (emphases added). Youngblood similarly recognizes that the weekly “Sabbath is characterized as ‘the Lord’s *holy day*;” (Ronald Youngblood, “A Day of Rest, a Time for Worship,” *Decision* 41/4 [April 2000]: 32, emphasis added).

³⁵As Frey noted regarding the sanctifying of the seventh day in Gen 2: “Later texts will allude to the ‘Sabbath of the Lord’ [Exod 16:23, 25; 20:10; 35:2; Lev 23:3, 38; Deut 5:14] and ‘my Sabbaths’ [Exod 31:13; Lev 19:3, 30; 26:2];” (47 [including the references from footnotes #78 and #79]). Cole’s doctoral research (319, footnote #2) likewise concluded: “The expressions ‘my Sabbaths’ (שַׁבְּתוֹתַי) in Ezek 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, is a technical designation for the weekly Sabbath, as in Lev 23:37, 38.” Similarly, Hasel and Murdoch (50) “note the frequent identification ‘my sabbaths,’” as referring to the weekly Sabbath; (see also, *ibid.*, 54 [endnote #27], 55 [endnote #72]).

³⁶Young indicates that, “when construed with the phrase ‘new moons,’ *shabbat* designates the weekly sabbath;” (Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Volume 1 – Chapters 1 to 18*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 66). Haag (“שַׁבָּת,” *TDOT* XIV:391) explains that “the association of the Sabbath with the celebration of the new moon points to the regular and frequent recurrence of this ‘holiday’ over the course of the year.”

³⁷See, for example, Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2026.

which this term has been translated in accord with linguistic indicators and context, thus denoting a meaning distinct from the seventh-day Sabbath. [Square brackets indicate that a term is implied].

Table 2 Linguistic Markers for Non-Seventh-day “Sabbaths” in the Hebrew Scriptures					
Ref.	Afflict	Seven ³⁸	Of the Land	Her/Your {She} ³⁹	Context/Comment
A. Passages Dealing with שַׁבָּת Meaning “Week”					
Lev 23:15		שִׁבְעַ שַׁבְּתוֹת ⁴⁰			Cardinal number “seven” with “sabbath” = Seven “weeks,” towards Pentecost (LXX: ἑπτὰ ἑβδομάδας; ⁴¹ i.e., seven weeks ⁴²)
Lev 25:8		שִׁבְעַ שַׁבְּתַת שָׁנִים			Cardinal number “seven” with “sabbath” = Seven weeks ⁴³ of years; i.e., 49 years; (LXX: ἀναπαύσεις; i.e., “rests”)
Lev 25:8		שִׁבְעַ שַׁבְּתַת הַשָּׁנִים			Cardinal number “seven” with “sabbath” = Seven weeks ⁴⁴ of years; i.e., 49 years; (LXX: ἑβδομάδες; i.e., “weeks”)

³⁸Harper-Knapp pointed out that “both [the Hebrew and Greek] languages have two words for week. Although the Hebrew שַׁבָּת and the Greek ἑβδομάς were the ordinary words used to express a period of seven days, the translators of the Septuagint not only understood the Hebrew *shabbath* to have a dual meaning, but actually used ‘sabbath’ to mean ‘week,’ as has been shown in the titles of the Psalms;” (Lucille Harper-Knapp, “A Critical Study of the Greek Words *Sabbaton* and *Sabbata*” [MA thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1949], 28.

³⁹The pronouns (or concepts) “her,” “your,” and “she” have been included in the same column since they all stand in contrast to the “My,” which is used as an identifying linguistic marker for the weekly שַׁבָּת.

⁴⁰Regarding שַׁבָּת, in context of Pentecost (Lev 23), Haag (“שַׁבָּת,” *TDOT* XIV:394) noted that the word שַׁבָּת “here has become a synonym for ‘week.’” Giving proof that שַׁבָּת is “week” here, Gane (*Leviticus*, 390) stated: “Confirmation that ‘Sabbaths’ (pl. of *sabbat*) in this context mean ‘weeks’ comes from Numbers 28:26, where the usual word for weeks (pl. of *šabua*) refers to the same period.” Harper-Knapp (21) concluded that “at the time of the translation of the Septuagint, the Hebrew שַׁבָּת meant not only a single day, but the seven day period ending in the Sabbath as well.”

⁴¹Wevers noted: “The Hebrew word for ‘weeks’ שַׁבְּתוֹת, [is] a feminine plural formation on שַׁבָּת ‘Sabbath,’ which LXX rightly rendered by ἑβδομάδας, plural of ἑβδομάς ‘a period of seven days,’ i.e., a week;” (John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, Number 44 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1997], 372). See also, Eduard Lohse, “*Sabbaton*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., and abridged in one vol. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 989; J. C. McCann, Jr., “Sabbath,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, rev., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 248.

⁴²While the ASV, KJV, and NKJV all render it “seven sabbaths” (“Sabbaths” [cap. NKJV]), the NASB “seven complete sabbaths,” and YLT “seven perfect sabbaths,” most English versions render שַׁבָּת here as “weeks” (CEB, CEV, HCSB, JB, JPS, MEV, NAB, NEB, NET, NIV, NIVrev, NJB, NLT, NLTrev, NRSV, REB, RSV, TNIV, and TVB).

⁴³While some render שַׁבָּת as “sabbaths” here (specifically, “sabbaths” of years – ASV, JPS, KJV, MEV, NASB, NEB, NIV, NKJV, REB, and YLT; or “sabbath” years – NIVrev, NLT, NLTrev, TNIV, and TVB; or “sabbatic” years – HCSB), others translate שַׁבָּת here as “weeks” (CEB, ESV, JB, NAB, NET, NJB, NRSV, and RSV).

⁴⁴While some render שַׁבָּת as “sabbaths” here (specifically, “sabbaths” of years – ASV, JPS, KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, and YLT; or “sabbath” years – NIVrev; or “sabbatic” years – HCSB), others interpret שַׁבָּת here as “weeks” (CEB, ESV, JB, MEV, NET, NJB, NRSV, and RSV). In brief, on average the majority of English versions render the שַׁבָּת in Lev 23:15, and 25:8 as “weeks” rather than the literal seventh-day “Sabbath.”

Ref.	Afflict	Seven	Of the Land	Her/Your {She}	Context/Comment
B. Passages Dealing with שַׁבַּת Meaning “Sabbatical Year”					
Lev 25:2			הָאָרֶץ		Sabbatical Year ⁴⁵
Lev 25:4			לָאָרֶץ		Sabbatical Year
Lev 25:4			[לָאָרֶץ]		Sabbatical Year
Lev 25:6			שַׁבַּת הָאָרֶץ		Sabbatical Year ⁴⁶
Lev 26:34			הָאָרֶץ	שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ	Sabbatical Year
Lev 26:34			הָאָרֶץ	שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ	Sabbatical Year
Lev 26:35			[תַּשְׁבַּת]	בְּשַׁבְּתֵיכֶם	Sabbatical Year
Lev 26:43			וְהָאָרֶץ	שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ	Sabbatical Year
2 Chr 36:21			הָאָרֶץ	שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ	Sabbatical Year
C. Passages Dealing with שַׁבַּת Referring to Annual “Ceremonial Sabbaths”					
Lev 16:31	וְעִנִּיתֶם			{היא}	Ceremonial sabbath; i.e., the Day of Atonement
Lev 23:32	וְעִנִּיתֶם				Ceremonial sabbath; i.e., the Day of Atonement ⁴⁷
Lev 23:32				שַׁבְּתֹכֶם	Ceremonial sabbath; i.e., the Day of Atonement ⁴⁸
Hos 2:11 ⁴⁹				וְשַׁבְּתָהּ	Ceremonial (i.e., “her”) sabbath(s): “her” serving here as an identifying linguistic indicator ⁵⁰

⁴⁵Harding recognized “The Sabbatical Year” as the time when “the land was to keep a Sabbath;” (E. Elmer Harding, “Feasts and Fasts,” *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. I, James Hastings, ed. [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908], 859). See also, J. B. Payne, “Sabbatical Year,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 252-253.

⁴⁶The Hebrew text here has simply שַׁבַּת הָאָרֶץ. As Waltke and O’Connor noted: “The *construct relation* usually carries definiteness over from the genitive to the construct;” (Bruce K. Waltke, and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 240). Hence, several English versions render this phrase as “the sabbath of the land” (e.g., ASV, ESV, RSV), with the first definite article *the* being supplied in the text. But, other versions do not add in a definite article; they interpret it thus: “the land has *its* sabbath” (NAB, emphasis added; see also CEB, NJB, NRSV). This rendition into English (i.e., without any definite article before “sabbath”) coincides with the consistent manner in which שַׁבַּת is used in Scripture for various non-seventh-day sabbaths – they are never directly linked with the definite article *the* in the Hebrew Bible. Discussing this very passage of Lev 25:6, Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 2159) points out that it is “literally ‘the land’s sabbath,’” language which accords well with the point being made here.

⁴⁷Concerning the term שַׁבַּת, Gordon comments on the “use of *sabbath* to denote a solemn day of *rest*” – the Day of Atonement; (Robert P. Gordon, *Leviticus, A Bible Commentary for Today* [London: Pickering & Inglis, 1979], 232).

⁴⁸Bellinger recognized that this text in Lev 23 is dealing with the Day of Atonement, as a “sabbath;” (W. H. Bellinger, in *Leviticus and Numbers*, New International Biblical Commentary [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001], 140).

⁴⁹The linguistics and literary structure of Hosea 2:11 will be dwelt with in-depth in Chapter Five of this thesis.

⁵⁰See further below, especially footnote #54 (which deals with the issue of “her,” in context of Israel’s apostasy).

Commonalities for Any Type of שַׁבָּת

Certain terms in the Hebrew Bible are used for both the seventh-day Sabbath and ceremonial sabbaths. The most obvious is the noun שַׁבָּת itself. For instance, שַׁבָּת can refer to the weekly Sabbath (as in Exod 20:10) or to a ceremonial sabbath (as in Lev 23:32). The compound expression “sabbath of solemn rest” (i.e., שַׁבְּתֹתָי שַׁבָּתוֹן) is used of the seventh-day Sabbath (as in Exod 31:15) or of a ceremonial sabbath (as in Lev 16:31). The Hebrew phrase מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ (“holy assembly”) is employed with both the weekly Sabbath (as in Lev 23:3) and various appointed seasons (as in Lev 23:21-27). The term לָכֶם (“to you”) is found with both the seventh-day Sabbath (as in Exod 35:2) as well as with the Sabbatical Year (as in Lev 25:6). Finally, the phrase לַיהוָה (“to/for Yahweh”) is utilized both with the weekly Sabbath (as in Exod 20:10) and with the sabbath of the land (as in Lev 25:2).

Distinguishing Linguistic Markers

These commonalities must not detract from the multiple distinctive terms present in the text that form identifying linguistic markers to differentiate clearly between the weekly שַׁבָּת and any non-seventh-day occasions. In brief, these contrasts can be observed in the following chart:

שַׁבָּת, as the Seventh-day Sabbath	שַׁבָּת – for Non-Seventh-day Occasions
1. One must <i>keep</i> or observe it.	1. One may need to <i>afflict</i> one’s soul on it. ⁵¹
2. The word <i>the</i> identifies it distinctly.	2. Lack of definite article, allows for various meanings.
3. It is the seventh <i>day</i> of the week.	3. It can identify the seventh <i>year</i> of the <i>land</i> . ⁵²
4. Connected with Yahweh, it is <i>holy</i> .	4. If preceded by the cardinal “seven,” it is a full <i>week</i> .
5. Yahweh calls it <i>My</i> Sabbath.	5. Yahweh calls them <i>her/your</i> ⁵³ (i.e., Israel’s) sabbaths.
6. It is cyclical – <i>Sabbath by Sabbath</i> .	6. It can be <i>annual</i> – as in the Day of Atonement.

⁵¹While the term עָנָה is used only in connection with the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:31), it would apply to the Day of Trumpets as well, since it was the time of “warning” God’s people that the awesome Day of Atonement was fast approaching. This verb עָנָה “refers to various forms of self-denial, including but not limited to fasting (cf. Psa 35:13 and Isa 58:3, 10);” (NET comments on “humble yourselves” in Lev 16:29, 281, footnote #14). This concept of עָנָה should not be misconstrued. In view of the fact that the Day of Atonement was the annual time at which “Israel was reconciled to Jehovah,” and since the “Jubilee year was always proclaimed on the Day of Atonement” (Merrill F. Unger, “Festivals,” New Unger’s Bible Dictionary, R. K. Harrison, ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1988], 416), there was obviously much joy attached to this generally solemn occasion.

⁵²Often when שַׁבָּת is used specifically in reference to the Sabbatical Year, it is employed as a plural substantive, as seen above.

⁵³The use of the linguistic identifier “your” has been challenged, in the following manner: Since God “gave” all sabbaths to Israel, either the weekly or the cultic sabbaths can be classified as both “My” (i.e., God’s), and “your” (i.e., Israel’s) sabbaths; hence, the pronoun cannot be definitive. Careful textual analysis, however, suggests otherwise. For example, though God had “given” (Heb. נתן) the weekly שַׁבָּת (see Exod 16:29, where the noun שַׁבָּת is used for the first time), one never finds in the biblical references any evidence that the seventh-day Sabbath was ever classified (with any pronouns) as belonging to Israel. The converse is likewise true, that throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, no evidence exists of any cultic sabbath/s being identified with pronouns as belonging to God.

Commenting on Leviticus, Milgrom acknowledged this type of differentiation between the weekly Sabbath and the ceremonial sabbaths. In his explication of the Day of Atonement reference in Leviticus 23:32, Milgrom underlined the fact that the text shows that it is “*your* sabbath,” and “not the Lord’s Sabbath.”⁵⁴ In discussing the septennial year, Milgrom pointed out: “The sabbatical year, but not the weekly sabbath, can be expressed with a second-person-plural suffix ‘*your* sabbaticals’ ([Lev] 26:35).”⁵⁵ The suffix “your” thus similarly differentiates this use of שַׁבָּת for a cultic sabbath, from the manner in which the weekly שַׁבָּת is spoken about in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁵⁶

Recognizing just such a crucial distinction, John Andrews declared: “The contrast between the Sabbath of the Lord and these sabbaths of the Hebrews is strongly marked.”⁵⁷ Andrews noted that the seventh-day Sabbath is called “‘*my* Sabbaths,’ ‘*my holy day,*’ and the like; while the others are designated as ‘*your* sabbaths,’ ‘*her* sabbaths,’⁵⁸ and similar expressions.”⁵⁹ Likewise, Donald Mansell

⁵⁴Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2026 (emphasis added). Milgrom’s “sabbath” has been capitalized to synchronize with the writing style used in this thesis and to differentiate between the seventh-day Sabbath and ceremonial sabbaths. Some, such as Reynolds, have conjectured as follows regarding pronouns connected to the term שַׁבָּת, as in Hos 2:11: Since “Israel had merely perverted God’s [weekly] Sabbaths ... God calls them Israel’s rather than his own;” (Edwin Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47 [Autumn 2009]: 280). See also, Jerry Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath? A Response to Ron du Preez,” in Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, rev. ed. (Glendale, AZ: LAM Publications, 2010), 384-385. In other words, it is alleged that because God was addressing Israel as an unfaithful wife (in Hos 2:11), the phrase “*her* sabbath” was used. However, such a conclusion ignores the specific language and chiasmic structure of the passage (as dealt with in Chapters Five and Seven). Furthermore, the context indicates that Hosea was writing to a people who had convoluted God’s instructions; they had turned the solemn times of these annual sabbaths into levity, which was one reason they were being reproved. Intriguingly, in a somewhat similar case of the rebellion of Israel, despite their rejection of Him and His laws, God still spoke of the weekly rest day as “*My* Sabbaths” (see Ezek 20:8-24; 22:26; 23:38; etc.). In brief, despite the rebellion of His people (see Ezek 20:8), God still called the seventh-day “*My* Sabbath” (see Ezek 20:12, 13), and not “*her* Sabbath.” As Milgrom’s commentary (ibid.) on Leviticus indicated, this distinction between “your sabbath” (i.e., a ceremonial sabbath) and “the Lord’s Sabbath” (or Yahweh calling it “*My* Sabbath,” i.e., the weekly Sabbath), has nothing to do with terminology related only to the apostasy of Israel – for if this speculative theory were correct, it would cast doubt on the clarity with which the writing prophets apparently sought to communicate regarding this issue.

⁵⁵Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1963 (emphasis added).

⁵⁶The question has been raised as to why it is that the מועדים are identified by God as both “My appointed seasons” (see, for example, Lev 23:2), as well as “your [i.e., Israel’s] appointed seasons” (see, for example, Num 29:39). As addressed in Chapter Four of this thesis, it is clear that throughout the biblical period, the weekly Sabbath is always listed as distinct from the מועדים (see, for example, 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12-13; Neh 10:33; Ezek 46:1-15; etc.). See Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1956. Since the Hebrew word שַׁבָּת is used in Scripture to refer to the weekly, the annual, and the septennial שַׁבָּת, in addition to meaning “week” at times, linguistic markers are essential for identifying the precise meaning of שַׁבָּת, while such linguistic indicators are not needed for the מועדים, as this latter term (as used in a cultic context) does not have potentially confusing definitions.

⁵⁷Andrews, 88.

⁵⁸Gladson (386-387) claimed that the phrase “her sabbaths” (τὰ σάββατα αὐτῆς) in 1 Macc 1:39 shows that the pronoun “her” can be used to identify the weekly Sabbath (and hence is not a unique identifier of ceremonial sabbaths). However, since the *only* form in which we have this book is in its Greek translation, we have no way to check whether the LXX is accurate or not. The translational inconsistency of the LXX is well-recognized. For example, in his article on “שַׁבָּת,” Haag (*TDOT* XIV:386) noted that “the LXX rendering of the vb. *šābat* does not exhibit any consistency.” Stacey (8) similarly cautioned, that “we need to be wary, because the LXX frequently reveals a mind of its own.” Since, this thesis, as already stated, is based on *only* the original Hebrew (of the OT) and the Greek (of the NT), any LXX rendition does not invalidate the consistent pattern seen above in the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁵⁹Ibid. (emphases added).

underscored the fact that while the seventh-day Sabbath is referred to as “*the Sabbath*,”⁶⁰ the Day of Atonement is called “*a sabbath*” in Leviticus 23:32.⁶¹

Summary of the Use of שַׁבָּת in the Hebrew Bible

In conclusion, it is plausible that the writing prophets intentionally surrounded the term שַׁבָּת with sufficient definitive and reliable syntactical and linguistic indicators to enable the reader and/or listener to adequately recognize which type of “sabbath” is being indicated. Of the 111 times that the substantive שַׁבָּת appears in the Hebrew Bible, 95 times it relates to the seventh-day Sabbath (i.e., at least 85.5 percent of time various linguistic markers, as confirmed by the immediate and broader contexts, show that שַׁבָּת refers to the weekly Sabbath). Similarly, contrasting distinctive linguistic markers suggest that in the other sixteen cases, שַׁבָּת is used to refer to something other than the שַׁבָּת of the fourth commandment, that is, to indicate at minimum the *Day of Atonement*, or to identify the *Sabbatical Years*, or to mean *weeks* (when שַׁבָּת is directly preceded by the cardinal number seven).

The evidence thus far in this chapter coincides with the 1986 *Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible* which states that, in addition to identifying the seventh-day Sabbath, “the Hebrew term ‘Sabbath’ may also refer to the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:31; 23:32), the week (Lev 23:15-16), or ‘the year of rest’ (Lev 25:5, 8).”⁶²

The above analysis invalidates the claim regarding the use of “the word *Sabbath* without qualification,”⁶³ since it appears that this term is never employed without some sort of qualification

⁶⁰Maris’ recent article on Lev 23:11 has challenged the notion that the definite article (הַ) when linked with the substantive שַׁבָּת always identifies the weekly Sabbath. He alleges that here הַשַּׁבָּת refers to *Abib* 15, i.e., the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread; (Bradford Maris, “A Proposed Solution to ‘The Most Long-Lasting Schism in the History of the Jewish People’: A Fresh Look at הַשַּׁבָּת in Leviticus 23:11,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 56.1 [2018], 47). This theory, however, (1) Is built on a somewhat arbitrarily selected verbal link (i.e. שַׁבָּת) of Exod 12:15, and from a book other than Leviticus, with a different contextual setting; (2) Promotes a rather speculative theory that הַשַּׁבָּת is used here to mean “this Sabbath,” in contradistinction to the usual way Hebrew denotes particularity (i.e., הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה); (3) Stands in tension with the way in which the specific noun שַׁבָּת (when used with a particular day) describes a period of *no work* whatsoever, whereas according to Exod 12:16, the Israelites were allowed to cook on *Abib* 15 (see Chapter Four, footnote #83, #85, etc.); and (4) De facto propounds the notion that the day of Pentecost would always land on the 5th of Sivan; yet, if that were the case, that could easily have been specified in the instructions given. In short, these concerns appear sufficient to retain the conclusions relative to footnote #25 above; and, that Lev 23:11 identifies the seventh-day Sabbath.

⁶¹D. E. Mansell, “Thoughts on Colossians 2:14-17,” *Ministry*, December 1971, 27 (emphases added).

⁶²*Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible*, Geoffrey Wigoder et al, eds. (New York: Macmillan, 1986), s.v. “Sabbath.” Gesenius likewise shows that שַׁבָּת designates these four occasions; (William Gesenius, *The New Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., Edward Robinson, trans. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 992; hereafter *BDB* [1981]). Echoing essentially similar conclusions (though without providing any textual references), Klein concluded that שַׁבָּת can identify the Sabbath, a week, a festival, or a Sabbatical year; (Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* [New York: Macmillan, 1987], 638). While not mentioning the Day of Atonement, various lexicons do note that the Hebrew שַׁבָּת is used to designate the seventh-day Sabbath, sabbatical years, and the week; (Georg Fohrer, ed., *Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1971], 277; Benjamin Davies, ed., *A Compendious and Complete Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, new ed. [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1957], 616; Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. IV [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 1410-1411; Fuerst, 1340-1341).

⁶³Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” 343; see also, idem, “Responses to Joseph A. Pipa,” 191.

in the Hebrew Scriptures. Also, the above investigation shows how the term שַׁבָּת by itself (though with linguistic markers) is used in various places in the Old Testament to refer to non-seventh-day sabbath occasions, including at minimum the ritual events of the Day of Atonement and Sabbatical Years,⁶⁴ thus opening the way to consider whether or not something similar may have been intended by the use of the lexical term σάββατα in Colossians 2:16.⁶⁵

Put simply, the linguistic indicators, together with the context, appear crucial in accurately interpreting the meaning of this significant substantive. Therefore, the notion that the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16 could refer to ceremonial sabbaths appears to be a linguistically viable option, since it does not go against the various ways in which the original Hebrew שַׁבָּת is contextually rendered throughout the Old Testament.

Septuagint Rendering of שַׁבָּת שַׁבְּתוֹן

Over the years some writers have promoted the following argument in order to strengthen the theory that the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16 cannot refer to ceremonial sabbaths. First, they note that both the seventh-day Sabbath and the Day of Atonement are sometimes designated by the compound Hebrew expression שַׁבָּת שַׁבְּתוֹן, as in Exodus 31:15 and Leviticus 23:32. Then they allege that this two-pronged term is *always* rendered in the Septuagint by the compound Greek expression σάββατα σαββάτων. Finally, they claim that ceremonial sabbaths are *never* classified by the simple lexeme σάββατα, as in Colossians 2:16.

For example, a former Sabbatarian, Robert Brinsmead posited: “When the Old Testament refers to the yearly Sabbaths, such as the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23), it calls them ‘a Sabbath of rest,’ which the Septuagint *consistently* translates with the compound Greek expression *Sabbata sabbaton*.”⁶⁶ Then he added: “Colossians 2:16 simply has *sabbaton*, the same word which Matthew 28:1 uses for the weekly Sabbath.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Paul Jewett alleged that “Paul, by contrast, uses the simple σάββατα in Col. 2:16,” which “refers *without exception to the weekly Sabbath*,” thus making “it very plain that the Gentile Christians had no obligation to observe the Sabbath.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴Contra Love, “The Sabbath,” Article I, 368; idem, “The Sabbath,” Article II, 427.

⁶⁵The significance placed on the use of the definite article in the context of identifying the weekly Sabbath has been misunderstood, as for example, by Joseph D. Fantin, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:1 (Jan-Mar 2011). The point being made is that, at times the definite article is used to alert the reader/hearer that the weekly Sabbath is in view. However, such is not always the case. The lack of such an article does not necessarily mean that the weekly Sabbath is not in view. Other linguistic indicators (as well as the context) will assist in identifying the meaning of שַׁבָּת.

⁶⁶Robert D. Brinsmead, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 5: Colossians 2:16,” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 29 (emphasis original). Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 359, makes a similar claim.

⁶⁷Brinsmead, 29.

⁶⁸Jewett (footnote #20, emphasis original).

Outlining the Compound Expressions

In Table 3 below, all seven compound expressions relating to the Hebrew term שַׁבָּת, and their translation in the Greek Septuagint are outlined, so as to assess the accuracy of the argument above.⁶⁹

Table 3 Compound Expressions Relating to the Term שַׁבָּת		
Ref.	Hebrew (Masoretic Text)	Greek (Septuagint)
A. Passages Dealing with the Weekly שַׁבָּת		
Exod 16:23	שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבָּת ⁷⁰ sabbath of sabbatism ⁷¹ קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה for/to Yahweh holy/	σάββατα ἀνάπαυσις sabbath a rest ἅγια τῷ κυρίῳ holy to the Lord
Exod 31:15	שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבָּת sabbatism sabbath of קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה for/to Yahweh holy	σάββατα ἀνάπαυσις sabbath a rest ἅγια τῷ κυρίῳ holy to the Lord
Exod 35:2	קֹדֶשׁ שַׁבָּת sabbath of holy שַׁבָּתוֹן לַיהוָה for/to Yahweh sabbatism	ἅγιον σάββατα holy sabbath ἀνάπαυσις κυρίῳ a rest to [the] Lord
Lev 23:3	שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבָּת sabbatism sabbath of מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה for/to Yahweh ... holy/convocation	σάββατα ἀνάπαυσις sabbath a rest κλήτη ἅγια τῷ κυρίῳ convocation holy to the Lord
B. Passages Addressing the Annual Cultic שַׁבָּת		
Lev 16:31	שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבָּת sabbatism sabbath of היא לכם for/to you it	σάββατα σαββάτων sabbath of sabbaths ἀνάπαυσις αὕτη ἔσται ⁷² ὑμῖν a rest this shall be to you
Lev 23:32	שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבָּת sabbatism sabbath of הוא לכם for/to you it	σάββατα σαββάτων sabbath of sabbaths ἔσται ὑμῖν it shall be to you
C. Passage Focusing on the Septennial שַׁבָּת		
Lev 25:4	שַׁבָּתוֹן שַׁבָּת sabbatism sabbath of יְהִי לְאָרֶץ for/to the land shall be	σάββατα ἀνάπαυσις sabbath a rest ἔσται τῇ γῆ it shall be to the land

⁶⁹The literal translation of all of the Hebrew words has been given to indicate the manner in which the Hebrew couplet שַׁבָּת שַׁבָּתוֹן (or its inverse, as in Exod 16:23) has been rendered in the LXX Greek.

⁷⁰Milgrom pointed out that, though the word *šabbātōn* “stands in reverse order with *šabbāt* in Exod 16:23,... it has the same meaning as the normal construct chain,” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2013).

⁷¹William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., Edward Robinson, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 992 [hereafter *BDB* (1951)], noted that שַׁבָּתוֹן (*šabbātōn*) means “sabbath observance, sabbatism.”

⁷²That the use of ἔσται is not a unique indicator (in the LXX) of the Day of Atonement, can be seen by a comparison with Table 8, where the LXX employs ἔσται for Sabbatical Years as well (as in Lev 25:4, 6).

John Wevers observed that in Leviticus 16:31, the “LXX begins with *σάββατα σαββάτων ἀνάπαυσις αὕτη ἔσται ὑμῖν*, whereas MT has *שבת שבתון היא לכם*; in other words, *שבתון* seems to have two equivalents. The phrase *σάββατα σαββάτων* occurs only *twice* in OT, here and at [Lev] 23:32.... Our verse with its double rendering of the word [*שבתון*] is *unique*.”⁷³

As is evident from the above chart, Wevers’s observations are correct: *σάββατα σαββάτων* occurs only *twice* in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and that the Leviticus 16:31 rendering in the LXX is unique. Thus, it becomes clear that actually only *once* in the entire Bible (i.e., in Lev 23:32) does the Septuagint specifically render the Hebrew *שַׁבַּת שְׁבִתוֹן*, i.e., “a sabbath of solemn rest,” as *σάββατα σαββάτων* – also a completely unique translation.

An Immediate Contextual Marker

While not directly germane to the matter of the free-standing word “sabbath,” it appears that a specific contextual indicator (as can be seen in Table 3 above), connected with the two-pronged term *שַׁבַּת שְׁבִתוֹן*, does serve to differentiate between the weekly Sabbath and other cultic “sabbaths,” i.e., when any of them happen to employ this two-pronged term. Only the seventh-day Sabbath is described as *שְׁבִתוֹן* in Hebrew (or as a form of *ἀγία*, in the Greek of the LXX).⁷⁴

Conclusion Regarding *שַׁבַּת שְׁבִתוֹן*

As indicated in the previous section above, “*שַׁבַּת* in the Hebrew Old Testament,” the present investigation confirms that certain terms in the Hebrew Scriptures were used for both the seventh-day Sabbath and for cultic sabbaths. Of the seven total occurrences of the two-pronged term *שַׁבַּת שְׁבִתוֹן*, it is used four times in reference to the seventh-day Sabbath, twice to refer to the seventh-month Day of Atonement, and once for the seventh-year sabbath of the land. Since this phrase is used in this common manner, on its own, it cannot function as an identifying linguistic indicator.

Furthermore, contrary to the view noted at the beginning of this section, the Septuagint does not consistently translate the Hebrew *שַׁבַּת שְׁבִתוֹן* with the compound Greek expression *σάββατα σαββάτων*. As recognized by the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*: “The LXX developed various forms for rendering the superlative construction *šabbāt [sic] šabbātōn*, including *sábbata sabbátōn anápausis* (Lev. 16:31), *sábbata sabbátōn* (Lev. 23:32), *sábbata anápausis* (Ex. 16:23;

⁷³Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, 257-258 (emphasis added).

⁷⁴Though somewhat tangential, it should be noted that the term *שַׁבַּת שְׁבִתוֹן* (on its own), is used four times throughout the Hebrew Scriptures: (1) For the Day of Trumpets (Lev 23:24); (2) For the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:39); (3) For the eighth day, related to the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:39); and, (4) For the Sabbatical Year (Lev 25:5). As can be seen, these occasions are all “sabbatically” related – the first three noted here are all annual occasions located in the *seventh* month, while the fourth is identified as the *seventh* year. In a similar manner, all the occasions where the two-pronged term is used, are also “sabbatically” connected – the weekly *שַׁבַּת*, with the *seventh* day; the Day of Atonement *שַׁבַּת*, with the *seventh* month; and the Sabbatical Year *שַׁבַּת*, with the *seventh* year.

31:15; 35:2; Lev. 23:3; 25:4).⁷⁵ As observed above, the Septuagint version actually does so only once (or at most twice, if one ignores the term ἀνάπαυσις in Lev 16:31) of its seven total occurrences in the Hebrew original.⁷⁶ Incidentally, both the original Hebrew and the LXX translation do provide internal contextual cues (as well as at least one linguistic marker) to distinguish the weekly שַׁבָּת from other ritual sabbatic occasions, whenever this two-pronged term is utilized.

The crucial question as to whether the ceremonial sabbaths are ever classified by the simple term σαββάτων, which is the term seen in Colossians 2:16, will be addressed later in this Chapter.

“Sabbath” in New Testament Greek

More than a century ago Dudley Canright stated: “The word Sabbath occurs sixty times in the New Testament. In fifty-nine times out of the sixty, it is freely admitted by all Sabbatarians that the weekly Sabbath is meant; but in the sixtieth case, where exactly the same word is used both in Greek and English, they say it must mean some other day.”⁷⁷ William Love noted: “Is it not arbitrary and unreasonable to take the word in the sixtieth instance, and declare that it means feast-days!”⁷⁸

Σάββατον and Σάββατα in the Greek Scriptures

In addressing the claim above, it will be instructive to observe the manner in which the two words σάββατον and σάββατα have been rendered quite consistently in standard English versions.⁷⁹

⁷⁵Haag, “שַׁבָּת,” *TDOT* XIV:396.

⁷⁶The above analysis (as to the different and inconsistent ways in which the LXX renders the MT) is yet another reason that the translation of the Septuagint is not being used as a trustworthy principal source in this thesis, which seeks to analyze potential linguistic indicators related to the original words for “sabbath” in the canonical Scriptures.

⁷⁷D. M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Refuted: In a Nutshell* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1970, reprint), 39. This is a reprint of Dudley Marvin Canright, *Adventism Refuted in a Nutshell* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1889). Similar claims have been made by others, such as Charles A. Russell, *Which Day Is the Sabbath? And the United States Land of Freedom* (Allegan, MI: C. A. Russell, 1902), 40.

⁷⁸Love, “The Sabbath,” Article II, 428 (emphasis added).

⁷⁹This table does not include the unique appearance of σαββατισμός in Hebrews. The meaning of σαββατισμός is not an integral part of this thesis. Suffice it to say that this term does not negate the linguistic/contextual analysis regarding the meaning of “sabbath” in the Greek Testament. Some, such as Evans and Westerholm, have suggested that σαββατισμός refers “to the eschatological fulfillment of God’s will. At this time all believers will enter God’s rest;” (Craig A. Evans, and S. Westerholm, “Sabbath,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig A. Evans, and Stanley E. Porter, eds. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 1035). Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Endtime Issues No. 133: Reflections on the 58th General Conference Session;” (See <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com> [accessed 14 July 2005], also argued that Heb 4:9 identifies a literal Sabbath-keeping [yet, he also maintained that the writer is addressing a spiritual Sabbath-keeping as well]). See also, Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1988), 135-136, 164-170. A recent doctoral research on σαββατισμός in Heb 4:9, based on immediate and broader contexts as well as investigation of extra-biblical materials, has concluded that this term “is meant to define more precisely the character of the rest,” and that (other than as expected in the works of the allegorical writer Origen) this word “is always used literally” in non-Christian as well as Christian literature to mean the literal observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. (See Erhard H. Gallos, “Κατάπαυσις and Σαββατισμός in Hebrews 4” [PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2011], 238-242). In essential accord with Gallos, Delitzsch noted that the term σαββατισμός means “the keeping of a Sabbath, the enjoyment of a Sabbath rest;” (Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874-1876], 197). In brief, the in-depth exegetical analysis by Gallos refutes those who allege that the writer of Hebrew is here using σαββατισμός in a typological manner, and therefore that the weekly Sabbath can now also be seen as a typological “shadow,” and that it should thus be viewed as being similar to the annual sabbaths, that have met their end in Christ.

The complete listing of these two terms in the entire New Testament is diagramed here in Table 4.

Table 4			
The Translation of Σάββατον and Σάββατα in the Greek Testament⁸⁰			
“WEEK” as derived from:		“SABBATH(S)” as derived from:	
Σάββατον (2nd declens.)	Σάββατα (3rd declens.)	Σάββατον (2nd declens.)	Σάββατα (3rd declens.)
	Matt 28:1	Matt 12:2 12:5 12:8 24:20	Matt 12:1 12:5 12:10 12:11 12:12 28:1
Mark 16:9	Mark 16:2	Mark 2:27 2:27 2:28 6:2 15:42 16:1	Mark 1:21 2:23 2:24 3:2 3:4
Luke 18:12	Luke 24:1	Luke 6:1 6:5 6:6 6:7 6:9 13:14 13:14 13:15 13:16 14:1 14:3 14:5 23:54 23:56	Luke 4:16 4:31 6:2 13:10
	John 20:1 20:19	John 5:9 5:10 5:16 5:18 7:22 7:23 7:23 9:14 9:16 19:31 19:31	
	Acts 20:7	Acts 1:12 13:27 13:42 13:44 15:21 18:4	Acts 13:14 16:13 17:2 [Note: Σάββατα & τρία = “sabbaths,” plur.]
1 Cor 16:2			Col 2:16
Totals: 3	6	41	19

⁸⁰This includes the one occurrence of προσάββατον, located in Mark 15:42.

In summary, the numerical breakdown for the Greek neuter noun for “sabbath” shows that it appears exactly 69 times. To begin with, as a second declension *singular* (i.e., σάββατον), this term appears 44 times: three times it is translated as a “week,” based on the context; while 41 times it is translated as the seventh-day “Sabbath,” based on the context.

However, more importantly, the third declension⁸¹ term (i.e., σάββατα) is used 25 times. Besides its usage in Colossians 2:16, it is rendered 17 times as a single seventh-day “Sabbath,” based on the context; only one time it is rendered as seventh-day “Sabbaths” (plural), based on the context; and six times it is rendered as a “week,” based on the context. That the above is considered an appropriate and reliable translation of σάββατον and σάββατα in the Greek Testament can be seen from the consistent manner in which several standard English Bible versions have translated these words, as described above.⁸²

Confirmation by Others

In his article, “*Sábbaton*,” Lohse concurred with the above three-fold definition: “The plural *tá sábbata* may mean one sabbath, several sabbaths, or the whole week like the Hebrew term.”⁸³

These basic definitions are confirmed in Joseph Thayer’s Greek-English lexicon. Σάββατα,

- can be used to refer to a *single* seventh-day Sabbath, as in Matthew 12:1;⁸⁴
- can be used of several sabbaths, Acts 17:2, i.e., seventh-day Sabbaths (*plural*);⁸⁵ and
- can be rendered as seven days, a *week*, as in Matthew 28:1.⁸⁶

Though dated, Thayer’s cognizant of the Septuagint’s usage (as in “Lev. xxiii. 32 etc.”), aptly indicates that the term σάββατα may even be “occasioned” “by the plur. names of festivals,”⁸⁷ as in Colossians 2:16. This fact is obviously relevant to this study, and will be explored.

⁸¹This understanding that the “third declension” is being used, is based on the ending of the dative plural as σάββασι(v), which would derive from the (apparently hypothetical) singular σάββατι. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* states: “The word σάββατον, ov, τό, forms, in the New Test., σάββασι, in the dat. pl., according to the third declension, Mat. 12.1, 5, et al;” (*The Analytical Greek Lexicon* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950], vii). See also, Harper-Knapp, Table I; Charles Walter Irwin, *The Sabbath in Greek*, Bible Truth Series (Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, nd), 2.

⁸²For example, the following ten versions have all consistently translated the above Greek words as shown in Table 4 above: ASV, ESV, HCSB, KJV, NAB, NABrev, NJB, NKJV, NRSV, and TNIV.

⁸³Lohse, “*Sábbaton*,” 989. So also, Lohse, “σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή,” *TDNT* VII:20. Obviously, while the Greek term σάββατον “may mean” “the whole week,” additional grammatical and contextual features will determine the correct interpretation of the word. See also, Walter Bauer, σάββατον, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., Frederick William Danker, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 909-910; Harold K. Moulton, ed., σάββατον, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 361.

⁸⁴*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. enl., Joseph Henry Thayer (New York: American Book Company, 1899), 566.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 565.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 566.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 565.

Clearer Statistical Data on Use of Σάββατα

As indicated at the beginning of this section, some have lumped both Greek terms (σάββατον and σάββατα) together and then drawn conclusions based upon 59 of the selected 60 renditions of these terms, thereby suggesting that consistency in translation requires that the term σάββατα in Colossians 2:16 also be rendered as the seventh-day Sabbath. However, as the analysis of these Greek terms has revealed in the above table, when commentators and scholars discuss the translation of σάββατα, the nominative form of the word in Colossians 2:16, it would be more accurate to report the record in the following manner:

The third declension Greek term σάββατα appears a total of 25 times in the Greek Testament. Other than its occurrence in Colossians 2:16, σάββατα has been rightly translated on 17 occasions (i.e., 68 percent of the time) as a single seventh-day “Sabbath;” on six occasions (i.e., 24 percent of the time) as “week;” and once (i.e., 4 percent of the time) as “Sabbaths,” in the plural, based on the context.

Much evidence exists to show that σάββατα has appropriately been interpreted in a variety of legitimate ways. For example, the Septuagint uses σάββατα to mean a single seventh-day “Sabbath” (as in Exod 20:10), multiple weekly “Sabbaths” (as in 2 Chron 31:3), “ceremonial sabbaths” such as the Day of Atonement (as in Lev 23:32c), and “Sabbatical Years” (as in Lev 25:4). Thus, on a matter as complex and vital as this, it becomes clear that Bible scholars must be both cautious and thorough – taking into account all appropriate linguistic markers, the immediate and broader contexts, as well as any pertinent connections with the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures (including relevant insights from the Septuagint). This basic approach, if followed, may assist in establishing the best possible interpretation and understanding of the one remaining usage of σάββατα in the Greek Testament – the one that appears in Colossians 2:16.

Is Σάββατα Singular or Plural?

The question as to whether the term σάββατα is a plural, as derived from the Greek neuter σάββατον, has caused considerable discussion over the years. As far back as 1886, an acknowledged New Testament Greek authority, J. B. Lightfoot, began proposing the following: “The word σάββατον is derived from the Aramaic ... אַבְבַּת, and accordingly preserves the Aramaic termination in *a*. Hence it was naturally declined as a plural noun, σάββατα, σαββάτων,”⁸⁸ as seen in Colossians 2:16. More than a century later, contemporary scholarship confirmed that this noun σάββατα is “an Aramaic loanword taken into Greek by the Jews of Alexandria.”⁸⁹ Despite this, the debate is still

⁸⁸J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1886), 192.

⁸⁹Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, 380.

ongoing. Since it appears that this matter, as to whether *σάββατα* is a singular or a plural, is germane to this investigation, Chapter Six of this thesis has been devoted to such an analysis.

For now, part of the summary of that chapter will have to suffice: A comparison of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, the record of translations into various languages over more than two millennia (from the Septuagint to contemporary versions), the extra-biblical writings of Zenon, Philo, Josephus, and Plutarch, deuterocanonical works, intra- and inter-textual analyses, a study of linguistics, together with etymological and lexicographical evidence, all indicate that *σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16 (as derived from *σάββατα*), is a transliterated word which must be rendered as a singular word “sabbath,”⁹⁰ unless the grammar requires otherwise. Furthermore, as Lightfoot noted: “In the New Testament *σάββατα* is only once used distinctly of more than a single day, and there the plurality of meaning is brought out by the attached numeral; Acts xvii. 2 ἐπὶ *σάββατα* τρία.”⁹¹

In brief, it appears that the argument for a plural reading of the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16, based on this being a supposed derivative of the Greek singular *σάββατον*, “rests on a shaky foundation.”⁹² It is evident, therefore, that linguistic and theological context will be crucial in determining the best meaning and interpretation of *σάββατα*, especially in Colossians. Paul Gien pointed the way forward, noting that “it is much more likely that it is singular like *ἑορτῆς* and *νεομηνίας*, the other two words in the series”⁹³ in Colossians 2:16. As *Die Bybel in Afrikaans* (1971) aptly translated this verse: “Laat niemand julle dan oordeel in spys of in drank of met betrekking tot ’n fees of nuwemaan of sabbat nie.” The key three terms, rendered as singular nouns in the Afrikaans Bible, are echoed in the Revised Standard Version, as “a festival or a new moon or a sabbath.”

Linguistic Markers for *Σάββατον* and *Σάββατα*

Just as in the Hebrew Scriptures, where it has been shown that the term *שַׁבָּת* is almost always connected to various linguistic markers, it appears that the writers of the Greek Testament found ways to similarly indicate the meaning of the term “sabbath” when they used it. To accomplish this task, these apostolic leaders leaned heavily on the basic biblical understanding of their readers and listeners. They utilized several linguistic markers already known in the Hebrew language, transposing these into the Greek of their day. Furthermore, they surrounded the terms *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* with additional linguistic or contextual indicators so as to assure that their readers and listeners could

⁹⁰Although this word has been declined as if it were a regular Greek plural, the *σαββάτων* in Col 2:16 is actually a singular term, and must be translated as “[a] sabbath.”

⁹¹Lightfoot, 192.

⁹²Paul Gien, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word *Σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16” (MA thesis, Loma Linda University, 1977), 28.

⁹³Ibid.

recognize all intended references to the weekly Sabbath. The outline in Table 5 below shows which terms are used, where they are located, and how the immediate and broader contexts confirm the categorization of all of these 59 usages, which appear as direct references to the seventh-day Sabbath.

Matt.	The	Day	Lawful	Synagogue	Keep	Cyclical	Context
12:1	τοῖς ⁹⁴						Sabbath-keeping
12:2			ἔξεστιν				<i>the</i> Sabbath (cf. Matt 12:1)
12:5	τοῖς						Sabbath-keeping
12:5	τὸ						Sabbath-keeping
12:8	τοῦ						Sabbath-keeping
12:10	τοῖς		ἔξεστιν	συναγωγῆν (12:9)			Sabbath healing
12:11	τοῖς						Sabbath healing
12:12	τοῖς		ἔξεστιν				Sabbath healing
24:20						χειμῶνος μηδὲ σαββάτω	Sabbath-keeping (by this time all ceremonial sabbaths would have come to an end)
28:1						Ὅψε δὲ σαββάτων ... εἰς μίαν	“Now after Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn” (thus, it is the 7 th day)

Mark	The	Day	Lawful	Synagogue	Keep	Cyclical	Context
1:21	τοῖς			συναγωγῆν			Sabbath healing
2:23	τοῖς						Sabbath-keeping
2:24	τοῖς		ἔξεστιν				Sabbath-keeping
2:27	τὸ						Sabbath-keeping
2:27	τὸ						Sabbath-keeping
2:28	τοῦ						Sabbath-keeping
3:2	τοῖς			συναγωγῆν (3:1)			Sabbath healing
3:4	τοῖς		ἔξεστιν				Sabbath healing
6:2				συναγωγῆ			Sabbath teaching
15:42						προσάβ- βατον	First the “Preparation,” then the Sabbath (see Mark 16:1)
16:1	τοῦ						“The Sabbath was past,... on the first day of the week” (see Mark 16:1-2)

⁹⁴In a manner somewhat similar to what is seen in the Old Testament, the New Testament frequently directly links the seventh-day Sabbath with the definite article *the*. While most of these examples appear in the synoptic gospels (more than 83% of the time), it also happens in John 5:18; 9:16; 19:31 (2x); Acts 13:14; and 16:13.

Luke	The	Day	Lawful	Synagogue	Keep	Cyclical	Context
4:16	τῶν	ἡμέρα		συναγωγῆν			Sabbath reading
4:31	τοῖς			συναγωγῆ (4:33)			Sabbath teaching
6:1	τοῖς (6:2)					δευτερο- πρώτῳ ⁹⁵	Sabbath-keeping
6:2	τοῖς		ἔξεστιν				Sabbath-keeping
6:5	τοῦ						Sabbath-keeping
6:6				συναγωγῆν		ἑτέρῳ σαββάτῳ	Sabbath healing
6:7	τῷ						Sabbath healing
6:9	τῷ		ἔξεστιν				Sabbath healing
13:10	τοῖς			συναγωγῶν			Sabbath teaching
13:14	τῷ					Ἐξ ἡμέραι...	Sabbath healing
13:14	τοῦ	ἡμέρα					Sabbath healing
13:15	τῷ						Sabbath healing
13:16	τοῦ	ἡμέρα					Sabbath healing
14:1	τῷ (14:3)						Sabbath healing (cf. Luke 14:3-5)
14:3	τῷ		ἔξεστιν				Sabbath healing
14:5	τοῦ	ἡμέρα					Sabbath healing
23:54						παρα- σκευῆς	“Preparation” day, i.e., the day before the weekly Sabbath
23:56	τὸ						The Sabbath (of the ten commandments; Exod 20)

John	The	Day	Lawful	Synagogue	Keep	Cyclical	Context
5:9		ἡμέρα					Sabbath healing
5:10			ἔξεστιν				Sabbath-keeping
5:16	τὸ (5:18)						Sabbath-keeping (cf. John 5:1-18)
5:18	τὸ						Sabbath-keeping
7:22							Sabbath healing/keeping (cf. John 5:1-18; Luke 13:14)
7:23							Sabbath healing/keeping (cf. John 5:1-18; Luke 13:14)
7:23							Sabbath healing/keeping (cf. John 5:1-18; Luke 13:14)

⁹⁵Some ancient manuscripts, such as Alexandrinus, and Ephraemi Rescriptus (Paris) of the 5th century include this term; (see Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. [Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Society, 1990], 224 [footnote #1]). This is rendered as “on the second Sabbath after the first” (NKJV, MEV, etc.), thus implying a cyclical pattern of Sabbath-keeping.

John	The	Day	Lawful	Synagogue	Keep	Cyclical	Context
9:14		ἡμέρα					Sabbath healing
9:16	τὸ				τηρεῖ ⁹⁶		Sabbath-keeping
19:31	τῷ					παρα-σκευῆς	“Preparation” day, i.e., the day before the weekly Sabbath
19:31	τοῦ	ἡμέρα					Sabbath-keeping

Acts	The	Day	Lawful	Synagogue	Keep	Cyclical	Context
1:12							Sabbath traditions ⁹⁷
13:14	τῶν	ἡμέρα		συναγωγῆν			Sabbath worship
13:27						κατὰ πᾶν	Sabbath worship
13:42				συναγωγῆς (13:43)		μεταξὺ	Sabbath worship
13:44						ἐρχομένῳ	Sabbath worship
15:21				συναγωγαῖς		κατὰ πᾶν	Sabbath worship
16:13	τῶν	ἡμέρα					Sabbath worship
17:2				συναγωγῆ (17:1)		τρία	Sabbath worship
18:4				συναγωγῆ		κατὰ πᾶν	Sabbath worship

As noted above, the Greek words *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* are quite consistently accompanied by certain linguistic indicators, as well as by the immediate and broader contexts, so they can be identified as the weekly Sabbath. Thus, other than the *σάββατα* in Colossians 2:16 (which is under scrutiny here), there are 59 clear references to the seventh-day Sabbath in the New Testament. In 55 of the 59 references (i.e., more than 93 percent of the time) there is at least one linguistic marker that identifies the day as the weekly Sabbath.⁹⁸ At times there are as many as three linguistic identifiers to show that it is the seventh-day Sabbath. Of these 59 uses of *sabbath* in the Greek language,

- 36 were prefaced (in the immediate context) with the definite article *the*;⁹⁹
- nine times the word *ἡμέρα* was used with it;
- nine times it was related to the term *ἕξἑστιν*;
- 11 times it was linked to attendance and/or activities at the *synagogue*;

⁹⁶This is the only known occurrence of the Greek word *τηρεῖ* related to the Sabbath in the New Testament. However, as seen above, the Hebrew word for *keep* (*שמר*) is connected to the seventh-day Sabbath at least ten times.

⁹⁷Lohse noted, regarding Acts 1:12: “One may only go the prescribed journey on the [seventh-day] Sabbath;” (Lohse, “*σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευῆ*,” *TDNT* VII:21).

⁹⁸If the conservative estimated dates of the writing of the New Testament documents are reasonably accurate, it may explain why the gospel of John includes fewer linguistic markers for the weekly Sabbath, than any other books – by this time (close to the end of the first century AD), the Temple had been destroyed, and the ceremonial sabbaths were no longer an issue; hence, when John wrote, it would have been understood that whenever he referred to the term “sabbath,” he would have been identifying the weekly Sabbath.

⁹⁹A. R. Fausset, *1 Corinthians – Revelation, A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 448, recognized that “the” identifies the seventh-day Sabbath.

- once it was connected with the term *keep* (i.e., τηρεῖ);
- 14 times a *cyclical* expression was used for a regular weekly pattern of Sabbath-keeping;
- and, on every occasion the immediate and/or larger contexts indicated that the seventh-day Sabbath was in view in the above passages.

In short, whenever the Greek terms *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* are accompanied by certain specific linguistic markers they can consistently be identified as the weekly seventh-day Sabbath.

Language Requiring the Word “Week”

The outline in Table 6 indicates the various other ways that *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* have quite consistently been correctly rendered in English Bible versions, based on the context:

Ref.	<i>One</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Twice</i>	Context
Matt 28:1	μίαν σαββάτων			The Sabbath was past (Matt 28:1); then, a new <i>week</i> began
Mark 16:2	τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων			The Sabbath was past (Mark 16:1); then, a new <i>week</i> began
Mark 16:9		πρώτη σαββάτου		The resurrection of Jesus, on the first [day] of [the] <i>week</i>
Luke 18:12			δὶς τοῦ σαββάτου	Referring to those who were fasting <i>twice</i> in the <i>week</i> ¹⁰⁰
Luke 24:1	τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων			Resurrection day; “first” of the <i>week</i> (cf. Luke 23:56)
John 20:1	τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων			Resurrection day, “first” of the <i>week</i> (cf. John 19:42)
John 20:19	τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων			Evening of the resurrection day, “first” of the <i>week</i>
Acts 20:7 ¹⁰¹	τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων			Identical phrase in Mark 16:2: “first” [day] of the <i>week</i>
1 Cor 16:2	κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου			“On the ‘first’ [day] of [every (?)] <i>week</i> ”

¹⁰⁰Decades ago Harper-Knapp (36) noted that “the Pharasaic tradition of fasting twice a week, on the second and fifth days, is well confirmed in the Talmud.” Chapter One of the *Megillath Ta’anith*, a 1st century AD Jewish treatise on fasting, mentions the matter of regularly undertaking a “fast on Mondays and Thursdays throughout the year.” See also, Walter Bauer, *σάββατον*, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., Frederick William Danker, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 739, where the following is stated: “The Jews fast δευτέρῃ σαββάτων καὶ πέμπτῃ *on the second and fifth days of the week* (Monday and Thursday);” (emphasis original). The Didache (cir. 96 AD) speaks of fasting δευτέρα σαββατων και πεμπτη, literally, “on second of sabbaths and fifth,” but translated “on the second and fifth days of the week.”

¹⁰¹Newman and Nida indicate that *mia tōn sabbatōn* should be rendered as “on Saturday evening;” (Barclay M. Newman, Jr., and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on The Acts of the Apostles* [London: United Bible Societies, 1972], 384). They admit (*ibid.*) that it “is literally ‘on the first day of the week.’” So also, R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 824.

Conclusions from This Linguistic Study

A review of the above nine passages reveals that Bible translators, well-versed in the Greek language, have appropriately interpreted the terms *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* as “week” in the English language.¹⁰² Such a rendering is required from the evidence of the immediate and wider contexts.

Based on the fact that *σάββατα* can rightly be rendered “week,”¹⁰³ it has been conjectured that the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16 could actually be referring to “week” or “week-days.”¹⁰⁴ However, this supposition is based upon a misunderstanding of the Greek language. As observed in the above table, each of the nine appearances for the words for “sabbath” is directly connected with specific numerical indicators that provide linguistic support for the translation “week.” Already, an analysis of the Hebrew Scriptures has shown that whenever the number “seven” is linked with *שָׁבַע*, that word *שָׁבַע* is aptly rendered as “week.” Similarly, the κοινή Greek links a numeral with the word “sabbath” so as to mean “week.” This is true not only of New Testament Greek, but can also be seen in the LXX (as outlined in Table 7 below), whenever a numeral is linked to a Greek word for “sabbath.”

<i>Reference in LXX [& Eng.]</i>	<i>Septuagint Superscription</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
Ps 23:1 [English = Ps 24]	τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων	“on the first <i>day</i> of the week”
Ps 47:1 [English = Ps 48]	δευτέρα σαββάτου	“on the second <i>day</i> of the week”
Ps 93:1 [English = Ps 94]	τετράδι σαββάτων	“for the fourth <i>day</i> of the week”

¹⁰²Modern dynamic translations, such as the NEB, have therefore rendered the “first day of the week” (here in Matt 28:1, as well as in Mark 16:2, 9, Luke 24:1, John 20:1, 19, and 1 Cor 16:2) as “Sunday.” Acts 20:7 is rendered by the NEB as “Saturday night,” apparently taking into account the fact that the biblical day begins at sunset. See also the CEV, and the NLT, that render “first day of the week” as “Sunday” in most cases.

¹⁰³See, for example, Henry George Liddell, and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 1579; Lohse, “*Sábbaton*,” 989; McCann, 248. See also, Barclay M. Newman, Jr. *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 160.

¹⁰⁴Bacchiocchi alleged that “the fact that the plural [*σάββατα*] has three meanings [*sic*] ... has led some to believe that in Colossians the term refers not exclusively to the seventh-day Sabbath but also to ‘week-days;’” (Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 360). Bacchiocchi provided a footnote, as alleged evidence. However, a careful reading of the footnote, as well as an analysis of the examples provided negates Bacchiocchi’s claim. See also, Norbert Hagedé, *Commentaire de l’Épître aux Colossiens* (Genève, Switzerland: Éditions Labor et Fides, 1968), 144, footnote #160. Furthermore, the additional reference to Lohse (Lohse, “*σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή*,” *TDNT* VII:20), similarly reveals no evidence that Lohse viewed Col 2:16 as referring to “week-days.” While Lohse did point out that (as in the above nine passages) *σάββατον* and/or *σάββατα* can be rightly rendered as “week” (though not as “week-days,” as Bacchiocchi inaccurately claims), Lohse held that the term *σάββατα* in Col 2 referred to the seventh-day Sabbath (see *ibid.*, 30).

¹⁰⁵A careful look at these three passages reveals the following: In each case the Greek word for *sabbath* is directly linked to a numeral (*μιᾶς, δευτέρα, or τετράδι*). Thus, just as in Table 6 above (dealing with the translation of the New Testament Greek terms for *sabbath*, as “week”), in these three cases the directly connected numerals require that the *sabbath* mentioned here be likewise rendered as “week.” Therefore, it is inaccurate to claim that simply because the Greek terms for *sabbath* can be rendered as “week” or “week-days,” means that Col 2:16 could be referring to the “week” or “week-days.” The κοινή Greek language of the New Testament is not open to such haphazard speculative interpretation. (The above LXX text is from <http://en.katabiblon.com/us/?text=LXX> [accessed 31 October 2017]. While other renditions may have differing forms of *σάββατον*, there is a general understanding that it means “week”).

Admittedly, a cursory comparison of the above table with the earlier one outlining the linguistic markers for the seventh-day Sabbath appears to show an overlapping use of the definite article *the*, which does appear in six of the nine references to the “week.” However, a more thorough analysis of the data shows that whenever the definite article (*the*) is not directly accompanied by a numeral, it indicates the seventh-day Sabbath. On the other hand, when the definite article is placed between a numeral and the Greek term for “sabbath,” then it clearly refers to the week, and not to the seventh-day Sabbath. Furthermore, as noted in the earlier table, there are five additional non-overlapping linguistic markers that specifically identify the seventh-day Sabbath.

Thus, as observed in the analysis of linguistic markers for שַׁבָּת in the Hebrew Scriptures, it seems evident that whenever the words *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* appear in the Greek Testament, there are sufficient syntactical, linguistic, and contextual indicators to assure a reliable translation of these words: 59 times it refers to the seventh-day *Sabbath*; and nine times it means *week*.¹⁰⁶

Tentative Summary of “Sabbath” in Greek

In brief, the total statistical analysis of the original terms for “sabbath” is as follows:¹⁰⁷ The Greek terms *σάββατον*¹⁰⁸ and *σάββατα* appear 69 times in the New Testament. Of these, 59 are universally recognized by all competent Greek scholars as unmistakably referring to the seventh-day *Sabbath* (i.e., at least 85.5 percent of the time these terms identify the weekly Sabbath – which is intriguingly, but not surprisingly, basically an identical percentage to the Hebrew term שַׁבָּת in the Old Testament). Of the remaining 10 occurrences of these Greek terms, nine are accurately rendered as *week*,¹⁰⁹ based on definitive linguistic indicators, as well as clear contextual factors.

This leaves just one other instance of “sabbath” to be identified – the one found in Colossians 2:16. The linguistic markers as well as the immediate and broader contexts need to be closely examined so as to discover what the nominative term *σάββατα* actually refers to in Colossians.

In the κοινή Greek, Colossians 2:16-17 reads: Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων· ἃ ἔστιν σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ. In standard English it reads: “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath, which are a shadow of things

¹⁰⁶Lampe notes that *σάββατον*, in Patristic Greek was used of the seventh-day Sabbath, as well as the entire week; (G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1961], 1220).

¹⁰⁷This does not include the unique appearance of the term *σαββατισμός* (seen in Heb 4:9), which is addressed in footnote #79 above.

¹⁰⁸This includes the *προσάββατον* of Mark 15:42.

¹⁰⁹Similarly Bauer (1979), 739.

to come, but the substance is of Christ.”¹¹⁰ As one examines this passage, it becomes plain that the word σαββάτων, as it appears in Colossians 2:16, obviously lacks any of the well-recognized linguistic markers or context to identify it as the seventh-day *Sabbath* or a *week*. Thus, based solely on the above analysis, it seems the σάββατα here may refer to something other than the seventh-day Sabbath or a week. The immediate and broader contexts need to be considered in order to determine whether or not the σάββατα of this passage refers to ceremonial sabbaths or perhaps something else.

Σάββατα and Ceremonial Sabbaths

It is widely agreed among Bible linguists that the single term שַׁבָּת generally applies to the seventh-day Sabbath. William Love, however, extended this concept by asserting that this word on its own is never used of any ceremonial sabbaths: “The single word שַׁבָּת ... is not even applied to the day of atonement without the qualifying or defining word יוֹם שַׁבָּתוֹן accompanying it.”¹¹¹ Carrying the point further, Dale Ratzlaff opined: “While some of the yearly ‘appointed feasts’ are *elsewhere* said to be ‘a sabbath of rest’ (Lev. 23), they are *not* called by the [simple] term ‘sabbaths,’ probably to avoid confusion with the weekly Sabbath. For this reason the term ‘festival’ in Colossians 2:16 *must* refer to the annual ‘sabbaths,’ leaving the word ‘Sabbath day’ for the weekly Sabbath.”¹¹² To evaluate such views, the Hebrew Scriptures, and the LXX must be considered carefully. If the above writers are correct, their conclusions will impact the meaning of σάββατα in Colossians 2.

שַׁבָּת/Σάββατα and the Day of Atonement

The section of the text in Leviticus 23:32 that deals with the term under discussion is diagramed here, with its Greek translation in the Septuagint:

Ref.	Hebrew (MT)	Greek (LXX)
Lev 23:32	<p>עַד־עֶרֶב מִעֶרֶב even/until from even שַׁבְּתֵיכֶם תִּשְׁבֹּתוּ your <i>sabbath</i> you must observe</p>	<p>ἀπὸ ἑσπέρας ἕως ἑσπέρας from evening until evening σαββατιεῖτε τὰ¹¹³ σάββατα ὑμῶν you shall sabbatize the <i>sabbath</i> of you</p>

¹¹⁰Verse 16 is from the RSV, and verse 17 from the NKJV.

¹¹¹Love, “The Sabbath,” Article II, 427. Love also alleged that in the “only two instances in the whole Bible where the word ‘Sabbath’ is certainly applied to a ceremonial feast-day,” it is “not unqualified;” (ibid., 428-429).

¹¹²Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis* (Applegate, CA: Life Assurance Ministries, 1990), 161 (emphasis original).

¹¹³Note the definite article τὰ, directly linked to a non-seventh-day sabbath. This usage in the LXX of the definite article with cultic sabbaths occurs often (see e.g., Table 8 below, in which Sabbatical Years are linked with τὰ in Lev 25:6, 34; 26:43; etc.). Since this thesis on Col 2:16 is premised on the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New, it seeks to shed light on the “sabbath” from a linguistic perspective. As already noted, the LXX is not always a reliable indicator of what is found in the Masoretic Text. For example, in Amos 6:3, the LXX has turned the “reign of terror,” into “false sabbaths,” apparently by understanding the שבת as שַׁבָּת (sabbāt), rather than the MT’s שַׁבָּת (šebet).

Incidentally, in an earlier section of this Chapter this very passage was dealt with, to show how the Hebrew שַׁבָּת שַׁבָּתוֹן in the first part of this verse is rendered as σάββατα σαββάτων in the LXX. As indicated in the above diagram, it is here, in Leviticus 23:32c, specifically dealing with the Day of Atonement, that the Hebrew term שַׁבָּת, on its own, is used. Moreover, the Septuagint rightly renders שַׁבָּת into the Greek language with the simple word σάββατα, the very term from which the “sabbath” in Colossians 2:16 is derived. Gien noted that, “the Septuagint uses the word *sabbaton*, [to translate] the Day of Atonement.”¹¹⁴ On the use of the simple word שַׁבָּת in this specific levitical passage, Baruch Levine concurred, indicating that “the provision ‘from evening to evening’” is used “in connection with the Day of Atonement.”¹¹⁵ Thus, contrary to the earlier assertions, we have here an example of the simple term “sabbath,” both in the original Hebrew as well as in the Greek Septuagint translation, being used to designate something other than the seventh-day Sabbath.

Sabbatical Years and the Simple Term “Sabbath”

The simple, free-standing Hebrew word שַׁבָּת (with its Greek equivalent σάββατα) is also used in several passages dealing with the Sabbatical Years, which were to be kept by ancient Israel every seventh year. Various scholars have recognized that these land sabbaths were part of the ritual religious requirements to be observed by the people of Israel.¹¹⁶ That the lexeme σάββατον was understood to refer also to “the sabbatical year” can also be seen from the fact that in Patristic Greek it was similarly so used.¹¹⁷ Table 8 shows the employment of the term “sabbath” for these special septennial sabbaths, as stated in both the Hebrew original and in the Greek rendition in the LXX.

Table 8 Sabbatical Years as שַׁבָּת and Σάββατα in the Old Testament		
Reference	Hebrew (MT)	Greek (LXX)
Lev 25:2	וּשְׁבַתְתָּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ the land and shall observe שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה for/to Yahweh <i>sabbath</i>	ἀναπαύσεται ἡ γῆ . . . ὑμῶν it shall rest the land ... of you σάββατα τῷ κυρίῳ <i>sabbath</i> to the Lord

¹¹⁴Gien, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16,” 26. See also, Francis Nigel Lee, *About Sunday: Is It the Sabbath?* (Tallahassee, FL: Np, 1978), 59, where there is a dialogue between two characters. Commenting on Lev 23:32, one states: “The Bible also says quite clearly, ‘From even(ing) unto even(ing) shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.’ How do you explain that?” To which the other character then responds: “That text does not refer to the weekly Sabbath, but only to the day of atonement, a *ceremonial* Sabbath.”

¹¹⁵Baruch Levine, 161.

¹¹⁶See, for example, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Ronald F. Youngblood et al, eds. (Nashville: Nelson, 1995), s.v. “Feasts and Festivals;” Payne, 252-253; Unger, “Festivals,” 406-423; Hobart E. Freeman, “Festivals,” *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rea, eds. (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 599-605.

¹¹⁷Lampe, 1220.

Reference	Hebrew (MT)	Greek (LXX)
Lev 25:4b	יהיה לארץ for/to the land he shall be שבת ליהוה for/to Yahweh <i>sabbath</i>	ἔσται τῆ γῆ it shall be to the land σάββατα τῷ κυρίῳ <i>sabbath</i> to the Lord
Lev 25:6	והיתה שבת <i>sabbath</i> of and she shall be הארץ לכם for/to you the land	ἔσται τὰ σάββατα it shall be the <i>sabbath</i> τῆς γῆς of the land
Lev 26:34	אז תרצה הארץ the land shall enjoy then את שבתותיה her <i>sabbaths</i> --	τότε εὐδοκήσει ἡ γῆ then shall enjoy the land τὰ σάββατα αὐτῆς the <i>sabbath</i> of her
Lev 26:34	אז תשבת הארץ the land shall rest then את שבתותיה her <i>sabbaths</i> -- and shall enjoy	ἡ γῆ . . . εὐδοκήσει the land ... shall enjoy τὰ σάββατα αὐτῆς the <i>sabbath</i> of her
Lev 26:35	בשבתותיכם in your <i>sabbaths</i> עליהם upon it when you dwelt	τοῖς σαββάτοις ὑμῶν the <i>sabbaths</i> of you ἡνίκα κατοκεῖτε αὐτήν when you were dwelling in it
Lev 26:43	והארץ . . . ותרץ and enjoy... and the land את שבתותיה her <i>sabbaths</i> --	προσδέξεται ἡ γῆ shall enjoy the land τὰ σάββατα αὐτῆς the <i>sabbath</i> of her
2 Chr 36:21	עד רצתה הארץ the land had enjoyed / until את שבתותיה her <i>sabbaths</i> --	ἕως . . . προσδέξασθαι τὴν γῆν until... should enjoy the land τὰ σάββατα αὐτῆς the <i>sabbath</i> of her

שַׁבָּתוֹן and the Day of Trumpets

Since the Day of Trumpets is an annual מועד which is *never* classified as a חג (i.e., a “pilgrim festival”), it needs further attention here. Leviticus 23:24 identifies this day as a שַׁבָּתוֹן. The respected lexicon of William Gesenius defines the term שַׁבָּתוֹן as “sabbath observance, sabbatism.”¹¹⁸ William Holladay stated it means “sabbath feast.”¹¹⁹ The updated *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* notes that שַׁבָּתוֹן “can be distinguished from the basic lexeme as signifying one individual and particular שַׁבָּת, such as one observed in a particularly strict way, or one preserved as a special celebration.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸BDB (1951), 992.

¹¹⁹William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 360.

¹²⁰Koehler, and Baumgartner, IV:1411.

According to the 1998 edition of the *Concordance to the Septuagint*, the Hebrew שַׁבָּתוֹן is rendered in the Greek as either ἀνάπαυσις or as σαββάτων.¹²¹ John Wevers, in his research on the Greek text of Leviticus concurred: “From all this it is clear that שַׁבָּתוֹן is either transliterated [as σαββάτων] or translated by ἀνάπαυσις” [i.e., “rest”].¹²² Somewhat similarly, Haag has noted that “another explanation sees ... in the sg. [Greek] *sábbaton* the transliteration of Heb. *šabbātôn*.”¹²³ Thus, apparently in accord with the above lexicographically possible options, at some point in time, the Day of Trumpets, which is the only independent one-day-long “set time” specifically labeled a שַׁבָּתוֹן in the Hebrew Scriptures,¹²⁴ was rendered into Greek as either σάββατον or σαββάτων (the latter form which is seen in Colossians 2:16):

Reference	Hebrew (MT)	Greek (Minuscules) ¹²⁵
Lev 23:24	<p>יהיה לכם שַׁבָּתוֹן of sabbatism to you shall be זכרון תרועה trumpet blast reminder</p>	<p>In these ancient sources σάββατον is used twice; while σαββάτων appears once. Thus, the Day of Trumpets was translated as “sabbath,” in some early Greek manuscripts.</p>

Conclusion on the Meaning of Σάββατα

In brief, the evidence outlined above shows that, on its own, the simple Greek term σάββατα in the Septuagint (based on the Hebrew שַׁבָּת), was used for the Day of Atonement, i.e., a ceremonial sabbath. Furthermore, the simple term σάββατα in the LXX (from the Hebrew שַׁבָּת), is similarly used by itself for the Sabbatical Years, i.e., a ritual observance of ancient Israel. (Parenthetically, it should

¹²¹Edwin Hatch, and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint, And the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 354, cf. 1256. While the example given is Leviticus 23:32, where שַׁבָּתוֹן is rendered in the LXX with σάββατα σαββάτων, it is clear that in this case the LXX simply transliterated the Hebrew שַׁבָּתוֹן into the Greek σαββάτων.

¹²²Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, 258. Wevers similarly noted (366) that, in Lev 23:32, שַׁבָּתוֹן “is transliterated as σαββάτων.” As addressed in Chapter Four, it should be pointed out that, while both the weekly שַׁבָּת and the Day of Atonement were occasions on which the Israelite was to “do no work” (vs. 3, and vs. 28 respectively), the rest of the annual מועדים required the Israelite to refrain from only “laborious” or “customary” or “regular” or “servile” work (vss. 7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36).

¹²³Haag, “שַׁבָּת,” *TDOT* XIV:396.

¹²⁴In addition to the Day of Trumpets, the term שַׁבָּתוֹן on its own is used of/for Sabbatical Years (Lev 25:5), and for the first and eighth days related to the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:39). Since these Feast of Tabernacles days are labeled שַׁבָּתוֹן, some may feel it appropriate to include them in this category of ritual sabbaths (especially since the “eighth day” may otherwise be inadvertently left out of the discussion on the possible (fullest appropriate) meaning of σάββατα in Col 2:16. For example, Brooke and McLean noted that in three minuscules the first day of Tabernacles was actually called “σαββάτων;” (Alan England Brooke, and Norman McLean, eds., *The Old Testament in Greek*, vol. 1, *The Octateuch*, part II, *Exodus and Leviticus* [London: Cambridge University Press, 1909], 387 [footnote #12]). In essential accord, in his article on “שַׁבָּת,” in the *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Stolz (1300) stated: “New Year’s Day [i.e., Day of Trumpets] and the 1st and 8th days of the Feast of Booths (1st, 15th, and 22nd days of the 7th month;...) are also *šabbātôn*.” However, see Chapter Five, footnote #212 below, where it is noted that the שַׁבָּתוֹן which are part of the pilgrim festivals, do not need to be reckoned separately since they were an integral part of the festivals celebrated at the temple.

¹²⁵See U. Quast, *Leviticus*, in *Septuaginta*, John William Wevers, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); Brooke, and McLean, 387; Fridericus Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum*, vol. I, *Prolegomena: Genesis-Esther* (Hildersheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964).

be noted that the Day of Trumpets, the only independent one-day-long occasion labeled a יְהוֹמַתּוֹ, i.e., a “sabbatism,”¹²⁶ was rendered in some early Greek manuscripts as σάββατον or σαββάτων).

Summary and Conclusion on Linguistic Markers

This chapter investigated various notions promulgated regarding the use of the Hebrew word יְהוֹמַתּוֹ, the translation of the two-pronged phrase יְהוֹמַתּוֹ יְהוֹמַתּוֹ into the Septuagint, as well as claims made about the κοινή Greek terms σάββατον and σάββατα. By way of recapitulation, the following should be noted: The term יְהוֹמַתּוֹ in the Hebrew Scriptures, when apparently intended to identify the weekly Sabbath, has been quite consistently connected with some type of qualifying linguistic indicator(s). Likewise, whenever that same word יְהוֹמַתּוֹ was utilized for other occasions, it appears connected to different distinctive linguistic markers, so that the reader and/or listener is able to recognize that non-seventh-day occasions are being referred. In other words, the linguistic markers, as confirmed by the immediate and broader contexts, seem crucial in interpreting the meaning of this significant noun. Thus, the above analysis invalidates the assertion regarding the so-called use of “the word *Sabbath* without qualification.” Furthermore, contrary to claims, the LXX does not consistently translate the Hebrew יְהוֹמַתּוֹ יְהוֹמַתּוֹ with the compound Greek expression σάββατα σαββάτων.

Since the writers of the New Testament were essentially “ethnic Hebrews,”¹²⁷ the κοινή Greek evinces an almost predictable analogous use of the two sabbath-related terms. Just as the יְהוֹמַתּוֹ in the Hebrew Scriptures is employed about 85.5 percent of the time to identify the weekly Sabbath, in the same way the words σάββατον and σάββατα are used about 85.5 percent of the time to indicate the seventh-day Sabbath, based on linguistic links, and the context.¹²⁸ Of the remaining 10 occurrences of these two Greek terms, nine are aptly rendered as *week*, based on definitive linguistic indicators, as well as clear contextual factors. This leaves only one other instance of “sabbath” to be identified – the σάββατα in Colossians 2:16. Certain hints regarding the possible interpretation of σάββατα may be found in the Septuagint. As seen in this Chapter above, the simple term σάββατα in the LXX (based on the free-standing Hebrew יְהוֹמַתּוֹ), was used for the Day of Atonement, i.e., a ceremonial sabbath. Also, in the LXX, σάββατα is similarly used by itself for the Sabbatical Years, i.e., a ritual

¹²⁶BDB (1951), 992.

¹²⁷Jo Ann Davidson, *Toward a Theology of Beauty: A Biblical Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 39.

¹²⁸Intriguingly, based on the analysis done in this chapter, a curious inverted mathematical equivalence comes to light when one compares both the OT and NT usage of the terms for “sabbath” with its one-in-seven day occurrence of the weekly Sabbath, which amounts to 14.28 percent (i.e., 1/7). In the Hebrew language יְהוֹמַתּוֹ is employed 16 times out of its 111 appearances to refer to something *other than* the seventh-day Sabbath, which amounts to 14.41 percent. Similarly, in the Greek language σάββατον and σάββατα are utilized 10 out of its 69 appearances to refer something *other than* the seventh-day Sabbath, which amounts to slightly over 14.49 percent. So, in both biblical languages the words for “sabbath” are employed *six out of seven times* throughout biblical literature to refer to the *one day out of seven* that is identified as the weekly Sabbath.

observance of ancient Israel. (Incidentally, the Day of Trumpets, the only independent one-day-long occasion labeled a $\text{יְהוֹמַת\ טְרַבְּטִים}$, was rendered in some early Greek manuscripts as σάββατον or σαββάτων).

Since σάββατα is the nominative form of the word that appears in Colossians 2:16, it may therefore be lexically appropriate to understand Paul’s use of this term as similarly referring to annual ritual sabbaths (such as the Day of Atonement). This appears corroborated by Moulton’s *Analytical Greek Lexicon* which indicates that one of the definitions of σάββατα is a more general “*times of sacred rest*, Col. 2.16.”¹²⁹ Based on evidence, Thayer’s *Lexicon*¹³⁰ confirms that the σάββατα here refers to ritual sabbaths.¹³⁰ The above data, therefore, together with the immediate and broader contexts (as best understood within the available historical background, and the theme of this epistle), need to be considered so as to determine the most reliable interpretation of the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16.

Excursus: Σάββατον and Σάββατα in English Bibles

An examination of the way in which Bible translators – representing various denominations – have rendered all the Greek words for “sabbath” in the New Testament, shows that they took into account all necessary aspects of the language and syntax. Table 9 provides plausible evidence that these linguists were aware that σάββατον and σάββατα needed to be translated in three distinctly different ways, including identifying “weeks,” the weekly Sabbath, as well as non-weekly sabbaths.

<i>A. Passages Where Σάββατον and Σάββατα Are Translated as “Week”</i>					
Ref.	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
Matt 28:1	μίαν σαββάτων	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week
Mark 16:2	$\text{τῆ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων}$	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week
Mark 16:9	πρώτη σαββάτου	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week
Luke 18:12	δὶς τοῦ σαββάτου	twice a week	twice a week	twice a week	twice a week
Luke 24:1	$\text{τῆ δὲ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων}$	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week
John 20:1	$\text{τῆ δὲ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων}$	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week
John 20:19	τῆ μιᾶ σαββάτων	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week

¹²⁹Harold K. Moulton, ed., *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 361.

¹³⁰Thayer, 565.

Ref.	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
Acts 20:7	τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week
1 Cor 16:2	κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου	first <i>day</i> of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week	first day of the week

B. Texts Where Σάββατον and Σάββατα Are Rendered as Seventh-day “Sabbath” (with a capital “S”)

Matt	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
12:1	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
12:2	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
12:5	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath days	Sabbath	Sabbath
12:5	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
12:8	σαββάτου	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
12:10	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
12:11	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
12:12	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
24:20	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day	Sabbath
28:1	σαββάτων	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath

Mark	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
1:21	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
2:23	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
2:24	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
2:27	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
2:27	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
2:28	σαββάτου	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
3:2	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
3:4	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
6:2	σαββάτου	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
15:42	προσάββατον	before the Sabbath	before the Sabbath	before the Sabbath	before the Sabbath
16:1	σαββάτου	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath

Luke	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
4:16	ἡμέρα ... σαββάτων	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath	Sabbath day
4:31	σάββασιν	Sabbaths	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbaths
6:1	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
6:2	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
6:5	σαββάτου	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath

Luke	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
6:6	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
6:7	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
6:9	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
13:10	σάββασιν	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
13:14	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
13:14	ἡμέρα ... σαββάτου	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath day
13:15	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
13:16	ἡμέρα ... σαββάτου	Sabbath	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath
14:1	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
14:3	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
14:5	ἡμέρα ... σαββάτου	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath day
23:54	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
23:56	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath

John	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
5:9	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
5:10	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day
5:16	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day
5:18	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
7:22	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day
7:23	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day
7:23	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day
9:14	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day	Sabbath day
9:16	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day
19:31	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day
19:31	σαββάτου	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath day

Acts	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
1:12	σαββάτου	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath day
13:14	ἡμέρα ... σαββάτων	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath	Sabbath day
13:27	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
13:42	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
13:44	σαββάτω	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
15:21	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath day	Sabbath	Sabbath
16:13	ἡμέρα ... σαββάτων	Sabbath day	Sabbath day	Sabbath	Sabbath
17:2	σάββατα	Sabbaths	Sabbath days	Sabbaths	Sabbaths
18:4	σάββατον	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath

<i>C. Passage Where Σάββατα Is Translated as a Non-Weekly “sabbath” (with a lower-case letter “s”)</i>					
Col	Greek Text	NKJV (1982)	HCSB (2004)	CEB (2011)	MEV (2014)
2:16	σαββάτων	sabbaths	sabbath days ¹³¹	sabbaths	sabbath days

None of the above English Bibles, published between 1982 and 2014, is consistent in the translation of the Greek word ἡμέρα. This includes occasions when the versions mistakenly add the word “day/s” without any Greek manuscript support, as seen for example in the HCSB and MEV renderings for Colossians 2:16. Nevertheless, all four of these English translations demonstrate a remarkable regularity with which they render σάββατον and σάββατα in the New Testament.¹³²

In brief, the specific manner in which these translations have uniformly rendered all the crucial Greek terms into English, together with the apparent intentional capitalization of these words, synchronizes well with the results of the analysis of linguistic indicators done in this Chapter. At minimum, the consistent translational evidence of these English versions may proffer plausible support for the notion that the lexeme σάββατα in Colossians 2:16 refers to ceremonial sabbaths, and not to the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. Whether or not this tentative hypothesis is appropriate will hopefully become clearer in the upcoming chapters of this thesis.

¹³¹The footnote in the HCSB indicates that the term σαββάτων here could also be rendered as “sabbaths.”

¹³²There are other English Bible versions in which the translators rendered these Greek terms for “sabbath” in a somewhat similarly consistent manner, in the New Testament. The 1972 NEB has a “sabbath **rest**” for Heb 4:9; it interprets the “first *day* of the **week**” into modern language (i.e., most often, as “Sunday”); it uses a capital “S” for all the passages dealing with the seventh-day Sabbath; and then it appropriately renders Col 2:16 as “sabbath” with a lower-case letter “s,” implying a ritual sabbath in contrast to the rest of the terms found in the New Testament. The 1994 KJ21, while it adds in the word “day” or “days” in more than 30 additional places, renders σάββατον and σάββατα in virtually the same manner as seen in the NKJV, the only major difference being that it renders the σάββατα of Col 2:16 as “sabbath days” (which accords more with the KJV translation). While it completely omits Mark 16:9 for text-critical reasons, and does not mention the “Sabbath” in Acts 15:21, the 1977 CCNT is similarly consistent in its translation: It renders Heb 4:9 as “a Sabbath **rest**,” uses “first day of the **week**” for appropriate texts, places a capital “S” for the seventh-day Sabbath passages, and renders Col 2:16 as “sabbaths” with a small “s,” likewise implying ceremonial sabbaths, and not the seventh-day Sabbath. Incidentally, when it comes to the term σαββατισμὸς in Heb 4:9, the above mentioned four versions translate as follows: The NKJV has “rest;” the HCSB has “Sabbath rest;” the CEB has “sabbath rest;” and the MEV has “rest.”

Table 9 (as well as the information in this footnote) deal specifically with *only* the translational evidence as seen in the New Testament part of the aforementioned English versions. While the seven Bibles that were examined reveal a remarkable regularity in their renderings of σάββατον and σάββατα in the New Testament, such is not the case with the translation of the Hebrew שַׁבָּת in the Old Testament. The MEV is the only known version which seems to attempt to make an intentional distinction between the weekly Sabbath, and the non-seventh-day uses of the substantive שַׁבָּת. Analysis of this 2014 version reveals that, when it comes to the weekly Sabbath, they have succeeded, with complete consistency, in rendering שַׁבָּת as the word Sabbath with a capital “S,” in accord with the evidence adduced above in this thesis. In line with the linguistic markers (as well as clear contextual factors), these linguists have then aptly rendered most of the non-seventh-day appearances of שַׁבָּת in the book of Leviticus with a lower-case “s,” as “sabbath,” thus indicating and implying that these are to be recognized as ceremonial occasions. Also, they have recognized that in Lev the term שַׁבָּת is used to identify “weeks.” Somehow though, while they have rightly labeled the Sabbatical Year with a lower-case “s” in Lev 25:2, 4 [2x], 6; and 25:34 [2x], 43, in 2 Chron 36:21 they have capitalized it as “Sabbath.” Similarly, in connection with Hos 2:11, they have rendered שַׁבָּת here with a capital, as though it were the weekly Sabbath. These are the only two times in the MEV where the manner in which they have rendered the שַׁבָּת appears to contradict the conclusions arrived at in the analysis thus far in this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SABBATH AND THE APPOINTED SEASONS

The Intersection of Two Key Hebrew Terms

Based on his conclusion that Leviticus 23:3 includes the weekly שַׁבָּת as part of the yearly מוֹעֲדֵי, Old Testament commentator Derek Tidball opined that passages such as Colossians 2:16 “suggest that observing the day is no longer legally binding.”¹ This linking of these two passages goes back at least as far as the Reformer John Calvin,² who used the Colossian passage as “a key interpretive text” to prove that “the law of the Sabbath disappears with Christ.”³ As dispensationalist Joel Williamson pointedly challenged Sabbatarians: “Though many Christians consider the Sabbath a moral obligation, Scripture often regards it as a ceremonial ritual along with the other celebrations of Israel: ‘Let no one judge you ... regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths’ (Col 2:16).”⁴

While not necessarily directly associating Leviticus and Colossians, others have likewise concluded that in Leviticus 23 “the first mentioned festival is the Sabbath.”⁵ For example, in discussing the word מוֹעֵד in his commentary, Eugen Pentiuic claimed that this “is a generic term for all Israel’s festivals (‘sabbath’ – Lev 23:2 [& 3]; ‘new-moon’ – Ps 104:19; ‘Passover’ – Lev 23:4f.;

¹Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus: Free to Be Holy*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 272.

²See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses, Abridged in the Form of a Harmony*, vol. 2nd, Charles William Bingham, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 434-435, where he opined that the weekly Sabbath “was a ceremonial precept,” and that “Paul clearly teaches, calling it a shadow of these things, the body of which is only Christ. (Col. ii. 17).”

³Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 241. Radner (ibid.) added: “Thus, the Sabbath falls into the same bin of used ceremonials.” Other modern commentators have likewise directly linked Leviticus 23 and Colossians 2; see, for example, John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2003), 507; Mark J. Lenz, *Leviticus*, People’s Bible Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2005), 197-198.

⁴Joel T. Williamson, Jr., “The Sabbath and Dispensationalism,” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 11/32 (March 2007): 93. Williamson specifically noted (ibid., footnote #48) that “in Leviticus 23, the Sabbath is listed as one of the ‘feasts of the LORD’.”

⁵Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 282. See also, Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 301; Richard N. Boyce, *Leviticus and Numbers*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 87; Charles H. Mackintosh, *Notes on the Book of Leviticus* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1861), 325; “Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters,” Presented to the Fortieth (1973) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (<https://www.opc.org/GA/sabbath.html>; accessed 22 August 2017); Elce-Junior Lauriston, *All Foods Are Clean and Every Day Is the Sabbath: A Response to Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi and Seventh-day Adventism on Romans 14* (Camp Verde, AZ: LAM Publications, 2017), 37. Some have inverted this notion that the weekly שַׁבָּת is included in the word מוֹעֵד, and have alleged that “all the festivals are properly called Sabbaths;” (R. Laird Harris, *Leviticus*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 2: *Genesis-Numbers* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 622); see also, Dale Ratzlaff, “Are Adventists Moving to Feast-Keeping?” *Proclamation* 9/5 (September/October 2008); <http://www.lifeassuranceministries.org/proclamation/2008/5/ratzlaff.html> (accessed 11 August 2017).

‘Succoth’ – Deut 1:10).⁶ More recently, in 2011, G. K. Beale similarly alleged that “the word [מִועֵד] in Lev. 23:2 includes reference to the Sabbath in Lev. 23:3.”⁷ In a parallel manner, Jason Meyer has stated: “Here the Hebrew term for ‘appointed times’ (*mô‘ēd*) serves as an inclusive term for the wider Jewish system, which includes the seventh-day Sabbath (Lev 23:3).”⁸ Meyer then went on to propose that “the inclusive nature of ‘all her appointed times’ (*mô‘ēd*) in Hos 2:11 could show that God will put an end to the wider Jewish system of Lev 23, which includes the seventh-day Sabbath.”⁹

Curiously, this notion that the seventh-day שַׁבָּת is an integral part of the annual מִועֵדִים was promulgated decades ago by Gerhard Hasel, a Seventh-day Adventist [SDA] academic. In discussing the weekly Sabbath in the Pentateuch, Hasel made the definitive claim that “the Sabbath is listed as belonging to the sacred festivals. ‘The appointed feasts of the LORD’ (Lev. 23:2).”¹⁰ In a similar vein, the 2010 *Andrews Study Bible*, produced by SDA scholars, includes the following footnote as an explanation of Leviticus 23:2: “*feasts*. Or, ‘appointed times,’ including the weekly Sabbath (v. 3).”¹¹ Intriguingly, the above-mentioned view of Hasel, who was aptly recognized as “one of our most

⁶Eugen J. Pentiuć, *Long-Suffering Love: A Commentary on Hosea with Patristic Annotations* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2002), 39.

⁷G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 780 (footnote #17). Young alleged that “the designation [מִועֵד] is restricted in the Scriptures to the sabbath, passover, pentecost, day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles;” (Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Volume I – Chapters 1 to 18*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 67). Haag viewed “the Sabbath as one of Israel’s ‘appointed festivals’ (*mô‘ādim*);” (E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת *šabbāt*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., Douglas W. Stott, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], XIV:394); hereafter *TDOT*. For analogous claims see: Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete, and The Ascendancy of First-Day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 141; Robert I. Vasholz, *Leviticus, A Mentor Commentary* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 284; Verle Streifling, *Bible Answers to Sabbath Questions*, 5th ed. eBook (Glendale, AZ: LAM Publications, 2003), ch. 7; A. A. MacIntosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 62; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Book of Leviticus*, The New Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1156; Francis Nigel Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath* (London: The Lord’s Day Observance Society, 1969), 225-226; R. North, “Sabbath,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), XII:779; Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. I., James Martin, trans.; Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, 4th Series, vol. XIV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 93. Curiously, some Sabbatarians (who now claim to observe the levitical festivals) similarly insist that the שַׁבָּת be recognized as a מִועֵד; and believe that since they keep the Sabbath, the מִועֵדִים (i.e., “appointed times/seasons”) should also be kept. See, for example, Norbert Link, *God’s Commanded Holy Days* (eBook: http://www.eternalgod.org/lit/book/lets/holydays_view.pdf; accessed 23 August 2017).

⁸Jason C. Meyer, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Themelios* 35, no. 1 (2010): 76.

⁹Ibid. In his Doctor of Ministry project of May 2017, Hall also concluded that these levitical “festivals are tightly linked to the Sabbath concept;” (Gregory D. Hall, “Beyond the Sabbath’s Shadow: A Biblical Understanding and Application of Godly Rest” [DMin project, Knox Theological Seminary, 2017], 70).

¹⁰Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 33. Hasel (ibid.) insisted that “The Sabbath ... belongs to God’s ‘appointed feasts’ (verse 2).”

¹¹*Andrews Study Bible: Light. Depth. Truth. [ASB]* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 155. Admittedly (156, in a comment about vs. 4), this same study Bible includes the following footnote: “*These are the feasts of the LORD*. Repeating the introduction (v. 2) to set Sabbath rest (v. 3) apart from the yearly festivals that follow.” This issue, of setting the weekly Sabbath “apart from the yearly festivals” will be addressed below. Complicating matters, the *ASB* (in its explanation of Col 2:16-17, on p. 1563) maintains that “Paul’s warning may mean that Christians should not be drawn into keeping ceremonial events – festivals, new moons, and ceremonial sabbaths – described in the OT (see esp. Lev. 23).” If the *ASB* is correct in its claim that “feasts” in Lev 23:2 means “‘appointed times,’ including the weekly Sabbath,” then “Paul’s warning” to Christians could logically also include the weekly Sabbath!

prominent apologists,¹² has recently been referenced by Clinton Baldwin, an SDA New Testament academic, as part of the theological basis for his personal rejection of the validity of observing the weekly Sabbath.¹³ Baldwin has likewise opined that “in Lev 23, all the Sabbaths are referred to as the Lord’s appointed times or feasts;”¹⁴ hence, he has concluded that the weekly Sabbath has been fulfilled and abrogated by Jesus Christ, and is thus “non-obligatory for the person in Christ.”¹⁵

Apparently more cautious, Calum Carmichael acknowledged that “what is really puzzling is to find the institution of the Sabbath included among Yahweh’s appointed festivals at all.”¹⁶ Thus, the question naturally arises: Is it exegetically accurate to state that “the *weekly* Sabbath and all of God’s *annual* Holy Days stand and fall together”¹⁷? In other words, is the seventh-day שַׁבָּת actually identified as a מועֵד in Leviticus, and thus included as part and parcel of the ritual regulations of ancient Israel; or does the text of Scripture provide sufficient clear and definitive evidence to lucidly differentiate between the weekly Sabbath and the yearly appointed seasons?

Juxtaposition of Various Kinds of Laws in Scripture

First, there is virtually no dispute that the weekly Sabbath (which is part of the Decalogue) is identified as such in Leviticus 23:3, and is placed in the same chapter with the rest of the festal calendar. Is the שַׁבָּת then to be viewed as an integral part of the מועֵדִים?

¹²See Clinton Baldwin, *The Person of Jesus: God’s Obligatory Sabbath* (Silver Spring, MD: Dikaioma Publishers, 2017), 120.

¹³Baldwin (*The Person of Jesus*, 121) maintained that “there is an inseparable link between all the Sabbaths of the Old Testament. Therefore, what will apply to one in terms of fulfillment in Jesus, will apply to all.”

¹⁴Ibid., 119. Baldwin, though not at that point in time using this notion to abandon the weekly Sabbath, had years earlier alleged that “the Seventh day Sabbath along with the other yearly Sabbaths were all called ‘the Sabbath of rest to the Lord,’ ‘the appointed times/feasts of the Lord;’” (Clinton Baldwin, *The Sabbath: More Than a Day, A Person: Exploring the Deeper Meanings of the Sabbath* [Spanish Town, Jamaica: Lithomedia Printers Limited, 2012], 10).

¹⁵Baldwin, *The Person of Jesus*, 241. See also, 121, 221-232.

¹⁶Calum Carmichael, *Illuminating Leviticus: A Study of Its Laws and Institutions in the Light of Biblical Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 106. Somewhat similarly, McKay has asked: “Why should the Sabbath intrude itself in a list of feast days?” (Heather A. McKay, “New Moon or Sabbath?” in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington, and William H. Shea, eds. [New York: Crossroad, 1991]. 19). Perhaps this “puzzling” issue has precipitated somewhat internally contradictory conclusions by some scholars. For example, regarding Lev 23:3, Wevers maintained that “the first of the appointed occasions is the Sabbath day;” (John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, Number 44 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 365); yet (ibid., 366), he stated that “v. 4 is a general introduction which differentiates the annual feasts from the weekly Sabbath.” Similarly, commenting on the “feasts of Jehovah” in Lev 23, Keil and Delitzsch concluded that this expression is “used with reference to the Sabbath.” Yet, they maintained that the weekly “Sabbath was distinguished from the yearly feasts;” (Carl Friedrich Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. I: *The Pentateuch*, James Martin, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], 438).

¹⁷Link (emphases added). Based on his view of Lev 23, he further opined (ibid.) that “it is inconsistent to keep the weekly Sabbath and then neglect or refuse to keep the annual Sabbaths.” Former Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Dale Ratzlaff, has likewise alleged that “the required observance of the feasts and the required observance of the seventh-day Sabbath stand or fall together. Leviticus 23 clearly lists all of them as ‘The Lord’s appointed times;’” (Ratzlaff, “Are Adventists Moving to Feast-Keeping?”).

A comparison with another chapter in Leviticus can serve to elucidate whether or not the juxtaposition of various kinds of laws in Scripture necessarily implies their uniform status, as some have suggested. Leviticus 19 contains a long enumeration of many regulations. There is no question that several verses are essentially a repetition of obligations of the Decalogue, a fact recognized by various Bible commentators.¹⁸ For instance, Leviticus 19:11 states: “You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, not lie to one another,” echoing the eighth and ninth commandments (as in Exod 20:15, 16).

However, even a quick reading of Leviticus 19 shows, for example, that “after the categorical commandments about keeping the Sabbath and not making images (vv 3a-4), he [i.e., the writer] gives specific instructions about handling food from an offering” (i.e., vss. 5-8).¹⁹ In this chapter are found regulations which can be aptly classified as moral (vs. 3), ceremonial (vss. 5-8), civil (vs. 20), agricultural (vss. 23-25), health-related (vs. 26), and cultural (vs. 32). As commentator Roy Gane appropriately pointed out, “Leviticus 19 is a remarkably diverse miscellany of apodictic and casuistic laws that exemplify a wide range of ritual and moral/social legislation and reiterate principles of most of the Ten Commandments.”²⁰

In other words, in Leviticus 19 “numerous specific [non-moral] laws are mixed in with the categorical laws” of the Decalogue.²¹ Included here are “laws dealing with both the ethical and the cultic dimension of life.”²² In summary, this “collection of some thirty laws covers what we would call both ritual and moral matters,”²³ “a variety of topics,”²⁴ which deal “with the religious and social duties of the ordinary Israelite towards God and his fellow-countrymen.”²⁵

In a somewhat similar manner, a more meticulous analysis of Leviticus 23 seems to show that this chapter includes both an apodictic law (of the weekly Sabbath, in vss. 3, 38), and the ritual regulations of the festal calendar (vss. 4-37, 39-44). Therefore, it appears that the juxtaposition of various laws in Leviticus 23 does not necessarily indicate that all of the institutions enumerated must be seen as of equal value. Rather, whether such regulations are an integral part of categorical law, or whether they should be regarded as part of the cultic legislation given to the literal nation of

¹⁸See, for example, John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1992), 310; Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 335; Clyde M. Woods, and Justin M. Rogers, *Leviticus-Numbers*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2006), 118; Rooker, 252-262.

¹⁹Hartley, *Leviticus*, 310.

²⁰Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 335.

²¹Hartley, *Leviticus*, 310. See also, Woods, and Rogers, *Leviticus-Numbers*, 118.

²²Hartley, *Leviticus*, 310.

²³James L. Mays, *The Book of Leviticus, The Book of Numbers*, The Layman's Bible Commentary (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 59.

²⁴Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 263.

²⁵J. R. Porter, *Leviticus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), 152.

ancient Israel must be determined by other internal indicators, as well as the broader context of the full revelation of Scripture.

Significance of הַשָּׂאָה, the “Offering Made by Fire”

One of the internal indicators as to whether or not the weekly שַׁבָּת is identical to the annual מִנְחָה has to do with the Hebrew term הַשָּׂאָה, that is, “an offering made by fire” (or, a “fire-offering”). Regarding the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread,²⁶ Leviticus 23:8 states that “you shall offer an offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD for seven days.” Next, in connection with the presentation of the First Fruits, an Israelite had to bring “an offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD, for a sweet aroma” (Lev 23:13). The Feast of Pentecost included “an offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] for a sweet aroma to the LORD” (Lev 23:18). On the Day of Trumpets the Israelites were to “offer an offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD” (Lev 23:25). Similarly, on the Day of Atonement, there was to be “an offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD” (Lev 23:27). Finally, in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, they were to “offer an offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD” (Lev 23:36).

“Fire-Offerings” for Daily, Monthly, and Yearly Occasions

In an intriguing manner, the book of Numbers corroborates the direct connection between the הַשָּׂאָה and various annual appointed seasons, including the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread (Num 28:19, 24), the Day of Trumpets (Num 29:6), the Feast of Tabernacles (Num 29:13), as well as the “eighth day” related to this final pilgrim festival (Num 29:36).²⁷ More significant, however, is the additional information provided in the book of Numbers regarding the הַשָּׂאָה. Numbers 28:6 indicates that this specific kind of “offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD” was also to be performed as part of the regular daily offerings. Similarly, Numbers 28:13 states that “an offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD” was to be done on the first day of each month as part of the new moon celebrations. Although various sacrifices are listed as needing to be performed solely on the weekly Sabbath, the “offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה] to the LORD,” was *never* included as an integral part of the explicitly identified sacrifices performed for this unique holy day.

In other words, it is obvious that these instructions in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29, while mentioning the seventh-day Sabbath, specifically omit the matter of any fire-offering (הַשָּׂאָה). Perhaps

²⁶Over time the original Passover “became so closely linked with the next listed Feast of Unleavened Bread,” that later passages of Scripture used “names and lengths of the celebrations interchangeably;” (David W. Baker, *Leviticus*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary [Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008], 169. See, for example, Ezek 45:21; Matt 26:17; Mark 14:1. In fact, one New Testament writer states: “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover” (Luke 22:1).

²⁷This type of “offering made by fire [הַשָּׂאָה]” was also to be performed with or for various other sacrificial regulations (see, for example, Lev 1:9; 2:2; 3:3; 4:35; 5:12; 6:10; 7:5; 8:21; 10:12; Num 15:10, 13, 14; etc.). However, none of these was specifically identified as being directly linked to any offerings required for the weekly שַׁבָּת.

more significant is the fact that throughout the entire Bible, the weekly שַׁבָּת is never directly joined with any אֲשֶׁה. While it is true that the *daily* offering had such fire-offerings (Num 28:3-8), the official Sabbath offerings (as in Num 28:9) did not include any such אֲשֶׁה. Referring to verse 9, Numbers 28:10 (NCV) states: “This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, *in addition* to the daily burnt offering and drink offering.” Also, while a *monthly* set time (Num 28:13), or an *annual* appointed season (Num 28:19-24; 29:6, 13, 36), which also all involved such fire-offerings, did sometimes coincide with the Sabbath, the LORD’s instructions specifically for Sabbath offerings *never* included any such אֲשֶׁה anywhere in Scripture.

“Fire-Offerings” for the מוֹעֲדִים; Not for שַׁבָּת

In a vital introductory statement, Numbers 28:2 states: “Command the children of Israel, and say to them, “My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire [אֲשֶׁה] as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time [מוֹעֵד].”” The manner in which the book of Numbers identifies the אֲשֶׁה as specifically part of the festal calendar (which, by extension, seems to include the daily and monthly rituals), is largely confirmed by the levitical account. This can be recognized in the key summary statement of Leviticus 23:37a, which clearly enunciates the vital significance of the distinctive manner in which each set time of the *annual* festal calendar, to the exclusion of the *weekly* Sabbath, was intimately intertwined with the fire-offering: “These are the appointed seasons [מוֹעֲדִים] of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to bring an offering made by fire [אֲשֶׁה] unto the LORD” (JPS). As another version puts it: “These are the LORD’s appointed annual festivals. Celebrate them by gathering in sacred assemblies to present all the various offerings to the LORD by fire” (Lev 23:37a, NLT). This translation aptly notes that it was the “annual festivals [מוֹעֲדִים]” – and *not* the weekly שַׁבָּת – which are stated in this chapter as including the אֲשֶׁה, the “offering made by fire” to the LORD, thus assisting the Bible reader in recognizing the vital difference between the seventh-day Sabbath and the appointed seasons.

The distinguished Hebrew scholar Jacob Milgrom correctly emphasized “the absence of any reference to the sabbath sacrifice” here in Leviticus 23.²⁸ This obvious “absence,” Milgrom pointed out, stands in direct “contrast to the sacrificial references in *all* the other holiday prescriptions of Lev 23 (vv. 8, 12-13, 18-19, 25, 27, 36, 37).”²⁹ Furthermore, Milgrom observed that, while the Sabbath, the new moon, and the daily offering are included in the calendar of public sacrifices in Numbers 28-29, these are not technically מוֹעֲדִים. This is so, for, “as indicated by references throughout the span

²⁸Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1956.

²⁹Ibid. (emphasis added).

of the biblical period,” neither the Sabbath, nor the new moon, nor the daily sacrifice is ever classified as a מועד, but they are rather listed as distinct from the מועדים (see, for example, 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12-13; Neh 10:33; Ezek 46:1-15; etc.).³⁰ Perhaps the passage in which this is easiest to see is 2 Chronicles 31:3 (REB): “The king provided from his own resources, as the share due from him, the whole-offerings for both morning and evening, and for the sabbaths, new moons, and appointed seasons [מועדים], as prescribed in the law of the LORD.” The Hebrew scholar Jacques Doukhan discussed vital differences between the Sabbath and the festal calendar, noting that the שבת (as noted in Exod 20:8-11) is an eternal reminder of creation “and is, therefore always relevant and mandatory.” For, “*shabbat* was given at the end of the creation week, when sacrifices were not yet a necessary factor in the equation of salvation because sin had not yet been committed. The *shabbat*, unlike Jewish festivals, was a part of the Ten Commandments and was given to all of humanity.”³¹

Brief Summary of אֲשֶׁה, the “Offering Made by Fire”

In short, while the seventh-day שבת is clearly mentioned in Leviticus 23, one vital way to differentiate it from all the מועדים of the festal calendar is that divinely-directed fire-offerings were to be offered as an indispensable part of the daily, monthly, and annual appointed seasons, but *never* was there a fire-offering (i.e., an אֲשֶׁה) intimately or inextricably intertwined as an integral part of the offerings specifically designated just for the weekly Sabbath day.

The Significant Etymological Meaning of מועד

One of the most important terms that repeatedly surfaces in Leviticus 23 is the Hebrew word מועד.³² In all, this term appears six times, mostly in plural form, in Leviticus 23. The JPS translation renders verse 2 as follows: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: The appointed seasons [מועדים] of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons [מועדים].” Then, after a brief mention of the seventh-day Sabbath, and before the lengthy passage dealing with the set times, vs. 4 notes: “These are the appointed seasons [מועדים] of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season [מועד].” Once these set seasons have been enumerated, verse 37a states: “These are the appointed seasons [מועדים] of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations.” Finally, verse 44 concludes: “And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the appointed seasons [מועדים] of the LORD.”

³⁰Ibid., 1956.

³¹Jacques B. Doukhan, “Why Would Christians Do Jewish Festivals?” *Shabbat Shalom* 50 (Winter 2003/2004): 24.

³²Some, such as Young, have claimed (without any textual support) that, “the designation [מועד] is restricted in the Scriptures to the *sabbath*, passover, pentecost, day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles;” (Edward Young, 67). Since the focus in this chapter is on the meaning of מועד, specifically in relation to the weekly שבת, the accuracy of the above notion will be assessed only regarding the seventh-day Sabbath.

Derivation and Lexical Meaning of מועד³³

The basic lexical term מועד occurs a little more than 220 times in the Old Testament.³⁴ The issue at hand is to determine what the most accurate contextual rendition of מועד is in Leviticus 23.³⁵ A. Noordtjiz stated that “the Hebrew term translated as ‘appointed feast,’ *mō’ēd*, is derived from a verb [יעד] that means to ‘designate’ or ‘assign’.”³⁶ As Hebrew lexicons indicate, the fundamental meaning of *yā’ad* is basically “to appoint,”³⁷ “determine,”³⁸ or as some scholars have put it, to “fix”³⁹ or to “set.”⁴⁰ Concurring, Baruch Levine noted that the Hebrew term *mō’ēd*, “set time,” derives from *yā’ad*, which means “to set, designate.”⁴¹ Referring to its consonantal origin, Milgrom affirmed that “the noun *mō’ēd* stems from the root *y’d* ‘designate’ either a place (e.g., *ōhel mō’ēd* ‘the Tent of Meeting’, Exod 27:21 ...) or a time” (Num 28:2).⁴²

³³See K. Koch, “מועד *mō’ēd*,” *TDOT*, VIII:167-173. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, after a brief summary of the uses of מועד (i.e., as “Appointed sign, appointed time, appointed season, place of assembly, set feast”), provided this in-depth explanation: “This masculine noun occurs 223 times [in the Old Testament]. It frequently designates a determined time or place without regard to the purpose of the designation. It may be the time for the birth of a child (Gen 17:21; 18:14; 21:2), the coming of a plague (Ex 9:5), the season of a bird’s migration (Jer 8:7), an appointed time [i.e., to simply meet someone] (1 Sam 13:8; 20:35), the time for which a vision is intended (Hab 2:3), the times of the end (Dan 8:19), or the time for the festivals (Lev 23:2) and solemnities (Deut 31:10);” (Jack P. Lewis, “יעד (*yā’ad*),” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. [Chicago: Moody, 1980], 1:388; hereafter *TWOT*, in footnotes). Notice that only the final definitions in this *Theological Wordbook* identify מועד as used for the annual appointed seasons (i.e., for the “festivals” and “solemnities”). Interestingly, meticulous analysis of the actual utilization of מועד throughout the Hebrew Bible, and as rendered in translation over the centuries corroborates and validates the conclusions of the *TWOT*.

³⁴Some may count it as 223, since five times the consonantal spelling is מעד [*mō’ēd*], as in Lev 23:44; Num 15:3; Deut 31:10; 1 Chron 23:31; and Zech 8:19. While vocalized essentially the same way, i.e., *mō’ēd*, it is spelled מעד, which is slightly different than the one usually found in the consonantal Hebrew text, i.e., מועד.

³⁵The importance of accuracy of definitions (especially in regard to מועד and שבת) can be seen in a recent book on Old Testament law. Relying on a loose English translation (instead of on the original biblical languages), Gane has inaccurately asserted that “ceremonial sabbaths were included in the ‘festivals;’” (Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017], 358, footnote #43). Consequently, he concluded that *σάββατα* in Col 2:16 must be the weekly Sabbath. But, as a Sabbatarian, he then seeks to exclude it from abrogation, by alleging that it “never served as a temporary type;” (ibid.).

³⁶A. Noordtjiz, *Leviticus*, Raymond Togtman, trans., Bible Student’s Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 228. Besides “assign,” Georg Fohrer, ed., *Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 109, included the word “fix.”

³⁷William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), s.v. יעד (hereafter *BDB* [1951]); Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), s.v. יעד. See also, Lewis, *TWOT*, 1:387.

³⁸Tyler F. Williams, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Willem A. VanGemeren, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), s.v. יעד. He includes “designate, appoint.”

³⁹Julius Fuerst, *A Hebrew & Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz, 1867), s.v. יעד. See also, Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 300.

⁴⁰Hartley, *Leviticus*, 375.

⁴¹Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 154. Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Study Edition, vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 2001), s.v. יעד, includes the meaning “designate,” in the *qal* form.

⁴²Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1955. Or, as Sauer, noted: “It can be defined as ‘the announcement of a decree or a decision, whose execution is tied to a particular place or fixed time;’” (G. Sauer, “יעד: *y’d* to appoint,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds., Mark E. Biddle, trans. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997], 2:552, quoting L. Rost, *Die Vorstufen von Kirche und Synagoge im AT* [1938], 6).

How was this done in ancient Israel? Psalm 81:3 states: “Sound the ram’s horn at the new moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast.” Every מועד was “appointed” (based on Mosaic law) by the sighting of the first sliver of the new moon, which identified the new lunar month. In Milgrom’s words: “Since the festivals were ‘proclaimed,’... the proclamation was most likely performed by the use of the shofar (Num 10:10).”⁴³ John Hartley proposed that “the use of *miqrā*’ in this phrase [of Lev 23:2] may come from the practice of positioning official observers to look for the first sign of the new moon; on sighting the new moon they sent *miqrā*’, ‘a call,’ throughout the land proclaiming the beginning of the high day.”⁴⁴ Admitting that the phrase *mikra’ kodesh* “is a somewhat ambiguous term,”⁴⁵ Baruch Levine nevertheless concluded that one could render this “as ‘a sacred assembly, convocation,’ indicating that on an occasion so designated, the community is summoned for common worship and celebration.”⁴⁶ In brief, Israel was to participate in corporate worship, on sacred occasions (such as the מועדים), as specified by Yahweh.

מועדים Calculated by Humans; שבת “Fixed by God”

Citing a very practical matter, Milgrom observed: “Indeed, because the lunar month is approximately 29.5 days long, it is for the recognized authorities to decide whether a month contains 29 or 30 days. Thus the entire calendar, even the setting of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, must be the result of *human*, not *divine*, decision.”⁴⁷ Hence, by visually recognizing the first sliver of the new moon, humans were to calculate the start of their religious lunar month. In addition, “the onset and close of the sabbatical year is by the lunar calendar, which is determined *not* by God, but by Israel.”⁴⁸

Milgrom cautiously stated: “The term *mô’ēd* means ‘fixed time (or meeting or place)’ and implies, perhaps, the time fixed by man (e.g., 1 Sam 9:24; 13:8, 11; 2 Kgs 4:16, 17) in contrast to the sabbath, the time fixed by God,”⁴⁹ as being *every* seventh day. In accord, John Kleinig noted that the specific day of “the Sabbath did not need to be fixed by astronomical observance.”⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Samuel Balentine wrote, regarding the מועדים: “Whereas they are annual occasions whose place on the calendar Israel determines by calculating the shifting phases of the moon, the seventh

⁴³Ibid., 1952.

⁴⁴Hartley, *Leviticus*, 375.

⁴⁵Baruch Levine, 154.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1959 (emphases added).

⁴⁸Ibid., 1963 (emphasis added). Reiterating (ibid.), Milgrom declared: “The festivals, no differently from the sabbatical, are fixed by the lunar calendar, the determination of which is entirely in Israel’s hands.”

⁴⁹Ibid., 1965.

⁵⁰Kleinig, 495.

day [שַׁבָּת] is a weekly occurrence that falls where it does because God has so decreed it. The Sabbath is therefore not a time that Israel must fix on the calendar; it is a day God has already established.”⁵¹ Likewise, the regular daily (i.e., morning-and-evening) sacrificial rituals were not dependent on the sighting of the moon.⁵²

Thus, Milgrom astutely acknowledged a clear “distinction between the sabbath and the festivals,”⁵³ a difference which he recognized early on, when he apparently intentionally listed the Sabbath of Leviticus 23:3, before he introduced “the festivals.”⁵⁴ Regarding this specific text, Milgrom noted that the weekly Sabbath has “the following attribution ‘it is a sabbath of YHWH.’ That is, it is *not* for you to proclaim the day.”⁵⁵

In essential accord, David Baker contrasted “the Sabbath, which occurs every seven days, at a time fixed by God since creation (Gen 2:2) and not by the Israelites,” with the “appointed festivals,” which “fall at fixed intervals during the lunar cycle of the year,” and which “were announced or determined by the Israelites themselves.”⁵⁶ In agreement, Baruch Levine observed that the “biblical usage regularly differentiates between *shabbat*, ‘the Sabbath,’ and *mo‘ed*, as in verses 37-38 of our chapter [i.e., Lev 23], which speaks of the ‘set times of the LORD’ as being ‘apart from the Sabbaths of the LORD.’”⁵⁷ Milgrom’s categorical conclusion is that “throughout the span of the biblical period,” the Sabbath was *never* classified as a מועד, but was listed as distinct from the מועדים (as in 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12-13; Neh 10:33; Ezek 46:1-15; etc.).⁵⁸

Baruch Levine aptly pointed out: “There is, however, a problem in using the term *mo‘ed* with reference to the Sabbath.”⁵⁹ There is “no need to ‘fix’ the time of the Sabbath,”⁶⁰ since it cycles around every week. The texts show, Noodtziĵ opined, that “it did not belong among the appointed

⁵¹Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 174. Milgrom elaborated: “The festivals are fixed according to the lunar calendar. Hence it is *not* God but Israel that determines their dates (*tigrē’û* ‘you shall proclaim’). The sabbath, however, is independent of the [festal] calendar; its occurrence has been predetermined by God;” (ibid., Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1962, emphasis added).

⁵²Contra Gladson’s claim (see Jerry Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath? A Response to Ron du Preez,” in Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, rev. ed. [Glendale, AZ: LAM Publications, 2010], 378), Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 1956) pointed out that, though the plural term *mō’ădîm* appears basically as a heading (in Num 28:2) and as a subscript (in Num 29:39) in a long elaboration of what was to be offered on which occasions, the use of this term here is not to be viewed as actually labeling all of these occasions as *mō’ădîm*.

⁵³Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1962.

⁵⁴Ibid., 1950.

⁵⁵Ibid., 1960 (emphasis added).

⁵⁶Baker, 167.

⁵⁷Baruch Levine, 154.

⁵⁸Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1956.

⁵⁹Baruch Levine, 154.

⁶⁰Ibid.

feasts proper.”⁶¹ In the words of Milgrom: “The sabbath is *not* a *mô ‘ēd*.”⁶² Thus, since “the sabbath occurs automatically, independently of any calendar; it need not be ‘set.’”⁶³

מִוֶעֵדִים Is Fundamentally Different from שַׁבָּת

While Baker merely mentioned that the Sabbath “is essentially different from the other festivals,”⁶⁴ Milgrom categorically stated: “The sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the *mô ‘ēd* in all the biblical sources;”⁶⁵ “it is independent of the lunar month, falling on every seventh day.”⁶⁶ Providing several examples, K. Koch concurred that the “Sabbath” is “not referring to a *mô ‘ēd*.”⁶⁷

Careful investigation of Scripture confirms Milgrom’s assertion. For instance, superficial skimming of Numbers 28 has caused some to claim that the weekly Sabbath is a *mô ‘ēd* since it is mentioned in Numbers 28:9-10. The line of reasoning to support this claim is that the LORD’s commands through Moses begins with the term מִוֶעֵד (28:2), and also ends with the same basic word מִוֶעֵד (29:39); and that therefore anything between these two terms *must* be understood to be classified as a “*mô ‘ēd*.”

However, already distinctly embedded within that introductory “bookend” (28:2) is the inclusion of an אֲשֶׁה (a “fire-offering”) to be offered in its “appointed season” (מִוֶעֵד). In brief, the diligent Bible student is aware that there was *never* any אֲשֶׁה intimately and inextricably intertwined with the offerings specifically designated for the seventh-day שַׁבָּת. As shown above, this notation in Numbers 28:2 serves to immediately alert the careful reader that the weekly Sabbath (as seen in 28:9-10) is *not* an actual מִוֶעֵד, even though the שַׁבָּת is mentioned here briefly in the comprehensive enumeration of the required sacrifices.

Furthermore, as Hartley rightly observed: “The repetitive regularity of this [Sabbath] day’s observance is distinct from the once-a-year occasion of a feast.”⁶⁸ In fundamental harmony with the

⁶¹Noordtzi, 228.

⁶²Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1956 (emphasis added). While Milgrom’s words are being used here, such is not meant as an endorsement of his views of an alleged textual history. See Chapter Five, footnote #204, which explains more as to how this thesis utilizes Milgrom’s text-based explanation of the relation of the Sabbath to the *mô ‘ādīm*.

⁶³Ibid., 1957. Note: According to Scripture the “day” goes from sunset to sunset; thus, the “timing” of the seventh-day Sabbath and all other appointed seasons is the same (sunset to sunset). However, the issue of “which day” is a different matter: Sabbath has been set by God at Creation; *mô ‘ādīm* are set by humans.

⁶⁴Baker, 166. Similarly, Gane stated that the weekly Sabbath “fundamentally differs” from the festivals; (*Leviticus, Numbers*, 393).

⁶⁵Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1954. Talking about the *mô ‘ēd*, Baruch Levine (154) observed that “elsewhere in the ritual legislation it usually designates an annual occurrence.” Similarly, Milgrom (ibid., 1956) noted: “In regard to the calendar, *mô ‘ēd* refers to a fixed annual observance, *bēmô ‘ādām* ‘each at its fixed time’ (Lev 23:4).”

⁶⁶Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1954. Incidentally, part of this distinction between the *mô ‘ādīm* (which are set by the sighting of the new moon) and the daily sacrificial rituals, as well as the weekly Sabbath, may be seen in the fact that several texts list the sacrifices for the “daily,” the “Sabbath,” and the “new moon,” separately from those for the *mô ‘ādīm* (see, for example, 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; Neh 10:33; etc.).

⁶⁷Koch, 170.

⁶⁸Hartley, *Leviticus*, 372.

above, the *SDA Bible Commentary*, referring to Leviticus 23, pointed out: “The Sabbath is different from all other feasts and holy convocations (see vss. 37, 38) in that it originated at creation (Gen. 2:1-3), whereas the annual feasts ... had their origin with the Jewish nation.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, as Ross Cole’s doctoral research concluded: “Lev 23:37, 38 indicates that the term מועדים is a technical designation *only* for the annual festivals [i.e., as the term is used here in Lev 23].”⁷⁰

To recapitulate, the Hebrew noun מועד derives from the verb יָעַד, which means “to appoint, set, or designate” either a place or a time. Leviticus 23 uses the basic lexical term מועד six times. Based on its immediate contextual usage, as well as evidence from the rest of Scripture, it is clear that the word מועד (as employed in this ritual setting), describes annual occasions which are calculated by *human beings*, based on the sighting of the first sliver of the new moon. Indeed, Leviticus 23:37, 38 provide conclusive evidence “that the term *mô ‘ădîm* is a technical designation *only* for the annual festivals”⁷¹ (in Lev 23), and is *never* used to refer to the weekly שַׁבָּת. Thus, as noted above: “The sabbath, however, is independent of the [festal] calendar; its occurrence has been predetermined by God.”⁷² Since it has been divinely set by God at creation, as a recurring weekly event, it can therefore be correctly concluded that the seventh-day “sabbath is *not* a *mô ‘ēd*,”⁷³ that is, it is *not* an “appointed season.”

“Sabbath” Terminology and the “Appointed Seasons”

A 2017 doctoral project concluded: “The *Sabbath* included one day a *week*, an additional day each *month*, several festival days scattered throughout the *yearly* calendar, one year every *seven* and an extraordinary *Jubilee* year every fifty.”⁷⁴ Others have similarly alleged that there are more sabbaths than just the seventh-day Sabbath (in Lev 23); that is, sabbaths connected with the Day of Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, etc. Thus, the question arises: Is it true, as claimed, that God tied the weekly שַׁבָּת to the annual מועדים by calling them all the same name, i.e., “Sabbath”?

⁶⁹Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols., rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 1:802.

⁷⁰H. Ross Cole, “The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch: Old Testament Indicators of the Extent of Their Applicability” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 1996), 96 (emphasis added).

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1962 (emphasis added).

⁷³Ibid., 2034 (emphasis added). While these are Milgrom’s words, they are not being used as an endorsement of his views of an alleged textual history. See footnote #68 above; also see the comments in Chapter Five, footnote #204.

⁷⁴Hall, “Beyond the Sabbath’s Shadow,” 76-77 (emphasis added); see also pp. 71, 78, 82. The above concerns raised regarding Hall’s doctoral research are not meant to detract from some constructive insights suggested in his project. However, the type of “theological postulations” he suggested seems to be constructed at the expense of careful exegesis, which would include demonstrating the multiple intentional distinctions made between the weekly Sabbath, and other appointed seasons. Indeed, unless the significant distinctive elements are adequately taken into account, as well as the actual meaning of the Hebrew noun *šabbāt* and the Hebrew verb *šābat* (in their various contexts), it will not be possible to understand the true and full biblically-valid meaning of any Sabbath theology. Contrast this with Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 2153), who aptly noted that “the jubilee is not called a ‘sabbath.’”

Meaning and Usage of Hebrew Noun שַׁבָּת

To begin with, it should be noted that the noun שַׁבָּת and the verb שָׁבַת “are related,”⁷⁵ with the noun deriving from the verb,⁷⁶ or perhaps vice versa.⁷⁷ Moreover, as recognized by careful research, the verb *šābat* “means literally ‘to cease’ from labor or activity.”⁷⁸ Likewise, the noun *šabbāt* means “cessation.” When one understands the actual meaning of these terms then it is not too hard to understand how they are used in Scripture, especially the noun, שַׁבָּת.

This Hebrew noun appears 111 times in Scripture, and is used in at least four different ways: (a) It identifies mainly the seventh-day Sabbath, a weekly day upon which *all* labor is strictly forbidden (as in Lev 23:3). (b) It is used for the Day of Atonement (as in Lev 23:32), on which, similarly, *all* work was completely outlawed (Lev 23:31), but only once a year. (c) It is employed for the Sabbatical Year, during which there was to be *no* work *on the land*, every seventh year (as in Lev 25:4). Fourth, by extension, (d) it is sometimes used to describe the week (as in Lev 23:15-16), that is, a period of seven days. It should be noted, that a related Hebrew term שַׁבְּתוֹן (as elaborated on below), is employed for the Day of Trumpets, the first and eighth days associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Sabbatical Years.

Misleading Translation by Some Bible Versions

Regrettably, some translations have inaccurately rendered Leviticus 23:24, 39 basically as the King James Version has put it:⁷⁹ “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a *sabbath*, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.... Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a *sabbath*, and on the eighth day shall be a *sabbath*.” The English word *sabbath*, as italicized in the two texts above (from the KJV), does *not* actually derive from the Hebrew noun שַׁבָּת. The original Hebrew term found here in Leviticus 23:24, and 39 is שַׁבְּתוֹן, which is correctly translated as either simply a “rest” (NASB, NIV, etc.), or a “solemn rest” (ASV, ESV, JPS, etc.). The mistranslation of these verses in a few Bible versions has given the unwary reader the false impression that the Day of Trumpets is

⁷⁵F. Stolz, “שַׁבָּת,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds., Mark E. Biddle, trans. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1297.

⁷⁶Haag, “שַׁבָּת,” 388.

⁷⁷Victor P. Hamilton, שַׁבָּת, in *TWOT*, 2:902. This is contra Haag, who claimed that “no evidence suggests that the vb. *šābat* itself derives from the noun *šabbāt*,” (E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת *šābat*,” *TDOT*, XIV:385).

⁷⁸*Seventh-day Adventists Believe...: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 282. See also, Hamilton, above.

⁷⁹YLT (of 1898), and the MEV (of 2014) have rendered these passages in a comparable manner. The AmpB (of 1987) has similarly put “Sabbath” in vs. 39, while rendering the same Hebrew term located in vs. 24 as “a day of solemn [sabbatical] rest.”

labeled a “sabbath” (vs. 24); also, these translations have unwittingly fostered the inaccurate notion that the Feast of Tabernacles begins with a “sabbath” (vs. 39), and also concludes with another “sabbath” (vs. 39).

Contrasting “No Work” and “No Laborious Work”⁸⁰

Without providing any textual support, commentator Allen Ross asserted: “All the feasts were supposed to be observed as complete Sabbath rests even though they might not fall on the Sabbath.”⁸¹ Other commentators have made similar claims, also without any actual evidence.⁸² Contrary to such notions, textual research reveals a direct and deliberate qualitative difference between almost all of the annual מועדים and the weekly שבת. As noted above, the *only* two occasions upon which *no labor* at all was to be performed (i.e., not even food preparation [as noted in Exod 16:22-30]), was the seventh-day שבת, and the Day of Atonement (which is also directly labeled a שבת).⁸³

The text is clear that, in connection with the other annual מועדים, what was forbidden was specifically מלאכת עבודה, that is, “laborious work” (NASB); or as other versions put it, “customary work” (NKJV), or “ordinary work” (ESV), or “regular work” (NIV), or “servile work” (ASV).

Food Preparation Is Not Classified as “Laborious Work”

At the initial institution of these מועדים, the LORD provided clear instructions as to the type of “work” that was to be allowed on these days. Discussing the proper manner of celebrating the

⁸⁰Was the seventh-day Sabbath originally simply a respite; or did it include the aspect of worship? Koch pointed out that these were times “when God approaches Israel as the Creator and meets with his cultic community. Such times are thus filled with holiness (*qdš*, Ps. 74:3f.; Lev. 23:2ff. and *passim*), and such occasions are marked by solemn convocations (*qr*, Lev. 23:2ff.; Nu. 16:2; Lam. 1:4, 15; 2:22 and *passim*);” (Koch, 170).

⁸¹Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 396-397. Ross explained what he means by “Sabbath rest,” when he pointed out that “the Sabbath commemorates God’s cessation from all his creative work;” (ibid., 397).

⁸²While Rooker (283, emphasis added), in commenting on the מועדים of Lev 23, alleged that “most of the festivals observe days where *no work* is to be done,” Vasholz (285) made the following claims: “Sabbaths are prescribed non-work days which made up part of the appointed Jewish festivals during the year. The Day of Atonement, the first and seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), the Feast of Trumpets and the first two days of the Feast of Tabernacles were Sabbaths.” Similarly Hall asserted: “For an Israelite, the reality of the Sabbath was much more extensive than a one in seven day of rest. There were Sabbath days strewn throughout their yearly calendar on which they regularly observed a *Sabbath rest of no labor*;” (Hall, “Beyond the Sabbath’s Shadow,” 71, emphasis added). Unfortunately, such inaccurate notions (which cannot be substantiated from the text of Scripture) can cause confusion regarding the clear distinctions between the שבת and almost all the other annual מועדים.

⁸³The *Andrews Study Bible* (156) rightly notes that the term “customary work” (or “servile work,” or “laborious work”) referred to “the work of one’s occupation for making a living.” Hence, “light housework” was not outlawed. Then, the *ASB* aptly adds: “The only ceremonial sabbath (rest day) when even housework was forbidden, as on the weekly Sabbath, was the Day of Atonement (vv. 28, 30).” See also Bush, who concurred that “on the sabbath, and the day of atonement, (which is also called a sabbath,) they were to do *no work at all*, not even the dressing of meat;” (George Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Leviticus: Designed as a General Help to Biblical Reading and Instruction* [New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman & Co., 1842], 234, emphasis original). Kellogg similarly noted: “While on some other sacred seasons the usual occupations of the household were permitted, on the Sabbath ‘no manner of work’ was to be done;” (S. H. Kellogg, *The Book of Leviticus, The Expositor’s Bible* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906; New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1908], 454). Lohse aptly stated: “Absolute rest from work is enjoined by the Sabbath commandment;” (Eduard Lohse, “σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], VII:3); hereafter *TDNT*.

Feast of Unleavened Bread, God gave these instructions to Israel: “On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. *Do no work at all* on these days, *except to prepare food* for everyone to eat – that is all you may do” (Exod 12:16b, NIV).

Correctly interpreting this concept, the Hebrew scholars who prepared the Septuagint version more than a century before the time of Christ, noted that the faithful Israelite was to “do no *servile work* on them” (Exod 12:16b).⁸⁴ That is, on the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As Jay Sklar noted in his 2014 commentary on Leviticus: “They could do none of their *ordinary work* (Lev. 23:7-8), such as farming, although they could prepare the food they would eat in celebration (Exod. 12:16 ...).”⁸⁵ This “first mention” of the kind of work permissible on this feast, is pivotal for the appropriate understanding of the extent of sanctity attributed to almost all other מועדים. This conclusion, based on careful analysis of the biblical text, is affirmed in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*: “The Sabbath and Day of Atonement were further distinguished by the divine prohibition excluding all labor (Lev 23:3, 31)... The six other special convocations did not exclude the preparation of food even though servile labor was prohibited (Lev 23).”⁸⁶

A Unique Hebrew Two-Pronged Term

Significantly, in repeating the explanation as to how to rightly observe those identical days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, God gave the following information: “On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any *laborious work* [מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה]. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any *laborious work* [מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה]” (Lev 23:7, 8, NASB).

This unique Hebrew combination of terms (מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה) appears in only 12 texts, every one of them solely in the chapters in Scripture that contain a comprehensive elaboration of the sacrificial system of ancient Israel. With impeccable precision, this two-pronged term is utilized just for six occasions in Leviticus 23 – the annual מועדים, which are then repeated in Numbers 28-29.

The complete list of the specific days on which there was to be no “laborious work” (i.e., no מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה), is as follows: (a) the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:7; Num

⁸⁴This is from the LXE, i.e., the English translation of the Septuagint, the LXX. The LXX uses the phrase *ergon latreuton* here, which Liddell-Scott’s Greek lexicon indicates refers to “work” which is “servile.”

⁸⁵Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 281 (emphasis original). Bush similarly noted that “only *servile* work was interdicted, which allowed food to be cooked;” 235 (emphasis original). Gane (*Leviticus, Numbers*, 388) stated: “Six of these seven are sabbaths of partial rest, when laborious work involving one’s trade/occupation/business (*m’la’kah*) is prohibited but other light work (food preparation ...) is implicitly permitted. The Day of Purgation, however, is like the weekly Sabbath (v. 3) ... requiring total cessation from all work (vv. 28, 30, 31).” See also Charles R. Erdman, *The Book of Leviticus: An Exposition* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1951), 109.

⁸⁶Leonard J. Coppes, “קָרָא (*qārā*),” in *TWOT*, 2:811.

28:18); (b) the seventh day of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:8; Num 28:25); (c) the Feast of Pentecost (Lev 23:21; Num 28:26); (d) the Day of Trumpets (Lev 23:25; Num 29:1); (e) the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:35; Num 29:12); and, (f) the eighth day, related to the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:36; Num 29:35).

In other words, in a particularly precise pattern, in both “sacrificial system” sections, the Bible elucidates what type of “work” the faithful Israelite was not allowed to do on these annual seasons. In contradistinction, all manner of work was completely forbidden on the two occasions that the people were to observe as a *שַׁבָּת* (i.e., the weekly Sabbath, and the Day of Atonement).

Conclusions on “Feasts” Being Called “Sabbath”

In brief, the fact that the Hebrew term *שַׁבָּת* is *not* used when referring to the above-mentioned six annual *מוֹעֲדִים* (other than the Day of Atonement), together with the specific instruction that the faithful believer was permitted to actually prepare food on these six *מוֹעֲדִים*, implies quite strongly that, in the Bible itself, none of these six occasions is ever classified as an actual *שַׁבָּת* (i.e., a day on which *no work* was to be performed).

While the Day of Atonement is labeled a *שַׁבָּת*, on which *no work* was to be performed at all (as in Lev 23:28, 30, 31; Num 29:7; etc.), in various places in Scripture, the Day of Atonement is clearly and repeatedly differentiated from the seventh-day *שַׁבָּת*. An example of this can be seen from an examination of the repeated four-part calendric string which contains a summary statement of the daily-weekly-monthly-yearly sacrificial system of Israel. In these calendric strings the plural term “Sabbaths” refers specifically to the *weekly שַׁבָּת*, and *not* to any *מוֹעֲדִים*, which is mentioned separately (see, for example, 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12, 13; 31:3; Neh 10:33; etc.). This type of distinction between the *weekly* Sabbath and the *annual* appointed seasons appears quite consistently throughout the Scriptures. Thus, as Baker concluded in his commentary on Leviticus 23, the weekly *שַׁבָּת* “is essentially different from the other festivals.”⁸⁷

Recognition of Parenthetical Statements in the Bible

If one is to conclude, based on appropriate etymological and legitimate linguistic lines, that the weekly Sabbath is *not* a *מוֹעֵד*, and hence not part of the annual festal calendar, then how is one to rightly understand and interpret Leviticus 23:2-4, in which the seventh-day *שַׁבָּת* is directly spoken about, immediately after the statement “these are My feasts”? Here are those three controverted verses:

⁸⁷Baker, 166. An additional (and somewhat significant) distinction, is that “the Sabbath could still be fully observed after the destruction of the Temple;” (ibid., 167). Though he alleged that the weekly Sabbath is one of the “feasts” (in Lev 23), Mackintosh (325) did recognize that “strictly speaking, as the attentive reader will observe, Israel’s *first* great feast was the Passover, and their *seventh* was the feast of Tabernacles;” (emphases original).

²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.

³Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

⁴“These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.”

Examples of Intentional Digressions in Scripture

In contemporary communication an author or speaker may choose to parenthetically insert a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or more, as deemed necessary. Likewise, there is unequivocal evidence that at times the writers of Scripture intentionally inserted materials into the central issues they were seeking to clearly convey. These types of parenthetical statements are often made plainer in some Bible versions, through the actual utilization of parentheses. For example, in the Joseph narrative, the New English Translation (NET) makes Reuben’s intentions clear, when it uses appropriate parentheses, in Genesis 37:22: “Reuben continued, ‘Don’t shed blood! Throw him into this cistern that is here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.’ (Reuben said this so he could rescue Joseph from them and take him back to his father).”⁸⁸

At times a writer may even intentionally reiterate a statement similar to that which he had written before a digression was made. A classic example of this is found in the midst of the above-mentioned Joseph chronicle. The final verse of Genesis 37 states: “Now the Midianites had sold *him* in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard” (Gen 37:36).⁸⁹ The reader, most likely expecting to continue with the Joseph account, may be taken by surprise when reading Genesis 38:1, which suddenly picks up the story of Judah. However, as soon as necessary, the narrative returns the reader to the Joseph chronicle by repeating basically the same information seen in Genesis 37:36, but with some extra data to fill out the picture. Hence Genesis 39:1 states: “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.”⁹⁰ Various scholars

⁸⁸In the New Testament one finds similar clear cases in which parenthetical statements are made. One such obvious tangent appears in Mark 7, a factor recognized and so indicated in several translations (such as the ESV, NASB, NET, etc.). The NIV renders Mark 7:3, 4 in this way: “(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles.)”

⁸⁹Emphases added.

⁹⁰Emphasis added. The only seeming difference is that Gen 37:36 states that the “Midianites” had sold Joseph in Egypt, whereas Gen 39:1 says that it was the “Ishmaelites.” Judges 8 (especially vss. 22-24) resolves this apparent contradiction, by indicating that the Ishmaelites were actually Midianites. Longman simply combined the two names, saying that “Ishmaelite/Midianite traders sold Joseph to Potiphar;” (Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* [Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2005]. 153). Goldingay postulated that “‘Ishmaelites’ seems here to refer not to Ishmael’s physical descendants but to people involved in trade, so that Midianite can be a subset of Ishmaelite;” (John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone: Part 2 – Chapters 17-50* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010], 133).

have recognized that this story of Judah and Tamar, “is parenthetical,”⁹¹ an “interlude,”⁹² a “digression,”⁹³ or an “interruption.”⁹⁴ That this insertion was intentional is emphasized by the fact that “Genesis 39:1 recapitulates 37:36,” as Bruce Waltke put it.⁹⁵

Yet, as Esther Blachman indicated, “those who approach Gen 38 from a historical-critical perspective find the placement of limited value in terms of contributing social and tribal data; they prefer to study it as an independent narrative.”⁹⁶ R. R. Reno complained that “this quick and confident rejection of interpretive responsibility is one of the ways in which modern biblical study manifests a disturbing exegetical negligence.”⁹⁷ Nevertheless, there are some scholars “who use literary methods to show the connection of Gen 38 to its narrative setting.”⁹⁸ These scholars have chosen to interpret “the biblical narrative based on the final form of the text”⁹⁹ – which is essentially the approach selected for this research project.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary*, vol. 3: *Genesis 37-50* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 893. So also, Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 517.

⁹²John C. Jeske, *Genesis*, People’s Bible Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2005), 318. See also, Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009), 325. Yairah Amit, “The Case of Judah and Tamar in the Contemporary Israeli Context: A Relevant Interpolation,” in *Genesis, Texts@Contexts*; Athalya Brenner, Archie Chi Chung Lee, and Gale A. Yee, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 214, averred that this is a “bracketed interlude that was added by a later redactor between Gen. 37:36 and 39:1.”

⁹³Michael Maher, *Genesis* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 221. See also, Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1994), 363; W. Sibley Towner, *Genesis*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 249; Eugene F. Roop, *Genesis*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1987), 248.

⁹⁴R. R. Reno, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 266. Reno (267) also labeled it a “digression.” Others who recognize Genesis 38 as an interruption of the Joseph narrative, include: Dianne Bergant, *Genesis: In the Beginning* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 160; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 263; Robert Davidson, *Genesis 12-50*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 224; A. S. Herbert, *Genesis 12-50: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 126; John J. Scullion, *Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers, and Preachers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 298; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 431; Esther Blachman, *The Transformation of Tamar (Genesis 38) in the History of Jewish Interpretation* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 28; William D. Reybun, and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 871; Leon R. Kaas, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 526, 527; Longman, 151.

⁹⁵Waltke, 517. Arnold (325) maintained that these two verses are “intentionally framing the Judah-Tamar chapter.” See also, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 363, 373; Herbert, 126; Scullion, 298; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 431; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 312. Youngblood noted that “the first verse of Genesis 39 reviews the information found in the last verse of Genesis 37;” (Ronald Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis: An Introductory Commentary*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991], 251). Westermann indicated that Gen 37:36 “forms a bridge to chapter 39;” (Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, Text and Interpretation; David E. Green, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 266).

⁹⁶Blachman, 28. Her observation seems appropriate, as can be seen in writings of E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 299; Brueggemann, 307-308; and Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, John H. Marks, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 356, all of whom she has referenced.

⁹⁷Reno, 266.

⁹⁸Blachman, 28.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Blachman (ibid.) observed that “in examining the biblical texts as literary units, today’s scholars view the whole canon as a narrative continuum. They therefore examine the text in its final form, applying literary criticism and intertextual reading to discover added levels of meaning.” This is the basic approach aimed at in this research project.

Several commentators have identified conceptual and “intentional linguistic parallels,”¹⁰¹ in the language of Victor Hamilton. Such conceptual parallels include the following facts: (a) While Judah’s “separating from the family [was] one by choice,” that “of Joseph was an unnatural, forced separation.”¹⁰² (b) The theme of deception observed in Genesis “is central,” in that “Judah, who with his brothers deceives Jacob concerning Joseph’s death, is now deceived by Tamar.”¹⁰³ (c) Then, there is an unmistakable “contrast between Judah, who seeks out sexual opportunity,... and, on the other hand, Joseph, who avoids the sexual opportunity”¹⁰⁴ of Potiphar’s wife.¹⁰⁵

Linguistic parallels include: (a) “The way that הכִּרְנָה (‘please recognize’ [or ‘examine’]) connects the deception *by* Judah in chapter 37 to the deception *of* Judah in chapter 38.”¹⁰⁶ (b) “Ch. 38 begins by telling us that Judah ‘went down’ (*wayyēred*) from his brothers. Ch. 39 opens by reminding us that Joseph ‘had been taken down’ (*hûrad*) to Egypt.”¹⁰⁷ (c) “The two chapters [i.e., 37 and 38] contrast a Jacob who refused to be consoled (*lʰitnahēm*, 37:35) over Joseph, and a Judah who was consoled (*wayyinnāhem*, 38:12) over his wife’s death.”¹⁰⁸ In brief, it seems quite plausible that the “interruption” of Genesis 38 into the Joseph narrative was intentionally done so as to provide various points of comparison and contrast, both linguistically and conceptually.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 431.

¹⁰²Roop, 249. This is evident from Gen 38:1 and Gen 37:23-36.

¹⁰³Reyburn, and Fry, 871. See also, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 364. Similarly, Hamilton (432) highlighted the theme of deception in chapters 37-39. For the two accounts of deception, compare Gen 37:31-35 with Gen 38:12-26.

¹⁰⁴Reyburn, and Fry, 871.

¹⁰⁵Arnold (325) referred to this as “Judah’s indiscretion and callousness ... contrasted with Joseph’s unsurpassed morality.” This can be seen from contrasting Gen 38:12-19 with Gen 39:6-20. Blachman (29) stated that “Rabbi Shemuel bar Nahman claims that the author wanted to contrast Tamar’s story with the temptation attempt by Potifar’s wife in Gen 39 (*Gen. Rab.* 85.2).” See also, Hamilton (432), on the similarity of Tamar and Potiphar’s wife in the role of “the seductress.”

¹⁰⁶Blachman, 28 (emphasis added). See also, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 364; Reyburn, and Fry, 871. Additionally, Hamilton (431) provided textual evidence that “two back-to-back uses of the Hiphil imperative of *nākar* (37:33; 38:26) unite these two chapters.”

¹⁰⁷Hamilton, 432. Blachman (29) noted that “in *Gen. Rab.* 85.2, Rabbi Yohanan declared that the stories were juxtaposed in order to connect one ‘descent’ (Gen 38:1) with the other ‘descent’ (Gen 39:1).” Hamilton further noted (*ibid.*) that, “in one Judah ‘goes down’ (*yrd*) from the hill country to Adullam, and in the other Joseph ‘goes down’ (*yrd*) from Canaan to Egypt.”

¹⁰⁸Hamilton, 432. Blachman (29), saw this as a “contrast between Jacob’s inconsolable mourning for his presumably dead son (Gen 37:34-35) and Judah’s lack of responsiveness to the real consecutive deaths of his two sons ... [Gen 38:7-10].” Hamilton (432), similarly noticed this contrast of “Jacob’s grief” with none seen in Judah. See also Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 364.

¹⁰⁹Among other things, contrasts between these two brothers include: (a) While “the LORD” is repeatedly said to be “with Joseph” (e.g., Gen 39:2, 3) the only time “the LORD” is mentioned in the Judah story is when He appears to be “against” Judah’s family (38:7, 10); (b) Joseph forgives before being asked (e.g., 45:1-7), while Judah condemns before investigation (38:24). Similarities include the fact that they were both sons of Jacob (29:28-35; 30:1, 22-24), and both marry women from outside of the Abrahamic God-fearing people (38:2; 41:45). For additional linguistic and conceptual connections between Gen 38 and surrounding chapters, see Reno, 266-267; Towner, 249; Longman, 151-152; Kaas, 527; Hamilton, 431-432; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 364-365.

Identifying the Parenthesis of Leviticus 23:2-4

Not surprisingly, a similar type of intentional interruption may be observed in the legislation located in Leviticus 23:2-4, the passage quoted at the beginning of this section.¹¹⁰ Commentators have at times sought to resolve the dilemma of the appearance of the שַׁבָּת among the מוֹעֲדִים by suggesting it has been “interpolated,”¹¹¹ or that it is a “later addition”¹¹² to the chapter. Some have attempted to perhaps skirt the issue by alleging that the שַׁבָּת is merely “introduced here by way of preface to the others,”¹¹³ or that it is exempted from being part of the מוֹעֲדִים, which consists of a total of “seven” appointed seasons.¹¹⁴ Others, such as Frank Gorman, have concluded that “the sabbath is excluded from this count in that it is a *weekly* rite and not a *yearly*, calendrical rite.”¹¹⁵ None of these solutions appears sufficiently adequate.

It seems appropriate, thus, to begin by acknowledging that the weekly שַׁבָּת is directly and unequivocally identified in verse 3. Yet, it seems to have been done, both in comparison with, and in contradistinction to, the annual מוֹעֲדִים.¹¹⁶ For instance, the שַׁבָּת (Lev 23:3) is similar to the מוֹעֲדִים, in that it is also a day for a “holy convocation” (see vs. 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35, 36). A partial similarity between the שַׁבָּת and the מוֹעֲדִים is seen regarding the matter of “work” – while both the שַׁבָּת and the Day of Atonement were occasions on which the Israelite was to “do no work” (vs. 3, and vs. 28 respectively), the rest of the annual מוֹעֲדִים required the Israelite to refrain from only

¹¹⁰Ignoring the significance of such lucid parenthetical statements, some have superficially looked at the verse mentioning the Sabbath, then drawn an inaccurate conclusion, as the following example reveals: “In the beginning of Leviticus 23, instructions are repeated for the weekly Sabbath. ‘For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings’ (Lev. 23:3). Then the instructions about the other ‘appointed times’ are given. It becomes clear that these festivals are tightly linked to the Sabbath concept;” (Hall, 70).

¹¹¹McKay, 18, 19. Similarly, Christophe Nihan, in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers*, Thomas Römer, ed., Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2008), 212.

¹¹²Martin Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 166. So also, Nihan, 188.

¹¹³Bush, 234.

¹¹⁴Lloyd R. Bailey, *Leviticus*, Knox Preaching Guides (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 87. As noted above, Mackintosh (325) stated that “strictly speaking, as the attentive reader will observe, Israel’s *first* great feast was the Passover, and their *seventh* was the feast of Tabernacles;” (emphases original). Somewhat similarly, Erdman (111) pointed out that “strictly speaking, the Sabbath was not a ‘feast.’... The first ‘feast’ of the holy year was Passover.” Rodríguez aptly concluded that the Sabbath is actually “not the first feast listed in the chapter;” (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church*, Biblical Research Institute Releases, 3 [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005], 13).

¹¹⁵Frank H. Gorman, *Divine Presence and Community: A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 127 (emphases added). See also, Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 438.

¹¹⁶This type of juxtaposition, so as to emphasize distinct difference, is recognized even by Brueggemann (312), who admitted, regarding the Joseph chronicle discussed above, that “R. Alter may be correct in suggesting a deliberate contrast in the role of sexuality in chapters 38 and 39 as they are presently placed.”

“laborious,” “customary,” “regular,” or “servile” work (vss. 7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36), as already outlined above.¹¹⁷

Additionally, clear contrasts can be seen between the שַׁבָּת and the מִוֵּעָדִים: While the Sabbath operates on a continuous weekly cycle of “six days” followed by the “seventh day,” the other appointed seasons are based upon an annual lunar system. Also, as already demonstrated above, while the שַׁבָּת does not have any fire-offering (i.e., an אֶשָּׁה) intimately intertwined as an integral part of the offerings specifically designated just for it, all of the מִוֵּעָדִים do (see vss. 8, 13, 18, 25, 27, 36). Furthermore, as the broader witness of Scripture attests, while “the great [pilgrim] feasts were to be kept in one place where the sanctuary was established”¹¹⁸ (e.g., Deut 16:16), “the [seventh-day] Sabbath could still be fully observed after the destruction of the Temple,”¹¹⁹ since “the weekly sabbath celebration did not presuppose the existence of the temple.”¹²⁰

Careful examination of the structure and language of Leviticus 23:2-4 has convinced various scholars that there may be additional evidence in support of the notion that, as Herbert Douglass noted, “verse 3 is thrown in *parenthetically* between v. 2 and vv. 4-37.”¹²¹ By way of reminder, Leviticus 23:2b (JPS) states: “The appointed seasons [מִוֵּעָדִים] of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons [מִוֵּעָדִים].” After mentioning the weekly Sabbath, verse 4 (JPS) immediately states: “These are the appointed seasons [מִוֵּעָדִים] of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season [מִוֵּעָד].” Some scholars see this as “a dual introduction,”¹²² or that vs. 4 is a “reiteration”¹²³ of vs. 2b,¹²⁴ thus leading to the conclusion “that although the weekly Sabbath is a sacred time, it is distinguished from the yearly festivals.”¹²⁵

In other words, if the Sabbath were simply one of the festal calendar days, there would have been no reason for the writer to repeat something similar to that initial statement of verse 2. He

¹¹⁷Another partial similarity can be seen from an examination of the actual terms employed for these occasions: Both the seventh day and the Day of Atonement are classified as שַׁבָּת (vs. 3 and vs. 32), and as שַׁבַּת שְׁבִיטוֹן (vs. 3 and vs. 32), while the Day of Trumpets, and the first and eighth days of Tabernacles are called simply שְׁבִיטוֹן (vss. 24, 39).

¹¹⁸Bush, 234.

¹¹⁹Baker, 167.

¹²⁰Bailey, 88.

¹²¹Herbert E. Douglass, *Feast Days: Shadows of Our Faith* (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2006), 40 (emphasis added).

¹²²Timothy M. Willis, *Leviticus*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), 191.

¹²³Hartley, *Leviticus*, 376.

¹²⁴Andrews concluded that “there is a break in the narrative, for the purpose of introducing the Sabbath [in verse 3] as a holy convocation, and that verse 4 begins the theme anew in the very language of verse 2;” (J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. rev. [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887], footnote #23, of chapter 6).

¹²⁵Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 388.

would simply have continued listing the מועדים. However, the fact that the writer intentionally reiterated the basic content of verse 2 indicates that he, after this important “interruption,” knew that he now needed to repeat his introductory statement, with apparently greater specificity.¹²⁶

Illustrating this concept, Timothy Hui posited that “the repetition of the demonstrative אלה, which appears at the end of verse 2 and at the head of verse 4, indicates that verse 3 is a purposeful insertion.”¹²⁷ Nobuyoshi Kiuchi concurred that “the beginning of this verse [4] resumes the last part of v. 2, perhaps to distinguish it from the weekly sabbath.”¹²⁸ Apparently taking into account the fact that the Hebrew sentence begins with the word אלה (i.e., “these”), Douglass concluded that Leviticus 23:4 states: “‘These [i.e., the מועדים now to be listed] are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.’”¹²⁹

Moreover, Hui proposed that “the addition of the phrase ‘in their [appointed] seasons’ to verse 4 (but not in v. 2) makes that verse perhaps, the introduction proper,”¹³⁰ to the festal calendar. Indeed this is the very manner in which the 2012 English version, The Voice, renders the passage: “Here are times I have appointed for sacred assemblies; you are to celebrate these feasts and declare them publicly at their appointed times.” In short, the term “these” [אלה] points forward to the annual festal calendar, which is then outlined. That vs. 4 provides “its own formal introduction”¹³¹ to the מועדים, is an accepted conclusion by some scholars.¹³²

Summary of the “שבת” Parenthesis in Leviticus 23

Based on the consistent manner in which the weekly שבת is spoken about in Scripture as never being a מועד (i.e., an annual appointed season, whose timing is “determined” by human beings), the etymological evidence, the immediate context, and the manner in which the writers of Scripture engaged in deliberate digressions, often for valuable pedagogical purposes, the weight of evidence indicates that the statement regarding the seventh-day Sabbath is intended to be understood

¹²⁶This excellent articulation was provided by David Hor, in a telephone discussion, after he had seen my 2010 3ABN “Today Live” presentation.

¹²⁷Timothy K. Hui, “The Purpose of Israel’s Annual Feasts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 148.

¹²⁸Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2007), 422. In basic agreement, Rodríguez posited: “The biblical writer is making a special effort to indicate that the Sabbath is not part of the feast [days] by going back to that phrase before listing the feast [days];” (Rodríguez, *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church*, 14).

¹²⁹Douglass, *Feast Days*, 29 (emphasis added).

¹³⁰Hui, 148.

¹³¹Bailey, 87.

¹³²See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 438; Sklar, 280. The *Andrews Study Bible* (156) states that vs. 4 is “repeating the introduction of (v. 2) to set Sabbath rest (v. 3) apart from the yearly festivals that follow.” Admittedly, those who incline towards the historical-critical method, claim that vs. 4 was “the original superscript” (Nihan, 203), since they hold (ibid., footnote #63) that “the other heading in v. 2 was probably added when the Sabbath instruction in v. 3 was added to Lev 23” (by a later redactor). See also, ibid., 188 (esp. footnote #27).

as being parenthetically added here in Leviticus 23:3. Capturing the basic significance of this parenthesis, and making a definitive distinction between the *weekly* שַׁבָּת and the *annual* מוֹעֲדִים, the NLT renders the immediately following verse of Leviticus 23:4 thus: “In addition to the Sabbath, the LORD has established festivals, the holy occasions to be observed at the proper time each year.”

Acknowledging the Bracketing of Concepts

In addition to acknowledging that the weekly Sabbath has been parenthetically added, and that “throughout the span of the biblical period,” it was *never* classified as a מוֹעֵד, but was listed as distinct from the מוֹעֲדִים,¹³³ some Bible commentators have noticed a significant similarity between Leviticus 23:3 and verse 38. These two verses form a “prologue” and an “epilogue” for this festal calendar. They serve as “bookends,” but are clearly separated from the content of the festal calendar “book” itself.

Just as the seventh-day שַׁבָּת is highlighted in Leviticus 23:3, in a similar manner Leviticus 23:38a focuses on this *weekly* holy day,¹³⁴ differentiating it from the *annual* מוֹעֲדִים: “These festivals must be observed in addition to the LORD’s regular Sabbath days.” Cole thus appropriately pointed out that “Lev 23:38 forms an *inclusio* with vs. 3.”¹³⁵

Rodríguez indicated that,

Lev 23:37-38 states that the festivals are not like the Sabbath: “These are the Lord’s appointed feasts that you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies to bring offerings made to the Lord.... In addition to the Sabbaths of the Lord and in addition to your gifts....” The Lord did not want the people to consider the Sabbath as one of these feasts and made it very clear that they were to be celebrated in addition to the Sabbath. Even the offerings brought during the festivals were also in addition to those brought during the regular services.¹³⁶

Milgrom emphasized that “the explicit mention of the sabbath as not included among ‘the fixed times of YHWH’ [in Lev 23:37] proves unquestioningly”¹³⁷ that the annual festal calendar goes from verse 4-37, and does *not* include the weekly Sabbath.

Understanding a Key Hebrew Literary Structure

Several scholarly studies of Hebrew literary structures have focused on “parallelisms.” John Willis noted: “Much attention has been given to ... chiasmic parallelism in particular.”¹³⁸ David

¹³³Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1956 (emphasis added). See Chapter Five, footnote #204, for more on this point.

¹³⁴Cole, “The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch,” 90, referred to “the weekly Sabbath in vs. 3, which forms an *inclusio* with the reference to ‘the Sabbaths of Yahweh’ (שַׁבְּתֵי יְהוָה) in vs. 38.”

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 96 (footnote #1).

¹³⁶Rodríguez, *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church*, 14.

¹³⁷Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2033.

¹³⁸John T. Willis, “Alternating (ABA’B’) Parallelism in the Old Testament Psalms and Prophetic Literature,” *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, Elaine R. Follis, ed., Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 40 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 49.

Dorsey, in *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, indicated: “Hebrew authors and editors generally took great pains to arrange their compositions in ways that would help convey their messages.”¹³⁹ Or, as William Shea, specifically dealing with “literary form and theological function in Leviticus,” has demonstrated, the “*literary form* of a given portion of inspired Scripture was designed to help explain its meaning.”¹⁴⁰

Chiastic Structures Can Be Vital for Interpretation

Revealing the seriousness of this matter, Ernst Wendland cautioned that, if the chiastic structure is ignored, “at the very least, the intended message will not be conveyed with the same impact as in the original.”¹⁴¹ More significantly, as Patrick Miller pointed out, “a deeper sensitivity to the poetic character of the text can enhance our understanding, and attention to the poetic features may aid the interpretive process and results.”¹⁴² But “parallelism” is not “one of the primary characteristics of [only] biblical poetry,”¹⁴³ for “Hebrew prose yields a variety of features that may be termed parallelism.”¹⁴⁴

As Wilfred Watson aptly noted, the writing prophets effectively utilized parallel word-pairs “*enabling the audience (or readers) to follow the meaning better.*”¹⁴⁵ In other words, if one attempts to understand any passage in Scripture without reference to the evident symmetrical arrangement of key words and phrases, the intended contextual meaning of the Hebrew terms can too easily be misunderstood, and the passage misinterpreted and misapplied.

Incontrovertible Chiasm from Leviticus 23:4-37

Wilfried Warning, who did his doctoral research on the literary structure of Leviticus, has shown a “complex chiastic structure knitting together Lev 23:4-37.”¹⁴⁶ Warning asserted that “vss. 2-3 [which mentions the seventh-day שַׁבָּת] stand outside the present chiastic structure, but the chiastic structure of the following nine [parts] can hardly be contradicted.”¹⁴⁷

¹³⁹David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 15.

¹⁴⁰William H. Shea, “Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus,” in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, 3 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 131 (emphasis original). Note: The quoted statement is part of the “editorial synopsis” of Shea’s article.

¹⁴¹Ernst Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Prophetic Literature: Determining the Larger Textual Units of Hosea and Joel* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995), 13.

¹⁴²Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 30.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 27.

¹⁴⁵Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 140.

¹⁴⁶Wilfried Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus*, Biblical Interpretation Series 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 90.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

- Verse 4 reads: *miqrā'ê qōdeš 'āšer-tiqrē'û 'ōtām*
- Verse 37 says: *'āšer-tiqrē'û 'ōtām miqrā'ê qōdeš*¹⁴⁹

Then, Milgrom noted that the fact that “the order of these words is reversed in v. 4,” as compared with verse 37, literally locks in verses 4-37 as “a chiasmically related inclusio.”¹⁵⁰ Milgrom is thus correct in his conclusion that the close of the “calendar [in vs. 37] ... forms a chiasmically structured inclusio with the opening verse, v. 4.”¹⁵¹ Keil and Delitzsch concur, pointing out that the concluding formula (of verses 37 and 38) “answers to the heading in vers. 4, in which the Sabbaths are excepted [i.e., excluded].”¹⁵²

Summary and Conclusions

The major findings from this investigation, dealing mainly with the festal calendar, can be summarized as follows: To begin, it must be noted, that a superficial skimming of Leviticus 23 (which itself includes a basic summary of the annual *בְּמִוֶּעֵדִים*) may at first glance appear to suggest that the weekly *שַׁבָּת* is to be considered as the first, and most important, of these appointed seasons. Such a misunderstanding could precipitate the acceptance of the unsupportable theory that very little or no distinction is made between the weekly Sabbath and the annual festal calendar in Leviticus, or elsewhere in Scripture. As seen above, the language and literature of Leviticus 23, and the broader witness of Scripture reveal otherwise.

Thus, based on the above inquiry, it appears that there is plausible support for the following conclusions: (a) That merely juxtaposing various laws, such as seen in Leviticus 23 (where the weekly Sabbath is placed side-by-side with the annual festal calendar), does *not* prove that all of the regulations in the same chapter are of equal legislative value; (b) That the seventh-day Sabbath is unquestioningly distinguished from the festal calendar by the fact that the divinely-directed fire-offering was to be offered as an inseparable part of the *daily*, *monthly*, and *annual* occasions; and, that there was *never* any fire-offering (i.e., an *הִשָּׂא*) as part of the offerings specifically designated

¹⁴⁹Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 1958) rightly noted that the new moon “is not a *miqrā'ê qōdeš* (i.e., a ‘sacred occasion’)” according to Scripture. Neither is it ever classified as a *שַׁבָּת*, though once a year, on the seventh month, that new moon day was to be observed as a “Day of Trumpets” (Lev 23:24), and was classified as a *שַׁבְּתוֹן*, a “sabbatism;” that is, it was not a full, regular sabbath day of rest from all labor (*BDB* [1951], 992). Osborn and Hatton suggested the term “sabbatical;” (Noel D. Osborn, and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, Helps for Translators [New York: United Bible Societies, 1999], 400).

¹⁵⁰Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2033.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.* Nihan (180) similarly noted that the “festal regulations” “are framed by a superscript and a subscript in v. 4 and in vv. 37-38.”

¹⁵²C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2, *The Pentateuch*, James Martin, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 447. Timothy Willis (191) likewise observed that “verse 4 forms an inclusio with verses 37-38.” See also, Bellinger, who stated that “verse 38 notes that these festival observances are in addition to the customary Sabbath worship;” (W. H. Bellinger, *Leviticus and Numbers*, New International Biblical Commentary [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001], 140).

for the weekly שַׁבָּת; (c) That, based on vital etymological factors, it is undeniable that the Hebrew noun מוֹעֵד derives from the verb יָעַד, which means “to set, appoint, or designate;” and that such was done by human beings, by observing the new moon, for the annual and septennial occasions, while no such need existed to “appoint” the Sabbath, since it had been “set” by God at creation, as every seventh day; hence, the Sabbath is *not a mō‘ēd* (i.e., it is *not* a feast day or an appointed season “set” by humans); (d) That the Hebrew term שַׁבָּת is *not* used when referring to any annual מוֹעֵדִים (other than the Day of Atonement, which itself is clearly and repeatedly differentiated from the seventh-day Sabbath in other places in Scripture); (e) That the above factors, together with the immediate context and the manner in which Bible writers engaged in intentional digressions (at times for pivotal pedagogical purposes), provide sufficient evidence that the Sabbath is actually in parentheses here in Leviticus 23:3; (f) That the language and overall structure show that Leviticus 23:3 serves as a prologue (mentioning the seventh-day Sabbath), while Leviticus 23:38 serves as an epilogue (by likewise noting the weekly Sabbath), thereby positioning the שַׁבָּת as two “bookends” which are separate from, and of a different nature than, the annual festal calendar; and (g) That, in addition to all of the above, ancient Semitic literary structure reveals that Leviticus 23:4-37 contains an extensive, intricately-developed chiasm, which deliberately includes *only* the annual festal calendar, while specifically excluding the weekly Sabbath¹⁵³ – an inverted parallelism, corroborated by the apparently intentional inclusio located in vs. 4 and 37.

All of the above serve to demonstrate quite persuasively that the seventh-day Sabbath itself is *not a mō‘ēd*, that is, an appointed season, or part of the ritual system of ancient Israel. In Milgrom’s words: “The sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the *mō‘ēd* in all the biblical sources.”¹⁵⁴ Moreover, this scriptural conclusion also invalidates the notion that “the weekly Sabbath and the other annual sacred appointed times stand or fall together.”¹⁵⁵ In short, based on the “sacred story” of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, Lloyd Bailey has concluded: “Sabbath observance, grounded in creation and practiced even by the deity, thus began long prior to the historical situations which produced the annual festivals.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³While this essay has been focused primarily on Lev 23, repeatedly in Scripture there are additional definitive distinctions made between the weekly שַׁבָּת of the everlasting covenant, and the temporary types of the festal system.

¹⁵⁴Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1954. See, for example, 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; Neh 10:33; etc.

¹⁵⁵For those, however, who may be tempted to go too far, seeking to place the seventh-day Sabbath on the same level as the yearly מוֹעֵדִים, the Jewish Hebrew scholar Jacques Doukhan gives a serious warning: “To equate the *shabbat* with the festivals may affect the true meaning of *shabbat*, ultimately removing its mandatory character. For this reason, it is problematic to associate Jewish festivals with the *shabbat*. Paradoxically, by elevating the Jewish festivals to the level of the *shabbat* one may kill the *shabbat* itself;” (Doukhan, 24).

¹⁵⁶Bailey, 88. Similarly, Balentine (174) noted: “The [seventh-day] Sabbath is the only day whose observance is commanded in the Decalogue, and this command is, in turn, the only one that is grounded in creation theology ... (Exod. 20:8-10a, 11).”

CHAPTER FIVE

THE “FEAST, NEW MOON, SABBATH” PHRASE

Reflections on an Old Testament Sequence

In his study of Colossians 2:16, Maurice Logan asserted: “‘A feast day, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day’ (R. V.). Note the order – yearly, monthly, weekly – and compare with 1 Chron. 23:30, 31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Neh. 10:33; Ezek. 45:17; Hosea 2:11, where the same order (sometimes reversed) is given, in all of which the word ‘Sabbath’ is in the weekly part of the list. Paul evidently had the same order in mind.”¹ In essential agreement, James Borland noted: “This triple terminology of festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths is found elsewhere in the Old Testament (Isa. 1:13-14; Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11); thus it was familiar to Paul’s Jewish readers.”²

Concurring, Jerry Gladson concluded that Colossians 2:16 employs “a technical formula used frequently in the Old Testament and apocryphal books to designate the sum total of all the Jewish sacred days.”³ Gladson then posited that the full formula uses the chronological pattern yearly-monthly-weekly, which “invariably includes the weekly seventh-day Sabbath.”⁴ Similarly, Craig Blomberg alleged that this passage contains “the Israelite triad of annual, monthly, and weekly holy days, with the Sabbath as the last of these.”⁵ These comments are a representative sample of a large body of commentary maintaining a similar view.⁶

¹Maurice Logan, *Sabbath Theology: A Reply to Those Who Insist That Saturday Is the Only True Sabbath Day* (New York: New York Sabbath Committee, 1913), 268.

²James A. Borland, “Should We Keep the Sabbath?” The Christian Research Institute, 2005, <http://www.equip.org/free/DS420.htm> (accessed 9/12/2005). This article first appeared in the *Christian Research Journal* 26/2 (2003). Similar to others, Borland includes Isa 1:13-14 in his list of passages alleged to have a “triad.” However, as noted below in the “Excursus,” this passage actually has two distinct dyads. Thompson similarly alleged that “these same words [‘festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths’] appear in OT summaries of Israel’s distinctive practices (1 Chr 23:31; Hos 2:11; Ezek 45:17...);” (Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 64).

³Jerry A. Gladson, *A Theologian’s Journey from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries), 332. He wrote: The “familiar chronological trilogy” reveals “that *sabbata* in Colossians 2:16 ... is indeed the weekly Sabbath;” (Jerry Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath? A Response to Ron du Preez,” in Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, rev. ed. [Glendale, AZ: LAM Publications, 2010], 393). Strand also employs the term “trilogy;” (Kenneth A. Strand, “The Sabbath,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Raoul Dederen, ed. [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000], 506, 507). Gladson’s reference to “apocryphal books” is addressed in the “Appendix” below. Papaioannou seems to prefer to call it a “calendric triplet;” (Kim Papaioannou, *Israel, Covenant, Law: A Third Perspective on Paul* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017], 136).

⁴Gladson, *A Theologian’s Journey from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*, 332.

⁵Craig L. Blomberg, “Responses to Skip MacCarty: Response by Craig L. Blomberg,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 86; idem, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 344.

⁶For example, more than 120 years ago, Love wrote: “In the list in Colossians there is a descending scale – yearly festivals, monthly ones, weekly ones;” (William DeLoss Love, *Sabbath and Sunday* [Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1896], 56). That this is essentially the view of the majority of Bible commentaries, was noted in Chapter One above. A

In reference to the passages in Chronicles and Nehemiah, Mxolisi Sokupa's doctoral thesis noted that "there is a need therefore to examine these texts more closely to ascertain their constituent parts. This has important ramifications for the interpretation of Col 2:16, 17."⁷ Regrettably, instead of engaging in the needed textual examination, Sokupa's doctoral research itself ignored these crucial passages, while relying considerably on other scholars.⁸

Referring to almost all of the Bible texts referenced above, Blomberg suggests that these are the "most natural antecedents for Paul to have in mind,"⁹ which if taken into account, provide the "plain meaning of the text."¹⁰ Referring to these "triads," Christopher Seitz cautioned that "one needs to look at these contexts more closely."¹¹ Since some New Testament passages "can be understood only through an accurate understanding of their OT counterparts,"¹² this chapter will set out to assess the accuracy of the notion that Colossians 2:16 includes a "triad,"¹³ or "combination of terms"¹⁴ (of

classic example is Smith, who (citing LXX texts, such as 1 Chron 23:31; and 2 Chron 31:3) opined that "ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα are respectively celebrated annually, monthly and weekly;" (Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul's Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae* [London: T & T Clark, 2006], 117).

⁷Mxolisi Michael Sokupa, "Σκια τῶν Μελλόντων in Col 2:17: An Interpretation" (PhD dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2009), 95.

⁸See Sokupa, 85-101. Throughout his thesis, it appears that Sokupa relied overly on others, without doing some of the indispensable, careful investigation of the actual texts of Scripture. A classic example of this, is his "Table 2" (on p. 94), which he indicates was "adapted from McKay, 34;" (i.e., Heather A. McKay, "New Moon or Sabbath?" in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington, and William H. Shea, eds. [New York: Crossroad, 1991], 26-27). If he had examined the actual chapters (i.e., Num 28-29), he would have realized that eight out of the ten rows on his "adapted" Table 2 have errors in them: two of the "Calendric Items" have been misnamed; there are incorrect dates for two other of the "Calendric Items;" the claim regarding "no work" is inaccurate in four cases; the monthly offering has been omitted from the Day of Trumpets; and the "daily" sacrifices have been omitted from almost all of the chart; ultimately, his Table 2 has a count of 37 fewer animal sacrifices than required. (To be fair, it must be noted that most of these errors "originate" with McKay; however, others are Sokupa's). In brief, since it appears that his work lacks the "careful consideration" that he has himself rightly called for (Sokupa, 100), since he seems to have overtrustingly relied on others (apparently without properly checking the validity of their work), ignored crucial passages, etc., the conclusions he drew in his thesis cannot be considered to be reliable, especially not textually dependable.

⁹Blomberg, "The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ," 343. See also, Craig L. Blomberg, "Responses to Joseph A. Pipa: Response by Craig L. Blomberg," in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 191.

¹⁰Blomberg, "The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ," 342.

¹¹Christopher R. Seitz, *Colossians*, Brazos' Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 135.

¹²Skip MacCarty, "Responses to Craig L. Blomberg: Response by Skip MacCarty," in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 371.

¹³In his commentary, citing several references, Wolter called it "diese Trias;" (Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Kolosser; Der Brief an Philemon* [Würzburg, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993], 143). Moo referred to it as "the threefold;" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 220).

¹⁴David M. Hay, *Colossians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 105. See also, Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Hermeneia, William R. Poehlmann, and Robert J. Karris, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 115. See also, G. K. Beale, "Colossians," in G. K. Beale, and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 862. Wilson stated that these three terms "are mentioned together;" (R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* [London: T & T Clark International, 2005], 217). Similarly, H. Ross Cole, "The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch: Old Testament Indicators of the Extent of Their Applicability" (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 1996), 281, 355.

an annual, monthly, weekly sequence of holy days), including the purported basis of antecedents in the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁵

Use of the Old Testament in Colossians

Recently, there has been a growing interest in inter-textuality, especially of the Old Testament in the New.¹⁶ One challenge has been that “commentators offer various definitions of ‘allusion’ and ‘echo’ [and other related terms] and posit various criteria for discernment of both.”¹⁷ In connection with the passages alleged to be antecedents¹⁸ to the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase in Colossians 2:16, scholars have used verbs such as “corresponds”¹⁹ or “represents,”²⁰ or substantives such as “allusion,”²¹ “parallel,”²² etc., claiming that “the triadic formula”²³ is “a frequent OT idea.”²⁴ The

¹⁵There are other “calendric texts” (Sokupa, 87), in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as Exod 12:1-20; 23:14-17, 18-24; Deut 16:1-17. However, since they do not appear to be relevant antecedents for the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase in Col 2:16 these passages are not dealt with in this thesis.

¹⁶Discussing the “explosive increase in interpretive methodologies,” Klingbeil included “intertextuality” as “one of more promising efforts,” then explained: “Intertextuality studies the inner-biblical use and re-use of biblical texts by contemporary or later biblical authors. Instead of focusing solely upon direct quotes, it looks at allusions, recurring motifs and known patterns, or the opposite to those patterns;” (Gerald A. Klingbeil, “‘Eating’ and ‘Drinking’ in the Book of Revelation: A Study of New Testament Thought and Theology,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16/1-2 [2005]: 89).

¹⁷Beale, 841. Since Beale’s “purpose is to argue the likelihood that Paul, to one degree or another, intended to make the reference” (ibid.), it is clear that he would more likely be in agreement with the use of the term “allusion,” as defined below.

¹⁸See, for example, the claim of Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 262, 275.

¹⁹Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 215.

²⁰Michael F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon*, A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 83; Robert Bratcher, and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 65. Dunn posited that these “three terms together, ‘sabbaths, new moons, and feasts,’ was in fact a regular Jewish way of speaking of the main festivals of Jewish religion;” (James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 175). Others have seen it as a “[fairly] typical” list of Jewish holy days; see Allan R. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 77; Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 121; N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 119.

²¹See John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, Classic Commentary Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 177. Eadie did not mention Hos 2:11 as one of these possible “allusions.” Reynolds asserts: “The key to understanding this reference [i.e., “feast, new moon, sabbath,” of Col 2:16] is unmistakably found in the OT texts to which it clearly alludes;” (Edwin Reynolds, “‘Let No One Judge You:’ Col 2:16-17 in Exegetical Perspective,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 20/1-2 [2009]: 211). However, Reynolds failed to define his use of the term “alludes.”

²²Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, rev. ed. (Glendale, AZ: LAM Publications, 2010), 172. Concerning this triad, Foster claimed that “the same three terms in 2 Chron. 31: 3 that occurs here in Col. 2:16 forms an interesting parallel, though it is not necessary to suggest direct literary dependence;” (Paul Foster, *Colossians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries [London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016], 281). Papaioannou (135) also used the term “parallel.”

²³Bird, 83.

²⁴Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 90. Similarly, Markus Barth, and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Astrid B. Beck, trans., Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 338.

basic question, as succinctly put by Seitz in his recent commentary, is: “What is Paul thinking of when he uses the triad?”²⁵

The above terminological disharmony has been greatly benefitted by the doctoral research of Christopher Beetham, which specifically focused on the possible use of the Old Testament in Colossians.²⁶ In accord with other scholars, he concluded that there are no explicit quotations in this epistle.²⁷ One of the major contributions of Beetham’s extensive research into literary scholarship includes the clear definitions he has articulated,²⁸ together with essential criteria for determining such potential inter-textual appearances.²⁹ Since he defines the term “echo” as “a subtle, literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition,”³⁰ the only pertinent definition for this thesis, in the context of the above-noted purposeful triad, would be the term “allusion.” Beetham aptly noted that “an allusion can exist in the form of a ‘word cluster,’”³¹ and then identifies and discusses the following four items essential to defining this term more precisely:³²

(a) It is a deliberate, or “intentional, conscious attempt by an author to point a reader back to a prior text.”

(b) An “allusion has ‘in each instance, a single identifiable source.’” The author desires to “point the audience to a specific predecessor.”

(c) It “must adequately stand out in order to be perceived by the audience,” thus implying that “the author and reader share a common language and tradition.”³³

²⁵Seitz, 135.

²⁶Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

²⁷*Ibid.*, 2, 5, 8, 260-262. He rightly noted that though “there are no quotations of Scripture in Colossians, this is not to say that scholars therefore have not seen *any* influence of the OT upon the letter;” (*ibid.*, emphasis original).

²⁸For example, he defined “quotation” (*ibid.*, 17) as: “An intentional, explicit, verbatim or near verbatim citation of a former text of six words or more in length. A *formal* quotation is a quotation accompanied by an introductory marker, or *quotation formula* [if so, then the quotation could be less than six words]; an *informal* quotation lacks such a marker.”

²⁹This matter of “inter-textuality,” while a still-developing field, may benefit much from Beetham’s work, in that he has promoted a more careful definition of terms, as well as the need for a better hermeneutical approach. His work may clarify the confusion (among some) as to the matter of the role of extra-biblical texts. For example, Fantin has alleged that “extrabiblical texts” help to provide “the original context,” which is basically indispensable to understanding “what Paul may have had in mind;” (Joseph D. Fantin, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:1 [Jan-Mar 2011]; <http://www.dts.edu/reviews/ron-du-preez-judging-the-sabbath> [accessed 9 July 2017]).

³⁰Beetham, 24. His only other relevant definition is the word “parallel,” which he used for “broader elements (such as a theme or doctrine) rather than a specific textual relationship;” (*ibid.*, 25). Unfortunately, based on superficial comparisons of the Col 2:16 tripartite phrase with English versions (but not the Hebrew) of passages in 1 and 2 Chron and Neh, it has been concluded that these serve as “parallel OT passages;” (Reynolds, “‘Let No One Judge You:’ Col 2:16-17 in Exegetical Perspective,” 215).

³¹Beetham, 17.

³²These four points, as briefly stated below, are elaborated on from page 18-20, *ibid.*

³³In answer to the question as to how many of Paul’s references would his audience have actually detected, Beetham explained: “It is possible that Paul wrote with especially the functionally literate in view, some of whom would certainly have held leadership roles in the churches, and expected of them to teach and explain his message to the rest of the congregation, including its OT foundations;” (Beetham, 257). Moreover, as seen in the example of the Bereans (Acts 17), there were some who had access to the Hebrew Scriptures, and could have perhaps checked things out themselves. Fee concluded that “even though Paul was an obviously trained *reader* of texts, he knew well that he spoke

(d) An author employing an allusion “expects that the audience will remember the original sense of the previous text and link the appropriate components that the new context requires in order to be most fully understood.”³⁴

In view of the above factors, Beetham has proposed the following functional definition of an allusion: “A literary device intentionally employed by an author to point a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be fully understood.”³⁵ While Beetham’s definition is helpful, it may need some adjustment. Taking into account that few of the original audience may have been able to actually read,³⁶ as well as the fact that the writer may have intended to direct his audience to more than one scriptural antecedent,³⁷ the following adapted definition will be employed in this present thesis: “An allusion is a literary device intentionally employed by an author so as to point a reader or hearer back to at minimum one identifiable scriptural source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be fully understood.” Before proceeding further, it needs to be noted that Beetham intentionally underlines the intrinsic nature and value of a genuine allusion, by stating: “An author has failed in his use of allusion as a literary device if the audience does not catch the reference.”³⁸ Furthermore, since by its very definition, “an echo is not dependent upon the original” it seems that the question regarding whether or not Paul was using an “echo” is not germane to this investigation.³⁹

into a culture where the majority were not, but who nonetheless knew their Bibles especially well;” (Gordon D. Fee, “Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians: Reflections on Pauline Christology and Gentile Inclusion in God’s Story,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*, Sang-Won [Aaron] Son, ed. [New York: T & T Clark, 2006], 202, emphasis original).

³⁴This final point may seem self-evident, in view of the many who have alleged that there are OT antecedents which assist in understanding the meaning of the tripartite phrase of Col 2:16. Curiously, while Gladson on the one hand insisted that this is a “familiar chronological trilogy” (Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 393), he claimed on the other hand that “New Testament writers often reinterpret Old Testament passages, giving them new meaning not evident in the original contexts;” (ibid., 384). This novel suggestion of Gladson’s appears to ultimately undermine the entire notion that Col 2:16 is an “allusion” to at least one Old Testament antecedent. This type of reasoning is not unique, as seen in the following example. In discussing E. P. Sanders’ exegetical proposals, Wright lamented that Sanders “suggested that Paul quoted the Old Testament more or less at random, without regard for context;” (N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009], 10). Then Wright added (ibid.): “It is hard to argue against such determination not to see what is in fact there in the texts.”

³⁵Beetham, 20. In essential accord, though employing the much looser term “echo,” Fee stated: “One of the more remarkable features of Paul’s letters to his churches is the many times that he echoes the language of the Old Testament in contexts where he almost certainly expects his readers to catch not only the echo, but to recognize the implications as well;” (Fee, 201).

³⁶Beetham (258) granted that “the bulk of the church” to which Paul wrote, may not have been “biblically and functionally literate members.” Similarly, Fee (202) noted that “the majority were not” trained readers.

³⁷For example, when Paul writes to the Corinthian believers regarding the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26), he could be referring to any one of (or two of, or all three of) the gospel accounts: Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19, 20. Also, if he had wanted to alert his readers and/or hearers to anything related to Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah, until his ultimate fall (all during the reign of King Hezekiah), the apostle Paul could have made allusions to 2 Kgs 18:13-19:37, or to 2 Chron 32:1-22, or to Isa 36:1-37:38, or to any two of these passages, or even to all three accounts.

³⁸Beetham, 12.

³⁹Ibid., 21. Also, it must be noted that, “the author does not intend to point the audience to the precursor;” (ibid.).

This study will proceed, firstly to make a careful analysis of various passages purported to be biblical antecedents to the Colossians 2:16 triad. Then, utilizing the broadened definition of allusion, the above-enumerated criteria (modified so as to align with this adapted definition) will be used as the paradigm through which to consider which Old Testament passages, if any, may qualify as legitimate precursors to the “feast, new moon, sabbath” tripartite phrase in the Colossian epistle.

Analysis of the Primary Alleged “Triad” Passages

On the surface it may appear that the passages mentioned above distinctly demonstrate that there is a yearly-monthly-weekly sequence in the Hebrew Scriptures, which is then simply reflected in Colossians 2:16. In order to properly investigate this claim, these passages will be carefully considered in the original language,⁴⁰ and the immediate and broader contexts will be taken into account. To begin with, an in-depth analysis will be done of the following six primary passages: Numbers 28-29; 1 Chronicles 23:29-31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 2 Chronicles 8:12-13; 2 Chronicles 31:3; and Nehemiah 10:33.⁴¹

As noted above, Hosea 2:11 is one of the texts that has frequently been included in the listing of Old Testament passages that purportedly contain the yearly-monthly-weekly sequence. The chart below indicates that all of the primary passages analyzed use the Hebrew term מועד for the “yearly” appointed seasons. However, in Hosea 2:11 the corresponding term is אָרְבַּע, and the order of concepts (superficially, at least) seems inverted. This variance, together with several other differentiating factors, places the Hosea passage in a different category, and it will be examined in greater detail later in this Chapter.⁴²

The purpose of Table 10 is to summarize the results of a meticulous textual investigation of the six principal passages often identified as containing a yearly-monthly-weekly chronological combination of terms.

⁴⁰As indicated, for example, in footnote #58, #76, and #113 of Chapter Three above, and footnote #41 of Chapter Six below, the Septuagint (LXX) is not always a reliable indicator of what is found in the Masoretic Text. Moreover, as Sauer astutely observed, “the LXX equivalents have *all* noticeably *expanded* the meanings of the Hebr. terms;” (G. Sauer, “עָרַב *y’d* to appoint,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds., Mark E. Biddle, trans. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997], 2:553, emphases added). This concern is especially relevant to this study since a crucial Hebrew term, מועד, has been frequently rendered in the LXX in a broadened way as *kairos* or *heortē* (ibid.), instead of with the more precise term *panēguris*, resulting in some questionable conclusions. Hence, due to its inconsistent rendering of some Hebrew terms into Greek, it would be better to not naïvely rely on the Septuagint in relation to the six frequently referenced “triad” passages, or the alleged sequences in Ezek 45 and 46. Paul’s utilization of the LXX, and its implications for this investigation of Col 2:16, will be considered later in Chapter Seven.

⁴¹A careful reading of the major literature on this matter reveals that, while other passages of Scripture are sometimes cited as allegedly having this calendar sequence, the ones most frequently and consistently referenced are at least the last five of the six being analyzed here. The other passages will be considered later in this chapter.

⁴²In discussing the fact that the other passages deal with sacrifices on these days, Giem acknowledged “the possible exception of Hosea 2:11;” (Paul Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16” [MA thesis, Loma Linda University, 1977], 30).

Table 10 Primary Sequence Passages in the Old Testament ⁴³				
Reference	DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	YEARLY
Num 28:1-29:40	בין הערבים and בבקר = “in the morning” & “between the [two] evenings” (Num 28:4, 8); also ליום = “for the day;” and תמיד = “regular” (Num 28:3)	שבת בשבתו = [lit.] “Sabbath by Sabbath of him/it” = “every Sabbath” (i.e., implicit plural; cyclical) (Num 28:10)	חודשיכם = “New Moons of you” (Num 28:11)	במועדיכם = “in appointed seasons of you” (Num 29:39; cf. Num 28:2); also חג = “feast:” Unleavened Bread (Num 28:17), and Tabernacles (Num 29:12)
1 Chron 23:29-31	לערב & בבקר בבקר = “in the morning, in the morning” & “in the evening”	לשבתות = “on the Sabbaths”	לחודשים = “on the New Moons”	ולמועדים = “and on the appointed seasons”
2 Chron 2:4 [MT: vs. 3]	ולערב and לבקר = “for the morning” & “and for the evening”	לשבתות = “on the Sabbaths”	ולחודשים = “and on the New Moons”	ולמועדי = “and on appointed seasons of”
2 Chron 8:12-13	יום ביום = “day by day” (i.e., cyclical)	לשבתות = “on the Sabbaths”	ולחודשים = “and on the New Moons”	ולמועדות = “and on the appointed seasons” [& 3x חג]
2 Chron 31:3	והערב and הבקר = “the morning;” & “and the evening”	לשבתות = “on the Sabbaths”	ולחודשים = “and on the New Moons”	ולמועדים = “and on the appointed seasons”
Neh 10:33 [MT:vs.34]	התמיד = “the regular” (“daily” [HCSB])	השבתות = “the Sabbaths”	החודשים = “the New Moons”	למועדים = “for the appointed seasons”

Since “the literary unity of Numbers 28-29 is commonly accepted,”⁴⁴ it may be well to note the distinctive calendric sequence, in which the focus moves from the daily through to the yearly. Moreover, as evident from the Hebrew text, the LORD required specific animal burnt sacrifices (i.e., עלות) as an integral part of the offering for the daily (Num 28:3, 6), the weekly (Num 28:10), the monthly (Num 28:11, 14), as well as each of the yearly cultic activities (Num 28:19, 27; 29:2, 8, 13, 36). Recognizing the focus on “offerings,” it has been noted that the purpose of the pentateuchal passage in Numbers 28-29 “is to define the periodic public offerings,”⁴⁵ the catalogue of sacred

⁴³The English translation in this chart (for the “Daily” column) is that of the John R. Kohlenberger, ed., *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987). For the other three columns, it is that of the JPS, with the following exceptions: (a) For Num 28:11, where the JPS has “your new moons,” it has been rendered as “New Moons of you;” (b) For Num 29:39, where the JPS has “in your appointed seasons,” it has been rendered as “in appointed seasons of you;” and (c) For 1 Chron 23:31, where JPS has “in,” has been rendered as “on,” for the “yearly.”

⁴⁴Christophe Nihan, in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers*, Thomas Römer, ed., *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2008), 186.

⁴⁵Timothy Hui, “The Purpose of Israel’s Annual Feasts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 145, quoting George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), 402.

times being merely incidental.⁴⁶ Not to be missed is the notable fact that all of the other five passages (from Chronicles and Nehemiah) are located in the “Writings” section (the כְּתוּבִים) of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Four-Part Sequence in a Formal Bible Version

Other than the original institution of the sacrificial system, as outlined across the two chapters in Numbers 28 and 29, the four-part sequence as diagramed above is at times difficult to recognize in some English translations.⁴⁷ Thus, so as to emphasize this aspect as well as the matter of the burnt sacrifices, the formal Jewish Publication Society (*Tanach*) version is quoted below, with the relevant terms highlighted in *italics*, in **bold**, or in *underlined italics*:

1 Chronicles 23:29-31a: “for the showbread also, and for the fine flour for a meal-offering, whether of unleavened wafers, or of that which is baked on the griddle, or of that which is soaked, and for all manner of measure and size; and to stand **every morning** to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at **even**; and to offer all *burnt-offerings* [i.e., עֲלוֹת] unto the LORD, on the **sabbath_s**, on the **new moon_s**, and in the **appointed season_s**.”

2 Chronicles 2:3 [Eng: vs. 4]: “Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him incense of sweet spices, and for the continual showbread, and for the *burnt-offerings* [i.e., עֲלוֹת] **morning** and **evening**, on the **sabbath_s**, and on the **new moon_s**, and on the **appointed season_s** of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel.”

2 Chronicles 8:12-13a: “Then Solomon offered *burnt-offerings* [i.e., עֲלוֹת] unto the LORD on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch, even as the duty of **every day** required, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the **sabbath_s**, and on the **new moon_s**, and on the **appointed season_s**.”⁴⁸

2 Chronicles 31:3: “He appointed also the king’s portion of his substance for the *burnt-offerings* [i.e., עֲלוֹת], to wit, for the **morning** and **evening** *burnt-offerings* [i.e., עֲלוֹת], and the *burnt-offerings* [i.e., עֲלוֹת] for the **sabbath_s**, and for the **new moon_s**, and for the **appointed season_s**, as it is written in the Law of the LORD.”

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Most often this seems to stem from the problem that there is no single English word that accurately captures the meaning of the Hebrew term מועד. Hence, for example, English versions have rendered the plural מועדים in Neh 10:33 in the following ways: “appointed festivals” (NIV); “appointed feasts” (ESV); “annual festivals” (NLT); “set feasts” (ASV) – all of which give the mistaken impression that the word means “feast” or “festival” (for which the Hebrew term is חג). While the NASB renders it as “appointed times,” and the NET as “appointed meetings,” the JPS has rendered this term as “appointed seasons,” which appears to best capture its true meaning. The only known other English version to also use the language “appointed seasons” is YLT, which unfortunately does not generally make for smooth reading.

⁴⁸The rest of the verse continues, “three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.” On the surface it appears that these were the only מועדים; however, as the context shows, the Chronicler is focusing on relating the account of Solomon’s building project after its completion. As Gladson perceptively noted, here the annual listing includes only the three pilgrim festivals, evidently because these were the ones which the entire Israelite [at least male] population “would have to observe through pilgrimage to the Temple;” (Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 380).

Nehemiah 10:34 [Eng: vs. 33]: “for the showbread, and for the continual meal-offering, and for the **continual burnt-offering** [i.e., עֲלֹת], of the **sabbath**, of the **new moon**, for the **appointed seasons**, and for the holy things, and for the sin-offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

Just as the Septuagint translators have done, by rendering the Hebrew term עֲלֹת (in every relevant text in Numbers 28-29), into the Greek ὀλοκαύτωμα, so these LXX linguists have rightly captured the emphasis on the *burnt-offering* – which becomes a key identifying link for each of the five passages noted above. In addition, the starting point of the “**daily**” *burnt-offering*, in each of these five passages has been noted through the use of Greek words, almost all of which hark back to the terms used in Numbers 28-29.⁴⁹ In the original Hebrew (and as affirmed in specific aspects in the LXX, as noted above), it is clear that a tetrad, not a triad, is quite evident in these passages.

Summary of the Six Primary Alleged “Triad” Passages

The above diagrammatic analysis, together with the JPS versional corroboration, indicates a few things: First, Numbers 28 and 29 deal with the various burnt sacrifices [i.e., עֲלֹת] to be made daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly, according to Moses’ instructions, as given to him by God.⁵⁰ As Paul Giem observed: “What is dealt with is the [*burnt*] offerings on these days.”⁵¹

Second, as seen in the aptly translated JPS version, every one of these six passages includes the “*appointed seasons*” (i.e., מִן־יָמֵינוּ) as the final occasion. This clearly contrasts with the language of “*feasts*” or “*festivals*,” as used in most English versions – language which may have engendered the false idea that these passages employ the same basic terminology as seen in Colossians 2:16.⁵²

Third, while the Hebrew terms for the “*daily*” vary, the language shows that the texts in 1 and 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah do refer to *daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly* burnt sacrifices.⁵³ Fourth,

⁴⁹For 1 Chron 23:30, πρωῖ (“morning”), and ἑσπέρας (“evening”); for 2 Chron 2:4, πρωῖ (“morning”), and δειλῆς (“evening”); for 2 Chron 8:12, 13, ἡμέρας ἐν ἡμέρα (“day by day”); for 2 Chron 31:3, πρωῖνήν (“early morning”), and δειλινήν (“dusk”); for Neh 10:33, ἐνδελεχισμοῦ (“regular,” i.e., “daily”). The terms in Numbers 28:3-6 were πρωῖ (“morning”), ἑσπέραν (“evening”), ἡμέραν (“day”), ἐνδελεχώς and ἐνδελεχισμοῦ (both meaning “regular,” i.e., “daily”).

⁵⁰As Gladson put it: “The passage unmistakably classifies the days upon which these sacrifices are to be offered in a chronological order: daily, weekly, monthly, and annually;” (Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 379).

⁵¹Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16,” 31 (emphasis added).

⁵²While, on the surface, it may appear that the LXX (of most of the above passages) provides linguistic proof that Col 2:16 is derived from these OT “antecedents,” this claim ignores several facts, including the following: (1) The calendric sequence is in the “reverse” order as compared to Col 2:16; (2) It has a fourth factor (the “daily”) as distinctly rendered in the LXX (and as noted in footnote #49 above); (3) It focuses on the daily burnt sacrifice (in contrast to Col 2:16 which does not).

⁵³Discussing the “regular observance of temple worship, with its proper sacrifices,” in the context of 2 Chron 8:12-15, Selman recognized “the pattern of daily, weekly, monthly, and annual ceremonies;” (Martin J. Selman, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries [Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994], 349). Similarly, John Mark Hicks, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2001), 302; Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 627.

in each of these passages the terms of alleged “triad” are all stated in the plural form,⁵⁴ which is distinct from the singulars seen in Colossians 2:16.

Finally, every designated passage in 1 and 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (all from the פְּתוּבִים) is “reminiscent of Numbers 28-29”⁵⁵ (in the תּוֹרָה), where instructions for such sacrifices were first systematically articulated:

- (a) 1 Chronicles 23:31 – “in accordance with the regulations”⁵⁶ (re: David’s plans);
- (b) 2 Chronicles 2:4 – “this is a lasting ordinance for Israel”⁵⁷ (re: Solomon’s plans);
- (c) 2 Chronicles 8:13 – “according to the commandment of Moses” (re: Solomon’s actions),⁵⁸
- (d) 2 Chronicles 31:3 – “as it is written in the Law of the LORD” (re: Hezekiah’s actions);
- (e) Nehemiah 10:34 – “as it is written in the law of Moses”⁵⁹ (re: Nehemiah’s actions).

In short, it can be plausibly concluded that all of these passages deal not simply with calendric times, but rather focus on *burnt sacrifices*, and that “all of these are quite clearly derived from Numbers 28-29.”⁶⁰ Each of these passages has a basic four-part sequence – *daily, weekly, monthly,* and *yearly* – not three-part as maintained by most. Significantly, the fourth item in the sequence is consistently identified as “appointed seasons” (i.e., מועדים), not as “feasts,” as so often alleged.⁶¹ Finally, every one of the terms of the purported triad is directly stated (or implied, as in Num 28:10) to be in the *plural*, unlike the singular forms found in all of the three terms in Colossians 2:16.

Analysis of the Secondary Alleged “Triad” Passages

In addition to the six primary passages analyzed above, a few passages located in the “Prophets” section (the נְבִיאִים) of the Hebrew Scriptures, have sometimes been suggested as the

⁵⁴When first set up (as articulated in Num 28-29) no definite article הַ was placed before the three key terms.

⁵⁵This is Gladson’s language, in reference to his analysis of 2 Chron 31:3; (Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 380). He did conclude similarly regarding other passages, though; see *ibid.*, 379-381.

⁵⁶This is from the NET.

⁵⁷This is from the NIV.

⁵⁸Selman, for example, acknowledged that “in all this, Solomon is faithful to the commands of both *Moses* (v. 13) and *David* (vv. 14-15);” (Selman, 349, emphasis original). Williamson noted that “the Chronicler spells out the other occasions too, *according to the commandment of Moses*, in this case especially Num. 28f;” (H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, New Century Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 232, emphasis original).

⁵⁹This is from the DCB.

⁶⁰“Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters,” Presented to the Fortieth (1973) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; (see comments under sub-section “6. Colossians 2:16-17”). <https://www.opc.org/GA/sabbath.html> (accessed 22 August 2017).

⁶¹This conflation of the “feast/festival” with the מועדים seems to cause confusion even for some Old Testament academics, such as Gane, where he incorrectly claimed that “ceremonial sabbaths were included in the ‘festivals;’” (Roy E Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017], 358, footnote #43). Somehow, it seems Gane may be unaware that occasions such as the Day of Atonement were called by the freestanding Hebrew term שַׁבָּת, and were never classified as a מועד, an occasion that required Israelites to make a pilgrimage to the Temple. Gane made a similar problematic conflation of terminology in his commentary; (Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004], 395).

possible origin of Paul’s “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase in Colossians 2:16. It is to these passages in the book of Ezekiel that attention will now be paid.

Examining the Sequence in Ezekiel 45

Specifically referring to Ezekiel 45:17, which uses somewhat different terms from the above-mentioned six passages, William Love posited: “Now, it is nearly or quite certain that the apostle borrowed his phrase in Col. ii. 16, from the like phrases in the Old Testament.”⁶² Again, the textual evidence needs to be considered to assess the accuracy of this claim.

Reference	ANNUAL (“Pilgrimly”) ⁶³	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	YEARLY (“Seasonal”) ⁶⁴
Ezek 45:17	בַּחֲגִים = “at pilgrim feasts” [REB]; (i.e., Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles)	וּבַחֲדָשִׁים = “and in the New Moons”	וּבַשַּׁבָּתוֹת = “and in the Sabbaths”	בְּכָל־מוֹעֲדֵי = “in all the appointed seasons of;” (i.e., Trumpets, Atonement {&, by extension, Sabbatical Years})

In a literal manner, the JPS has rendered Ezekiel 45:17 (with the relevant terms emphasized in *italics*, or in **bold**, or in underlined italics): “And it shall be the prince’s part to give the *burnt-offerings*, and the meal-offerings, and the drink-offerings, in the **feasts**, and in the **new moons**, and in the **sabbaths**, in all the **appointed seasons** of the house of Israel; he shall prepare the sin-offering, and the meal-offering, and the *burnt-offering*, and the peace-offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.”⁶⁵

The last part of the calendric string in Ezekiel 45:17 reads בְּכָל־מוֹעֲדֵי (literally, “in/at all of appointed seasons of”). Some suggest that this is an all-inclusive term,⁶⁶ summarizing the previous

⁶²William DeLoss Love, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day,” Article II, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 37 (July 1880): 428.

⁶³The neologism “Pilgrimly” has been proposed so as to indicate that this term does not refer to all the “ANNUAL” occasions, but is instead limited to the three “pilgrimage festivals,” i.e., also called “pilgrim feasts.”

⁶⁴The term “Seasonal” was employed in order to indicate a category distinct from the more general term “yearly” used above in Table 10 (since the Hebrew term is חַג) – details of which are explained below. Also, the † was added so as to indicate that the term בְּכָל is being understood as allowing a broader meaning (hence, including at least Sabbatical Years), rather than the more restricted sense as seen in Table 10, where only the “yearly” is included in the מוֹעֲדִים.

⁶⁵Some such as Block seem to suggest that Ezek 45 includes the daily sacrifices. If such can be textually proven to be the case, then it would strengthen the evidence that the passage in Ezek 45 is similar to the others that include the daily burnt-offerings. Specifically, Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 659, indicated that in verses 13-15, “the actual *tērûmâ* instructions break down into three parts, regulating the taxing of grain, olive oil, and sheep, respectively, for the *regular* ritual sacrifices;” (emphasis added). Similarly, Hummel, asserted that, “now in [Ezek] 45:13, 16 it refers to a ‘contribution’ for the regular sacrifices;” (Horace D. Hummel, *Ezekiel 21-48, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 2007], 1303). Zimmerli likewise posited that, “in the present passage it [i.e., the תְּרוּמָה] refers to the gifts which are donated for the regular sacrifice;” (Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2, Hermeneia*, James D. Martin, trans. [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 477).

⁶⁶For example, Gladson (“Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 382) maintained that it is “an all-encompassing term.” Keil posited that “these feasts are all summed up” in the final phrase בְּכָל־מוֹעֲדֵי; (C. F. Keil *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. I, *Biblical Commentary of the Old Testament*, James Martin, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], 58).

three items: feasts, new moons, sabbaths. However, this notion contradicts the fact that, as Milgrom noted, “the [seventh-day] sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the *mô‘ēd* in all the biblical sources”⁶⁷ – a matter confirmed by textual analysis. The internal evidence seems quite strong that the weekly Sabbath is in view in this text, which serves to imply that *בְּכָל־מוֹעֲדַי* cannot be summarizing the previous items, or standing in apposition to it.⁶⁸ Thus, the question naturally arises, So what other types of *מוֹעֲדִים* can legitimately be included here? In view of the fact that *חַג* is restricted to the *pilgrimage* festivals, it seems likely that the non-pilgrimage “appointed seasons” are included here, such as the Day of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, as neither of them is classified as a *חַג* in the Hebrew Scriptures. In addition, it seems possible that Deuteronomy 31:10 includes the Sabbatical Years⁶⁹ also as a *מוֹעֵד*.⁷⁰ Bibles such as the NKJV render this verse as, “And Moses commanded them, saying: ‘At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles.’” However, it appears, that this passage can be appropriately rendered as:⁷¹ “‘At the end of every seven years at the *appointed season* of the year of release...’”⁷² – thus indicating that even the Sabbatical Year may possibly be included as a *מוֹעֵד*.⁷³

Unfortunately, the Septuagint translates some key terms in Ezekiel 45:17 rather loosely; in other words, both *חַג* and *מוֹעֵד* are rendered with *ἑορτή*.⁷⁴ In fact, in the *Theological Lexicon of the*

⁶⁷Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1954.

⁶⁸Ezek 45:17 lacks any such linguistic term, as for example in Hos 2:11; for which, see below.

⁶⁹Various scholars have rightly recognized these Sabbatical Years as an integral part of the ancient Jewish religious cultic seasons. See, for example, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Ronald F. Youngblood, ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1995), s.v. “Feasts and Festivals;” J. B. Payne, “Sabbatical Year,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley et al, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 252-253; Merrill F. Unger, “Festivals,” *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, R. K. Harrison, ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 407-408; Samuel J. Schultz, *Leviticus: God Among His People*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 118-119; Hobart E. Freeman, “Festivals,” *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rea, eds. (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 599-602; Augustus Stiles Carrier, and Ovid R. Sellers, “Fasts and Feasts,” *Funk and Wagnalls New “Standard” Bible Dictionary*, Melancthon W. Jacobus et al, eds. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1936), 262.

⁷⁰The Hebrew spelling here is slightly different, being *מוֹעֵד* (instead of the usual *מוֹעֵד*). Though rare, besides this occurrence in Deut 31:10, this spelling can be found in each major segment of the Hebrew Testament: (a) the *תּוֹרָה* (Lev 23:44; Num 15:3); (b) the *נְבִיאִים* (Zech 8:19); and (c) the *כְּתוּבִים* (1 Chron 23:31).

⁷¹This seems evident from versions such as the OJB and YLT. See also, CEB, HCSB, and NET.

⁷²Though dated, a 1937 Jewish Publication Society commentary (in contrast to how most versions render this as merely “time” in a general sense) posited that this “*מוֹעֵד* denotes ‘appointed or fixed time’ for a sacred festival, comp. Ex. 23.15;” (Joseph Reider, *Deuteronomy: With Commentary*, The Holy Scriptures [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1937], 289). Similarly, George Adam Smith, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1950), 335.

⁷³Since the Jubilee is intimately connected to and dependent upon Sabbatical Years (and even linked to the Day of Atonement), it may possibly also be included, by expansion. Keil, and Delitzsch noted that “the year of jubilee was to be proclaimed on the day of atonement in the sabbatical year with a blast of trumpets (Lev. xxv. 9);” (C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. III: *The Pentateuch*, James Martin, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949], 458). Similarly, Cole, 351; A. Noordtzi, *Leviticus*, trans. Raymond Togtman, Bible Student’s Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 251.

⁷⁴Footnote #58, #76, and #113 of Chapter Three above, and footnote #41 of Chapter Six below highlight further translational challenges related to the LXX.

Old Testament, Sauer acknowledges that “the LXX equivalents have *all* noticeably *expanded* the meanings of the Hebr. terms.”⁷⁵ This factor does caution against an indiscriminate reliance on the Septuagint, though it seems that almost all who allege Colossians 2:16 alludes to these eight Old Testament passages being considered here, have done so.⁷⁶

This analysis of Ezekiel 45:17 shows that the focus is once again on the *burnt-offerings* (i.e., the עֲלוֹת) per se, and *not* merely on the times as such (as is the case in Col 2:16). The listing of items is as follows: (a) חַגִּים: The pilgrimage festivals (i.e., Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles); (b) חַדְשֵׁים: The new moon celebrations; (c) שַׁבַּת־יְהוָה: The seventh-day Sabbath; and, (d) מועֲדֵים: The “appointed seasons” (i.e., of Trumpets, Atonement, and possibly Sabbatical Years), since they are not included in the previous three calendric terms.

Thus, it appears there is no real triad here, that is, the specific yearly-monthly-weekly sequence. Rather, this passage has a comprehensive collection of sacred times, made up of four-parts, not three (as seen in Col 2:16). Also, all four Hebrew terms are in the *plural*, which is different from the singular found in all three items in Colossians 2:16. While this passage also talks about *burnt-offerings* on these cultic times, its order differs from the examples that unmistakably follow the Numbers 28-29 original pattern, evidently so as to highlight the offerings that are different in amount and type from those offerings enumerated in the book of Numbers.⁷⁷

Considering the Sequence in Ezekiel 46

In concord with other scholars, Gladson posited that a similar grouping of yearly-monthly-weekly terms is to be found in Ezekiel 46.⁷⁸ Does an analysis of the material in Ezekiel 46:1-15⁷⁹ support the purported yearly-monthly-weekly triad? To begin with, the following should be noted: The terms שַׁבַּת and חַדְשֵׁים appear as a couplet, both in Ezekiel 46:1, and in vs. 3. However, the specific enumeration of what the actual offerings are to be starts in verse 4, suggesting that this may be the

⁷⁵Sauer (2:553, emphases added) noted that מועֲדֵים has been rendered into Greek in the LXX, “usually with *kairos* ... or *heortē*,” besides *panēguris* (see Ezek 46:11; Hos 2:11; 9:5).

⁷⁶See, for example, Tonstad, 275, endnote #17; Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16,” 29-34; Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1977), 359; etc. Besides the issues noted above, those who conclude that Ezek 45:17 is the background to Col 2:16 do not seem to have considered the following: (1) That while Ezek 45:17 does identify the שַׁבַּת as the weekly Sabbath (by means of the linguistic indicator הַ), in Hos 2:11 the suffix suggests that שַׁבַּת here refers to the ritual sabbath/s; (2) As explained in-depth below, Hos 2:11 consists of a combination of three terms (similar to Col 2:16), whereas Ezek 45:17 has at least four parts; (3) While Ezek 45:17 enumerates sacred occasions on which sacrifices are to be offered, the tripartite phrase of Hos 2:11 is in the context of the termination of the days (similar to Col 2:16, indicating that these are sacred occasions, no longer to be observed).

⁷⁷For example, while Num 28-29 simply list how many and what kind of animals to offer, Ezek identifies the “percentage,” i.e., “one sheep from every flock of two hundred” (Ezek 45:15 NET).

⁷⁸Gladson (332) referred specifically to Ezek 46:3 (which lists only “sabbaths” and “new moons”), while other scholars consider additional verses in Ezek 46, which mentions other religious occasions.

⁷⁹Since the matter of when to perform these sacrifices goes through vs. 15, this analysis deals with Ezek 46:1-15.

beginning of the enumeration of the sacrificial requirements (in the context of the restoration of the temple). Moreover, a closer look reveals that there are four different clusters (vss. 4-5; 6-7; 11; 13-15), in which the specific animal sacrifices are identified, together with the “grain offering” and “oil to moisten the fine flour” (JPS). Taking the above into account, the following general outline of Ezekiel 46:4-15 becomes apparent:

Reference	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	YEARLY	DAILY
Ezekiel 46: 4-15	הַשַּׁבָּת = “the Sabbath” (vs. 4)	הַחֹדֶשׁ = “the New Moon” (vs. 6)	וּבְמוֹעֲדֵי = “and in the appointed seasons” (vs. 11b), LXX: πανηγύρεσιν; ⁸⁰ [& וּבְחַגִּים = “at pilgrim-feasts” (vs. 11a, REB): ἑορταῖς; & בְּמוֹעֲדֵי = “in the appointed seasons” (vs. 9), LXX: ἑορταῖς]	תָּמִיד = “regular” (vs 15 ⁸¹) [i.e., “daily” ⁸²]

As Sokupa’s doctoral study succinctly summarized, in dealing with the restoration of temple services: “This restoration is captured in the form of the **daily sacrifices** (Ezek 46:11-15), **weekly Sabbaths** (Ezek 46:4-5), **monthly** (Ezek 46:6-7), and **annual** festivals (Ezek 46:9-11).”⁸³ Clearly, Ezekiel 46:4-15 does not really have any so-called “triad.” If one considers the crucial terms in these verses, the following seems evident: Somewhat similar to the passages in Chronicles, Nehemiah and Ezekiel 45, the focus is not simply on the times themselves, but rather on the *burnt-offerings*, though in a more spread-out elucidation.⁸⁴ Likewise, perhaps to highlight the contrast, the sequence of sacred occasions⁸⁵ – **weekly, monthly, yearly, then daily** – is slightly different from Numbers 28-29, in that the “daily” is mentioned last instead of first. Nevertheless, despite these differences, since there is an enumeration of all *four parts* of the calendric sequence, and because of a key identifying link of specifically, the *burnt-offerings* (i.e., the עֹלֹת), it seems reasonable to conclude that this passage also may hark back to none other than the most complete sacrificial elaboration, in Numbers 28-29.

Incidentally, it is evident that the Septuagint renders some of the vital terms of Ezekiel 46 relating to cultic seasons in an inconsistent manner. As noted in the above chart, both Hebrew terms

⁸⁰In brief, the lexical word πανηγύρις (panēguris), derives from מָעַד, and (in the LXX) it refers to the observance of celebrations and joyful pilgrimages. For more on the meaning and use of πανηγύρις, see footnote #203 below.

⁸¹It must be noted that in Ezek 46:13, as well as in 46:14, the daily *burnt-offerings* are spoken of as בִּבְקָר בְּבֹקֶר (i.e., “morning by morning”).

⁸²This is from GW.

⁸³Sokupa, 96 (emphases added).

⁸⁴See, for example, the differing “Sabbath” sacrifices: In Numbers 28:9 it stipulates that two lambs were to be offered in addition to the normal daily offering of two lambs (Num 28:3). In contrast to this, Ezek 46:4 states that the Sabbath sacrifice had to be six lambs and one ram. Similarly, Sokupa (97, footnote #3) noted that “this calendar seems to depart from the one in Numbers in terms of details on the number of sacrifices.” See also, McKay, 18.

⁸⁵Gladson (“Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 381) noted that the “inconsistency with the cultic prescriptions in the Pentateuch sent the rabbis at the Jamnia conference near the end of the first century C. E. searching for explanation.”

מועד (vs. 9) and חג (vs. 11a) are rendered with the Greek lexeme ἑορτή. Yet, the מועד of verse 11b is rendered aptly in the LXX with πανήγυρις. This type of unfortunate interpretational incongruity suggests the need for greater caution regarding an unwary use of the Septuagint,⁸⁶ as well as the importance of analyzing more meticulously the Hebrew text itself.

Conclusions Regarding the Calendric Sequence Passages

Incidentally, it has been claimed that certain passages, such as those found in 1 Maccabees, 1 Ezra, Judith, Jubilees, and 1 Enoch, “will help us put into larger perspective the threefold phrase of Colossians 2.”⁸⁷ While the various potential benefits of these sources are not to be ignored, a primary issue at stake in this thesis is to assess whether or not the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase provides evidence of an intentional (and readily observable) allusion to any readily identifiable Old Testament passage(s), rather than extra-biblical documents. Since this study of Colossians 2:16 focuses upon the canonical Scriptures, from a Protestant perspective, the passages in these other ancient sources, that are alleged to contain a calendric sequence similar to that of Colossians 2, will be carefully considered only in an Appendix at the end of this thesis.

Kim Papaïouannou pertinently pointed out that “even a casual reading of these texts shows that in every single instance, except Hos 2:11, the emphasis is not the festivals themselves but the *sacrifices and burnt offerings* offered during those festivals.”⁸⁸ Hence, other than Hosea 2:11, every biblical passage proposed as containing a genuine three-part yearly-monthly-weekly sequence has been examined in its immediate and larger contexts. Since the Hosea 2:11 passage will be considered in great detail later, it would be appropriate here to summarize the above evidence and formulate some significant preliminary conclusions regarding the primary and secondary alleged “triad” passages.

In brief, Numbers 28-29; 1 Chronicles 23:29-31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 2 Chronicles 8:12-13; 2 Chronicles 31:3; Nehemiah 10:33; Ezekiel 45:17, and Ezekiel 46:4-15 are eight of the scriptural passages most frequently referenced in discussing the meaning of the term σαββάτων as located in Colossians 2:16. Many have claimed that the three crucial words utilized in Colossians 2:16 – ἑορτή,

⁸⁶The unwary use of the LXX can be seen, for example, in Gladson (“Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 378). He wrote: “The entire sequence [in Num 28-29] is encompassed by the term *mo’ed* [*sic*], ‘appointed times,’ in 28:2, a word rendered in the LXX as *heorte* [*sic*], ‘festival,’ the same as that in Colossians 2, showing that this terminology is capable of including every single one of Israel’s observances.” While it is true that the LXX does (at times) loosely render *mô’ēd* as *heortē*, internal evidence from the actual text of Col 2:16 militates against adopting the LXX’s term here. If, as claimed, that *heortē* includes “every single one of Israel’s observances,” then (since this would include new moons, as they are listed in Num 28-29), there would be no need for such to have been mentioned separately in Col 2:16.

⁸⁷Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 385. See, also Fantin.

⁸⁸Papaïouannou, 134.

νεομηνία, σάββατα – are taken from the above Old Testament passages, in which the word “sabbath” always refers to the seventh-day Sabbath. However, it seems that, while there has been a heavy reliance on translations (including the LXX), virtually no attention has been paid by basically any scholars to the original Hebrew passages, resulting in some rather questionable conclusions.

The investigation of these eight Old Testament passages, as diagramed in the charts above, provides some fundamental elucidating factors. While all of these eight passages are claimed to illustrate a triadic sequence of a **yearly, monthly, weekly** pattern (or its supposed reverse), not even one has been found to actually contain any such logical *three-part* progression. On the contrary, notice the findings:

(a) *All eight passages have **four parts***, and not three (as located in Col 2:16);

(b) *All eight focus on the **sacrifices** offered*, and not really the actual days themselves (as referenced in Col 2:16);

(c) Besides Ezekiel 45:17, the other seven passages *include the **daily***, a factor almost always omitted by those proposing a triad (alleged to be similar to that in Col 2:16);

(d) Besides Ezekiel 46:4-15,⁸⁹ the other seven *all have the Hebrew terms* for “Sabbaths,” “New Moons,” and “appointed seasons” directly stated in the *plural* and not the singular (as found in all three terms used in Col 2:16);⁹⁰ and,

(e) Besides the Ezekiel passages, the others go in a distinct *decreasing frequency order of burnt-offerings* – daily, weekly, monthly, yearly – and not the reverse (as allegedly in Col 2:16).

In the context of evaluating an extensive and intensive analysis of the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase, Joseph Fantin opined: “The question that needs to be asked is much simpler: Does Colossians 2:16 allude to these passages?”⁹¹ Put simply, “the plain meaning of the text”⁹² can best be identified once the potential antecedents have been appropriately analyzed. In light of the above investigation, the following can be concluded: The “feast, new moon, sabbath” tripartite phrase of Colossians 2:16 is, in several ways, considerably distinct from those found in Numbers, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Ezekiel investigated above. Therefore, despite a veritable scholarly tradition of positing that Colossians 2:16 is dependent on a presumed calendar sequence (often labeled a “triad”), textual analysis suggests that none of these passages can legitimately be used as

⁸⁹It should be noted that, in the immediately preceding verse 3, Ezekiel uses plural terms: וְבַחֲדָשִׁים and בְּשַׁבְּתוֹת.

⁹⁰The significance of the use of the singular (as seen in Col 2:16, as well as in Hos 2:11) will be addressed further in Chapter Seven. Suffice it to say that Paul himself (in Gal 3:16) constructs a vital christological argument on the matter of whether or not the Old Testament antecedent was “singular” or “plural.”

⁹¹See Fantin. He added, by way of contrast, “(and not to Hos. 2:11),” a matter to be addressed below.

⁹²Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” 342.

support for the view that Paul was utilizing this allegedly common Old Testament phrase in his letter to the Colossians. In other words, since “an *allusion* by definition must be overt enough to be recognized by the audience,”⁹³ it seems appropriate to conclude that not one of the above-scrutinized passages qualifies as an authentic antecedent for the “feast, new moon, sabbath” tripartite phrase, as seen in Colossians 2:16.

While these eight analyzed passages appear to be incongruent with the tripartite phrase under consideration here, this does not mean that the Hebrew Scripture is ignored in this epistle. On the contrary, there is one more vital passage that needs attention – the one located in Hosea 2:11.

The Linguistics of Hosea 2:11

More than a century ago, Maurice Logan stated: “We read in Hosea 2:11, ‘I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.’ Paul doubtless had this prophecy in mind when he said, ‘Let no man judge you ... in respect of a feast day, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day.’”⁹⁴ Concurring, T. J. Johnston noted: “In Hosea 2:11 God says of Israel: ‘I will also cause her mirth to cease, her new moons, feast days and *Sabbaths*.’ In Col. 2 and Gal. 4, Paul, by obvious implication, recognizes the fulfilment of that prophecy.”⁹⁵

In basic agreement, Dudley Canright declared: “The Sabbath with all Jewish holy days, was to be abolished. ‘I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths.’ Hosea 2:11. Plain enough. Paul says [in Col 2:14, 16 that] the Sabbath, with all these days, was abolished at the cross.”⁹⁶ Over time, many have thus linked Hosea 2:11 with Colossians

⁹³Beetham, 12. He added (ibid.): “An author has failed in his use of allusion as a literary device if the audience does not catch the reference.”

⁹⁴Logan, 269. See also the following writers who believe that there is a clear link between this prophecy by Hosea and its supposed “fulfillment” in Paul’s counsel to the Colossians: Lehman Strauss, *The Eleven Commandments* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1955), 76-77; Kenneth E. Coombs, *The True Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday* (Salt Lake City: Kenneth E. Coombs, 1948), 55, 60; George L. Rose, *Our Day of Rest: A Graphic History of the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day; With That of the Calendar and the Law* (Glendale, CA: Rose, 1946), 74; James R. McClung, *The Lord’s Day: Is It Saturday or Sunday?* (Pasadena: J. McClung, 1945), 85-87; L. J. U. Smay, *The Sanctuary and the Sabbath: A Critical Examination of Seventh Day Adventism* (Cleveland, OH: Evangelical Association, 1915), 190-191; O. A. Johnson, *Bible Text-Book* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900), 92; Samuel Walter Gamble, *Sunday, the True Sabbath of God* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1900), 158; E. Hopkins, *The Law and Sabbath, The Gospel and Lord’s Day. Why I Quit Keeping the Jewish Sabbath* (Mount Morris, IL: Brethrens, 1885), 48-49; J. Thos. Butler, *The Sabbath Question: Is the Christian Under the Mosaic Law and Must He Observe the Jewish Sabbath?* (Jacksonville, FL: Np, nd), 13-15; Timothy D. Scott, *Sunday, the Christian Sabbath: A Brief Discussion of the Sunday Question* (Springfield, OH: Whyte, nd), 61-62; Norman C. Deck, *The Lord’s Day or, The Sabbath* (London: Pickering & Inglis, nd), 86-87. See also, Charles Lee Feinberg, “The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 95:378 (Apr 1938): 187; Tertullian *Against Marcion*. I. XX, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III.

⁹⁵T. J. Johnston, *The Lord’s Day Observance Vindicated and Seventh-day Sabbatarians Answered* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1909), 14 (emphasis original). See also, Robinson Radjagukguk, “Τα Στοιχεία Του Κοσμου and Life with Christ: An Exegetical Study of Col 2:6-3:4” (ThD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1991), 161, who links Hos 2:11 and Col 2:16.

⁹⁶D. M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Refuted: In a Nutshell* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1970, reprint), 38. [This is a reprint of Dudley Marvin Canright, *Adventism Refuted in a Nutshell* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1889)].

2:16. But, what is the meaning of this tripartite phrase in Hosea, and what implications might it have for the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16?

This prophetic Old Testament book portrays apostate Israel as an unfaithful wife. Yet, as Harry Mowvley noted, “It is often difficult to tell which is in the forefront of the speaker or writer’s mind, Israel or the wife, for reality and metaphor are very closely intertwined.”⁹⁷ The basic message is that, “Yahweh will turn his back on Israel just as she [the unfaithful wife] has turned her back on him.”⁹⁸ It is in this context that Yahweh warns of the termination of the ritual calendar (Hos 2:11).

Elements of the Hosea 2:11 Calendric String

A cursory look at Hosea 2:11 may cause the unsuspecting reader to assume that it contains a four-part phrase, consisting of the Hebrew terms *חַג*, *שַׁבָּת*, *רֵוַח*, and *מוֹעֵד*. However, there are actually five substantives in this text. Thus, as David Noel Freedman and Francis Andersen indicate, “the grouping of the five objects of the verb [with the word *all* in front of the first and last terms] makes it clear that there are two sets. The middle three [i.e., ‘feast, new moon, sabbath’] constitute a series.”⁹⁹ Providing additional support for this notion, Jerry Gladson pointed out that “the Jewish scribes have accentuated the Hebrew in Hosea 2:11 so that it should be read: ‘I will cause all her mirth to cease [*slight pause*], her festival(s), her new moon(s), and her sabbath(s) [*pause*], even all her appointed time(s).”¹⁰⁰ Attempting to capture this in poetic form, the Holman Christian Standard Bible (similar to several other versions)¹⁰¹ has rendered Hosea 2:11, as follows:

⁹⁷Harry Mowvley, *The Books of Amos & Hosea*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth, 1991), 107.

⁹⁸Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 85. While not directly germane to this thesis, the issue of “the days of the Baals to which she burned incense” (Hos 2:13), does deserve some attention. Kelle has pointed out that “the vast majority of commentators associates this verse only with the termination of a widespread Baal cult in Israel and identifies these cultic occasions as Baal festivals. Macintosh’s statement is representative: ‘All the state’s religious observances were tainted by idolatry ... with the Baals....’ [A. A. Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 62];” (Brad E. Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective*, Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica, No. 20 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005], 257). See also, J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 117; Harold Shank, *Minor Prophets*, vol. 1: *Hosea-Micah*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2001), 52; Allen R. Guenther, *Hosea, Amos*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1998), 64; Garrett, 84; Mowvley, 108; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 51; William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 233; Keil, 59. Challenging the above general view, Kelle (ibid., 257-258) asserted that the language of the verse “does not in any way indicate that the cultic occasions have any connection with a supposed Baal fertility cult.... Should Yahweh permanently divorce his [metaphorical] wife, the resulting destruction would include ... the cessation of the cultic calendar.”

⁹⁹Francis I. Andersen, and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 24 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 250.

¹⁰⁰Gladson, “Does the Letter to the Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 384 (emphases added). Gladson is correct, since the “slight pause” is a *zāqēp qātôn*, while the “pause” is an *atnāh*. See, William Sanford LaSor, *Handbook of Biblical Hebrew: An Inductive Approach Based on the Hebrew Text of Esther*, vol. 2 – Grammar (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 22.

¹⁰¹Emphases added. Similarly, the CEB, ESV, LEB, NASB, NCV, NRSV, and RSV.

“I will put an end to *all* her celebrations:
her feasts, New Moons, and Sabbaths—
all her festivals.”

In short, it seems plausible that “the list of the three kinds of festive assemblies ... is inserted between”¹⁰² “her celebrations” (מְשׁוֹשָׁה) and “her festivals” (מוֹעֲדֵיהָ) – Hebrew terms that include a form of poetic assonance. Moreover, only מְשׁוֹשָׁה and מוֹעֲדֵיהָ have the word *all* (כָּל) preceding each of these terms, thus confirming the Masoretic punctuation, as well as the versification by the translators. Since it seems quite clear that the middle three Hebrew nouns “constitute a series,”¹⁰³ they will be considered below as a tripartite phrase.

Comparison of Hosea 2:11 and Colossians 2:16

Examination of the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase mentioned in Hosea 2:11 [MT vs. 13] suggests several distinct potential similarities with the tripartite phrase observed in Colossians 2:16.

Notice the following correspondences between these two texts:

- Both make no mention of any daily ritual activity;
- Both appear to consist of essentially three main terms;
- Both are stated in the same type of sequence;
- Both focus on the set times; not the sacrifices;¹⁰⁴
- Both lack linguistic markers for weekly Sabbaths;
- Both have the main three terms stated in the singular;¹⁰⁵
- Both deal with the discontinuity of cultic occasions.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Andersen, and Freedman, 250.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Contra Sokupa, who alleged that in Hos 2:11 “the context was clearly a ritual context, with a clear focus on the sacrifice;” (Sokupa, 145). In an earlier section, “Ritual Elements in Hos 2:11,” Sokupa asserted that, “as one examines the context it is evident that the focus is on sacrificial language rather than time language;” (ibid., 109, footnote #1); then he referenced Hos 3:4; 4:6, 13, 14, 19; 6:6; 8:13; 9:4; 11:2; and 13:2, as purported textual evidence for his point. Based on these texts, Sokupa claimed that “the sacrificial ritual element permeates the entire book and supercedes any ritual time elements;” (ibid.). He concluded: “Therefore it is not inconceivable that even Hos 2:11 focuses on the ritual sacrifices, rather than that of time;” (ibid.). The fact is that the term עלֵה appears only once in this entire book, mainly as a negative contrast [“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hos 6:6)]; but it has no connection with the times listed in Hos 2:11. That the book of Hosea is not simply one continuous saga (but is made up of basically three large segments – chs. 1-3; 4:1-11:11; and 11:12-14:9), seems to be the conclusion of careful analysis. See, for example, Dearman, 16; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 16-19; Peter C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, vol. 1: *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah*, The Daily Study Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 30. Also, since the “first three chapters [in which Hos 2:11 is located] constitute Part I, in which a degree of thematic unity is provided by the story of Hosea’s family life” (Craigie, 31), it seems best to not conflate the material in the book. While it is true that the texts Sokupa lists do deal with offerings, none of them is part of the interpretative context of Hos 2:11; hence, the supposed “ritual sacrifices” appears to be read in to this pericope, rather than it being an actual part of it.

¹⁰⁵This can be seen by looking at the original Hebrew. Also, note the evidence as recorded by John Joseph Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 673, 763.

¹⁰⁶See Eugen J. Pentiuc, *Long-Suffering Love: A Commentary on Hosea with Patristic Annotations* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2002), 39, regarding the end of Israel’s festivals and the Assyrian conquest.

Thus, if Paul was indeed seeking to allude to the Hebrew Scriptures, it seems rather probable that he was referring to Hosea 2:11.

Linguistic Analysis of the Tripartite Phrase

Where does the weight of Hebrew linguistic evidence lay regarding how best to translate the three relevant terms in this passage in Hosea 2:11? Young's Literal Translation of Hosea 2:11 renders this crucial Hebrew phrase – חַג־הַחֹדֶשׁ וְשַׁבְּתָתָהּ – as “her festival, her new moon, and her sabbath.”

Before reflecting on the authentic meaning of the term חַג, it would be well to highlight the matter of the use of singular forms in this tripartite phrase in Hosea 2:11.¹⁰⁷ A. A. Macintosh noted: “The word is, like those that follow, a collective singular and, since the true singular can refer to any one of them, it is likely to denote here the three annual pilgrimage festivals.”¹⁰⁸ As various scholars have recognized, these substantives “are in Hebrew collective nouns in singular form.”¹⁰⁹ In Brad Kelle's words: “The nouns in this verse are singular collectives.”¹¹⁰

Acknowledged Restrictive Meaning of חַג

A careful reading of much of the literature that has been produced on the meaning of the שַׁבְּתָהּ in Hosea 2:11 reveals that most writers do not discuss the actual definition of the significant three Hebrew terms found in this passage. Yet, there does appear to be a general consensus among lexicographers and linguists that the first term of this tripartite phrase, חַג, though often merely rendered “festival,” or “feast” in English, has a narrower and more restrictive meaning, when it appears in a ritual setting.

For example, in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Hendrik Bosman defines חַג as a word “used to refer to the three annual Israelite festivals (the Feasts of Booths, Passover/Unleavened Bread, and Weeks/First Fruits) that required making a pilgrimage

¹⁰⁷The significance of the use of the “singular” has been misunderstood by some, such as Edwin Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47 (Autumn 2009): 281, where he alleged: “This argument [regarding collective singulars] is based on changing the language of the text from the singular to the plural. If, as he earlier argued, these terms are singular, what ground is there for making them represent plural realities? There is too much manipulation of the text here.”

¹⁰⁸Macintosh, 61.

¹⁰⁹Gerhard F. Hasel, and W. C. G. Murdoch, “The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 53, footnote #10. As confirmation of this, Hasel noted that they were “understood as collectives as they were read by the LXX;” (Gerhard F. Hasel, “‘New Moon and Sabbath’ in Eighth Century Israelite Prophetic Writings (Isa 1:13; Hos 2:13; Amos 8:5),” *Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums*, Band 13 [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988], 55, footnote #37). See also, Thomas Edward McComiskey, *Hosea, The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 39; Macintosh, 61; Andersen, and Freedman, 250.

¹¹⁰Kelle, 209.

to the temple in Jerusalem.”¹¹¹ As Gordon Wenham elaborated: “The Hebrew word here translated *feast (hag)* may literally mean ‘pilgrimage.’ ... The word is used of the festivals of unleavened bread ([Lev 23] v. 6), tabernacles (v. 39), and weeks (Exod. 34:22; Deut. 16:16).... In later times these feasts were always celebrated in the central sanctuary in Jerusalem and involved a pilgrimage.”¹¹² As Richard Davidson noted, “These are the *only* times of assembly in the cultic calendar actually called ‘feasts’ (*hag*) in Scripture.”¹¹³ James Mays succinctly stated: “*Feast (hag)* is the term for the three annual pilgrimage festivals.”¹¹⁴

Put plainly, the Hebrew term *גָּח* that appears in Hosea 2:11 is a rather exclusive term. Discussing Hosea 2, Elizabeth Achtemeier commented that, “*yearly festivals (hag)*, in verse 11 [MT vs. 13], refer to the three annual festivals of unleavened bread, harvest, and ingathering.”¹¹⁵ In other words, it is quite imprecise to say that Hosea 2:11 refers to “yearly” feasts. Since the Hebrew word *hag* identifies the three festivals that “required making a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem,”¹¹⁶ it would be more accurate to render this term as *The Voice Bible* version has it: “*pilgrimage festivals.*”

Uncontested Rendition, and Significance of וַחֲדָשׁ

The second term is וַחֲדָשׁ, the basic meaning of which is not controverted. As Carl Weber noted, “This word properly means ‘new moon,’”¹¹⁷ i.e., when it is employed in a ritual setting. It was

¹¹¹Hendrik L. Bosman, “גָּח,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 2, Willem A. VanGemeren, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 20. See also the following, who basically concur with this definition: Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 23; G. I. Davies, *Hosea*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 76; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 51; Frederick A. Tatford, *Prophet of a Broken Home: An Exposition of Hosea*, The Minor Prophets, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1982), 37; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 303.

¹¹²Wenham, 303 (emphasis original). See also, Tatford (37), who noted that the term *hag* is “used of the three annual pilgrimage festivals.”

¹¹³Richard M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, book 1, Frank B. Holbrook, ed., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 120. See also, Guenther (64), who correctly elaborated: “Festivals marked special occasions in Israel’s history and experience. The Scriptures identify three pilgrim festivals in which every male was to participate (Exod. 23:14-17; 34:18-24; Deut. 16:1-17; Passover/Unleavened Bread, Harvest/Weeks/ Pentecost, Ingathering/Booth/Tabernacles).”

¹¹⁴James L. Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1969), 42. Similarly, Achtemeier, 23; Trent C. Butler, *Hosea*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 20; Shank, 52; Guenther, 64; Macintosh, 61; Theodore Laetsch, *Minor Prophets*, Concordia Classic Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia, 1987), 30; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 51; Tatford, 37; Keil, 57; Sydney Lawrence Brown, *The Book of Hosea with Introduction and Notes*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen & Co., 1932), 18-19; Brown made this comparison: “The word translated ‘feasts’ (*hag*) is used of a festival accompanied by a pilgrimage (in Moslem lands *haj*, = the pilgrimage to Mecca);” (ibid., 18).

¹¹⁵Achtemeier, 23 (emphasis original).

¹¹⁶Bosman, 20.

¹¹⁷Carl Philip Weber, “וַחֲדָשׁ (*hādash*),” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, R. Laird Harris, ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 266.

also one of the appointed ritual times of ancient Israel, “and is listed with the Sabbath and the pilgrim feasts as involving burnt offerings (II Chr 8:13 et al).”¹¹⁸

While the actual meaning of חַדָּשׁ (as used in a cultic context) stands essentially unchallenged, the vital significance of this lunar celebration needs further explication. In his 2006 *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, William Mounce has elaborated on the biblical concept of the *month*: “The first day of each month is to be celebrated with burnt offerings presented to God (Num. 28:11; cf. 1 Chr. 23:31; Ezz. 3:5; Neh. 10:33), together with blowing trumpets (Num. 10:10; Ps. 81:3).”¹¹⁹ Hobart Freeman appropriately observed that this significant “demi-feast”¹²⁰ was also a time for “family feasts (I Sam 20:5), spiritual edification (II Kgs 4:23), and family sacrifices (I Sam 20:6). [And,] as on all sabbatical feast days, all servile work ceased, except the necessary preparation of food (cf. Ex 12:16).”¹²¹

Why was the first day of each month of such great import? Merrill Unger explains: “As the festivals, according to the Mosaic law, were *always* to be celebrated on the same day of the *month*, it was necessary to fix the commencement of the month. This was determined by the appearance of the new moon.”¹²² As Psalm 104:19a notes: “He made the moon to mark the seasons.”¹²³ More specifically, as Mounce explained, “the month begins at the appearance of the new moon, the thin crescent visible at sunset.”¹²⁴

Freeman summarized the indispensability of the new moons to the religious life of the Jewish nation: “The moon occupied an important place in the life of the Hebrews, since it was *the* guide to their calendar based upon the lunar month or period of the moon’s circuit. Because of this, and the importance of the uniform celebration of the various periodic religious festivals by Jews everywhere, it was *extremely important* to determine the *exact time* of the appearance of the new moon.”¹²⁵

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), s.v. “Month.” See also, Weber, “חַדָּשׁ (*hādāsh*),” 266.

¹²⁰This is the descriptor used by Unger, 409.

¹²¹Freeman, 601.

¹²²Ibid. (emphasis added).

¹²³This is from the ESV, with a footnote: “or the appointed times [literally, *mō’ēd*].”

¹²⁴Mounce, 454. See also, William Latham Bevan, “Month,” *A Dictionary of the Bible: Comprising Its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History*, vol. 2, William Smith, ed. (London: John Murray, 1863), 415; Madeleine S. Miller, and J. Lane Miller, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), s.v. “Time;” Weber, “חַדָּשׁ (*hādāsh*),” 266. Regarding the basic twelve lunar months, Weber (266) noted: “The Hebrew calendar used a lunar month fitted into a solar year. This was done by adding an extra month approximately once every three years because it was about eleven days less than the solar year.” Miller and Miller explain in greater detail: “In order to reconcile the lunar and the solar years they [i.e., the Hebrews] adopted the Metonic cycle of 19 years, whereby an extra (intercalary) month (‘Second Adar’) was added to the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years.”

¹²⁵Freeman, 601 (emphasis added).

Simon De Vries recognized that, in relation to the religious year of ancient Israel, “the new moon played so important a role.”¹²⁶ Put concisely, the new moon played “an especially *decisive* role,”¹²⁷ for the “moon governed the dates for other religious festivals.”¹²⁸

More Precise Definition of שַׁבָּת in Hosea 2:11

Finally, the well-researched Hebrew term שַׁבָּת must now be considered. Chapter Three of this study has already provided evidence for the manner in which the word שַׁבָּת is used in its 111 occurrences in the Old Testament. As noted earlier, in addition to identifying the weekly Sabbath, the word *šabbāt* on its own, has been used for the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:32c), which is simply referred to as *σάββατα* (Lev 23:32c) in the Septuagint. Indeed, regarding this very passage, Jacob Milgrom indicated that the wording “*your sabbath*,”¹²⁹ and “not the Lord’s Sabbath,”¹³⁰ creates a clear contrast between the ceremonial sabbath and the seventh-day Sabbath.

Furthermore, the term שַׁבָּתוֹת, i.e., “a sabbatism,” which is used of the Day of Trumpets (Lev 23:24), has been transliterated as *σαββάτων*,¹³¹ and appears in some early Greek manuscripts as *σαββάτων* or *σάββατον*. Then too, the term שַׁבָּת is often used of the septennial sabbaths (e.g., Lev 25:2, 4, 6; etc.),¹³² and rendered as *σάββατα* in the Septuagint. Aware of this linguistic usage, as well as the fact that the restricted Hebrew term שַׁבָּת or its Greek equivalent *ἑορτή* is *never* used of the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, or even Sabbatical Years, it becomes evident that the term שַׁבָּת in Hosea 2:11 could actually be referring to these annual and (by extension) septennial cultic sabbaths.

The analysis in Chapter Three, regarding שַׁבָּת in the Hebrew Scriptures, demonstrated that the term *šabbāt* here in Hosea 2 does not have any of the definitive syntactical and linguistic markers that are necessary to reliably identify it as being the seventh-day Sabbath. However, since the שַׁבָּת here is directly classified as “*her sabbath*” (שַׁבָּתֶיהָ), which includes one of the specific linguistic indicators for ritual sabbaths, it becomes quite plausible that Hosea 2:11 is referring to these non-

¹²⁶Simon J. De Vries, “Calendar,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, vol. 1: A-D, George Arthur Buttrick, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 485.

¹²⁷K. Koch, “מוֹעֵד, (*mō‘ēd*)” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. VIII, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., Douglas W. Scott, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 170 (emphasis added).

¹²⁸*Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Moon.”

¹²⁹Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2026 (emphasis original).

¹³⁰*Ibid.* Milgrom’s “sabbath” has been capitalized to synchronize with the style used in this thesis, to differentiate between the seventh-day Sabbath and ceremonial sabbaths.

¹³¹This can be seen from the manner that the Septuagint has rendered it in Lev 23:32.

¹³²As already noted above, many recognize that the Sabbatical Years were an integral part of the Jewish cultic system. See, for example, Payne, 252-253; Schultz, 118-119; and other scholars, as referenced in footnote #69 above.

seventh-day sabbaths.¹³³ The 1992 ERV interprets שְׁבֻתָּהּ as “her days of rest,” while the 1983 Afrikaans Bible, *Die Bybel: Nuwe Vertaling*, translates this term as “haar sabbatsfeeste,” i.e., “her sabbath feasts” – translations that may appear to synchronize with the above study.

A potentially significant corroboration, that “her sabbath(s)” most likely refers to only the ritual sabbaths and not the seventh-day Sabbath, has to do with Yahweh’s threat to bring “an end to Israel’s cultic calendar.”¹³⁴ But, as Stuart asked, “What could interrupt such traditions?”¹³⁵ Would Yahweh let them “go into captivity?”¹³⁶ Stuart indicated that, though not directly stated in the text, “the use of the verb גלה, with its dual meaning of ‘reveal’ and ‘exile,’” suggests the approaching time when Israel “will be gawked at as she is led into exile;”¹³⁷ with no possibility of deliverance. Pentiuć proposed that, “This prophetic word could be a reference to the gloomy days of the Assyrian conquest and later deportation which would come upon Israel in a little more than two decades (722/1 B.C.).”¹³⁸ Concurring, Gladson noted: “This is a prediction that the Northern kingdom’s cultic observance would come to an end once they were taken into captivity.”¹³⁹ Regardless though, of where or when such captivity was to take place, Yahweh states that “no one shall rescue her out of my hand” (Hos 2:10, NRSV). Thus, the crucial question is: Why would exile and captivity terminate the ritual sabbaths, but not necessarily affect the observance of the weekly Sabbath?

Capturing an essential distinction between these two kinds of sabbaths, the nineteenth-century commentator George Bush noted: “The great feasts [as well as the cultic sabbaths] were to be kept in one place where the sanctuary was established;”¹⁴⁰ but the Sabbaths in this respect differed from

¹³³Macintosh aptly noted: “The words move naturally from the parable to its referent, *Israel*. The third feminine singular suffix (required by the parable), ‘her’ yearly festivals etc., provides the link;” (62, emphasis added).

¹³⁴Dearman, 117.

¹³⁵Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 51.

¹³⁶McComiskey, 39.

¹³⁷Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 51. He added, that “her people [are] naked in the manner of exiles, all because of disloyalty to Yahweh’s covenant (cf. the captivity/exile curses in Lev 26:33, Deut 4:27; 28:36, et al).”

¹³⁸Pentiuć, 39. See also, Giem (“An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16,” 32), who suggested that Hosea’s “prophecy was fulfilled at the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (cf. Lam. 2:6).”

¹³⁹Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 383.

¹⁴⁰Referencing Deut 16:16, Rodríguez noted: “Three [pilgrim] feasts are specifically required to be observed in the Temple [in Jerusalem];” (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Reinventing Ancient Rituals?” *Adventist Review Online*, 10 February 2010). Also, repeatedly in Scripture (Lev 16:1-28, 30-34; 23:28; etc.) the Day of Atonement is portrayed as directly dependent on the continued operation of the three-part sanctuary. Since the Day of Trumpets (Lev 23:24, 25) is intimately linked to the Day of Atonement, it would not be expected to be observed either. In addition, the Jubilee, which presupposes the cycle of Sabbatical Years, “is proclaimed by the blowing of a trumpet on the Day of Atonement, so that at least this feature of the Jubilee presupposes the continued observance of the Day of Atonement;” (Cole, 351). Finally, if essentially none of the cultic occasions can be (properly) observed when in exile, too far away from the sanctuary/temple, then the celebration of the new moon would also cease, since its function (as the celestial chronometer for the cultic calendar) would not longer exist. This conclusion appears corroborated by Mounce’s assertion that “the marking of each new month appears to have been for the *purpose* of maintaining the festive calendar;” (455, emphasis added).

them,”¹⁴¹ in that they could be kept “in every place that you may inhabit.”¹⁴² That this is the meaning of Leviticus 23:3 is the understanding of more than a dozen English versions that have rendered the last part of the verse in a manner similar to that of the New Living Translation: “It is the Lord’s Sabbath day, and it must be observed wherever you live.”¹⁴³ The reality of the continued observance of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, even during times of captivity or exile, can be seen from the fact that the Sabbath “became one great bond of union among the Jews in exile.”¹⁴⁴ While appointed seasons involving the sacrificial service would be disrupted, “the Sabbath could still be fully observed after the destruction of the Temple.”¹⁴⁵ In brief, since the Israelites knew that the weekly Sabbath was “to be observed” “wherever they might find themselves residing,”¹⁴⁶ it would likely have been self-evident to the reader and/or hearer of Hosea’s prophetic warning that the שַׁבָּת that would be terminated due to exile could only be the ritual sabbaths, related to the operations of the sanctuary and not the weekly Sabbaths, which were to be observed everywhere.

Understanding the Term מועד in Hosea 2:11

As discussed in Chapter Four above, it is well-recognized that the term מועד, as used in a cultic setting, is a technical definition for the appointed seasons (as in Lev 23:4-37). Understanding the וְכָל מוֹעֲדֶיהָ as a collective singular, and recognizing that the *waw* should be seen here as an explicative,¹⁴⁷ this has been rendered as “even all her appointed times” (YLT). In accord, *Die Bybel in Afrikaans* (1971) interprets this entire verse as: “En ek maak ’n einde aan al haar vreugde, haar feeste, haar nuwemaande, en haar sabbatte, ja, aan al haar feestye.” G. I. Davies noted, the *waw* “is explanatory” and “is best left untranslated,”¹⁴⁸ which is how some English versions, such as the NET, NLT, and TNIV have rendered it: “—all her appointed festivals.”¹⁴⁹ That this lexeme מועד is utilized

¹⁴¹George Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Leviticus: Designed as a General Help to Biblical Reading and Instruction* (New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman & Co., 1842), 234; “Sabbaths” was capitalized, in the original.

¹⁴²Ibid. Bush was here commenting on the phrase “in all your dwellings” (Lev 23:3).

¹⁴³While the NIV and TNIV simply say, that “wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the Lord,” the CEV states: “No matter where you live, you must rest on the Sabbath and come together for worship.” See also, CEB, CSB, GNT, GW, HCSB, ISV, MSG, NET, NIV, NOG, REB, and TVB.

¹⁴⁴T. K. Cheyne, *Hosea, with Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge: University Press, 1889), 51.

¹⁴⁵David W. Baker, *Leviticus*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 167.

¹⁴⁶Ibid. These are comments by Baker in context of his “Introduction and Sabbath ([Lev] 23:1-4).”

¹⁴⁷Bruce K. Waltke, and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 648-649, indicate that, besides “epexegetical,” it is sometimes called the “emphatic *waw*.”

¹⁴⁸Davies, 76.

¹⁴⁹See also, CSB, GNT, GW, HCSB, NKJV.

here “as a summary expression,”¹⁵⁰ is well-recognized¹⁵¹ – implications of which will be explored below.

Conclusion Regarding Linguistic Analysis of Hosea 2

As noted above, there are numerous distinct similarities between the tripartite phrase “feast, new moon, sabbath” of Hosea 2:11 and that of Colossians 2:16. Thus, if Paul borrowed this phrase from the Old Testament it seems probable that he extracted it from Hosea 2. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that Paul’s usage of this tripartite phrase in Colossians 2:16 has a meaning different from that of the original Hebrew text, especially since it is really the only three-part phrase in the entire Old Testament that actually synchronizes with the one located in Colossians.¹⁵²

The linguistic evidence outlined above, therefore, proposes that J. J. Givens was correct in this statement concerning the Hebrew term חַג located in Hosea 2:11: “‘Her feasts days, were the three annual festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.’”¹⁵³ The second key word considered above, שַׁבָּת, though basically uncontested, refers to the new moon which had a pivotal role in accurately calculating all of the cultic observances of ancient Israel, other than the weekly Sabbath.

Regarding the third term שַׁבְּתוֹת, Thomas Preble, aptly observed: “Hosea says, ‘her Sabbaths.’ But the [seventh-day] Sabbath of which we are speaking, God calls ‘my Sabbath.’ Here is a clear distinction between the creation Sabbath and the ceremonial.”¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Milton Wilcox noted: “They are called in Hosea 2:11, ‘her sabbaths;’ that is, *Israel’s* sabbaths. But the Sacred Record is careful to distinguish between these yearly days and the ‘Sabbath of Jehovah.’”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 384; contra Cole, 282, footnote #3.

¹⁵¹See, for example, M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), *Hosea*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 8: *Daniel ~ Malachi*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 237, stated: “The inventory closes with the summary phrase. ‘All her appointed feasts.’” See also, Trent Butler, 20; Hasel (“‘New Moon and Sabbath’”), 42; Keil, 58; C. von Orelli, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, J. S. Banks, trans. (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1977), 15.

¹⁵²Sokupa (109) claimed that “the sacrificial ritual element permeates the entire book” of Hosea. Though more circumspect, Papaioannou (135) argued that “in Hos 2:11 where sacrifices and offerings are not directly mentioned they are implied.” Similarly, Reynolds (“‘Let No One Judge You:’ Col 2:16-17 in Exegetical Perspective,” 214), contended that there are “implicit allusions” to “sacrifices and offerings” – all of which allegedly demonstrated that Hos 2:11 can be classified as essentially the same as the passages in 1 and 2 Chron, Neh, and Ezek. However, as a careful reading shows, there is a clear break at the end of chap. 2; there is no hint of any burnt sacrifice (עֹלָה) in this unit; and it is only in a separate unrelated section in chap. 6 (vs. 6) where עֹלָה appears, and then only in the context of contrasting it with faithfulness to the LORD. In short, as others (like Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16,” 30) have begun to recognize, it seems as though Hos 2:11 is an “exception” to the rest of the passages.

¹⁵³Quoted in Timothy Scott, 61 (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁴T. M. Preble, *A Tract, Showing That the Seventh Day Should be Observed as the Sabbath Instead of the First; According to the Commandment* (Nashua, NH: Murray & Kimball, 1845), 5 (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁵Milton Charles Wilcox, *The Lord’s Day: The Test of the Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1931), 42 (emphasis added). Though limiting it to the *annual* cultic sabbaths, Andrews’ comments are worth noting: “Hosea designates the annual sabbaths in the following prediction:- ‘I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new moons, and HER sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts;’” (J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. rev. [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887], 90, emphasis original).

In short, the above findings regarding the literary analysis of Hosea 2:11 can be summarized as follows, with a special emphasis on the contextual meaning of the term שַׁבָּת:

- (a) There is a basic agreement among commentators that, since it is not one of the three pilgrim festivals, the weekly שַׁבָּת is excluded from the Hebrew term חַג;
- (b) While essentially not controverted, חַדְשׁ identifies new moon celebration, which is key in computing all of ancient Israel's ritual occasions, except for the seventh-day שַׁבָּת;
- (c) There are three sabbatically-related observances (Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years), to be included in the term שַׁבָּת here – but not the weekly שַׁבָּת;
- (d) Since it is widely acknowledged that “the inventory closes with the summary phrase”¹⁵⁶ וְכֹל־מִעֲדָה (including an explicative *waw*), it appears best to conclude that the seventh-day שַׁבָּת is not included here, for as Milgrom noted, “the sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the *mô‘ēd* in all the biblical sources.”¹⁵⁷

Thus, based upon lexicographical evidence, indications from the linguistic markers, as well as the immediate and larger contexts, the following conclusions can legitimately be drawn, regarding the preferred manner of translating the contested phrase חַגָּה חֲדָשִׁה וְשַׁבָּתָה in Hosea 2:11. *Hag* is not simply “feast” or “festival,” but is restricted to the three **annual** “pilgrimages” of the ancient Israelite religion: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. *Hōdeš* identifies the significant new moon **monthly** celebrations, which played such a vital role in determining the dates for the other religious appointed seasons. *Šabbāt* appears to refer to cultic occasions which are classified as some form of sabbatic observance in Scripture, such as the **annual** Day of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement¹⁵⁸ (and by extension, the Sabbatical Years). Thus, it seems possible that the “feast, new moon, sabbath” tripartite phrase in Hosea 2:11 may be exhibiting the literary form of chiasmus, so often used by the writers of the Scriptures – annual, monthly, annual.

Regardless of whether or not the Hosea passage was intentionally structured as a “mini-chiasm,”¹⁵⁹ it appears that the linguistic evidence adduced thus far adds a greater plausibility to the notion that the Hosea 2:11 tripartite phrase may be the best candidate as the antecedent to that of

¹⁵⁶Carroll, 237.

¹⁵⁷Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1954.

¹⁵⁸Bacchiocchi noted that Trumpets and Atonement differ from the other appointed seasons in two ways: (a) Both “were not connected with any special historical or national event;” (Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, Part II: *The Fall Festivals* [Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1996], 52); and, (b) Both (ibid.) “were observed, not like the other festivals in a spirit of exalted joyfulness, but in a spirit of intense moral and spiritual introspection.” Naturally, as noted below, the Day of Atonement was also a day of joyful redemption.

¹⁵⁹This thesis will be using the nomenclature suggested by Heil in his seminal study on chiasmic structures in Colossians: “Macrochiasm,” for large swaths of work, such as an entire book; “Microchiasm,” for distinct units; and “Mini-chiasm,” for sentences [or perhaps even phrases]. See John Paul Heil, *Colossians: Encouragement to Walk in All Wisdom as Holy Ones in Christ*, Society of Biblical Literature: Early Christianity and Its Literature, Number 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 37, 104.

Colossians 2:16.¹⁶⁰ If these conclusions are accurate, it could have some impact on the specific meaning of the word σαββάτων as it appears in Colossians.

Literary Structures in Hosea

The linguistic analysis above suggests that it is an imprecise assumption that Hosea 2:11 has a “yearly-monthly-weekly” sequence. On the contrary, based on evidence from more precise lexical definitions, the linguistic indicators, and the internal context, it appears that the three-part phrase may actually exhibit the well-known Semitic literary structure of a chiasm, an inverted parallelism.

A Significant Semitic Literary Form

Many scholarly studies have focused on what is commonly known as *parallelism*. As John Willis noted, “Much attention has been given to synonymous, ‘pivot-pattern,’ ‘Janus’, ABCB, and chiasmic parallelism in particular.”¹⁶¹ A very broad definition of parallelism, is that “it occurs in the interaction of semantic and grammatical equivalence and opposition,”¹⁶² with “a sense of balance between or among the elements.”¹⁶³ Matters of meter, syllable-count, word-count, the arrangement of the same or similar verbs or nouns, or the entire thought of the passage,¹⁶⁴ can be vital in recognizing chiasmic parallelisms, which is the “overall tendency in Scripture.”¹⁶⁵ Hence, the student of Scripture “must carefully observe the individual words as well as their relationships at the level of the colon, multi-colon, and the entire poem in order to comprehend the range of parallelisms utilized in the Hebrew Bible.”¹⁶⁶

Examples of Some Chiasms in Hosea

According to Loren Bliese, “Hosea has thirty chiasmic poems,”¹⁶⁷ that demonstrate this type of structural symmetry. Bliese added: “A nice example of a chiasmic poem is Hos 2.18-20 (20-22, Hebrew):”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁰In his MA thesis on σαββάτων in Col 2:16, while arguing in favor of the passages in 1 and 2 Chron, Neh, etc., as being alleged antecedents, Gien (“An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16,” 30) recognized “the possible exception of Hosea 2:11,” from this list.

¹⁶¹John T. Willis, “Alternating (ABA’B’) Parallelism in the Old Testament Psalms and Prophetic Literature,” *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, Elaine R. Follis, ed., Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 40 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 49.

¹⁶²David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 35.

¹⁶³Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 30.

¹⁶⁴See Willis, 49.

¹⁶⁵Robert A. Harris, *Discerning Parallelism: A Study in Northern French Medieval Jewish Biblical Exegesis*, Brown Judaic Studies, Number 341 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2004), 108.

¹⁶⁶Petersen, and Richards, 35.

¹⁶⁷Loren F. Bliese, “Symmetry and Prominence in Hebrew Poetry: With Examples from Hosea,” in *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures*, Ernst R. Wendland, ed., United Bible Societies Monograph Series, No. 7 (Reading, England: United Bible Societies, 1994), 68.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

- A 18 And-I-will-establish for-them a-covenant
in-that day** [3+2] (5)
- B** With=the-beasts-of the-field
and-with=the-birds-of the-sky
and-the-creeping-things-of the-ground [2+2+2] (6)
- *
- C And-bow and-sword and-war
I-will-destroy from=the-earth** [3+2] (5)
- C' And-I-will-make-them-lie-down in-hope.**
(enjambment)
- 19 And-I-will-betroth-you to-me forever;** [2+3] (5)
- B' And-I-will-betroth-you to-me**
in-righteousness and-in-justice
and-in-faithfulness and-in-mercy; [2+2+2] (6)
- A' 20 And-I-will-betroth-you to-me in-truth;
and-you-will-know the=LORD.** [3+2] (5)

In analyzing Hosea 9:1-9, Bliese observed that “the first stanza has a *semantic* pattern of chiasmus:”¹⁶⁹

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|------------------------------|------|
| A rejoice ... exalt | 1a | A' festival ... feast | 5 |
| B God | 1b | B' LORD | 4c |
| C grain | 1c | C' bread | 4b,c |
| D new wine | 2 | D' wine | 4a |
| E land of LORD | 3a | E' Egypt ... Assyria | 3b |

The conclusions of Bliese regarding the frequent occurrence of chiasmic parallelisms in Hosea have been confirmed by the research of several scholars.¹⁷⁰ For example, Gale Yee demonstrated that “Hos 11:10 forms an artful chiasmic structure:”¹⁷¹

- | | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| A | <i>'aḥārê yhw̄h yēlēkû</i> | [They shall walk after the LORD] |
| B | <i>kě 'aryēh yiš 'āg</i> | [He will roar like a lion] |
| B' | <i>kî hū' yiš 'āg</i> | [When He roars] |
| A' | <i>wēyeherdû bānîm miyyām</i> ¹⁷² | [Then His sons shall come trembling from the west] ¹⁷³ |

Ernst Wendland’s discourse analysis of Hebrew prophetic literature recognizes “a general chiasmic arrangement of meaningful segments” in Hosea 5:3-4:¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 78 (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁰See, for example, Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (London: T & T Clark, 2005); idem, “Internal or Half-Line Parallelism in Classical Hebrew Again,” in *Poetry in the Hebrew Bible: Selected Studies from Vetus Testamentum*, David E. Orton, compiler (Leiden: Brill, 2000). Note also the additional documents mentioned in this section.

¹⁷¹Gale A. Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, Number 102 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 154.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Translation added.

¹⁷⁴Ernst R. Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Prophetic Literature: Determining the Larger Textual Units of Hosea and Joel* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995), 11.

- A. I myself know Ephraim ... and Israel
 B. **indeed** now you have *prostituted yourselves*, O Ephraim
 C. Israel is defiled
 C' their deeds do not allow them to return to their God
 B' **indeed** the *spirit of prostitution* (is) among them
 A' **and Yahweh** they do **not know**¹⁷⁵

In his insightful study, Bliese later indicated that “another form of chiasmus is the listing of words or synonyms in mirror image, usually meeting in the central peak.... Chiastic relationships between stanzas in a poem can often be shown by section headings tagged with **A B C B' A'** etc.”¹⁷⁶ Illustrating this, Bliese diagrammed the crucial words of the “artfully structured chiastic poem in Hosea 7.3-7,”¹⁷⁷ basically as follows:

king	(first line)
princes	
all of them as an oven	(2nd line from start)
baker	(3rd line from start)
KING, PRINCES, HIS HAND, MOCKERS AS AN OVEN	
baker	(3rd line from end)
all of them as an oven	(2nd line from end)
rulers	
kings	(last line) ¹⁷⁸

Corroborating the above, William Shea’s research on chiastic structures demonstrated that the “*literary form* of a given portion of inspired Scripture was designed to help explain its meaning.”¹⁷⁹ Whatever the writer intentionally placed at the literary center can thus be recognized as pivotal in the overall chiastic structure.¹⁸⁰ For example, Shea has shown that in the extended inverted parallelism of Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement is at the central peak of the chapter.¹⁸¹ The importance of the fulcrum in shorter chiasms, such as an **A B C B' A'** poem, or an **A B A'** tricolon, must likewise be reckoned with in dealing with such parallelisms.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 12.

¹⁷⁶Bliese, 91 (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 69.

¹⁷⁸See Bliese, 71.

¹⁷⁹William H. Shea, “Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus,” in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 131 (emphasis original). Note: The quoted statement is part of the “editorial synopsis” of Shea’s article.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid., 149. Shea has also analyzed Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, revealing an extended inverted parallelism, with the Lord’s Prayer at its literary center. See, William H. Shea, “How Jesus Preached the Sermon on the Mount, in *The Word of God for the People of God: A Tribute to the Ministry of Jack J. Blanco*, Ron du Preez, Philip G. Samaan, and Ron E. M. Clouzet, eds. (Collegedale, TN: School of Religion, Southern Adventist University, 2004), 198.

Importance of Chiasms for Interpretation

Wendland cautioned that if the chiasmic structure is ignored, “at the very least, the intended message will not be conveyed with the same impact as in the original.”¹⁸² More significantly, as Patrick Miller observed, “a deeper sensitivity to the poetic character of the text can enhance our understanding, and attention to poetic features may aid the interpretive process and its results.”¹⁸³

Thus, to gain “a sensitive, nuanced, and full reading of the passage under consideration,”¹⁸⁴ the interpreter of Scripture must consider the matter of parallelism, since this is “one of the *primary* characteristics of biblical poetry.”¹⁸⁵ Indeed, “Hebrew prose [also] yields a variety of features that may be termed parallelism.”¹⁸⁶

As Wilfred Watson noted, the writing prophets effectively utilized parallel word-pairs “*enabling the audience (or readers) to follow the meaning better.*”¹⁸⁷ Put simply, if one attempts to understand any passage in Scripture without reference to the evident symmetrical arrangement of crucial terms, the contextual meaning of the Hebrew words could easily be misunderstood, and the text misinterpreted and misapplied.¹⁸⁸

Initial Reflections on the Hosea 2:11 Chiasm

Recognizing the kinds of parallelisms in the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole, including those evident in Hosea, and taking into account the lexicographical and linguistic data noted in the above Chapters, the following inverted parallelism initially emerges from Hosea 2:11 [MT vs. 13]:¹⁸⁹

I shall put a stop to¹⁹⁰

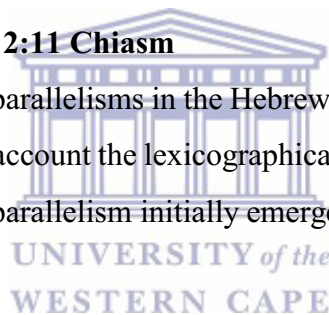
A all her celebrations:

B her pilgrimages,

C her new moons,

B' her sabbaths –

A' all her appointed seasons.



¹⁸²Wendland, 13.

¹⁸³Miller, 30.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 31.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 30 (emphasis added).

¹⁸⁶Petersen, and Richards, 27.

¹⁸⁷Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 140 (emphasis original).

¹⁸⁸See Bliese, 70, where he made this vital point regarding the proper interpretation about the “artfully structured chiasmic poem” (69) in Hosea 7:3-7.

¹⁸⁹This is essentially from the REB.

¹⁹⁰It is apparently not unusual for a chiasmus to have an introductory statement, which is not directly part of the pattern itself. See, for example, Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 155, where he made the following comment about Col 2:6, in relation to the overall chiasmic structure of Col 2:6-19: “The chiasmus is prefaced by an introduction, associated with, but not belonging to, the chiasmic pattern itself.”

The word “pilgrimages” above, though rarely used, is a legitimate rendition of the Hebrew term חַג. Indeed, of the more than 50 different English Bible versions examined,¹⁹¹ only the Revised English Bible, and its earlier edition (i.e., the New English Bible), translated *ḥag* as “pilgrimages,” while TVB has rendered it as “*pilgrimage* festivals.” Yet this appropriately precise translation of *ḥag* is fully in line with the evidence from the biblical materials themselves, as outlined earlier. In addition to the contemporary *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, the respected *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* likewise confirms that *ḥag* was “a feast celebrated by a *pilgrimage*.”¹⁹²

In his 2005 scholarly study of Hosea 2, Kelle noted that מועֲדֶיהָ (i.e., “her appointed seasons”), “functions as an inclusio here with the other general term”¹⁹³ מְשׁוּשָׁה (i.e., “her celebrations,” or “joy”). As already stated above, Andersen and Freedman echo the reality of this textual structural factor.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, “the Jewish scribes have accentuated the Hebrew in Hosea 2:11,”¹⁹⁵ so that the reader would pause after מְשׁוּשָׁה, as well before מועֲדֶיהָ. Capturing this in poetic form, the New American Bible (revised edition) has rendered this verse as follows:

“I will put an end to all her joy,
her festivals, her new moons, her sabbaths—
all her seasonal feasts.”¹⁹⁶

In short, it seems plausible that “the list of the three kinds of festive assemblies ... is inserted between”¹⁹⁷ the words “joy” and “feasts,” in the above rendition of the revised NAB. Taking into account the Masoretic punctuation noted above, as well as the versification by various versions,¹⁹⁸ it seems valid to conclude that the “three words sandwiched between”¹⁹⁹ the only “two nouns that have the word ‘all’ in front of them,”²⁰⁰ rightfully “constitute a series.”²⁰¹

¹⁹¹This includes the following: AET, AmpB, ANT, ASV, BBE, BLT, BV, CBAT, CEV, CJB, CW, CWK, DBY, DCB, ESV, GNV, GW, HCSB, ICB, JB, JPS, KJ21, KJIIV, KJV, LB, LXXEng, MSG, MLB, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NCV, NET, Nlrv, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NLT, NLTrev, NLV, NRSV, NWT, RSV, RV, SS, TEV, TNIV, and YLT.

¹⁹²See the explanation under the noun מועֵד (in the section on the verb יָעַד), in William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., Edward Robinson, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 417 (emphasis original).

¹⁹³Kelle, 209.

¹⁹⁴Andersen, and Freedman, 250.

¹⁹⁵Gladson, “Does the Letter to the Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 384. See *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. The two pauses are a *zāqēp qātōn* and an *atnāh*.

¹⁹⁶Following the Hebrew versification, the NABrev has this as Hos 2:13.

¹⁹⁷Andersen, and Freedman, 250.

¹⁹⁸See, for example, the CEB, ESV, LEB, NASB, NCV, NRSV, and RSV.

¹⁹⁹David Allan Hubbard, *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1989), 78.

²⁰⁰Andersen, and Freedman, 250.

²⁰¹Ibid.

Some have wondered how the initial term, מְשׂוּשָׁה (“joy”), could conceptually be paired with מוֹעֵדָה, since the latter includes the Day of Atonement, which is often perceived as a “solemn” day, devoid of all “joy.” However, since Yom Kippur was the annual time when “Israel was reconciled to Jehovah,” and since the “Jubilee year was always proclaimed on the Day of Atonement,”²⁰² this “solemn” day was also a day of joyful celebration – for “the mighty works of God in redemption.”²⁰³

As indicated earlier, it is well-recognized²⁰⁴ that the final part of this passage (וּכְלִי-מוֹעֵדָה) acts “as a summary expression”²⁰⁵ for the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase immediately preceding it. Most have then reasoned similarly to Blomberg: “It is highly unlikely that the Sabbaths in Hos 2:11 are limited to ceremonial ones, because the prophet sandwiches his triad of ‘her’ yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days’ inside references to stopping ‘all her celebrations’ and ‘all her appointed festivals.’ One can scarcely exclude the weekly Sabbath from these expressions.”²⁰⁶

However, it seems that commentators in general may have inadvertently missed a crucial factor related to the lexeme מוֹעֵד. In his monumental work on Leviticus, Milgrom astutely concluded that “the sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the *mô’ēd* in all the biblical sources.”²⁰⁷ In other words, the weekly Sabbath is *never* included as one of the מוֹעֵדִים, but is *always* listed separately, as can be seen for instance in everyone of the eight major passages examined above (in Numbers,

²⁰²Unger, 416.

²⁰³Hubbard (78), was here commenting on the term “joy,” noting that it “describes the divinely ordered purpose of the festivities: they were to be celebrations of thanksgiving for the gifts of God in crops and the mighty works of God in redemption.” Additional support for “celebration,” even on the Day of Atonement, comes from a study of the Greek. The lexicon defines: “πανηγυρισ πανēguris,” as deriving from מוֹעֵד: “In the Septuagint the word denotes the observance of celebrations and pilgrimages and especially the happiness they arouse (see Hosea 2:11).” Also, “in the New Testament *panēguris* is found only in Hebrews 12:23 where it describes the joyful praise and celebration [GNT: ‘joyful gathering’] in the heavenly Jerusalem;” (Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary: Pi-Rho* [Springfield, MO: Complete Biblical Library, 1986], s.v. “πανηγυρισ πανēguris”). There may be additional support for connecting the notion of “joy” with מוֹעֵד. Though employing a different term for “joy,” this verse does directly link the two concepts.

²⁰⁴See, for example, Carroll, 237, who stated: “The inventory closes with the summary phrase. ‘All her appointed feasts.’” See also, Trent Butler, 20; Hasel (“New Moon and Sabbath”), 42; Keil, 58; von Orelli, 15.

²⁰⁵Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 384. Taking this into account, various English versions have rightly left the explicative *waw* untranslated, rendering the phrase as the NET, NLT, and TNIV have it, “—all her appointed festivals.” See similarly, CSB, GNT, GW, HCSB, and NKJV.

²⁰⁶Craig L. Blomberg, “Final Remarks: Craig L. Blomberg,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 401 (emphasis original). Unfortunately, as others who have commented on the triad in Col 2:16, Blomberg has unwarily relied on a selected English version (the TNIV in this case) as alleged support for his view. As shown above, there are several problems with his construct, including: (1) The word “yearly” (added by the TNIV translators without manuscript support), which gives an inaccurate idea that Hos 2:11 is simply referring to “yearly festivals,” whereas the Hebrew term מוֹעֵד (as used in cultic settings), is restricted to the three pilgrim festivals; (2) The word “days” (added by the TNIV translators without manuscript support), provides the false impression that it refers to the weekly Sabbath (which frequently includes the linguistic link “days” as an identifying term).

²⁰⁷Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1954. Milgrom repeated the point (ibid. 1956) that “throughout the span of the biblical period,” the Sabbath was *never* classified as a מוֹעֵד, but was listed as distinct from the מוֹעֵדִים (as in 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12-13; Neh 10:33; Ezek 46:1-15; etc.). Note: It must be admitted that Milgrom claimed that the weekly שַׁבָּת was added to the מוֹעֵדִים by a later “H” redactor (see, for example, ibid., 2055). However, it needs to be emphasized that, throughout this thesis, the references made to Milgrom’s assertion that the seventh-day Sabbath was never classified as (or included as) a מוֹעֵד, is done without endorsing any of his theories regarding the alleged evolution of the text, but only in the context of the actual textual evidence provided, such as identified in the above references.

1 and 2 Chron, Neh, and Ezek). Moreover, in making his textually-corroborated point, Milgrom has included the Hosea 2 passage as one of his examples.²⁰⁸ Put simply, Scripture *always* differentiates between שַׁבָּת and מוֹעֵד; and the former is *never* included in the latter. Since there is sufficient evidence that the final noun (מוֹעֵדִים) does appropriately summarize the afore-mentioned tripartite phrase, and since חַג is well-recognized as being restricted to solely the pilgrim festivals, the most plausible solution to this dilemma seems to be to acknowledge that the שַׁבָּת used here actually does refer to the ceremonial sabbaths, which can rightfully be encapsulated in the מוֹעֵדִים.

The punctuation used in this passage in the Holman Christian Standard Bible is basically echoed in the inverted parallelism shown below:²⁰⁹

“I will put an end to all her celebrations:
her feasts, New Moons, and Sabbaths—
all her festivals.”

This punctuation, as rendered here, thus corroborates the linguistic evidence that there are two sets of concepts in this passage, thereby indicating that the inner three terms together explain the extent of the outer two items. With all of the above in mind, the basic five terms in this passage, including those that may be loosely identified as “Prologue” (A) and “Epilogue” (A’), can be outlined as follows:

Ref.	“Prologue”	Annual-“Pilgrimly” ²¹⁰	Monthly	Annual-“Sabbatically” ²¹¹	“Epilogue”
Hosea 2:11 [MT: vs. 13]	כָּל־מְשׁוֹשָׁה = All <i>her</i> celebrations (or exultation)	חַגָּה = <i>her</i> [pilgrimage] festivals: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles	חֲדָשֵׁה = <i>her</i> new moons	וְשַׁבְּתֹהּ = and <i>her</i> [ceremonial] sabbaths: Atonement, and Trumpets ²¹²	וְכָל־מְוָעָדָהּ = Even all <i>her</i> appointed seasons

²⁰⁸Ibid., 1956. Other examples he included are: 2 Chron 8:13; Neh 10:34; Ezek 46:1, 6, 9, 11.

²⁰⁹In a manner somewhat similar to that of the HCSB, the TEV has punctuated Hos 2:11 as follows: “I will put an end to all her festivals – her annual and monthly festivals and her Sabbath celebrations – all her religious meetings.” This rendering also helps in seeing that the inner three concepts indicate the extent of the outer two items.

²¹⁰As done above, in relation to the term חַג in Ezek 45:17, the same neologism, “Pilgrimly,” is used here so as to indicate that this term does not refer to all the “Annual” occasions, but is limited to the three “pilgrimage festivals.”

²¹¹The term “Sabbatically” has been employed here to indicate that both of these “Annual” occasions, Atonement and Trumpets, are identified in Scripture as some form of “sabbath” (with שַׁבָּת for the former, and שַׁבְּתוֹן for the latter).

²¹²As footnoted in Chapter Three above, it should be noted that the term שַׁבְּתוֹן (on its own), is used four times throughout the Hebrew Scriptures: (1) For the Day of Trumpets (Lev 23:24); (2) For the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:39); (3) For the eighth day, related to the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:39); and, (4) For the Sabbatical Year (Lev 25:5). As can be seen, these occasions are all “sabbatically” related – the first three noted here are all annual occasions located in the *seventh* month, while the fourth is identified as the *seventh* year. Since Trumpets is the only fully independent one-day-long annual sacred occasion (labelled שַׁבְּתוֹן, i.e., a “sabbatism”), and since it was never classified as a חַג (i.e., a pilgrimage festival) in Scripture, it has been included in the above chart. While the eighth day, related to Tabernacles, is also labeled a שַׁבְּתוֹן, it is not included above since in practice (as clearly implied in passages such as Num 29:12-38), it was celebrated as part of the pilgrim festival at the temple. Since the first day of Tabernacles (though called a שַׁבְּתוֹן) was an integral part of the Feast of Tabernacles, it is also not included above (since it is already accounted for in the “Annual” section dealing with the “pilgrim feasts.” [The matter of the Sabbatical Year is addressed below, in the discussion of “an augmented inverted parallelism.”])

In his 2005 volume *Classic Hebrew Poetry*, Wilfred Watson mentioned the **A B A'** tricolon, as one of the “forms of chiasmus.”²¹³ Thus, since they are linguistically grouped together, we need to consider primarily these “middle three” terms here – a phrase rendered in the American Standard Version literally as, “her feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths.”

Ref.	ANNUAL-“Pilgrimly”	Monthly	ANNUAL-“Sabbatically” ¹
Hosea 2:11 ²¹⁴	חגה = <i>her</i> feasts [i.e., pilgrimages]: Pass-over/Unl. Br., Pentecost, & Tabernacles	חדשה = <i>her</i> new moons	ושבתה = and <i>her</i> sabbaths [i.e., ritual]: Day of Atonement, and Trumpets ²¹⁵

In brief, it is plausible that the pivotal section in Hosea 2:11 contains an inverted parallelism – a semantic pattern of chiasmus. Though distinct from the type of evident linguistic chiasmic poem (as basically seen in Hosea 7:3-7 above), this semantic pattern is comparable to that observed in the Hosea 9:1-9 example cited above. While each side of the mini-chiasm has an essentially synonymous semantic concept of annual appointed seasons, the new moon festival (which determines the actual timing of these annual cultic seasons, as above) is located at the central peak of the chiasmus.

The Levitical Sequence and Hosea 2:11

Already it has been noted that the combination of calendric terms seen in 1 and 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Ezekiel most plausibly derive from the listing of burnt sacrifices in Numbers 28-29. As scholars recognize, the only other major enumeration of calendric ritual data is found in Leviticus 23. The significance of these two textual segments is further highlighted by the uncommon two-pronged Hebrew term, מלאכת עבודה. As noted in Chapter Four above, this unique two-pronged term appears in just 12 texts in the entire Old Testament, every one of them solely in these chapters in Scripture that contain a comprehensive elaboration of the sacrificial system of ancient Israel. With impeccable precision, this term (מלאכת עבודה) is utilized for only six occasions in Leviticus 23 – the annual מועדים, which are then repeated six times in Numbers 28-29.²¹⁶

Since the language and structure of the tripartite phrase in Hosea 2:11 do not appear to be based on the four-part sequence seen in Numbers 28-29, the only other extensive ritual calendric passage (i.e., Lev 23:4-37) may be worth considering, as a potential antecedent for Hosea. To be also

²¹³Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 215.

²¹⁴As explained above, these terms are recognized as collective singulars; hence are translated as plurals. See, for example, ASV, BBE, BV, CEV, ESV, GW, HCSB, ICB, JB, JPS, KJV, NAB, NASB, NCV, NEB, NET, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NLT, NLV, NRSV, REB, RSV, RV, and TNIV.

²¹⁵See the footnote above related to “Trumpets” in the chart that includes the “Prologue” and “Epilogue.”

²¹⁶The complete list of the specific days on which there was to be no מלאכת עבודה, is as follows: (a) the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:7; Num 28:18); (b) the seventh day of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:8; Num 28:25); (c) the Feast of Pentecost (Lev 23:21; Num 28:26); (d) the Day of Trumpets (Lev 23:25; Num 29:1); (e) the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:35; Num 29:12); and, (f) the eighth day, related to the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:36; Num 29:35).

kept in mind, in contradistinction to the *offering-focused* instructions in Numbers 28-29,²¹⁷ is the fact that in Leviticus 23 “the whole *emphasis* lies on the *days* that must be observed,”²¹⁸ for the purpose of rest and religious assembly.²¹⁹

Revelation scholar Jon Paulien states: “What has been overlooked is the fact that the Feast of Trumpets comes as the climax of seven new moon feasts (Num 10:10) and forms the bridge between the spring and the fall feasts.”²²⁰ This notion, including that of Trumpets as forming “a bridge,” seems corroborated in Numbers 29:6, in the context of the enumeration of the sacrifices at this event, when a direct reminder is given that these annual offerings are “besides the burnt offering of the [monthly] new moon” (ESV). Now, as noted in Chapter Four, Wilfried Warning’s doctoral research concluded that “the chiasmic structure of [Lev 23:4-37] ... can hardly be contradicted;”²²¹ and, that it excludes the weekly Sabbath (similar to the manner in which it deals with the “daily”).²²² In accord with Warning, Christophe Nihan has noted that the appointed seasons in Leviticus 23 “are

²¹⁷This focus on offerings can be seen, for example, by the number of times certain words appear in these 71 verses of Num 28-29: *’olah* 30x; *minha* 33x; *neseq* 27x. By way of contrast, in the 44 verses of Lev 23 those same words appear as follows: *’olah* 3x; *minha* 4x; *neseq* 3x. This is a per capita ratio of more than five-and-a-half times as many appearances for offering-related terminology in Numbers than in Leviticus.

²¹⁸Hui, 147-148, quoting Wenham, 7-8 (emphases added). See also, Papaioannou who concluded that “the focus is not the festal calendar of Israel as such, but the offerings during the festal calendar;” (134).

²¹⁹Ibid., 154. Words related to “sabbath/rest,” “no work,” and “holy convocation” appear for a total of 35x in the 44 verses of Lev 23, while these same terms appear only 15x in the 71 verses of Num 28-29. This is a per capita ratio of almost four times as many appearances of rest/worship concepts in Leviticus than in Numbers.

²²⁰Jon Paulien, “Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, Book 1, Frank B. Holbrook, ed., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 191. Paulien (ibid.) also noted: “The blowing of seven trumpets – near the center of the book (Rev 8-9, 11) – reminds the reader of the seven monthly new moon feasts that climaxed in the Feast of Trumpets, marking the transition between the spring and fall feasts.”

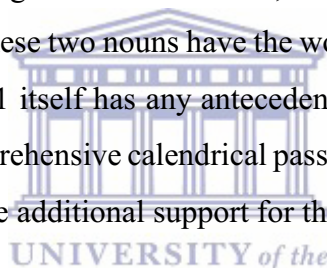
²²¹Wilfried Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 90.

²²²Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 2034), suggested that the דְּבַר יוֹם בַּיּוֹם (vs. 37) “specifies the offerings for each festival day.” However, careful examination of all passages that contain this basic phrase seems to point in a different direction. Besides the one time in which it was used in a generic sense of “daily” (1 Kgs 8:59), in many instances this phrase refers to a “daily” quota (Exod 5:13, 19; 16:4; 2 Kgs 25:30; Jer 52:34; Dan 1:5). In almost all of the other cases, besides the one under discussion, it appears that this phrase relates to “daily” temple activities (1 Chron 16:37; 2 Chron 8:14; 31:16; Neh 11:23; 12:47). Ezra 3:4 appears as somewhat of an anomaly for the use of this phrase; for the context indicates that it means “specified for each day of the festival” (NLT). In 2 Chron 8:13, however, the context shows that the phrase here means “as each day required” (CEB), referring to the “regular” daily sacrifices. In line with the generic use, the “daily” quota use, as well as the general temple use, it seems that the phrase in Lev 23:37 would best be understood as referring to the “regular” daily sacrifices (as in 2 Chron 8:13), especially as this phrase in Lev 23 is unquestioningly outside the *inclusio* (of vss. 4 and 37), and stands outside of the chiasmic structure of the annual cultic calendar. Commenting on the דְּבַר יוֹם בַּיּוֹם phrase, Nihan (201) considers 1 Kgs 8:59; 2 Kgs 25:30; Jer 52:34, and Ezra 3:4, then concluded that, “as these parallels suggest, it apparently refers to the *customary* protocol for the ritual of each day at the sanctuary.” See also, Keil, and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. II, *The Pentateuch*, 447, who affirmed it as a “daily” event. Furthermore, since the “daily” and the weekly Sabbath are never computed by means of the new moon, they are the two parts of the tetrad that naturally can not be an integral part of the annual cultic calendar; which helps to explain why both the “daily” and the seventh-day Sabbath are always scrupulously identified separately throughout the biblical record. In other words, the “daily” and the “Sabbath” are never classified as *mô ’ădîm*, i.e., occasions determined by the sighting of the first sliver of the new moon.

framed by a superscript and a subscript” (vss. 4 and 37), which “are formulated identically,”²²³ a factor which serves to strengthen the theory that this passage reveals an inverted parallelism. Warning has shown that Trumpets indeed forms the fulcrum of the microchiastic structure of Leviticus 23.

Paulien has aptly noted that “the bridge” that the Day of Trumpets forms is directly related to it being “the climax of seven new moon” sacred celebrations – a factor emphasizing its *monthly-relatedness*. Yet, since this מועד is celebrated yearly, and is directly classified as a שַׁבָּתוֹן (i.e., a “sabbatism”), it also forms an introduction to, as well as a constituent part of, the *annual* sacred occasions.²²⁴ Thus, it is plausible that the “feast, new moon, sabbath” tripartite phrase in Hosea 2:11 is an abbreviated generalization – a catch-phrase – encompassing the entire microchiastic structure of Leviticus 23:4-37.

Just as the textual structure of verses 4 and 37 of Leviticus 23 forms a “a chiastically related inclusio,”²²⁵ as Milgrom pointed out, in a parallel manner in Hosea 2:11, the term מועדה “functions as an inclusio here with the other general term משושה,”²²⁶ as Kelle noted – a grammatical point “confirmed by the fact that only these two nouns have the word ‘all’ in front of them.”²²⁷ In brief, if the tripartite phrase in Hosea 2:11 itself has any antecedent, it is probably this levitical passage, especially since it is the only comprehensive calendrical passage in the Pentateuch besides Numbers 28-29.²²⁸ If so, then it may provide additional support for the linguistic evidence adduced thus far,



²²³Nihan, 180. He noted (ibid.) that the superscript and subscript identify the sacred occasions “as the מועדי יהוה, ‘appointed times of YHWH,’ during which אֵל מְקַרְא קֹדֶשׁ must be proclaimed.”

²²⁴See Jacques B. Doukhan, “Loving the Sabbath as a Christian,” in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington, and William H. Shea, eds. (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 149-168, who made a similar point that – while the fourth commandment is part of one’s duty to God, and is therefore in the first table of the law – the language (of “your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant,” etc.) leads into and connects with the second table of the law; hence, Doukhan pointed out that the Sabbath commandment forms a hinge between the two parts of the Decalogue.

²²⁵Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2033.

²²⁶Kelle, 209.

²²⁷Andersen, and Freedman, 250.

²²⁸A brief comparison between these two passages in Num 28-29 and Lev 23 can be diagramed as follows:

Numbers 28-29	Leviticus 23
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focuses on the <i>burnt sacrifices</i>. 2. Many details given about <i>offerings</i>. 3. A categorical <i>chronological</i> sequence. 4. <i>Four</i> parts: daily, weekly, monthly, yearly. 5. Sabbatical year, & Jubilee are not mentioned. 6. Referenced/implied in 1 & 2 Chron, Neh & Ezek. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focuses basically on <i>sacred times</i>. 2. Details of times for <i>worship</i> and <i>rest</i>. 3. A clear <i>chiastic</i> structure (i.e., only vss. 4-37). 4. Implied <i>three</i> parts: annual, [monthly], annual. 5. Plus Sabbatical yr. & Jubilee (ch. 25). 6. Broadly summarized in Hos 2:11.

that the tripartite phrase here in Hosea does not include the weekly Sabbath,²²⁹ since it is not part of the Leviticus 23 chiastic structure either.

Consideration of Augmented Parallelisms

In his discussion of the dynamic lines of Hebrew poetry, Robert Alter considered the manner in which intensification is effected: “The simplest strategy of intensification is the introduction in the second verset of one parallel term that is obviously stronger than its counterpart in the first verset.”²³⁰ Psalm 18:16 illustrates this well:²³¹

He reached down from above and grabbed me,
He *pulled me from the surging waters*.

Wilfred Watson, in a similar manner, discussed what he labeled “augmented word-pairs.”²³² This characteristic of Semitic poetry differs from the basic repetitive word-pairs, in that it augments or intensifies the element that is being repeated. In other words, while reiterating the basic concept, it also adds in an additional aspect. Watson used Psalm 29:8 as an example of augmented word-pairs:

Yahweh’s voice makes *the desert* writhe,
Yahweh(‘s voice) makes *the holy desert* writhe.²³³

Alter observed that this “sort of development that occurs in incremental repetition” is an “adding to or at least heightening [of] meaning.”²³⁴ In an **A B A’** inverted parallelism there will obviously be a similar incremental increase of meaning. When **A’** not only echoes **A**, but actually carries the concept further, it is this emphatic aspect, “more than any aesthetic of symmetry or paralleling, which is at the *heart* of biblical parallelism.”²³⁵

An Augmented Inverted Parallelism in Hosea

Hosea 12:13 (MT: vs. 14) provides an example of just such an **A B A⁺** augmented inverted parallelism, the ⁺ symbol indicating intensification:

²²⁹And, neither does it include the “daily” – which is also not included in Hos 2:11.

²³⁰Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic, 1985), 33.

²³¹This is from the NET.

²³²See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 132.

²³³A similar type of augmented parallelism can be seen in other passages, such as in that very Ps 29:4, 5 (ESV):
The voice of the LORD is *powerful*;
The voice of the LORD is *full of majesty*.
The voice of the LORD breaks the *cedars*;
The [voice of the] LORD breaks the *cedars of Lebanon*.

²³⁴See Alter, 33.

²³⁵James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 51 (emphasis added). Though Kugel was specifically dealing with a somewhat different aspect of parallelism, his concept applies well to this matter of emphatic or augmented inverted parallelisms.

A	העלה <u>he-brought-up</u>	ובנביא <i>and-by-prophet</i>
B	ממצרים from-Egypt	יהוה את־ישראל Israel --- Yahweh
A ⁺	נשמר <u>he-was-preserved</u>	ובנביא <i>and-by-prophet</i>

Notice how the first verb העלה, is virtually uniformly rendered as “brought up/from/out of” in most English versions.²³⁶ However, the corresponding word, שמר, is evidently an augmented and intensified term, showing a heightening of meaning and significance. This term in line A⁺ is rendered variously in English translations as “preserved” (RSV), “protected” (NAB), “guarded” (ESV) – clearly a more emphatic term than that located in the earlier line A.

However, while the interpretive task requires identifying and correctly utilizing this matter of augmented parallelisms, the vital peak of an A B A⁺ inverted parallelism must not be overlooked. For example, while Hosea 12:13 reveals the beauty of an intensified mini-chiasm, the focal point is on *Yahweh*, who has delivered Israel from Egypt: יהוה את־ישראל ממצרים, that is, “Yahweh [brought up] Israel from Egypt.”

Hosea 2:11 – An Augmented Inverted Parallelism?

Before considering this question, it may be well to recall that the term שבת is often used of the septennial sabbaths (e.g., Lev 25:2, 4, 6; etc.), and rendered as *σάββατα* in the LXX,²³⁷ and that various scholars rightly recognize these Sabbatical Years as an integral part of the ancient Jewish religious appointed seasons.²³⁸ Moreover, while the focus of Leviticus 23:4-37 is on the annual appointed seasons, the matter of Sabbatical Years²³⁹ is appended shortly afterwards in Leviticus 25, essentially as a *seventh-year* augmentation to the appointed seasons (especially those occurring in the *seventh month*).

When all the relevant linguistic, punctuational, structural, inter-textual and contextual factors are considered, Hosea 2:11 appears to be more than a simple mini-chiasm. It evidences the following intensified inverted parallelism:

²³⁶See, for example, ASV, ESV, HCSB, KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, and YLT.

²³⁷See Lev 25:2, 4, 6; 26:34, 35, 43; 2 Chron 36:21.

²³⁸See, for example, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Ronald F. Youngblood, ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1995), s.v. “Feasts and Festivals;” Payne, “Sabbatical Year,” 252-253; Schultz, 118-119; E. Elmer Harding, “Feasts and Fasts,” *A Dictionary of the Bible, Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology*, James Hastings et al, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 859-863; Freeman, 599-602; Unger, 407-408.

²³⁹Besides the Sabbatical Years (Lev 25:1-7, 18-22), the Jubilee (Lev 25:8-12) is also discussed. There is no mention of Sabbatical Years in Numbers; though Jubilee is noted once briefly in Num 36:4, tangentially.

A חג (i.e., the pilgrimage **festivals**) = 3 *annual*

B חודש (i.e., the lunar **new moons**) = *monthly*

A⁺ שבת (i.e., the ritual **sabbaths**) = two *annual* **and** one *septennial*

As demonstrated above in the section on the meaning and significance of the new moons, while חודש is basically an uncontested linguistic term, these lunar observances were extremely crucial for the religious practices of the entire ancient Israelite nation. Hence, the monthly new moons stand at the peak of this mini-chiastic structure. In addition, just as the items in line **A** are calculated by means of sighting the first sliver of the new moon, in the same way, the items in the parallel line **A⁺** are similarly computed by the new moon.²⁴⁰ Since commentators generally recognize that, according to the biblical account, the weekly Sabbath has been “fixed by God,”²⁴¹ as occurring every seven days (without dependence on any lunar calculations), then, if the Hosea passage is accepted as a mini-chiasm, this will increase the plausibility that the שבת used here must be identifying ritual sabbaths.

Conclusions on Hosea’s Literary Artistry

The work of various scholars confirms that the book of Hosea contains many examples of the Semitic literary structure of chiastic parallelisms. Besides the more straightforward symmetrical type, the emphatic or intensified chiasmus also appears in this ancient Hebrew book.

If this characteristic of Semitic communication is applied to the three crucial terms in Hosea 2:11 – “feast, new moon, sabbath” – it becomes evident that this tripartite calendric string constitutes an augmented inverted parallelism: **AB A⁺**. The movement goes from *annual* pilgrim festivals, to *monthly* new moons, and then to augmented *annual* appointed seasons, as diagramed below:

Reference	ANNUAL-“Pilgrimly”	MONTHLY	ANNUAL-“Sabbatically” ⁺
Hosea 2:11 ²⁴² [MT: vs. 13]	חגה = <i>her</i> feasts [i.e., pilgrimage festivals]: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, & Tabernacles	חודשה = <i>her</i> new moons	ושבתה = and <i>her</i> sabbaths [i.e., ceremonial]: Trumpets, Atonement, and (septennial) Sabbatical Years

Watson observed that the writing prophets effectively utilized parallel word-pairs “*enabling the audience (or readers) to follow the meaning better.*”²⁴³ Thus, based upon the evidence, it appears that Hosea 2:11 needs to be understood in reference to the evident chiastic arrangement of the crucial

²⁴⁰Regarding the validity of seeing Sabbatical Years as part of Israel’s ritual system, see footnote #69 above.

²⁴¹Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1965. See also, *ibid.*, 1957; John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2003), 495; Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 174; Baker, 167.

²⁴²As explained above, these terms are recognized as collective singulars; hence are translated as plurals. See, for example, ASV, BBE, BV, CEV, ESV, GW, HCSB, ICB, JB, JPS, KJV, NAB, NASB, NCV, NEB, NET, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NLT, NLV, NRSV, REB, RSV, RV, and TNIV.

²⁴³Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 140 (emphasis original).

terms, so that the contextual meaning of these significant Hebrew words can best be understood, and the passage appropriately interpreted and applied.

As indicated above, many scholars have directly linked the tripartite phrase in Hosea 2:11 with the one located in Colossians 2:16. The weight of linguistic, contextual, and structural evidence seems to favor understanding the תַּבֻּשׁ of Hosea 2:11 as a reference to ceremonial sabbaths, and not the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. This deduction should have some significant implications for the meaning of the term *σάββατα* in Colossians 2:16, especially since, as Jerry Sumney acknowledged, “These [same three] terms appear in this order in Hos 2:13 (2:11E).”²⁴⁴

Conclusions Regarding the Tripartite Phrase

Since, on the one hand, no direct quotations of the Old Testament can be found in Colossians, and on the other hand, an “echo” is not intended for public recognition, this Chapter set out to consider whether any of the oft-quoted antecedent passages appropriately qualify as allusions to the “feast, new moon, sabbath” tripartite phrase in Colossians 2:16. Over time, various commentators have suggested that this triad here corresponds to an allegedly similar sequence of terms in several Old Testament passages, in which the weekly Sabbath is distinctly included.

Examination of the most frequently-referenced passages of Numbers 28-29; 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3; Nehemiah 10:33; Ezekiel 45:17; and 46:4-15, reveals that their combination of terms seems to differ from that of Colossians 2:16 in terminology, enumeration, sequence, number, and focus. Since “an *allusion* by definition must be overt enough to be recognized by the audience,”²⁴⁵ the significant discrepancies noted above appear to seriously call into question the claim that these passages are authentic allusions to the tripartite phrase under examination.

A separate linguistic analysis of Hosea 2:11 reveals that its relevant cluster of terms differs from the above-mentioned passages in its focus (i.e., on the times, not the burnt-offerings), its enumeration (three parts not four), its number (singulars instead of plurals), its suffix (i.e., “her,” in contrast with definite articles), its terminology (such as *גִּחַ*), its tone (as in the predicted end of temple rituals), its structure (chiastic not chronological), its computation (i.e., as to what can legitimately be summed up in the *מִוֶּעֲדֵי*), and its possible antecedent (i.e., Lev 23:4-37, not Num 28-29) – all of which serves to credibly suggest that the weekly Sabbath is not included in תַּבֻּשׁ here in Hosea 2.

²⁴⁴Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 151. He did add, Ezek 45:17, not recognizing the multiple distinguishing aspects outlined above. Reynolds (review of *Judging the Sabbath*, 279) admitted: “It is not difficult to agree that Hos 2:11 is probably the best literary background for Col 2:16.”

²⁴⁵Beetham, 12. He added (ibid.): “An author has failed in his use of allusion as a literary device if the audience does not catch the reference.”

Moreover, it seems probable that חגֵה חֲדָשֵׁה וְשַׁבָּתָה in Hosea 2:11 may be exhibiting the Semitic literary form of an augmented mini-chiastic structure **A B A⁺** – identifying the **annual** pilgrim festivals (of Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), the **monthly** new moon celebrations, and the expanded **annual** sabbatical occasions (of Trumpets, Atonement, and septennial years).²⁴⁶ Since the writing prophets effectively utilized parallel word-pairs “*enabling the audience (or readers) to follow the meaning better*,”²⁴⁷ a recognition of this mini-chiasm has helped to elucidate better “the plain meaning of the text.”²⁴⁸

As mentioned, many scholars have linked the tripartite phrase in Hosea 2:11 with the one located in Colossians 2:16. This investigation has shown that these two passages do have numerous distinct similarities, including in sequence (first “feast,” then “new moon,” finally “sabbath”), in count (of three key terms), in focus (on the set times, not any burnt-offerings), in number (singulars not plurals), in tone (i.e., of a discontinuity of all cultic occasions), etc. Hence, Hosea 2:11 appears as the only authentic plausible candidate as the passage to which Paul alluded in Colossians 2:16.

William Miller, the founder of the mid-nineteenth-century Millerite movement, recognized the significance of linguistic indicators to identify the term “sabbath” in Scripture, acknowledging the vital connection between the ritual sabbaths of Hosea 2 and Colossians 2. Miller wrote:

“See Hosea 2:11. ‘I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.’ All the Jewish sabbaths did cease when Christ nailed them to his cross. Col. 2:14-17. These were properly called Jewish sabbaths. Hosea says, ‘*her sabbaths*.’ But the Sabbath of which we are speaking, God calls ‘*my Sabbath*.’ Here is a clear distinction between the creation Sabbath and the ceremonial.”²⁴⁹

Irrespective of whether the Hosean “feast, new moon, sabbath” passage was purposely formed as an inverted parallelism, it appears from the rest of the literary analysis of this tripartite phrase, that there may be sufficient evidence to nevertheless posit Hosea 2:11 as the only valid antecedent to that of Colossians 2:16. This conclusion, and its ramifications could make a contribution to understanding the specific meaning of σαββάτων as it appears in Colossians.

²⁴⁶Contra the claim of Gladson (“Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 385), that Hos 2:11 has a “chronological” sequence, and contra that of Hasel (“New Moon and Sabbath,” 41), that this passage has “a sequential order,” it appears that this passage in Hosea provides an exhaustive and comprehensive enumeration of the lunar-connected cultic occasions of Israel.

²⁴⁷Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 140 (emphasis original).

²⁴⁸Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” 342, has called for a “plain meaning” of this passage.

²⁴⁹William Miller, *Life and Views*, 161-162; quoted in J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, 2nd ed. enl. (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1873), 87, footnote #1 (emphases added).

Excursus: Terminological Clusters in the Old Testament

Craig Blomberg acknowledged that “the only appearance of the word *Sabbath* in the rest of the NT [i.e., besides the Gospels and Acts] occurs in Col 2:16.”²⁵⁰ Then, he aptly added: “But this passage may also be the most important in all of the NT.”²⁵¹ As indicated above, similar to others, Blomberg alleged that this passage contains “the Israelite triad of annual, monthly, and weekly holy days, with the Sabbath as the last of these.”²⁵² This notion, that the seventh-day Sabbath is identified by the “triad of annual, monthly, and weekly holidays,”²⁵³ and that this triad is directly alluded to in Colossians 2:16 (indicating the abrogation of the weekly Sabbath), seems widespread and almost axiomatic. If correct, it should be verifiable by an analysis of the biblical materials.

While it is true that a quick reading of the allegedly corroborating Old Testament passages (as rendered in certain selected Bible translations) may initially appear to support this well-accepted perspective, sustained in-depth research appears to seriously challenge the veracity of this claim.

A comprehensive investigation of the Hebrew Testament reveals that the various “appointed seasons” (i.e., the מועדים), in addition to the seventh-day Sabbath, have often been grouped together in clusters of different sizes and various sequences, each with readily identifiable significance and meaning, in the following ways:

- (1) **Dyads:** These appear more frequently, and in multiple patterns,²⁵⁴ such as:
 - (a) the “new moon” (חֹדֶשׁ) [*monthly*], and the “Sabbath” (שַׁבָּת) [*weekly*]: (Amos 5:3),²⁵⁵
 - (b) the “new moon” [*monthly*], and the “festival” (חַג) [*annual-pilgrimly*]: (Ps 81:3);
 - (c) the “appointed seasons” (מועדים) [*yearly*], and the “Sabbaths” [*weekly*]: (Ezek 44:24);²⁵⁶
 - (d) “Your appointed seasons” [*yearly*], and “your new moons” [*monthly*]: (Num 10:10).²⁵⁷
- (2) **Triads:** Actually only one genuine “triad” appears in the Old Testament,²⁵⁸ as located in Ezra 3:5: the “regular” (תָּמִיד) [*daily*], the “new moons” [*monthly*], and “appointed seasons” [*yearly*].²⁵⁹ Two factors in this text may be significant: (a) The focus is explicitly on *burnt*

²⁵⁰Craig L. Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 341.

²⁵¹Ibid. He opined that it is the most important “for confirming” his belief that the seventh-day Sabbath has been abrogated.

²⁵²Blomberg, “Responses to Skip MacCarty,” 86.

²⁵³Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” 344.

²⁵⁴While some passages may superficially appear to contain dyads, additional analysis indicates they should be understood as monads, in which one term expands upon or may serve to explain the other. See, for example, Hos 9:5; and Ezek 46:11.

²⁵⁵See also 2 Kgs 4:23 (another basic dyad); similarly Isa 1:13. See also, Isa 66:23 (essentially a duplicate dyad); and Ezek 46:1, 3 (which appear to be two set of dyads).

²⁵⁶See also Lam 2:6.

²⁵⁷See also Isa 1:14, where the order is reversed.

²⁵⁸Though sometimes alleged to contain a “weekly-monthly-yearly” triad, Isa 1:13, 14 actually contains two separate dyads, as noted in footnote #255 and #257 above.

²⁵⁹In a somewhat spread out fashion Exod 23:10-18 appears to suggest the three parts of sabbatical years,

offerings (as in *all* tetradic texts); and (b) the sequence (“daily-monthly-yearly”) goes in the same direction as seen in Numbers 28-29, except that the weekly Sabbath is completely absent in Ezra 3:5.²⁶⁰

- (3) **Tetrads:** Though frequently thought to be “triads,” the passages in 1 Chronicles 23:29-31;²⁶¹ 2 Chronicles 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3; and Nehemiah 10:33, all (as outlined in Table 10 above) appear to have a definite four-part calendric string: “continual”/“day-by-day”/“morning and evening” [*daily*], “the Sabbaths” [*weekly*], “the new moons” [*monthly*], and “the appointed seasons” [*yearly*] – all focused on the *burnt sacrifices*. As indicated in the analysis above, Ezekiel 46:4-15 appears to evince a similar tetrad, also highlighting the *burnt-offerings*.²⁶² Significantly, the final term used in these passages (to identify the *yearly*) is the Hebrew lexeme טָבַח, i.e., “appointed season;” which is not the term for “feast,” as inaccurately rendered in the translations many seem to rely on.
- (4) **Chiasms:** Taking into account Semitic thought-patterns, meticulous analysis suggests that the writers of the Old Testament at times expressed the enumeration of the appointed seasons in inverted parallelisms or chiasms.²⁶³
- (a) This kind of assemblage of terms – including verbal, semantic, conceptual, structural, and contextual factors – can be seen most vividly in Leviticus 23:4-37, as diagrammatically outlined in Chapter Four above.²⁶⁴ As already noted, the fulcrum of this microchiasm is the Day of Trumpets, which naturally synchronizes with the seventh New Moon of the cultic year. Though not explicitly mentioned in Leviticus 23, New Moon day is clearly implied (as the entire annual religious calendar was basically dependent on lunar cycles); and it is explicitly highlighted in the context of the Day of Trumpets in Numbers 29:6.
- (b) Reminiscent of the manner in which almost all of the tetradic passages have summarized the extensive sacrificial calendar of Number 28-29 into a short four-part combination of terms, it seems that Hosea, the mid-eighth century prophet to Israel, similarly formulated a broad-based summary of Leviticus 23:4-37, with his tripartite phrase “feast, new moon, sabbath,” with the New Moon also filling the role of pivot-point for the inverted parallelism. As noted above, the linguistic indicators, the semantic factors, the Masoretic punctuation, the context of the confluence of the monthly New Moon and yearly Day of Trumpets, etc., together provide plausible support for the conclusion that the tripartite phrase of Hosea 2:11 reveals, at minimum, an “annual/monthly/annual” mini-chiasm.

Conclusion

In short, if the above analysis is correct, then one may come to the perplexing conclusion that, perhaps unwittingly, the eight frequently-quoted “triad” passages of the Old Testament have been

seventh-day Sabbaths, and pilgrim festivals. However, since only the final aspect actually includes the regular identifying Hebrew term, this passage is generally not considered a triad.

²⁶⁰This absence may be explained by the fact that, as Ezra’s contemporary, Nehemiah admits (see Neh 10:28-31; 13:15-22), the Israelites had ignored and violated the Sabbath.

²⁶¹1 Chron 23:30 literally reads: “morning by morning ... and in the evening.” 1 Chron 23:30-31 (ESV) states: “And they were to stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, and whenever burnt offerings were offered to the LORD on Sabbaths, new moons and feast days, according to the number required of them, regularly before the LORD.”

²⁶²As noted above, Ezek 45:17 is also a tetrad (which includes the *burnt-offerings*), though of a different nature.

²⁶³Some clusters of terms/concepts appear to have no discernible pattern, such as Exod 34:18-25.

²⁶⁴See Warning, 90.

too often inverted, truncated (from four to three parts), misidentified (for example, as referring to “feasts”), and consequently misapplied, as antecedents to the Colossians 2 phrase.

In contradistinction, there seems to be sufficient plausible data to suggest that the Hosea 2:11 tripartite phrase of “feast, new moon, sabbath” (apparently based upon Lev 23:4-37), may be the very passage that Paul alluded to in Colossians 2:16. Whether or not that is the case will be the task that will be undertaken in Chapter Seven of this thesis.



CHAPTER SIX

ΣΑΒΒΑΤΩΝ: A SINGULAR OR A PLURAL?

Colossians 2:16 reads: Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων.¹ In his 1977 Master's thesis, Paul Giem noted: "Historically, the greatest controversy over this phrase [i.e., ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων] has been whether the σαββάτων is singular or plural. Those who viewed it as plural regarded its plurality as proof that the seventh-day Sabbath is not intended, but rather the many ceremonial sabbaths."² As the literature indicates, in addition to Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs), other seventh-day Sabbatarians have argued similarly over the centuries regarding the word σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16, or its lexical form, σάββατα.³ Apparently many Adventists continue to believe that the σαββάτων used here is a plural which refers to ceremonial sabbaths. Some SDA scholars, on the other hand, though still holding that σαββάτων is a plural, insist that this term refers to the seventh-day Sabbath. The matter as to whether or not σαββάτων is a regular Greek plural or is employed as a singular has significant implications for the overall investigation as to the meaning of σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16.

The research engaged in thus far has brought to light the import of linguistic indicators, that appear to play a crucial role in assisting the reader to identify which "sabbath" is being referred to in any text. Furthermore, it has been shown that the weekly Sabbath is scrupulously distinguished from the appointed seasons of the ritual system of Israel. Also, investigation of the major suggested antecedents to the tripartite phrase in Colossians has shown that the Hosea 2:11 phrase, "her festival,

¹This is from the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek text. According to the 1995 Robinson-Pierpont Majority Text, the only textual differences are that it has the Greek word ἢ ("or") instead of the word καὶ ("and"), and in place of νεομηνίας ("new moon"), it uses the alternate spelling νομηνίας, minor distinctions of no significance to the main issue under discussion in this Chapter. In brief, "Col 2:16 does not present a problem of MS. readings, nor primarily of translation. It is a linguistic question of whether the word [σαββάτων] used here ... should be translated as an English plural;" (*Problems in Bible Translation* [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954], 230-231).

²Paul Giem, "An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16" (MA thesis, Loma Linda University, 1977), 26. See also, Harper-Knapp's Master's thesis, where she similarly noted that seventh-day Sabbatarians "sometimes" point to this "plural form" as "evidence that the sabbaths referred to are not the seventh-day Sabbath;" (Lucille Harper-Knapp, "A Critical Study of the Greek Words *Sabbaton* and *Sabbata*" [MA thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1949], 2).

³For example, before the seventeenth century had ended, Mr. Bampffield claimed that "because the word σάββατα (the plural), meaning literally 'Sabbaths,' is used in Col. ii. 16, the weekly Sabbath cannot be meant;" (see Robert Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*, 2 vols. [Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart, 1865], 2:100). More recently, Sabbatarian Johnson stated: "Paul here says 'sabbath days' (plural) which are a shadow of things to come.... Paul is not talking about the seventh day Sabbath," but about sabbaths "such as in Exodus 12:16 [*sic*], Leviticus 23:1-9;" (Ross Johnson, "A Discussion of the Sunday-Sabbath Subject," *Bible Advocate*, August 1973, 16). Christenson, however, opined: "Note that the term used is 'sabbath days' (plural). Apparently, Paul is here referring to the manifold Jewish [Rabbinical] sabbaths" that "were not part of the ten commandment law but were Jewish traditions established by the priests;" (Reo M. Christenson, "Questions Often Asked on The New Testament Sabbath," *Bible Advocate*, December 1971, 6).

her new moon, and her sabbath,” is the most plausible candidate for the passage that Paul is alluding to. All of this is part of the foundation for a better understanding and interpretation of the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16. But, there is one other critical matter needing attention before proceeding to an in-depth investigation of the Colossian passage.

Since the question regarding the continued validity of seventh-day Sabbath observance is of such import for Seventh-day Adventist Christians, and since Colossians 2:16 is the only passage in all of Scripture which appears to directly undermine the belief in the continued sanctity of the Sabbath, it has become the focus of discussion and debate since before the official establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. When challenged with this text, one of the most-frequent responses, by laity and leader alike, has been that the word “sabbaths” in this text refers to the ceremonial sabbaths of ancient Israel – evidence of which can be seen from the fact that the word *σάββατα* employed here by Paul is in the plural form, i.e., thus identifying the many annual ritual sabbaths, but not the weekly Sabbath.

In addition to tracing the history of this line of argument, this Chapter will set out to examine how the Greek language has used the term *σάββατα*, first in its renditions in the Septuagint, and then in the κοινή Greek Testament, as well as in modern Greek. In addition, extra-biblical works (such as those of Philo, and Josephus), deuterocanonical writings, as well as the possible etymological origins of *σάββατα* will be considered for additional insights. The implications of the findings, as to whether this key noun is a singular or a plural, can have a significant impact on this research, since this lexeme *σάββατα* is the one located in Colossians 2:16.

Early Adventist View of Σάββατα as Plural

In 1862, the year before the formation of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, J. M. Aldrich, later to become president of the SDA Publishing Association,⁴ argued that in Colossians 2:16, 17 Paul is speaking, “not of the weekly Sabbath of the Lord, (singular,) but of the ‘Sabbath days’ (plural,) that were connected with meats and drinks, new moons, &c, which were the annual Sabbaths of the Jews.”⁵ More than 20 years earlier, though contending that Sunday be

⁴Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1986), 173.

⁵J. M. Aldrich, *Review of Seymour's Tract: His Fifty Questions Answered* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1862), 74. Less than a decade after the publication of this book, the only official publishing house of the Seventh-day Adventist Church published a book by a Seventh Day Baptist pastor, in which he clearly stated: “The truth is that, in the New Testament, the singular and plural forms of the word are used interchangeably;” though he still maintained that “in the passage under consideration, the word is indeed plural, but the reference is not to the seventh day of the week;” (Thomas B. Brown, *Thoughts Suggested by the Perusal of Gilfillan, and Other Authors, on The Sabbath* [Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870]). One wonders why this matter of the lexical term *σάββατα*, being used interchangeably as a singular or a plural, does not appear to have been taken into account in the early arguments used by Adventists in regard to Col 2:16.

observed as the Sabbath, the following argument had already been promulgated, in a discussion on Colossians 2:16: “The plural form, *Sabbath days*, rarely, if ever, occurs in Scripture when the original institution is intended.”⁶

In 1971, more than a century after that initial article by Aldrich, Don Neufeld referred to the importance of Colossians 2:16 being translated as “the plural ‘sabbath days,’” since this represents “the position Seventh-day Adventists have held through the years, namely that Paul is speaking of ceremonial sabbath days whose observance has become obsolete.”⁷ Over the decades, until as recently as 2013, articles have repeatedly appeared in Adventist materials, arguing that the term σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16 is a plural and hence refers to ceremonial sabbaths, and not the weekly Sabbath.⁸

Seeking to strengthen this view, during the past century various Adventists, including the well-known SDA apologist Francis D. Nichol, have relied upon the explanation of the respected Presbyterian commentator, Dr. Albert Barnes.⁹ For example, in the 1912 edition of *The History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*, Barnes is quoted at some length, part of which is noted here:

“Or of the Sabbath days; Gr., ‘of the Sabbaths.’ The word *Sabbath* in the Old Testament is applied not only to the seventh day, but to all the days of holy rest that were observed by the Hebrews, and particularly to the beginning and close of their great festivals. There is, doubtless, reference to those days in this place, as the word is used in the plural number, and the apostle

⁶Harmon Kingsbury, *The Sabbath: A Brief History of Laws, Petitions, Remonstrances and Reports, with Facts and Arguments, Relating to the Christian Sabbath* (New York: Robert Carter, 1840), 196. Such reasoning, by those arguing for the sanctity of a Sunday-Sabbath, was not necessarily agreed upon by all though. For example, in 1879 one commentator argued that “the word for ‘Sabbath’ is here in the plural form, and therefore should naturally include not only the weekly Jewish Sabbath, but the Sabbatic year—each seventh—and the jubilee—the fiftieth. The plural form of Sabbath (Greek) is sometimes used for the weekly Sabbath only, leaving it doubtful whether Paul designed to include all the Mosaic Sabbaths;” (Henry Cowles, *The Shorter Epistles; viz: Of Paul to the Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; Thessalonians; Timothy; Titus and Philemon; Also, of James, Peter, and Jude* [New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1879], 173-174).

⁷D[on] F. N[eufeld], “Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days?” *Review and Herald*, April 15, 1971, 13.

⁸See, for example, Uriah Smith, *What Was Nailed to the Cross?* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 187?), 14; Eugene S. Smith, and J. L. Shuler, *The Smith-Shuler Debate on The Law, The Sabbath, and The Lord’s Day* (Dallas: Gospel Broadcast Publication, 1947?), 99; Myung Soo Cho, *The Biblical Lord’s Day and Its Purpose* (Silver Spring, MD: Np, 2006), 37; Myung Soo Cho, *Beauty and Truth Calendar* (Silver Spring, MD: Np, 2009), 53; Allen Walker *The Law and the Sabbath* (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2009), 113-114; John C. Witcombe, *Jerusalem Caliphate and the Third Jihad* (Grants Pass, OR: Prophecy Waymarks Publications, 2013), 143-145.

⁹See, for example, Carlyle B. Haynes, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1928), 30; Walter E. Straw, *Sunday or Sabbath: Which Should Christians Observe? An Answer* (Berrien Springs, MI: College Press, 1947), 23; Arthur E. Lickey, *God Speaks to Modern Man* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 448; Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections: An Examination of the Major Objections Raised Against the Teachings of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 167; Allen Walker, *The Law and the Sabbath* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland Publications, 1985), 172. Though Barnes was used as recently as 1982 as supposed supportive evidence that Col 2:16 does not discard the seventh-day Sabbath, his very basis for such reasoning (i.e., the alleged plurality of the term “sabbath” in the Greek), has been completely excised; see Kenneth H. Wood, “The ‘Sabbath Days’ of Colossians 2:16, 17,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 340.

does not refer particularly to the Sabbath properly so called.... If he had used the word in the singular number, 'the Sabbath,' it would then, of course, have been clear that he meant to affirm that that commandment had ceased to be binding, and that a Sabbath was no longer to be observed. But the use of the term in the plural number, and the connection, show that he had his eye on the great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law, and not on the moral law, or the ten commandments."¹⁰

Adventist Shift Toward Σάββατα as Singular

Over time, this plurality postulate became popular, and it appeared to persist for several decades. However, as early as the 1930s Adventist authors, while still insisting that "the original word is in the plural," began to somewhat tentatively conclude "that the term 'sabbath' in Colossians 2:16 should be used in the singular."¹¹ This initial shift may have been spurred on by a former Seventh-day Adventist, who argued that "all educated Sabbatarians are obliged to admit that... precisely the same form of the word that is used in Col. 2:16, is time and again used for the weekly Sabbath."¹²

In the late 1940s, Lucille Harper-Knapp, a budding Greek scholar within the denomination, appropriately concluded her research as follows, regarding the Greek term σάββατα: "Even though by every appearance it was plural, the fact that in the Aramaic the form and meaning were singular doubtless carried over into the Greek."¹³

This incremental departure from the generally accepted plurality argument became more widespread with the publication of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* in the mid-1950s. Commenting on the King James Version's "Sabbath days," it stated: "Gr. *sabbata*. This may

¹⁰J. N. Andrews, and L. R. Conradi, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, 4th ed. rev. and enl. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1912), 161-162. Andrews' name is listed as coauthor since he produced the original volume. However, as evident from earlier editions, Andrews himself did not include this statement by Barnes. Hence, since it appears in print only years after Andrews' death, it seems that this quote was added in later by coauthor Conradi. See Albert Barnes, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, John Cumming, rev. (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851), 279.

¹¹See, for example, W. E. Howell, "'Sabbath' in Colossians 2:16," *Ministry*, September 1934, 21. This idea persisted for decades, as seen in Paulien's claim: "Although the word σαββατα is plural, it can have a singular meaning;" Jon Paulien, "An Exegetical Overview of Col 2:13-17: With Implications for SDA Understanding," August 1983, TMs [photocopy], p. 6; www.andrews.edu/~jonp (accessed April 21, 2006). See also, Milton C. Wilcox, *Questions Answered* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1938), 150. Wilcox (ibid.), without providing any supportive documentation, claimed: "The Greek word *sabbatōn* is used for the singular in its plural form, partly for emphasis." As recently as 2002, though reluctantly admitting that "this is not conclusive," one writer, still attempting to cling to the plurality view, suggested that "the PLURAL form used here could indicate that Paul had these ceremonial 'sabbath days' in mind;" (Howard A. Peth, *7 Mysteries Solved: 7 Issues That Touch the Heart of Mankind* [Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2002], 399).

¹²I. C. Wellcome, *The Seventh-day Sabbath Claims Examined – The Lord's Day Vindicated: History of Seventh Day and First Day Keeping During the Gospel Dispensation Contrasted* (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1913-33?), 26-27.

¹³Harper-Knapp, 7. For similar conclusions, see also, William DeLoss Love, "The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord's Day: Article II," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 37 (July 1880): 423; William DeLoss Love, *Sabbath and Sunday* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1896), 55.

represent either a genuine plural of the Gr. *sabbaton* or a transliteration of the Aramaic *shabbata* [sic], a singular form.”¹⁴

Interestingly, more than 300 years before the above statement was published in the *SDA Bible Commentary*, a serious challenge to the plurality perspective of the σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16 had already been in print. In his 1636 disputation against seventh-day Sabbatarians in general, Dr. White stated, in part:

*The word Sabbath (say they) is plural and indefinite in this text. Therefore it comprehendeth not the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. But this cavil is ridiculous. For first of all, in the very decalogue itself, where the law of the weekly Sabbath is rehearsed, the Greek translation reads, μνήσθητι τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων: Remember the day of the Sabbaths, Exodus 20:8.... In like manner, the word Sabbaths is used in the plural number in many other passages, both of the Old and New Testament, in which it is certain that it comprehendeth the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.*¹⁵

This basic challenge to the plurality position has been reiterated more recently, and more vigorously, by writers such as H. M. Riggle: “This reasoning is so flimsy that Sabbatarians ought to be ashamed of it. The Sabbath is frequently in Scripture spoken of in the plural. This is true both in the Old and the New Testament.”¹⁶

Historically, there may be an additional possible catalyst for the transition away from the plurality argument used by early Adventists.¹⁷ After the epochal events of the mid-1950s, during

¹⁴Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols., rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 7:205; originally published in 1957. This commentary (ibid.) goes on to state: “Hence, *sabbata*, though grammatically plural in form, may and often does represent a singular (Matt. 28:1; etc.). Either form may be adopted here, for the interpretation of the passage does not depend upon whether the reading is ‘sabbath days,’ or ‘a sabbath.’” The accuracy of these statements will be considered later in this chapter. Interestingly, while quoting Barnes in support of the plurality view of this passage, Odom, apparently aware of the above information, then proceeded to undercut this view by admitting the following in a footnote: “The Greek term rendered as ‘sabbath days’ in the King James Version of Colossians 2:16, 17, may represent either a genuine plural of *sabbaton* or the singular form of a transliteration of the Aramaic word *shabbata* [sic];” Robert L. Odom, *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1977), 63, footnote #2.

¹⁵Francis White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath-Day: Containing a Defence of the Orthodoxall Doctrine of the Church of England, Against Sabbatarian Novelty* (London: R. B., 1636), 165-166. Note: In the above quotation, the spelling and punctuation have been updated. In addition to Deut 5:12, which he mentioned earlier, White went on to list the passages which he maintained provide evidence for his conclusions: Lev 19:3; 23:3, 38; Lam 1:7; Isa 1:13; 56:4, 6; Ezek 20:12; Matt 12:5, 11; Mark 1:21; 2:23; 3:2, 4; Luke 4:31; 6:9; 13:10; Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2. These passages will be considered later in this Chapter, to ascertain the accuracy of White’s assertions.

¹⁶H. M. Riggle, *The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day* (Guthrie, OK: Faith Publishing House, 1980), 101. Riggle (ibid.) then elaborated on his point by quoting several passages, including the following: “‘My sabbaths ye shall keep’” (Exod. 31:13). ‘Keep my sabbaths’ (Lev. 19:3, 30). ‘Eunuchs that keep my sabbaths’ (Isa. 56:4)... ‘Is it lawful to heal on the *sabbath-days*?’ (Matt. 12:10). ‘On the *sabbath-days* the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath’ (vs. 5). ‘Taught them on the *sabbath-days*’ (Luke 4:31).” Riggle, however, fails to point out that the plural (in both the original Hebrew and the LXX translation) is also used to refer to the Sabbatical Years; e.g., “Then shall the land enjoy its sabbaths” (Lev 26:34a); see also Lev 26:34b, 35, 43.

¹⁷The reason for such a tentative proposal is due to evidence that the immediate reaction by church leaders was to make a strong response to Martin’s book, repeating the traditional plurality perspective, as follows: “We would merely reiterate the grammatical fact that in Colossians 2:16 the word is a plural and that Walter Martin can cite no grammatical reasons why this word should not be translated as a plural;” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Doctrinal Discussions: A Compilation of Articles Originally Appearing in The Ministry, June, 1960 – July, 1961, in Answer to Walter R. Martin’s Book The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* [Washington, DC: Review and

which a few Adventist leaders discussed key doctrinal issues with two major Evangelical scholars, one of them, Walter Martin, published a book titled *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*.¹⁸

In his analysis of Adventist arguments regarding Colossians 2:13-17, Martin charged that Adventist Sabbatarians “appeal to certain commentators” such as Albert Barnes for support, even though these commentators “do not analyze the uses of the word ‘sabbath’.”¹⁹ Then Martin added: “If a commentator’s opinion is not in accord with sound exegesis, it is *only an opinion*.”²⁰ Quoting various respected scholars, Martin then propounded the idea that the σαββάτων here is singular, and that it refers to the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath of the decalogue.²¹

Despite the centuries-old claim noted above, and ignoring the challenge by Evangelicals such as Martin, as well as the movement by many Adventists away from the plurality theory, a few contemporary Adventist writers are still contending that the term σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16 should be understood and interpreted in this passage as a plural, i.e., “sabbaths.” Incidentally, based on this plurality idea it has also been alleged that the lexical term σάββατα can rightly be rendered here as either “week” or “week days.”²²

As recently as 2009 Edwin Reynolds asserted in an Adventist scholarly journal: “The word in Col 2:16 is *sabbatōn*, which is not ambiguous: it is a genitive plural and it cannot be singular.”²³

Herald, 1961], 91).

¹⁸See Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960).

¹⁹Ibid., 163.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 163-166. Based on the above, Martin concluded: “In the light of this Scripture alone, I contend that the argument for Sabbath observance collapses;” (Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1997], 576). Similarly, Richard James Griffith, “The Eschatological Significance of the Sabbath” (ThD dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990), 166-171; Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis* (Applegate, CA: Life Assurance Ministries, 1990), 157-163.

²²While assuming that σαββάτων is a plural, Bacchiocchi raised the following question, in his doctoral dissertation: “Does the plural form ‘σάββατα’ refer exclusively to the seventh-day Sabbath?” (Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* [Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977], 360). See also, Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985), 132. Based on the fact that σάββατα at times can rightly be rendered “week,” Bacchiocchi (ibid.) then speculatively conjectured that the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16 could actually be referring to “week” or “week days.” Though he claimed that certain scholars support this view, Bacchiocchi’s reference notes provide no evidence of this at all. On the contrary, careful contextual investigation reveals that, only when the word σάββατα is directly preceded by a numeral (or such a numeral followed by the definite article), can it legitimately be rendered as “week.” The Greek language is not open to the haphazard speculative approach suggested by Bacchiocchi. For additional in-depth data on the manner in which σάββατα is used to identify the “week,” see Chapter Three above.

²³Edwin Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47 (Autumn 2009): 277. Interestingly, Reynolds’ categorical claim is somewhat an echo of what was alleged almost 50 years earlier: “The fact of the matter is that in the Greek this term is a plural, *sabbatōn*, the nominative form of which is *sabbata*;” (*Doctrinal Discussions*, 91). More than 20 years after the publication of *Doctrinal Discussions*, this plurality view was still being glibly followed, to some degree; (see Seizou Wagatsuma, “Christ’s Ministry Today and Shadow: The Exegesis of Col 2:16-17,” July 1982, TMs [photocopy], p. 15, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI). After recognizing that “many scholars” argue that “*sabbata* in Col 2:16” is “a singular rather than a plural,” Reynolds (277) alleged: “What is generally overlooked in this regard is that the ambiguous *sabbata* does not appear in Col 2:16.” After asserting (ibid.)

This variety of views demands further meticulous analysis in order to determine the weight of evidence as to the correct meaning of the lexical term *σάββατα* (especially as seen in the manner it has actually been utilized), and the most appropriate translation of the specific word *σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16.

Rendering of *שַׁבָּת* in the Septuagint²⁴ and in Modern Greek

Respected Greek grammarian Archibald Robertson noted that, since the writers of the New Testament were used to speaking the common Greek language from their youth, it was only natural for them to employ the language and phraseology of the Septuagint (LXX) in their writing.²⁵ While there are some significant exceptions (which are to be addressed later), it is a fact that “the quotations in the N. T. from the O. T. show the use of the LXX more frequently than the Hebrew.”²⁶ Since this early translation of the Old Testament into Greek has exercised such a considerable influence upon the New Testament, it is clear that an examination of the LXX is indispensable to the study of the New Testament.²⁷ This will be the focus of the following major sections of this research.

Exhaustive examination of the manner in which the translators of the Septuagint have rendered the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* into the Greek language of more than two millennia ago reveals some valuable insights regarding their understanding of the meaning of the regular lexical term for the singular *σάββατον* and its appropriate declensions, the meaning of the normally plural form *σάββατα* and its appropriate declensions, as well as the intended contextual meanings of both Greek words.

First, it must be pointed out that the LXX does not always translate the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* into Greek.²⁸ At times, *שַׁבָּת* is translated with a contextually related word, but not with the lexical term

that “scholars, including Du Preez [*sic*], indulge in a careless substitution of something from outside the text for what is actually in the text,” Reynolds opined: “Du Preez then follows though the rest of his argument with this false assumption, weakening the rest of the argument.” Then, he added: “This is a weak link in his study, casting doubt on some of his other conclusions.” All the above concerns raised will be addressed in this research. Interestingly, Reynolds’ theory about the alleged plurality of the *σαββάτων* is used in an attempt to prove that the seventh-day Sabbath *is* in view in this passage. Actually, he holds that the “*sabbatōn* in Col 2:16 is, in fact, unquestionably genitive plural” (278) – a matter to be addressed later in this Chapter. Hardy opined: “No one denies that this Greek plural can be translated as a singular where context requires, but if the context does not require singular meaning – if instead it requires plural meaning, as I believe the present context does – there is nothing in the plurality of the Greek term which would require us to translate it other than what it is, i.e., a plural;” (Frank W. Hardy, “The Sabbath in Colossians 2?” 10 [http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Sabbath_Col02.pdf; accessed 24 November, 2010]). While Hardy suggested that the “context” indicates that *σαββάτων* is plural here, he did not provide any substantive evidence for his hypothesis.

²⁴The edition used for this research is Rahlfs’ LXX Septuaginta.

²⁵A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), 93.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 99.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 96, 100.

²⁸See Exod 20:11; 31:15b, 16b; Lev 23:11; 24:8b; 2 Kgs 16:18. Yet, the Modern Greek Bible [MGK] includes the singular *τοῦ σαββάτου* in Exod 20:11, 31:15b, Lev 23:11, and 2 Kgs 16:18. While omitting any form of *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* in Exod 31:16b, and Lev 24:8b, it does imply it.

for “sabbath.”²⁹ There are also a few occasions when the LXX does contain a form of either *σάββατον* or *σάββατα*, even when the specific Hebrew term *שַׁבָּת* is not used in the original text.³⁰ This includes one use of *σάββατον*, as a singular, to identify the week: *δευτέρα σαββάτου* (Ps 47:1 [Eng. Ps 48]), i.e., “on the second [day³¹] of the week.” Also, it includes at least two occasions in which *σάββατα* likewise refers to the week: (1) *τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων* (Ps 23:1 [Eng. Ps 24]), i.e., “on the first [day] of the week;” and (2) *τετράδι σαββάτων* (Ps 93:1 [Eng. Ps 94]), i.e., “for the fourth [day] of the week.”³²

Once the above anomalies are accounted for, it becomes possible to engage in an accurate analysis of the Septuagint’s use of the term *שַׁבָּת*. An actual count of all the occurrences of *שַׁבָּת*, as confirmed by other scholars,³³ shows that it appears 111 times throughout the Hebrew Bible.³⁴ Of these 111 instances, the LXX renders a total of 101 into the Greek language.³⁵ It is these 101 cases that are considered and investigated here, in context.³⁶

For a total of 27 times, whenever the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* appears as a singular, the LXX similarly renders it appropriately in Greek as a singular, a phenomenon which happens almost exclusively in

²⁹See Lev 23:15b (*ἑβδομάδας*, i.e., “weeks”); 23:16 (*ἑβδομάδος*, i.e., “week”); 25:8a (*ἀναπαύσεις*, i.e., “rest”); 25:8b (*ἑβδομάδες*, i.e., “weeks”). The MGK provides the following translation for these passages: Lev 23:15b has *ἑβδομάδας* (i.e., “weeks,” as noted above in the LXX); 23:16 has *τοῦ ἑβδόμου σαββάτου* (i.e., “the seventh sabbath”); 25:8a has *ἑβδομάδας* (i.e., “weeks”); and 25:8b has *ἑβδομάδων* (i.e., “weeks”).

³⁰This is considering, at least, the currently available form of the MT. See Num 15:33; Ps 24 (LXX: 23:1); 48 (LXX: 47:1); 93 (LXX: 92:1, where the LXX superscription includes the lexical term *προσάββατον* [i.e., “{the day} before Sabbath”], a term found only here, in Judith 8:6, and in Mark 15:42); Ps 94 (LXX: 93:1). See also, Lev 16:31 (where the Hebrew term is *שַׁבָּת*); Lev 23:32a (where the Hebrew term is, likewise, *שַׁבָּת*); Amos 6:3 (where the Hebrew has *שַׁבָּת*, the basic consonants of which are the same as for *שַׁבָּת*). In essential accord with the MT, the MGK does not include any form of either *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* in the above passages. In Lev 16:31a and 23:32a, the MGK uses *ἀναπαύσεως* (i.e., “rest”) to translate the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת*.

³¹The word “day” has been added into the English translation, for this is in accordance with the grammatical demands, and the context. Because the numerals *μιᾶς*, *δευτέρα*, and *τετράδι* are feminine adjectives, it is appropriate to insert the word *ἡμέρα*, since this fits the immediate context, and is in accord with the rule governing such relationships (i.e., that a feminine noun agreeing in gender, number and case, must be supplied, when needed).

³²Incidentally, there are only five known occasions when (in the Septuagint) a plural numeral is directly attached to the word weeks, in order to make it into a definite plural: (a) *ἑπτὰ ἑβδομάδας* (i.e., “seven weeks,” in Deut 16:9 [2x]); (b) *ἑβδομήκοντα ἑβδομάδες* (i.e., “seventy weeks,” in Dan 9:24); and (c) *τρεις ἑβδομάδας* (i.e., “three weeks,” in Dan 10:2, and 3).

³³Such as F. Stolz, *שַׁבָּת*, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1301; and Gerhard F. Hasel, “Sabbath,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman et al, eds. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:849.

³⁴See Chapter Three above where it can be seen that linguistic markers, as well as the immediate and broader contexts, indicate that 95 times the term *שַׁבָּת* directly refers to the seventh-day Sabbath, while in the 16 other cases the *שַׁבָּת* identifies something other than the weekly Sabbath. This study will include the use of *שַׁבָּת* for both the seventh-day Sabbath and for the other occasions indicated by this Hebrew word.

³⁵The ten times that the LXX does not include either *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* for the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* (as seen in the MT) are as follows: Exod 20:11; 31:15b, 16b; Lev 23:11, 15b, 16; 24:8b; 25:8 (2x); 2 Kgs 16:18.

³⁶These 101 cases are rendered as singulars 27 times: (a) 11 are *σάββατον* (either nominative or accusative); (b) 12 are *σαββάτου* (genitive); and (c) 4 are *σαββάτω* (dative). The rest of the 74 cases are rendered with the apparent plurals, as follows: (a) 44 are *σάββατα* (either nominative or accusative); (b) 23 are *σαββάτων* (genitive); and (c) 7 are *σαββάτοις* (dative).

the historical books of 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah.³⁷ In various sections of the Hebrew Bible, for a total of 28 times, whenever the term שַׁבָּת occurs in a plural form, the Septuagint translators likewise render it as a Greek term that appears to be a plural form.³⁸

However, there are a total of 46 times when, despite the fact that the Hebrew uses שַׁבָּת as a singular, the LXX renders it with terms which clearly appear (at least on the surface) to be a plural form of the singular lexeme σάββατον. For analytical reasons, all of these cases are outlined below, together with the contextual meaning, including whether they be weekly Sabbaths or ceremonial ones (which are placed in italics). The rendering in the Modern Greek Bible is also provided.

The following table reveals that the LXX “Greek Pentateuch consistently uses the plural form to express the singular Hebrew word שַׁבָּת;”³⁹ but only in Exodus 31:16 does it have a plural meaning.

Table 11 Rendering of שַׁבָּת (in the Pentateuch) in the Septuagint and in Modern Greek				
Reference	MT Text	LXX Text	Contextual Meaning	Modern Greek
Exod 16:23	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“tomorrow;” i.e., a single day	σάββατον
Exod 16:25	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“today;” i.e., a single day	σάββατον
Exod 16:26	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath: singular	τῷ ⁴⁰ σαββάτῳ
Exod 16:29	הַשַּׁבָּת	τὰ σάββατα	“seventh day” = the Sabbath: sing.	τὸ σάββατον
Exod 20:8	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	vs. 9 contrasts with “six days”	τοῦ σαββάτου
Exod 20:10	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath: singular	σάββατον
Exod 31:14	הַשַּׁבָּת	τὰ σάββατα	singular pronouns = singular	τὸ σάββατον
Exod 31:15	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath: singular	σάββατον
Exod 31:16	הַשַּׁבָּת	τὰ σάββατα	ποιεῖν αὐτὰ = “to observe them:” pl.	τὸ σάββατον
Exod 35:2	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath: singular	σάββατον
Exod 35:3	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	vs. 2 contrasts with “six days”	τοῦ σαββάτου
Lev 16:31a	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	vs. 29 says it is a single “day”	σάββατον
Lev 23:3a	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath: singular	σάββατον
Lev 23:3c	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	vs. 3 starts with “six days”	σάββατον
Lev 23:15	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	from “day after” the Sabbath: sing.	τοῦ σαββάτου

³⁷See 2 Kgs 4:23; 11:5, 7, 9 (2x); 1 Chron 9:32 (2x); 2 Chron 23:4, 8 (2x); Neh 9:14; 10:31 (2x) [MT: vs. 32]; 13:15 (2x), 16, 17, 18, 19 (3x), 21, 22. The other four appearances of these singulars are found in the superscription of Ps 92 [LXX: 91:1]; Isa 66:23 (2x); Lam 2:6. Similarly, the MGK renders all of the above texts as singulars, except for 1 Chron 9:32b, and Isa 66:23b, where these singulars are implied.

³⁸See Exod 31:13; Lev 19:3, 30; 23:38; 26:2, 34 (2x), 35, 43; 1 Chron 23:31; 2 Chron 2:4 [MT: vs. 3]; 8:13; 31:3; 36:21; Neh 10:33 [MT: vs. 34]; Isa 56:4; Ezek 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24; 22:8, 26; 23:38; 44:24; 45:17; 46:3. Incidentally, the LXX never renders a Hebrew plural of שַׁבָּת as a singular in the Greek text. In a manner similar to that of the LXX, the MGK utilizes forms of the normal plural Greek lexical term σάββατα in all of the passages identified in this footnote.

³⁹Harper-Knapp, 10. Harper-Knapp (ibid., footnote #16) indicated that the only exceptions to this use of σάββατα are found in Codex Alexandrinus [A] in Exod 31:15, Num 15:32, and 28:10, which may be due to slips on the part of the copyist. (As noted in Table 11, the grammar of Exod 31:16 shows that σάββατα has a plural meaning here).

⁴⁰The definite article “the” being implied in the Hebrew, it is added into the MGK, as τῷ.

Reference	MT Text	LXX Text	Contextual Meaning	Modern Greek
Lev 23:32a	שַׁבַּת	σάββατα	vs. 27 says it is a single “day”	σάββατον
Lev 23:32c	שַׁבְּתֵיכֶם	τὰ ⁴¹ σάββατα ὑμῶν	“even to even” Atonement: singular	τὸ ⁴² σάββατόν
Lev 24:8	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“on each Sabbath day:” singular	σαββάτου ⁴³
Lev 25:2	שַׁבַּת	σάββατα	land must keep a sabbath: singular	σάββατον
Lev 25:4a	שַׁבַּת	σάββατα	“seventh year” = sabbath: singular	σάββατον
Lev 25:4b	שַׁבַּת	σάββατα	vs. 4 starts with “7 th year:” singular	σάββατον
Lev 25:6	שַׁבַּת	τὰ ⁴⁴ σάββατα	vs. 4 shows it is “7 th year:” singular	τὸ ⁴⁵ σάββατον
Num 15:32	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	was “on the Sabbath day:” singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Num 28:9	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	and “on the Sabbath day:” singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Num 28:10a	שַׁבַּת	σαββάτων	vs. 9 shows “day” context: singular	[only implied] ⁴⁶
Num 28:10b	בַּשַּׁבָּתוֹ	τοῖς ⁴⁷ σαββάτοις	vs. 9 shows “day” context: singular	σαββάτου
Deut 5:12	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	observe “the Sabbath day:” singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Deut 5:14	שַׁבַּת	σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath: singular	σάββατον
Deut 5:15	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	keep “the Sabbath day:” singular	τοῦ σαββάτου

In brief, the above analysis reveals that, other than Exodus 31:16, in every single case in the Pentateuch (in the LXX), the immediate and broader contexts, together with the linguistic indicators, demonstrate that the word for “sabbath” must of necessity be a singular, and not a plural. Yet, despite this, the Septuagint translators consistently employed σάββατα (and its concomitant declensions), which, at least on the surface, appears to be the plural form of the regular Greek singular term σάββατον. Harper-Knapp concluded that this seems “to constitute the strongest kind of evidence that,” before the New Testament era, “the plural form was used in the sense of the singular – and that not rarely.”⁴⁸ As John Wallis noted in his 1694 book: “In all the five books of Moses we shall hardly meet with σάββατον in the singular number, but σάββατα in the plural.”⁴⁹ The most probable

⁴¹As can be seen here, the LXX adds in the definite article (τὰ), which is not in the Hebrew text. The significance of the clear and careful delineation between the use and non-use of the definite article by the writers of the original text (both in the Hebrew Old Testament and the κοινή Greek Testament) is discussed in Chapter Three above. However, this issue is not directly germane to the above investigation, regarding the interpretation of the Hebrew שַׁבַּת by the Septuagint translators. There are times when linguistic markers and context identify the שַׁבַּת as the seventh-day Sabbath (even when the definite article is not included in the Hebrew); hence, when the LXX aptly adds the definite article in the Greek, this will not be discussed, since such rendering is linguistically appropriate.

⁴²Similar to the LXX, the MGK adds the definite article (τὸ) here, which is not in the MT. See footnote #41.

⁴³The MGK has omitted the definite article since it is not needed in its translation of this text.

⁴⁴Evidently due to the construct in the Hebrew (שַׁבְּתֵיכֶם הַשַּׁבָּת) the LXX adds in the article τὰ.

⁴⁵See footnote 44; the MGK does essentially the same, except it has the singular τὸ.

⁴⁶It is implied by the term ἐκάστου being placed immediately in front of σαββάτου.

⁴⁷The definite article “the” being implied in the Hebrew, it is added into the LXX text, as τοῖς.

⁴⁸Harper-Knapp, 10.

⁴⁹See Cox, 2:100, quoting from John Wallis, *A Defence of the Christian Sabbath. Part the Second. Being a Rejoinder to Mr Bampfield’s Reply to Dr Wallis’s Discourse Concerning the Christian Sabbath* (Oxford: Np, 1694), 4-131. In basic agreement with the evidence from the Pentateuch, Richardson noted: “The plural form is used several times for the weekly Sabbath, including in the heart of the fourth commandment;” (William E. Richardson, “Sabbath: Nailed

reasons as to why these translators generally “used the neuter plural form *σάββατα* to express the singular meaning”⁵⁰ will be explored later in this Chapter.

Before proceeding to an examination of the Septuagint’s rendition of *שַׁבָּת* in the prophetic writings, we need to briefly comment on the Modern Greek Bible’s translation of the above passages. In clear contradistinction to the LXX, this contemporary Greek version renders the *שַׁבָּת* in every one of the above texts as forms of the regular singular in Greek, except for Numbers 28:10b, where it is simply implied.⁵¹ In other words, while in every case other than in Exodus 31:16, the LXX employed the apparent plural *σάββατα* (yet, in such a way as to convey a singular meaning), the Modern Greek Bible has rendered these same texts with unequivocal singulars. This newer translation thus basically validates the hypothesis that is arising out of the current analysis – i.e., that the term *σάββατα* was most often utilized as in a singular sense in the Greek of the Septuagint.

In the prophetic books, the Hebrew singular *שַׁבָּת* is similarly rendered as *σάββατα* (or its inflected forms), an apparent plural form, 85 percent of the time:⁵²

Reference	MT Text	LXX Text	Contextual Meaning	Modern Greek
Isa 1:13	וְשַׁבָּת	καὶ τὰ ⁵³ σάββατα	new moon and “sabbath:” singular	καὶ τὰ ⁵⁴ σάββατα
Isa 56:2	שַׁבָּת	τὰ ⁵⁵ σάββατα	keep [the] “Sabbath” = singular	τὸ ⁵⁶ σάββατον
Isa 56:6	שַׁבָּת	τὰ σάββατα	keep [the] “Sabbath” = singular	τὸ σάββατον
Isa 58:13a	מִשַׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“from [the] Sabbath” = singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Isa 58:13b	לְשַׁבָּת	τὰ σάββατα	“to/for the Sabbath” = singular	τὸ σάββατον
Jer 17:21	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	on “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Jer 17:22a	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	on “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Jer 17:22b	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	hallow “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου

to the Cross?” *Ministry*, May 1997, 15). Decades earlier, the Adventist publication, *Problems in Bible Translation* (231) already noted that, in the “Septuagint, the translators used the plural form of *sabbaton* to translate the Hebrew singular in Ex. 16:23, 25, 26, 29;” and that “the Septuagint uses the plural *sabbata* to translate Ex. 20:8, 10; 31:15, and 35:2, although the sense is clearly singular.”

⁵⁰Harper-Knapp, 10.

⁵¹Incidentally, as noted above, for Lev 24:8, the MGK has omitted the definite article in front of the word *σαββάτου*, a matter of no real consequence for the issue being considered here.

⁵²That is, 17 out of 20 times; the three times when it rendered as singulars in Greek are: Isa 66:23 (2x); and Lam 2:6.

⁵³See comment for footnote #41.

⁵⁴This MGK rendering is identical to that of the LXX. Also, see comment for footnote #41.

⁵⁵Based on the linguistic indicators and the context the LXX has aptly added in the definite article *τὰ* here, as well as in Isa 56:6, and the definite article *τῶν* in Isa 58:13a.

⁵⁶Based on the linguistic indicators and the context the MGK (similar to the LXX) has aptly added in the definite article *τὸ* here, as well as in Isa 56:6, and the definite article *τοῦ* in Isa 58:13a.

Reference	MT Text	LXX Text	Contextual Meaning	Modern Greek
Jer 17:24a	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	on “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Jer 17:24b	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	hallow “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Jer 17:27a	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	hallow “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Jer 17:27b	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	on “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Ezek 46:1	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“six days” then “the Sabbath:” sing.	τοῦ σαββάτου
Ezek 46:4	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	on “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Ezek 46:12	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	on “the Sabbath” day: singular	τοῦ σαββάτου
Hos 2:11 [MT: vs. 13]	וַשַּׁבְתָּהּ	καὶ τὰ ⁵⁷ σάββατα αὐτῆς	<i>all three terms, “festival, new moon, sabbath” = each a singular</i>	καὶ τὰ ⁵⁸ σάββατα αὐτῆς
Amos 8:5	וְהַשַּׁבָּת	καὶ τὰ σάββατα	“and the Sabbath” = singular	τὸ σάββατον

The above outline shows results somewhat similar to the earlier pentateuchal analysis. While there is admittedly less direct contextual data, in each case there is sufficient significant linguistic information to demonstrate that the term for “sabbath” should preferably be translated as a singular, and not as a plural.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, in the overwhelming majority of the cases in these prophetic books, the Septuagint has rendered the Hebrew singular שַׁבָּת with what visually appears to be a plural Greek word (or its associated inflected forms). As Kenneth Wood quite aptly noted: “In the Septuagint the plural form with a singular meaning is found in numerous places.”⁶⁰

Incidentally, as seen in the above table, the Modern Greek Bible’s translation of these passages is quite similar to that mentioned in connection with the Pentateuch. In 15 of the above 17 passages, this version renders the Hebrew שַׁבָּת with the appropriate Greek singular. The only passages that include a form of the apparent plural σάββατα are Isaiah 1:13 and Hosea 2:11.

In brief, the translational evidence observed above reveals that, while σάββατα was seen as the apparent Greek plural term, it was frequently used in the LXX as a singular. This utilization of the term σάββατα as a singular, is confirmed by the following intra-textual grammatical and semantic data that arise from an intensive investigation of the intriguing manner in which the Septuagint has

⁵⁷See comment for footnote #41.

⁵⁸This MGK rendering is identical to that of the LXX. Also, see comment for footnote #41.

⁵⁹Of the above 17 texts, only three have additional contextual data similar to those seen in the Pentateuch. However, the linguistic indicators, together with the recognition that these prophetic books were produced at a point when the context of and use of שַׁבָּת was already well understood, are sufficient to identify these terms as singulars.

⁶⁰Wood, 341. His examples include Exod 16:23, 25; 20:8; Deut 5:12; Jer 17:21, 22; and Ezek 46:1. Neufeld (13), essentially concurring, stated that “in the Septuagint” “*sabbata* occurs frequently where the Hebrew has the singular. Examples are Exodus 16:25; 20:8.” Likewise, in his Master’s thesis, Ray noted, that “a comparison with the LXX of Exod 20:11 shows this same word [σαββάτων] in plural form obviously having a singular meaning, referring to the Hebrew word meaning Sabbath;” (Paul Ray, “New Moons, Sabbaths and Eschatological Newness: A Study of the Typological Significance of Isaiah 66:22-23, and Related Texts” [MA thesis, Andrews University, 1981], 25). So also, David Coltheart, “An Examination of Colossians 2:14-17,” June 1974, TMs [photocopy], pp. 21-22, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Marvin Moore, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times*, February 2003, 28.

rendered dozens of passages of the Hebrew Scriptures into the common Greek language of more than two thousand years ago.

Grammatical Analysis of Σάββατα in the Septuagint

Relationship of Σάββατα to “Tomorrow”

Based on the Hebrew text, where the noun מָחָר appears the very first time in Scripture, the LXX translators have rendered Exodus 16:23b, as follows: $\text{σάββατα ἀναπαυσις ἁγία τῷ κυρίῳ αὐριον}$. According to various standard Greek lexicons, αὐριον is an adverb meaning “tomorrow,” or the “next day.”⁶¹ Hence, the above passage, if one insists that the word σάββατα must be understood and interpreted as a Greek plural, would read: “Tomorrow [is the] Sabbath, a holy rest to the Lord.” Obviously, in order for this construction to convey a coherent concept, the word σάββατα , though it merely appears as a plural, must be rendered as a singular, “Sabbath.” A similar case appears in Leviticus 23:15b: $\text{ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπαύριον τῶν σαββάτων}$. If the word σαββάτων must be seen as the genitive plural, then this phrase would literalistically read: “from the morrow after the Sabbath.”⁶² However, taking into account the diagrammed evidence that σάββατα (as well as its inflected forms) is frequently employed in the LXX as a singular, this τῶν σαββάτων , though simply visually looking like a plural, needs to be correctly understood as “the Sabbath,” singular.

Connection of Σάββατα to “Today”

Within the same pericope in Exodus 16 considered above, we find the following clause in the Septuagint: $\text{ἔστιν γὰρ σάββατα σήμερον τῷ κυρίῳ (vs. 25b)}$. The key term considered here is σήμερον , which the lexicon defines as the adverb “today.”⁶³ Based on the notion that σάββατα needs to be seen and rendered as a plural, this LXX translation would then literalistically read: “for today is Sabbath to the Lord.” Again, it is clear that the term σάββατα , as used here, must be seen as a singular, “Sabbath,” in order for this clause to make any sense at all.

Demonstrative Pronoun and Σάββατα

The intra-textual evidence for such an understanding of σάββατα becomes even stronger in the final appearance of the term “sabbath” in this narrative. Exodus 16:29a states: $\text{ἴδετε ὁ γὰρ κύριος ἔδωκεν ὑμῖν τὴν ἡμέραν ταύτην τὰ σάββατα}$. When the demonstrative pronoun ταύτην (i.e., “this”⁶⁴) is linked with τὴν ἡμέραν (i.e., “the day”), it is rendered “this day.” Once again, it becomes obvious

⁶¹See, for example, Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 122.

⁶²See *ibid.*, 283, where the adverb ἐπαύριον is defined as “tomorrow.”

⁶³*Ibid.*, 749.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 596-598.

that, though the apparent plural *σάββατα* is used here in the Septuagint, the only way for this sentence to be coherent is to translate it as a singular, “Sabbath.” Thus, the LXX would read: “See, for the Lord has given you this day [as] the Sabbath.”

Σάββατα Listed as “the Seventh [Day]”

Repeatedly in the Pentateuch (and as translated in) the LXX the Sabbath is recognized as the “seventh day,” following “six days” of labor. For example, the Septuagint renders the section of the fourth commandment seen in Exodus 20:9-10a, as follows: *ἔξ ἡμέρας ἐργᾶ καὶ ποιήσεις πάντα τὰ ἔργα σου τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου.*⁶⁵ If the *σάββατα* must be seen and translated as a plural, then this would literalistically read: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but on the seventh day [is] the Sabbath_s to the Lord your God.” Once more, it is clear that the *σάββατα* needs to be rendered as a singular, “Sabbath.”

Σάββατα Identified as “the Day”

Finally, throughout the Pentateuch and in the writings of two major prophets there are at least seventeen occasions in the Septuagint when the phrase *τὴν ἡμέραν* (i.e., “the day”) or *τῇ ἡμέρᾳ* (i.e., “on the day”) immediately precedes and is directly linked with *τῶν σαββάτων* (which visually appears as a genitive plural).⁶⁶ For instance, the fourth commandment begins: *μνήσθητι τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων ἀγιάζειν αὐτήν* (Exod 20:8).⁶⁷ While it is obvious that the words *τὴν ἡμέραν* are in the singular, they are inextricably interconnected with the *τῶν σαββάτων* (literalistically rendered as, “of the Sabbath_s”).⁶⁸

Yet universally, this sentence has been consistently and correctly comprehended and interpreted by Bible translators to refer to the seventh-day “Sabbath,” singular: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” As noted earlier in this study, at least since 1636 it was already recognized that the Greek translation of the fourth commandment utilized the term *σάββατα* here.⁶⁹

⁶⁵See also, Deut 5:13-14a, which reads in the identical manner in the LXX. See also, Exod 16:26 (*ἔξ ἡμέρας συλλέξετε τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα* = “six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day [is a] Sabbath”); 31:15 (*ἔξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα* = “six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day [is a] Sabbath”); 35:2 (*ἔξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ κατάπαυσις ἅγιον σάββατα* = “six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day [shall be] rest – a holy Sabbath”); and Lev 23:3 (*ἔξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα* = “six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day [is a] Sabbath”).

⁶⁶In addition to the passages in the LXX (based on the currently available MT), the LXX of Num 15:33 also has *τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων*.

⁶⁷The other sixteen cases are as follows: (a) *τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων* appears in Deut 5:12, 15; Jer 17:22b, 24b, 27a; (b) *τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων* appears in Exod 35:3; Lev 24:8; Num 15:32; 28:9; Jer 17:21, 22a, 24a, 27b; Ezek 46:1, 4, 12.

⁶⁸Admittedly, there are occasions when *τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ σαββάτου* (i.e., “the day of the Sabbath [singular]”) appears, as in Neh 13:17, 22; and in the LXX translation of the superscription of Ps 91:1 (Eng. Ps 92); also seen is *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου* (i.e., “on [the] day of the Sabbath [singular]”), as in Neh 10:32; 13:15b, 19c.

⁶⁹White, 165. White listed many texts as purportedly supporting his view. As the analysis in this Chapter reveals, his point of the “plural” use of “Sabbaths” was correct, as follows: (a) The LXX rendered what was already plurals of

The frequency with which this phenomenon appears in the LXX, of directly connecting the singular τὴν ἡμέραν (or its equivalent) with τῶν σαββάτων, provides additional significant supportive data that the word σάββατα must be recognized as a singular, and translated thus, unless compelling contextual cues and/or lucid linguistic links demand otherwise.⁷⁰

In all, of the 46 times that the LXX has rendered the Hebrew singular noun שַׁבָּת as the term σάββατα (or its derivatives), almost 60 percent of these usages can be seen to be employed in intra-textual ways that require that the term σάββατα be rendered as a singular.⁷¹ Concurring with the evidence described above, Moulton and Milligan in their Greek vocabulary volume, note that in various places in the Septuagint, “τὰ σάββατα is used both for ‘the Sabbath’ and ‘the sabbaths.’”⁷² As Wilfred Stott succinctly summarized: “There does not seem to be any difference in meaning between the singular and plural forms of the Greek equivalent in the LXX.”⁷³

Thus, in addition to the general manner in which the Septuagint has repeatedly rendered the singular שַׁבָּת with the term σάββατα (or its inflections), the supportive data from the Modern Greek Bible, and the evidence from the intra-textual grammatical and semantic analysis, as well as the confirmation of Greek scholars, provide persuasive proof that σάββατα (including its declensions) cannot simplistically be considered as a plural Greek term. Rather, since it is clear that the LXX translators understood and employed this term (as well as its inflected forms) repeatedly as a singular, readers of the κοινή Greek Testament must take this information seriously into account when seeking to appropriately comprehend its meaning in context.⁷⁴

שַׁבָּת into σάββατα (or its derivatives) in Lev 19:3; 23:38; Isa 56:4; and Ezek 20:12; (b) The LXX translated the singular Hebrew שַׁבָּת and rendered it with σάββατα (or its inflections) in Lev 23:3; Deut 5:12; Isa 1:13; and 56:6; (c) In the New Testament the following passages do have σάββατα (or its declined forms) in Matt 12:5a [but, it is singular in vs. 5b], 11; Mark 1:21; 2:23; 3:2, 4; Luke 4:31; 6:9 [but, it is singular in the NU text, which came into existence more than 200 years after White’s publication]; 13:10; Acts 13:14; and 16:13. Acts 17:2 is not a congruent example of σάββατα being used as a singular since it is immediately followed by the word τρία, so as to indicate that it is intended as a plural. Also, Lam 1:7 actually does not have the term “Sabbaths” at all. The King James Version mistranslated the Hebrew term מְשֻׁבָּתִים (“her desolations”), as “her Sabbaths.”

⁷⁰Incidentally, the deuterocanonical Judith (10:2) has ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν σαββάτων (i.e., literally, “on the days of the Sabbaths;” or more aptly “on the Sabbath days”), a phrase not ever found throughout the LXX translation of the 39 books of the Old Testament (as accepted by Protestants).

⁷¹The actual count is 17 out of 29 times in the Pentateuch, i.e., 58.62% (Exod 16:23, 25, 26, 29; 20:8, 10; 31:15; 35:2, 3; Lev 23:3, 15; 24:8; Num 15:32; 28:9; Deut 5:12, 14, 15); and 10 out of 17 times in the books of the prophets, i.e., 58.82% (Jer 17:21, 22 [2x], 24 [2x], 27 [2x]; Ezek 46:1, 4, 12). In an analogous manner, Brenton’s translation (i.e., the LXE) of the Septuagint, renders σάββατα as the singular word “Sabbath,” 73.9% of the time. See Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986).

⁷²James Hope Moulton, and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), 567.

⁷³Wilfred Stott, σάββατον, Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 405. See also, σάββατον, Verlyn Verbrugge, ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 1133.

⁷⁴Wallis (in Cox, 2:100), noting this use of σάββατα to refer to a single Sabbath day, stated that “the New Testament doth use to follow” the Septuagint.

Σάββατον and Σάββατα in Apocryphal Writings

Before proceeding to an extensive examination of *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* in the New Testament, a brief excursus will be made here into deutero-canonical writings (and into extra-biblical works, in the next section) so as to observe, through some selected examples, how these two terms were employed by various authors about two centuries before the writing of the Greek Scriptures. The first book of Maccabees, written in Hebrew about the latter part of the second century BC by a Jewish author, survives only through the Greek translation contained in the Septuagint. However, 2 Maccabees was written in κοινή Greek, probably in Alexandria, Egypt, ca. 124 BC, and includes a revised version of the historical events of the first seven chapters of 1 Maccabees, together with some additional materials.

To begin with, it must be noted that the singular form *σάββατον* appears a total of seven times in 1 and 2 Maccabees. A clear example of this is seen in a phrase from 2 Maccabees 5:25: ἕως τῆς ἁγίας ἡμέρας τοῦ σαββάτου, i.e., “until the holy day of the Sabbath.”⁷⁵

In addition to the seven uses of the singular, these books employ the apparent plural *σάββατα* ten times. In six of these ten instances *σάββατα* is placed in a phrase that requires that it be understood and interpreted as a singular term. For example, 1 Maccabees 2:32 has: τῇ ἡμέρᾳ [regular singular] τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural], which would read “on the day of the Sabbath,” if *σάββατα* must literalistically be rendered as a plural.⁷⁶ However, despite the apparent plural of τῶν σαββάτων, translators have rightly interpreted this phrase as “on the Sabbath day.”⁷⁷ In a similar manner, 1 Maccabees 2:38a reads: καὶ ἀνέστησαν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἐν πολέμῳ τοῖς σάββασιν. Though the τοῖς σάββασιν may be technically viewed as a dative plural, this clause has been correctly translated, in reputable English Bible versions, as referring to a singular Sabbath: “So they attacked them on the sabbath.”⁷⁸

Thus, in a nutshell, though the regular singular term *σάββατον* was used in these deutero-canonical works, the apparent grammatical-plural *σάββατα* was likewise repeatedly used in a manner

⁷⁵This is from the NJB. The other six passages that use the singular *σάββατον* are 1 Macc 1:43 (καὶ ἐκβεβήλωσαν τὸ σάββατον, i.e., “and profaned the sabbath” [NRSV]); 6:49 (ὅτι σάββατον ἦν τῇ γῆ, i.e., “for that was a sabbath year in the land” [NAB]); 2 Macc 8:26 (ἦν γὰρ ἡ πρὸ τοῦ σαββάτου, i.e., “it was the eve of the Sabbath” [NJB]); 8:27 (τὸ σάββατον, i.e., “the Sabbath” [NJB]); 8:28 (μετὰ δὲ τὸ σάββατον, i.e., “Then after the sabbath” [DRA]); and 12:38 (τὸ σάββατον διήγαγον, i.e., “kept the Sabbath” [NJB]).

⁷⁶See also, 1 Macc 2:41; 9:34, 43, which all have the identical phrase τῇ ἡμέρᾳ [regular singular] τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural], which is rightly rendered, “on the Sabbath day” (NJB). A similar phrase in 1 Macc 2:34, (τὴν ἡμέραν [regular singular] τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural]), is aptly rendered “the Sabbath day” (NJB); and 2 Macc 15:3 (ἄγειν τὴν τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural] ἡμέραν [regular singular]), is correctly rendered “the keeping of the Sabbath day” (NJB).

⁷⁷This is according to the NJB. See also, JB, NAB, NEB, NRSV, REB, RSV, etc.

⁷⁸This is from the NRSV. See also, RSV; and similarly JB, NAB, NEB, NJB, REB, etc.

that requires understanding and interpreting it also as a singular, seventh-day Sabbath, in a manner virtually identical to that observed in the Greek version of the Old Testament materials considered above.

The Usage of Σάββατα in Extra-Biblical Works

Extensive employment of the form σάββατα with a singular meaning can be found in non-biblical writings as well. The earliest known occurrence of σάββατα in secular works appears in the collection of the Zenon Papyri.⁷⁹ In the mid-third century BC, Zenon was a business manager for Apollonius, who held a high post during the reign of Ptolemy II (285 – 246 BC). The records left by Zenon include papyrus 59762, which contains an account of a week's delivery of bricks. The editor and translator of these papyri, Campbell Edgar, makes an astute observation: "The writer was apparently a Jew, and a strict observer of the Sabbath; for the 7th is marked Σάββατα, and on that day no bricks were delivered."⁸⁰ This term σάββατα, as shown in column one of the original text, provides conclusive evidence that as early as about 250 BC the apparent plural was already being used in speaking of a single, seventh-day Sabbath.

The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BC – AD 50), used the regular singular σάββατον when referring to Exodus 16:23. He states that the "seventh" (ἑβδόμη) day "was called Sabbath" (ἦν σάββατον καλεῖ) by God.⁸¹ However, in a strikingly similar passage, Philo uses the apparent plural σάββατα (yet with a singular meaning) in referring to "the seventh" (τὴν ἑβδόμην) day, as the day which "the Hebrews call 'the Sabbath'" (ἦν Ἑβραῖοι σάββατα καλοῦσιν).⁸²

The works of Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (ca. AD 37 – 101), a contemporary of the New Testament writers, evidences a similar usage of σάββατον and σάββατα. First, it is clear that Josephus repeatedly utilized the normal Greek singular σάββατον in various of his writings. For example, in his defense of Judaism he used the clause καὶ ἐκάλεσαν τὴν ἡμέραν σάββατον (i.e., "and called that day the Sabbath").⁸³ However, similar to Philo, Josephus repeatedly employed σάββατα to refer to a single seventh-day Sabbath. For instance, near the beginning of his *Antiquities of the*

⁷⁹See C. C. Edgar, *Zenon Papyri*, vol. IV, Nos. 59532-59800 (Cairo, Egypt: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français, d'Archéologie Orientale, 1931).

⁸⁰Ibid., 191.

⁸¹Philo Judaeus *On the Change of Names*. 260.

⁸²Philo Judaeus *On Abraham*. 28.

⁸³Josephus *Against Apion*. II. 2. A little later in this same section, Josephus writes: ἡ δὲ περὶ τὴν ὀνομασίαν τοῦ σαββάτου γραμματικῆ ("and as for this grammatical translation of the word Sabbath"). This translation is by William Whiston. See also, Josephus *Wars*. II. 19. 2, where he wrote of the Jews who fought on the "Sabbath" (σάββατον). Similarly, in his autobiography, he wrote of ἡμέραν σάββατον ("Sabbath day"); Josephus *Life*. 32.

Jews, Josephus refers to the “seventh” (ἑβδόμη) day, as a day when God ceased from His creative activities; then he refers to τὴν ἡμέραν, i.e., “the day” (singular), which God calls σάββατα (an apparent plural, but with a singular meaning).⁸⁴ In the same work, Josephus later writes: κατὰ δὲ ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν, ἣτις σάββατα καλεῖται. Literalistically rendered, this would translate incoherently as, “but on the seventh day [singular], which is called Sabbath[s] [plural].”⁸⁵ Again, the σάββατα is utilized as a singular.

Perhaps most instructive regarding the manner in which σάββατον and σάββατα were both used to refer to a single, seventh-day Sabbath comes from the following statement, where Josephus refers to the twelve loaves of unleavened bread that were placed on the table in the holy place of the tabernacle, every week, μετὰ δὲ ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ (i.e., “after seven days”) ... ἐν τῷ καλουμένῳ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν Σαββάτῳ: τὴν γὰρ ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν Σάββατα καλοῦμεν.⁸⁶

The intriguing manner in which Josephus apparently intentionally juxtaposed these two clauses, which form part of the same sentence, deserves additional analysis, especially since the first clause uses the singular σαββάτῳ, while the second employs the seemingly plural σάββατα, and furthermore because this latter clause can be seen to be substantially similar to the first. To begin, our Jewish author observes that these loaves were brought in after,

ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ ... ἐν τῷ καλουμένῳ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν Σαββάτῳ:
 “seven days” ... “on the [day] called by us the Sabbath:”

Then, clearly emphasizing this fact, Josephus immediately adds:

τὴν γὰρ ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν Σάββατα καλοῦμεν.
 “for we call the seventh day ‘Sabbath.’”

⁸⁴Josephus *Antiquities*. i. I. I, reads in full: καὶ τὸν κόσμον ἐξ ταῖς πάσαις ἡμέραις Μωυσῆς καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ φησὶ γενέσθαι, τῇ δὲ ἑβδόμῃ ἀναπαύσασθαι καὶ λαβεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων ἐκεχειρίαν, ὅθεν καὶ ἡμεῖς σχολὴν ἀπὸ τῶν πόνων κατὰ ταύτην ἄγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν προσαγορευόντες αὐτὴν σάββατα: δηλοῖ δὲ ἀνάπαυσιν κατὰ τὴν Ἑβραίων διάλεκτον τοῦνομα. Feldman translated this, as follows: “Moyses says that the universe and all the things in it came into being in six days in all and that on the seventh day He ceased and took a rest from His activities, whence we also on this day take leisure from our activities, calling it the Sabbath. This word means ‘rest’ in the language of the Hebrews;” (*Flavius Josephus, Judean Antiquities 1-4*, Louis H. Feldman, trans. and commentary [Leiden: Brill, 2000], emphases added).

⁸⁵The entire passage (Josephus *Antiquities*. iii. 10. 1) reads: Ἐκ δὲ τοῦ δημοσίου ἀναλώματος νόμος ἐστὶν ἄρνα καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν σφάζεσθαι τῶν αὐτοετῶν ἀρχομένης τε ἡμέρας καὶ ληγούσης, κατὰ δὲ ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν, ἣτις σάββατα καλεῖται, δύο σφάττουσι τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἱερουργοῦντες. Again, notice Feldman’s translation: “There is a law that at public expense a year-old lamb should be slaughtered each day both at the beginning and at the end of the day; but on the seventh day, which is called Sabbath, they slaughter two, sacrificing in the same manner;” (emphases added).

⁸⁶The entire quote from Josephus *Antiquities*. iii. 6. 6 reads: ὑπὲρ δὲ τῶν ἄρτων ἐτίθεντο φιάλαι δύο χρύσειαι λιβάνου πλήρεις, μετὰ δὲ ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ πάλιν ἄλλοι ἐκομίζοντο [ἄρτοι] ἐν τῷ καλουμένῳ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν Σαββάτῳ: τὴν γὰρ ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν Σάββατα καλοῦμεν: τὴν δ’ αἰτίαν ἐξ ἧς ταῦτα ἐπενοήθησαν ἐν ἑτέροις ἐροῦμεν. Feldman rendered it as follows: “Above these loaves of bread were placed two golden offering-cups full of incense. After seven days seven other loaves of bread were brought in turn on the day called by us the Sabbath. For we call the seventh day the Sabbath. We shall mention elsewhere the reason why these things were contrived;” (emphases added). See Markus Barth, and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 339, footnote #8.

Obviously, if this final clause were to be rendered literalistically, it would illogically read: “For we call the seventh day [singular] Sabbath_s [plural].”⁸⁷ Moreover, the way in which the above two clauses are used in parallel serves to demonstrate that for Josephus, living and writing at the time of the apostles, the term *σάββατα* was clearly understood and applied in everyday usage to refer to a single entity.⁸⁸

Living about the same time as Josephus, Plutarch (ca. AD 46 – 120), the Greek historian, biographer and essayist, who became a Roman citizen, similarly used the term *σάββατα* when referring to a single seventh-day Sabbath.⁸⁹

Σάββατον and Σάββατα in the New Testament

A careful enumeration of all “sabbath” terminology in the κοινή Greek of the New Testament reveals a total of 69 occurrences.⁹⁰ First, it would be well to consider the manner in which Greek

⁸⁷Incidentally, in Josephus *Wars*. I. 7. 3 the following clause is found: ὑπὲρ μόνου γὰρ τοῦ σώματος ἀμύνονται τοῖς σαββάτοις. The last two words could be translated either as “the Sabbaths,” or “the Sabbath.”

⁸⁸Regarding this use of *σάββατα* by Josephus, note Lightfoot’s conclusions: “The general use of *σάββατα*, when a single sabbath-day was meant, will appear from such passages as Jos. *Ant.* i. 1. 1, ἄγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν, προσαγορεύοντες αὐτὴν *σάββατα*, *ib.* iii. 10. 1, ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν ἣτις *σάββατα* καλεῖται;” (J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations*, new ed. [London: MacMillan and Co., 1879], 194). Lightfoot (*ibid.*) also pointed out that “The general use of *σάββατα*, when a single sabbath-day was meant, will appear from such passages as ... Hor. *Sat.* i. 9. 69 ‘hodie tricesima sabbata.’” See also, Abbott (264), who similarly highlighted the Latin use of this term in the apparent plural: “Compare Hor. *Sat.* i. 9. 69, ‘hodie tricesima Sabbata;’” (T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, ICC, C. A. Briggs, S. R. Driver, and A. Plummer, eds. [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897], 264). The evidence reveals that, just as the Jews (hundreds of years before the New Testament era) seem to have borrowed *σάββατα* “directly from the Aramaic language, so the Romans appear to have made a direct transliteration of this Hellenized Semitic word into the Latin;” (Harper-Knapp, 29). There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the Latin term *sabbata*, though appearing to be plural in form, was actually employed with the singular meaning. The earliest of such usages, as noted above, was produced during the time of Augustus, by the leading Roman lyric poet, known as Horace (65 – 8 BC). In one of his works he stated, “hodie tricesima Sabbata;” (Quintus Horatius Flaccus *Satirae*. I. IX. 69). Translated, it reads, “today is the thirteenth Sabbath,” which unquestionably shows a singular usage of the apparent plural *sabbata*. Later, another Roman poet, Ovid (43 BC – AD 17/18), also writing before the New Testament, wrote about the *sabbata*; (see Publius Ovidius Naso *Remedia Amoris*. 219). Then, there was Seneca (ca. 4 BC – AD 65), a Roman stoic, philosopher, statesman, and dramatist, who mentioned *sabbata*; (see Lucius Annaeus Seneca *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*. 95. 47); similarly, so does the Roman naturalist and philosopher, Pliny the Elder (AD 23 – 79); (see Gaius Plinius Secundus *Naturalis Historiae*. 31. 2. 18); besides other Latin authors.

⁸⁹Plutarch *Moralia*. 169 C states: “ἀλλ’ Ἰουδαῖοι σαββάτων ὄντων ἐν ἀγνάμπτοις καθεζόμενοι, τῶν πολεμίων κλίμακος προστιθέντων καὶ τὰ τεῖχη καταλαμβάνόντων.” Frank Cole Babbitt translated this as follows: “But the Jews, because it was the *Sabbath day*, sat in their places immovable, while the enemy were planting ladders against the wall and capturing the defenses;” (emphases added). Perhaps Plutarch was here referring to the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BC. See Plutarch *Moralia II*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 481, footnote *f*.

⁹⁰This count does include the one appearance of *προσάββατον* (i.e., “before Sabbath”), located in Mark 15:42. However, the above tally does not include the unique occurrence of *σαββατισμὸς* in Heb 4:9. The meaning and interpretation of *σαββατισμὸς* is not directly relevant to this thesis, and as such will not be addressed here. Nevertheless, as recently demonstrated, by means of careful doctoral research, “the analysis of *σαββατισμὸς*, meaning [seventh-day] Sabbath observance in non-Christian as well as in Christian literature, revealed that it is always used literally, although sometimes pejoratively, with the exception of Origen who uses the term twice figuratively. This is understandable taking Origen’s allegorical interpretation of Scripture into consideration;” (Erhard H. Gallos, “Καταπαυσις and Σαββατισμός in Hebrews 4” [PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2011], 331). See also Hardy, for basically the same count: Frank W. Hardy, “Greek/English *Sabbaton*” (http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Grk_Sabbaton.pdf; accessed 24 November 2010).

terms for “sabbath” have been quite consistently rendered in virtually all standard English versions, as the word “week.”⁹¹

Table 13				
Σάββατον and Σάββατα as “Week” in the New Testament (Contrasting Modern Greek)				
Reference	Σάββατον	Σάββατα	Contextual Meaning	Modern Greek
Matt 28:1		μίαν σαββάτων	after the Sabbath, on the “first [day] of [the] week:” singular	πρώτης της ημέρας τῆς ἐβδομάδος
Mark 16:2		μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων ⁹²	after the Sabbath, on the “first [day] of the week:” singular	πρώτης ἡμέρας τῆς ἐβδομάδος
Mark 16:9	πρώτη σαββάτου		the resurrection of Jesus, on the “first [day] of [the] week:” singular	πρώτης τῆς ἐβδομάδος
Luke 18:12	δὶς τοῦ σαββάτου		referring to those who fast “twice in the week:” ⁹³ singular	δὶς τῆς ἐβδομάδος
Luke 24:1		μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων	resurrection day, i.e., the “first [day] of the week:” singular	πρώτην ἡμέραν τῆς ἐβδομάδος
John 20:1		μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων	resurrection day, i.e., the “first [day] of the week:” singular	πρώτην τῆς ἐβδομάδος
John 20:19		μιᾶ σαββάτων ⁹⁴	the evening of the resurrection, i.e., the “first [day] of [the] week:” singular	πρώτης τῆς ἐβδομάδος
Acts 20:7		μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων	same as in Luke 24:1: the “first [day] of the week:” singular	πρώτη ἡμέρα τῆς ἐβδομάδος
1 Cor 16:2	κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου ⁹⁵		literally, “on [the] first [day] of every week:” singular	κατὰ τὴν πρώτην τῆς ἐβδομάδος

In short, based upon the linguistic indicator of an immediately preceding numeral (or such a numeral immediately followed by the definite article), as well as clear contextual cues, competent Greek scholars over the centuries have consistently rendered three appearances of the singular term *σάββατον* as “week,” in translation.⁹⁶ Likewise, based upon the same criteria, these learned linguists have rendered the six occurrences of the apparent plural word *σάββατα* as the singular term “week,” a seeming aberration, to be addressed below.⁹⁷ Incidentally, this type of usage was not an innovation

⁹¹This includes versions such as the ASV, CEV, ESV, HCSB, ICB, JB, KJV, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NCV, NET, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NLV, NRSV, REB, RSV, RV, TNIV, etc.

⁹²The Majority Text has *μιᾶς σαββάτων*, a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

⁹³Chapter 1 of the *Megillath Ta’anith*, a first-century AD Jewish treatise on fasting, mentions the matter of regularly undertaking a “fast on Mondays and Thursday throughout the year.” Similarly, the *Didache* 8.1 (dated by most scholars to the late first/early second century AD), includes the following phrase, concerning fasting: *δευτέρα σαββάτων καὶ πέμπτη*; literally, “on second of sabbaths and fifth,” yet rightly rendered as “on the second and fifth [days] of the week.

⁹⁴The Majority Text has *μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων*, a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

⁹⁵The Majority Text has *κατὰ μίαν σαββάτων*, a substantial distinction, to be addressed further below.

⁹⁶This is similar to the Septuagint’s rendition of the superscription of Ps 47:1 (Eng. Ps 48): *δευτέρα σαββάτου* (i.e., “on the second [day] of the week”).

⁹⁷This is similar to the Septuagint’s translation of the superscriptions of Ps 23:1 (Eng. Ps 24): *τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων*

by the writers of the New Testament. Rather, as Harper-Knapp observed, they used these terms “in imitation of the Septuagint translation, which, in turn, imitated a practice already common to the Hebrew language.”⁹⁸

Careful examination of the way in which the Modern Greek Bible has translated the above nine passages, reveals supportive evidence for rendering either *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* as “week,” when required thus by linguistic and contextual cues. In place of the terms *σάββατον* and *σάββατα*, this Bible has consistently employed the lexical term *ἐβδομάς* (i.e., “week”) in all nine passages, as shown in the above table. Not only does this remove any cause for confusion as to how to properly understand the meaning of *σάββατον* and/or *σάββατα* in these texts, but such use of *ἐβδομάς* also compellingly confirms that the writers of the New Testament employed both *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* as singulars, referring to the “week,” in these nine instances.⁹⁹

Now that we have diagramed the manner in which the two Greek terms *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* have been utilized and aptly translated as the singular word “week” in essentially all regular English versions of the New Testament,¹⁰⁰ the use of these two words in all the other cases in the κοινή Greek will be carefully considered in Table 14 below.

Table 14			
Σάββατον and Σάββατα (if Unqualified) as Equivalent Singulars in the New Testament			
Reference	Σάββατον	Σάββατα	Contextual Meaning
Matt 12:1		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:2	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:5a		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:5b	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:8	τοῦ σαββάτου		“of the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:10		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular

(i.e., “on the first [day] of the week”); and, Ps 93:1 (Eng. Ps 94): τετράδι σαββάτων (i.e., “for the fourth [day] of the week”).

⁹⁸Harper-Knapp, 18. Hebrew has two different words for “week.” The one is spelled *שבוע* or *שבוע* (i.e., “period of seven,” “heptad,” or “week”), and appears 20 times in the MT. The LXX has rendered these terms as follows: (a) Twelve times as forms of the Greek lexical term *ἐβδομάς* (i.e., “week,” or “period of seven days”), in Gen 29:27, 28; Exod 34:22; Num 28:26; Deut 16:9 (2x), 10, 16; 2 Chron 8:13; Dan 9:24; 10:2, 3; (b) Twice as *ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας* (i.e., “seven days”), Lev 12:5; Ezek 45:21; (c) Once it is not translated at all (in Jer 5:24); and (d) Five times it appears that a different original Hebrew text than the MT was used (in Dan 9:25 [2x], 26, 27 [2x]). Though less frequently used, the other Hebrew word for “week” is *שבועות*, the same term used for the seventh-day Sabbath (as well as for the Sabbatical year [Lev 25:2ff.], etc.). The LXX has rendered these as follows: (a) Twice as forms of *ἐβδομάς*, in Lev 23:15; 25:8b; and (b) Once it is rendered as a form of the lexical term *ἀνάπαυσις* (i.e., “rest”), in Lev 25:8a. Besides the use of *ἐβδομάς* as “week,” the LXX used the words *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* for “week,” in the Psalms (as pointed out in the above footnotes, #96 and #97).

⁹⁹Also, this usage of various forms of the lexical term *ἐβδομάς* is employed in the Modern Greek Bible in all of the 20 appearances, noted in footnote #98 above, in which the Hebrew words *שבוע* or *שבוע* were used (except for Ezek 45:21, which has *ἑπτὰ ἡμερῶν*, which is similar to the LXX’s *ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας*).

¹⁰⁰See, for example, those mentioned in footnote #91.

Reference	Σάββατον	Σάββατα	Contextual Meaning
Matt 12:11		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:12		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 24:20	χειμῶνος μηδὲ σαββάτω		“in winter nor on a Sabbath:” both singulars
Matt 28:1		σαββάτων	pre-resurrection day: singular
Mark 1:21		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:23		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:24		τοῖς ¹⁰¹ σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:27a	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:27b	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:28	τοῦ σαββάτου		“of the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 3:2		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 3:4		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 6:2	σαββάτου		taught on “Sabbath:” singular
Mark 15:42	προσάββατον		day before “Sabbath:” singular
Mark 16:1	τοῦ σαββάτου		“the Sabbath” ended: singular
Luke 4:16		τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων	in a synagogue, “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 4:31		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:1	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:2		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:5	τοῦ σαββάτου		“of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:6	ἐν ἑτέρῳ σαββάτῳ		“on another Sabbath;” contrast vs. 1: sing.
Luke 6:7	ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:9	τῷ σαββάτῳ ¹⁰²		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:10		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:14a	τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:14b	τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου		in a synagogue “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:15	τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:16	τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου		divine healing “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 14:1	σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular
Luke 14:3	τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 14:5	ἐν ¹⁰³ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου		mercy; “on [the] day of the Sabbath:” sing.
Luke 23:54	σάββατον		post-preparation day: singular
Luke 23:56	τὸ ... σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
John 5:9	σάββατον		healing on “Sabbath:” singular
John 5:10	σάββατόν		healing on “Sabbath:” singular
John 5:16	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular

¹⁰¹The Majority Text has ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν, a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

¹⁰²The Majority Text has τοῖς σάββασιν, a significant difference, to be discussed further below.

¹⁰³The Majority Text has ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου, a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

Reference	Σάββατον	Σάββατα	Contextual Meaning
John 5:18	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
John 7:22	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular
John 7:23a	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular
John 7:23b	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular
John 9:14	σάββατον		healing on “Sabbath:” singular
John 9:16	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
John 19:31a	ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
John 19:31b	ἡ ἡμέρα ... τοῦ σαββάτου		“the day ... of the Sabbath:” singular
Acts 1:12	σαββάτου		“[a] Sabbath:” singular
Acts 13:14		τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων	in a synagogue, “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Acts 13:27	πᾶν σάββατον		“every Sabbath:” singular
Acts 13:42	εἰς τὸ μετὰξὺν σάββατον		“on the following Sabbath:” singular
Acts 13:44	τῷ δὲ ἐρχομένῳ σαββάτῳ		“and on the coming [i.e., the next] Sabbath:” singular
Acts 15:21	πᾶν σάββατον		“every Sabbath:” singular
Acts 16:13		τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων	worship; “and on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Acts 17:2		καὶ ἐπὶ <i>σάββατα τρία</i>	“and for <i>three Sabbaths</i> :” ¹⁰⁴ plural (due to the qualifying term <i>τρία</i>)
Acts 18:4	πᾶν σάββατον		“every Sabbath:” singular
Col 2:16		ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων	“or in respect of festival or new moon or σαββάτων:” the first two nouns are each a singular; what of an unqualified σαββάτων?

Even a cursory overview of the linguistic and contextual evidence outlined immediately above shows that those who produced the New Testament documents freely utilized both Greek terms *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* to be understood as referring to the singular word “sabbath.”¹⁰⁵ As the seventeenth-century Bible scholar Wallis noted: “In the New Testament, though the Sabbath be sometimes called *σάββατον*, it is very often *σάββατα*.”¹⁰⁶ Or, as Robert Wilson more recently

¹⁰⁴The RSV is basically the only formal version to render this as “three weeks,” instead of “three Sabbaths.” However, “there is nothing in the Greek, linguistic or contextual, or in the circumstances described, to require [or even allow] the translation ‘week;’” (*Problems in Bible Translation*, 230). Interestingly, there is no known occasion in the entire New Testament (whether *κοινή* or Modern Greek Bible), where any term is to be rightly rendered as the plural “weeks.”

¹⁰⁵Referencing James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 174, and R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 219, Ranzolin posited that “the plural ‘sabbaths’ (*σαββάτων*) was often employed to refer to a single sabbath;” (Leo S. Ranzolin, “The Sabbath in Colossians,” Paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Washington, DC, November 17, 2006). See also Vaughan, who explained it thus: “*Σάββατα*, though plural [at least visually], is regularly used in the NT in a singular sense;” (Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., *Ephesians Through Philemon*, vol. 11 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 204).

¹⁰⁶See Cox, 2:100. Or, as Abbott (264) noted: “*σάββατα*, though plural, means ‘a Sabbath day.’”

expressed it: “The [apparent] plural τὰ σάββατα is quite often used, as well as the singular, for a single Sabbath day.”¹⁰⁷

The *only* incontrovertible exception to this practice is located in Acts 17:2, where the numeral τρία (i.e., “three”), which immediately follows σάββατα, and is thus directly attached to it, indicates that the σάββατα must be translated in this specific instance as the plural word “Sabbaths.”¹⁰⁸

Once again, investigation of the Modern Greek Bible furnishes some helpful data. Other than Acts 17:2 (which is clearly a plural due to the connected τρία), this version has changed 12 of the 18 occurrences of σάββατα into forms of the singular σάββατον,¹⁰⁹ thus validating the conclusion that in κοινή Greek the term σάββατα was often understood and interpreted as a singular.

In his *Word Studies in the New Testament* Marvin Vincent corroborated the above analysis, stating: “The plural is *only once* used in the New Testament of more than a single day (Acts xvii. 2).”¹¹⁰ This general manner, in which the apparent plural term σάββατα is regularly employed as a singular entity,¹¹¹ is repeatedly validated by the following text-critical, intra-narrative, intra-textual, inter-synoptic, semantic, and structural evidence.

Substitutability of Σάββατα with Σάββατον

Comparative Manuscript Analysis

A comparative evaluation of the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek text with the 1995 Robinson-Pierpont Majority Text reveals only two substantial variants germane to this research: (a) While Nestle-Aland has τῷ σαββάτῳ (the dative singular) for Luke 6:9, the Majority Text has τοῖς

¹⁰⁷Wilson, 219. Lohse stated: “The plural τὰ σάββατα is very frequently used to designate the singular;” (Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Hermeneia, William R. Poehlmann, and Robert J. Karris, trans. [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968], 115). Also, Eduard Lohse, σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή, Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *TDNT*, vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7, indicated that, among the possible meanings of τὰ σάββατα is “one Sabbath.” Likewise, *Problems in Bible Translation* (231) affirmed that “the Greek uses the plural form with singular sense.” Similarly, Henry George Liddell, and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1579.

¹⁰⁸Earlier, Hardy’s view (“The Sabbath in Colossians 2?” p. 10) was noted in a footnote: “No one denies that this Greek plural can be translated as a singular where context requires, but if the context does not require singular meaning – if instead it requires plural meaning, as I believe the present context does – there is nothing in the plurality of the Greek term which would require us to translate it other than what it is, i.e., a plural.” The above data, that shows that the term σάββατα should always be rendered as a singular unless lucid linguistic links and/or clear contextual cues require it, seems to indicate the inverse of what Hardy has proposed.

¹⁰⁹The other passages, in which the apparent plural term σάββατα was retained in the MGK, are: Matt 12:5a; Mark 2:24; Luke 4:31; 6:2, 9; Col 2:16.

¹¹⁰Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. III, *The Epistles of Paul: Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1924), 494 (emphasis added). So also, A. Lukyn Williams, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: University Press, 1907), 103, who noted: “In Acts xvii. 2, ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία, it has a plural meaning, but everywhere else, probably, in the N.T. still the singular.”

¹¹¹Wood (341) rightly notes that “The New Testament contains similar instances” as seen in the Septuagint, where the [apparent] plural form σάββατα is found with a singular meaning, including Matt 12:1; 28:1; Luke 4:16. Similarly, more than a decade earlier, Neufeld (13) noted that the [apparent] “Greek plural form” “often stands for the singular,” such as in Matt 12:1; 28:1; Luke 4:16.

σάββασιν (the dative apparent plural); yet, both passages contextually refer to the same, single, seventh-day “Sabbath.”

(b) Similarly, whereas the Nestle-Aland text has κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου (the genitive singular) for 1 Corinthians 16:2, the Majority Text has κατὰ μίαν σαββάτων (the genitive apparent plural); yet, both are rightly rendered basically as, “on the first [day] of every week,” in standard English Bible versions.¹¹² In sum, while one set of manuscripts employs the lexical singular term σάββατον, to mean either a “sabbath” or a “week” (depending on the linguistic links and/or the context), the other set of manuscripts utilizes what is visually the plural word σάββατα, to identify precisely the same singular “Sabbath” or the identical singular “week.” Concurring with such textual evidence, New Testament exegete Murray Harris affirms: “Remarkably, σάββατον, -ου, τό in either the sg. or the pl. can mean either ‘sabbath’ or ‘week.’”¹¹³ This conclusion is corroborated by various Greek lexicons. For example, in defining σάββατον, the Friberg Lexicon states that “both singular and plural [are] used for the seventh day of the week (Saturday);” also, the “singular and plural [are used] as a designation for the span of seven days [i.e., a] week.”¹¹⁴

Intra-Narrative Investigation

This type of usage of σάββατα to identify a single concept is further illustrated through a study of the manner in which various inspired writers have used these terms within the same pericopes. This intra-narrative usage first appears in Matthew’s account of the disciples plucking grain on the seventh-day Sabbath. Matthew 12:1 and 5a both have the phrase τοῖς σάββασιν (an apparent plural), whereas verse 2 has ἐν σαββάτῳ, verse 5b has τὸ σάββατον, and verse 8 has τοῦ σαββάτου (all singulars); yet, both the apparent plurals, and the obvious singulars refer to the identical Sabbath day (singular). The record of this grain plucking is quite similar in Mark 2. While the writer utilizes τοῖς σάββασιν (the apparent plural) in both verses 23 and 24, he opts for τὸ σάββατον (the singular) twice in verse 27, and τοῦ σαββάτου (the singular) in verse 28 – all five uses of which refer quite interchangeably to the same, single, seventh-day Sabbath. In the identical grain-plucking chronicle, we find that, while Luke 6:2 has τοῖς σάββασιν (an apparent plural), Luke 6:1 uses σαββάτῳ, and verse 5 uses τοῦ σαββάτου, inflected forms of the singular σάββατον, all to describe the same single Sabbath.

¹¹²See, for example, ESV, ICB, NASB, NASBrev, NfV, NIV, NRSV, RSV, RV, TNIV, etc.

¹¹³Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 118.

¹¹⁴See also, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; as well as Bauer’s *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.

In an analogous manner, the story of the crippled woman whom Jesus healed in the synagogue evidences a similar substitutability of *σάββατα* with *σάββατον*. Whereas Luke 13:10 has *τοῖς σάββασιν* (an apparent plural), verses 14-16 employ only inflected forms of the singular,¹¹⁵ all of which are used to identify the identical, single, seventh-day Sabbath.

Third, in the book of Acts a similar example relating to the utilization of *σάββατα* to refer to an individual Sabbath can be observed. In recording Paul's visit to Antioch of Pisidia, Luke employs *τῶν σαββάτων* (an apparent plural) in Acts 13:14, to refer to a single Sabbath on which Paul was invited to preach; and then, he utilizes *τὸ σάββατον* (vs. 42), and *τῷ ... σαββάτῳ* (vs. 44) to refer to a Sabbath day, of a week later. The appropriateness of this type of intra-narrative interchangeability of *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* is confirmed by the manner in which virtually all regular English versions render these passages.¹¹⁶

Finally, in Mark 16, there is one other example of such unmistakable linguistic use of *σάββατα* for a single entity. Here, Mark employs *μὴ τῶν σαββάτων*, an apparent plural (in verse 2),¹¹⁷ followed by *πρώτη σαββάτου*, the singular (in verse 9), to refer to the very same, single, "first [day] of the week," as evidenced in basically all English translations.¹¹⁸

Intra-Textual Examination

Significantly, one of the clearer passages identifying this essential similarity of meaning between *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* is located within one specific verse dealing with the seventh-day Sabbath. Of all the gospels, only Matthew 12:5 records the statement of Jesus (regarding the priests who were ministering in the temple on the Sabbath), part of which reads: *ὅτι τοῖς σάββασιν οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τὸ σάββατον*. As rendered in many versions, no distinction is made at all between the apparent plural (of the *τοῖς σάββασιν*) or the phrase in the singular, *τὸ σάββατον* – both are understood and interpreted to refer to a Sabbath, in the singular, even though a visual plural is employed in the first instance.

Inter-Synoptic Inquiry

Instructive in this regard is the manner in which inspired synoptic gospel writers record the identical event, yet using language that on the surface seems contradictory. Concerning the grain-plucking incident, Matthew 12:1 as well as Mark 2:23 indicate that Jesus went through these fields

¹¹⁵These are *τῷ σαββάτῳ* (in both Luke 13:14a, and 15), and *τοῦ σαββάτου* (in both Luke 13:14b, and 16).

¹¹⁶See, for example, ASV, ESV, KJV, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NIV, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, etc.

¹¹⁷The Majority Text, while also using the apparent plural, records this slightly differently, as *τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων*.

¹¹⁸See, for example, ASV, ESV, KJV, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NIV, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, etc.

τοῖς σάββασιν (the apparent plural). However, Luke 6:1 records this same event, indicating that Jesus went through the fields ἐν σαββάτῳ (using the singular term). In other words, Luke refers to the same incident on the same Sabbath (using the regular singular term), whereas Matthew and Mark speak of the same event on the same day, while using an apparent plural term. In like manner, Matthew 12:2 points out that the Pharisees charged the disciples with doing what was not lawful ἐν σαββάτῳ (using the singular), while both Mark 2:24 and Luke 6:2 maintain that the Pharisees accused the disciples of doing what was not lawful τοῖς σάββασιν (the apparent plural).

The question naturally arises: Which language did the Pharisees actually use: the regular singular or the apparent plural? Or, is it possible that there is really no essential difference between σάββατον (the normal Greek singular), and σάββατα (the apparent plural) in the regular usage in κοινή Greek, when generally employed to refer to a single “sabbath”?

Immediately following the outdoor encounter with the Pharisees, all three synoptic gospels record Jesus’ visit to the synagogue on a certain Sabbath, and the incident regarding the man with a withered hand. This issue, as to the legality of healing on the Sabbath, also provides some insight into the way in which σάββατον and σάββατα were employed in everyday usage in New Testament times. Luke 6:7 indicates that these Jewish leaders were watching to see whether Jesus would heal him ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ (the regular singular), while Mark 3:2 uses τοῖς σάββασιν (the apparent plural form).¹¹⁹ In order to illustrate the importance of showing compassion on the Sabbath, Jesus then asked whether they would rescue an animal that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath: Matthew 12:11 uses τοῖς σάββασιν (an apparent plural), while Luke 14:5, noting that Jesus asked essentially the same question on another occasion, employs singulars: ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου. In Luke 6:9, in this Sabbath miracle account, Jesus rhetorically asks if it is lawful to do good τῷ σαββάτῳ (i.e., “on the Sabbath,” singular).¹²⁰ Mark 3:4, however, has Jesus asking the same question, but using the phrase τοῖς σάββασιν (an apparent plural).¹²¹

This same type of substitutability of the lexical term σάββατα for the regular singular σάββατον, can also be seen in the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week. Whereas, Mark 16:1 uses the singular τοῦ σαββάτου to refer to the Sabbath that was past, Matthew 28:1 employs σαββάτων (an apparent genitive plural) to refer to the selfsame entity.

¹¹⁹Incidentally, Matt 12:10 records the query of the Pharisees as to the legality of healing τοῖς σάββασιν (an apparent plural); yet, in Luke 14:3, when Jesus asks the same question of the Pharisees, He asks if it is lawful to heal τῷ σαββάτῳ (the normal singular).

¹²⁰Admittedly, the Majority Text of Luke 6:9 has τοῖς σάββασιν (an apparent plural), like that of Mark 3:4.

¹²¹While Mark and Luke record Jesus asking a question, Matt 12:12 has a statement: ὥστε ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν καλῶς ποιεῖν (i.e., “Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” [NKJV]).

Such usage of *σάββατον* and *σάββατα*, as observed in the above examples, engenders the following crucial query: Is it possible that the term *σάββατα* (together with its various inflected forms), though it may have basically all the visual outward signs of being a normal plural word, should *always* be viewed and treated as a singular term in the κοινή Greek Testament,¹²² unless it is followed immediately by a plural numeral, or unless the grammar indicates that it must be a plural?

Grammatical/Semantic Issues

Of the various ways in which *σάββατα* appears in the κοινή Greek Testament, one of the most enlightening is its appearance in the form identical to that located in Colossians 2:16 – *σαββάτων*. Actually *σαββάτων*, this apparent plural genitive of *σάββατα*, appears ten other times in the Greek of the New Testament.¹²³ Six of these occurrences have already been discussed above, where it was pointed out that this apparent plural simply refers to a singular “week,” as indicated by the various linguistic identifiers and other contextual factors. Incidentally, Matthew 28:1 has the term *σάββατα* in a unique construct. The passage begins with: Ὁψὲ δὲ *σαββάτων* (i.e., contextually, “now after Sabbath”). As just noted above, it is obvious that the genitive apparent plural here refers to a single seventh-day Sabbath.

It is the three verses, however, from the pen of the physician Luke that bring to light some fundamental aspects of the meaning of *σαββάτων* – factors that harmonize well with the evidence observed above, in the intra-textual analysis of the Septuagint’s use of the same term. When Luke writes about the weekly custom of Jesus, he notes in Luke 4:16 that He went into the synagogue τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν *σαββάτων*.¹²⁴ If one insists that the term *σαββάτων* is “not ambiguous,” but is “a genitive plural and [that] it cannot be singular,”¹²⁵ then one is faced with an intractable anomaly; for, the above phrase would then have to be literally translated into English as “on the day [singular] of the Sabbaths [plural]” – a nonsensical sentence.

¹²²This conclusion appears also applicable for the Greek of the LXX, since all of the passages in which the lexical term *σάββατα* appears (whether coming from either singular or plural original Hebrew words), can actually be seen and rightly understood to refer to singular concepts (i.e., the seventh-day Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, or the Sabbatical year).

¹²³Thus, referencing Lightfoot’s *Colossians* commentary, Bevere aptly noted: “Indeed, the use of the plural *σαββάτων* here is commonly Jewish;” (Allan R. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 226 [London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 78).

¹²⁴Interestingly, Luke also uses regular singulars (in Luke 13:14, and 16): τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ *σαββάτου* (i.e., “the day of the Sabbath”); and similarly Luke 14:5: ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ *σαββάτου* (i.e., “on [the] day of the Sabbath”). Note: Slightly different, the Majority Text has ἐν τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ *σαββάτου* here. Also, in John 5:9 there is a similar sentence structure (utilizing the singular): Ἦν δὲ *σάββατον* ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῆ ἡμέρᾳ (i.e., “Now that day was the Sabbath” [ESV]). Similarly, John 9:14: ἦν δὲ *σάββατον* ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ (i.e., “Now it was a Sabbath on the day” [NASB]). Note: The Majority Text does not have ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ here in John 9:14.

¹²⁵Reynolds, 277.

This type of grammatical construct is not unique in κοινή Greek; for in Acts 13:14 Luke tells of how Paul went into the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων (as above, literalistically, “on the day [singular] of the Sabbath[s] [plural]”). One other time, in Acts 16:13, Luke informs us that he went with Paul to the riverside to pray, τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων (similar to the above, “and on the day [singular] of the Sabbath[s] [plural]”). Obviously, the very linguistic structure of the above phrases demonstrates that the word σαββάτων, though it seems to be obviously declined from the apparent plural σάββατα, must be understood and translated as a singular; hence the above phrases would correctly read, “on the day of the Sabbath [singular],” or in smoother English, “on the Sabbath day.”

Linguistic Considerations

Finally, in connection with the research of this type of interchangeability between σάββατον and σάββατα, the word most significant to this study needs to be considered – the term σαββάτων as located in Colossians 2:16. Of the three terms in this phrase (ἑορτῆς, νεομηνίας, σαββάτων) it is recognized that both ἑορτῆς, and νεομηνίας are irrefutably singular nouns. Hence, it has been concluded that the final term σαββάτων, though visually a plural, should probably be seen as a singular. Accordingly, Giem aptly concluded in his research, that “it is much more likely that it is singular like ἑορτῆς and νεομηνίας, the other two words in the series.”¹²⁶

Commentator Margaret MacDonald noted: “In Greek the references to festivals and new moons are in the singular and the phrase is sometimes literally translated as such (e.g., NAB: with regard to a festival or new moon or sabbath).”¹²⁷ In fact, as Wood observed, in commenting on the King James Version of Colossians 2:16, “Apparently the apostle Paul used *sabbath* generically in the singular, to correspond with the four other words in the series – meat, drink, holy day, and new moon, each of which is singular.”¹²⁸

As has repeatedly and abundantly been attested above, the word σάββατα (including its inflected forms) is to be understood and rendered as a singular, unless it is directly followed by a plural numeral. The additional evidence, that the tripartite phrase of Colossians 2:16 begins the trilogy with two words that are singulars, seems to imply that the third term (σαββάτων) should not be viewed as a plural, but rather as a definite singular. Though stated somewhat tentatively by a

¹²⁶Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16,” 28.

¹²⁷Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 17 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 110. She added: “But it is also possible that the nouns are generic singulars and therefore can be translated as they are here in the plural (cf. NRSV).”

¹²⁸Wood, 341.

seventh-day Sabbatarian, this fact was already well-recognized in the early 1980s: “Adventists are aware that the word *sabbath* in verse 16, though apparently plural in form, probably should be translated as a singular.”¹²⁹

This in-depth examination of New Testament materials provides additional support regarding the common usage and understanding of the lexeme *σάββατα*, which corroborates the findings from the investigation of the Septuagint (as well as the Modern Greek Bible), the deuterocanonical works, and extra-biblical writings.

Etymological Origins of *Σάββατα*

To begin with, it must be acknowledged that, in and of itself, the basic Greek term *σάββατα* (together with its inflected forms) appears, on the surface at least, to be the regular plural of the normal singular word *σάββατον*. However, extensive examination of *σάββατα* in the LXX, in extracanonical works, in apocryphal writings, in the κοινή Greek Testament, and as validated by the Modern Greek Bible, together provide compelling evidence that such a simplistic perspective of this term can no longer be credibly maintained. Thus, the following query naturally arises: Why does *σάββατα* have the definite appearance of a plural term when it is always employed as a singular, unless directly followed by a plural numeral?¹³⁰

The issue as to whether or not the term *σάββατα* is simply a genuine plural, as inflected from the Greek neuter noun *σάββατον*, has caused considerable discussion over the years. At least as far back as 1879, an acknowledged New Testament Greek authority, J. B. Lightfoot, pointed out the following: “The word *σάββατα* is derived from the Aramaic ... אַבְבַּתָּ, and accordingly preserves the Aramaic termination in *a*. Hence it was naturally declined as a plural noun, *σάββατα*, *σαββάτων*,”¹³¹ as seen in Colossians 2:16. As supportive evidence for his conclusion, Lightfoot referenced, among other ancient writers, Josephus,¹³² who utilized both *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* for the singular, seventh-day Sabbath, as already indicated above.¹³³

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰As in Acts 17:2, noted above.

¹³¹Lightfoot, 194. Incidentally, about two decades earlier, Robinson had already (though much more tentatively) pointed out the apparent connection with the Aramaic: “τὰ *σάββατα*, mostly for the Singular; originally perhaps an imitation of the Aramaean form אַבְבַּתָּ;” (Edward Robinson, *A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament*, new ed. [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858], 651, abbreviation updated).

¹³²Lightfoot (194) noted: “The general use of *σάββατα*, when a single sabbath-day was meant, will appear from such passages as Jos. *Ant.* i. 1. 1, ἄγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν, προσαγορεύοντες αὐτὴν *σάββατα*, *ib.* iii. 10. 1, ἐβδόμη ἡμέραν ἣτις *σάββατα* καλεῖται, Plut. *Mor.* 169 C, Ἰουδαῖοι *σαββάτων* ὄντων ἐν ἀγνάμτοις καθεζόμενοι, *ib.* 671 F, οἶμαι δὲ καὶ τὴν τῶν *σαββάτων* ἑορτὴν μὴ παντάπασιν ἀπροσδιόνυσον εἶναι.” See also, Abbott (264): “Thus Josephus distinctly, *Ant.* iii. 10. 1, ἐβδόμη ἡμέραν ἣτις *σάββατα* καλεῖται; also *ib.* i. 1. 1.”

¹³³Thus far, the research has not revealed any explanation as to the reason(s) that the above-mentioned writers (including the translators of the Septuagint) chose to use both the regular Greek singular *σάββατον* and the Aramaic

The manner in which Josephus employed these two terms is corroborated by the conclusions of Heinrich Meyer (as published in 1885), in which he recognized the term “σάββατα as equivalent to σάββατον.”¹³⁴

In his almost 1,500-page tome on Greek grammar, the widely recognized New Testament scholar Archibald Robertson noted the difference between σάββατον and σάββατα.¹³⁵ Though, on the surface, appearing as the singular and plural of the identical word, he pointed out that these two terms actually originate from two different languages. First, the Hebrew term for “sabbath” is שַׁבָּת, and is the logical source of the normal Greek word σάββατον. However, in post-exilic times the Aramaic language was widely used in Palestine, and its word for the sabbath is ܫܒܬܐ, which could easily have been transliterated into Greek as σάββατα, especially since the Greek language has no “sh” sound.¹³⁶ In the mid-twentieth century Harper-Knapp, suggesting “an Aramaic origin for the word in its form σάββατα,”¹³⁷ articulated this view as follows:

The Aramaic form is the same as the Hebrew שַׁבָּת but, while the Hebrew substantive is made definite by prefixing the definite article הַ, the Aramaic makes a definite form (often called the emphatic state) with a sort of post-positive article, with a suffixed ܐ. Thus the Aramaic emphatic state ܫܒܬܐ [sic] ends in the vocal -a. This Aramaic form, transliterated into the Greek, would appear as σάββατα. This would look like a neuter plural and on this basis was declined as such.¹³⁸

In other words, since in normal Greek grammar σάββατα is the plural of the neuter singular σάββατον, this transliterated Aramaic term, as W. E. Vine notes, “was mistaken for a plural.”¹³⁹

singular transliterated form of σάββατα to refer to a singular noun (whether it be the seventh-day Sabbath, a ceremonial day, or the Sabbatical Year). Taking into account the historical background, it would not seem unreasonable to postulate that these writers may have been seeking to use both forms since their intended readers and/or listeners may have included both native Greek-speakers, as well as those for whom Aramaic had become the main language of communication.

¹³⁴Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon*, John C. Moore, trans., William P. Dickson, rev. and ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 312. Though more tentative, Barth, and Blanke (339, footnote #8) basically concurred, saying: “The plural form *sabbata* is probably to be understood in the singular.”

¹³⁵Robertson, 88-108.

¹³⁶Haag noted that one of the explanations for “the pl. form *tá sabbata* [is] the transliteration of Aram. *šabbāṭā*’ (Heb. *šabbāṭ*);” E. Haag, “שַׁבָּת *šabbāṭ*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., Douglas W. Stott, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), XIV:396. See also, the summary of Robertson, by Earle Hilgert, “‘Sabbath Days’ in Colossians 2:16,” *Ministry*, February 1952, 42. Recently O’Hare aptly noted: “The Aramaic noun for Sabbath is homophonic to the Greek plural noun;” (Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete, and The Ascendancy of First-Day Worship* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011], 206).

¹³⁷Harper-Knapp, 6.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 6-7. Harper-Knapp (*ibid.*, 7) went on to state, as noted above: “But even though by every appearance it was plural, the fact that in the Aramaic the form and meaning were singular doubtless carried over into the Greek.” Then she added: “This would account in some degree for the very frequent use of this form as a singular.” [Note: The original “הַ” of the above quote, has been corrected to הַ.] About two decades after Harper-Knapp’s conclusions, fellow Adventist scholar Neufeld (13) more cautiously stated: “This plural (*sabbata*) may represent the Aramaic singular *šabbetha*’, the reason perhaps being that the two words sound much alike.” Then, he added: “The *a* ending in Greek represents the plural for this word (the singular ending is *on*), whereas in Aramaic the *a* ending attaches to the singular.”

¹³⁹W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. III (London: Oliphants, 1940), 311. So also, W. E. Vine, “Sabbath,” *The Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis: Bethany

Over time, many other biblical scholars have affirmed the basic perspective on the origin and meaning of *σάββατα*, as espoused by Greek linguists such as Lightfoot and Robertson.¹⁴⁰ Now, more than a century after Lightfoot, contemporary scholarship has confirmingly concluded that this noun *σάββατα* is actually “an Aramaic loanword taken into Greek by the Jews of Alexandria.”¹⁴¹

In brief then, the weight of evidence suggests that for more than two millennia, since at least around 250 BC, and as corroborated in the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, in extra-biblical writings (such as that of Philo and Josephus), as well as in deuterocanonical works, the feminine singular Aramaic noun (with its attached definite article), *ܣܒܒܐܬܐ* “was transliterated into Greek as *σάββατα* and declined as a plural.”¹⁴²

This cumulative data, together with the consistent usage of *σάββατα* in the κοινή Greek Testament, and its definition in standard Greek lexicons, provides somewhat persuasive proof that the term *σάββατα* must be understood as a singular word in every case in the New Testament, since the grammar never necessitates it being rendered as a plural. The only known “exemption” is Acts 17:2, since it is distinctly identified by a plural numeral directly attached immediately after it.¹⁴³

House, 1984), 983. Moule concluded: “The original *σάββατα*, is a Greek plural in form, but only as it were by accident;” (H. C. G. Moule, *Colossian Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon*, 4th ed. [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903], 174-175, footnote #2). Similarly, Abbott (264) noted that the term *σάββατα* is “a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic, and from its form mistaken for a plural.”

¹⁴⁰See, for example, Abbott (264), who indicated that *σάββατα* is “in fact, a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic.” Moule (175, footnote #2) agreed: “It is a transliteration of the Aramaic *shabbâthâ* [sic] (Hebrew, *shabbâth*).” Lohse (*σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή*, 6), stated: “The Aram. *ܣܒܒܐܬܐ* is used for the single Sabbath or for the whole week.” See also, J. W. Shepard, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul: An Exegetical Study*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 521, footnote #38; Homer A. Kent, *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 93, footnote #3; Norman C. Deck, *The Lord’s Day, or, The Sabbath: A Reply to Seventh Day Adventists* (London: Pickering & Inglis, nd), 77-78. See also, André Pelletier, “*Σαββατα*: Transcription Grecque de L’Arameen,” *Vetus Testamentum* XXII (1972): 436-447.

¹⁴¹John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, Number 44 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 380. See also, Hendrik L. Bosman, “Sabbath,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 4, Willem A. VanGemeren, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1160. Though more cautious, Barth, and Blanke (339, footnote #8) essentially agree, noting: “We are probably dealing with the appropriation of the Aramaic singular form *sabata* [sic], which is similar to a Greek form in the neuter plural and its declination.” Admittedly, two other possible origins for *σάββατα* have been proposed: (1) That it was formed by simple analogy to the neuter plural form of names of festivals such as τὰ ἄζυμα (i.e., “the [feast of] unleavened bread;” Mark 14:1), γενέσια (i.e., “birthday;” Mark 6:21), and τὰ ἐγκαίνια (i.e., “the [feast of] dedication;” John 10:22), where each name ends in the final “-a” sound, appearing to be a plural, but actually being a “singular” festival; and (2) That it was originally a transliteration of the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* into Greek, but was given a Greek ending in “-a” in precisely the same way that ἄλφα, βῆτα, etc., received the final “-a” sound. See Harper-Knapp (7-8), who was referring to Eduard Schwyzer, “Altes und Neues zu (hebr.-)griech. *σάββατα* griech.-)lat. *sabbata* usw.,” *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der Indogermanischen Sprachen* 62 (1934): 1-16.

¹⁴²Williams, 103. As noted above, the Modern Greek Bible does render *ܣܒܒܐܬܐ* basically in accord with the MT.

¹⁴³This fact is corroborated by the consistent manner in which various versions, such as the ASV, ESV, NAB, NASB and NASBrev, have translated all the appearances of *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* as seen in the κοινή Greek Testament. Regarding this “unique” use of *σάββατα*, Lightfoot (194) observed: “In the New Testament *σάββατα* is only once used distinctly of more than a single day, and there the plurality of meaning is brought out by the attached numeral; Acts xvii. 2 ἐπὶ *σάββατα* τρία.” Incidentally, extensive study of the manner in which other calendric terms are combined with numerals so as to indicate plurality, provides supportive evidence for the manner in which the τρία is used to show the plurality of *σάββατα*, specifically in the writings of Luke, the author of Acts (where the only example is found in the

Summary and Conclusions

This research has shown that a key argument made by early Seventh-day Adventists (as well as other Sabbatarians) was that the lexical term *σάββατα*, which is used in Colossians 2:16, was a Greek plural noun; this claim was then used as supposed proof that “the plurality indicates the variety of ceremonial sabbaths,”¹⁴⁴ and not the seventh-day Sabbath of the decalogue. While this view began to experience a transition as early as the 1930s, some contemporary Adventists still strongly maintain that the actual word *σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16 “is not ambiguous: it is a genitive plural and it cannot be singular.”¹⁴⁵

An exhaustive analysis of the manner in which the Old Testament was rendered into the Greek language of more than two thousand years ago, has furnished some intriguing results: (a) All of the 29 times that the singular Hebrew term *שַׁבָּת* appears in the Pentateuch, it is translated as *σάββατα* (or its derivatives); and except for Exodus 31:16, the context and linguistic markers show that the word for “sabbath” must necessarily be singular; (b) Similarly, in the prophetic books, the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* is rendered with *σάββατα* (or its inflected forms), 85 percent of the time, even though the context calls for a singular word; (c) The use of *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* in the Modern Greek Bible, though not identical, accords quite well with the analysis of the Septuagint’s employment of these two terms; (d) Intra-textual grammatical and semantic analyses provide additional information that the word *σάββατα* should not simplistically be classified as a plural Greek term.

A review of passages from extra-biblical works (such as that of Zenon, Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, and Plutarch), as well as texts from deuterocanonical writings, furnished more data that support the evidence already garnered, that the term *σάββατα* was regularly used for more than two millennia as a singular Greek word, completely interchangeably with the normal singular *σάββατον*, unless immediate grammatical factors or numerical qualifiers indicated otherwise.

κοινή Greek Testament of *σάββατα* being used as a definite plural, as noted above). For example, Luke places the plural numeral immediately behind the noun it qualifies twice as many times as he places it beforehand. In connection with *ἡμέρα* (i.e., “day”) being placed before the plural numeral, see Luke 2:21, 46; 4:2; 9:28; 18:33; Acts 1:3; 7:8; 9:9; 20:6 (2x); 21:4; 21:7; 24:11; 25:6; 28:12, 14, 17. In connection with *μήν* (i.e., “month”) being placed before the plural numeral, see Luke 1:24, 26, 36, 56; 4:25; Acts 7:20; 18:11; 19:8; 20:3. In connection with *ἔτος* (i.e., “year”) being placed before the plural numeral, see Luke 2:36 [not found in the Majority Text], 37, 42; 3:1, 23; 4:25; 8:42, 43; 13:11; Acts 4:22; 7:6, 30, 36, 42; 9:33; 13:20, 21; 19:10. Besides Luke’s writings, the rest of the New Testament writers place the plural numeral immediately behind the noun it qualifies about half as many times as they place it beforehand, in connection with the same three calendric terms. Incidentally, in contradistinction to the Lukan pattern discussed above, the Modern Greek Bible renders the key phrase in Acts 17:2 as follows: *καὶ τρία σάββατα*. Since the MGK no longer uses either *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* for “week” (but rather *ἑβδομάς*), there would be no confusion in placing a numeral *before* the noun, the position the numeral is normally placed in κοινή Greek to identify the day of the “week.”

¹⁴⁴Harper-Knapp, 2, was merely reporting, and not endorsing this view.

¹⁴⁵Reynolds, 277. Admittedly, Reynolds does not hold this view in order to prove that the *σάββατα* (literally, *σαββάτων* in Col 2:16) refers to ceremonial sabbaths. Rather, his claim is that the *σαββάτων* here refers to the seventh-day Sabbath itself.

On this issue of the term *σάββατα*, it has been noted that “the writers of the New Testament did not coin any new usage, but used the word as it was commonly understood by the people in their time.”¹⁴⁶ Indeed, in connection with this research on *σάββατα*, it has been repeatedly attested that “the phraseology of the New Testament is very closely connected with that of the Septuagint, which in turn imitated the idiom of the Hebrew Old Testament.”¹⁴⁷ Hence, it should come as no surprise that comprehensive examination of all “sabbath” terminology in the κοινή Greek Testament, revealed the following results, which are quite similar to those seen in the Septuagint.

(a) Regardless of whether the basic term used was *σάββατον* or *σάββατα*, competent Greek scholars over the centuries have consistently concluded that whenever these words are directly preceded by a numeral (or such a numeral immediately followed by the definite article), either of these terms must be rendered as the word “week,” in the singular. (b) In like manner, these two terms, based upon certain other specific cues from the immediate and broader contexts, must be understood and interpreted as the singular “sabbath,” except when immediately followed by a plural numeral, or if the grammar requires it. (c) Text-critical, intra-narrative, intra-textual, inter-synoptic, and semantic analyses further supports the ever-burgeoning evidence, that in the LXX and the κοινή Greek Testament, the term *σάββατα* (including its inflected forms) must be understood and rendered as a singular, unless directly followed by a plural numeral, or if necessitated by grammatical data.

As identified above, the only time that *σάββατα* is rightly understood in the κοινή Greek Testament to mean more than one Sabbath can be seen in Acts 17:2, where Luke immediately followed the term *σάββατα* with the numeral *τρία*, so as to indicate that the reference in this particular case was specifically to “three Sabbaths” (plural). The concomitant conclusion of the above syntactical rule is that the word *σάββατα*, whenever it has no such plural numerical marker immediately added directly after it, must be understood and interpreted as a singular word, and not as a plural (especially so, since no grammatical data requires that it be rendered as a plural). Since in Colossians 2:16 the lexical term *σάββατα* appears without any such numerical marker, since no immediate grammatical data necessitates it being seen as a plural word, and since it is part of a string of five singulars, it must be rendered in this Colossian passage as a singular, that is, “sabbath.”¹⁴⁸

Finally, a consideration of the possible etymological origins of *σάββατα* indicated that, though the term appears as a normal Greek plural, it was apparently transliterated from the singular

¹⁴⁶Harper-Knapp, 5.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 35.

¹⁴⁸Also, since it has no directly preceding numeral (or with such a numeral immediately followed by a definite article), it cannot be rightly translated as the word “week.”

of the Aramaic emphatic form, and has been accepted and used, for more than two thousand years, as a regular Greek singular word,¹⁴⁹ except when immediately followed by a plural numeral,¹⁵⁰ or when necessitated by immediate grammatical data, as in Exodus 31:16.

In brief, it appears that the argument for a plural reading of the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16, based on this being a supposed declension of the Greek singular *σάββατον* “is not substantiated,”¹⁵¹ “rests on a shaky foundation,”¹⁵² and “has been shown to be invalid.”¹⁵³ At least since 1949, serious Adventist scholarship has concluded that “biblical and contemporary non-Biblical Greek usage of *sabbaton* reveals that both the singular *σάββατον* and its plural *σάββατα* are used to denote the singular meaning.”¹⁵⁴ As Walter Martin noted regarding the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16: “Modern conservative scholarship establishes the singular rendering of ‘sabbath’ in the New Testament.”¹⁵⁵

Thus, a comparison of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, the record of translations into various languages over more than two millennia (from the Septuagint to contemporary versions), the extra-biblical writings of Zenon, Philo, Josephus, and Plutarch, deuterocanonical works, intra- and inter-textual analyses, a study of linguistics, together with etymological and lexicographical evidence, all indicate that the term *σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16 (as derived from *σάββατα*), is a transliterated term which must be rightly rendered as the singular word “sabbath.”¹⁵⁶ The words of Wood thus fittingly express the conclusions of this extensive study: “The most defensible position seems to be to regard the [apparent] genitive plural *sabbatōn* in Colossians 2:16 as a singular. Not only from a linguistic point of view is this logical, but from the context.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁹Contra Reynolds (277), who holds that “the word in Col 2:16 is *sabbatōn*, which is not ambiguous: it is a genitive plural and it cannot be singular,” Wood (341), pointed out: “The Aramaic word for Sabbath is *shabbetha*, transliterated into Greek as *sabbata*. But *sabbata*, although representing the singular *shabbetha*, happens to be spelled as a plural in Greek, and has been *misunderstood to represent the plural* of the Greek *sabbaton*, “Sabbath.”

¹⁵⁰Or, as indicated above (see footnote #143), the Modern Greek Bible has the plural numeral immediately preceding the noun: καὶ τρία σάββατα (Acts 17:2).

¹⁵¹Hilgert, 42.

¹⁵²Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word *Σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16,” 28.

¹⁵³Harper-Knapp, 37.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁵Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, 166.

¹⁵⁶Although this word has been declined as if it were a regular Greek plural, the *σαββάτων* in Col 2:16 is actually a singular term, and should be translated as “[a] sabbath,” and understood in the context as a collective singular, thus referring to the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and by extension the Sabbatical Years. As Harris pointed out, Col 2:16 contains generic singulars, which can be translated as plurals; (Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 118).

¹⁵⁷Wood, 341. The research for this Chapter has highlighted the danger of glibly assuming that the meaning of words can always be accurately determined by merely comparing such with the ordinary rules of standard grammars. Instead of simply making assumptions and constructing conclusions on the basis of solely technical information, the careful scholar needs to seek to understand how the relevant terms were actually utilized in the language of the time, as well as over time, and in other related languages, before drawing appropriate conclusions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“FEAST, NEW MOON, AND SABBATH” IN COLOSSIANS

General Introduction

The previous Chapters have provided a substantial foundation upon which this pivotal Chapter will be able to build. To begin with, a major centuries-long challenge, as to the accurate meaning of the term “feast” (ἑορτή) and its relationship with the word sabbath (σάββατα) will be addressed. It is in this specific context that Paul’s use of the Hebrew Scriptures in his writings will be considered, especially in connection with the possible antecedent/s for the “feast, new moon, and sabbath” phrase in Colossians 2:16.

The theme and overall focus of this epistle will be examined, so as to provide the framework for the central argument that Paul sought to make. In view of the continued debate surrounding the meaning of the phrase χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν (Col 2:14), it will be examined inter-textually, structurally, and linguistically (including insights from relevant extra-biblical documents), due to its proximity to verse 16, and since its interpretation could impact the tripartite phrase of verse 16.

Most significantly, this chapter will expend considerable effort in an analysis of key terms and phrases located in Colossians 2:16. First, the word κρινω will be addressed, to evaluate whether the broader meaning of “assess” or the narrower definition of “criticize” is in view here. Second, the connected terms, βρῶσις and πόσις, together with associated words, will be looked at in light of the wider witness of Scripture. Third, an innovative theory that proposes that Paul was identifying the sacrifices but not the sacred occasions themselves, will be scrutinized. Fourth, a brief summary will be made of key linguistic markers, the alleged yearly/monthly/weekly triad, and the meaning of vital Greek terms, as this information will complement the research in this Chapter. Fifth, the semantic significance of the use of the definite article with the term σάββατα will be explored. Sixth, the challenge raised regarding the consistency of interpretation of the substantive σάββατα in the New Testament will be addressed. All of this will hopefully furnish sufficient evidence on which to assess the best understanding of the σαββάτων, as located in Colossians 2:16.

Moving beyond the linguistic analysis, current research on literary structures in this epistle to the Colossians, together with its potential for meaning and interpretation, will be taken into account. In addition, comparison with the mini-chiasm as recognized and outlined in Hosea 2:11 will be done, together with appropriate deductions made.

Finally, the meaning of the terms σκία and σῶμα in Colossians 2:17 will be dealt with in context, especially in comparison with a similar phrase in Hebrews 10. A suggested translation of Colossians 2:16 will be proposed, in view of the study done in this project. An overall summary and concluding statement will complete this Chapter.

Examination of “Feasts” in Scripture

In the 1870s, Sabbatarian author Uriah Smith acknowledged a significant challenge raised by some regarding the logic of the language of Colossians 2:16.¹ He noted: “They claim that, ... as the ceremonial festivals are *all* included in the term *holy-day* (*heortē*, feast day), the word *sabbaton* must refer to the weekly Sabbath alone.”² As C. E. Putnam put it: “These ‘holydays’ included all the feasts-sabbaths. So, are we not forced to recognize that ‘the sabbath’ here mentioned is the fourth-commandment Sabbath?”³ More recently, former Sabbatarian pastor Greg Taylor stated it this way: “It would be redundant ... for this to refer to the appointed feasts. It would read ‘Let no one judge you regarding festivals, new moons, or festivals.’ That would not make sense.”⁴

¹Typical of such claims is this one: “These Sabbath days cannot be specially referred [*sic*] to annual or monthly Sabbaths, for such are included in the former specifications [i.e., the annual ‘feast days’];” (D. S. Warner, *The Sabbath or Which Day to Keep* [Grand Junction, MI: Gospel Trumpet Publishing, 1894], 106). In his MA thesis on Col 2:14-17, New Testament academic Richardson similarly alleged “that σαββάτων does not refer to the ceremonial sabbaths. These sabbaths were a part of the annual feasts to which the word ἑορτῆς apparently referred;” (William Edwin Richardson, “A Study of the Historical Background and the Interpretation of Colossians 2:14-17” [MA thesis, Andrews University, 1960], 74). In agreement, church historian Bacchiocchi claimed: “Another significant indication pointing against annual ceremonial sabbaths is the fact that these are already included in the word ‘ἑορτῆς – festival’ and if ‘σαββάτων’ meant the same thing there would be needless repetition;” (Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* [Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1977], 360). More recently, Old Testament commentator Gane likewise argued that “the weekly Sabbaths are in view” in Col 2:16, “because ceremonial sabbaths were included in the ‘festivals;” (Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017], 358, footnote #43). Similarly, Desmond Ford, *The Forgotten Day* (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Publications, 1981), 105; Ivan T. Blazen, “Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully,” *Spectrum* 27/3 (Summer 1999): 40.

²Uriah Smith, *What Was Nailed to the Cross? An Exposition of Colossians 2:14-17* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 187?), 8 (emphasis original, except for “all”).

³C. E. Putnam, *Sunday Observance, or Sinai Seventh-Day Sabbath-Keeping* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1924), 25. Armstrong has similarly argued that the “annual Sabbaths” “are all included under the words, holy day;” (Wm. Armstrong, *Is Saturday or Sunday the Christian Sabbath? A Refutation of Sabbatarianism* [New York: Eaton & Mains, 1880], 95), i.e., that “these ‘holydays’ included all the feast-sabbaths.” Similarly, Riggle made this claim regarding Col 2:16: “These ‘sabbath-days’ cannot be specially referred [*sic*] to annual or monthly sabbaths, for such are included in the former specifications;” (H. M. Riggle, *The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day* [Guthrie, OK: Faith Publishing, 1980], 93); so also, *ibid.*, 99.

⁴Greg Taylor, and Paula Taylor, “An Open Letter to Our Friends and Family,” <http://www.formeradventist.com/taylor.html> (accessed 8/16/2001). Ratzlaff, and Streifling asserted: “The vast majority of scholars believe the ‘Sabbath days’ mentioned in this text refer to the Seventh-day Sabbath, because Paul has already referred to the annual feast days by the term ‘festival’. To conclude ‘Sabbaths’ also refer to annual feast days makes Paul redundant;” (Dale Ratzlaff, and Verle Streifling, “The Undivided Law: The Law of Moses and the Law of God Are One,” *Proclamation*, October-December 2010, 27). So also, Lauriston: “If the word Sabbath as used here means yearly Sabbaths, the sentence would read, ‘annual Sabbaths, monthly Sabbaths, and annual Sabbaths.’ This clearly would not make any sense because ‘festival’ already encapsulates all the annual Sabbaths;” (Elce-Junior Lauriston, *All Foods Are Clean and Every Day Is the Sabbath: A Response to Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi and Seventh-day Adventism on Romans 14* [Camp Verde, AZ: LAM Publications, 2017], 92-93). A ThD thesis claimed: “The annual (‘ceremonial’) sabbaths also cannot be in view. All non-weekly Sabbaths are already mentioned in the verse as they are included under ‘religious festivals’ (ἑορτῆς), so another designation for yearly and monthly Sabbaths in the same phrase would be redundant;” (Richard James Griffith, “The Eschatological Significance of the Sabbath” [ThD dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990], 168).

Assumptions Tested by Linguistic Evidence⁵

All of the above arguments are based on the fundamental supposition that the ceremonial sabbaths were included in the term ἑορτή, that is, “feasts.”

An investigation of all available documents has yet to reveal any whose writings on the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase of Colossians have seriously examined any of the terms used in the Bible for the ritual feast days of the Israelite nation. At the same time, there seems to be consensus among lexicographers and linguists that the Hebrew term אָה, though often loosely rendered as “feast” or “festival” in English, has a specific and limited meaning. For example, in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Carl Weber observed that “the noun means ‘pilgrim feast.’”⁶ Jack Lewis concurred, stating that אָה “designates the three great annual festivals” of Israel.⁷ C. F. Keil noted that the three sacred seasons of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles “had the character of *châg*, i.e. of feasts of joy *par excellence*.”⁸

Overview of “Feasts” in the Old Testament

Old Testament scholar Richard Davidson explained the feasts this way: “God commanded Israel, ‘Three times in the year you shall keep a feast unto me’ (Exod 23:14). These are identified as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (connected with Passover), the Feast of Harvest (Pentecost), and the Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles), in verses 14-16. These are the *only* times of assembly in the cultic calendar actually called ‘feasts’ (*hag*) in Scripture.”⁹ Put plainly, as related to the ritual system, the Hebrew term אָה is a definitively restricted word.

⁵Of late, it appears that some of the confusion regarding Col 2:16 comes from various former Sabbatarians, who have made claims that contradict the actual textual evidence. By way of illustration, Lauriston (94) alleged: “Furthermore, from Greek word analysis, we have virtually conclusive evidence that the word Paul chose for the third position in his list of three holy days – σαββάτων (*sabbatōn* – neuter noun, genitive, plural) *always* refers to the weekly Sabbath in the New Testament: see the Greek of Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 4:16; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; 20:19; Acts 13:14; 16:13; 20:7 and 1 Cor. 16:2 (KJV Greek text) and also in the Septuagint.” Even a quick check shows that there are multiple examples which refute his claim. For example, note the many times that the “neuter noun, genitive, plural” is used for the word “week:” Matt 28:1 (μῶν σαββάτων); Mark 16:2 (μῶ τῶν σαββάτων); Luke 24:1 (μῶ τῶν σαββάτων); John 20:1 (μῶ τῶν σαββάτων); John 20:19 (μῶ σαββάτων); Acts 20:7 (μῶ τῶν σαββάτων). Similarly, the evidence from the LXX contradicts Lauriston’s claim: Ps 23:1 (Eng. Ps 24) refers to the “week” with the phrase τῆς μῶς σαββάτων.

⁶Carl Philip Weber, “אָה (*hāgag*),” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, R. Laird Harris, ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 262 (emphasis added); hereafter *TWOT*.

⁷Jack P. Lewis, “אָה,” *TWOT*, 1:389.

⁸Carl Friedrich Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. I, Biblical Commentary of the Old Testament, James Martin, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 57. “*Châg*” is an alternate way of transliterating the Hebrew אָה, which is rendered *hag* when transliterated here in this thesis, unless a direct quotation.

⁹Richard M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, book 1, Frank B. Holbrook, ed., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 120. See also, Allen R. Guenther, *Hosea, Amos*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1998), 64, who elaborated thus: “Festivals marked special occasions in Israel’s history and experience. The Scriptures identify three pilgrim festivals in which every male was to participate (Exod. 23:14-17; 34:18-24; Deut. 16:1-17; Passover/Unleavened Bread, Harvest/Weeks/Pentecost, Ingathering/Booths/Tabernacles).”

Theodore Laetsch aptly notes that חג “is the name of the three festivals recurring annually: Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles (Ex. 23:14 ff.).”¹⁰ Weber observed that, four times this noun “is used for each of the three pilgrim festivals in a single context.”¹¹ Also, the noun is used twenty times to refer directly to the Feast of Tabernacles, eleven times to indicate specifically the Feast of Unleavened Bread (or Passover),¹² and once individually for the Feast of Pentecost.¹³

Regarding the Septuagint translation of these individual religious occasions, David Conklin pointed out:¹⁴ “Only the following feasts are found to use the Greek word ‘*heortē*’: the Festival of Unleavened Bread (or Passover),¹⁵ Festival of Booths (or Tabernacles),¹⁶ and Feast of Harvest or Weeks [i.e., Pentecost].¹⁷ Neither the Day of Atonement (a day of fasting – ‘afflict your souls’),¹⁸ nor the ‘blowing of trumpets,’¹⁹ both of which are ceremonial sabbaths,²⁰ are referred to using the word ‘feast’ [i.e., *heortē*, in LXX Greek].”²¹

Analysis of “Feasts” in the New Testament

Since, as can be seen above, “the Septuagint employs *heortē* to translate *chagh*,”²² it should be determined how the New Testament uses this Greek term outside of its appearance in Colossians

¹⁰Theodore Laetsch, *Minor Prophets*, Concordia Classic Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia, 1987), 30. See also, G. I. Davies, *Hosea*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 76, who noted that “feasts (*haggim*) are the annual pilgrimage festivals.”

¹¹Weber, “חג (*hāgag*),” 262. He lists Exod 23:15-16; Exod 34:18-22; Deut 16:16; and 2 Chron 8:13.

¹²Since in the Scriptures, the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread are often spoken of as one festival, whenever the term “Passover” is used alone in this thesis (i.e., other than in direct quotations) it needs to be understood that the immediately following feast of Unleavened Bread is automatically included.

¹³In the OT the Hebrew חג is used individually for Pentecost only once: Deut 16:10. Similarly, in the Greek NT, Pentecost is called a “day” in Acts 2:1, and in Acts 20:16; and, once it is simply labeled “Pentecost” (1 Cor 16:8); hence, it may not be too surprising (as suggested below) that Pentecost is individually referred to only once in the NT as ἑορτή.

¹⁴This is not to deny that at times the LXX (in its sometimes loose and expanded interpretation of Hebrew terms) has rendered the word מועדים (which does include the three חגים and at least the Day of Atonement יום הכיפורים) with the Greek term ἑορταίς (as in 2 Chron 2:4). The analysis by Conklin deals with *only* individual religious occasions, as stated above.

¹⁵See Exod 12:14, 17; 13:6, 10; 23:15; 34:18, 25; Lev 23:6; Num 28:17; Deut 16:16; 2 Chron 8:13; 30:13, 21-22; 35:17; Ezra 6:22; Ezek 45:21, 23, 25.

¹⁶See Lev 23:34, 39, 41; Num 29:12; Deut 16:13-16; 31:10; 2 Chron 8:13; Ezra 3:4; Neh 8:14, 18; Zech 14:16, 18-19.

¹⁷See Exod 23:16; 34:22; Deut 16:16; 2 Chron 8:13 (where this feast is listed with other feasts); once only it is mentioned individually as a חג (Deut 16:10).

¹⁸See Lev 23:27-28.

¹⁹See Lev 23:24 – “a memorial of blowing trumpets.” See Num 29:1.

²⁰See Lev 23:24, 27-28.

²¹See David J. Conklin, “Feasts in the OT and LXX,” 2007, TMs [photocopy], p. 1, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²²Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary: Delta-Epsilon* (Springfield, MO: Complete Biblical Library, 1986), s.v. “ἑορτή *heortē* noun.” Kedar-Kopfstein concurred: “The LXX regularly renders *chagh* by means of *heortē*,” (B. Kedar-Kopfstein, “חג [*chagh*]; חגג [*hgg*],” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. IV, G. Johannes Botterweck, and Helmer Ringgren, eds., David E. Green, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 203; hereafter *TDOT*). “*Châgh*” is an alternate way of transliterating the Hebrew חג, which is rendered *hag* when transliterated here in this thesis, unless a direct quotation.

2:16. Table 15 outlines all of these occurrences of the word “feast,” together with linguistic and contextual evidences for its preferred interpretation.

Table 15			
Complete Listing of all Uses of “Feast” in the New Testament (Besides Colossians 2:16)			
Reference	Phrase	Context	Meaning
Matt 26:5	τῆ ἑορτῆ	Matt 26:17 = “Unleavened Bread” and “Passover,” specifically stated	<i>Passover</i>
Matt 27:15	ἑορτὴν	No article here; but reference to the same feast shows a definite article (Matt 26:5)	<i>Passover</i>
Mark 14:2	τῆ ἑορτῆ	Mark 14:1 = “Passover” and “Unleavened Bread” directly stated	<i>Passover</i>
Mark 15:6	ἑορτὴν	No article here; but reference to the same feast shows a definite article (see Mark 14:2)	<i>Passover</i>
Luke 2:41	τῆ ἑορτῆ	Literally, “The Feast of the Passover”	<i>Passover</i>
Luke 2:42	τῆς ἑορτῆς	Luke 2:41 specifies “Passover”	<i>Passover</i>
Luke 22:1	ἡ ἑορτῆ	Literally, “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” [i.e., “Passover;” cf. Mark 14:2]	<i>Passover</i>
Luke 23:17 ²³	ἑορτὴν	See context in Luke 22:1	<i>Passover</i>
John 2:23	τῆ ἑορτῆ	Literally, “At the Passover, during the Feast”	<i>Passover</i>
John 4:45	τῆ ἑορτῆ	Reference is to John 2:23-25	<i>Passover</i>
John 4:45	τὴν ἑορτήν	Reference is to John 2:23-25	<i>Passover</i>
John 5:1	ἑορτῆ ²⁴	People were outside near the pool; thus, it is not Passover, a winter’s end feast. ²⁵	Pentecost (according to the NET)
John 6:4	ἡ ἑορτῆ	Literally, “The Passover, the Feast”	<i>Passover</i>
John 7:2	ἡ ἑορτῆ	Literally, “The Feast of the Jews, the Tabernacles”	Tabernacles
John 7:8	τὴν ἑορτήν	See context in John 7:2	Tabernacles
John 7:8	τὴν ἑορτὴν	See context in John 7:2	Tabernacles
John 7:10	τὴν ἑορτήν	See context in John 7:2	Tabernacles

²³The NU omits Luke 23:17 because of divided textual evidence. TR has this verse with no article (simply ἑορτὴν); but notice the early works that have τὴν ἑορτήν: cop^{bo} (Coptic; 3rd & 4th c.); and Eusebius (339 AD).

²⁴There is no article here in the NU text; but notice these early works with the definite article: Byzantine text = ἡ ἑορτῆ; Ⲙ (Sinaiticus, 4th c.); C (Ephraemi Rescriptus, 5th c.); cop^{sa, bo, ach} (Coptic 3rd & 4th c.); Diatessaron (2nd c.); and, Origen (254 AD).

²⁵Next, in John 7:2, comes the Feast of Tabernacles, so it is assumed this was Pentecost. Admittedly, this cannot be known with certainty. Pentecost is called a “day” in Acts 2:1; 20:16, and once simply “Pentecost” (1 Cor 16:8). As footnoted above (#13), Pentecost is only once referred to individually as *or* in the OT. Chrysostom asks “What ‘feast’?” and answers, “Methinks that of Pentecost;” (Chrysostom *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John* [The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers] 14:1-334). So also, Barnabas Lindars, ed., *The Gospel of John*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1972), 211. See also, Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 17. Based on the timeline of the activities of Jesus, Calvin concluded: “The order of time leads us to understand it as Pentecost;” (John Calvin, *The Gospel According to St John: 1-10*, T. H. L. Parker, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961], 117). Morris, after quoting some reflections from the Mishnah, cautions, that “it does not seem possible to identify the feast with any certainty;” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 265, footnote #6).

Reference	Phrase	Context	Meaning
John 7:11	τῆ ἑορτῆ	See context in John 7:2	Tabernacles
John 7:14	τῆς ἑορτῆς	See context in John 7:2	Tabernacles
John 7:37	τῆς ἑορτῆς	See context in John 7:2	Tabernacles
John 11:56	τῆν ἑορτήν	John 11:55 says literally, “Passover”	<i>Passover</i>
John 12:12	τῆν ἑορτήν	John 12:1 says literally, “Passover”	<i>Passover</i>
John 12:20	τῆ ἑορτῆ	John 12:1 says literally, “Passover”	<i>Passover</i>
John 13:1	τῆς ἑορτῆς	Literally, “The Feast of the Passover”	<i>Passover</i>
John 13:29	τῆν ἑορτήν	See context in John 13:1	<i>Passover</i>
Acts 18:21	τῆν ἑορτήν ²⁶	To reach Jerusalem for festival season before seas became impassable in winter, implies this was the “Passover.”	<i>Passover</i>

Preliminary Summary of Heorte

The evidence in Table 15 confirms what has been seen in the Hebrew linguistic analysis. While it is true that the Septuagint does not always translate all the Hebrew terms with complete consistency,²⁷ a study of all New Testament texts other than Colossians 2:16 shows some regularity in the use of the term ἑορτή in the Greek New Testament. As commentator Paul Deterding noted: “‘Festival’ (ἑορτή) is used in the NT of the Passover festival (Lk 2:41), the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lk 22:1), and the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Jn 7:2);”²⁸ as well as probably the Feast of Pentecost (as indicated above in Table 15). Incidentally, the verb ἑορτάζω (i.e., to “celebrate a festival”²⁹), which appears once in the New Testament, is used in 1 Corinthians 5:8 in reference to the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread (cf. vss. 5, 6).³⁰

It is significant to note that the Day of Trumpets (though clearly alluded to in Revelation 8:6-11:15³¹), and the Day of Atonement (referred to as the “Fast” in Acts 27:9), as well as the Sabbatical

²⁶The NU omits this term because of insufficient textual evidence. The Byzantine text and the TR have it.

²⁷For example, sometimes the Septuagint fails completely to translate אָחַד at all, as in Lev 23:41, and 1 Kgs 8:2. Also, for example, the LXX is inconsistent in the manner in which it renders the terms אָחַד and רַבָּעַתַּיִם when they appear in the same passage. These terms are rendered as ἑορτή and πανήγυρις respectively, in Ezek 46:11, Hos 2:11 [MT vs. 13], and Hos 9:5. However, in 2 Chron 8:13, and Ezek 45:17, both אָחַד and רַבָּעַתַּיִם are rendered as ἑορτή, with no distinction between the two (as the LXX does in the other three passages, as shown above).

²⁸Paul E. Deterding, *Colossians*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 113.

²⁹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., Frederick William Danker, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 280.

³⁰This conclusion is confirmed, as follows: “The only occurrence of *heortazō* in the New Testament is in 1 Corinthians 5:8. Its use there is based on the Passover custom;” (Gilbrant, ed., *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary: Delta-Epsilon*, s.v. “ἑορτάζω *heortazō* verb”).

³¹Paulien noted “the blowing of seven trumpets – near the center of the book (Rev 8-9, 11);” (Jon Paulien, “Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, book 1, Frank B. Holbrook, ed., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992], 191). See also, Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” 123-124.

Years,³² are never referred to by name in the New Testament, nor evidently included in any of the above 26 references which use the term ἑορτή. Thus, just as the Hebrew term אָד (when referring to the cultic calendar) is used to denote only the three pilgrim festivals, in the same manner its Greek equivalent ἑορτή (in the New Testament), is utilized to identify these same joyous occasions. In contrast, commenting on Trumpets and Atonement, B. Kedar-Kopfstein indicated that in the Hebrew Scriptures “neither of these is *ever* called *chagh*.”³³ Put simply, just as the Hebrew אָד is *never* used to indicate Trumpets, Atonement, or Sabbatical Years, similarly there is no evidence in the Greek Testament that the word ἑορτή is *ever* used to refer to these ceremonial sabbaths.

Consideration of ‘ἑορτή in Colossians 2:16

The only “feast” left to consider is the lexeme ἑορτή of Colossians 2:16. In light of the above, it appears that the weight of evidence indicates the following:

Reference	Term	Context	Meaning
Colossians 2:16	ἑορτῆς	Discussion of [Jewish] rituals: Circumcision, food and drink, etc.	Specifically, the three Pilgrim Festivals: <i>Passover</i> , <i>Pentecost</i> , and <i>Tabernacles</i>

The evidence from the linguistic analysis done thus far, and as summarized in the above diagram is essentially corroborated by *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary*. This lexicon indicates that “the Septuagint employs *heortē* to translate *chagh*,”³⁴ and that “the New Testament carries over the Septuagint’s use of *heortē*.”³⁵ Thus, since the above analysis of the “feasts” in the New Testament indicates that ἑορτή is a rather consistent translation of the Hebrew אָד, i.e., the three *pilgrim festivals*, it would appear that ἑορτή should similarly be limited to these specific three feasts.

It therefore appears that Henry Cowles was accurate in identifying the Greek term ἑορτή as “referring to the three great annual festivals.”³⁶ In fact, calling them by name, commentator John Eadie concludes that the Greek term ἑορτή in Colossians 2:16 refers “to the three great annual feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.”³⁷

³²As far as is known, there is no direct reference or clear allusion at all to Sabbatical Years in the New Testament. As will be shown later, it seems that these septennial years are probably included in Col 2:16.

³³Kedar-Kopfstein, 211. See also, Gerhard F. Hasel, “‘New Moon and Sabbath’ in Eighth Century Israelite Prophetic Writings (Isa 1:13; Hos 2:13; Amos 8:5),” *Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums*, Band 13 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), 57 (footnote #53).

³⁴Gilbrant, ed., *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary: Delta-Epsilon*, s.v. “ἑορτή *heortē* noun.”

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Henry Cowles, *The Shorter Epistles; viz: Of Paul to the Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; Thessalonians; Timothy; Titus and Philemon; also, of James, Peter, and Jude* (New York: D. Appleton, 1879), 173.

³⁷John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957; from T. & T. Clark, 1884), 176. See also Deck, who recognized that, ἑορτή was “used 27 times in the N. T. in connection with the feast of the Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and finally in this passage;”

Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years

It must now be asked: If, in the New Testament, ἑορτή is used solely for Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, what about the other major events of the Hebrew religious calendar (Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years)? As demonstrated above in Chapter Three of this thesis, the simple Hebrew term תְּבֻשָׁ, with its Greek equivalent σάββατα, was used for the Day of Atonement. Moreover, the Day of Trumpets, while called a יוֹם תְּבֻשָׁ in Hebrew, was rendered as a declension of σάββατα in some early Greek manuscripts. Furthermore, the septennial Sabbatical Years, labeled תְּבֻשָׁ, are translated repeatedly as σάββατα in the Septuagint. Thus, all of these three cultic occasions – Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years – have been classified in Greek with the word σάββατα, which is the same basic lexical term used in Colossians 2:16.

Conclusion Regarding “Feasts” in Scripture

In brief then, the linguistic evidence adduced thus far reveals that the Hebrew יָד and its Greek equivalent ἑορτή, were used for the three pilgrim festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. There is no evidence that יָד (in the Hebrew Scriptures) or ἑορτή (in the Greek Testament) was *ever* used for the three additional religious occasions of Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years, all of which are identified as some type of “sabbath” in both Hebrew and Greek.

It appears that the supposition that cultic sabbaths were included in the annual feast days, is invalid. Salim Japas, noting the essential difference between the joyous pilgrim festivals and the other appointed times, stated: “These two groups are kept distinctly apart in the Pentateuch.”³⁸

Thus, it would not be a needless repetition, as some have suggested, to use the term σάββατα in Colossians 2:16 to indicate ceremonial sabbaths. On the contrary, when one has a fuller linguistic and contextual understanding of the biblical usage of these terms, it becomes clear that Paul evidently needed to include both ἑορτή (i.e., the three pilgrim festivals) and σάββατα (i.e., the three additional sabbatically-related observances) to cover all annual as well as septennial cultic occasions – anything less would have been confusing reductionism. In other words, had Paul used only the term ἑορτή (i.e., Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), the recipients of this epistle might have wrongly concluded that he was *not* including Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years in his list of cultic occasions in Colossians 2:16.

(Norman C. Deck, *The Lord's Day Or, The Sabbath: A Reply to Seventh Day Adventists* [Glasgow: Pickering & Inglis, nd], 76).

³⁸Salim Japas, “Feast, New Moon, Sabbath in Colossians 2:16,” 1974, TMs [photocopy], p. 13, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI. Japas (13) does not directly include Sabbatical Years in his “clear cut difference” between these two groups. However, when he discusses the “Solemn days,” though he did not point out that Sabbatical Years were directly called “shabbath” in Hebrew, Japas (17) did recognize that the Sabbatical Years are spoken of as being “shabbaton” in Scripture.

Use of the Hebrew Scriptures in Pauline Epistles

As indicated earlier in this thesis, the use of Old Testament allusions by New Testament writers is a topic of relevance to this study. Some of those arguing for a seventh-day Sabbath in Colossians 2:16 make the following basic claim: Since Paul extensively referenced the Septuagint Greek version in his epistles, it would be inconceivable for him to use a common triad of terms (such as allegedly in 2 Chronicles 2:4 or Nehemiah 10:33), and have a different meaning in mind for the final word of the phrase in Colossians 2:16, namely, *σάββατα*.³⁹ On the surface, this appears to be a valid claim. But unfortunately, little or no attention seems to have been paid to those alleged antecedent passages in the original Hebrew text in their contexts, the structural phenomena, etc.

Recapping the Eight Sequence Passages

Chapter Five above was devoted to examining the eight major Scripture passages frequently used in the discussion of the meaning of the lexeme *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16 – i.e., Numbers 28-29; 1 Chronicles 23:29-31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3; Nehemiah 10:33; Ezekiel 45:17; and 46:4-15. As already indicated, many have claimed that Colossians 2:16 has a specific “feast, new moon, sabbath” trilogy of terms that comes from these above Old Testament passages, in which the word *שַׁבָּת* always refers to the seventh-day Sabbath.

However, the evidence proposed in this thesis, suggests that all eight passages have at least four parts, and not three. All eight focus on burnt-offerings, not the actual days themselves. All that have a consistent sequence go in a decreasing frequency order – daily, weekly, monthly, yearly – and not the reverse. Besides Ezekiel 45:17 all include the daily, a factor overlooked by those promoting the triadic theory. Besides Ezekiel 46:4-15 all have the Hebrew terms for “Sabbaths,” “New Moons,” and “appointed seasons” in the plural not the singular, as seen in all three terms in Colossians 2:16.

The Hebrew term *שַׁבָּת* (and its LXX equivalent *σάββατα*), in the above eight passages does refer to the weekly Sabbath. However, since the “feast, new moon, and sabbath” in Colossians 2:16, is so different from the eight alleged triad passages, the evidence suggests that none of these passages can legitimately be used as support for the view that Paul was alluding to them, and thus utilizing this purportedly common Old Testament phrase in his letter to the Colossians. In short, it appears that the view that the “feast, new moon, and sabbath” is “a literal phrase”⁴⁰ coming from these passages, or even an allusion to any of these passages, does not stand up to a more careful textual analysis.

³⁹See, for example, Deck (79), who, after diagramming English, Hebrew, and Septuagint Greek (of the so-called “triad”), together with the New Testament Greek (of Col 2:16), concluded that “these O.T. passages may well prove to be a key to the meaning of the Colossian passage.”

⁴⁰Ibid.

Paul's Use of the Old Testament

Yet, the matter of Paul's quotations from, allusions to, and echoes of the Old Testament needs further attention.⁴¹ According to Robert Bratcher's *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*, Paul drew from more than 20 books of the Old Testament,⁴² in his 206 references.⁴³ As a careful Torah scholar, when essential to making his point, Paul even took into account whether the Hebrew words were singular or plural.⁴⁴ This fact suggests that he did not naïvely depend on the Septuagint translation, especially since it sometimes translated key Hebrew terms rather loosely? For example, as Kedar-Kopfstein pointed out, the LXX "has a dozen different translations" for מוֹעֵד⁴⁵ – a rather significant term for this research, especially as it appears in so many passages where שַׁבָּת is located.

Gleason Archer and Gregory Chirichigno have demonstrated that in total, there are 33 quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament in which the language "adheres more closely to the MT than the LXX."⁴⁶ In their extensive evaluation of these Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, Archer and Chirichigno show that when New Testament writers recognized that the LXX was problematic or incorrect they went back to the original Hebrew text and translated directly from it.⁴⁷ Moreover, these writers did not choose the original Hebrew text only when it was clear that the Septuagint had misunderstood and/or misinterpreted the passage. Linguistic studies show that on several occasions the Hebrew was selected over against the Greek translation, perhaps simply as a matter of preference, or because the translation was not as clear as they wanted it to be.⁴⁸

⁴¹These three terms were defined in Chapter Five above.

⁴²These are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

⁴³This would include statements appearing in the book of Acts, as well as in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The basic data summarized here is from Robert G. Bratcher, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*, rev. ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1961), 31-67. In other words, in considering this matter, Paul's use of the OT in the NT, is given the broadest possible framework, rather than being restricted to the narrower seven-epistle "critical canon."

⁴⁴For example, in order to make a specific christological point, Paul wrote: "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Gal 3:16). Papaïouannou perceptively noted that "in context, it refers to Isaac, Abraham's only son with Sarah, and by implication his descendants who would inherit Canaan, as indeed happened. But for Paul the true seed is none other than Jesus, the most important descendant of Abraham, the Seed, so to speak;" (Kim Papaïouannou, *Israel, Covenant, Law: A Third Perspective on Paul* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017], 36).

⁴⁵Kedar-Kopfstein, 203. Similarly, addressing מוֹעֵד and related terminology, Sauer cautioned that "the LXX equivalents have all noticeably expanded the meanings of the Hebr. terms;" (G. Sauer, "יָדָה y'd to appoint," *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, eds., Mark E. Biddle, trans. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997], 2:553, emphases added). Similarly, Haag noted: "The LXX rendering of the vb. *šābat* does not exhibit consistency;" (E. Haag, "שַׁבָּת *šābat*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck, and Helmer Ringgren, eds., Douglas W. Stott, trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], XIV:386).

⁴⁶Gleason L. Archer, and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), xxvi.

⁴⁷Archer and Chirichigno provide examples such as the use of Zech 13:7 in Mark 14:27, and of Zech 12:10 in John 19:37; *ibid.*, 165, 163.

⁴⁸See *ibid.*, category "C" quotations throughout their book. None of this, though, is to deny that, as Robertson noted, "the quotations in the N. T. from the O. T. show the use of the LXX more frequently than the Hebrew;" (Archibald

There is quite conclusive evidence that, besides using the Septuagint,⁴⁹ Paul had access to the Hebrew Text. It appears that whenever he deemed it appropriate, he chose the Hebrew text and translated directly from it, rather than merely relying on the Greek translation in the Septuagint.⁵⁰ One of the clearest cases is his use of Isaiah 8:14 in Romans 9:33.⁵¹ Concerning this reference Archer and Chirichigno stated: “Here the NT rendering is completely independent of the LXX and corresponds almost perfectly to the MT, as if translated directly from it.”⁵²

The available biblical evidence indicates that Paul was apparently well-acquainted with various languages, including Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. This factor, together with the evidence of Paul’s utilization of the Hebrew Text, suggests the need for caution in too glibly assuming that Paul’s use of “feast, new moon, and sabbath” was a direct allusion to the above-mentioned eight passages from the Septuagint. This caution is especially relevant when one recognizes, as shown especially in Chapter Five above, that the “feast, new moon, and sabbath” phrase of Colossians 2:16 does not synchronize with any of the eight allegedly triadic passages.

Paul’s Use of Books Containing the “Triad”

For decades there has been a general consensus that Colossians 2:16 contains a phrase from certain Old Testament books. But, is there any evidence that Paul, in any of his extensive writings, ever referenced 1 and 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Ezekiel, the books most frequently cited as allegedly being the source for the presumed triad? The best available current evidence regarding Paul’s use of Old Testament materials from the above books is as follows:

1. A paraphrase (or “echo”):
 - (a) Of Ezekiel 37:27, in 2 Corinthians 6:16.
2. Allusions:
 - (a) To Ezekiel 28:2, in 2 Thessalonians 2:4;
 - (b) To Ezekiel 37:23, in Titus 2:14;
 - (c) To Hosea 6:5, in Ephesians 6:17.
3. Direct quotations:
 - (a) From Hosea 2:23, in Romans 9:25;
 - (b) From Hosea 2:1 [LXX; MT 1:10], in Romans 9:26;
 - (c) From Hosea 13:14 [LXX], in 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Thomas Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914], 99). The issue here is that Paul did not naïvely rely on the Septuagint, but used the MT as needed.

⁴⁹For example, Robertson (99) said: “In Paul’s Epistles more than half of the direct quotations follow the LXX.”

⁵⁰Archer and Chirichigno conclude that Paul did that in at least the following three of his letters: Rom, 1 and 2 Cor; (*ibid.*, xxvi).

⁵¹Also, in his sermon, as recorded in Acts 13:16-41, it appears that Paul selected the Hebrew text of Hab 1:5, rather than the Septuagint translation of it; (see Archer, and Chirichigno, 159).

⁵²Archer and Chirichigno, 97.

In brief, there is no clear evidence that, in any of his works, Paul ever utilized 1 or 2 Chronicles, or Nehemiah – the passages most often alleged as antecedents to the Colossian triad. While he relied on Ezekiel for an echo, as well as two allusions, there is no evidence that Paul ever directly quoted from this book. Regarding Hosea, it appears that Paul alluded to it once, and quoted from it three times, including twice from verses on either side, and not far from Hosea 2:11.

This fact of Paul's allusion to, and repeated quoting from Hosea, calls for further attention. It is possible, then, that the reference in Hosea, which has also been frequently used in the discussion of Colossians 2:16, holds some promise regarding the meaning and interpretation of this passage.

Conclusions Regarding Pauline Quotations

In brief, Paul often referred to the Old Testament. While he mostly utilized the Septuagint translation, there is clear evidence that Paul sometimes used the Hebrew text directly. Thus, careful scholarship requires the examination of every reference, to ascertain whether its source is the Hebrew text, or the LXX version, especially since Paul sought to best communicate his message – even to the point of making a christological application based on the use of a singular versus a plural term.

The three books most frequently cited as the supposed source for the “feast, new moon, and sabbath” phrase in Colossians 2:16 are 1 and 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah. Yet, there is no clear evidence that Paul ever otherwise referenced any of them in any of his works. If the Colossian phrase were indeed drawn from these historical books, it would be the only time that Paul used these Old Testament books in his writings. A fourth book, Ezekiel, which he paraphrased and alluded to, is sometimes proposed as a source for Paul's use of the phrase in question – an hypothesis challenged, from a textual basis, in Chapter Five above of this thesis.

When one acknowledges that the author of Colossians 2:16 was a well-trained scholar whose mind was saturated with the Hebrew Scriptures, when one takes into account the *usus loquendi*, as well as the evidence seen above from a careful analysis of the biblical materials, it becomes quite credible to conclude that, if there is an Old Testament source for Paul's comment in Colossians 2:16, the book of Hosea seems to be the more obvious candidate. Of all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures purported to be the source of this tripartite phrase, the only one from which Paul directly quoted, and that repeatedly, is the book of Hosea. The analysis done above, together with the evidence from the manner in which Paul was not dependent on the LXX, but used the Hebrew text as needed, suggests that Hosea 2:11, in its context, and with its appropriate linguistic, semantic, and structural meaning, be seriously considered as *the* antecedent to the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase in Colossians. Thus, it is to the Colossian epistle itself that attention will be paid in the rest of this Chapter.

Theme and Focus of the Epistle

Writing to the believers in Colossae, Paul cautioned: Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων· ἃ ἔστιν σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ⁵³ (Col 2:16, 17). Douglas Moo cautioned that “a casual reading of this verse [i.e., vs. 16] would suggest that Sabbath observance is treated as entirely optional.”⁵⁴

While not much is known for certain about the church at Colossae, some hints as to its establishment can be found in Acts 19:10, and in the epistle itself (Col 1:7, 8; 4:12, 13).⁵⁵ Apparently, while Paul was in prison in Rome,⁵⁶ Epaphras visited him (Phlm 23), and informed him of the spiritual growth of the Colossian church (Col 1:3-8; 2:5), as well as the heterodox teachings making inroads among some believers (Col 2:1-23).

As already observed in Chapter Two above, the specific nature of this heresy is nowhere identified in the epistle, though scores of theories regarding it have been promulgated by scholars over time.⁵⁷ However, since at least 1966 scholars have concluded that “it is no longer fitting to discuss a possible influence of ‘Gnosticism’ upon the Colossian Religion or its refutation.”⁵⁸ While it may be that “identifying the heresy is not essential for understanding Paul’s basic message,”⁵⁹ in his 2008 commentary on Colossians, Peter Davids pointed out that “much recent scholarship favors models involving thought patterns with which Paul was very much at home – that is, some form of Jewish spirituality rather than Gnostic speculation or mystery cult initiation,”⁶⁰ though chapter 2:21

⁵³This is from the 27th edition of the *Nestle-Aland Greek Text* (London: United Bible Societies, 4th ed., 1993). According to the 1995 *Robinson-Pierpont Majority Text*, the only textual differences are that it has the Greek word ἢ (“or”) instead of the word καὶ (“and”), and in place of νεομηνίας (“new moon”), it uses the alternate spelling νοιμηνίας, minor distinctions of no real significance to the main issue under discussion in this thesis – though the matter of the use of καὶ (which has recently become an issue) is addressed in footnote #219 below. In brief, “Col 2:16 does not present a problem of MS. readings, nor primarily of translation. It is a linguistic question of whether the word [σαββάτων] used here ... should be translated as an English plural;” (*Problems in Bible Translation* [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954], 230-231). The issue of σαββάτων (and whether a plural or not) has already been dealt with above in Chapter Six.

⁵⁴Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 221. Curiously, despite his own caution, within about half a page, Moo himself (222) alleged that “Colossians 2:16 can validly be used, we think, to conclude that the observance of a Sabbath day is no longer a requirement of God’s people in the new realm.”

⁵⁵See Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 17 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 9; Kevin L. Morgan, “Crucifixion Nails Through the Sabbath?” *Ministry*, March 1993, 15.

⁵⁶Derek Tidball noted in 2011, that Colossians “was probably written from Rome;” (Derek J. Tidball, *In Christ, In Colossae: Sociological Perspectives on Colossians* [London: Paternoster, 2011], 11).

⁵⁷See James D. G. Dunn, “The Colossian Philosophy: A Confident Jewish Apologia,” *Biblica* 76/2 (1995): 153, footnote #2.

⁵⁸Markus Barth, and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Astrid B. Beck, trans., Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 32.

⁵⁹Arthur G. Patzia, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, A Good News Commentary (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 46.

⁶⁰Peter H. Davids, *Colossians, Philemon*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 231. See, for example, Allan R. Beverly, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 226 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 255,

suggests that the restrictions proposed went far beyond the Jewish law.⁶¹ As David Garland opined: “Newly formed Gentile Christians in Colossae are being badgered about their faith by contentious Jews.”⁶² It appears that these false teachers were telling the Colossian believers that it was not enough to have accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but that they “needed to keep the Jewish ceremonial law;”⁶³ that is, that contrary to the basic conclusions derived at by the early church (as noted in Acts 15), they were “being called upon to observe times and seasons as somehow necessary for their salvation.”⁶⁴ It appears that the allusive language in Colossians 2:16, 17 may assist in directing one to the fuller canonical framework of the passage,⁶⁵ which may in turn provide contextual clues for a more accurate understanding of the passage within its local context.⁶⁶

where he concluded in favor of the theory that “the Colossian philosophy was essentially Jewish.” See also Petr Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary*, Siegfried S. Schatzmann, trans. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 113, footnote #23. Robert McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 57, noted that “most recent proposals all in some way look back to Judaism in some form.” Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul’s Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae* (London: T & T Clark International, 2006), 205, essentially agreed, noting, “It has been our conclusion that the error arose from within Judaism.” For more on this view that the “heresy” was basically Jewish, see Chapter Two of this thesis.

⁶¹While “the precise details of these teachings at Colossae cannot be ascertained.... unquestionably they contained Judaizing tendencies.... The false teachers at Colossae.... insisted on an extremely legalistic ceremonialism, following the Jewish pattern, and emphasizing circumcision.... and observance of festivals.... Not only is Paul concerned to refute Judaizing legalism, he also must contend with certain pagan elements that sought to degrade or eclipse the office of Christ;” (Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 7 vols. [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980], 7:184). The restrictions noted in Col 2:21 may have some similarity to the matter of the abstaining from foods on certain days, as discussed in Rom 14:1-12.

⁶²David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 27. Moo agreed, noting that “an Old Testament/Jewish derivation for the false teachers’ insistence on keeping certain religious ‘days’ is much more likely.... There is, then, universal agreement that the false teachers’ insistence on observance of days was influenced by Judaism;” (Moo, 220). Pao, after pointing out that the “shadow of things to come” of Col 2:17 is best paralleled by Heb 10:1, concluded: “This strengthens our understanding of the significance of the Jewish context of the false teachers plaguing the Colossian believers;” (David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 186).

⁶³John MacArthur, Jr., *Colossians & Philemon*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 118.

⁶⁴H. Dermot McDonald, *Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (Waco, TX: Word, 1980), 88. See also, Pokorný, 143; T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, International Critical Commentary, C. A. Briggs, S. R. Driver, and A. Plummer, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner’s sons, 1897), xlvi; N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 27, 119; Nichol, 7:204.

⁶⁵In accord with the biblical concept that “Scripture is its own best interpreter,” some scholars have been proposing a return to seriously examining the actual text of Scripture itself instead of being so dependent upon Talmudic or pseudepigraphal writings, especially extra-biblical reconstructions or speculations. See, for example, Ian Smith, 38; Thomas R. Schreiner, review of *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, by Clinton E. Arnold, in *Trinity Journal* 20 (Spring 1999): 102; Roy Yates, “A Reappraisal of Colossians,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 [New Series] (1992): 100-101; Fernando Canale, “The Eclipse of Scripture and the Protestantization of the Adventist Mind: Part 2: From the Evangelical Gospel to Culture,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 22/1 (2011): 132. While promoting the *scriptura sui ipsius interpres* axiom, Davidson cautioned: “This does not mean the indiscriminate stringing together of passages in ‘proof-text’ fashion without regard for the context of each text. But since the Scriptures ultimately have a single divine Author, it is crucial to gather all that is written on a particular topic in order to be able to consider all the contours of the topic;” (Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Raoul Dederen, ed., Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12 [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000], 65).

⁶⁶Reynolds suggested this helpful approach in an earlier version of his research, which he merely hints at in the later published revision; (Edwin Reynolds, “‘Let No One Judge You’: Col 2:16-17 in Exegetical Perspective,” *Journal*

The major theological thrust of this epistle seems to be a correct view of Christ – “the visible manifestation of the invisible God”⁶⁷ (Col 1:15) – a Christology intimately related to salvation (Col 1:13, 14; cf. 2:11-15),⁶⁸ and redemption,⁶⁹ with profound implications for ethical living (Col 3:4-6). As Sigve Tonstad cogently articulated, “It is on the platform of Christ’s role as Creator [1:15] that Paul built the case for Christ’s work as redeemer [1:18].”⁷⁰ The single great message of Colossians may thus be summed up in the declaration: “Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11b).⁷¹ Charles Talbert noted that “it is against the background of this salvific narrative that the arguments of the Colossian letter unfold.”⁷²

Central Argument of the Epistle

Immediately after laying down a christological foundation, and moving into the main body of the letter (Col 2:6, 7), Paul begins with the imperative *blepete* (“beware,” vs. 8), thus drawing attention to what Christ has already done for any who belong to Him.⁷³ Paul then links this section (vss. 8-15) with the word “therefore” (vs. 16), so as to challenge the false teachings arising at Colossae.⁷⁴ Not to be missed though is the fact that, “verses 12 and 13 are central to the appeal of the letter,”⁷⁵ and evidently “contain the argument of the entire epistle.”⁷⁶ Emphasizing the sufficiency of salvation in Jesus Christ, Paul states this truth, in a typical Hebrew poetic parallelism:

of the Adventist Theological Society 20/1-2 [2009]: 213).

⁶⁷McDonald, 14. See also, G. H. P. Thompson, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 120-121.

⁶⁸Deterding (102) called it “a soteriological Christology.” He stated that “this highly Christological and soteriological section [of chap. 2:6-15] is at the heart and center of the letter.” Foster likewise described it as “a highly christological letter;” (Paul Foster, *Colossians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries [London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016], 106). Fields declared that “Colossians is the most Christ-centered epistle in the New Testament;” (Wilbur Fields, *Philippians-Colossians, Philemon: A New Commentary, Workbook, Teaching Manual* [Joplin, MO: College Press, 1969], 126).

⁶⁹As Cannon put it: “The central theological focus of Colossians is upon Christology and the focal point of its Christology is the significance of the death of Christ;” (George A. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983], 223).

⁷⁰Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 269.

⁷¹Ibid., 15. See also, H. Wayne House, “Doctrinal Issues in Colossians, Part 2: The Doctrine of Christ in Colossians,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (Apr-Jun 1992): 180-192.

⁷²Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 181.

⁷³Pao, 149.

⁷⁴See, for example, Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians and Philemon*, Bible Study Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 81; Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 118. Some commentaries see only verse 15 as the focus of the word “therefore:” MacDonald, 110; McDonald, 88; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 89. Others see only verse 14 as the focus: Nichol, 7:205; Abbott, 263; J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1884), 192.

⁷⁵Bonnie B. Thurston, *Reading Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 44.

⁷⁶Pokorný, 126.

2:12 “**Buried** with Him in baptism, in which you also were **raised**...”

2:13 “**Dead** in your transgressions ... He made you **alive** together with Him...”⁷⁷

One of the central assertions of this epistle is that God grants forgiveness and blessings to all who have been baptized into Christ.⁷⁸ In agreement with those who view verses 12 and 13 as pivotal in this chapter, the research of Ian Thomson has shown that these two verses are structurally the double peak of a microchiasm, that extends throughout most of Colossians 2, as follows:⁷⁹

Introduction: 2:6 “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”

A 2:7 “**Rooted and built up** in Him and established in the faith”

B 2:8 “**Beware lest anyone** cheat you⁸⁰ ... **not** according to **Christ**”

C 2:9 “In Him dwells ... the Godhead **bodily**,” 10a “You are complete in Him”

D 2:10b “Who is the head of all **principality** and **power**”

E 2:11 “Circumcised with the circumcision made without **hands**”

F 2:12 “**Buried** with Him in baptism, in which you also were **raised**”

F' 2:13 “**Dead** in your transgressions ... He made you **alive** together with Him”⁸¹

E' 2:14 “Wiped out the **handwriting** of requirements that was against us”

D' 2:15 “Having disarmed **principalities** and **powers**”

C' 2:16 “Let no one pass judgment;” 17 “The **body** that cast the shadow is Christ”⁸²

B' 2:18 “**Let no one** keep defrauding you;”⁸³ 19a “**Not** holding fast to the **Head**”

A' 2:19b “**Nourished and knit together** by joints and ligaments, grows”

The Χειρόγραφον τοῖς Δόγμασιν

In relation to the issue of forgiveness, as well as the meaning of the tripartite phrase in verse 16, it would be well to explore Colossians 2:14, which begins: ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν. That first term, ἐξαλείψας, means to “wipe out” (as in Acts 3:19; Rev 3:5), or to “wipe away” (as in Rev 7:17; 21:4). Curtis Vaughan indicated that “in secular literature it was used of blotting out a writing or of abolishing a law.”⁸⁴ While there is general agreement with regard to ἐξαλείψας, as recently as 2012, David Pao pointed out that “the exact meanings of the words ‘written

⁷⁷Verse 13 is from the NASB.

⁷⁸Sumney noted that the following two verses then identify “the crucifixion as the means of forgiveness and of release from the powers that formerly held them captive;” (Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008], 143). Concurring, Hay noted: “In verses 14-15 the writer presents a series of assertions concerning Jesus’ death, as an elaboration of the claim at the end of verse 13 regarding forgiveness;” (David M. Hay, *Colossians* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2000], 92).

⁷⁹See Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 153-156.

⁸⁰The first part of verse 8 is from the NKJV, based on the Greek verb συλαγωγέω, which can mean “carry off as booty,” “as a captive,” or “rob;” (Bauer, 776).

⁸¹This is from the NASB.

⁸²This is from the CEB.

⁸³This is from the NASB.

⁸⁴Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 201.

decree' (χειρόγραφον) and 'regulations' (δόγμασιν) remain a subject of scholarly debate."⁸⁵ Or as Moo put it more strongly, the meaning of these two Greek words "is hotly contested;"⁸⁶ this, despite the fact that δόγμα is a common term, while χειρόγραφον ("a word little used in classical Greek"⁸⁷) is literally "an expression used of any document written by hand."⁸⁸ Though written decades ago, it is still true that "scholars are divided on the meaning of this term [χειρόγραφον] and the proper interpretation of the entire phrase."⁸⁹

Ian Smith perceived that "the difficulty of interpreting the χειρόγραφον is compounded by the lack of specific background for its use in a Christian environment."⁹⁰ While Murray Harris aptly noted that the suggested identifications of χειρόγραφον are numerous,⁹¹ it appears that many scholars see this as a reference to a "certificate of debt" (NASB), i.e., specifically, "the notion of sin as debt"⁹² – the record of which was wiped clean by God, due to Christ's crucifixion.⁹³ In basic agreement with many, Pao pointed out that the primary understanding of the word χειρόγραφον (a *hapax legomenon*

⁸⁵Pao, 170. In one sense, this "scholarly debate" can be seen from the manner in which translators have rendered the entire phrase in various English versions. For example, older versions generally provided a more literal translation, as in YLT's (1911) "handwriting in the ordinances" (see also, GNV [1560], DCB [1609], KJV [1611]) – the only real modern versions being the MEV (2014), the NKJV (1991), and the NIV (1978). Generally, since the 1930s most English versions have rendered this phrase as in the NET's (2001) "a certificate of indebtedness," or the RSV's (1951) "the bond which stood against us with its legal demands" (see also, NAB [1970], NEB [1972], NRSV [1989], REB [1992], ESV [2001], etc.).

⁸⁶Moo, 209.

⁸⁷Ceslas Spicq, "Χειρογραφον," *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, James D. Ernest, trans. and ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 508.

⁸⁸Vaughan, *Colossians*, 201. So also, Francis W. Beare, "The Epistle to the Colossians" in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 198. H. C. G. Moule called it "an autograph;" (H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon with Introduction and Notes* [Cambridge: University Press, 1932], 106).

⁸⁹Patzia, 43. In his commentary, published in 1984, Patzia listed five views (ibid.): "(a) the Law of Moses, (b) the covenant between Adam and the Devil, (c) a certificate of debt, such as an I.O.U., from mankind to God, (d) a heavenly book on which God recorded human sins, of (e) Christ himself." About a decade earlier, Carr had listed the first four views; (Wesley Carr, "Two Notes on Colossians," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 [1973], 492). In 1990, Yates first elaborated on the following six views: (a) The Law of Moses; (b) A Pact with Satan; (c) An IOU from Mankind to God; (d) A Heavenly Book; (e) Penitential Stelae; and (f) Theophany Visions; then offered his own proposed solution of a "metaphor of atonement;" (Roy Yates, "Colossians 2,14: Metaphor of Forgiveness," *Biblica* 71 [1990]: 259). As only the first and third views noted here are seriously considered by most scholars, they will be focused on above.

⁹⁰Ian Smith, 101.

⁹¹Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 118. See, similarly Pao, 107.

⁹²Nijay K. Gupta, *Colossians* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2013), 96. So also, Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Epistles: Twisting Scripture?" *Perspective Digest* 5/2 (2000): 5.

⁹³This is apparently an ancient perspective, from the ante-Nicene Fathers (as early as AD 236) onwards, as Hippolytus wrote: "He who taketh away the sins of the world.... But who has blotted out our transgressions? Paul the apostle teaches us, saying, 'He is our peace who made both one;' and then, 'Blotting out the handwriting of sins that was against us;'" (Hippolytus *Fragments from Commentaries*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers V, Part I, "On Daniel II: 15"). See also, Origen *Commentary on Matthew*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers X, Book XIV: 20; Origen *Commentary on John*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers X, Book VI: 37; Ambrose *Concerning Repentance*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers X, Book II: ii 9; Ambrose *Letters*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, XLI: 8; Jerome *Letter to Oceanus*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers VI, Letter LXIX: 7; Augustin *On Forgiveness of Sins, and Baptism*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers V, Book II: 49.

in the κοινή Greek Testament) is derived from the fields of commerce and law, as well as deutero-canonical works.⁹⁴ While “the particular language of atonement is absent here,”⁹⁵ Jerry Sumney’s summary of this view is nonetheless appropriate: “The forgiveness and new life that believers receive at baptism has its basis in the cross, the means by which God expunges the record of sin and removes it from interfering with their relationship with God.”⁹⁶ Though in essential accord with the theological tenet of the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, a reasonably legitimate question may be raised as to whether this generally accepted contemporary understanding of the χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν necessarily comports best with the immediate and broader contexts, especially from an inner- and intra-biblical, textual perspective.⁹⁷

To begin with, it should be noted that Pao recognized that “there may have been a play on words with the use of ἀχειροποιήτω (‘not performed by human hands’ v. 11) and χειρόγραφον (‘written decree’).”⁹⁸ This semantic pun synchronizes with Thomson’s chiasmic outline, which identifies a linguistic connection between “the **hand**writing of requirements” (of verse 14) and “the circumcision made without **hands**” (of verse 11).⁹⁹ Besides a direct linguistic link, these two lines also imply a conceptual parallel – verse 11 points to the *absence* of “hands,” while verse 14 focuses on the *removal* of a “hand-written” document. In addition, Allan Bever noted that the verbal link may also be expressing a relationship between the χειρόγραφον and the Law – since those in Christ are circumcised “without hands,” this may suggest “that the circumcision ‘done with hands’ is no

⁹⁴Pao, 170-171. See also, Moo, 208-212; Sumney, 144-146; Hay, 97-99; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 164. The extra-canonical references cited as supportive evidence for the basic “certificate of debt” interpretation, include the *Testament of Job* 11:11, Tob 5:3; 9:2, 5; Jub 39:6; 1 En 100.10; the (Jewish) *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* 3:6-9; the (Christian) *Apocalypse of Paul* 17; a (contemporaneous papyrus) MM, 687; Plutarch *On Not Lending* 829A; Polybius *Hist.* 30.8.4; etc.

⁹⁵Gupta, 96.

⁹⁶Sumney, 146.

⁹⁷For example, Carr (492) challenged this view from a grammatical perspective. Also, Carr (*ibid.*), and Yates (“Colossians 2,14,” 250-251) challenged the “Pact with Satan” view, as being anachronistic (as are also the “Penitential Stelae,” and “Theophany Visions” interpretations; Yates, “Colossians 2,14,” 255-256). Furthermore, contra Wink (see Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, vol. One: *The Powers* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 55-56), Carr concluded that the “Heavenly Book” theory is too obscure (*ibid.*). Others, such as Yates, “Colossians 2,14,” 254, and Rodríguez, “Epistles: Twisting Scripture?” 5, have challenged the “Heavenly Book” view. Ian Smith (100) has challenged both the “Heavenly Book” view and Blanchette’s idea that the *cheirographon* is Christ Himself (see Oliva A. Blanchette, “Does the *Cheirographon* of Col 2,14 Represent Christ Himself?” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 [1961]: 306-312), as “unlikely,” and a view that “makes impossible demands upon the reader.”

⁹⁸Pao, 171. Hamm noted: “Reading this passage in Greek, one cannot help but notice a playful resonance between *acheiropoiētos* (‘not administered by hand,’ that is, administered by God) and *cheirographon* (‘hand-written document,...’);” (Dennis Hamm, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013], on Col 2:11-14). Similarly, Hay wondered whether perhaps the term “in 2:14 (Gk. *cheirographon*; literally a ‘handwritten text’) alludes to the idea of a circumcision ‘made without hands’ in 2:11, and thus to the Jewish Law, but the phrasing of verse 14 suggests something more general than the Mosaic legislation.”

⁹⁹MacDonald (106) suggested that, “the reference to ‘circumcision’ may indicate circumcision was among the practices being recommended by the false teachers; these practices clearly included many Jewish elements (2:16-23).”

longer necessary because the hand-written document requiring such a practice was eradicated through the cross of Christ.”¹⁰⁰ This lexical arrangement may thus serve to nudge the interpreter towards a more formal translation of the χειρόγραφον, as a literal “written code” (NIV [1978]),¹⁰¹ or a “handwriting” (NKJV, MEV, etc.).¹⁰² Acknowledging that this term is derived from the two Greek words *hand* and *write*, commentator Ernest Campbell postulated: “Paul is obviously using this word here to refer to the *handwritten Mosaic Law*”¹⁰³ – a matter to be further analyzed here.

The unique term χειρόγραφον is immediately qualified by τοῖς δόγμασιν, a phrase that has also been disputed.¹⁰⁴ Though also often debated, the basic meaning of δόγμα in the New Testament is that of a decree or ordinance.¹⁰⁵ More than half a century ago, Gerhard Kittel averred that “the usage of Hellenistic Judaism would thus refer the τοῖς δόγμασιν to the Mosaic Law and its demands as the content of the χειρόγραφον.”¹⁰⁶ Bevere’s recent scholarly published essay alleged that two major popular interpretations of the χειρόγραφον have failed “to take seriously the essentially Jewish nature of the Colossian philosophy,”¹⁰⁷ especially since the Jewish elements (of circumcision, food laws, festival observance, etc.) “contain the very essence” of this philosophy.¹⁰⁸ He noted that “the χειρόγραφον as the Law of Moses is seen explicitly in the practices outlined in the polemical core, which are Jewish in character. These are the halakhic regulations (δόγμα) of the Law (χειρόγραφον) being referred to in 2:14, and the μὴ οὖν in 2:16 suggests this as well.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰Allan R. Bevere, “The *Cheirographon* in Colossians 2:14 and the Ephesians Connection,” in *Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honor of James D. G. Dunn for His 70th Birthday*, B. J. Oropeza, C. K. Robertson, and Douglas C. Mohrmann, eds. (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 203.

¹⁰¹In basic agreement with the original NIV rendition, Beare (198), contended that, “like γράμμα (II Cor. 3:6-7), it [i.e., the χειρόγραφον] represents simply the law as a written code.”

¹⁰²Lenski pointed out that the term *cheirographon* can refer to a debtor’s bond, a labor contract, a document giving authority to act, or even a business agreement. But literally, it simply means a “manuscript.” See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretations of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 114. The type of written document in Colossians 2:14 must be determined by the immediate and larger contexts. Thayer concluded it is “metaphorically applied, in Colossians 2:14 (where R.V. bond) to the Mosaic Law;” (John Henry Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996], s.v. “χειρόγραφον”). Weiss noted that there is “an exegetical tradition which links the word *cheirographon* (Col 2:14) to the law of Moses and understands *ta dogmata* (Col 2:14) as the ordinances of that law;” (Herold Weiss, “The Law in the Epistle to the Colossians,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 [July 1972], 294).

¹⁰³Ernest R. Campbell, *Colossians & Philemon* (Silverton, OR: Canyonview Press, 1982), 105 (emphasis original).

¹⁰⁴Ian Smith (103-104), pointed out that the dative case “presents several possibilities of interpretation,” six of which he explained.

¹⁰⁵Bauer (1979), 201. Incidentally, the term δόγμα, was likewise contemporaneously used by Josephus and Philo to refer to the Mosaic law. This usage of δόγμα for the Mosaic law also appears in 3 Macc 1:3, where it talks about a “Jew by birth who later changed his religion and apostatized from the ancestral traditions [δογμαίων]” (NRSV).

¹⁰⁶Gerhard Kittel, “δόγμα, δογματιζω,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. II, Gerhard Kittel, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. and ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 231.

¹⁰⁷Bevere, “The *Cheirographon* in Colossians 2:14,” 200.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 202.

Since it is believed to have been written by the same author, covering similar issues, sent via the same messenger (Tychicus, Col 4:7, 8; Eph 6:21), to recipients of the same region, some researchers have concluded that Ephesians 2:15 throws light on Colossians 2:14,¹¹⁰ thus making “a reference to the Mosaic Law.”¹¹¹ As a recently paraphrased Dutch version (de Basis Bijbel) renders Colossians 2:14b: “Hij heeft namelijk de wet van Mozes, die beweest dat we schuldig waren, aan het kruis gespijkerd.”¹¹²

Reflecting on the lexical term δόγμα in Colossians 2:14, Moo postulated that “a more likely interpretation arises from comparison with Ephesians 2:15, the only other place where the word occurs in Paul. Here Paul uses it to describe the commandments of the Mosaic law as consisting in ‘decrees.’”¹¹³ In addition, as Pao indicated, in Ephesians the apostle Paul focused on the barrier between Jew and Gentile, while in Colossians he emphasized the obstacle between God and humankind, caused by the spiritual forces.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, both epistles challenged “the reliance on regulations associated with the written law.”¹¹⁵ As William Hendriksen argued: “In the clearly parallel passage (Eph. 2:15) what has been abolished through the cross is not ‘a certificate of indebtedness with our signature on it,’ but ‘the law of commandments with its requirements.’”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰See, for example, Moo (210), who stated: “A more likely interpretation [for the meaning of τοῖς δόγμασιν] arises from comparison with Ephesians 2:15, the only other place where the word [δόγμα] occurs in Paul. Here Paul uses it to describe the commandments of the Mosaic law as consisting in ‘decrees.’” Likewise, Harris (107) held, “the most probable being the Mosaic law itself (cf. Eph. 2:15).” See also, Nichol (6:1009), where Eph 2:15 is explained thus: “Law of commandments. This is generally thought of as referring to the ceremonial law.” See also, Nichol, 7:204.

¹¹¹Charles R. Hume, *Reading Through Colossians and Ephesians* (London: SCM, 1998), 44. See also, Thurston, 45; MacDonald, 102. Harris (108, emphasis added) maintained that the connected phrase, τοῖς δόγμασιν, “probably refers to the demands of the Mosaic law.” See also, Robert D. Brinsmead, “Sabbatarianism Re-Examined, Chapter 5: Colossians 2:16,” *Verdict* 4/4 (June 1981): 27-28. Bird pointed out that the Mosaic law is sufficiently implied in the passage itself, despite the lack of an explicit use of the term νόμος; (Michael F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon, A New Covenant Commentary* [Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009], 84). Bird directly stated: “I reject the view of DeMaris 1994: 51 [Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae*, JSNTSup 99 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994)], that there is no polemic against the Mosaic law in Colossians;” (ibid., footnote #30).

¹¹²Others who see Col 2:14 as referring to the Mosaic (or Jewish) Law include: Verlyn Verbrugge, ed., “σάββατον,” *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 1136; Anthony L. Ash, *Philippians, Colossians & Philemon*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994) 184; H. Wayne House, “Doctrinal Issues in Colossians, Part 2,” 189; Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 110-113; Vaughan, *Colossians*, 201; Wilfred Stott, “Sabbath, Lord’s Day,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:410; Frederick Brooke Westcott, *Colossians – A Letter to Asia: Being a Paraphrase and Brief Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Believers at Colossae* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 112; Eadie, 159.

¹¹³Moo, 210. Then he added (ibid.): “Colossians, of course, lacks any reference to the Mosaic law, but it would be typical of Paul’s theology of the law to extend the word to include all those ‘decrees’ of God that regulate human conduct.”

¹¹⁴Pao, 171.

¹¹⁵Ibid. Besides these similarities, Beale indicated that there may be a further connection between the passage in Eph 2 and that in Col 2: “The reference to ‘circumcision made without hands’ (Col. 2:11) implies a contrast with ‘circumcision made with hands,’ which Paul refers to in Eph. 2:11 (‘circumcision in the flesh made by hands’);” (G. K. Beale, “Colossians,” G. K. Beale, and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 861).

¹¹⁶William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 121,

Likewise, Kittel stated: “The construction and train of thought are much the same in Eph. 2:15, namely, that the Mosaic νόμος τῶν ἐντολῶν, which consists in δόγματα, is set aside by Christ.”¹¹⁷

As Bevere quite appropriately pointed out: “The imagery conveyed in both letters is so similar that it is not unreasonable to suggest that both refer to the same thing.”¹¹⁸

Others concur that linking these two passages helps to better interpret the χειρόγραφον.¹¹⁹ Some have noted that “most of the Greek Church Fathers”¹²⁰ supported the notion that the Mosaic Law is in view here,¹²¹ and that this interpretation “is grammatically without problems,”¹²² though some have recognized that “a strict identification with the Mosaic Torah cannot be made.”¹²³ The NIV originally translated this phrase as, “the written code, with its regulations,”¹²⁴ which structurally

footnote #90.

¹¹⁷Kittel, “δόγμα, δογματίζω,” 231.

¹¹⁸Bevere, “The *Cheirographon* in Colossians 2:14,” 204. Besides noting that both Ephesians and Colossians use the term δόγμα, Bevere (ibid.) identified the following parallels: “In Ephesians, Christ’s death nullifies the Law together with its commandments and regulations. In Colossians, the χειρόγραφον (the Law) with its regulations is erased as it is nailed to the cross of Christ. In Ephesians, the cross abolishes the Mosaic Law as a dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile; and while the language of division between Jew and Gentile is not explicit in Colossians, the χειρόγραφον as a barrier that stands in the way is obvious – it is ‘against us’ (τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν) and ‘hostile to us’ (ὁ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν).”

¹¹⁹See, for example, Wilson, 208; Verlyn Verbrugge, ed., “δόγμα,” *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 343; Pokorný, 137-138; Hans-Helmut Esser, “δόγμα,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1: 330-331; Gerhard Kittel, “δόγμα,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., abridged by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 178; F. F. Bruce, “Colossian Problems, Part 4: Christ as Conqueror and Reconciler,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (Oct-Dec 1984): 295; W. E. Read, “More on Colossians 2:14, Part 1,” *Ministry*, January 1973, 46-47; Idem, “More on Colossians 2:14, Conclusion,” *Ministry*, February 1973, 42; Hendriksen, 121, footnote #90; Westcott, 112; Robert John Floody, *Scientific Basis of Sabbath and Sunday* (Boston: Herbert B. Turner, 1906), 171.

¹²⁰Barth, and Blanke, 328.

¹²¹For example, Yates (“Colossians 2,14,” 250) stated: “Following the lead given by the Fathers of the School of Antioch a number of modern commentators have proceeded to interpret the cheirograph in the light of Eph 2,15 as the law of Moses.” Bevere concluded: “In considering the internal evidence from Colossians itself, and the related evidence from the Book of Ephesians, it appears that the best explanation for the identity of the χειρόγραφον in Colossians 2:14 is that it is *primarily* and most specifically a reference to the Law of Moses;” (Bevere, “The *Cheirographon* in Colossians 2:14,” 206, emphasis original).

¹²²Barth, and Blanke, 328. In other words, Paul may have intentionally connected the assurance of full forgiveness through Christ (vs. 13b), to both the “written code, with its regulations” (vs. 14), which required sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, as well as to the death of Christ, by which these ritual requirements were ultimately fulfilled, and thereby abrogated. In short, by His death, Christ consummated the ritual system. Admittedly, it has been claimed that, “The idea of the law nailed on the cross with Christ would have been unthinkable for Paul;” (Charles Masson, *L’Épître de St. Paul aux Colossiens*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, vol. 10 [Neuchâtel: Delachaux, 1950], 128). Challenging such thinking about Paul, N. T. Wright has aptly concluded that “the explosive force of Paul’s theology lies just here,... [in that] he writes simultaneously of fulfillment and of something radically new – something shocking, something until that point unthinkable;” (N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009], 28). While his comments were dealing specifically with Col 1:15-20, Wright’s overall point can be appropriately applied to Col 2:14-17 as well.

¹²³While he maintained that Paul is not suggesting that the Torah is nailed to the cross, and while he held that this χειρόγραφον is most likely a “record of debt,” Pao concluded in his 2012 exegetical commentary (171) that, “even though a strict identification with the Mosaic Torah cannot be made,” the χειρόγραφον “should be understood in relation to the Mosaic law.”

¹²⁴This 1978 edition of the NIV takes into account the fact that Paul did not use the genitive, but rather the dative case, τοῖς δόγμασιν, hence, “with its regulations” (associative dative, or dative of accompanying circumstances); see Harris, 109. The 1999 version of the New International Reader’s Version similarly rendered the first part of the verse:

appears to parallel the reference to the regulations of circumcision – the covenant sign of ancient Israel.¹²⁵

These “regulations” that were “contrary to us” appear to allude to the laws in the Old Testament that stood as “a witness against you” (Deut 31:26),¹²⁶ and which the apostle Peter later (in Acts 15:10) referred to as a “yoke” (NASB, ESV, etc.), or a “burden” (CEB, CEV, etc.).¹²⁷ It may be significant that in the immediate context, the LXX notes that Moses recorded these laws, by “writing” (γράφων, Deut 31:24) – a possible lexical link to the χειρόγραφον of Colossians 2:14. This nomenclature of “hand” and “writing/written” related to the Mosaic law is not unknown in post-exilic literature. For instance, when Ezra was asked to “bring the Book of the Law of Moses” (Neh 8:1, NKJV), and from which he then read, the Hebrew text literally states: “And they found *written* in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by the *hand* of Moses...” (Neh 8:14).¹²⁸

Since Paul refers to the Old Testament law as νόμος more than a hundred times in his writings, it is likely that he refrained from using νόμος in Colossians so as to avoid the impression

“He wiped out the written Law with its rules.”

¹²⁵It seems that if the term χειρόγραφον is classified as a “metaphor,” such would nullify the microchiasm; for, as it stands, vs. 14 is already a clear metaphor – it echoes the spiritual metaphor of the “circumcision without hands” notion, of vs. 11.

¹²⁶This use of God being “against us” or “contrary to us” can be seen repeatedly in the counsel Moses gave Israel before he died. For example, Lev 26:17, 21, 23-24, 27-28, 40-41; Deut 28:48-49; 29:27; 31:17, 19, 21, 27.

¹²⁷Referring to the ceremonial law, that some were trying to foist on the new Gentile converts, Peter said: “Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 15:10). Barnes concurred: “The meaning here is, that the burdensome requirements of the Mosaic law are abolished, and that its necessity is superseded by the death of Christ;” (Albert Barnes, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [London: George Routledge and Co., 1851], 265). Then Barnes (ibid.), referencing Peter’s “yoke” statement, noted that these requirements were “burdensome.”

¹²⁸Moreover, centuries after the writing of Deuteronomy, when that very Book of the Law was found in the temple, King Josiah recognized “the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written *concerning* us” (2 Kgs 22:13, emphasis added). Significantly, the Hebrew term וְלִי translated “concerning us,” or “for us” (YLT), has been rendered in the Septuagint as καθ’ ἡμῶν. A similar phrase is seen in 1 Cor 15:15, ὅτι ἐμαρτυρήσαμεν κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, and is rendered as “because we have testified *of* God” (NKJV, emphasis added), “because we have testified *about* God” (ESV, emphasis added); “for we have witnessed *concerning* God” (DBY, emphasis added). In brief, κατὰ can be rendered as “with respect to,” (see Walter Bauer, *σάββατον, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., Frederick William Danker, ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 407), or synonyms, such as seen in the English versions above, and must be translated according to the context. Paul may have selected this very phrase, καθ’ ἡμῶν, from this context of the Book of the Law, and connected it with the χειρόγραφον in Colossians 2:14. While καθ’ ἡμῶν has been translated mostly as something “*against* us,” it is also linguistically legitimate to render this as “the handwriting *concerning/for* us.” See Liddell-Scott’s Lexicon, where among other terms, they indicate that κατὰ can be rendered “concerning.” In other words, the ceremonial regulations were given by God *concerning/for* the nation of Israel, in order for them to know how to obtain forgiveness of sins, through the sacrificial system. Should Israel depart from the requirements of these ritual regulations (which were given “for” them), that law would become a witness “against” their apostasy, and thus be seen as even “contrary” to them. See also, Donald E. Mansell, “Thoughts on Colossians 2:14-17,” *Ministry*, December 1971, 27. Harris (116) concluded that the broken laws stand “as a silent testimony against us,” “a witness hostile to us.” As C. F. D. Moule put it: “This χειρόγραφον is ‘against us’ because we have manifestly failed to discharge its obligations;” (C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary [Cambridge: University Press, 1958], 97).

that the entire Mosaic law had been abrogated.¹²⁹ Addressing this very issue, Roy Yates noted: “In the process of attempting to give adequate expression to Christian belief in the crucified and risen Lord new metaphors were sought, new vocabulary coined and old words filled with new meaning.”¹³⁰ Thus, since the universal moral principles enumerated in the Torah were to continue, Paul apparently coined the unique phrase χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν, with the specific purpose of drawing attention to the ritual law of the Jewish nation.¹³¹ As Alexander Maclaren explained: “Of course, by *law* here is primarily meant the Mosaic ceremonial law, which was being pressed upon the Colossians”¹³² – evidence of which can be seen in the listing in verse 16 of various elements of these cultic regulations of Israel, thus corroborating this more carefully nuanced understanding of “Mosaic law.”¹³³ Commentator Gordon Clark noted that the ceremonial law is “a more plausible view.”¹³⁴

After concisely expounding on five different types of offerings required by the Mosaic Law, and observing that “none of these sacrifices had any value or significance apart from Christ,”¹³⁵ John Phillips commented on the χειρόγραφον: “All of this ‘handwriting’ in the Mosaic Law has been ‘blotted out’ by Christ. His death for us on the Cross renders all of the Old Testament types and pictures obsolete.”¹³⁶ In fundamental accord, Richard Leonard stated: “Christ himself had offered the only efficacious blood sacrifice (Heb. 9:11-14; 10:1-10) and in his death and resurrection had cancelled the decrees of the *ceremonial law* (Col. 2:13-14).”¹³⁷ In brief, it was essentially the levitical

¹²⁹Donelson stated: “The terminology in 2:14-15 is a little unusual. This is not a common way to talk about the Jewish law;” (Lewis R. Donelson, *Colossians, Ephesians, First and Second Timothy, and Titus*, Westminster Bible Companion [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 40).

¹³⁰Yates, “A Reappraisal of Colossians,” 105. In the above statement, Yates was including both “the cheirograph [vs. 14] and the triumph [of vs. 15];” (ibid.). In a somewhat similar manner, but commenting here on Paul’s address at the Areopagus, Kistemaker noted (specifically concerning Acts 17:28): “By quoting these poets Paul is not intimating that he agrees with the pagan setting in which the citations flourished. Rather, he uses the words to fit his Christian teaching;” (Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 637).

¹³¹See, for example, Gordon H. Clark, *Colossians: Another Commentary on an Inexhaustible Message*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 89-90.

¹³²Alexander Maclaren, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Colossians and Philemon* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899), 214 (emphasis original).

¹³³See Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 25-26. Pao (171) aptly cautioned that χειρόγραφον “should not be identified entirely with the Torah.” Somewhat similarly, but discussing the δόγματα, Yates (“Colossians 2,14,” 257) stated: “Some of the prescriptions of the law of Moses may be included in these regulations, but not the Torah as such.”

¹³⁴Clark, 89. He added that, “verse 16 lends credence to this interpretation;” (ibid., 90).

¹³⁵John Phillips, *Exploring Colossians & Philemon: The Expository Commentary*, John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 129.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Richard C. Leonard, “Background to the Christian Festivals,” *Complete Library of Christian Worship*, vol. 1: *Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, Robert E. Webber, ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 1:194 (emphasis added).

services that “Christ abolished at the cross.”¹³⁸ Conclusions such as those of Phillips, Leonard, etc., though not frequently seen in contemporary scholarship, should not surprise one, as this was “the common view” across the centuries,¹³⁹ as Eadie recalls: “Not a few understand the apostle to refer [in Col 2:14] to the *ceremonial law*, or the Mosaic law *in its ritual part* or aspect. Such is the view of Calvin, Beza, Crocius, van Till, Gomar, Vorstius, Grotius, Deyling, Schoettgen, Wolf, Bähr, and others.... It is true that it was abrogated by the death of Christ on the cross.”¹⁴⁰ As the Dutch commentator, J. A. C. van Leeuwen, acceded: “Bij het door ‘document’ vertaalde woord, letterlijk ‘handschrift,’ doch met de beteekenis van een ‘officieel,’ rechtskracht bezittend geschrift, moeten wij denken aan de ceremonieele wet van Israel.”¹⁴¹

This interpretation of χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν, as employed to identify the “Mosaic law in its ritual part” (i.e., “the ceremonial law”), has received some significant extra-biblical support in a scholarly article published in November 2017.¹⁴² Kyu Seop Kim has analyzed quite an abundance of ancient Greek papyri and ostraca written between the second century BC and the third century AD, in which the term χειρόγραφον appears (together with its cognates, χειρογραφία and χειρογραφεῖν). His research unearths documents that imply that, “χειρόγραφον does not refer to a debt certificate,”¹⁴³ contrary to Adolf Deißmann’s argument; but, it “can be defined as a main certificate type of ancient private law,”¹⁴⁴ such as that of “a lease contract (P.Fouad 40, AD 35), house sale contract (P.Louvre 1:10, AD 75-99), farm sale contract (P.Mich. 5:272, AD 45-46), and loan contract (P.Gen. 2:1:24, AD 96).”¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, in accord with Ludwig Mitteis’s 1891 conclusion, Kim’s study reveals that

¹³⁸Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, vol. 15 (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1985), 70.

¹³⁹Already in the 17th century it was noted, by James Fergusson, that this “handwriting of ordinances,” was “the ceremonial law unto the Jews;” (James Fergusson, *Brief Exposition of the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* [London: Thomas Ward & Co., 1978; from original editions, 1656-1674], 351). He held (352) that the seventh-day Sabbath was part of this ceremonial law. So also, Thomas B. Brown, *Thoughts Suggested by the Perusal of Gilfillan, and Other Authors, on the Sabbath* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1870), 45.

¹⁴⁰Eadie, 163 (emphasis added).

¹⁴¹J. A. C. van Leeuwen, *De Brief aan de Colossensen: Opnieuw uit den Grondtekst Vertaald en Verklaard, Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift: Met Nieuwe Vertaling* (Kampen, Holland: J. H. Kok, 1923), 41.

¹⁴²Kyu Seop Kim, “The Meaning of Χειρόγραφον in Colossians 2:14 Revisited,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 68.2 (2017): 223-239.

¹⁴³Kyu Seop Kim (229) maintained: “Even when the term χειρόγραφον is associated with the certificate of indebtedness, it was not directly meant as the certificate of indebtedness or the bond: it simply refers to the document or the certificate with regard to a handwritten declaration.” As evidence Kim (ibid.) refers to P.Mich. 11:614 (AD 256): “‘And we wish that from two copies of the handwritten contract (ἀπό τοῦ δισσοῦ χειρογράφου), a single copy will be made public...;’” as well as that of SB 24:16265 (ca. AD 259), which basically echoes that of P.Mich.: “‘And I wish that from two copies of the handwritten contract (ἀπό τοῦ δισσοῦ χειρογράφου), a single copy will be made public...;’” (ibid., 230). Kim concluded (ibid.): “Thus, χειρόγραφον does not refer to a debt certificate itself, but to a handwritten declaration, even when it is used in respect of a loan or a bond.”

¹⁴⁴Kyu Seop Kim, 226.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 226-227. Kyu Seop Kim added (ibid., 229, and provided the evidence), that “the term χειρόγραφον was used in the document of a slave sale (P.Oxy. 60:4058, AD 158-159).”

“χειρόγραφον could also be employed with regard to a public situation,” such as seen in P.Aberd. 49 (AD 158), P.Col. 7:145 (AD 335), and P.Oxy. 10:1252 (AD 288-295).¹⁴⁶ After providing evidence that χειρόγραφον was used as an official membership report for a guild (in P.Mich. 5:244, AD 43), and a declaration of an official delegation (in P.Fay. 34, AD 161), Kim concluded that “χειρόγραφον could be utilised to express public and official declarations, not simply private contracts.”¹⁴⁷ Verbal and similar formulaic statements provide,¹⁴⁸ as Kim noted, “many pieces of evidence that, contrary to Deißmann’s definition and the present consensus ... χειρόγραφον does *not* simply refer to a private debt certificate, but was ... used in both private and public situations.”¹⁴⁹

In view of the plethora of contemporaneous materials, and since there is no expression found in Colossians 2 that identifies any debt, Kim’s conclusion seems reasonable: “It is unlikely that Paul expected his readers to understand this term as the bond between God and humanity.”¹⁵⁰ Incidentally, regardless of “whether the false teaching [in Colossae] contains Jewish features or not,” Kim averred that “it seems obvious that δόγμα in Colossians 2:14 refers to the religious regulations required to [*sic*] the Colossian believers, and that it is related to ascetic regulations.”¹⁵¹ At minimum, this newly-published research indicates that there is enough evidence from ancient documents that “χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν refers to χειρόγραφον with respect to the religious regulations”¹⁵² – a technical definition that accords well with the inter-textual and inner-biblical deductions proposed above.

By way of a brief summary, the following should be noted: As increasingly recognized by scholars, “it does seem likely that the Colossians were being asked to adopt some Jewish practices as additions to what they had received in Christ.”¹⁵³ Paul informed the Colossians that Christ’s death on the cross spelled the end of the χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν; henceforth, they no longer needed to worry about observing the ritual aspects of the Mosaic Torah, as all of the Old Testament types (including the “feasts, new moons, and sabbaths”) had been fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ.

John Woodhouse contended that Colossians 2:14 has “one of the most vivid descriptions in the New Testament of what happened when Jesus died.”¹⁵⁴ In his 2010 scholarly analysis of the letter

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 231.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 233.

¹⁴⁸Here Kyu Seop Kim (234-235) included P.Hib. 2:247, P.Oxy. 18:2185 (AD 92), O.Petr. 309 (3rd century AD), BGU 16:2562 (8-7 BC), BGU 16:2570 (8-7 BC), BGU 16:2565 (3-2 BC), P.Oxy. 57:3907 (AD 99), P.Ryl. 4:572 (2nd century BC), P.Oxy. 2:260 (AD 59), P.Tebt. 3:801 (134 BC), as evidence of his conclusions on this point.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 235 (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 236.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 237.

¹⁵²Ibid., 236.

¹⁵³Davids, 275.

¹⁵⁴John Woodhouse, *Colossians and Philemon: So Walk in Him* (Ross-Shire, England: Christian Focus, 2011),

to the Colossians, John Paul Heil opined that, “the metaphor is convoluted, but presumably reflects again the idea of Christ’s death as a sin offering”¹⁵⁵ – which reminds the reader of the ritual system as fully elaborated to ancient Israel in Scripture – a system in which forgiveness of sins took place through the death of sacrificial animals, especially the lamb. Verse 15 then reveals, as commentator Dermot McDonald observed: “Christ the crucified is Lord; and all the hostile powers of the universe have become subjected to him. In Christ’s cross the demonic hosts of evil have met their Conqueror.”¹⁵⁶

The Linguistics of Colossians 2:16

Texts such as Colossians 1:21, 22, 27, and 2:13 give the distinct impression that the Colossian church was predominantly Gentile, though Jews were certainly present,¹⁵⁷ for history records that “Colossae had a significant Jewish population.”¹⁵⁸ Paul’s counsel to the Colossians, regarding how to relate to these Judaizing teachers may seem clear: “So let no one judge [κρινέτω] you....” The question, though, relates to the contextual meaning of the term κρινέτω.

Reflections on the Term Κρινέτω

David Hay opined that “Colossians 2:16 does *not* make clear what kinds of judgments are in view.”¹⁵⁹ In an appendix to his doctoral thesis, church historian Samuele Bacchiocchi asserted that “the verb [κρίνω] is neutral and it does not mean ‘to condemn’ but ‘to judge’ whether approvingly or disapprovingly.”¹⁶⁰ After an apparently biased selection of verses from Romans 14, where κρίνω appears, and aware that this term can simply mean “to express an opinion,”¹⁶¹ Bacchiocchi postulated “that the verb used [in Colossians 2:16] indicates that Paul is considerably tolerant on this question. He does not condemn the specified practices, but simply insists that no one should be compelled to observe them.”¹⁶² In taking this approach, it appears that Bacchiocchi has reprised a somewhat

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¹⁵⁵John Paul Heil, *Colossians: Encouragement to Walk in All Wisdom as Holy Ones in Christ*, Society of Biblical Literature, Number 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 119, footnote #43.

¹⁵⁶McDonald, 87. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 114, succinctly summarized the overall point of verse 15: “Paul is asserting that, because of what Jesus did on the cross, *the powers and authorities*, are a beaten, defeated lot, so that (by implication) neither the Colossians nor anyone else who belongs to Jesus need be overawed by them again.”

¹⁵⁷See Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 82; Thurston, 4; Clark, 88.

¹⁵⁸Tidball, 19. Moreover, the Colossian Jews were “a substantial and possibly influential ethnic minority;” (ibid., 20).

¹⁵⁹Hay, 103 (emphasis added). He claimed that the Colossians may have been criticized “either for *not* observing certain dietary and holiday regulations or for observing regulations about food and holidays;” (ibid., emphasis original).

¹⁶⁰Bacchiocchi, 355.

¹⁶¹See Bauer (1979), 452.

¹⁶²Bacchiocchi, 355.

antiquated defense of the seventh-day Sabbath – “that this is a mere caution *against judging* the believers at Colossae.”¹⁶³ In the words of commentator Lukyn Williams: “Observe that St Paul takes a far wider view than that of forbidding the observance of dietary laws and of festival seasons. He leaves the matter free for the individual person.”¹⁶⁴

The question is, do “these passages call for tolerance rather than abolition,”¹⁶⁵ as some have suggested?¹⁶⁶ Douglas de Lacey observed that “the nuances of κρίνειν depend on the context.”¹⁶⁷ To begin with, it should be noted that Paul’s warning is strong: “Let no one, then, judge you...” (YLT). This clause includes an imperative construction depicting an action that must always be avoided.¹⁶⁸

Comparison with Paul’s repeated use of κρίνω in Romans 14, when dealing with a similar problem, shows two possible definitions: First, it can rightly be rendered with the broader meaning of “considers,”¹⁶⁹ “regards,”¹⁷⁰ etc.,¹⁷¹ (as in vs. 5); or “decide,”¹⁷² “determine,”¹⁷³ etc.,¹⁷⁴ (as in vs. 13b). However, in all the other texts (i.e., vss. 3, 4, 10, 13a, and 22), the context demonstrates that Paul is using κρίνω in its more restrictive sense of “condemn,”¹⁷⁵ “criticize,”¹⁷⁶ etc.,¹⁷⁷ as confirmed by Bauer’s lexicon.¹⁷⁸ Pao pointed out that “this negative use of the verb is consistent with Paul’s usage elsewhere; it is best illustrated by Rom 2:1, where ‘judge’ [*krineis*] is paralleled by ‘condemn’ [*katakrineis*].”¹⁷⁹

¹⁶³George Carlow, *A Defense of the Sabbath, in Reply to Ward on the Fourth Commandment* (New York: Paul Stillman, 1847), 151 (emphasis added).

¹⁶⁴A. Lukyn Williams, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1907; 1928), 102.

¹⁶⁵Jean-Paul André Heldt, “The Missiological Significance of the Biblical Sabbath and Jubilee as a Judeo-Christian Worldview” (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2002), 179, footnote #16.

¹⁶⁶See, for example, Marvin Moore, “Dialogue.” *Signs of the Times*, June 2003, 28; Demetrios J. Constantelos, “Religious Cultural Diversity and Christian Unity in the Church of Colossae: An Exegesis of Colossians 2.16 to 3.4,” in *Agape and Diakonia: Essays in Memory of Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos*, Fr. Peter A. Chamberas, ed. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 55; Charles A. Russell, *Which Day Is the Sabbath? And the United States the Land of Freedom* (Allegan, MI: C. A. Russell, 1902), 45.

¹⁶⁷Douglas R. de Lacey, “The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, D. A. Carson, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 182.

¹⁶⁸Harris, 117; MacDonald, 109.

¹⁶⁹For example, HCSB, and NIV.

¹⁷⁰For example, NASB, and NET.

¹⁷¹Other words used, with a similar meaning, include “esteems” (ESV, WEB); and “decides” (GW, ISV).

¹⁷²For example, ESV, GW, HCSB, and NLT.

¹⁷³For example, NASB, and NET.

¹⁷⁴Other words used, with a similar meaning, include “make up your mind” (ISV, NIV); and “resolve” (TVB).

¹⁷⁵For example, “condemn” is used in the NLT (vss. 3, 4, 10, 13a), and the NASB (vs. 22).

¹⁷⁶For example, “criticize” is used in the HCSB (vss. 3, 4, 10, 13a).

¹⁷⁷For example, “despise” is used in GW (vs. 10); and “convict” is used in the CEB (vs. 22).

¹⁷⁸Bauer (1979), 452.

¹⁷⁹Pao, 184.

De Lacey concluded that, as the context of Colossians 2:16 is Christian freedom, “this makes it likely that the κριτής (‘judge’) will be more condemnatory than approbatory.”¹⁸⁰ Harris noted that in Colossians 2:16 κρινέτω “clearly has a pejorative sense;”¹⁸¹ contextually it means “condemnatory judging,”¹⁸² as it is “paralleled by being ‘taken captive’ in v. 8 and being ‘disqualified’ in v. 18.”¹⁸³ In Roy Yates’ words: “No one has the right arrogantly to set himself up as a judge over others because they do not follow certain regulations”¹⁸⁴ of the accomplished and abolished ceremonial law.¹⁸⁵ So, while it is true that, at times, κρίνω may allow for the broader definition of merely “decide” or “express an opinion about,”¹⁸⁶ the context here indicates a condemnatory judging. The REB reflects this as follows: “Allow no one, therefore, to take you to task about ... the observance of festival, new moon, or sabbath.” Or, as the NLT has rendered it: “So don’t let anyone condemn you for ... not celebrating certain holy days.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰De Lacey, 182. Since de Lacey viewed the judge “to be a man of ascetic tendencies” (in contrast to the view that these are Judaizers, as held by many, including the researcher of this thesis), he speculated that this “judge” is merely objecting “to certain elements of such observation [of feast days];” (ibid.). Hence, de Lacey concluded that “it seems that Paul could happily countenance Sabbath keeping;” (ibid.).

¹⁸¹Harris, 117.

¹⁸²Hermann Olshausen, *Biblical Commentary on St Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1864), 352. Bauer, has “pass unfavorable judgment upon;” ([2000], 121). See also, Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 196-197; Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 121; Harris, 117-118; Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Hermeneia, William R. Poehlmann, and Robert J. Karris, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 114; Sumney, 149.

¹⁸³Moo, 218. Troy Martin has proposed a radical reinterpretation of the traditional understanding of Col 2:16, 17, in such a manner that he has concluded that the Christians in Colossae may not have been condemned for failure to keep the Jewish calendar; but rather, they may have been condemned for continuing to observe it. He concluded, by means of his innovative rendition of the passage that the practices in vs. 16 are probably those of the Colossian Christians rather than those of the opponents. See Troy W. Martin, “‘But Let Everyone Discern the Body of Christ’ (Colossians 2:17),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114/2 (1995): 249-255. However, critiquing Martin’s suggested reinterpretation, Cole stated: “The question of the translation of Col 2:17 clearly cannot be settled on syntactical grounds alone. However, it can be settled by an examination of the semantics of the preceding nominal phrase in v. 17, *skia tōn mellontōn* (‘a shadow of the coming things’), in order to determine whether its use is pejorative or positive;” (H. Ross Cole, “The Christian and Time-keeping in Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39/2 [Autumn 2001]: 275). Cole (ibid., 277) continued, saying that, “a comparative study of Col 2:17 and Heb 10:1 shows that in Col 2:16 the phrase *skia tōn mellontōn* (‘a shadow of things to come’) is pejorative, a fact that decidedly favors the traditional translation. The evidence is thus against Martin’s proposal that the practices of Col 2:16 are those of the Colossian Christians rather than those of the opponents. While these practices may have had validity at one time, this validity has ended with the advent of Christ.” In short, Cole (ibid., 282) concluded that, “the practices of Col 2:16 are those of the critics, which are evaluated negatively by the author.”

¹⁸⁴Roy Yates, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth Press, 1993), 58.

¹⁸⁵Sumney (149) opined: “The Colossians must not allow anyone to pass judgment in these matters of diet or religious festivals because Jesus’ death has freed them of such judgments.”

¹⁸⁶See, for example, Acts 4:19; 20:16; 21:25; 25:25; Rom 14:13b; 1 Cor 2:2; 7:37; 10:15; 2 Cor 2:1.

¹⁸⁷Harris, 104, concluded: “The Colossians should resolutely resist any effort that certain propagandists ... might make to restrict their freedom by legalistic regulations.”

Contextual Meaning of Βρώσις and Πόσις

Before delving into the crucial terms “feast, new moon, sabbath,” two other crucial matters need attention, the first of these being the “food and drink” of verse 16.¹⁸⁸ Kim Papaïouannou pointed out that “some casually observe that this phrase refers to clean and unclean foods and conclude that OT food prohibitions are no longer valid.”¹⁸⁹ However, in accord with others, Robinson Radjagukguk noted in his doctoral thesis that, since “the Levitical code had much to say about clean and unclean food, but not about drink,” the “author probably is not referring directly to OT food laws.”¹⁹⁰ Since “Paul’s words most likely do not refer to OT food prohibitions,”¹⁹¹ an analysis of the biblical materials is imperative.¹⁹² Of its approximately seventy appearances in the LXX¹⁹³ and the New

¹⁸⁸Regarding the meaning of “food” and “drink,” Sokupa pointed to Num 28:29, and then concluded: “Therefore, the ‘food and drink’ in Col 2:16 may refer to the offerings that were associated with ritual sacrifices rather than dietary matters;” (Mxolisi Michael Sokupa, “Σκια τῶν Μελλόντων in Col 2:17: An Interpretation” [PhD dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2009], 158). He may have a point, in that one can find “food” and “drink” offerings together, listed with the “daily” (Num 28:5, 7), the weekly Sabbath (Num 28:9), the New Moon (Num 28:12 [MT vs. 13]), Pentecost (Num 28:28), and last six days of Tabernacles (29:18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 33), plus the “eighth day” related to Tabernacles (Num 29:37). However, since it appears that the background to Hos 2:11 (to which Col 2:16 alludes) is Lev 23, it may be more appropriate to see the “food” and “drink” offerings as stemming from this chapter – as referring to the “daily” (Lev 23:37), Passover/Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:13), and Pentecost (Lev 23:18).

¹⁸⁹Papaïouannou, 135. As, for example, Barth, and Blanke, 338; Homer A. Kent, *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 92, footnote #2. Similarly, Hughes claimed that “dietary rules” were simply a shadow; and “when Jesus came, those dietary laws were abolished;” (R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ*, Preaching the Word Series [Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989], 82). Intriguingly, Hughes (ibid.) asserted: “Unknown to the Jew, there were excellent physical reasons for the Old Testament laws, which Dr. S. I. Macmillen has catalogued in his interesting book, *None of These Diseases*.” It seems strange then, that despite the “excellent physical reasons for the Old Testament laws,” it is claimed that these “dietary laws were abolished.”

¹⁹⁰Robinson Radjagukguk, “Τα Στοιχεῖα Τοῦ Κοσμοῦ and Life with Christ: An Exegetical Study of Col 2:6-3:4” (ThD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1991), 160. Radjagukguk (ibid.) did recognize “except in a few special cases, e.g., priests ministering in the tabernacle, Lev 10:9; cf. liquids contained in unclean vessels, Lev 11:34, 36; and of Nazirite vows, Num 6:3;” yet, still drew his conclusion, as noted above. Similarly, a major committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church concluded that, since “there were no such laws on matters of drink,” the terms βρώσις and πόσις “cannot refer to the Mosaic dietary laws (contrary to many commentators);” (“Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters,” Presented to the Fortieth [1973] General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; see comments under sub-section “6. Colossians 2:16-17;” <https://www.opc.org/GA/sabbath.html> [accessed 22 August 2017]).

¹⁹¹Papaïouannou, 136. Similarly, O’Brien concluded that “Paul is probably not referring directly to the OT food laws;” (Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco, TX: Word, 1982], 138). However, O’Brien added the idea that these were probably “regulations of an ascetic nature” (ibid.), which were apparently “related to obedient submission to the ‘elemental spirits of the universe;”” (ibid., 139). Papaïouannou (136) challenged views such as those of O’Brien’s, noting: “Failing to see OT food prohibitions, some assume that Paul condemns the practice of ascetic syncretists who tried to impose their own food and drink regulations on Colossian believers. But this approach is hardly any more plausible because syncretistic ascetic practices could in no way be a shadow of the body of Christ.”

¹⁹²Young suggested that “it is reasonable to *infer* that the partaking of food and drink refers to communal meals on the festival days [i.e., on the ‘feasts, new moons, and sabbaths’];” (Norman H. Young, “Romans 14:5-6 and Colossians 2:16 in Social Context,” Paper Presented to the Biblical Research Institute Committee at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, October 22-23, 2007, 18, emphasis added). Terms such as “presumably,” “seem,” “probable,” “apparently,” etc. (18-20), are then employed to further bolster the case for speculating that the “food” and “drink” of Col 2:16 refer to “communal meals” on these appointed seasons. This thesis prefers to remain with the consensus of formal/literal English versions (inclusive of the data acquired from an analysis of the actual manner in which the Greek terms were used in the LXX and the NT), which indicates that the nouns “food” and “drink,” instead of the verbs “eating” and “drinking,” are preferred (as noted in the main document of this thesis).

¹⁹³The almost 50 occurrences of βρώμα (or its inflections) in the LXX are used consistently to describe literal food, but never any grain or food offerings connected with temple rituals. See Gen 6:21; 14:11; 41:35 [2x], 36, 48 [3x]; 42:2, 7, 10; 43:2, 4, 20, 22; 44:1, 25; Lev 11:34; 25:6, 37; Deut 2:6, 28; 23:20; 2 Sam 13:5, 7, 10; 1 Kgs 10:5; 12:3; 1 Chron 12:40 [LXX 12:41]; 2 Chron 2:10 [LXX 2:9]; 9:4; 11:11; Job 6:5; Job 20:21; Pss 69:21 [LXX 68:22]; 74:14

Testament,¹⁹⁴ the lexical term βρῶμα¹⁹⁵ is utilized once (or at most twice), and only in the book of Hebrews,¹⁹⁶ to refer to “food/s” directly connected with temple rituals. Analysis of the approximately 40 uses of βρῶσις reveals that, while this Greek word can on occasion be contextually rendered “eating,” or “to eat,”¹⁹⁷ in almost every other case,¹⁹⁸ βρῶσις clearly refers to “food,” at times figuratively,¹⁹⁹ but almost always literally.²⁰⁰ In accord with what is already becoming apparent, it must not be forgotten that βρῶμα and βρῶσις were at times utilized interchangeably in classical Greek.²⁰¹ In a similar manner, Jesus employed both these terms in the same pericope to refer to “food.”²⁰² Also, in Hebrews 12:16 βρῶσις is used to refer to literal “food,” while just a few verses later (in 13:9), the writer used βρῶμα to also refer to “food.”

Though there are far fewer references for comparison, a similar equivalent usage of the terms πόμα and πόσις can be seen in both the LXX²⁰³ and the New Testament.²⁰⁴ Significantly, in connection with the four terms analyzed above, the only place in the LXX where temple ritual food is mentioned is in 1 Samuel 2:28 – and here it uses the word βρῶσις, the same lexical term located in Colossians 2:16.²⁰⁵ According to John 6:55, Jesus used both words to express a ritual meaning,

[LXX 73:14]; 78:18 [LXX 77:18]; 79:2 [LXX 78:2]; 107:18 [LXX 106:18]; Prov 23:6; 31:15; Isa 3:6; 62:8; Ezek 4:10; Hab 1:16; Hag 2:13; Mal 1:12.

¹⁹⁴Of its 17 appearances in the NT βρῶμα is used in a figurative sense three times (in John 4:34; 1 Cor 3:2; 10:3). Other than Heb 9:10, and possibly 13:9 [see footnotes of the NET], it is almost always used to refer to literal food (Matt 14:15; Mark 7:19; Luke 3:11; 9:13; Rom 14:15 [2x], 20; 1 Cor 6:13 [2x]; 8:8, 13; 1 Tim 4:3).

¹⁹⁵Incidentally, the rarely used adjective, βρώσιμος, meaning “eatable,” appears in the LXX in Lev 19:23; Ezek 47:12; and in the NT in Luke 24:41.

¹⁹⁶As in Heb 9:10; and possibly 13:9 [see footnotes of the NET].

¹⁹⁷As in the LXX: 2 Sam 16:2; (possibly Isa 55:10); Jer 15:3; similarly, in the NT: Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 8:4; (and possibly 2 Cor 9:10).

¹⁹⁸The exceptions are the LXX’s Mal 3:11 (used fig. as “devourer”); and Matt 6:19, 20 (where it is fig. rendered as “rust”).

¹⁹⁹John 6:27 [2nd occurrence]; 6:55.

²⁰⁰In the LXX, see Gen 1:29, 30; 2:9; 3:6; 9:3; 25:28; 47:24; Lev 7:24 [LXX 7:14]; 25:7; Judg 14:14 [Codex Alexandrinus]; 1 Sam 2:28; 2 Sam 19:42; Job 33:20; 34:3; Ps 104:21 [LXX 103:21]; Jer 7:33; 19:7; 41:20; Lam 1:19; 4:10; Ezek 47:12; Dan 1:10; Hab 3:17 [LXX 4:17]. In the NT, see John 4:32; 6:27 [1st occurrence]; Heb 12:16. The only other occurrence is in Col 2:16, which will be addressed.

²⁰¹See Bauer (1979), 148. Referring to the primary meaning of these two terms in classical Greek, Kropatschek noted that “*brōma* (from Hippocrates on) and *brōsis* (from Homer on) both mean: (a) what is eaten, food;” (Hans Kropatschek, “βρῶμα,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 2:268). Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance* (85, footnote #130) aptly challenged: “Lohse’s claim, *Colossians*, 115, that βρῶσις and πόσις should be distinguished from βρῶμα (1 Cor. 3.2; 6.13; 8.8, 13; 10.3; Rom. 14.15) and πόμα (1 Cor. 10.4) is tenuous.”

²⁰²The first use (in John 4:32) of βρῶσις was for literal food, while the second (in vs. 34) of βρῶμα was for figurative food.

²⁰³Appearing only in Ps 102:9 [LXX 101:10], and Dan 1:10 πόμα refers to literal drink. While πόσις only appears in Dan 1:16, it is clearly parallel to πόμα of vs. 10.

²⁰⁴In the NT, πόμα refers to literal drink in Heb 9:10, and figurative drink in 1 Cor 10:4. In Rom 14:17 πόσις can be rendered either as “drinking” or “drink.” The only other occurrence is in Col 2:16, which will be addressed.

²⁰⁵In addition, Harris (118) indicated that “by metonymy, *brōsis* can be equivalent to *brōma*, ‘food,’ and πόσις to *poma*, ‘drink,’” so that one can translate “‘what you eat or drink’” (as in the NAB, NEB, NIV, etc.).

when He stated: “‘For my flesh is food [βρώσις] indeed, and My blood is drink [πόσις] indeed.’” In short, while the terms βρώσις and πόσις may on occasion designate “eating” and “drinking,” they are better rendered with the words “food” and “drink,”²⁰⁶ as seen mostly in formal translations (e.g., ESV, MEV, NAB, NASB, NKJV, NRSV, etc.).²⁰⁷

As G. K. Beale pointed out in his 2011 tome on New Testament biblical theology, “the ‘food’ and ‘drink’ in Col. 2:16 likely have as part of the background food and drink *offerings* that were to take place in the temple”²⁰⁸ – an integral part of the Israelite cultic system.²⁰⁹ Though different Greek terms are used, the “food and drink” mentioned here in Colossians 2:16 appear to be the same as those referred to in Hebrews 9:10,²¹⁰ as they are similarly connected with the ritual regulations which pointed forward to the Messiah.²¹¹ In other words, since “throughout the Old Testament, ‘meat’ and ‘drink,’ used in conjunction, consistently refer to meat-offerings and drink-offerings,”²¹² and because the “food and drink” here appear in the context of “the observance of special days,”²¹³ it seems reasonable to conclude that in Colossians 2:16 “these words doubtless refer to the meal and drink offerings presented by the Israelites,”²¹⁴ in compliance with the ancient ritual system, an example of

²⁰⁶Greek lexicons, such as Bauer (1979), 148 (βρώμα and βρώσις); 690 (πόμα), 694 (πόσις), show that βρώμα and βρώσις can both be rendered “food;” and that πόμα and πόσις also can both be rendered as “drink.” On βρώσις, see also the lexicon by Thayer, and that of Liddell and Scott.

²⁰⁷See also, the HCSB, NET, and RSV. Translators of older formal versions, such as the ASV, also preferred this understanding of these nouns, though they used the old English “meat” for the more modern term “food.” See further, Bauer (2000), 148, 694; Barth, and Blanke, 337; Harris, 118; Gupta, 98.

²⁰⁸G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 794, footnote #43 (emphasis added). Beale (ibid.) recognized that “the same Greek words found in Colossians (*brōsis* and *posis*) do not occur in these OT references (e.g., for ‘food’ offerings, see Lev. 3:11, 16, and even seven other times only in Leviticus; ‘drink’ offerings are also given in the same context of the temple.” He added (ibid.): “‘Grain offerings’ are often found in this combination.”

²⁰⁹Clark (96) noted: “The context speaks of food and drink, feasts, and new moon. All this is ceremonial.”

²¹⁰In Papiouannou’s words (136), relating to Heb 9:9-10: “The cognate terms βρώμα and πόμα are also used of OT food and drink offerings.”

²¹¹While the entire ritual system apparently anticipated the coming Messiah, the distinction between the “burnt offering” (עֹלָה) in which animals were sacrificed, and the “food and drink” offerings (in which there was no death of any animals) must be kept in mind. Apparently, it was understood that the death of Christ was the perfect and final sacrifice (see esp. Heb 8-10), as He was the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29); for “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7). However, it seems that the false teachers in Colossae were seeking to get these believers to engage in “food and drink” offerings, as well as to observe the pilgrim festivals, new moon occasions, and ceremonial sabbaths (though without the killing of any animals, as the sacrificing of animals would have negated the belief of the newly developing Christian community regarding the meaning of the death of Jesus on the Cross). Those who propose that the Colossians were being urged to offer burnt sacrifices apparently overlooked this significant matter.

²¹²“Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters,” sub-section “6. Colossians 2:16-17.” Beale affirmed (Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 794, footnote #43) that “indeed, the combination of ‘meat’ and ‘drink’ offerings occurs often throughout the Pentateuch.”

²¹³Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 86. Papiouannou (136) noted that since “the OT offertory system included food and drink offerings,” it “makes better sense” that the “food and drink” phrase refers to “Israel’s offertory and sacrificial system.”

²¹⁴Nichol, 7:205.

which can be seen in Leviticus 23:13 (ESV): “a *food* offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the *drink* offering with it.”²¹⁵

Ἐν Μέρει: Literal or Idiomatic?

Besides the “food and drink,” the other matter needing attention follows immediately in the Greek text, literally “ἢ ἐν μέρει.” Williams observed that instead of the use of the conjunction καὶ (which, immediately before, served to connect βρώσις with πόσις), Paul may have intentionally now employed the disjunctive particle ἢ, “because he is about to enter on a new group of subjects.”²¹⁶ Reflecting on the ἐν μέρει phrase, Moo similarly proposed “that Paul simply wanted to divide the five issues into two natural groupings.”²¹⁷ Peter O’Brien noted that Paul took the Colossians to task “in two main areas: (a) with respect to *food*..., and (b) regarding *holy days*.”²¹⁸ This recognition of “two main areas” supports the notion that the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase is a separate section, which can legitimately be considered on its own. Furthermore, as indicated above in the analysis of Hosea 2:11, the language, punctuation, and structure similarly indicate that it consisted of basically “two natural groupings” – confirming that Paul was probably alluding to Hosea 2 in Colossians 2.

In recent times, a novel interpretation has been emerging among some Sabbatarian academics, in connection with this Greek phrase, ἐν μέρει, as located in Colossians 2:16 (RSV): “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to [ἐν μέρει] a festival or a new moon or a sabbath.” Instead of the usual manner of rendering ἐν μέρει as “with regard to,” or “with respect to,” it is being asserted that it be translated as “in a part of,” thus implying that Paul was identifying only the sacrifices of the festal calendar, but not to the actual days themselves.²¹⁹

For example, after pointing out that “the primary lexical nuance of μέρος is one ‘part’ of a whole,”²²⁰ Papaouannou set out to form an argument (based essentially on three examples of the

²¹⁵See also Lev 23:37 (ESV), which includes both the “food offering” and the “drink offering.”

²¹⁶Williams, 103. *This* seems a more probable reason than Maris’ theory, as challenged in footnote #219 below.

²¹⁷Moo, 220, footnote #126. Moo (ibid.) was here also challenging the perhaps over-simplistic view of Harris (119), who suggested that the use of ἐν μέρει was so as “to avoid a succession of five datives.” Commenting on the ἐν μέρει used here, exegete Harris suggested that it is “a stylistic variation of the previous simple ἐν, used to avoid a succession of five datives;” (Harris, 185). So also, Ian Smith, 117.

²¹⁸O’Brien, 138 (emphasis original). So also, Daryl Ellis, *Galatians Through Colossians*, Randall House Bible Commentary (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 1988), 415.

²¹⁹See Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians*, 357-358. Similarly, Bradford Maris, “The Case for a New Translation of Colossians 2:16-17: Dispelling a Theological Eclipse of Christianity’s Central Truth;” (Unpublished essay submitted to *Andrews University Seminary Studies*). This essay includes the following problems: (1) Its major argument depends on a textual variant, i.e., that the word καὶ (in ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει) is the “preferred reading,” versus the term ἢ, which appears in other textual witnesses, including the Majority Text. (2) It is claimed that this “new translation” will solve the challenge of the neuter plural relative pronoun ἃ, and the dative neuter singular term μέρει; yet, such is not needed, since “in Greek, it is not unusual to have a neuter plural as subject with a finite verb in the singular as predicate, as here [i.e., ἃ ἔστιν of vs. 17];” (Barth, and Blanke, 339). (3) Without any textual basis, it claims that the χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν “refers to the public decrees prohibiting access to the various regions of the temple compound.”

²²⁰Papaouannou, 130.

literal use of this phrase in the Septuagint), that Colossians 2:16 is dealing with only “one part or aspect of the festal calendar.”²²¹ Then he concluded, that this “aspect” points to the “sacrifices and burnt offerings ..., it can be *assumed*.”²²² While it is correct that μέρος does literally mean “part, in contrast to the whole,”²²³ other factors undercut an overly literalistic translation here. Of the 42 appearances of μέρος in the Greek Testament, it appears as a dative neuter singular noun in only three places, namely Colossians 2:16, and twice in 2 Corinthians. Since Paul produced both of these epistles, the understanding of the meaning of this phrase in this letter to Corinth may be instructive. There is a basic recognition that μέρος in 2 Corinthians 3:10 should be rendered idiomatically as “in this respect,”²²⁴ or “in this case.”²²⁵ Similarly, 2 Corinthians 9:3 is translated as “in this respect,”²²⁶ or “in this case,”²²⁷ or “in this matter.”²²⁸ Since μέρος in Colossians 2:16 appears to be employed in a similar manner, by the same author, it seems best to render this idiomatically as well. In addition to the internal evidence, Heinrich Meyer pointed out that “very frequently also in classical authors,” the phrase ἐν μέρει “with the genitive, designates the *category*,”²²⁹ which “has become weakened to merely mean “in respect of,”²³⁰ or “with regard to,”²³¹ or “concerning.”²³² Concurring with the lexicon, Robert Wilson concluded that, though it literally means “a part in contrast to the whole,” here in Colossians 2:16 it is an “idiomatic phrase,” meaning “in the matter of, in regard to.”²³³ Hence, the entire tripartite phrase is understood as being in view, and not only the sacrifices as proposed.

In a manner somewhat comparable to those who seek to render ἐν μέρει in a literalistic way, other Sabbatarians have suggested, as Paul Giam put it, that “the phrase ‘a festival or a new moon or a sabbath’ appears to have been a catch-phrase tied to the sacrificial system, and [that it] referred

²²¹Ibid., 132.

²²²Ibid., 135 (emphasis added, so as to highlight the fact that this view is admittedly based on *assumption*; and not on the text itself).

²²³Bauer (1979), 505.

²²⁴See, for example, ASV, NKJV, WEB, and YLT.

²²⁵See, for example, ESV, NASB, and RSV.

²²⁶See, for example, ASV, NKJV, WEB, and YLT.

²²⁷See, for example, MEV, NET, NRSV, and RSV.

²²⁸See, for example, ESV, HCSB, ISV, and NIV.

²²⁹Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon*, John C. Moore, trans. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 312 (emphasis added).

²³⁰Williams, 103.

²³¹Olshausen, 352. He stated: “Ἐν μέρει is used adverbially in *profane* writers also, in the sense, ‘with respect to, with regard to,’ and that is here perfectly suitable;” (ibid., emphasis original). See also, Constantine R. Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 42, who noted that it is “an idiom,” “meaning ‘with regard to.’”

²³²Barth, and Blanke, 338.

²³³Wilson, 218. See also, Bauer (1979), 506.

to the offerings at the times designated.”²³⁴ Just as with those promoting a literalistic interpretation of ἐν μέρει, this notion also seems to stand in direct tension with the primary purpose and function of the appointed seasons, especially as specifically articulated in the text itself.²³⁵ In reference to the purpose clause located in the pivotal passage of Leviticus 23:37,²³⁶ Ross Cole’s doctoral research showed that, “The observance of the holy times thus depends upon the operation of the sacrificial system,”²³⁷ all of which culminated with the death of Jesus Christ.²³⁸ In brief, since the biblical passages dealing with the appointed seasons and the sacrifices reveal an essential and inextricable interdependence between them, the innovative suggestion that Colossians 2:16 is dealing with *solely* the sacrifices and *not* the festal calendar, can, with sufficient reason, be justifiably laid aside.²³⁹

²³⁴Paul Giem, “Sabbatōn in Col 2:16,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 19/3 (Autumn 1981): 210. Similarly, Kim Papaouannou, and Mxolisi Michael Sokupa, “Does Colossians 2:16, 17 Abolish the Sabbath? A Fresh Look at a Difficult Text,” *Adventist Review*, <http://archives.adventistreview.org/article/5139/archives/issue-2012-1506/does-colossians-2-16-17-abolish-the-sabbath> (accessed 3 July 2017); Reynolds, “Let No One Judge You,” 215, 216; Sokupa, 217-219; Skip MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained? What the Old and New Covenants Reveal About the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), 192, 211-212; Tim Crosby, “The Apostolic Council and the Ten Commandments,” *Ministry*, April 2005, 15, footnote #5; Roy Gane, “Sabbath and the New Covenant,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10/1-2 (1999): 321-322; Erwin R. Gane, *You Ask, God Answers: Vital Questions on Salvation* (Wildersville, TN: Orion Publishing, 1998), 130; Herbert E. Douglass, *Philippians & Colossians: His Mind in You*, Adult Sabbath School Lessons (Teacher’s Edition), July-September 1994 (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists), 116. Similar hints can be seen in Kenneth H. Wood, “The ‘Sabbath Days’ of Colossians 2:16, 17,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 341. According to Choung Shik Kim, the idea that it was the sacrifices, not the actual Sabbath day referred to in Col 2:16, can be found as early as 1847; (Choung Shik Kim, “Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16-17: Interpretations from 1837 to 1996” [MA thesis, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2002], 11).

²³⁵In their textbook of biblical Hebrew syntax, Waltke and O’Connor made the following point regarding the meaning of clauses that have “the combination of [the preposition] *l* + infinitive construct,” as is the case here in Lev 23:37: “Infinitive clauses with *l* are of various types. Some of these types are analogous to those formed with other prepositions, that is *purpose*, result, and temporal clauses;” (Bruce K. Waltke, and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 605, 606). Or, as Gesenius put it: “The original meaning of the *l* is most plainly seen in those infinitives with *l* which expressly state a purpose;” (E. Kautzsch, ed., A. E. Crowley, trans., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1970], 348). By way of illustration, 1 Kgs 4:34b reads in Hebrew: לשמע את חכמת שלמה. This is rightly rendered by the Hebrew linguists Waltke and O’Connor, as the purpose clause: “in order to listen to the wisdom of Solomon;” (Waltke, and O’Connor, 606). Concurring with this understanding of the Hebrew language, Rodríguez makes the following point in relation to the purpose clause of Lev 23:37: “Each of the festivals was characterized by the joy of bringing offerings and sacrifices to the Lord;” (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Reinventing Ancient Rituals?” *Adventist Review Online*, 10 February 2010). Hence, one cannot legitimately separate the burnt-offerings from the festal calendar, on the basis of what the Greek phrase ἐν μέρει could mean.

²³⁶The JB (of Lev 23:37) captures the essence of this purpose clause thus: “These are the solemn festivals of Yahweh to which you are to summon the children of Israel, sacred assemblies for the purpose of offering burnt offerings.”

²³⁷H. Ross Cole, “The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch: Old Testament Indicators of the Extent of Their Applicability” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 1996), 95. Cole (341) noted that the purpose of the annual seasons was to mark off periods for sacrifice; hence, when sacrifices ended at the Cross, the rest days would not continue.

²³⁸Admittedly, as the timeline of the early church indicates, it took them almost two decades (at the Jerusalem Council of AD 49) before they recognized that circumcision was no longer needed to enter into a covenant relationship with God; then, it took several more years (perhaps by around AD 60, by which time Paul had probably penned this epistle to the Colossians), to come to the realization that the appointed seasons (which they had been observing for about 1,500 years) had lost their primary purpose since they ultimately pointed to the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

²³⁹This speculative notion also de facto implies that it was the “burnt sacrifices” that the Colossians were being urged to do – a factor for which there is no documented evidence. Also, it suggests that, despite Jesus’ death as the Lamb of God (John 1:29; cf. 1 Cor 5:7b), these Christians could still be induced to sacrifice animals. Furthermore, since the clause “let no one judge you,” means that the Colossians should not be worried about criticism, this “burnt sacrifices” interpretation would mean that these believers could offer animal sacrifices if they wanted to – something quite contrary to the Christian belief that the sacrificial system pointed to Jesus Christ, and was abrogated by His death on the Cross.

By way of summary, the following could be said: While the phrase ἐν μέρει has generally not been an issue, some Sabbatarian academics have recently proposed that, if taken literally, it points to only the sacrifices, and not the actual days themselves. Though the lexical evidence in the New Testament may be slim, it seems safer to remain with the idiomatic sense of ἐν μέρει, especially since that is how Paul used the term elsewhere, which is similar to its frequent use among classical authors.

Petr Pokorný succinctly concluded: “It cannot be demonstrated that only the cultic practices (sacrifices), but not ... [the feast, new moon, and sabbath] themselves are targeted;”²⁴⁰ for, “sacrifices are an integral and defining aspect of calendar feasts and holy days.”²⁴¹ Thus, the regular idiomatic understanding of ἐν μέρει, as rendered essentially unanimously in scores of English Bible versions,²⁴² and in accord with standard lexicons,²⁴³ is accepted in this thesis as a fully reliable translation.

Significance of Linguistic Markers²⁴⁴

The NEB renders Colossians 2:16 thus: “Allow no one therefore to take you to task ... over the observance of festival, new moon, or sabbath.” It is that final term “sabbath” that deserves special consideration. In both the Old and New Testaments the word “sabbath” in the original languages has various meanings, as discussed at length in Chapter Three above.²⁴⁵ Since some New Testament

²⁴⁰Pokorný, 143, footnote #2. Troy Martin charged that Giem, “incorrectly argues that this list [in Col 2:16] refers primarily to cultic practices;” (Troy W. Martin, “Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal 4.10 and Col 2.16,” *New Testament Studies* 42 [1996]: 111).

²⁴¹Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete; and The Ascendancy of First-Day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 210. O’Hare (209) concluded: “Paul doesn’t even mention the temple or the sacrifices ... so this proposal is pure presumption.”

²⁴²See AET, AmpB, ANT, ASV, BBE, BLT, BV, CBAT, CCNT, CEV, CJB, CW, DBY, DCB, DRA, ESV, EVD, GNV, GW, HCSB, ICB, ISV, JB, KJ21, KJIV, KJV, LB, LEB, MEV, MLB, MSG, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NCV, NET, NIV, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NLTrev, NLV, NRSV, NWT, OJB, RSV, RV, SS, TCNT, TEV, TNIV, YLT, etc.

²⁴³See Bauer (1979), 505-506; Wilhelm Mundle, “μέρος,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 2:302-303. See also, Thayer.

²⁴⁴Bratcher has shown that Paul, in his 206 references (if one includes statements in Acts, and Hebrews), drew from more than 20 books in the Hebrew Scriptures; (see Bratcher, 31-67). Contrary to what seems commonly assumed by some, dozens of times the New Testament writers quoted from the Old using language that adheres more closely to the MT than to the LXX; (for examples, see Archer, and Chirichigno). There is quite conclusive evidence that, in addition to using the LXX, Paul had access to the Hebrew text. One of the clearest examples is his use of Isa 8:14 in Rom 9:33. Concerning this, Archer and Chirichigno stated: “Here the NT rendering is completely independent of the LXX and corresponds almost perfectly to the MT, as if translated directly from it;” (ibid., 97). This factor suggests caution in too glibly assuming that Paul was using a “common” OT “triad” (as allegedly seen in the passages in 1 and 2 Chron, and Neh). Every quotation, allusion, or reference needs to be investigated individually before conclusions can be drawn. Since essentially all the research that has concluded that Paul is referencing this “triad” has been based on the LXX and/or English versions (while failing to adequately investigate the Hebrew original), their results are understandably suspect.

²⁴⁵Unfortunately, some have superficially read Lev 23, and concluded that the seventh-day Sabbath (as seen in vs. 3) is merely a מועד, i.e., one of the sacred occasions designated for only the Israelites. However, as careful students of Scripture recognize, the term מועד, in the context of ceremonial regulations, refers to an annual occasion, with a yearly date that must be “fixed” by the sighting of the moon. Since the Sabbath has already been established by God as recurring every seventh day, it need not be “fixed,” and is therefore not a מועד. See, for example, Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1950-1965; David W. Baker, *Leviticus*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 167; cf. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 154. The fact that the Sabbath is not a מועד can be seen from the frequent manner in which these terms (שבת and מועד) are used in tandem, as non-overlapping concepts (e.g., 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 8:12-13; Neh 10:33; etc.). The weekly Sabbath is further

texts, including Colossians 2:16, “can be understood only through an accurate understanding of their OT counterparts,”²⁴⁶ such matters have been taken into account already. Hence, only the significant factors directly relevant to Colossians 2:16 will be briefly recapitulated below.

Meticulous examination of all 180 occurrences of the “sabbath” terminology in the Bible (i.e., שַׁבָּת in the Hebrew, and either σάββατον or σάββατα in New Testament Greek),²⁴⁷ reveals that the writing prophets consistently surrounded these terms with definitive, reliable syntactical and linguistic indicators, as well as contextual factors, so as to enable the reader or hearer to quickly recognize what the term “sabbath” refers to in each setting.²⁴⁸ For instance, terms such as “the,” “day,” “keep,” etc., are repeatedly employed to cue in the reader, when the weekly Sabbath is being addressed in the passage.²⁴⁹ At times, language is used to indicate a direct contrast, such as when God refers to the seventh-day Sabbath as “My Sabbath,”²⁵⁰ while He refers to ceremonial sabbaths as “her” or “your” [i.e., Israel’s] annual and/or septennial “sabbaths.”²⁵¹ Just over 85 percent of the time in both the Old and New Testaments the terms for “sabbath” are identified as the weekly Sabbath,²⁵²

differentiated from the rest of the מועדים (“appointed seasons”) by the fact that during all the set times of the festal calendar a divinely-directed fire-offering (אֵשֶׁה) is to be offered as an indispensable part of the daily, monthly, and annual occasions; however, there is *never* such a fire-offering (אֵשֶׁה) intimately intertwined as an integral part of the offerings specifically designated for the weekly Sabbath day. For more on this, see Chapter Four above in this thesis.

²⁴⁶Skip MacCarty, “Responses to Craig L. Blomberg: Response by Skip MacCarty,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 371. Sokupa (85), in dealing with the relevance of the Old Testament for his doctoral study on the σκια τῶν μελλόντων of Col 2:17, noted: “The calendric text in Col 2:16, 17 is characterized by such brevity that it becomes necessary to trace it from its OT background.”

²⁴⁷The investigation of the linguistic links, etc., related to “sabbath” has been intentionally done only in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament, since no translation (including the LXX) seems to provide consistent and reliable renderings. For example, at times the LXX fails to translate שַׁבָּת at all, as in Lev 23:41 and 1 Kgs 8:2. Also, the LXX is inconsistent in the way it renders the terms שַׁבָּת and מועד when they appear in the same passage. These terms are rendered as ἑορτή and πανήγυρις respectively in Ezek 46:11, Hos 2:11 [MT vs. 13], and Hos 9:5. However, in 2 Chron 8:13 and Ezek 45:17, both שַׁבָּת and מועד are rendered as ἑορτή, with no distinction between the two.

²⁴⁸This is similar to the word “fast” in English, which could mean “firm,” “loyal,” “quick,” “unfading,” etc., depending on the context. Ignoring the Jewish ritual context of Col 2:16, as well as the fact that σάββατον/σάββατα can mean different things, some have suggested to follow the so-called “plain meaning of the text.” However, this “plain meaning” appears to be a misnomer for glibly assuming that the seventh-day Sabbath is being spoken of here, instead of allowing the text, in its fuller context, to provide the meaning.

²⁴⁹It is vital to recognize that this type of distinguishing linguistic marker is indispensable *only* because the original Hebrew שַׁבָּת and Greek σάββατον/σάββατα are utilized in Scripture for various appointed seasons and sacred days, as many biblical scholars recognize. Failing to understand that such linguistic markers are restricted in purpose and application, some writers have noted that, in connection with the Hebrew word מועדים (“appointed seasons”), God refers to these as both “My appointed seasons” (Lev 23:2, JPS), and “your (i.e., Israel’s) appointed seasons” (Num 29:39, JPS). Ignoring the fact that מועדים, when used in cultic contexts, has a restricted meaning, and thus does *not* need linguistic markers for identification, these writers then claim that the pronouns (“My” and “her”), as used with שַׁבָּת, may not be mutually exclusive, thus allegedly casting doubt on the linguistic evidence which distinguishes the weekly Sabbath from ceremonial sabbaths. Such, speculative theories, however, are contradicted by the extensive evidence seen in Scripture.

²⁵⁰For example, such use of “My Sabbath/s” in levitical passages, such as Lev 19:3, 30 (which has the immediate context of the decalogue, thus indicating the weekly Sabbath), has been corroborated by doctoral research. See, Mathilde Frey, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: An Exegetical and Theological Study” (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2011), 47, 189, 192, 238-254.

²⁵¹See, for example Lev 23:32; 26:35; Hos 2:11; for further analysis see Chapter Three above.

²⁵²As already noted above, in regard to the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16, Craig Blomberg has alleged that the seventh-day Sabbath is “what Jews universally meant the overwhelming majority of the time when they used the word

while the rest can be linguistically and contextually classified as something else, such as annual ceremonial sabbaths, or even the word “week.”²⁵³ Thus, it is evident that, among other factors, linguistic markers and the immediate context may play a pivotal role in rightly identifying the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16.

A “Yearly/Monthly/Weekly” Triad?

Scrutiny of a purported triad in Numbers 28:2 – 29:39, 1 Chronicles 23:29-31, 2 Chronicles 2:4, 8:12-13, 31:3, Nehemiah 10:33, Ezekiel 45:17,²⁵⁴ and 46:4-15, in the Hebrew language indicated that all of them have at least four parts (not three as seen in Col 2:16); all eight specifically indicate that the special focus is on burnt sacrifices and not the actual days themselves (which contradicts a major emphasis in Col 2:16, where no burnt sacrifices are in view); other than Ezekiel 45:17, all include burnt sacrifices for the *daily* (a factor not present in Col 2:16); all eight employ the specific Hebrew term *תָּגִיג* to identify the yearly “appointed seasons,” in contradistinction to the Greek term *ἑορτή* (as found in Col 2:16), which in the New Testament is restricted to the three pilgrim festivals; besides Ezekiel 46:4-15,²⁵⁵ none of these seven passages has any of the crucial three terms in the singular, as does Colossians 2:16;²⁵⁶ and, all that have a clearly defined sequence, go in a decreasing frequency order – daily, weekly, monthly, yearly – not the reverse (as allegedly in Col 2:16).²⁵⁷ Hence, it appears unlikely that the conscientious Torah scholar, Paul, was dependent upon or alluding to the above-listed passages when discussing the “feast, new moon, and sabbath” of Colossians 2:16.

Sabbath without qualification;” (Craig L. Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. [Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011], 343). Blomberg provided no supportive evidence for this claim (which is especially troubling since there is only *one* known case in which the word “sabbath” appears without qualification, i.e., Acts 1:12. Its historical context, nevertheless, does appear to identify it as the weekly Sabbath). In addition, the reference Blomberg cited for this notion similarly furnished no support for his claim either.

²⁵³For a comprehensive analysis of these 180 appearances of “sabbath” terms in Scripture, see especially Chapter Three above. It bears repeating that this research is based on a serious investigation of the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament. Translations, from the ancient Septuagint to modern versions, are considered only in so far as they corroborate the meaning of these original languages. For example, while modern Greek uses the word *ἑβδομάς* for “week,” *κοινή* Greek never uses *ἑβδομάς*, but only *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* (to render the word “week”) – linguistic evidence that strengthens the case for the above discussion.

²⁵⁴Some English translations of Ezek 45:17 render the crucial Hebrew terms for “feasts,” “new moons,” and “Sabbaths” in a manner that, on the surface, may appear similar to the tripartite sequence located in Col 2:16. However, in addition to the major differences listed above, it should be noted that, (1) While Ezek 45:17 includes the definite article “the” before “Sabbath” (thus identifying it as the weekly Sabbath), there is no such element in Col 2:16 to unequivocally classify the word *σάββατα* in this phrase as the seventh day of the week; and, (2) While Ezek 45 focuses on rules to be obeyed by the prince regarding burnt sacrifices and offerings for the appointed seasons and the weekly Sabbath, contextually Col 2 emphasizes the opposite – immunity from being judged “with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath” (RSV); also, there is no mention of any burnt sacrifices in Col 2:16.

²⁵⁵Even here in Ezek 46:3 the Hebrew terms for the seventh-day “Sabbath” and the “new moon” are in the plural, though one also finds them in the singular in vss. 1, 4, and 6.

²⁵⁶While some may question whether or not the issue of singulars or plurals matters, Paul’s own emphasis on number demonstrates the significance of such, especially when addressing christological concerns. For example, consider Gal 3:16: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”

²⁵⁷For more information, see Chapter Three above.

Meaning of Three Key Greek Terms

As noted earlier in this thesis, just as the Hebrew term $\gamma\eta$ (when referring to the cultic calendar) denotes only the three pilgrim festivals, in the same manner its New Testament Greek equivalent $\epsilon\omicron\pi\rho\tau\eta$ is limited to identifying these same joyous occasions: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.²⁵⁸

Regarding “new moons,” the basic meaning of the Hebrew term $\psi\eta\eta\eta$ or its Greek equivalent $\nu\epsilon\omicron\mu\eta\nu\iota\alpha$ is not controverted.²⁵⁹ As Simon De Vries pointed out, in relation to the religious year of ancient Israel, “the new moon played so important a role,”²⁶⁰ for the “moon governed the dates for other religious festivals.”²⁶¹

Finally, as noted already, the simple Hebrew term $\eta\alpha\psi$, with its Greek equivalent $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\beta\beta\alpha\tau\alpha$, was used for the Day of Atonement. Moreover, the Day of Trumpets was rendered as forms of $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\beta\beta\alpha\tau\alpha$ in some early Greek manuscripts. Furthermore, the septennial Sabbatical Years, labeled $\eta\alpha\psi$ in the Hebrew, are repeated translated as $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\beta\beta\alpha\tau\alpha$ in the Septuagint. Thus, all of these three cultic seasons – Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years – have been classified in Greek manuscripts as $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\beta\beta\alpha\tau\alpha$.²⁶² Though attempting to argue against the Sabbath, Francis Nigel Lee did admit that, in the “event of the ‘*sabbata*’ of Col. 2:16 excluding the weekly seventh-day sabbath, the word would then denote the annual, [as well as] septennial ... sabbath(s).”²⁶³

²⁵⁸See especially, “Examination of ‘Feasts’ in Scripture,” above.

²⁵⁹See especially Chapter Five above.

²⁶⁰Simon J. De Vries, “Calendar,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, vol. 1: A-D, George Arthur Buttrick, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 485.

²⁶¹*Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Ronald F. Youngblood, ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1995), s.v. “Moon.”

²⁶²Some have wondered about Sabbatical Years being classified as part of Israel’s religious system. In addition to what has already been pointed out in previous Chapters in this thesis, note the following. Payne stated: “The basic reason for the Sabbatical Year was religious, however: to demonstrate that the land, and indeed all creation, is ultimately subject to God’s law, not to human desires. The Sabbatical Year is repeatedly designated as ‘to the Lord’ (Lev. 25:2, 4). It is ‘the Lord’s release’ (Dt. 15:2)... Indeed, the year of release was enforced *only* for God’s people, the Hebrews, not for foreigners (Dt. 15:1-3);” (J. B. Payne, “Sabbatical Year,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 253). The following also point out that the Sabbatical Year was an integral part of Israel’s religious “festivals:” Merrill F. Unger, “Festivals,” *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, R. K. Harrison, ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 407-408; *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Feasts and Festivals;” Samuel J. Schultz, *Leviticus: God Among His People*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 118-119; Hobart E. Freeman, “Festivals,” *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rea, eds. (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 599, 601; E. Elmer Harding, “Feasts and Fasts,” *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. I, James Hastings, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 859-860.

²⁶³Francis Nigel Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath* (London: Lord’s Day Observance Society, 1969), 287, footnote #419. Lee maintained that this is “very unlikely,” but provides no evidence for such. After the word “septennial,” Lee added, “and/or quinquagenarian.” Since the Jubilee is never classified as a “sabbath” in Scripture, this part of Lee’s statement has been removed. Apparently realizing the implications of his frank admission, Lee then alleged: “But even then, the weekly Saturday sabbath would still be abolished by virtue of its inclusion under the ‘festive day’ (*heortai*) in the same verse.” As shown in this thesis, such a claim has no merit, since $\epsilon\omicron\pi\rho\tau\eta$ is used in the New Testament to refer to the three pilgrim festivals, and is never used of the weekly Sabbath in either the LXX or the Greek Testament.

The Definite Article with Σάββατα

English versions do not reveal to the reader that the word “sabbath” actually derives from two different words (σάββατον and σάββατα), as morphological studies attest.²⁶⁴ Analysis shows that the lexical form σάββατον is used about 40 times to refer to the weekly Sabbath,²⁶⁵ yet it includes a definite article for only about half of these occurrences.²⁶⁶ However, an intriguing factor emerges when the language usage of New Testament Greek is examined relative to the form σάββατα, in all of its appearances, besides that of Colossians 2:16.²⁶⁷

Of these 18 occurrences of the lexical term σάββατα, the synoptic gospels employ it for a total of 13 times as τοῖς σάββασιν;²⁶⁸ furthermore, in his writings Luke uses it three times as τῶν σαββάτων.²⁶⁹ Significantly, in *all* 16 occasions in which σάββατα irrefutably refers to the weekly Sabbath, σάββατα is immediately preceded by a definite article. In Acts 17:2 the phrase σάββατα τρία appears (i.e., “three Sabbaths”);²⁷⁰ hence, it is grammatically inappropriate to include the definite article before it, even though it too refers to weekly Sabbaths. Matthew 28:1 begins: Ὁψὲ δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων (literally: “Now after Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward first of week”).²⁷¹ Since the context identifies the lexical σάββατα as the day that immediately precedes the “first [day] of [the] week” (i.e., the seventh-day Sabbath), it is completely unnecessary to include a definite article in this case. Also, this is the *only* time in the New Testament when σάββατα is used in the same sentence to identify firstly the “Sabbath,” then the “week.” In brief, throughout κοινή Greek, whenever σάββατα is employed on its own to identify a single seventh-day Sabbath (without the type of context as in Matt 28:1), it is *always* preceded by the definite article.²⁷²

²⁶⁴See Lucille Harper-Knapp, “A Critical Study of the Greek Words *Sabbaton* and *Sabbata*” (MA thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1949), 2. See also, Eduard Lohse, “*Sabbaton*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., and abridged in one vol. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 989; Bauer (2000), 909–910; Harold K. Moulton, ed., σάββατον, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 361.

²⁶⁵See Matt 12:2, 5, 8; 24:20; Mark 2:27 (2x), 28; 6:2; 15:42 [i.e., προσάββατον]; 16:1; Luke 6:1, 5, 6, 7; 13:14 (2x), 15, 16; 14:1, 3, 5; 23:54, 56; John 5:9, 10, 16, 18; 7:22, 23 (2x); 9:14, 16; 19:31 (2x); Acts 1:12; 13:27, 42, 44; 15:21; 18:4; (as well as Luke 6:9, NU).

²⁶⁶See Matt 12:5, 8; Mark 2:27 (2x), 28; 15:42; 16:1; Luke 6:5, 7, 9; 13:14 (2x), 15, 16; 14:3, 5; 23:56; John 5:18; 9:16; 19:31 (2x).

²⁶⁷Some of the material in this sub-section, including the entire following paragraph is from Ron du Preez, “The Sabbath of Colossians 2:16: Reflections on a Debated Text,” in *The Sabbath and the Bible*, Theological Symposium, vol. 1 (Nairobi, Kenya: Adventist Theological Society, Adventist University of Africa, 2017), 80–81.

²⁶⁸Matt 12:1, 5, 10, 11, 12; Mark 1:21; 2:23, 24; 3:2, 4; Luke 4:31; 6:2 [TR has 6:9 as τοῖς σάββασιν]; 13:10.

²⁶⁹Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14; 16:13.

²⁷⁰That this self-evidently referenced weekly Sabbaths is clear from the point made that Paul went to “a synagogue of the Jews” (Acts 17:1), “as his custom was” and “reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (vs. 2).

²⁷¹For lexical reasons for rendering ὀψὲ as “after,” see Bauer (1979), 601.

²⁷²This essentially consistent connection of the definite article with σάββατα appears as a distinct contrast to the manner in which the term σάββατον is employed in the New Testament to refer to the weekly Sabbath. Of the 41 usages of σάββατον, a definite article is directly connected to it only 20 times (Matt 12:5, 8; Mark 2:7 [2x], 28; 16:1; Luke 6:5,

Interestingly, the lexical form utilized in Colossians 2:16 is *σάββατα*. If the *σάββατα* were here intended to refer to the weekly Sabbath, then the reader would expect there to be an attached definite article, or some other explicit grammatical and/or contextual information (as noted above), as seems to be the consistent pattern throughout the entire New Testament.²⁷³ There is, however, no definite article linked to *σάββατα* here. This rather unique usage of *σάββατα*, which contrasts with the way it appears to be normally used for the weekly Sabbath, may thus contribute to prodding the reader once more in the direction that the *σάββατα* located in Colossians 2:16 probably refers to Israel's cultic annual, and even septennial sabbaths.

The Issue of Consistency of Interpretation²⁷⁴

One final matter regarding the linguistics of Colossians 2:16 needs attention – the issue of “consistency” in interpreting the *σάββατα* here. As Dudley Canright challenged: “The word Sabbath occurs sixty times in the New Testament. In fifty-nine times out of the sixty, it is freely admitted by all Sabbatarians that the weekly Sabbath is meant; but in the sixtieth case, where exactly the same word is used both in Greek and English, they say it must mean some other day.”²⁷⁵ In a recent publication on Paul and the law, Papaïouannou similarly alleged, “that the word *σάββατον* refers almost exclusively ... to the weekly Sabbath. Consistency would suggest, but not require, that the same Sabbath is in view here.”²⁷⁶ Showing the fallacy of the argument for consistency of translation

7, 9; 13:14 [2x], 15, 16; 14:3, 5; 23:56; John 5:18; 9:16; 19:31 [2x]).

²⁷³Versions, such as the KJV and the Douay-Rheims Bible have the definite article “the” immediately before *σάββατα* in their renderings of Col 2:16. However, as Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown noted, one must “omit ‘the,’ which is not in the Greek;” (Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979]).

²⁷⁴One of the challenges of adequate interpretation relates to the matter of inserting one's own views into the text. It seems that this is what may have happened in the following “interpretation” of Col 2:16-17: “‘Let no one critique you by your eating and drinking or in respect to your feast, new moon or Sabbaths which practices are a shadow of things to come but let everyone discern the body of Christ by your eating and drinking or in respect to your feast, new moon, or Sabbaths;’” (Troy W. Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 118 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 133). Twenty-two words (all italicized for emphasis) have been inserted, apparently to prove a point. Such are the hazards of personal biases. Though not as glaring, it seems that a similar type of unwarranted wording appears in the following so-called “more accurate” rendition of Col 2:16: “‘Therefore do not let anyone judge you in eating and drinking, either [particle *εἴ*] as part of a festival, or [*εἴ*] of a new moon, or [*εἴ*] of Sabbaths, which is a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ;’” (Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians*, 357, italics original; underlining added). Here the dative *ἐν μέρει* has been rendered into English in a genitive sense, apparently so as to support a somewhat idiosyncratic theory.

²⁷⁵D. M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Refuted: In a Nutshell* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1970, reprint), 39. [This is a reprint of Dudley Marvin Canright, *Adventism Refuted in a Nutshell* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1889)]. Similar claims have been made by others, such as Walter Martin, who asserted: “It is significant that in 59 of 60 occurrences in the New Testament, Adventists affirm that they refer to the weekly Sabbath; but in the 60th occurrence they maintain it does not, although all grammatical authorities contradict them;” (Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960], 164, emphasis original). See also, Russell, 40.

²⁷⁶Papaïouannou, 129. The ellipsis is where the writer stated “(67 of 68 times).” The count of 68 total is due to the omission of *προσάββατον* in Mark 15:42. Also, ignoring the evidence from the LXX, the essentially consistent trend of Bible translations over the centuries, as well as NT textual evidence, that the words *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* have rightly been translated as “week” (depending on linguistic links, etc.), Papaïouannou claimed that “the Greek word for week is *ἑβδομάς*. The use of the word *σάββατον* therefore does not mean ‘week’ but rather signifies the Sabbath as the apex of the week to which other days of the week point to;” (ibid.). It seems that one example (Luke 18:12, where *δις*

of *σάββατα* in Colossians 2:16, Kenneth Wood used a frog as an illustration: “Clearly, to argue that because fifty-nine times the word means a four-legged creature it must mean the same in the statement ‘I have a frog in my throat’ is nonsense. Meaning must always be decided by context.”²⁷⁷

In addition to all the matters considered thus far, the following factors relating to the specific appearance of *σάββατα* in this epistle needs to be taken into account. First, it is the *only* time in the entire New Testament where the term *σάββατα* is used in a phrase with *ἑορτή*. Second, it is the *solitary* occasion in the New Testament where *νεομηνία* appears, and here it is linked to *σάββατα*. Third, this is the *exclusive* appearance of the word *σάββατα* in any of the epistles (all of the others being in the Gospels and Acts). Fourth, this is the *single* instance, after the crucifixion of Jesus, where specific instructions are given to Christians regarding how to relate to the *σάββατα*. Fifth, as just noted in the above sub-section, this is a lucidly *atypical* usage of *σάββατα* (i.e., without any definite article), for throughout New Testament Greek the lexeme *σάββατα* is consistently preceded by a definite article, whenever it is used on its own (without any other clearly identifying immediate contextual factors, as in Matt 28:1), to identify a single seventh-day Sabbath. Sixth, this is a *singular* setting for *σάββατα*; as Gordon Clark put it: “The context speaks of food and drink, feasts, and new moons. All this is ceremonial.”²⁷⁸ Thus, in view of Blomberg’s cogent comment that “this is a *unique* context,”²⁷⁹ it seems there are sufficient credible indications to reasonably conclude that the term *σάββατα* in Colossians 2:16 may indeed have a meaning different than is commonly expected;²⁸⁰ i.e., that it identifies the ritual sabbaths, not the seventh-day Sabbath.

Literary Structures in Colossians

In his commentary on *The Letter to the Colossians*, Eduard Schweizer recognized that in Colossians 2:16, “the sequence festival – new moon – sabbath corresponds *precisely* to that of the Greek Bible (Hos. 2:13 [MT]).”²⁸¹ In addition, as Christopher Seitz’s recent commentary suggested:

τοῦ σαββάτου means “twice a *week*”) suffices to challenge the novel and somewhat idiosyncratic theory of Papaioannou.

²⁷⁷Wood, 339. Stuart rightly noted that the primary question in lexical analysis is “the question of meaning in its immediate context;” (Douglas Stuart, “Exegesis,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, ed., vol. 2: D-G [New York: Doubleday], 1992). Stuart concluded (ibid.): “Thus the final question must always be ‘How is it used here?’”

²⁷⁸Clark, 94.

²⁷⁹Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” 343, footnote #92 (emphasis added).

²⁸⁰Unique interpretations are not unheard of in Scripture. For example, as pointed out in Chapter Three above, while the Hebrew term *שַׁבָּת* is usually used for the weekly Sabbath, it used only *once* as a free-standing term for the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:32). Apparently, many Bible translators understood that the appearance of *σάββατα* in Col 2:16 was a unique case; this can be seen from the manner in which they have rendered it in various English Bibles, as shown in the Excursus at the end of Chapter Three.

²⁸¹Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*, Andrews Chester, trans. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 155 (emphasis added). The *only* point being made here is that Schweizer apparently acknowledged the correspondence between the *sequence* of the three crucial terms in Hos 2:13 [MT], and that of Col 2:16. Schweizer’s capitalized “Sabbath” (which he views as the seventh-day Sabbath), has been given a lowercase here. Talbert (215) similarly indicated that (in Hos 2:11, among others), “the list of days, corresponds exactly.”

“Perhaps, Hosea’s negative ambiance is in view” here in this passage.²⁸² Thus, if the writer of this epistle was actually alluding to that phrase in Hosea 2, and appropriately adopting it as an inverted parallelism, this tripartite phrase may have significant implications for properly understanding the calendric string in Colossians 2:16. Nevertheless, if it cannot be conclusively proven that this “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase actually derives from either the language and/or the structure of Hosea 2:11, the valuable information already gained from the broad investigation of the biblical materials related to the overall cultic system of ancient Israel will be useful here. In addition to this background, the best lexicographical meaning of the terms, the evidence from linguistic indicators, the internal and larger contexts, as well as the literary structure of the Colossian passage itself should enable one to make a reasonably certain determination as to the best interpretation of this three-part phrase, including its most contested lexical term, *σάββατα*.

Chiasms in the Colossian Epistle

In his research on *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, John Welch pointed out “that chiasmus pervades Colossians.”²⁸³ In basic accord, Heil’s scholarly research on literary structures in this epistle revealed that there are several microchiasms in Colossians, besides the fact that the entire book evinces the following macrochiastic structure:

- A: 1:1-2: Grace from Paul an Apostle by the Will of God
- B: 1:3-14: Thanking God When Praying for You to Walk in Wisdom
- C: 1:15-23: The Gospel Preached to Every Creature under Heaven
- D: 1:24-2:5: We Are Admonishing and Teaching Every Human in All Wisdom
- E: 2:6-23: Walk and Live in Christ with Whom You Have Died and Been Raised
- E’: 3:1-7: You Died and Were Raised with Christ from Living as You Once Walked
- D’: 3:8-16: In All Wisdom Teaching and Admonishing One Another
- C’: 3:17-4:1: You Have a Master in Heaven
- B’: 4:2-6: Pray for Us in Thanksgiving and Walk in Wisdom
- A’: 4:7-18: Full Assurance in All the Will of God and Grace from Paul²⁸⁴

Looking at a micro-structure, Ralph Martin analyzed Colossians 1:15-20, and concluded that these “six verses have a literary and lexical stamp all their own.”²⁸⁵ This includes artistic evidence

²⁸²Christopher R. Seitz, *Colossians*, Brazos’ Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 135.

²⁸³John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981), 222.

²⁸⁴Heil, 37. As noted in Chapter Five above, this thesis will be using the nomenclature suggested by Heil in his seminal study: “Macrochiasm,” for large swaths of work, such as an entire book; “Microchiasm,” for distinct units; and “Mini-chiasm,” for sentences [or perhaps even phrases]. See *ibid.*, 37, 104.

²⁸⁵Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul’s Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 115.

of the “careful positioning of some key phrases such as ‘firstborn’, and the use made of the device of chiasmus (i.e., a criss-cross arrangement), as in verses 16c and 20:”²⁸⁶

A All things ————— B' And through him
 B Through him and ————— A' All things²⁸⁷

In an exegetical study Ekkehardt Mueller has more carefully and precisely identified the intricate linguistic composition and hermeneutical import of the literary structure of the passage in Colossians 1:15-20:²⁸⁸

A **He is** {the image of the invisible God,
 {the **firstborn** of all creation.

For in Him all things were created ...
all things have been created *through Him* and for Him.

B And He is before all things,
 C and in Him all things hold together.
 B' And He is the head of the body, the church;

A' **He is** {the beginning
 {the **firstborn** from the dead ...

For in Him it was His Father’s good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell, and *through Him* to reconcile *all things* to Himself ...

Significance of Structure for Interpretation

Mueller pointed out that the term “firstborn” is used twice in the above pericope. He then noted:

As Jesus is the firstborn of creation so He is the firstborn of the dead. The second phrase, which explains the first, makes it clear that the issue is not birth. Jesus was raised from the dead but not literally born from the dead. Second, He was not first in a temporal sense. Others were raised before Him. He was the first in the sense that all resurrections whether past or future were and are dependent on His resurrection.... As in Psalm 89, so here too, being “firstborn” is associated with having supremacy.²⁸⁹

Furthermore, since the text and immediate context directly state that through Jesus, the image of God, all things were created, it is clear that “He Himself is not created.”²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶Ibid.

²⁸⁷Ibid.

²⁸⁸Ekkehardt Mueller, “Focus on Scripture: The Firstborn (Col 1:15),” *Reflections: A BRI Newsletter*, October 2005, 7.

²⁸⁹Ibid., 8.

²⁹⁰Ibid., 7

In brief, the literary structure is key to the correct understanding and translation of the term πρωτότοκος. When the passage is diagramed as above, it becomes quite clear that the Greek term πρωτότοκος (i.e., “firstborn”) does not refer to the order of the literal birth of Jesus by Mary, or to Him allegedly being created by God or emanating from God in ages past. Rather, πρωτότοκος “points to Christ’s exalted position as the supreme king and ruler of the universe.”²⁹¹ The literary structure enables one to accurately determine the actual meaning of a specific term. Regarding the significance of literary structures in Colossians, Welch noted: “By appreciating the divisions and development of these thoughts within this significant letter, one may follow Paul’s thought with added clarity.”²⁹² If the actual form of the passage is so vital here in Colossians 1, it seems that a proper understanding of the literary structure of Colossians 2, would similarly elucidate the meaning of Colossians 2:16.

Inverted Parallelisms in Colossians 2²⁹³

When dealing with the “Central Argument of the Epistle” above, Thomson’s microchiastic outline of Colossians 2:6-19 was noted, as “it lies at the heart of the letter. Its analysis as a chiasmus enriches our understanding of the movement of Paul’s thought.”²⁹⁴

First, the value of this microchiastic pattern is that it shows “how Paul develops his thought logically and consistently.”²⁹⁵ But second, and more importantly, recognition of such literary forms assists the reader in better understanding the message intended by the writer. In addition to the macrostructure of the entire epistle, and the microstructure of specific units, Heil’s research demonstrates that Colossians 2:6b-7a has a mini-chiasm, with sub-elements that help the reader and/or listener to understand the meaning better:

- A** in him (ἐν αὐτῷ)
- B** go on walking (περιπατεῖτε)
- B’** having been rooted and being built up (ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομούμενοι)
- A’** in him (ἐν αὐτῷ)²⁹⁶

In addition to the above examples of intricate literary structures, just five verses beyond the tripartite phrase of verse 16, Colossians 2:21 contains a brief inverted semantic pattern of chiasmus.

²⁹¹Ibid., 8.

²⁹²Welch, 225.

²⁹³Heil (22) observed that “an A-B-C-D-D’-C’-B’-A’ chiastic pattern secures this fourth unit’s (1:24-2:5) integrity and distinctiveness.” The end of this microchiasm (in vs. 5) dovetails well with the next one, which Thomson outlined, beginning in vs. 6.

²⁹⁴Thomson, 152.

²⁹⁵Ibid., 184.

²⁹⁶Heil, 104. Instead of lowercase letters used by Heil (a, b) capitals have been used here (A, B).

Initially, this three-part phrase needs to be considered as a simple mini-chiasm,²⁹⁷ with a basically synonymous concept in A' echoing that of A.²⁹⁸

- A “Do not touch” (μη ἅψη)
B “Do not taste” (μηδὲ γεύση)
A’ “Do not handle” (μηδὲ θίγης)

As seen above, μηδὲ γεύση is generally rendered as “do not taste.”²⁹⁹ However, just as some versions translate μη ἅψη as “do not touch,”³⁰⁰ and others as “do not handle,”³⁰¹ in the same way μηδὲ θίγης is interpreted as either “do not handle”³⁰² or “do not touch.”³⁰³ Thus, just a few verses after Colossians 2:16, a brief inverted parallelism appears, in which the movement is from “touch” to “taste” and back to “touch” again.

Augmented Mini-Chiasm in Colossians 2

As discussed in Chapter Five above, when A' not merely echoes A, but moves the concept further, it is this emphatic aspect, “more than any aesthetic of symmetry or paralleling, which is at the *heart* of biblical parallelism.”³⁰⁴ This recognition mandates closer scrutiny of Colossians 2:21, to discern whether this simple mini-chiasm may actually contain an augmented inverted parallelism.

While there is some debate about its precise meaning, it appears that ἅπτω is best rendered with the simple English word “touch.”³⁰⁵ The corresponding word in this inverted parallelism, θιγγάνω, is often described with stronger, intensified terms such as “to harm,”³⁰⁶ or “to do violence to.”³⁰⁷ Though parallel concepts, ἅπτω seems generally more gentle, and is even used “of touching

²⁹⁷This is from the NKJV.

²⁹⁸For example, Bauer interpreted μη ἅψη as “you must not touch or handle;” (Bauer [1979], 102).

²⁹⁹See the following Bible versions: ASV, BV, CEV, ESV, GW, HCSB, MLB, NAB, NASB, NCV, NEB, NET, NIV, NKJV, NRSV, REB, RSV, RV, TEV, TNIV, and YLT.

³⁰⁰See, for example, BV, DCB, MLB, NKJV, YLT, etc.

³⁰¹See, for example, ASV, CEV, ESV, HCSB, NAB, NASB, NEB, NET, NIV, NRSV, REB, RSV, RV, TNIV, etc.

³⁰²See, for example, BV, DCB, MLB, NKJV, YLT, etc.

³⁰³See, for example, ASV, CEV, ESV, HCSB, NAB, NASB, NEB, NET, NIV, NRSV, REB, RSV, RV, TNIV, etc. In fact, the index to Bauer's lexicon renders both ἅπτω and θιγγάνω as “touch;” (John R. Alsop, ed., *An Index to the Revised Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek Lexicon*, 2nd ed. by F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 412).

³⁰⁴James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 51 (emphasis added). Though Kugel was specifically dealing with a somewhat different aspect of parallelism, his concept applies well to this matter of emphatic or augmented inverted parallelisms.

³⁰⁵See Bauer (2000), 126; Henry George Liddell, and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 231; *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Joseph Henry Thayer, rev. and enl. (New York: American Book Company, 1889), 70; Edward Robinson, *A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament*, new ed., rev. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1850), 90. In 1 Cor 7:1 ἅπτω is used as a circumlocution for sexual intercourse. This somewhat euphemistic usage of ἅπτω synchronizes well with the above idea, since it can once more be seen as a more gentle form of touching, than the rougher term θιγγάνω.

³⁰⁶Robinson, 337.

³⁰⁷Thayer, 291.

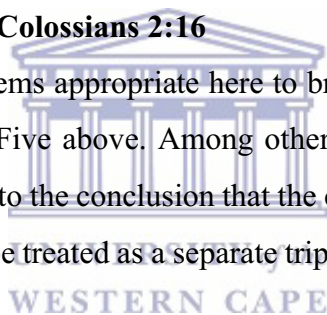
as a means of conveying a blessing.³⁰⁸ The latter word, *θιγγάνω*, seems more emphatic, as it includes handling “in a hostile sense.”³⁰⁹

In the immediate context of Colossians 2:21, Walter Bauer’s Greek-English lexicon suggests that this phrase – “Touch not, taste not, handle not”³¹⁰ – may mean, do not “*eat, enjoy, consume*.”³¹¹ Once again, it appears that, while the terms *eat* and *consume* are parallel, the final word intensifies or emphasizes the first. Furthermore, this rendition of the three-part phrase also highlights the central importance of the word *taste* (interpreted here as “*enjoy*”) for the mini-chiastic structure. Colossians 2:21 therefore seems to be an apt illustration of an **A B A⁺** augmented inverted mini-chiasm, the **+** symbol indicating intensification:

- A** μὴ ἄψῃ
Do not [gently] touch
- B** μηδὲ γεύσῃ
Do not taste
- A⁺** μηδὲ θίγῃς
Do not [roughly] handle

Comparison of Hosea 2:11 and Colossians 2:16

By way of reminder, it seems appropriate here to briefly recall some relevant research on Hosea 2:11, as done in Chapter Five above. Among other factors, linguistic, punctuational and structural elements in the text led to the conclusion that the central three terms were identified as a distinct grouping, and needed to be treated as a separate tripartite phrase. Hence, it was diagrammed as follows:



Reference	ANNUAL-“Pilgrimly”	MONTHLY	ANNUAL-“Sabbatically” ⁺
Hosea 2:11 [MT: vs. 13]	הַגָּד = <i>her</i> feasts [i.e., pilgrimage festivals]: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, & Tabernacles	הַחֲדָשִׁים = <i>her</i> new moons	וְשַׁבְּתֵיהֶן = and <i>her</i> sabbaths [i.e., ceremonial]: Trumpets, Atonement, and (septennial) Sabbatical Years

In brief, it appears that the calendric string in Hosea 2:11 – “feast, new moon, sabbath” – constitutes an intensified mini-chiasm: **A B A⁺**. The movement goes from *annual* to *monthly*, and then to augmented *annual* appointed seasons:

³⁰⁸Bauer (2000), 126.

³⁰⁹Ibid., 456.

³¹⁰This is from the DRA.

³¹¹Bauer (2000), 126 (emphasis original).

- A three pilgrim festivals = *annual*
- B the lunar new moons = *monthly*
- A* three ritual sabbaths = 2 *annual* and 1 *septennial*

Vital linguistic similarities exist between the tripartite calendric string in Hosea 2:11 and that of Colossians 2:16. In basic agreement with many other writers, Schweizer has concluded that in Colossians 2:16, “the sequence festival – new moon – sabbath corresponds precisely to that of” Hosea 2:11.³¹² There appear to be several specific reasons that, if he were actually alluding to the Old Testament, Paul would most likely have chosen to use the tripartite phrase from Hosea 2:11 in Colossians 2:16:

- It is a three-part grouping: “feast, new moon, sabbath,” not four as the other allegedly analogous passages are.
- It lacks any mention of the “daily” (or “continual”) as can be seen in virtually all of the putatively similar passages.
- It has the identical sequence: first “feast,” second “new moon,” and third “sabbath;” not the reverse.
- Unlike the plural terminology in the Hebrew text of basically all the other purportedly parallel passages in Scripture, the three crucial Hebrew terms in Hosea 2:11 are all stated in the singular, just as all three of the terms in Colossians 2:16 – a potentially significant linguistic matter for Paul, as noted above.
- It lacks any linguistic markers to incontrovertibly identify it as the seventh-day Sabbath, in contradistinction to all the other supposedly matching texts.³¹³
- This text deals with ritual times per se, not burnt sacrifices as the other professedly corresponding passages do.
- It deals with the culmination of cultic set times and is not merely listing them as the other presumably comparable texts do.

³¹²Schweizer, 155 (emphasis added). A lowercase “s” has been substituted for Schweizer’s capital “Sabbath.” Similarly, Reynolds admitted: “It is not difficult to agree that Hos 2:11 is probably the best literary background for Col 2:16;” (Edwin Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47 [Autumn 2009]: 279). As to the timing of the “cessation” of these festal celebrations, Griffith (141) noted: “The context of the prophecy does not mention when this time will occur. Likewise, most commentators do not attempt to identify the time of its fulfillment. A few suggest that this occurred when Israel was driven into exile with the intermission of its temple existence, sacrifices, and outward worship. However, several factors make this view untenable.” Moreover, in the context of this chapter in Hosea, this threat of the cessation of festal celebrations appears to describe one of the possible courses of action of Yahweh for punishing His wayward “wife,” Israel – a course of action which, in the context of the rest of the thesis, He does not pursue, at least not initially.

³¹³Naturally, the lack of any linguistic markers does not prove directly which *σάββατα* is being discussed; but, it opens up the possibility of it being either weekly or ritual sabbaths – which is why other factors are being considered.

Colossians 2:16 – Augmented Inverted Parallelism

These seven supportive concepts, together with the evidences of terminological similarities between Hosea 2:11 and Colossians 2:16, as well as the lexical definitions of the crucial terms, and the linguistic indicators, in addition to the overall structure of this tripartite phrase, strongly favor the following semantic pattern of chiasmus – an augmented inverted parallelism:

- A ἑορτή, i.e., three pilgrim festivals = *annual*
- B νεομηνία, i.e., lunar new moons = *monthly*
- A* σάββατα, i.e., three ritual sabbaths = two *annual* and one *septennial*³¹⁴

These similarities between the augmented mini-chiastic structure seen in both Hosea 2:11 and Colossians 2:16 can be diagrammed as follows:

Reference	ANNUAL-“Pilgrimly”	MONTHLY	ANNUAL-“Sabbatically”*
Hosea 2:11 [MT: vs. 13]	הגה = <i>her</i> feasts [i.e., pilgrimage festivals]: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, & Tabernacles	השדח = <i>her</i> new moons	התבשח = and <i>her</i> sabbaths [i.e., ceremonial]: Trumpets, Atonement, and (septennial) Sabbatical Years
Colossians 2:16 ³¹⁵	ἑορτῆς = feasts [i.e., pilgrimage festivals]: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, & Tabernacles	νεομηνίας = new moons	σαββάτων = sabbaths [i.e., ceremonial]: Trumpets, Atonement, and (septennial) Sabbatical Years

Conclusions on Literary Form in Colossians 2:16

Some have claimed that it is “totally out of literary character” for the term σάββατα to refer to cultic sabbaths, since this “would read ‘Let no one judge you regarding festivals, new moons, or festivals.’ That would not make sense.”³¹⁶ Ironically, it is the very structure of Semitic thought to communicate frequently in such forms of inverted parallelisms. In the past, chiastic structures have been more readily associated with the Old Testament. However, in recent decades “NT studies have

³¹⁴The question has been raised as to whether or not there is any evidence that the Sabbatical Years were being kept in Colossae at the point in time when this epistle was written to them. Current research has found no archaeological and/or historical evidence to either prove or disprove this factor. However, whether or not the septennial years were being observed is a moot point. Acts 15, especially verse 29, illustrates why: When the early church leaders cautioned the new believers to abstain from πορνεία, this term included all forms of physical sexual immorality, regardless of whether these new believers were practicing all of these forms of immorality. Paul is suggesting that all vestiges of the Jewish ritual economy have been abrogated, regardless of whether particular aspects of it were being observed in any given setting.

³¹⁵These terms are classified as being a “general singular” (Barth, and Blanke, 339), or can be labeled “collective singulars” (similar to the ones in Hos 2:11); hence, they are translated as plurals. See, for example, BBE, GW, JB, NJB, NLT, and NRSV. Regarding the best manner to translate Col 2:16, the New Testament exegete Harris (118) noted that while the first two terms (ἑορτῆς and νεομηνίας) are singular nouns, σαββάτων, as either a singular or plural can mean either “sabbath” or “week,” and thus be rendered “‘or concerning [the observance of, NEB] a festival, a new moon, or a sabbath day.’” Then Harris (ibid.) admitted that it is also possible that the first two nouns are generic singulars and therefore may be translated as plurals: “‘Or in connection with the observance of *festivals* or *new moons* or *sabbaths*;’” (emphasis added). Harris does continue the sentence saying, “or that Paul is referring to ‘the matter of annual or monthly or weekly festivals,’” a matter that is addressed in this thesis.

³¹⁶Taylor, and Taylor.

begun to recognize their presence and potential for interpretation.”³¹⁷ As Jo Ann Davidson indicated: “Both the Old and New Testaments in Scripture harbor numerous parallel and chiasmic structures.... New Testament writers, as ethnic Hebrews, also utilized these characteristic patterns even though writing in Greek.”³¹⁸ Hence, the emphasis on this vital aspect of literary structure in this Chapter.

Kenneth Strand’s supposition regarding Colossians 2:16 is therefore to a large extent correct, “that Paul was using the common literary device of inverted parallelism, thus moving from annual to monthly and then back again to annual” religious observances.³¹⁹ Had Strand recognized the aspect of augmented or intensified mini-chiasmic forms, he may well have included the septennial sabbaths of the cultus also.³²⁰ Taking into account the linguistic and structural evidence indicated above, this tripartite phrase in Colossians 2:16 could therefore be aptly diagrammed as an augmented inverted parallelism:

- A “feasts” = three annual pilgrimage festivals
 B “new moons” = regular lunar monthly celebrations
 A⁺ “sabbaths” = two annual and one septennial sabbath³²¹

In brief, it seems plausible, taking into account the similarities with Hosea 2:11, as well as the mini-chiasmic structure in Colossians 2:16, that the “sabbaths” in this tripartite phrase identifies only the ceremonial sabbaths, and not the seventh-day Sabbath.³²²

³¹⁷Gregory T. Christopher, “A Discourse Analysis of Colossians 2:16-3:17,” *Grace Theological Journal* 11/2 (1990): 211.

³¹⁸Jo Ann Davidson, *Toward a Theology of Beauty: A Biblical Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 39.

³¹⁹Kenneth A. Strand, “The Sabbath,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Raoul Dederen, ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 506.

³²⁰As early as 1831 it was proposed that the *sabbata* in Colossians 2:16 actually refers to sabbatical years; (John Davenant, *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, vol. 1 [London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1831], 479).

³²¹In 1871, while addressing Col 2:16, a Sabbatarian writer opined: “The original reads, ‘sabbaths,’ which covers all the annual sabbaths, and the septennial sabbaths, which were shadows pointing forward to Christ, and were nailed to the cross;” (A. C. Bourdeau, “Brief Replies to an Essay against the Seventh-Day Sabbath,” *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, October 1871, 139).

³²²See, for example, the following, by Seventh-day Adventists: James White, *The Present Truth* 1 (August 1849): 10; J. N. Andrews, “Colossians II, 14-17,” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 7 November 1854, 100; James White, *The Present Truth* 1 (March 1850): 52; Uriah Smith, *Synopsis of the Present Truth*, 84; J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, 3rd ed. rev., vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887), 83-92, 141-142; O. A. Olsen, *Bible Text-Book* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900), 92; *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 130-131, 151, 367, 386, 622; Mansell, 27-29; Russell Holt, “By the Book,” *Signs of the Times*, September 1994, 21; *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 287. Apparently, Seventh-Day Baptists also employed the “ceremonial sabbath” explanation: James Bailey, *Sabbath Commentary: A Scriptural Exegesis of All the Passages in the Bible That Relate, or Are Supposed to Relate, in Any Way, to the Sabbath Doctrine* (New York: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1888), 208-209; Thomas Brown, 44-45.

Considering the Σκιά and the Σῶμα³²³

As this issue of ritual sabbaths is considered further, it may be well to review the entire passage of Scripture being dealt with here: “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Col 2:16, 17).³²⁴ While there are some debates related to the Greek words σκιά and σῶμα, there is a general scholarly consensus as to their basic linguistic and contextual meaning. The σκιά is here understood to mean not a literal “shadow,” but more of a “foreshadowing,”³²⁵ that is, “an anticipation.”³²⁶ This is because σκιά is directly linked with the words τῶν μελλόντων, that is, “things to come.” Deterding indicated that this expression “is almost a technical term for the messianic age and kingdom that arrived with Christ at his first advent and that will be consummated at his return. Hence Jesus could call John the Baptist ‘Elijah, who is going to come’ (ὁ μελλων ἔρχεσθαι) even when John – and Jesus – had already arrived (Mt 11:14).”³²⁷ A similar phrase was used by John’s disciples, in their question to Jesus: “‘Are you the one who is to come [ὁ ἐρχόμενος], or shall we look for another?’” (Matt 11:3, ESV; also Luke 7:20).³²⁸

The Link with Σκιά in Hebrews 10:1

In his doctoral study on Colossians 2:17, Mxolisi Sokupa has pointed out that “the parallel between Col 2:16, 17 and Heb 10:1 is widely recognized.”³²⁹ Representative of this view is Charles Hume’s comment that, Colossians 2:17 “is remarkably similar to Heb. 10:1, ‘For the Law holds a shadow (*skiān*) of the good things to come (*tōn mellontōn agathōn*), not the actual form of reality.”³³⁰ The word “shadow” (σκιά) functions in the same relationship to “image” (εἰκών) in

³²³The view that Paul was dealing with non-biblical festal practices that were influenced by syncretistic ascetic tendencies (such as a mixture of Judaism and paganism) will not be addressed here, as “it is hard to see how syncretistic practices could be viewed as a shadow of the body of Christ;” (Papaioannou, 129).

³²⁴Vs. 16 is from the RSV, and vs. 17 from the NKJV. Ouro has gone so far as to assert that “verse 17 is the key to the passage [i.e., vs 14-17];” (Roberto Ouro, “Daniel 9:27a: A Key for Understanding the Law’s End in the New Testament,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12/2 [Autumn 2001]: 196).

³²⁵Bauer (1979), 755.

³²⁶Vaughan, *Colossians and Philemon*, 82.

³²⁷Deterding, 113.

³²⁸In her discussion with Jesus, shortly before Lazarus’ resurrection, Martha affirmed: “‘I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come [ἐρχόμενος] into the world’” (John 11:27, NKJV).

³²⁹Sokupa, 182. Sokupa (ibid.) alleged though, that since “the parallel has been generally seen from a linguistic perspective,” it “has resulted in the limiting of the parallel between Col 2:16, 17 to only Heb 10:1.” He then (ibid.) “seeks to establish the ritual parallels between Col 2:16, 17 and Heb 10.” This notion of the “ritual parallels” is built on his assumption that Col 2 is dealing with “the sacrificial sacrifices of the appointed times, which are the present practice of the opponents” (ibid., 201) – a claim for which no real textual (or extra-biblical) evidence has been provided in his thesis.

³³⁰Hume, 48. Similarly, Schweizer, 17; MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained?* 212, footnote #34; Ellis, 416; Peake, 531; Ash, 187; Westcott, 118; Garland, 174, footnote #2; Vaughan, *Colossians*, 204; Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 120, 152; Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 278; Michael R. Weed, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Philemon*, Living Word Commentary (Austin, TX: R. B. Sweet, 1971), 76-77; Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper &

Hebrews 10:1 as it does to “body/reality” (σῶμα) in Colossians 2:17.³³¹ More to the point, Beale concluded that “Colossians 2:17 and the two Hebrews texts [i.e., 8:5 and 10:1] are classic expressions of the NT’s typological view of the OT”³³² – a conclusion that appears to harmonize with the seminal research of Davidson on hermeneutical τύπος structures in Scripture.³³³ F. F. Bruce’s comments on the use of σκιά in Hebrews 10:1, however, highlighted a significant contrast with the use of σκιά in the Colossian epistle: “Whereas Paul in Col. 2:17 has in mind the legal restrictions of Old Testament times (food-laws and regulations about special days), our author [of the epistle to the Hebrews] is thinking more especially of the law prescribing matters of priesthood and sacrifice.”³³⁴

Tonstad contended that “it works best to see ‘shadow’ as something unreal and ‘body’ as the reality.”³³⁵ Unpacking this notion further, Ian Smith maintained that “Paul utilizes dualistic Platonic categories,” then “introduces a temporal contrast based on Jewish eschatology,” which “is a blending of Hebraic (promise/fulfilment) eschatology with a Hellenistic (appearance/reality) thought form.”³³⁶

Somewhat similarly, Wilson argued that, as in Philo, σκιά here “means a shadow in contrast to the

Row, 1964), 164; W. R. Nicholson, *Oneness with Christ: Popular Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1951), 203; *Bible Readings for the Home: Bible Questions Answered* (Silver Spring, MD: Better Living Publications, 1990), 173; *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 274. Pao (186) stated that “the imagery of the ‘shadow of the things to come’ is best paralleled by the description of the law in Heb 10:1a.” Hay (105) noted that “Hebrews 10:1 characterizes the Old Testament ordinances about priesthood and sacrifice as a ‘shadow,’ interpreting them as a true but now obsolete revelation that points to the perfect sacrifice of Christ.” See also Cole, “The Christian and Time-keeping in Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10,” (275-276), who concluded: “The clearest NT parallel to Col 2:17 is the reference in Heb 10:1, where the law is presented as ‘a shadow of the coming good things, not the very image of the things.’ ‘Shadow’ (*skia*) stands in the same relationship to ‘image’ (*eikōn*) in Heb 10:1 as it does to ‘body’ (*sōma*) in Col 2:17. In Heb 10:1, the shadow is clearly portrayed as inferior to the image or reality it represents. Christians are not encouraged to continue observing the shadow. They are called to focus on the reality instead.”

³³¹This usage in Col 2:17, which focuses on Christ Himself, aligns well with the manner in which Paul uses the term σῶμα in 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:24, 27.

³³²Beale, “Colossians,” 862. Rodríguez stated: “The law regulating the Israelite system of worship was a ‘shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves’ (Heb 10:1), and found its fulfillment in Christ;” (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church* [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005], 14). Frank Holbrook explained at greater length: “The key to the passage is verse 17, which states that these items are a ‘shadow of things to come,’ that is, they are *types* which foreshadowed things to come. The law which sets forth a ‘shadow of good things to come’ is clearly stated ... elsewhere to be the sacrificial, or ritual, law of types and ceremonies (see Hebrews 10:1-4). Therefore, all the items in verse 16 being ‘shadows,’ or types, are *items found in the ritual law* which typified the coming of Christ, His atoning death, and priestly ministry;” (Frank B. Holbrook, “Frank Answers: Did Christ Abolish the Sabbath?” *These Times*, August 1977, 22). See also, du Preez, “The Sabbath of Colossians 2:16: Reflections on a Debated Text,” 78-79.

³³³Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Τύπος Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. II (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 409-424.

³³⁴F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Hebrews*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 234-235. See also, Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 492, who saw a “contrast to Col. 2:17 here” in Heb 10:1. Looking at the larger context, Lane noted: “Throughout the course of the argument developed in [Heb] 8:1-10:18, the themes of covenant, priesthood, and sacrifice have been integrated;” (William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary [Dallas: Word, 1991], 271).

³³⁵Tonstad, 273. Tonstad does not provide any textual support for his view, but merely refers to Joachim Gnilka, *Der Kolosserbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 147, who holds to a Platonic and Philonic interpretation. See also, Bird (84-85) for a similar perspective.

³³⁶Ian Smith, 118.

reality.”³³⁷ Bevere, however, stated that τῶν μελλόντων “suggests an eschatological designation, [which] is missing from Platonic philosophy.”³³⁸ Beetham has put forward a similar challenge, by noting that, “unlike Philo’s use of it to support his allegorical method, Paul sets the idiom within a redemptive-historical framework by his use of the substantive participle τῶν μελλόντων”³³⁹ – which refers to the “‘reality’ of the coming age, to the Messiah.”³⁴⁰

Recognizing the chronological context of the τῶν μελλόντων, Francis Beare commented that “*things to come* means, of course, things which lay in the future when the observances were ordained; not things which still lie in the future. The *things to come* have come with Christ.”³⁴¹ Clark explained: “The apostle employs *esti* in the present [i.e., which *is* a shadow] ... because the apostle transports himself ideally into the past period of ritualism.”³⁴² Those shadows were still “to come” from “the perspective of the original institutions,”³⁴³ that is, “from the point of view of the Old Testament,”³⁴⁴ but they were all fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ.³⁴⁵ The ICB version renders it thus: “In the past, these things were like a shadow of what was to come. But the new things that were coming are found in Christ.” As Edmund Simpson and F. F. Bruce illustrated this point: “Thus, in

³³⁷Wilson, 220. Moo (223) suggested that Paul, tapping into a common Hellenistic image, thus “uses popular language to convey a historically oriented contrast between one era and another.” Davids (278) asserted that Paul is “using language also found in Hebrews (e.g., Heb 10:1) and in Hellenistic philosophy from Plato to Philo.” Similarly, Hans-Christoph Hahn, “Shadow,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:555; W. C. Vergeer, “Σκία and Σωμα: The Strategy of Contextualisation in Colossians 2:17. A Contribution to the Quest for a Legitimate Contextual Theology Today,” *Neotestamentica* 28(2) (1994): 382.

³³⁸Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 87. Similarly, O’Brien, 140; Pieter W. van der Horst, “Shadow,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman et al, eds. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:1149. Moreover, as Melick pointed out, at length: “In Platonic thought the things of earth were simply shadows of what existed in the real world of thought. The dualism of Platonic thought, however, was static: The two existed at the same time. For Paul, they were sequential: One gave way to the other. Further, in Platonism the two dimensions remain in separate realms of existence. For Paul, the body as well as the shadow appear on earth and that is the primary place of their existence. Finally, the Christological distinctive always separates Pauline thought from other philosophies as it does here;” (Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman, 1991], 269, footnote #216).

³³⁹Beetham, 201.

³⁴⁰Ibid., 202. In accord, Barth and Blanke (340) indicated that “in contrast with Philo and to Platonic ideas, in Col 2:17 *skia* is interpreted eschatologically through the addition of *tōn mellontōn*.”

³⁴¹Beare, 201 (emphasis original). See also, Davids, 278; Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 141; Vaughan, *Colossians and Philemon*, 83.

³⁴²Clark, 97. O’Brien (140) concurred: “The expression is to be interpreted from the period when the legal restrictions of verse 16 were enjoined; it is future from the standpoint of the OT.”

³⁴³Moo, 223. Similarly, Williams, 104.

³⁴⁴Olshausen, 353. Concurring, Peake noted: “It is future from the point of view of Judaism;” (A. S. Peake, “The Epistle to the Colossians,” W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, vol. III [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961], 531).

³⁴⁵Moo (223) concurred: “The phrase *that were to come* ... refers to those realities that have now come in Christ but were still to come from the perspective of the original institution.” See also Pao (186): These “things to come” refer “to the acts of God through Christ that have already been accomplished, thus justifying a translation that makes this temporal aspect explicit: ‘these are a shadow of the things that were to come’ (TNIV, NIV).” The ICB thus renders the first part of verse 17: “In the past these things were like a shadow of what was to come.” Similarly, the EVD reads: “In the past, these things were like a shadow that showed what was coming.”

1 Cor. 5:7f., the sacrifice of Christ is the reality which was foreshadowed by the passover in Egypt.”³⁴⁶

This is where the other Greek term σῶμα comes into play.³⁴⁷ Walter Bauer’s lexicon describes σῶμα (i.e., literally “body”) in this context, as “*the thing itself, the reality.*”³⁴⁸ Hence, the NIV’s rendition: “The reality, however, is found in Christ.” Garland observes: “The emphasis that the reality is found in Christ picks up ideas from [ch.] 1:15-20 that Christ is the image of the invisible God and the head of the body.”³⁴⁹ Ian Smith stated: “Since the reality has appeared, there is no need to delight in the shadows that are cast by that reality.”³⁵⁰ Or, as Andrew Bandstra succinctly noted, “Since the reality of Christ is present, the things of the shadow no longer form the norm for judging Christians.”³⁵¹

Some have insisted that Colossians 2:17 refers directly to “the physical body of Christ.”³⁵² On the basis of a literalistic interpretation of τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ others have suggested that the actual meaning is, “But it is the body of Christ (the church) that must pass judgment in all such matters.”³⁵³ However, since the terms σκιά and σῶμα clearly belong together, and since the word δέ “connects the previous relative clause with this independent clause,”³⁵⁴ the interpretation which basically contrasts the “shadow of the things to come” with the “body/substance [that] belongs to Christ” is “still the least problematic.”³⁵⁵

³⁴⁶Edmund K. Simpson, and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 245. See also, W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Christ Pre-Eminent: Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1923), 84.

³⁴⁷To promote the speculative notion that Col 2:16 is dealing “primarily with the sacrifices and burnt offerings offered therein rather than the feasts themselves,” Papaïouannou (135), claimed that the NJB better “translates” vs. 17: “These are only a shadow of what was coming: the reality is the body of Christ.” Ironically, while admitting that the lack of the verb “is,” compounds the matter of interpretation, Papaïouannou (132) then selected a version (i.e., the NJB) that provides a paraphrastic interpretation, which includes *three* words not in any Greek manuscript (i.e., “the reality is”).

³⁴⁸Bauer (2000), 984 (emphasis original).

³⁴⁹Garland, 175.

³⁵⁰Ian Smith, 118. Similarly, Wall, 122.

³⁵¹Radjagukguk, 166. Radjagukguk was here quoting Bandstra. Similarly, Bevere, “The *Cheirographon* in Colossians 2:14,” 203; Nichol, 7:206.

³⁵²Papaïouannou, 137. See also, Sokupa, 201; Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, “Τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Colossians 2:17,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*, Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, ed. (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 238.

³⁵³Hendriksen (124, footnote #96). He argued (ibid.): “To introduce the church at this point is wholly arbitrary.”

³⁵⁴Pao, 187.

³⁵⁵Ibid. Among others, Troy Martin has suggested that there is a “Greek ellipsis” here, which would result in a considerably different understanding; (“But Let Everyone Discern the Body of Christ,” 249-255). His claims have been seriously challenged in various ways, as for example, by Son (232): “This imaginative construction assumes an ellipsis of too many words [i.e., more than 20] and creates too many of its own. Moreover, he assigns two different meanings to the same word κρινέτω, the negative meaning of ‘critique’ (2:16) and the positive meaning of ‘discern’ (2:17, supplied). Most seriously, he understands the practices mentioned in Col. 2:16 as those of the Colossian believers and not of the opponents. This interpretation is not convincing and misunderstands the context of the Colossian passage (2:8-23).” Similarly, Crawford noted: “Even allowing for the fact that a healthy imagination is required for rendering these verses, among the most obscure in the NT, into intelligible English, M[artin]’s reading seems excessively convoluted and

There seems to be an increasing awareness that “there may be multiple layers of meaning embedded, or perhaps extra ‘nuances’”³⁵⁶ in the word σῶμα, “given that the term is used in different ways throughout the letter, including in an ecclesial sense two verses later.”³⁵⁷ Nijay Gupta pointed out that there are three possible meanings of σῶμα in this passage: (a) “Substance” (in contrast to the “shadow”); (b) The physical “body” (as the term is used in Col 1:22; 2:11); and, (c) The “church” (as the word is employed in Col 1:18, 24).³⁵⁸ Gupta himself recognized that, while one should be cautious about postulating more than one layer of meaning for any term, “it is difficult to resist the temptation here in view of the regular use of wordplay in Colossians,”³⁵⁹ since, as Foster noted, “it is also important to affirm the dexterity of the author in selecting terminology that evokes various images within the letter itself.”³⁶⁰ Perhaps then, of all known English versions, the Amplified Bible’s rendition is best: “But the reality (the substance, the solid fact of what is foreshadowed, the body of it) belongs to Christ” (Col 2:17b).

The HCSB renders the first part of verse 17: “These are a shadow of what was to come.”³⁶¹ The term “these” of verse 17 clearly has an earlier referent.³⁶² While the immediate context may imply that the referent is solely “the categories mentioned in v. 16 (food, drink, and festivals),”³⁶³ it has also been proposed that the τοῖς δόγμασιν of verse 14 (if accepted as the regulations of the ceremonial law), are to be included in the “shadow of what was to come.”³⁶⁴ The structure, context, and overall flow of the entire passage suggest that the “shadow” of verse 17 may refer to the content of both verses 14 and 16.³⁶⁵ Harris’ articulate summary seems worth quoting:

strained;” (Barry S. Crawford, review of *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as a Response to a Cynic Critique*, by Troy W. Martin, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 [April 1997], 387).

³⁵⁶Gupta, 100. Others, such as the following, have similarly recognized more than one meaning here: Heil, 123; A. J. M. Wedderburn, “The Theology of Colossians,” in *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters*, Andrew T. Lincoln, and A. J. M. Wedderburn, eds. (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 37; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 117, footnote #21.

³⁵⁷Foster, 285.

³⁵⁸Gupta, 100.

³⁵⁹Ibid.

³⁶⁰Foster, 285.

³⁶¹Lohse maintained that “the Greek neuter plural relative pronoun ‘these’ (ἃ) should be read with the majority of manuscripts;” (Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 116, footnote #15).

³⁶²The Greek literally reads: “which (things) ... is.” Barth and Blanke, 339, point out that “in Greek, it is not unusual to have a neuter plural as subject with a finite verb in the singular as predicate, as here.” Moo (222) admitted that “Paul does not explicitly connect v. 17 to v. 16.” But added (ibid.) that “the logical relationship between the two verses is clear enough.” Moo, however, did not include vs. 14, since he did not see it as referring to the ceremonial law, as argued above.

³⁶³MacDonald, 110. See also, Nichol, 7:206.

³⁶⁴Lohse, “*Sabbaton*,” 116. See also, Peake (531) who noted, regarding the introductory word of vs. 17: “The reference is to the whole of the ceremonial ordinances just mentioned.”

³⁶⁵Fundamentally concurring with the above view, the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* has applied these concepts, as follows: “Since the context deals with ritual matters, the sabbaths here referred to are the ceremonial sabbaths of the Jewish annual festivals ‘which are a shadow,’ or type, of which the fulfillments were to come in Christ;”

Food regulations and calendrical observances, and all such legal prescriptions that belonged to the transitory old age, were merely pale adumbrations of a coming permanent reality now realized in the person and gospel of Christ. The implication is that the shadows not only are now superfluous but actually disappear with the appearance of the “substance.”³⁶⁶

Reflecting on the matter of typology in relation to the weekly Sabbath, Roy Gane observed that “it fundamentally differs from the Israelite sanctuary and its ceremonial system.”³⁶⁷ In brief, in Robert Stein’s words, “Paul saw the ceremonial law as no longer binding,”³⁶⁸ for in Jesus Christ we have the reality of which all of the annual and septennial religious seasons of ancient Israel were the prefiguration.

Arguing contextually, Roberto Ouro concluded: “A shadow ends when it reaches the reality. Thus ‘shadow’ describes well the various elements of the sacrificial and ceremonial law, including the annual sabbaths, for they pointed forward to Christ as the reality.”³⁶⁹ Various non-seventh-day Sabbatarian writers have similarly recognized the indispensability of taking the context into account when dealing with the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16. For example, in 1892, J. Q. Bittinger pointed out that “the item ‘Sabbaths’ stands in connection with other things which are clearly ceremonial, and

(Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia: M-Z*, 2nd rev. ed., Bobbie Jane Van Dolson and Leo R. Van Dolson, eds. [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996], s.v. “Sabbath”).

³⁶⁶Harris, 106. Similarly, MacArthur, 119. Hendriksen opined: “Though it was not wrong for *the Jew*, trained from his infancy in the law, *for a period of transition* to observe some of these customs as mere customs, having nothing whatever to do with salvation, it was certainly wrong to ascribe to them a value they did not have, and to try to impose them upon the Gentiles;” (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965], 124, emphasis added). See also, Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 171; McDonald, 89; Yates, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, 59. As Nichol put it: “In these verses [16 and 17] Paul has completely removed the ground from beneath the feet of the Judaizing false teachers. They advocated a return to Judaic ceremonial requirements. The apostle meets their arguments by asserting that the shadows have served their function now that Christ the reality has come;” (Nichol, 7:206). Wall (121) noted: “Within Judaism most of these celebrations [listed in verse 16] were intended to help the community look forward to Messiah’s deliverance.” See also, Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 88, who observed that “Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism, which represented the shadow of what God intended.” Wall (121) concluded: “Thus, for the Christian to participate in these Jewish celebrations was tantamount to a denial of Jesus’ messiahship.”

³⁶⁷Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 393. Some who believe that the seventh-day Sabbath is in view in Col 2:16, such as Bacchiocchi (358), have then interpreted Col 2:17 as condemning only “the wrong motive involved in their observance,” or “its perversion;” (364); so also, L. Coleman, “Historical Sketch of the Christian Sabbath,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1 (August 1844): 531. In a parallel manner, others have alleged that Paul was condemning “a Christless Sabbath;” (William Edwin Richardson, “Letters,” *Ministry*, September, 1997, 3; idem, “Sabbath: Nailed to the Cross?” *Ministry*, May 1997, 15. Somewhat similarly, Gudmundur Olafsson, “God’s Eternal Covenant and the Sabbath,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16/1-2 [2005]: 162). De Lacey (195, footnote #166) suitably challenged Bacchiocchi (and by implication the others), as follows: “He fails to explain why the [seventh-day] Sabbath alone of these shadows should abide in the era of the new covenant.” Arguing more consistently (within the view that the weekly Sabbath is in Col 2), are those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, and the levitical festivals; (see, for example, Richard Wiedenheft, “Is the Sabbath a Shadow? A Commentary on Colossians 2:16,” *Bible Advocate*, June 2000, 16; Calvin Burrell, “Questions & Answers,” *Bible Advocate*, April-May 2008, 7).

³⁶⁸Robert H. Stein, *Difficult Passages in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 112. Stein (ibid.) pointed out that the ceremonial law was “only a shadowy portrayal of what was to come in Christ (Col. 2:17).”

³⁶⁹Ouro, 197. Gane (*Leviticus, Numbers*, 393) noted: “When the antitype commences, the type recedes into obsolescence.” Similarly, Mario Veloso, “The Law of God,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Raoul Dederen, ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 484; David C. Jarnes, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times*, October 1998, 28; Marvin Moore, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times*, February 1995, 14.

therefore, the conclusion is justified that ceremonial seasons are referred to in the use of the term ‘Sabbaths.’”³⁷⁰ William Plumer concurred, noting that “the *context* clearly shows that he speaks not of the weekly Sabbath, nor of any institution of the decalogue, but of matters beside the moral law.”³⁷¹

Conclusion on the Σκιά and the Σῶμα

Since the σκιά is here generally seen as not a literal “shadow,” but a “foreshadowing,” it follows that the “things to come” means things which lay in the future from the perspective of when these observances were first ordained, during Old Testament times. Thus the “things to come” have already come with Christ.³⁷² As J. N. Andrews put it: “When the Saviour died upon the cross, the whole typical system, which had pointed forward to that event as the commencement of its antitype, expired with him.”³⁷³

Ernest Scott aptly concluded: “In Christ we have the reality of which the sacred observances were the prefigurement.”³⁷⁴ “The ‘body’ having now come, the prophetic shadows have served their purpose and should cease.”³⁷⁵ The term “shadows” therefore appropriately describes the different aspects of the cultic laws of ancient Israel, including the ritual “sabbaths,” since they pointed forward to the life and ministry of Christ. The overall meaning of verse 17 has been succinctly summarized:³⁷⁶

As the great Antitype, Christ provided, in His life, and especially in His death upon the cross, the spiritual fulfillment of the sacrificial types and the full meaning of the sacred ceremonies and rituals. Thus He became substance of which those things were *shadows*.... The sacrifices ceased, and the ceremonies were no longer needful, when at the cross Christ opened up to the spiritual understanding of the faithful the realities of the plan of salvation.... Jesus has successfully met sin and death, and thus accomplished what the sacrifices and ceremonies foreshadowed.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁰J. Q. Bittinger, *A Plea for the Sabbath and for Man* (Boston: Congregational Sunday-School, 1892), 93. See also, Edwards, who stated: “The days referred to are those required to be observed in the ceremonial law – days associated by God with meats, drinks, and new moons. The passage does not refer to the Sabbath of the moral law, associated with the commands forbidding theft, murder, and adultery. This weekly Sabbath was never against men or contrary to them, but was always for them, and promotive of their highest good;” (Justin Edwards, “Commentary on Colossians 2:16,” *Family Bible: New Testament*; <https://www.studylight.org/commentary/colossians/2-16.html> (accessed 3 July 2017)).

³⁷¹William S. Plumer, *The Law of God as Contained in the Ten Commandments, Explained and Enforced* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education, 1864), 307 (emphasis added). See also, Bailey, 208-209; Robert Burnside, *Remarks on the Different Sentiments Entertained in Christendom Relative to the Weekly Sabbath* (London: Joseph Stillman, 1827), 114.

³⁷²See Beare, 201. See also, Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance*, 141; Vaughan, *Colossians and Philemon*, 83.

³⁷³Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, 3rd ed. rev., vol. 1:142.

³⁷⁴Ernest Scott, 53.

³⁷⁵Cowles, 174. See also, Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 171.

³⁷⁶Similarly, Davidson noted: “Christ’s sacrifice is the typological fulfillment of all the sacrificial system;” (Richard M. Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39:2 [Autumn 2001], 189).

³⁷⁷*Problems in Bible Translation*, 233 (emphasis original).

Summary of “Feast, New Moon, and Sabbath” in Colossians

By way of summary, the following can be said: As noted at the start of this Chapter, various authors have made claims regarding the alleged relationship between the words “feast” and “sabbath” in Colossians 2:16; yet, there is no evidence that anyone of them has seriously examined the actual meaning of these key terms. Investigation revealed that, when used in a cultic context, the Hebrew term $\alpha\eta$ (with its New Testament Greek equivalent $\epsilon\omicron\pi\tau\eta$) consistently describes only the pilgrim festivals of Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. In other words, when Paul wrote the word “ $\epsilon\omicron\pi\tau\eta$,” as a careful Torah scholar he would likely have been aware that, besides mentioning the new moons, he needed to include the other cultic occasions of Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years – for which he then employed the term $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\beta\beta\alpha\tau\alpha$. If he had not, the Colossians may have *wrongly* concluded that Paul was intentionally excluding these sabbatically-related items.

Consideration of the apostle’s use of the Hebrew Scriptures in his works revealed that he quoted and/or alluded to the Old Testament several times, sometimes using the Septuagint, while at other times translating directly from the Hebrew text. Of all the books purported to be the source for the triad in Colossians 2, the only one from which Paul directly quoted (and that more than once) is Hosea; hence, it is not surprising that its tripartite phrase appears to be the best antecedent to the Colossian phrase – a matter which served to strengthen the literary analysis of verse 16.

A brief review of the setting showed that it was in the context of a soteriological Christology that Paul addressed the false teachings making inroads among the Colossian believers. Taking into account inter-textual, structural, conceptual, semantic and linguistic factors (including data from extra-biblical documents), it was suggested that the highly debated $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\omicron\nu\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \delta\omicron\gamma\mu\alpha\sigma\iota\nu$ of Colossians 2:14 be understood and interpreted as the “Mosaic law in its ritual part,” which has been fulfilled at the Cross through Jesus Christ.

Several factors came to light regarding the linguistics of Colossians 2:16. First, while $\kappa\rho\iota\nu\omicron$ can have a broader meaning, the overall context in this epistle shows that condemnatory judging appears to be the issue here. Second, extensive examination of four key terms reveals that it is plausible that the $\beta\rho\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ and $\pi\acute{o}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ of verse 16 refer to the “food and drink” offerings that were to take place as part of the worship ritual.³⁷⁸ Third, the novel theory that Colossians 2 is dealing with only the sacrifices but not the appointed seasons themselves was investigated and considered to be invalid, especially in view of the connection between these cultic occasions and their concomitant

³⁷⁸As Orthodox Presbyterian Church scholars put it: “There is no other meaning for these two words in Colossians that fits the meaning of the ‘shadow,’ and is thus drawn from the Old Testament, except that which understands them as referring to meat- [i.e., ‘food’] and drink-offerings;” (“Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters,” sub-section “6. Colossians 2:16-17”). See also, Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 794, footnote #43.

burnt sacrifices. Fourth, a brief review of the significance of linguistic markers,³⁷⁹ the alleged yearly/monthly/weekly triad (in Num, 1 and 2 Chron, Neh, and Ezek), and the meaning of the vital terms ἑορτή, νεομηνία and σάββατα, provided credible support for the view that the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16 denotes the annual and septennial sabbaths. Fifth, in considering the usual usage of the definite article with σάββατα (to identify the seventh-day Sabbath), it was noticed that in the Colossians tripartite phrase there is no such definite article – an additional factor that contributes to the notion that the σάββατα here denotes ceremonial sabbaths. Sixth, regarding the challenge of “consistency in translation,” it was observed that multiple factors indicate that the appearance of σάββατα in this epistle is out of the ordinary, thus alerting the reader to be open to an interpretation of σάββατα other than normally anticipated; and that here it credibly refers to ritual sabbaths in contradistinction to the weekly Sabbath.

In addition to the linguistic analysis, research on literary structures in Colossians uncovered the following factors: To begin with, it was shown that this short epistle contains various inverted parallelisms, all of which serve to enhance interpretation and meaning. Comparison with the three-part phrase in Hosea 2:11³⁸⁰ yielded sufficient information to conclude that Paul was probably alluding to this triple terminology in Colossians 2:16.³⁸¹ And, consonant with the Hosea passage, the structure of the one in Colossians appeared to also be an augmented mini-chiasm, with the final term σάββατα identifying the annual and septennial cultic sabbaths. Irrespective, though, as to whether Colossians 2:16 evinces a mini-chiasm, and regardless of its evident allusion to Hosea 2:11, there

³⁷⁹In addition to the evidence as shown in Chapter Three above, note how a Seventh Day Baptist differentiated the annual and septennial sabbaths from the seventh-day Sabbath: “These sabbaths are clearly distinguished from the Sabbath of the Decalogue; for while the latter is called ‘the Sabbath of the Lord,’ ‘my Sabbaths,’ ‘my holy day,’ and the like, the former are designated as ‘your sabbaths,’ ‘her sabbaths,’ etc.,” (Thomas Brown, 44).

³⁸⁰Aware of this inter-textual reality, and apparently taking into account contextual similarities (such as “Hosea’s negative ambiance” [Seitz, 135]), commentator Seitz connected the temporality of the “shadows” of Col 2:17 with the Old Testament text, and suggested that “Hosea equally saw the provisionality of a rite ... [and that] such rites would simply be taken away;” (Seitz 136).

³⁸¹As already pointed out, various scholars have acknowledged that, as Gladson stated, “the sequence in Hosea is the same as in Colossians 2;” (Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 385). Ewald affirmed: “Da alle drei Ausdrücke der alt Terminologie entnommen sind (nebeneinander und zwar in der gleichen Reihenfolge Hos 2, 11 bzw. 13) und die Zusammenstellung den Eindruck macht, als handele es sich um eine vollständig gemeinte Zusammenfassung gesetzlicher Feiertage, so scheint es sich hier wirklich um gesetzliche Vorschriften lediglich mosaischen Charakters zu handeln und der Relativsatz scheint dies obendrein zu bestätigen;” (D. Paul Ewald, *Die Briefe des Paulus an die Epheser, Kolosser, und Philemon*, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Band X, Zweite verbesserte Auflage [Leipzig, Germany: A. Deichert’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1910], 391). Similarly, Gnilka stated: “Die Reihenfolge in Kol 2, 16 stimmt mit der überein, die bei den Profeten zu lesen ist: ‘Ich nehme weg alle Freuden, *irhe Feste und Neumonde, ihre Sabbate* und Freudentage’ (Hos 2, 13;...);” (Gnilka, 145, footnote #9, emphasis original). Gladson went as far as suggesting that the triad of Col 2:16 “may be an actual citation from Hosea 2:11;” (Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 383). Gladson (ibid.) added: “In the Greek they are very similar, at least in chronological sequence, as may be shown by placing them together in the following [corrected, as needed] literal translations:

Her *feast*, her *new moon*, and her *sabbath*
(Of) *feast* or (of) *new moon* or (of) *sabbath*.”

still appears to be sufficient contextual and linguistic data to indicate that the σάββατα here does not refer to the seventh-day Sabbath.

The terms σκία and σῶμα in Colossians 2:17 were analyzed, including in relation to how σκία is utilized in a similar phrase in the book of Hebrews.³⁸² In contrast to the manner in which Plato and Philo employed σκία, it was suggested that Paul used this term typologically, in a redemptive-historical setting, with a contrasting focus on the σῶμα, on Christ. In the words of Henry Cowles: “All these Mosaic ceremonial services foreshadowed the coming Christ; [they] were only the shadows of which Christ is the body. Hence the ‘body’ having now come, the prophetic shadows have served their purpose and should cease.”³⁸³

In conclusion, based on the above investigation, it seems reasonable to render Colossians 2:16, 17 as follows:³⁸⁴ “Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or for not celebrating festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These things were like a shadow of what was to come. But the reality is Christ!”³⁸⁵

Hence, taking into account multiple linguistic and contextual factors, as well as the literary structure of Colossians 2:16 with its possible allusion to Hosea 2:11, it seems tenable to conclude that Paul was charging the Colossian believers to keep focused on Christ, the all-sufficient Creator and Redeemer. In this vein, the apostle urged them to not allow anyone to criticize them for not observing the pilgrim festivals (of Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), the new moon occasions, the cultic sabbaths (of Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years), or the associated food and drink offerings. All of these aspects of the ancient Israelite cultus had prefigured the Messiah, whose atoning death on the Cross had fulfilled and terminated this entire ceremonial system.³⁸⁶ Nothing in the text or context of Colossians 2:16, however, identifies or addresses the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath.

³⁸²As James Spence noted: “The ceremonial law, with its ... many festivals and sacred seasons, was a system of symbols and pictures – a shadow of good things to come;” (James Spence, *Sunday Mornings with My Flock, on St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1875], 231).

³⁸³Cowles, 174. See also, Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 171.

³⁸⁴Verse 16 is from the NRSV, except that the words “of observing” have been replaced by the NLT’s “for not celebrating” (as this seems clearer). Verse 17 is from the NCV, except that the final four words (“the reality is Christ!”) are from the NET.

³⁸⁵The notes in the NET maintain that, “the genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ (*tou Christou*) is appositional and is translated as such ‘the reality is Christ’” (emphasis original).

³⁸⁶The above conclusion, that the entire ceremonial system has been terminated, is not meant to imply that believing Christians of Jewish heritage (or even anyone else) may not legitimately participate in “marking” these appointed seasons, as part of their literal (or perhaps spiritual) Hebrew roots – especially as this “marking” can be done without actually observing the ceremonial/typological aspects (since these facets were fulfilled by Jesus Christ, as noted above, in various places in this thesis).

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Synopsis of the Thesis

Within possibly a century of its being written and sent to its originally intended audience, the epistle to the Colossians was being understood as advocating that the seventh-day Sabbath had been abrogated by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross.¹ Across the centuries, and in basic accord with the above notion, interpreters have proposed a variety of reasons in support of the theory that Colossians 2:16 is “the death blow to,”² or at minimum, “the Achilles’ heel,”³ of all who believe in the continued observance of the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath.

Since this is the only place in the direct theological instruction provided in the entire New Testament for Christians, and as no known sustained and scholarly research has been done on it thus far, it was decided to engage in a critical analysis of the word σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16, in its immediate and broader contexts. As noted above, the Purpose of the Study was “to establish the weight of evidence as to what this term σάββατα refers to – whether the seventh-day Sabbath (as in the decalogue of Exod 20) or any of the ceremonial sabbaths (as in the ritual codes of Lev 23-25).” In order to achieve that, the major arguments related to this pivotal passage, were outlined and evaluated, primarily against the textual evidence, where possible.

To begin with, Chapter One, furnished a brief overview of the history of interpretation of Colossians 2:16. The Review of Literature, while noting the paucity of major scholarly scrutiny of this specific matter, revealed that a lot has been written on directly related issues – thus, providing a plethora of materials that were useful in this project. As noted, of 164 Bible commentaries, all but five concluded that the seventh-day Sabbath is identified in this passage. The overwhelming majority of these commentators also suggested that this text contains a yearly/monthly/weekly triad, which they maintained, includes the Sabbath as the final item of the threefold phrase, “feast, new moon, sabbath.” However, in all the available sources, thus far no evidence has been found to show that any of these 164 commentaries (regardless of the position proposed) engaged in any detailed analysis of the well-recognized crucial terms of this sequence – ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα.

¹Irenæus *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus XXXVIII, The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, 575.

²B. H. Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews, An Interpretation of the English Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1948), 51.

³Calvin Burrell, “Paul’s Sabbath Theology,” *Bible Advocate* (May 1983): 15 (emphasis added).

Chapter Two expended extensive effort in examining the question regarding the authenticity of the authorship of Colossians. Concluding that the weight of evidence supports Pauline authorship, this introductory matter allowed for a possible interpretive connection with the comparable letter to the Ephesians. As pointed out, there is a profusion of perspectives as to what the so-called Colossian heresy entailed. It was concluded, however, that enough information exists to plausibly posit that the philosophy plaguing the Colossian believers was probably some form of Jewish spirituality, by which the false teachers were seeking to get these new converts to observe the ancient Israelite ceremonial system. Regardless as to whether or not the issue of the Colossian heresy will ever be resolved, the Protestant principle of *scriptura sui ipsius interpres* implies the potentiality of a resolution, based upon the text of the Old and New Testaments themselves – a matter attempted in this thesis.

Hence, and in response to certain hypotheses proposed, Chapter Three proceeded to make an extensive examination of the linguistic protocols used in both Testaments. The findings were as follows: First, in contradistinction to the “*Sabbath* without qualification”⁴ theory, it was shown that whenever the writers of Scripture needed to discuss the seventh-day Sabbath, they apparently intentionally linked specific terms (such as “holy,” “day,” etc.) with the Hebrew term שַׁבָּת to enable the reader and/or hearer to reliably recognize that the Sabbath, as located in the decalogue, was being focused on. Similarly, the research showed that, in order to assist the audience in understanding when non-seventh-day related occasions were being addressed, other distinctive linguistic indicators were included in the text. Second, it is intriguing that the κοινή reveals an analogous use of the two sabbath-related words: σάββατον and σάββατα, thus identifying the seventh-day Sabbath in 59 of the 69 occurrences in the New Testament. Nine of the remaining 10 usages, based on different linguistic markers, have aptly been rendered as “week,” leaving only the lexeme σάββατα (of Col 2:16) to be identified. Since there is sufficient evidence, based on Greek manuscripts such as the Septuagint, that the word σάββατα was employed to pinpoint non-seventh-day observances (such as Atonement), it was concluded that Paul may have used this term to identify ritual sabbaths – a factor explored later.

Chapter Four addressed the repeatedly-raised challenge, that the weekly שַׁבָּת was an integral part of the levitical מִנְחָה. Based on this, it has been concluded that, since Christ’s death fulfilled the cultic system of Israel, observance of the seventh-day Sabbath has been terminated. Building on the seminal work of luminaries like Jacob Milgrom, this Chapter included the following conclusions. (a) The Sacrificial Difference: Throughout the biblical sources, the seventh-day Sabbath has been consistently distinguished from the festal calendar by the fact that there was to be a fire-offering (i.e.,

⁴Craig L. Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 343.

as אֲשֶׁר) as an inseparable part of the *daily, monthly, and annual* occasions; but, never has there been any אֲשֶׁר inextricably intertwined with the offerings specifically designated for the seventh-day שַׁבָּת.

(b) The Semantic Divergence: Based on crucial etymological factors, it was deduced that the noun מוֹעֵד (i.e., “appointed season”) derives from the verb יָדַע, which means “to set, or designate.” Such was done by human beings, by the sighting of the new moon, for annual and septennial occasions. Since God “fixed” the Sabbath as every seventh day, it does not qualify as an “appointed season.”

(c) The Structural Distinction: In addition to the fact that the seventh-day Sabbath “is scrupulously distinguished” throughout Scripture from the cultic calendar,⁵ the language and content specifically of Leviticus 23 reveal that verses 4-37 (which incorporates a linguistic inclusio) has an extensive and intricately-developed microchiasm, which includes the appointed seasons, but not the Sabbath. In brief, though they may at times appear within the same passage, the weekly Sabbath, as Lloyd Bailey noted, is “grounded in creation,” and distinct from “the annual festivals;”⁶ hence, since “the sabbath is *not* a *mô ‘ēd*,”⁷ it should not be commingled indistinctly with the appointed seasons.

More than any other proposal is the hypothesis that the “feast, new moon, sabbath” triad of Colossians 2:16 is an allusion to several allegedly similar passages in the Old Testament, where the noun שַׁבָּת does refer to the seventh-day Sabbath. In light of this, Chapter Five set out to meticulously examine Numbers 28-29; 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Nehemiah 10:33; Ezekiel 45:17; and 46:4-15. The calendric sequence in these eight passages was found to differ from the threefold phrase of Colossians 2:16 in focus, enumeration, number, sequence, and terminology. Since “an *allusion* by definition must be overt enough to be recognized by the audience,”⁸ the significant discrepancies discovered in this research appear to fatally undermine the claim that these passages are appropriate antecedents to the tripartite phrase under examination.

A separate linguistic analysis of Hosea 2:11 revealed that its relevant cluster of terms differs from the above-mentioned eight passages in its focus, enumeration, number, suffix, terminology, tone, structure, computation, and its possible antecedent – all of which serves to credibly suggest that

⁵Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1954. See, for example, 1 Chron 23:29-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; Neh 10:33; etc.

⁶Lloyd R. Bailey, *Leviticus*, Knox Preaching Guides (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 88. Similarly, Balentine noted: “The [seventh-day] Sabbath is the only day whose observance is commanded in the Decalogue, and this command is, in turn, the only one that is grounded in creation theology ... (Exod. 20:8-10a, 11);” (Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching [Louisville: John Knox, 2002], 174).

⁷Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1956 (emphasis added). As already noted, though Milgrom’s words are being used, such is not meant as an endorsement of his views of any textual history. See Chapter Five, footnote #204, which explains more as to how this thesis utilizes Milgrom’s text-based explanation of the relation between the Sabbath and the *mô ‘ādîm*.

⁸Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 12. He adds (ibid.): “An author has failed in his use of allusion as a literary device if the audience does not catch the reference.”

the weekly Sabbath is not being identified in the term שַׁבָּת here in Hosea 2. Moreover, the research suggested that the phrase חֲדָשָׁה וְשַׁבְּתָהּ in Hosea 2:11 may be exhibiting an augmented mini-chiastic structure **A B A⁺** – identifying the *annual* pilgrim festivals (i.e., Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), the *monthly* new moon celebrations, and the expanded *annual* sabbatical occasions (i.e., Trumpets, Atonement, and Septennial Years). Since the writing prophets effectively utilized parallel word-pairs “*enabling the audience (or readers) to follow the meaning better,*”⁹ a recognition of this mini-chiasm has helped to elucidate better “the plain meaning of the text.”¹⁰ It appears that the linking of the threefold term in Hosea 2:11 with the one located in Colossians 2:16 is appropriate in that they have several similarities, including in sequence (first “feast,” then “new moon,” finally “sabbath”), in count (of three key terms each), in focus (on the set times, not any burnt-offerings), in number (singulars, not plurals), in tone (i.e., of a discontinuity of all cultic occasions), etc. Hence, Hosea 2:11 (in which שַׁבָּת identifies ritual sabbaths, not the seventh-day Sabbath) appears to be the only authentic plausible passage to which Paul was apparently alluding in Colossians 2:16.

At first glance, Chapter Six may have seemed irrelevant to this project. However, because some Seventh-day Adventists have claimed that the alleged plurality of the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16 proves that Paul was dealing with ceremonial sabbaths, it needed to be adequately addressed here. In short, comparison of New Testament Greek manuscripts, the record of Bible translations into various languages over more than two thousand years (from the LXX to contemporary versions), the extra-biblical works of Zenon, Philo, Josephus, and Plutarch, deuterocanonical works, intra- and inter-textual analyses, a study of linguistics, together with etymological and lexicographical evidence, all indicate that the term *σαββάτων* in Colossians 2:16 (as derived from *σάββατα*), is a transliterated singular term from Aramaic, which should rightly be rendered as the singular word “sabbath.”¹¹ While this conclusion does undermine a “standard” argument still popular among Adventist laity, it serves to strengthen the developing direction in this research – that all three crucial terms in Colossians 2:16 are singulars, just as are the three singulars located in its antecedent in Hosea 2:11.

Chapter Seven was the acme of this project – in that it sought to build on and coordinate the material from the previous chapters. The significant conclusions, regarding Colossians 2:16, include:

⁹Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 140 (emphasis original).

¹⁰Blomberg (342) has called for a “plain meaning” of this passage.

¹¹Although this word has been declined as if it were a regular Greek plural, the *σαββάτων* in Col 2:16 is actually a singular term, and must be translated as “[a] sabbath,” and understood in the context as a collective singular, thus referring to the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and by extension the Sabbatical Years. As Harris pointed out, Col 2:16 contains generic singulars, which can be translated as plurals; (Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 118).

(a) Contrary to claims that the word “feast/s” includes the “ceremonial sabbaths,” lexicographical and textual research shows that in the New Testament such was *never* the case. Since ἑορτή included only the pilgrim festivals (of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), Paul needed a different term to identify the sabbatically-related items of Trumpets, Atonement, and Septennial Years; thus, he used the word σάββατα – a term already present in the threefold phrase in Hosea; hence his allusion to it.

(b) Despite ongoing debates, it was concluded, based on linguistic, semantic, conceptual, structural, and inter-textual factors that it is best to understand the χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν (of Col 2:14) as the “Mosaic law in its ritual part,” which has been fulfilled at the Cross through the death of Christ.

Linguistic investigation of other terms in Colossians 2:16 revealed the following: First, κρίνω needs to be seen as condemnatory judging. Second, contextually βρώσις and πόσις apparently refer to the “food and drink” offerings that were part of the worship ritual. Third, there is no real textual support for the innovative theory that Colossians 2 is dealing solely with the sacrifices, but not the actual set times themselves. Fourth, the meaning of the vital terms ἑορτή, νεομηνία, and σάββατα, provided reasonable support for the view that the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16 denotes the annual and septennial sabbaths. Fifth, the regular use of the definite article with σάββατα (to identify the weekly Sabbath), was shown to be absent in Colossians – a factor contributing to the notion that the σάββατα here denotes ceremonial sabbaths. Sixth, since there are so many extra-ordinary aspects regarding the appearance of σάββατα in this epistle, the interpreter needs to be open to understanding this term other than normally anticipated; and here it credibly refers to ritual sabbaths, rather than the weekly.

Further research in Colossians showed that this epistle includes chiasmic structures to enhance interpretation. Comparison with Hosea 2:11 provided enough data to conclude that Paul was likely alluding to this triple terminology in Colossians 2:16. And, in agreement with the Hosea passage, the structure of the one in Colossians appears to also be an augmented mini-chiasm, with the final term σάββατα identifying the annual and septennial cultic sabbaths. Irrespective, though, as to whether Colossians 2:16 has a mini-chiasm, and regardless of whether it alludes to Hosea 2:11, there appears to be sufficient linguistic data to suggest that the σάββατα here does not identify the weekly Sabbath.

An investigation of the terms σκία and σῶμα in Colossians 2:17 (and in related passages) concluded that Paul was using these terms typologically, in a redemptive-historical setting, with a contrasting focus on Christ – confirming the mounting evidence that this passage in Colossians is focused on the ceremonial system. In other words, in view of the distracting philosophy making inroads in Colossae, Paul charged these believers to remain focused on Christ. They were to not permit anyone to condemn them for not celebrating the pilgrim festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and

Tabernacles, the new moon occasions, the cultic sabbaths of Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years, or any of the associated food and drink offerings. All of these “shadows” had prefigured the Messiah, whose death had fulfilled the entire ritual system. Thus, nothing in either the text or the context of Colossians 2:16 appears to identify, address, or discuss the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath.

Final Conclusion

Towards the end of his doctoral research on Paul’s use of the Old Testament in the epistle to the Colossians, Christopher Beetham concluded that the apostle “did not explicitly quote from Scripture” in this short letter.¹² Based upon an adapted and even broadened definition of the term *allusion*, the research in this thesis proposes that the triple terminology – ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα – does not accord well with any of the eight oft-referenced passages in Numbers, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, or Ezekiel. The only other major purported antecedent (i.e., Hos 2:11) was also analyzed, culminating in the conclusion that the tripartite phrase in this prophetic book is the most plausible candidate as the Old Testament passage to which Colossians 2:16 alludes. Referring to this text, Beetham labels the connection a “direct statement”¹³ from the Torah; even clearer than an allusion. As Eduard Schweizer pointed out, in Colossians 2:16, “the sequence festival – new moon – sabbath corresponds *precisely* to that of the Greek Bible (Hos. 2:13 [MT]).”¹⁴

However, regardless of whether or not Paul was alluding to Hosea 2:11, this project submits that contextual, inter-textual, etymological, lexical, linguistic, semantic, syntactical, structural, and typological factors coalesce to strongly intimate that the weekly seventh-day Sabbath is *not* included in the Colossian threefold phrase. Finally, Colossians 2:16, 17 can be rendered:¹⁵ “Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or for not celebrating festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These things were like a shadow of what was to come. But the reality is Christ!”¹⁶

Any knowledgeable Jewish Christian or Gentile convert, having read or heard this statement, would readily have recognized that Paul was challenging them to remain focused on Christ. John MacArthur stated it concisely: “The false teachers were telling the Colossians that it was not enough

¹²Beetham, 261.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*, Andrews Chester, trans. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 155 (emphasis added). The *only* point being made here is that Schweizer apparently acknowledged the correspondence between the *sequence* of the three crucial terms in Hos 2:13 [MT], and that of Col 2:16. Schweizer’s capitalized “Sabbath,” has been given a lowercase here.

¹⁵Verse 16 is from the NRSV, except that the words “of observing” have been replaced by the NLT’s “for not celebrating” (as this seems clearer). Verse 17 is from the NCV, except that the final four words (“the reality is Christ!”) are from the NET.

¹⁶The notes in the NET maintain that, “the genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ (*tou Christou*) is appositional and is translated as such ‘the reality is Christ’” (emphasis original).

to have Christ; they also needed to keep the Jewish ceremonial law.”¹⁷ In that context, they were to basically ignore anyone who sought to condemn them for not participating in the pilgrim festivals of Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, the new moon occasions, the ritual sabbatisms of Trumpets, Atonement, and Septennial Years, or the related food and drink offerings – since these had all foreshadowed the promised Messiah; all of which had been fulfilled in Jesus.

In short, based on an intensive investigation of the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament, it appears that the preponderance of evidence credibly indicates that the lexical term *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16 identifies the ceremonial sabbaths of the ancient Jewish festal calendar, and not the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment.

Recommendations for Further Research

Various commentators have linked the references regarding the observance of sacred days. For example, in his exegetical commentary on the meaning of Galatians 4:10, Thomas Schreiner asserted that “the same concern for observing certain days and feasts arises in Rom 14:5 and Col 2:16;” and, that this includes “observance of the Sabbath.”¹⁸ Taking a different view, David Jones, concluded: “Some have appealed to passages such as Rom 14:5; Gal 4:9-11; Col 2:16-17 to argue that the Sabbath is not part of the moral law, or to teach that the Sabbath has been abrogated. Yet, the context of these passages reveals that these texts most likely refer to the civil and ceremonial Sabbaths, not to the moral Sabbath.”¹⁹ In view of such radically divergent notions, and especially in relation to the findings of this thesis, it seems that it would be a worthwhile endeavor to undertake a comparative analysis of these three passages.

Also, since this research project was primarily focused on a contextual lexical and linguistic analysis of the triple terminology of Colossians 2:16, it would be beneficial for an inner-biblical grammatically-sound exegesis to be carried out, despite the “numerous and infamous” exegetical challenges.²⁰ All of this could serve to enhance an understanding of the message of the Colossian epistle, especially in light of its focus on the all-sufficiency of redemption through Jesus Christ.

¹⁷John MacArthur, Jr., *Colossians & Philemon*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 118.

¹⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 279. Similarly, David W. Cloud, *Avoid the Snare of Seventh-day Adventism* (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1999), 37; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 192-193; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 206; Mark F. Rooker, *The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 185, footnote #23; J. A. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, rev. ed., Oxford Bible Series (Oxford: University Press, 1990), 110-111; etc.

¹⁹David W. Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, B & H Studies in Christian Ethics (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 165.

²⁰Beetham, 196.

APPENDIX

THE “TRIAD” IN EXTRA-BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS

As noted in Chapter Five above, some have alleged that the “yearly-monthly-weekly” triad is a formula which also occurs in extra-biblical documents,¹ such as 1 Enoch, 1 Esdras, Jubilees, Judith, and 1 Maccabees, to “put into larger perspective the threefold phrase in Colossians 2.”² While all of the relevant passages cited need careful scrutiny (since the potential benefit of these resources is not to be overlooked), a somewhat brief analysis will be offered in this appendix, since this thesis is focused on examining the *σάββατα* of Colossians 2:16 from a Protestant scriptural perspective.

It bears repeating that those involved in inter-textual study may profit much from the work of Christopher Beetham,³ in that he has aptly promoted a more careful definition of terms, as well as the need for a better hermeneutical approach. His research may clarify the confusion regarding the role of extra-biblical texts. One writer, for example, has alleged that “extrabiblical texts” help to provide “the original context,” which is basically indispensable to understanding “what Paul may have had in mind.”⁴ This thesis has adopted the thoughtfully-fashioned, well-founded definitions of Beetham, especially as to the term “allusion,” but has slightly adjusted his definition, as follows: “An allusion is a literary device intentionally employed by an author so as to point a reader or hearer back to at minimum one identifiable scriptural source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be fully understood.”

Calendric Sequences in Inter-Testamental Documents

Taking into account this adapted definition of “allusion,” the analysis below will include a two-fold emphasis: First, it will examine each passage so as to determine whether or not any of these passages have a sufficiently distinctive “feast, new moon, sabbath” triadic sequence which is similar enough to the one seen in Colossians 2:16, in order to reasonably conclude that Paul was making an

¹See, for example, David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 30; Jerry A. Gladson, *A Theologian’s Journey from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries), 333.

²Jerry Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath? A Response to Ron du Preez,” in Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, rev. ed. (Glendale, AZ: LAM Publications, 2010), 385.

³Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁴Joseph D. Fantin, Review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:1 ([Jan-Mar 2011]; <http://www.dts.edu/reviews/ron-du-preez-judging-the-sabbath> (accessed 9 July 2017).

intentional allusion to any of these inter-testamental documents. Second, it will seek to determine whether the “sabbath” listed in the passages refers to the seventh-day Sabbath, taking into account any relevant implications for this project. Not to be ignored is the significant factor that *all* extant materials are in Greek;⁵ hence, reliable comparisons with anything in the Hebrew language does not seem to be possible.

Deuterocanonical Writings

1 Esdras 5:52 (NEB) reads: “And thereafter the *continual* [ἐνδελεχισμοῦ] offerings, and *sacrifices* [θυσίας] on *sabbaths* [σαββάτων], at *new moons* [νουμηνιῶν], and on all *solemn feasts* [ἐορτῶν].” This seems quite certainly to be a four-part listing: daily,⁶ weekly, monthly, yearly; with the seventh-day Sabbath included in the enumeration. Moreover, just as noted above regarding the main triad passages, the emphasis in this text is on *sacrifices*, and not on simply the days themselves. Hence, it appears appropriate to conclude that 1 Esdras 5:52 reflects a tetrad in essential accord with all of the six primary alleged triad passages, all of which were shown to be so unlike the Colossian tripartite phrase that they were excluded as being genuine Old Testament antecedents. Furthermore, two of the three crucial terms in 1 Esdras 5:52 are plurals in the Greek, not singulars as in all three terms in Colossians 2:16.

Judith 8:6 (NAB) reads: “She fasted all the days of her widowhood, except sabbath eves and *sabbaths* [σαββάτων], new moon eves and *new moons* [νουμηνιῶν], *feastdays* [ἐορτῶν] and *holidays* [χαρμοσυνῶν] of the house of Israel.” The final term, χαρμοσυνῶν, is rendered “days of rejoicing” (RSV, NRSV), or “days of public rejoicing” (NEB, REB), a concept not found in the Colossian epistle. If one were to ignore the two “eves” mentioned (or to include them with their related terms), this passage evidences a four-part calendric sequence. Moreover, this passage begins with the lexeme σάββατα, while Colossians ends with that term. Also, almost all the terms are plurals in the Greek, not singulars as is seen in all three terms in Colossians 2:16. Thus, while the σαββάτων noted here is probably the weekly Sabbath, this passage has too many anomalies to be a reliable antecedent text.

1 Maccabees 10:34 (NAB) reads: ““Let all *feast* days [ἐορταῖ], *sabbaths* [σάββατα], *new moon* festivals [νουμηνίαι], *appointed days* [ἡμέραι ἀποδεδειγμέναι] and the three days that precede each feast day, and the three days that follow, be days of immunity and exemption for every Jew in

⁵At least one of these documents is known to have originally been written in the Hebrew language; but, is available only in its translated form. Hence, it will not possible to determine how the key concepts may initially have been recorded in Hebrew. Thus, aware of the inconsistent manner in which the LXX has rendered various terms, especially as related to words crucial for this research (matters repeatedly noted above, especially in footnotes), it seems advisable to refrain from speculating what those terms may have been, and/or their possible implications for this thesis.

⁶The NEB term “continual” is better rendered as “regular” in the NRSV; i.e., “daily,” using the same term (ἐνδελεχισμοῦ) seen in Num 28:6; Neh 10:33 [MT vs. 34], for the “daily” sacrifices.

my kingdom.” This passage has a four-part listing, not three; also there is no “yearly-monthly-weekly” sequence, but rather a mixing up of terms; and two of the three crucial words are plurals in Greek, not singulars as is the case in all three terms in Colossians 2:16. While the weekly Sabbath is apparently in view here, this tetrad is too dissimilar to the Colossian tripartite phrase to be seen as an authentic precursor.⁷

By way of summary, the following can be concluded: All of these passages from the Apocryphal works exhibit at least a fourfold enumeration, not three as in Colossians 2:16. None of these passages has the crucial terms “feast, new moon, sabbath,” as located in Colossians, in this same order. All of them have at least two of the three key terms as plurals, in contrast to the singulars in Paul’s epistle. Finally, it appears that the context of the termination of these ancient Israelite rituals (as seen in Colossians 2) is considerably different from that listed in the above three passages, where these occasions are expressed as positively continuing observances.

Pseudepigraphical Works

Though not as frequently cited, the following passages have been put forward as containing a triad, to which Paul was allegedly alluding in his letter to the Colossians. As done above, these will be briefly looked at here:⁸

Jubilees 1:14 has “*new moons, sabbaths, festivals, jubilees, and ordinances.*” Besides having the terms mixed (rather than any clear “yearly-monthly-weekly” sequence), this is apparently a four-part sequence, if one omits the term “ordinances.” It is dissimilar to the Colossian tripartite phrase.

⁷Though they “do not include the full chronological sequence” (Gladson, “Does the Letter of Colossians Refer to the Sabbath?” 387), other passages have been proposed as relevant to this topic: (a) 1 Macc 1:39 (NEB) reads: “Her temple lay desolate as a wilderness; her feasts [ἑορταὶ] were turned to mourning, her sabbaths [σάββατα] to a reproach, her honor to contempt.” On the surface it may appear that the phrase “her sabbaths” undermines the conclusions from Chapter Three above, which indicate that “her” is used only for ritual sabbaths; whereas the weekly Sabbath does seem to be in view here. However, as repeatedly noted above, this thesis seeks to examine *solely* the original Hebrew and Greek texts. Since it is well-recognized that 1 Macc is only a translation (of a manuscript produced in Hebrew by an orthodox Jew in the first or second century, BC), its rendition cannot be proof of what may have been in the original; hence, this matter is moot. (b) 1 Macc 1:45 (NEB) reads: “Burnt offerings [όλοκαυτώματα], sacrifices [θυσίαν], and libations in the temple were forbidden; sabbaths [σάββατα] and feast-days [ἑορτᾶς] were to be profaned.” Again, it does seem that the seventh-day Sabbath is being discussed, though the focus here is on “burnt offerings,” and “sacrifices,” which is different from the context of Colossians 2:16. (c) 2 Macc 6:6 (NEB) reads: “It was forbidden either to observe the sabbath [σαββατίζειν] or to keep the traditional festivals [ἑορτᾶς], or to admit to being a Jew at all.” This verse does not include the substantive σάββατα, but is actually a translation of the related verb; thus, it cannot be included as a credible source for nouns of the Colossian “triad.” (d) Sirach 43:6-8 includes the terms “moon” (μῆν) and “feast” (ἑορτῆς); but, there is no mention or hint of the “Sabbath” here. In brief, all of these passages contain dyads, not triads. These dyads in Maccabees appear similar to the dyads of Ezek 44:24, and Lam 2:6, where the “yearly” and the “weekly” are listed in the same passage. The passage in Sirach may be similar to the dyad seen in Isa 1:14, where the “new moon” and “yearly” are placed together. As noted in the “Excursus” above in Chapter Five, and based on the understanding of the meaning and purpose of inter-textuality, these passages fail to qualify as dependable antecedents to the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase located in Colossians 2:16.

⁸Jubilees 1:10 has the phrase “*feasts of my covenant and my sabbath.*” Only two terms appear here, not three; hence, since it is a dyad (a matter addressed in the above footnote), it will not be dealt with here. The passage in 1 Enoch 82:10 has “in their *times* [i.e., *seasons*], in their *months*.” This is also a dyad; in addition, there is no mention of “sabbath” at all; hence, the passage is not germane to this study.

Jubilees 2:9 has “for *days, sabbaths, months, feast (days), years, sabbaths of years, jubilees,* and for all of the (appointed) *times* of the years.” Similar to what has been noted in the “Analysis of Primary ‘Triad’ Passages” above, this passage begins with a four-part listing going from daily through yearly, which is clearly different from the three-part phrase in Colossians 2:16. Also, this passage actually has eight different terms, not just three.

Jubilees 6:34 has “the *new moons* and (appointed) *times* and *sabbaths*.” Though this is a “three-part” listing, there is no “yearly-monthly-weekly” sequence, as alleged in Colossians 2:16.

Jubilees 6:37 has “the *months* and *sabbaths* and *feasts* and *jubilees*.” This is another four-part listing, also with the terms mixed; thus, there is no “yearly-monthly-weekly” calendric string.

Jubilees 6:38 has “the *months* and the (appointed) *times* and the *sabbaths* and the *feasts*.” This is also a four-part listing, with the terms mixed; hence, there is no “yearly-monthly-weekly” sequence.

Jubilees 23:19 has “*festivals* and *months* and *sabbaths* and *jubilees*.” Again there is a four-part listing, with the terms in yet another configuration. While this may appear to be like the “feast, new moon, sabbath” phrase of Colossians 2:16, it is different in at least two respects: first, the terms in this passage are plurals, unlike the singulars of all three terms in Colossians; second, this passage also adds in the term “jubilees,” which is not mentioned in Colossians 2:16.⁹

1 Enoch 82:7 has “the *months, the festivals, the years, and the days*.” Here is a four-part listing, with no mention of “sabbath” at all.

1 Enoch 82:9 has “at their *times* [i.e., *seasons*], on their *festivals* and in their *months*.” Though a three-part listing, there is no progressive sequence here, but simply a mixture of terms; also, there is no mention of “sabbath” at all.¹⁰

In brief, while a cursory reading of some of these pseudepigraphical passages may at first glance appear to contain evidence of the “yearly-monthly-weekly” triad, as claimed by some, this brief investigation challenges that notion. Though it does appear that the weekly Sabbath is in view in the passages in Jubilees, all of them (other than Jub 6:34) have at minimum a fourfold enumeration, not three as in Colossians 2:16. Moreover, a comparison with the ordering of the

⁹The quotes of Jubilees are taken from James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, *Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985). The book of Jubilees is dated to around the first half of the second century BC. See also James C. Vanderkam, ed., *Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Louvain, Belgium: Lovanii in Aedibus E. Peeters, 1989); Matthew Albani, Jörg Frey, and Armin Lange, eds., *Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997).

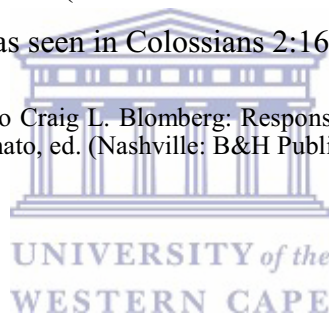
¹⁰The quotes from 1 Enoch are taken from George W. E. Nickelsburg, and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004). This part, i.e., “The Book of the Luminaries” (chapters 72–82), is dated around the third century BC. See also Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch, or 1 Enoch* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985).

crucial terms of “feast, new moon, sabbath” in Colossians 2 shows that none of these passages has the same sequence, except for Jubilees 23:19 (which has other factors that serve to distinguish it from Col 2:16). Since the passages in 1 Enoch do not mention the Sabbath at all, they are excluded from further consideration. Thus, in line with the analysis above of the purported triads in the Old Testament, it is concluded here that none of these additional references appears as an authentic antecedent for Colossians 2:16.

Conclusion Regarding Inter-Testamental Documents

As a conscientious Hebrew scholar, it is unlikely that Paul would have been alluding in his epistle to any of the inconsistently-phrased passages cited above, as he was seeking to communicate with sufficient clarity against a false teaching that was impeding the spiritual growth of these new believers in Colossae. In view of the fact that “some NT texts, Col 2:16 among them, can be understood only through an accurate understanding of their OT counterparts,”¹¹ it seems more likely that, if the apostle were seeking to allude to an antecedent, he would have selected a more precise, contextually-relevant, tripartite phrase (such as the one located in Hos 2:11), in order to accurately capture the threefold expression, as seen in Colossians 2:16.

¹¹Skip MacCarty, “Responses to Craig L. Blomberg: Response by Skip MacCarty,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, Christopher John Donato, ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 371.



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