

# SPECTRUM

A Quarterly Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

Volume 9, Number 1

Festival  
of the  
Sabbath



# SPECTRUM

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## About This Issue

The meaning of the Sabbath remains an inviting area for contemporary Christians to explore. Resources for such an enterprise can be found in the creative understandings of the Sabbath developed in the works of the major figures of Christian theology from Augustine to Barth. In the past, Seventh-day Adventists have paid much more attention to the history of Sabbath observance. However, this special issue reflects a growing trend to explore the "meaning of the Sabbath." It gathers together papers by several Adventists who have begun to write on the theology of the Sabbath.

As Ottillie Stafford's essay demonstrates, the Sabbath is much more than an intellectual exercise or legal requirement. Along with the works of theologians, therefore, this issue also includes artistic and poetic portrayals of the Sabbath. Christian art depicting the Sabbath and its activities has particularly been overlooked by both the worlds of art history and Christian theology. The editors thank Jorgen Henriksen, an artist, and Margaret Whidden, an art historian, for accepting the challenge of exploring the works waiting to be discovered in this area of Christian culture. Margaret Whidden particularly

COVER: Ken MacKintosh, *The Seventh Day*, mosaic, 1972-1973. From a seven-piece creation cycle, *In the Beginning God . . .* Fine Arts Center, Walla Walla College. Photo: Larry Canaday.

lavished months on trips, catalogue examinations and correspondence to cathedrals, libraries and museums in both the United States and throughout Europe. SPECTRUM's first reproduction of art in color has been made possible by generous contributors such as Dr. Gerhard Svrcek-Seiler, a physician in Vienna, who secured from the Kunsthistorisches Museum the reproduction of the seventeenth-century painting appearing in the center of the magazine. In a note accompanying the reproduction, he noted that the Sabbath deserved such "festive luxury."

This issue is noteworthy for the future of SPECTRUM since it marks the arrival of a new editor. Richard Emmerson, who received his doctorate in English medieval literature from Stanford University and is assistant professor of English at Walla Walla College, has accepted the position of executive editor. His past experience as editor of the Columbia Union College campus paper and as a consulting editor of SPECTRUM, and his broad interests, education and friendships in the areas of literature, history, theology and art will enrich the contribution of this journal. He will be active in all aspects of editing SPECTRUM. Manuscripts and reader's comments should be sent to him at SPECTRUM, Box 431, College Place, WA 99324. The Editors

# Festival of the Sabbath:

## Introduction

The holy has been described as both awesome and fascinating, the combination of mysterious power and attracting warmth. The Sabbath does not strike fear. It is God's holiness known as beauty, glory and splendor. It draws and renews. The Sabbath is God's weekly Yes to man.

Those who look to Christ's return often sound forbidding and act driven. Through the centuries, those who have proclaimed the fire, smoke, rebellion and warfare of the Apocalypse have often lived lives of stark denial and denunciation. The prospect of God's irresistible power's becoming personal and immediate can terrify. But in the long tradition of Christians who have expected Christ to come again, those who celebrate the Sabbath have the most reason to anticipate the Second Coming as a delight. Christians who know the Sabbath know the Messiah as an honored guest. They anticipate His final arrival as the culmination of a constantly renewed friendship. For them, the Second Coming is Sabbath joy become eternal.

This issue does not repeat the arguments why Seventh-day Adventists worship on the

seventh rather than the first day of the week, although the writers in this issue do assume that the seventh day is the day of Sabbath worship, and some examine the theological significance of that fact. Nor does this issue answer questions about puzzling borderline cases of Sabbath observance.

Instead, this issue explores the meaning of the Sabbath experience. In the process, the authors use their professional training to place Sabbath worship within the whole panoply of Christian life and doctrine. They share Karl Barth's feelings when he exclaimed with "a certain awe, the radical importance, the almost monstrous range of the Sabbath commandment . . . . This commandment is total. It discovers and claims man in his depths and from his utmost bounds" (*Church Dogmatics*, III; *The Doctrine of Creation*, II, 12). It calls him to freshness and wonder. This issue is an invitation to celebrate the Sabbath of creation and discover a festival of grace.

The Editors

# Seventh Day Baptists And Adventists: A Common Heritage

by Raymond F. Cottrell

One Sunday morning early in 1844 Frederick Wheeler, a Methodist-Adventist minister whose circuit included the Washington (New Hampshire) Christian church, conducted the communion service there. Present was a middle-aged woman, Mrs. Rachel Oakes (later Preston). In a subsequent conversation with Wheeler, Mrs. Oakes witnessed to her belief, as a Seventh Day Baptist, that the seventh day of the week was the Bible Sabbath. A few weeks later, Pastor Wheeler kept his first Sabbath and on the same March day preached a sermon about the Sabbath. Many of his parishioners followed him, and eventually Rachel Oakes Preston became an Adventist. Pastor Wheeler was the first Adventist to observe the seventh-day Sabbath; Mrs. Preston was one of the first Sabbathkeepers to become an Adventist. They became the first sabbatarian Adventists, and the Washington church the first sabbatarian Adventist congregation.<sup>1</sup> Seventh-day Adventists are happy to recognize their debt to the Seventh Day Baptists for this important facet of Adventist belief.

On the continent and in England, sabbatar-

ian Baptists trace their spiritual ancestry to the Anabaptist movement of Reformation times, and many of the Anabaptists are said to have observed the seventh-day Sabbath.<sup>2</sup> “Many conscientious and independent thinkers in the reign of Elizabeth (1558-1603) advocated the seventh-day,” and “in 1552 many in England were known as sabbatarians.”<sup>3</sup>

About 1664, Stephen Mumford, of the Bell Lane Seventh Day Baptist church in London, migrated to Newport, Rhode Island, where, finding no church of his own faith, he united with the Baptist church. By December 1671, he and a few other Baptist families were forced to form the first Seventh Day Baptist church on the North American continent, the church of Newport.<sup>4</sup> In 1801, at least 20 congregations and settlements of Sabbathkeepers formed the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, with a reported membership of 1,031.<sup>5</sup>

In the years just before 1844, Seventh Day Baptists generally listened approvingly to the Millerite proclamation of an imminent Advent, and sought to share with the Adventists their own conviction with respect to the Sabbath — seemingly in the hope of uniting the Advent and Sabbath truths. The Millerite leaders, however, resented any diverting of attention from the Advent to the Sabbath,

Raymond Cottrell, formerly associate editor of the *Review and Herald* and of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, is the author of *Beyond Tomorrow*.

which they considered an unimportant side issue. Consequently, few Seventh Day Baptists espoused the 1844 message.<sup>6</sup>

Early issues of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, which began publication in November 1850, testify to the indebtedness of Seventh-day Adventists to the Seventh Day Baptists for the Sabbath. On page 7 of the first issue, James White wrote:

We call special attention of the brethren to the articles, in this number, from the publications of the Seventh-day Baptists. They are clear, comprehensive and irrefutable. We intend to enrich the columns of the *Review and Herald*, with extracts from their excellent works on the Sabbath. We also design to get out a large pamphlet, containing the same material from their publications, that we publish in this paper. Such a work, judiciously circulated, will certainly do a great amount of good.<sup>7</sup>

That issue of the *Review* contained four such “extracts,” fully three-fourths of all the space. The second issue, in December, contained one Seventh Day Baptist article on the Sabbath along with one each from J. N. Andrews and Joseph Bates. In the 12 issues of volume one, nearly 40 percent of the space

**“Unfortunately, certain Adventists acting on their own initiative, gradually drove a wedge between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists. . . . Articles about ‘sheep stealing’ appeared in journals on both sides.”**

was devoted to the Sabbath. The extent to which pioneer Seventh-day Adventists were indebted to the Seventh Day Baptists for their understanding of the Sabbath is reflected in the fact that throughout the first volume over half of the Sabbath material was reprinted from Seventh Day Baptist publications.

On the front page of the sixth issue of volume one is a poem of seven stanzas about the Sabbath, “It’s Jewish,” by Roswell F.

Cottrell, at that time a Seventh Day Baptist minister. On October 19, 1851, Cottrell wrote James White from Mill Grove, New York, that “after some nine months of careful and cautious examination, I have just arrived at the decision [to accept the Advent message]. I believe with all my heart, it was from heaven.”<sup>8</sup> As a Seventh-day Adventist minister, Cottrell devoted the next 40 years to the proclamation of the Sabbath *and* the imminent coming of Jesus. Repeatedly, through the columns of the *Review*, he expressed his ardent desire for the spiritual growth of Seventh Day Baptists and his hope that they would accept the Adventist faith.

Unfortunately, certain Adventists, acting on their own initiative, gradually drove a wedge between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists. The years 1850 to 1880 witnessed relatively rapid growth of Seventh-day Adventists and a corresponding occasional loss of Seventh Day Baptists to the Adventists. This loss might have been sustained with a minimum of misunderstanding except for several instances of the traumatic breakup of a Seventh Day Baptist church by Adventists whose crude tactics aroused distrust and resentment that lingered for many years. Articles about “sheep stealing” appeared in journals on both sides.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these unfortunate incidents, Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists continued to take a fraternal interest in each other. In 1869, the Adventist General Conference proposed an exchange of observers at their respective General Conference sessions. At their 1870 session, the Seventh Day Baptists welcomed Roswell Cottrell to “take part in their deliberations” and voted “cooperation with the Seventh-day Adventists, but without compromising distinctive principles.” In the years 1871 to 1873, J. N. Andrews and Uriah Smith alternated as Adventist representatives at the Baptist General Conference sessions.

In 1876, “Elder James White appeared as delegate from the Adventists, and, later, gave an address on the relations of the two denominations.”<sup>10</sup> White wrote in an 1879 issue of the *Review*: “Both bodies have a spe-

cific work to do. God bless them both in all their efforts for its accomplishment. The field is a wide one. And we further recommend that Seventh-day Adventists in their aggressive work avoid laboring to build up a Seventh-day Adventist church where Seventh Day Baptist churches are already established.”<sup>11</sup>

At the Baptist session in 1879, Nathan Wardner, the Baptist representative to the Adventists, “expressed the opinion that that people [the Adventists] were modifying in their sentiments; and that each change brought them nearer to us in belief.” Their minutes for that session record that “Elder James White, of the Adventists, was introduced and welcomed to a seat in our Conference; and his report of their prosperity was met by a resolution expressing fraternal joy.”<sup>12</sup>

The tradition of exchanging observers continues to this day. The Seventh-day Adventist observer at the August 1976 Seventh Day Baptist General Conference Session in Houghton, New York, was Don Roth of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference.

The historic Seventh Day Baptist concept of the Sabbath was built on explicit statements of Scripture. The Sabbath command memorializes the Creator-creature relationship, and so does the day. The fourth commandment is not an inherently moral law in the strict sense of the word — like the commands against murder, adultery and theft, whose rationale is self-evident to conscientious people — but a positive precept that could not be known except by revelation. God intended the Sabbath for all mankind, and it cannot be altered by the church.

In historic Seventh Day Baptist thought, the Sabbath also has an eschatological dimension. In a great future crisis, truth will be in the balance (as foretold in Daniel 7:25). “The rest of the holy Sabbath” is “an earnest to God’s people, of that eternal rest, which is reserved for them in heaven,” an earthly “type” of a heavenly “antitype.” This perspective argues for the perpetuity of the Sabbath: “Now it is the nature of a type to continue until its use is superseded by the antitype. . . . The earthly Sabbath, then, being a type of the heavenly [rest], it must continue

till all the people of God shall have entered into their eternal rest; when there will be no more occasion for it. In other words, it must continue to the end of the world.”<sup>13</sup> The Sabbath is thus both a memorial of the perfect world as it came forth from the hand of the Creator, and a type of the earth made new. It bridges the great interregnum of time and sin.

The Sabbath means more than physical rest. We are to “search and cleanse our hearts from the cares of the world, . . . to reflect upon the tender care which God has exercised over us,” and “to see what improvement we have made of the last Sabbath’s instruction.” We are to engage in prayer and the reading of Scripture, and to converse upon religious subjects. We are to attend the Sabbath services and participate actively in them, in order that they may have “an important influence upon us during the succeeding week and . . . look forward with pleasure for the return of the weekly day of rest.”<sup>14</sup>

It would be difficult to draw a distinction between the historic Seventh Day Baptist concept of the Sabbath and that of Seventh-day Adventists. As the early issues of the *Review and Herald* make evident, we gratefully appropriated their well-developed understanding of the Sabbath, without modification, and made it our own.

Almost exclusively until recent years, Seventh Day Baptists emphasized Sabbath observance as man’s proper response to a divine command — as the Sabbath is, of course, presented in the Bible. This was the basis on which Rachel Oakes Preston witnessed to it in Washington, New Hampshire; and Seventh-day Adventists have followed this approach. God commands; it is our duty to obey.

More recently, at least some Seventh Day Baptists have been looking at the Sabbath from the added perspective of our need for it — as a gracious provision by a wise Creator to enable us to cope with the frenetic rush of the modern world. This approach makes the Sabbath more important today than in any previous generation. The Sabbath is the same, and man’s duty with respect to it is the

same. But instead of keeping it *only* because God requires it, there is emphasis on the Creator's purpose in giving man the Sabbath, on its intrinsic value, and on an intelligent observance of it. Ahva J. C. Bond aptly expressed this new perspective in the terse statement: "It is God's Sabbath; he made it," and "it is man's Sabbath; he needs it."<sup>15</sup>

An understanding and appreciation of the value of the Sabbath provides a more effective motivation for keeping it, and results in greater blessing than mere rote compliance with the Sabbath command can provide. In fact, true Sabbath observance is possible only when a person understands the purpose of the Creator in consecrating it as holy time, and chooses to keep it, not only because his creatureliness obliges him to do so, but also because, as a rational being, he sincerely desires to enter into the true Sabbath rest. This new emphasis sets the tone for Herbert E. Saunders' recent (1971) book, *The Sabbath: Symbol of Creation and Recreation*,<sup>16</sup> which is reminiscent of Abraham Heschel's classic, *The Sabbath*. Every thoughtful Seventh-day Adventist might profitably read both of these books. Saunders quotes from Heschel more than 20 times (and several times from M. L. Andreasen).

According to Saunders, the Sabbath is a continuing symbol of God's presence in the world, a "perfect link between God and our race," a constant reminder of the Creator's interest in us and of our creatureliness in relation to Him as our Father.<sup>17</sup> "Man was God's crowning achievement, and the Sabbath became the memorial of that achievement." Its observance is a supreme expression of loyalty to Him.<sup>18</sup> Neglect of the Sabbath leads to forgetfulness of the God of creation and the act of creation. Conversely, "the Sabbath remembered, God cannot be forgotten."<sup>19</sup>

According to Saunders, the Sabbath is a symbol that time is more important than the material things that occupy space. It symbolizes God's activity as well as His presence in time. "It is the recognition of the sanctity of time that leads us to an understanding of the Sabbath." For six days each week, we are concerned primarily with space and the things that occupy space; on the seventh we celebrate the holiness of time. The Sabbath is

rest after work, and consecrated rest demands consecrated work. The seventh day of the week thus sanctifies the six that precede it, if both are made what God intended them to be. The Sabbath is the cornerstone of time rejected by modern builders.<sup>20</sup>

The Sabbath stands not only at the apex of God's creative activity, but also of His redeeming power, and is a symbol of both.<sup>21</sup> It is a symbol of true spirituality and a perfect representation of true spiritual life, and Sabbathkeeping is an accurate barometer of that life.<sup>22</sup> It is time set apart for renewal, for

**"Is commitment to the Sabbath sufficient reason to maintain a separate church organization? The continuing existence of Seventh Day Baptists implies that they believe this to be so; their dwindling membership implies that it is not so."**

spiritual restoration and reconciliation.<sup>23</sup> "The Sabbath raises man from the level of earthly existence to the plane of the spirit."<sup>24</sup>

The Sabbath is also a symbol and an "example" of the world to come. Entering into its true spirit, "we have some idea of what heaven and eternity will be like for we have experienced the presence of the Father."<sup>25</sup> Again Saunders approvingly quotes Heschel: "The essence of the world to come is Sabbath eternal, and the seventh day in time is an example of eternity . . . a foretaste of the world to come; . . . a token of eternity." Unless we enjoy the taste of the Sabbath here, in time, we will be unable to enjoy the taste of the world to come.<sup>26</sup>

And how shall we keep Sabbath? Saunders asks. First, we must understand it. A person should do on the Sabbath that which leads toward an understanding of God's will. Anything that detracts from such contemplation or that allows one to forget it is the Sabbath, any use of the Sabbath hours that interferes with its purpose, in any way or to any extent, is a violation of the Sabbath. Conversely,



word or conduct that does not hinder one's own Christian growth or that of others, directly or indirectly, is appropriate. Unless we find God in the Sabbath, it is meaningless. There is no fixed human standard for observance; a person's conscience is to be his guide.<sup>27</sup>

What will the Sabbath do for those who understand its meaning and enter into its true spirit? It will enable them to face life with fresh hope, renewed strength and confidence; it will give a sense of harmony with the universe. It highlights the personal identity and worth of man, and frees him from the tyranny of the world.

Saunders devotes one section to the idea of the Sabbath as a day designed to bind the family together. "The Sabbath kept must be a Sabbath shared," he says, and sharing begins at home. The Jewish people make the Sabbath a significant family experience. It provides for a renewal of family ties, and for relating personally to members of the family and their needs. "Save the Sabbath and it will go a long way toward saving the family," he quotes George Bernard Shaw.<sup>29</sup>

The author repeatedly stresses the relevance of the Sabbath in the modern world. Far from being outmoded, it provides the very therapy modern man needs, the therapy of silence and quietness amid the pressures of a madly rushing, neurotic society; it dispels the frustrations of the present age.<sup>30</sup> In a world that tends to depersonalize people and transform them into robots, it makes each individual important; it restores the personal quality of life.<sup>31</sup>

Like Heschel, Saunders finds in the Sabbath "a different climate" from the other days of the week, an air that "surrounds us like spring," an oasis of tranquillity, serenity, peace and repose.<sup>32</sup> Again, like Heschel, he sees the Sabbath as a "sanctuary built for us in time," "a sheltered place of rest and refreshment," a "regular moment in time when men and God meet and share together in spiritual and living fellowship,"<sup>33</sup> an "island of stillness" in the "tempestuous ocean of time and toil."<sup>34</sup>

The Sabbath is the only point of belief on which Baptists and Seventh Day Baptists differ. Saunders specifically cites it as the

"only just reason for our denominational existence, separate from other Baptists."<sup>35</sup> This suggests the question, Is commitment to the Sabbath, in and of itself, sufficient reason to maintain a separate church organization? The continuing existence of Seventh Day Baptists implies that they believe this to be so; their dwindling membership implies that it is not so. Their 1803 U.S. membership stood at 1,130; in 1844, it had grown to nearly 6,100; in 1863, to 6,516 (compared with about 3,500 Seventh-day Adventists). In 1902, it peaked at 9,292 and has been gradually declining ever since. Today, it is back to 5,230.<sup>36</sup> In 1803, there was one Seventh Day Baptist to every 4,698 of the U.S. population; in 1976, the ratio was one to every 41,014 — proportionately one-ninth as large as 173 years ago.<sup>37</sup>

These considerations lead Saunders to conclude that "something is going to happen soon, if the Sabbath and all that it stands for in the Christian context is not to be lost."<sup>38</sup> "Either the Sabbath has meaning for this age or it does not. If not, it is time we found out and extended our energies into other areas of concern. But if the Sabbath does have meaning for this age," its spiritual values should be reflected in Seventh Day Baptist lives and in a renewed dedication to proclaiming the Sabbath. "Lack of conviction about the Sabbath is the most serious threat we face" today, he says.<sup>39</sup> "The time has come for us to begin the process of Sabbath renewal" by a "re-examination of our reason for keeping the Sabbath, and if it has no value then to discard it. But if it has what we have for centuries insisted that it had, of spiritual quality and significance, then it must be offered to a world in need."<sup>40</sup>

This concept of the Sabbath gives Seventh Day Baptists "a tremendous responsibility," and the time has come for them to restore it to a central place in their faith. "The demands of the present age are calling us to either a new commitment or to a relinquishing of our rights to the Sabbath. Seventh Day Baptists are either on the threshold of a new experience in Sabbatism or on the brink of denomi-

national disaster. God is calling us to a new awareness of the Sabbath in the life of modern man and we have something wonderful to offer.” “The time has come. The era of Sabbath need has arrived and we have been in existence for lo these many years because, I believe, we have been saved ‘for such a time as this.’ ”<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps there is still something of value we can learn about the Sabbath from our Seventh Day Baptist friends. We are grateful to them for their devoted witness to the seventh-day Sabbath, which in God’s providence brought it to our attention and made it a vital part of our belief and life as Seventh-day Adventists.

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# The Experience Of Liberation

by Sakae Kubo

The Sabbath relates to both justification and sanctification. It points to the completion of the redemptive activity of Christ as well as to His creative activity, serving as a day of joyous celebration of this redemptive act. This paper attempts to show the relationship between these themes and the Sabbath.

Man cannot save himself by works. Nothing that he performs or accomplishes is worth anything for his acceptance with God. The keeping of the Sabbath, therefore, cannot help a sinner to be justified. On the contrary, the Sabbath itself is a sign of God's grace, of the fact that salvation comes by nothing that man does but by everything that God does.

The first Sabbath kept by the first pair came on the first day after their creation. Thus, they were invited to rest not because of anything they had done but because God had finished His work. They came to the Sabbath empty-handed of any human works; all they could do was to view what God had done for them. The Sabbath, being remembered in their experience as their first day, continually reminded them that they had nothing to offer

to God. They were to accept the Sabbath as God's gift to them.<sup>1</sup>

On the Sabbath, we are to cease from our own works. It is God's invitation to us to look away from ourselves and our works, to Him and His works. On the Sabbath, God wants to remind us that human achievements and human works must be put aside in His presence. He wants to remind us that we cannot justify ourselves and that we must not trust in our own ability and works.

When we cease from our works, we realize that our works are not important. We can stop and the world still moves on without us. What we do, no matter how important, is not indispensable. We can stop our work, but the sustaining activity of God goes on. It is God's activity that is important, not ours. The Sabbath also tells us that God takes the initiative — He creates, He acts, He gives, He provides, He invites, He blesses, He sanctifies. We are the created recipients, the spectators, the guests.

Even what is commanded can be prostituted by man as a claim for self-righteousness. Prayer, almsgiving and fasting can be and have all been, used as works of the law to claim merit before God. And it is a recognized fact that the Sabbath, too, has been prostituted in this way. But something about the Sabbath militates against this legalistic spirit: its arbitrary character. The

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Sabbath commandment does not merely command the keeping of a day but specifies what day this should be. The seventh day is not a natural day of worship connected with sowing or reaping, with the revolution of the sun or moon. It is not connected with any natural phenomenon in the heavens or on the earth such as are Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles and the new moons. It can be understood only by revelation as the day that memorializes God's rest from creation. Because it is somewhat of an arbitrary day, the keeping of the Sabbath on the seventh day is ultimately an act of obedient and self-renouncing faith in recognition of God's sovereignty over us.<sup>2</sup>

God's sovereignty over man and his time, manifested by the command to observe the Sabbath, is not limited to that day. It extends to all of man's time and to all of man. God's special claim on us on the Sabbath does not mean that we can do as we please the rest of the week. While all time is not holy time as the Sabbath is, it is time to be lived under the recognition that God is sovereign over us and that our life always must be lived in relationship to Him and His principles.

The Sabbath command in a Jewish community where everyone keeps the Sabbath is not as great a challenge to man's autonomy as it is in a pluralistic society where competing claims are made, where in fact frequently the customs and practices of the society go contrary to God's commands. Such is the Sabbath in the contemporary society of the twentieth century. Not only must it seek to survive among those who espouse a Sunday-oriented world but more so among those who recognize no day of worship. The leisure society has taken over the weekend without thought of any divine claims. The weekend is centered around selfish human pleasures. In such a context, God's claim of the seventh day is a challenge to man's autonomy. To many, such an interruption cannot be accepted. Some propose having religious services before the weekend so that the entire weekend can be enjoyed without interruption. The majority simply have no time for God. But God's claim is insistent. If we are to worship God, we can do it only His way. We cannot manipulate God and His

Sabbath to our own convenience. We may accept Him or we may not. But if we do, it will have to be on God's terms, not ours.

God knows that we need more than relaxation and leisure time. Man does not live by rest, relaxation and leisure alone: he also needs God. True fulfillment comes only as he makes the kingdom of God first and learns to value the things of the spirit and of eternity more than the things of time and of matter.

The Sabbath, when understood as that which strips us of our works and our autonomy before God, cannot be used as a means of self-justification. Its very nature militates against its being used in such a way. The Sabbath is truly the sign of God's grace and sovereignty and of man's receptivity and dependence.

The Sabbath represents God's initiative and man's receptivity. Receptivity is a passive act, but it is an act. God does not force His presence upon us. Instead, He says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20, R.S.V.). His presence is ours only if we open the door. Thus, the full meaning of the Sabbath is completed only when man responds by accepting God's presence in his life.

This results in man's becoming a "new creation." But man is not simply inert matter like the earth but a dynamic personal being with a will. Therefore, man as a "new creation" is not a finished product like the inanimate creation. Day by day, he must respond to God, accept God's presence in his life, and live to God. As Ellen White states, "There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification. True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last."<sup>3</sup> With Paul, the Christian must say: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

It is this experience of sanctification, as well as the experience of justification, that the

Sabbath signifies. For God says: “Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I the Lord sanctify them” (Eze. 20:12). The Sabbath was a sign that God had chosen Israel as His holy people. It did not simply signify holiness of time, but holiness in time, or holy people. But as Ezekiel explains further, Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness, did not walk in His statutes, and profaned His Sabbaths. The profanation of the Sabbath is a natural consequence of rebellion and disobedience.

The Sabbath implies a holy people, not simply a people arbitrarily set apart. God can set aside a segment of time or a piece of property and it becomes arbitrarily holy, but he cannot do the same with human beings. People must respond with a holy life, with a life of obedience. Faith must work through love (Gal. 5:6). Therefore, when God says that the Sabbath is a sign of sanctification, He means that it is a sign that sets His people apart by their exemplary lives of loyalty and obedience to His will and commandments.

While it has been and is still possible to “keep” the Sabbath yet live a life that denies

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any relationship to Jesus Christ, it is clear that this is a complete rejection of the meaning of the Sabbath. For the Sabbath points to a new creation and to a life of sanctification, holiness and obedience. Sabbathkeeping by a person who denies the Lord of the Sabbath is a complete contradiction of terms. It is like saying one can be loyal and at the same time betray one’s nation. If we understand the meaning of the Sabbath as a sign of sanctification, either we will feel uneasy about the contradiction between our lives and what the

Sabbath stands for or we shall seek God’s help to put our lives in harmony with the meaning of the Sabbath.

Seventh-day Adventists affirm without reservation and in the clearest and most forceful words that the just shall live by faith. No one can be saved by works apart from grace. Only through the sacrifice of Christ can anyone hope to be saved. But we also believe that faith is dead if it does not produce fruits. Ellen White says: “He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy.”<sup>4</sup> As Paul says, faith works through love (Gal. 5:6), “for it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Rom. 2:13). The Sabbath both signifies God’s initiative and man’s response, a sign of his obedience and loyalty to God. The Sabbath, with the other commandments of God, challenges man’s seriousness in obeying God and tests the authenticity of his faith.

We witness today all too frequently a spineless Christianity — a great gulf separates what it says from what it does. This gulf has widened as the meaning of the Sabbath as serious obedience to God in all walks of life has been forgotten. The emphasis has been on justification without sanctification, a spurious faith without obedience, confession without love and love without cost. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”<sup>5</sup> In the present milieu, the Sabbath confronts us as God’s challenge to our seriousness in accepting Christ. Since the world in its life and business is structured with Sunday as its rest day, the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath today demands a radical, conscious, deliberate decision to follow Christ. We affirm that “*only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.*”<sup>6</sup>

Bonhoeffer's last statement is supported by New Testament passages on the criterion of final judgment. For instance, Paul says: "For we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (II Cor. 5:10). And again: "For he will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. 2:6). This idea is not limited to Paul. We find it in First Peter and in Revelation. "If you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile" (I Peter 1:17). "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done" (Rev. 22:11; see also 2:23 and 20:13). These passages surely do not imply that we shall be justified by our works. They imply what Bonhoeffer stated above: "Only the man who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes." Our works of faith are the means of testing whether we truly believed, for genuine faith leads to obedience: works are the natural consequence of such faith and attest its genuineness. On the other hand, works of the law reveal a complete lack of faith in Jesus Christ but instead a trust in one's own strength and righteousness.

The Sabbath brings together this intimate relationship between justification and sanctification. As Donald Bloesch states, "We are saved *by* grace alone, but we are saved *for* works and also *through* works in the sense that works that proceed from faith serve the advancement of our sanctification."<sup>7</sup> Bloesch continues that "we must affirm God's decision for us and our decision in God. We must try to grasp the paradoxical unity of what God has done for us in Christ and what we can do in, with, and for Christ."<sup>8</sup> Even in justification man has a part, for God does not justify us against our will. Our part is to accept His offer. It is not enough to claim Christ's death for us 2,000 years ago; we must demonstrate its efficacy today by a life lived according to His will. "It is not only the perfected life of Christ in the past but the faithful life of the believer in the present that makes salvation effectual. It is

not only Christ's death on the cross but the bearing of the cross by the people of the church that prepares the way for ultimate victory."<sup>9</sup>

The priority of justification is fundamental. It must ever be kept in mind that man alone and in his own strength cannot do anything for his salvation. Yet, we must not think of the Christian as lifeless matter on whom and for whom God does everything.

**"The Sabbath has no meaning at all unless there is a conjunction of God's creative power and its accomplished result in the life of the Sabbathkeeper. Holiness of time must be matched by holiness of being."**

God's initiative is basic but unless man responds in faith, there is no salvation for him. And the response in faith must be followed by the life of loving obedience.

The Sabbath as a symbol of justification and sanctification brings these truths together and keeps us who are prone to be one-sided from falling into either error: justification by works or antinomianism (a flip-pant, superficial disregard of earnest serious obedience in the Christian life). The Sabbath itself, because of what it symbolizes, warns us that it is not sufficient merely to maintain an outward observance. True Sabbath observance means that the Christian has responded to God's claim on his life and through the Spirit daily lives his life for God. When this is done, the truth of the intimate connection of justification and sanctification becomes a living reality. The symbol is realized and the meaning of the Sabbath is incarnated.

The Sabbath relates not only to creation but also to redemption. Deuteronomy 5:15 relates the two: "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day." While, no

doubt, there is a connection made between the servants in their midst (vs. 14) and Israel's status as servant in Egypt, suggesting that Israel should treat servants with consideration especially on the Sabbath, the emphasis in the verse on God's mighty deliverance of Israel points to the fact that the Sabbath should lead to reflection on their great deliverance from bondage. In Exodus 20, the observance of the Sabbath is connected with God as Creator; here, with God as Deliverer or Redeemer. The idea of Creator leads to the idea of Redeemer: the two ideas are inextricably related. But from the experiential point of view, we encounter God as Redeemer before we recognize Him as Creator.

In the Old Testament, especially Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the ideas of redemption and creation are closely connected. The same is true, although less explicitly, in the New Testament. Hans Walter Wolff makes a connection of the completion of God's creative activity with Jesus' words ("It is finished") as He died.<sup>10</sup> With the utterance of those words the veil of the temple was rent in twain, signifying that the barrier between God and man was removed in the reconciling act of Christ. The work of redemption was completed, finished. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5:19). As it was on the sixth day of the first week when God had finished His creative work, so it was on the sixth day of passion week when Christ had completed His redemptive work. As, at the beginning, the Creator rested on the seventh day, so now the Redeemer rested on the seventh day.

**W**hile the Sabbath memorializes the once-for-all redemptive activity of Christ, the redemption of each person is considered a "new creation." "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come" (II Cor. 5:7). In this sense also, creation and redemption are closely related. The work of Christ as Redeemer is viewed as a creative act. The result of His work as Redeemer is a "new creation." Thus, both Christ's general redemptive activity in passion week and His specific redemption of ourselves as individu-

als are memorialized on the Sabbath. The Sabbath as a memorial does not deal merely with the general redemptive activity of Christ but also with our individual redemption; not only with the objective act of Christ but also with our subjective response to it.

As the Sabbath memorializes the completed activity of creation, so it now also memorializes the finished redemptive activity of the new creation in Christ. The Christian, as he celebrates the Sabbath, rejoices not only in God's natural creation but also in God's spiritual creation. He recognizes that "the power that created all things is the power that recreates the soul in His own likeness."<sup>11</sup> He celebrates God's creative activity in his life as the Sabbath recalls to his mind the time of his re-creation, his baptism. The Sabbath, then, is a weekly reminder of the once-and-for-all completed creation event, the once-and-for-all completed redemption of Christ, and also the same weekly reminder of the once-and-for-all completed new creation.

The Sabbath can be a sign of God's creative power in us only if we indeed manifest in our persons the evidence of that power. We must in fact be a "new creation." The Sabbath has no meaning at all unless there is a conjunction of God's creative power and its accomplished result in the life of the Sabbathkeeper. Holiness of time must be matched by holiness of being. Holiness *of* time must become holiness *in* time. If this is true, Sabbathkeeping can never become a legalistic or nominal act. Truly, the symbol participates in the reality of that for which it stands. The Sabbath does not become an abstract entity, a mere external sign, for the Christian participates (by the keeping of the Sabbath) with the reality of the "new creation" which the day symbolizes. The Sabbath as a sign of the creation of the world becomes personally meaningful only if the Sabbath is first of all a sign of our "new creation."

The Sabbath has always had a joyful aspect to it. Isaiah called it "a delight" (Isa. 58:13). The Jews traditionally considered the Sabbath a day of delight to the extent that they forbade fasting on it. According to Samuel Dresner, "Even the seven days of *shivah*, the mourning period, are interrupted for the

Sabbath. The famous story from the Talmud of how Beruriah, the wife of Rabbi Meir, delayed telling her husband the terrible news of the death of their two sons until the Sabbath had passed and night had fallen, became a living example in the countless Jewish homes through the ages, that one must take every precaution to preserve the sweet peace and joy of the Sabbath."<sup>12</sup>

The Jews try in many ways to make the Sabbath a special day of delight. Adventists are likewise encouraged by Ellen White to make the Sabbath special. Parents especially are admonished to do all in their power to "make the Sabbath. . . the most joyful day of the week. They can lead their children to regard it as a delight, the day of days, the holy of the Lord, honorable."<sup>13</sup>

The Sabbath as a day of delight and joy takes on a heightened meaning for Christians because it points to the redemptive act of Christ which overshadows that of Moses as well as to our personal redemption from the bondage of sin. It calls to mind our liberation from the bondage of sin, our transfer from the world of darkness into the kingdom of light. It is well to "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12, 13).

The Sabbath is the foundation of worship because it underscores the distinction be-

tween Creator and creatures which is the basis of worship. The Sabbath is also a ground of worship in that it is a festival of deliverance and redemption. This celebration takes place in the Sabbath worship services. God's people come together to praise God for His mighty acts in word, prayer and hymn; to hear again God's word proclaimed, His mighty acts described, and the good news of salvation announced; to accept this good news and to commit themselves anew to this God of grace by word and by symbol in their offerings to God. The central focus of every worship service must be what God has done for His people through Jesus Christ. The Sabbath is the celebration of redemption.

There can be no thought of merit in attendance at worship services. God's people come because of what God has done. They worship with hearts grateful for the great deliverance they have received in Jesus Christ. They are like a gathering of men and women who have been rescued by lifeguards from drowning, or prisoners of war who have been delivered by a conquering general from imprisonment. They worship without any thought of reward but only of gratitude and praise. They take part in the worship service joyfully, not apathetically or mechanically. Enthusiastically they sing hymns of praise to their Benefactor; cheerfully they bring their offerings because they remember what He has given them. With Paul they joyfully exult, "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" (II Cor. 9:15).

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Karl Barth has an excellent treatment of this aspect of the Sabbath in his *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4.
2. See Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 84 (1972), 457-458.
3. Ellen White, *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1937), p. 9.
4. *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1892), p. 65.
5. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, revised and unabridged edition (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 47.

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7. Donald Bloesch, *The Christian Life and Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 17.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
10. "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," *Lexington Theological Quarterly*, 7 (1972), 70.
11. Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1882), VI, 350.
12. Samuel Dresner, *The Sabbath* (New York: Burning Bush Press, 1970), p. 19.
13. *Testimonies to the Church*, VI, 369.



# A Memorial Of Redemption

by Samuele Bacchiocchi

**I**n the Scripture, the history of redemption begins with God creating this planet and its creatures to enjoy eternal fellowship with Him and closes with the assurance that ultimately this original plan will be fulfilled when God Himself “will dwell with them and they shall be his people” (Rev. 21:3).

What role does the Sabbath play in this divine plan? Being the day when God first ceased from His creative activity in order to establish a special relationship with His creatures by entering into human time and history, the Sabbath not only inaugurates the history of mankind, but also epitomizes its ultimate consummation. The decisive divine acts of creation, redemption and the final restoration are all effectively symbolized and commemorated by this first divinely established institution, the Sabbath. In this study, we will focus our attention specifically on the redemptive meaning and function of the Sabbath.

Although the account of creation presents the Sabbath basically as a *cosmological* institution designed to express God’s concern for, and satisfaction over, His complete and per-

fect creation, the Sabbath’s *soteriological* function can already be detected there in an embryonic form. Some of the verbs used to describe its institution foreshadow the redeeming work of Christ: “And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done and he *rested* on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God *blessed* the seventh day and *hallowed* it” (Gen. 2:2-3).

What is the meaning of the divine Sabbath rest? Its first apparent function is to explain that God’s original creation was “finished” and “done” (Gen. 2:2-3). There was no need of an evolutionary process to improve God’s workmanship. There is, however, also a deeper meaning, although perhaps less apparent. By entering through the Sabbath into human time to give to His creatures not only things but also Himself, God revealed His willingness to enter into human flesh in order to become “Emmanuel, which means God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

Another redemptive implication can be seen in the assurance of divine blessings: “God *blessed* the seventh day” (Gen. 2:3; cf. Ex. 20:11). In the Old Testament, the notion of “blessing” is concrete, expressing the promise of full and abundant life (Gen. 1:22, 28; 9:1; 49:22-26; Ps. 133:3). In the creation account, the blessing of the Sabbath follows the blessing of the living creatures (Gen.

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1:22) and of man (Gen. 1:28). Being the final blessing, it expresses God's ultimate and total blessing over His complete and perfect creation. By blessing the Sabbath, God promised to be mankind's benefactor, reassuring all His creatures of full and abundant life. This sabbatical promise after the fall became the token of the coming salvation of the Lord.

Similarly, God's "hallowing" (Gen. 2:3) of the Sabbath contains redemptive implications. Since the holiness of the Sabbath is determined by the special manifestation of God's mysterious and majestic presence on this day (Ex. 31:13; Ez. 20:20; cf. Is. 1:12-15), through the Sabbath, God promises to bless His people with His holy presence. It is

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noteworthy that Adam's first full day of life was a Sabbath day which he spent not admiring God *doing* creative marvels, but *being* in fellowship with Him. Since through the Sabbath God promised not only *products* but also His *presence*, the day could adequately become after the fall the fundamental base and background of all His subsequent saving activities.

After creation, the manna is the next significant example of the redemptive function of the Sabbath. In this instance, the Sabbath is presented not as a cosmic structure expressing the completion and perfection of God's creation, but rather as a historic institution given to the new nation that God had miraculously *delivered* from Egyptian bondage: "See the Lord has given *you* the Sabbath" (Ex. 16:29).

During the week, God revealed Himself through the prodigy of the manna, but on the Sabbath, through His invisible, yet most di-

rect, voice. In order to hear without interferences the Word of God on the Sabbath, it is necessary to look up and not down, to recede from the world of things and not to move, except on the plane of faith. By teaching the people to make adequate preparation to listen to, and to trust, the Word of God, the Sabbath in the manna event becomes the medium to restore that divine-human trust-relationship broken by the fall and by the Egyptian bondage.

The manna experience was the prelude to God's greater revelation of Himself and of the meaning of the Sabbath at Mount Sinai. At this mountain, God provided to the people a fuller manifestation of His glorious presence and of His precepts. The Sabbath's role in this event of salvation history is evident in the septenary structure now used to describe the permanence of God's glory on Sinai: "The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it six days; and on the *seventh day* he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud" (Ex. 24:16). Ellen White comments that "upon the seventh day, which was the Sabbath, Moses was called up into the cloud."<sup>1</sup>

Why was Moses invited to enter into the glorious presence of God on the Sabbath day? Does God's invitation perhaps unveil the essence of the divine Sabbath rest (which in the creation narrative hides a certain mystery), namely, the day when God especially blesses His creatures with His holy presence? Several elements of the Sinai revelation suggest that the Sabbath is now used to personalize the holy presence of God. Not only does God invite Moses into His presence on a Sabbath, but also through the Sabbath commandment He urges all the people to cultivate His holy presence by making adequate preparation for the day (Ex. 20:8-10). Moreover, from Sinai the Lord explicitly declares the Sabbath to be a perpetual covenant sign designed to remind "that I, the Lord, sanctify you" (Ex. 31:13).

These blessings of the Sabbath were designed to constantly remind the Israelites of God's past, present and future saving activities. The Exodus version of the Sabbath commandment, for instance, emphatically enjoins that rest be granted to all, including

the animals (Ex. 20:10), in order to guarantee to all the members of the Hebrew society the freedom from bondage newly granted by Yahweh (Ex. 20:2). This redemption motif is stated even more explicitly in the Deuteronomic version of the commandment: "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm: therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15).

Hans Walter Wolff well remarks that "on every Sabbath Israel is to remember that her God is a liberator."<sup>2</sup> The liberation from the hardship of work and from social inequalities, which both the weekly and annual Sabbaths granted to all the members of the Hebrew society, not only recalled the past historical exodus deliverance, but also foreshadowed the fuller redemption the Messiah would one day bring to His people. The Messianic age of the ingathering of all the nations is in fact described in Isaiah as the time when "from Sabbath to Sabbath all flesh shall come to worship before me" (66:23). The experience of the Sabbath *rest-menuhah*, which A. J. Heschel defines "as happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony,"<sup>3</sup> is frequently identified both in the writings of the prophets and in the Talmudic literature with the Messianic age, commonly known as the end of days or the world to come.

This prevailing Messianic - redemptive understanding of the Sabbath explains why Christ, in His inaugural address delivered on a Sabbath at the synagogue of Nazareth, announced His mission by quoting the sabbatical message of Isaiah 61:1-2 (cf. 58:6) which says: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). Christ's brief comment on this passage is most pertinent: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

Christ's initial announcement of His Mes-

siahship (Luke 4:16-21) is followed in Luke by two healing episodes. The first occurred in the synagogue of Capernaum during a Sabbath service and resulted in the *spiritual healing* of a demon-possessed man (Luke 4:31-17). The second was accomplished immediately after the Sabbath service in Simon's house and brought about the *physical restoration* of Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39). The healing made the Sabbath a day of *rejoicing* for the whole family and resulted in *service*: "immediately she rose and served them" (v. 39).

In the healing of the man with the withered hand (Matt. 12:9-21; Mark 6:6-11), Christ further exemplifies the redemptive value and function of the Sabbath. A deputation of Scribes and Pharisees, who had brought the invalid before Jesus, posed the testing question: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (Matt. 12:12). Christ replied first by enunciating a principle, then by illustrating it. "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, *to save life or to kill?*" (Mark 3:4). To illustrate this principle, according to Matthew, Christ added a second question containing a concrete example: "What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more *value* is a man than a sheep!" (Matt. 12:11-12).

Both by the question of principle and by its illustration, Christ reveals the *original value* of the Sabbath, a day to honor God by showing concern and compassion for others. The believer who on the Sabbath experiences the blessings of salvation will automatically be moved "*to save*" and not "*to kill*" others. Christ's accusers, by failing to show concern for the physical and spiritual well-being of others on the Sabbath, revealed their defective understanding and experience of God's Holy Day. Rather than spending the Sabbath involved in a saving ministry, they were engaged in destructive efforts, *looking for faults* and thinking out methods *to kill* Christ (Mark 3:2, 6).

The redemptive significance of the Sabbath is brought out even more explicitly in the healing of the crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17). Three times, in fact, the Savior uses the verb "to free—*luein*." To the woman

who for 18 years had been “bent over,” Christ said: “Woman, you are *freed* from your infirmity.” The ruler of the synagogue became indignant over Christ’s healing act. For him, the Sabbath meant rules to obey, rather than people to love and save. To clarify the latter meaning of the Sabbath, the Lord addressed the ruler first by referring to a rabbinical concession: “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath *untie* his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it?” (Luke 13:15). Then, building upon the concept of untying an animal, Christ draws the obvious conclusion in the form of a rhetorical question: “And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan *bound* for eighteen years, be *loosed* from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 13:16).

**A**rguing from a minor to a greater case, Christ shows how the Sabbath had been paradoxically distorted. It was legitimate to *untie* an ox or an ass from his manger (possibly because a day without water may have resulted in loss of weight and consequently in less marketing value), yet a suffering woman could not be released on such a day from her physical and spiritual infirmity. What a perversion of the Sabbath! It was necessary, therefore, for Christ to act deliberately on the Sabbath against prevailing misconceptions in order to restore the day to God’s intended purpose.

Two Sabbath miracles reported by John (5:1-18; 9:1-41) further exemplify the relationship between the Sabbath and Christ’s redemptive ministry. Both healed men had been chronically ill: one invalid for 38 years and the other blind from birth. In both cases, the Pharisees formally accused Christ of Sabbathbreaking for instructing the invalid to carry his pallet and for preparing clay for the blind man. To defend Himself against the accusation of Sabbathbreaking, Christ made a memorable statement: “My Father is working still, and I am working” (John 5:17; cf. 9:4).

Some critics use this passage to discredit the Genesis notion of God’s observing the

Sabbath. They argue that Christ, by saying that His Father has been “working until now” in creative activities, implicitly denies that God has ever experienced the creation Sabbath rest. Is this interpretation correct? Is Christ referring to creative or redemptive activity when speaking of the “working until now” of the Father? The notion of a continuous divine creation, though present in Hellenistic Judaism, is foreign to the teaching of the Gospel of John. For the latter “all things were made” (1:3) by Christ at an indefinite distant past known as “beginning” (1:1).

**I**n the Gospel of John, the works of God are identified with, and manifested in, the saving ministry of Christ: “This is the work of God, that you *believe* in him whom he has sent” (John 6:29; cf. 5:36; 10:37, 38; 14:11; 15:24). The redemptive nature of the works of God is absolutely clear in the healing of the blind man, since this act is explicitly described as the manifestation of “the works of God” (John 9:3). To understand the force of Christ’s defense, we need to remember that the Sabbath is linked both to the *cosmos* through *creation* (Gen. 2:2-3) and to *redemption* through the *exodus* (Deut. 5:15; Ex. 20:8-100). While, by interrupting all secular activities, the Israelite was remembering the Creator-God, by acting mercifully toward fellow-beings he was imitating the Redeemer-God. On the basis of this theology of the Sabbath admitted by the Jews, Christ defends the legality of the “working” that He and His Father perform on the Sabbath, since their works consist in raising the dead, and in conducting a saving judgment.

To silence the echo of the controversy, Christ wisely adds the example of the circumcision (John 7:22-24). The Lord argues that if it is legitimate on the Sabbath for the priests to mutilate one of the 248 parts of the human body (that was the Jewish reckoning) in order to mediate through the rite of the circumcision the salvation of the covenant, there is no reason to be “angry” with Him for restoring on that day the “*whole body* of man.” The Sabbath is for Christ the day to work for the redemption of the *whole* man. In fact, in both healings, Christ looked for the

healed men later on the same day to minister to their spiritual needs (John 5:14; 9:35-38).

We can conclude, therefore, that the expressions “the Father is *working still*” (John 5:17) and “*we must work . . . while it is day*” (John 9:4), which were spoken by Jesus to defend His saving Sabbath ministry, refer not to the works of creation but to those of redemption. God rested at the completion of creation, but because of sin, He is “working still” to accomplish its restoration.

This redemptive function of the Sabbath is further clarified in the episode of the plucking of the ears of corn by the disciples on a Sabbath day (Mark 2:23-28; Matt. 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5). To defend the conduct of His disciples from the charge of Sabbathbreaking, Christ advances two arguments. First, He reasons that if it was right for David to allay his hunger by eating of the *holy bread*, then it is legitimate also for the disciples to provide for their needs by plucking ears of grain during the *holy time* of the Sabbath. Holy bread and

**“For Christ, the Sabbath is mercy and not sacrifice . . . . The order of true Sabbath service which Jesus sets up requires first a living-loving service to human needs and then the fulfillment of cultic prescriptions.”**

holy time can be used exceptionally to meet human needs, because the purpose of the Sabbath commandment is not to deprive, but to ensure, life (Mark 2:27). The second argument is drawn from the example of the priests. On the Sabbath, Christ points out, the priests work even more intensively in the temple (Num. 28:9-10), performing a host of activities illegal for the ordinary person. Yet, they are “guiltless” (Matt. 12:5) because of the redemptive nature of their Sabbath work, designed to provide forgiveness and salvation to needy sinners. Since Christ is “something greater than the temple” (Matt. 12:6), having come to fulfill its function and ser-

vices, He also can legitimately intensify on the Sabbath His ministry of salvation on behalf of needy sinners; and what He does, His followers must do likewise.

For Christ, the Sabbath is “mercy and not sacrifice” (Matt. 12:7), the memorial of the divine redemption from both the bondage of Egypt (Deut. 5:15) and the bonds of sin (Luke 5:18-19; 13-16; John 5:17). The order of true Sabbath service which Jesus sets up requires first a living-loving service to human needs and then the fulfillment of cultic prescriptions.

In the light of this fundamental redemptive value of the Sabbath, we should consider the meaning of Christ’s summon recorded in Matthew as a preface to the episode we have just mentioned. The Savior says:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find *rest* for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

What is the *rest* that Christ promises to those who come to Him and learn from Him? Several commentators have noted that Christ’s pronouncement was apparently made on a Sabbath since it is connected with the following verse (“At that time,” 12:1) which begins the above-mentioned Sabbath episode. The possibility exists, therefore, that the rest promised by Jesus is, as stated by J. Daniélou, “the *anapausis* rest of the true Sabbath.”<sup>4</sup> In this case, Christ’s Sabbath rest is viewed as an “easy yoke” and a “light burden,” possibly by contrast with the yoke of rabbinical Sabbath requirements which weighed heavily upon the people.

What is, then, the new “Sabbath rest” that Christ offers to those who labor in vain to procure rest for themselves by fulfilling burdensome legal obligations? Since we noticed earlier that Jesus made the Sabbath the fitting symbol of His redemptive mission, His Sabbath rest granted to burdened souls must be not a newer or simpler set of rules on how to keep the day, but a fuller experience on that day of the blessing of salvation. Through the Sabbath rest, Christ offers not merely physical relaxation, but the peace and joy of His forgiveness and redemption.

This redemptive meaning of the Sabbath is reflected in Hebrews (4:2-11), where God's people are reassured of the permanence of the blessings of the "Sabbath rest" and are exhorted to accept them. The author rejects the temporal notion of the Sabbath rest understood as entrance into the land of Canaan (Deut. 12:9; 25:19), since he argues that the land which Joshua gave to the Israelites is not the "Sabbath rest" which God has made available to His people since creation. The latter can be experienced by believing, obeying and accepting "today" the "good news" of salvation. The Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God is, for the author of Hebrews, not a material experience reserved exclusively for the Jewish nation, but rather a permanent spiritual blessing available to all who enter by faith into *God's rest* (Heb. 4:2, 3, 11).

This brief survey of the redemptive meaning and function of the Sabbath has shown that the day is the first and most revealing symbol of God's gracious concern for His creature. It originated as the fitting expression of a perfect divine-human relationship where God blessed His creatures not merely with things, but also with His holy presence. After the fall of man, the Sabbath was reiterated at various moments of the history of salvation to provide to God's people the assurance of the final redemption.

The supreme revelation of the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath is found in the Messianic claims and Sabbath ministry of Christ. Not only did Jesus announce His mission as the fulfillment of the sabbatical promises of redemption (Luke 4:18-19), but also on the Sabbath, He intensified His works of salvation (John 5:17; 9:4) on behalf of needy sinners so that souls whom "Satan bound" (Luke 13:16) might experience and remember the Sabbath as the day of their liberation. Moreover, Christ completed His redemptive mission on this earth on a Friday afternoon, and having said "it is finished" (John 19:30), He hallowed the Sabbath by resting in the tomb (Luke 23:53-54; Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42, 46). As the Sabbath rest at the end of creation (Gen. 2:2-3) expressed the satisfaction and joy of the Godhead over a complete and perfect creation, so the Sabbath rest now at the end of Christ's earthly mission expresses the rejoicing of the Godhead over the complete and perfect redemption restored to man. In the light of Christ's teaching and ministry, the Sabbath rest epitomizes the blessings of salvation which the Savior provides to sin-burdened souls. The believer who on the Sabbath stops his *doing* to experience his *being* saved by divine grace, renounces human efforts to work out his own salvation and acknowledges God as the author and finisher of his salvation.

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# These Bright Ends of Time

by Otilie Stafford

The bond of time that holds our lives together, giving them continuity and shape, makes it possible for us to place ourselves in history. Memory also makes possible our sense of our own histories. Time measurements have always been of great significance. Rituals that mark off segments of time tie our todays to our yesterdays and our lives to those of others. In rituals, the world stops and remembers, for memory is a central part of our time-recording. It is an important part of our New Years, our birthdays, our anniversaries, our Sabbaths.

We have many ways to record time, some solemn and some festive, some private and some public. We follow annual rituals around the birthday cake, singing familiar songs and blowing out tiny candles. Whatever for? Every December 31 a strange ritual takes place. The daily movement of the shadow of night around the earth is followed, a number of hours later, by a movement of sound, an edge of noise, a blast of horn-blowing, shouting, band-playing, balloon-bursting celebration moving around the earth at the exact pace with which night's

shadow has moved. Why do we follow such a strange custom on New Year's Eve? Why this annual piping in of midnight?

We know that 12:01 of January 1 will be little different from 11:59 of December 31. But, nevertheless, much of the world stops to direct its attention to the new notch being put on the record of our passing years, the numbering of our days. Weeks and years say the story of our lives and take us back to their beginnings.

Centennials and bicentennials mark longer lives — those of nations and of cultures. We cannot ignore these occasions; they remind us of what we have been, of how long we have been traveling this way. But throw away our clocks and calendars and historical chronologies, and the sun would rise every day to tell us it is time to work; the darkness would descend every night to tell us it is time to sleep; we would know the time for planting gardens, the time for shoveling snow, without marking off weeks, counting years, measuring decades, cataloguing centuries. Life would tell us when we have matured, when we are growing old, when we have lived out our lives.

Do we think perhaps that by recording in a diary the record of our lives' precise dates, by the careful measurement of time with accurate instruments, that we are, by measuring

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it, mastering it? Yet, time eludes us, we cannot arrest its advance, we cannot forget its cold blast behind our backs. We try to humanize it, to place controls on it, to record it in measured segments, but all we really do is observe it; still it eludes us.

For it is not a human dimension. We can master space. Put an individual in a wilderness, and he will immediately make a clearing, build a hut, plant a garden, make a part of its space his own. He can live in it, wall it in, protect it from invasion, put up signs: KEEP OFF THE GRASS. TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED. The law protects his space. What law protects his time?

**“We are always fascinated by the mysterious, the unknown, the unfathomable. . . So it is time that obsesses us. It is time that we are distressed by. It is time that calls forth the great human cry of sadness or of protest.”**

Put him in a cave, and he will paint pictures on the wall, put down carpets, measure off an entrance that is his. Put him in a college residence hall made up of identical rooms, and he will rearrange furniture, hang up posters, set personal possessions around the room as symbols that *he* is the master of this space; his personality alters it, possesses it, asserts his dominion over it.

Even around ourselves we set up controls over space. Invade an individual's personal space, the room he must have to feel comfortable — invade it too closely and he will give you a shove, back off or step on your toes and threaten worse violence to protect the space which he must have in order to be comfortable.

And we master space in more permanent ways. The architect encloses spaces in great structures, puts domes over football fields, encloses shopping malls, throws up serpentine walls to shut out sounds, builds vast worship areas of stone and stained glass,

sends up into the skies vertically stacked housing, tunnels down into the ground to store cars, puts a colossus over the harbor entrance and an arch as an entrance to the West. We marvel at the great stone structures standing in circles in the middle of a stoneless English plain, built by a lost civilization as their own way of marking off time. The space they mastered still records their efforts, but time has erased all record of who they were and where they came from and why they constructed Stonehenge.

**W**e are always fascinated by the mysterious, the unknown, the unfathomable. We cannot look out far nor in deep, but we would rather gaze at the unfathomable than explore the familiar. So it is time that obsesses us. It is time that we are distressed by. It is time that calls forth the great human cry of sadness or of protest.

The Hebrew felt it in Old Testament times:

Man that is born of a woman  
is of few days, and full of trouble.  
He comes forth like a flower, and withers;  
he flees like a shadow, and continues not.

The sixteenth century felt it as the century neared its close:

Beauty is but a flower  
which wrinkles will devour;  
Brightness falls from the air;  
Queens have died young and fair,  
Dust hath closed Helen's eye. . .

The seventeenth century, in particular, felt it, perhaps because of the breaking up of all its certainties:

Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney sweepers, come to dust.

---

How small a part of time they share  
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

---

The bright day is done  
And we are for the dark.

Time sweeps through Shakespeare's sonnets, toppling monuments, carrying individuals into oblivion, covering civilizations with the sediment of ages. It moves through the



works of Proust, Tolstoy, Thackeray and Faulkner as well as those of scores of their fellow writers, forcing us to admit the “change and decay in all around I see.” And it is most forcefully found in “The Great Dirge of the World,” the ninetieth Psalm:

For all our days pass away under thy  
wraith,  
our years come to an end like a sigh.  
The years of our life are threescore and  
ten,  
or even by reason of strength  
fourscore;  
Yet their span is but toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

That psalm used to bother me. I preferred Shakespeare’s fatalistic statement:

Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their com-  
ing hither.  
Ripeness is all.

Marvell, I thought, had a better answer to the problem:

Though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we still make him run.  
Even Dylan Thomas’s protest seemed some-  
how more humanly defensible:

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
Psalm 90, that great dirge, seemed to me to be one of the most mournful of all human responses to time’s destructive power. Its ending did not solve any problem, nor move in any direction that was comforting. Placing the eternal God at the beginning and the ending of the psalm only underscored how ephemeral man’s life really was. But the psalms keep speaking, and the longer they are listened to, the more they have to say. Gradually, the meaning of Psalm 90 grew in my mind.

That God is He who masters time, who bridges it, who towers over it like a colossus from everlasting to everlasting — spanning all rising, falling and obliterating of individuals, of nations, all the endings and beginnings of days, weeks and years — the psalm makes that point clearly. But that makes even more poignant the human impermanence, the short puff of vapor that is each person’s existence. That life can be happy some of the

time, even though it is short, *is* no answer to the problem.

Then, one day I was listening to the eighth psalm being read, and heard these words:

When I look at thy heavens, the work of  
thy fingers,  
the moon and the stars which thou hast  
established —

In my mind there was an echo of something, something I was reminded of that I tried to recover . . . that word *established*. That was where Psalm 90 ended:

Establish thou the work of our hands  
yea, the work of our hands, establish  
thou it.

Does God, whose creation included the very establishment of time, who set the great timekeepers in the heavens, whose structures mastered and formed the days, weeks and seasons that act upon men’s lives, does that same creative power whose creature I am, take the work of *my* hands, the work of his creatures’ creations, and set them in His time-less architectures?

Every year’s end I hear echoing in the back of my mind a poem of Richard Wilbur. He compares the perfection of a fern

That lays its fragile cheek against a stone  
a million years  
to the people who were caught in the destruc-  
tion at Pompeii, where  
the little dog lay curled and did not rise  
But slept the deeper as the ashes rose  
And found the people incomplete, and  
froze  
The random hands, the loose unready  
eyes  
Of men expecting yet another sun  
To do the shapely thing they had not  
done.

The shapely thing we have not done. That is what haunts us at the end of weeks, years, decades and centuries. What beautiful structures we intend to create with our lives, with our work, and how seldom we finish the shapely thing we would do. Wilbur goes on:

We fray into the future, rarely wrought  
Save in the tapestries of afterthought.  
More time, more time.

We fray into the future. Perhaps our need for anniversaries of the past and celebrations of

the new comes from wanting to shape, to structure what we are doing. Yet, we are always caught at the sudden ends of time with random actions and with unready minds.

But Psalm 90 contains the answer to Wilbur's cry, to the desire to shape a life that keeps slipping and sliding and being filled with imprecision and inadequacy, fraying out around the edges, never what was intended.

**T**he great creative God, whose presence from everlasting to everlasting completed all his creation, can complete with his creative power the lives and the works of his creatures. Then, change and decay are the illusions; changelessness, the reality. Inadequacy and imperfection are pieced out by God's creative goodness; and the great dirge of the world, the human cry that has echoed through the centuries from every civilization, can be turned into a song of joy.

Those reflections return us to the Sabbath and the meaning caught up in its symbols.

We all think of the Sabbath as a reminder of God's creative power. His presence at the beginning of time when chaos and disorder were shaped by His word and the formless seas given dimensions, when the moon and the stars were established, is told anew every seventh day. The mastery of time is implicit in all the Sabbath symbolism. God shapes a period of time as we shape a dimension of space, constructing the great architecture of the Sabbath as we construct a dwelling place, filling it with evidences of His nature, as we fill our rooms and houses and spaces with objects that speak of our personalities. It is His holy time, filled with quietness and sweetness and power, where we enter and worship. We prepare our own spaces for the Sabbath, clean our houses, light the candles, lay the fire, prepare the special meal; but He prepares the time, and we enter that time not to fill it up with our concerns, our work or our wishes, for it has already been filled by

Him with holiness and the worship in which the joyous creation sings.

But the Sabbath is not only a day of remembrance of creation, it is also a day that rejoices in the completion of the creation. It is God the completer, the finisher, who rejoices in the Sabbath rest, the day of perfection. All the days of the week have been incomplete and unfinished until they are shaped by this last day. It is the day which promises us not just a future re-creation, but a completion of all that is incomplete in our lives, that promises the establishment of our lives and of our works in the timeless creation of the holy one, that promises our restlessness will find rest in God's rest.

The ninetieth psalm intends the sorrow of the world's change and decay to conclude in joyous recognition of what God's creative power does in our lives and with the work of our hands. Then, how carefully that work must be done by God's creatures. How finely we must work, how thoughtfully, how thoroughly. How can God establish in His glorious creation what has been done with carelessness, with shabbiness, with indifference, with contempt? We may not be able to escape the sense of incompleteness, of fraying into the future; but we can, in our own fragile and fleeting work, make it as honest, as beautiful and as good as it is humanly possible to make it.

Each recurring Sabbath brings a reminder of God's power to accomplish and to complete. Each Sabbath is a prayer, a turning to the Creator. By our Sabbath worship, we say: Make us worthy to be a part of your creation. Make our words poems, psalms of hope and praise. Make our acts a part of the order and brightness that your presence calls forth. Help us to enter into the holy time of your holiday with hope and with the joyous knowledge that what we cannot complete you will finish; that what we cannot comprehend you will illuminate. And out of all that seems to be failure and change and decay, teach us to pray: Oh, Thou that changest not, abide with me.

# Christian Art of The Sabbath: A Commentary

by Margaret Whidden

A considerable body of Christian art, ranging from early mosaics and medieval manuscripts and sculpture to present-day wall decorations, interprets ideas and events connected with the biblical Sabbath, either directly or indirectly. Although the artistically rich and complicated treatment by Christian artists of the Annunciation, Crucifixion and Last Judgment cannot be duplicated in Christian art of the Sabbath, certain divine activities on Sabbath have been recurrently depicted: the seventh day of creation, Sabbath incidents in Christ's earthly ministry and the Revelation to John on the Lord's Day.<sup>1</sup> This commentary on the portfolio of reproductions is organized according to the sequence of events given in the Bible. Discussion of the portrayals of each event will follow the historical order in which the artists completed their work.<sup>2</sup>

The days of creation appear in an enormous number of church wall-paintings, mosaics, stained glass and sculpture cycles and numerous manuscripts. While many of these move directly from the sixth day of the creation of humanity to the expulsion of

Adam and Eve from Eden, those which do include the seventh day typically recreate the biblical image of God the Father resting on the Sabbath, blessing His creation. "And God *blessed* the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had *rested* from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. 2:3, italics mine).

Byzantine mosaics consistently portray a beneficent God the Father reposing on a throne. An example is a twelfth-century mosaic from a creation cycle in the nave of the Palatine Chapel in Palermo, Sicily (p. 29). God sits regally on a throne, with his feet comfortably supported by a cushion. Viewers of the mosaic were not to see it merely as an extension of the real space of the church. By focusing on the glittering, slightly uneven surface of the wall with its rich colors, believers were drawn into regarding their basilica as a microcosm of God's universe. Their worship was to share the glory of that creation Sabbath.

A mosaic in the narthex of Saint Mark's Cathedral in Venice (p. 31), also part of a creation cycle, shares with the Palermo mosaic a Byzantine style that is more concerned with simply stating doctrine through clear, unpretentious design than with accurately copying nature. As a result, the figures may look clumsy to twentieth-century eyes.

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The angels step on each others' toes, and their large hands are dislocated at the wrists. The artist's knowledge of perspective was evidently not academic; and he was certainly no botanist. But he did know how to give his composition a solemnity by posing his main figure so that he is viewed frontally. The gold of the background is rich and inspiring and knits the scene with the others in the cycle. The result is a unified design, not just a jumble of little unconnected scenes.

Iconographically, the San Marco creation cycle is exciting because, although it was created in the thirteenth century, it is based on much earlier works of art. A fifth- or sixth-century Byzantine manuscript<sup>3</sup> (which, unfortunately, survives only in fragments) contains scenes so similar to those in San Marco that it is entirely possible that the mosaic artist in Venice depended for his model on some other mosaic or even on a manuscript dating back to a sixth-century emphasis on the Sabbath.

Cesare da Sesto, a sixteenth-century painter generally considered to have been a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, merges traditional medieval symbolism with Renaissance ebullience in his depiction of the creation Sabbath. In a Milan fresco (p. 30), he employs the Renaissance techniques of overlapping, naturalistic figures and carefully foreshortened haloes. However, he uses the same general pose used by artists throughout the Middle Ages to depict Christ — complete with the great mandorla, or almond-shaped glory. While new artistic devices have been adopted, the fresco continues to portray God in a courtly setting, surrounded by angels, holding His orb of creation.

The grandeur of the creation Sabbath continues as a motif in the nineteenth century. Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, a dramatic, romantic painter, was famous for his great illustrated German Bible, published in his native Leipzig. He traveled to Rome in 1812 to share some of the ideas of the Nazarene painters (German expatriates who were the counterparts of the English Pre-Raphaelites), and visited Sicily in 1826. While there, he must have seen the powerful Byzantine mosaics of Christ in Monreale Cathedral, for the God of "Der Sabbath" (p. 30) reflects a

Byzantine weight and grandeur. But with the traditional angels and the vigorous mandorla come a new mystery in the shaded eyes and massive knees. Here God, by his beard and wrinkles, is Father of all living things. Schnorr's romantic spirit is drawn to depicting God as some massive spirit brooding over his creation.

A twentieth-century German artist, Ernst Barlach, entirely abandons the figure of God as a monarchical figure. His woodcut (p. 29) portrays a figure resting from his activities, almost a part of His creation, rather than elevated above it. Still, Barlach continues some emphases found in the earliest Byzantine art of the Sabbath. The parallels between the "Seventh Day of Creation" and particularly the Palermo mosaic are interesting. As in the earlier work, Barlach's God figure is reclining. The two designs also share interesting limitations imposed by the materials used. The mosaicist, working in tesserae (small pieces of marble, tile and glass), and Barlach, with his woodblock, were both forced to emphasize lines and simple, flat shapes, rather than subtle variations in tone. There is very little illusion of space in either work. Instead, in both the mosaic and the woodcut, texture is important. The many pieces of the mosaic refract the light of creation, while the bold strokes gouged out of the wood block suggest a powerful Creator, even a Rock of Ages.

Twentieth-century artists have often been interested in conveying their ideas through colors and shapes not associated directly with naturalistic representation, but abstracted from visual and understandable objects. By stating only red or blue, rather than by making a red dragon or a blue lake, a painter can approach the freedom of music. Like music, many twentieth-century art works often use widely known symbols to convey ideas. John Coburn's tapestry (p. 34) is rich in such symbolism. It is the seventh of a set of richly colored wall-hangings designed by this Sydney artist and given to the John F. Kennedy Center by the government of Australia.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Coburn says that he "thought of the seventh day as a day of grand achievement rather than

as a day of rest.” The other tapestries in the cycle portray age-old symbols — the sphere of eternity, the square which represents the earth, or earthly existence, the cross of Christ’s sacrifice and the tree of life. The colors are vivid and clean — brown for the earth, green for the trees, red-orange for flames and leaves and red-blooded animals. Perhaps Coburn does not intend all these meanings. However, “The Seventh Day” does reflect the great black-framed mandorla, or almond-aureole of Christ. It dominates a kind of psalm that includes, against seven bands of background color, the light and the dark, encircled by the sphere of eternity and rising above a chalice that is both an offering on the altar of life and a cup of oil for flames that are the source of everlasting light. Other religions worshiped the sun, but Jews and Sabbatarian Christians worship God who created light before he made the sun.

“The Seventh Day,” the work of the Seventh-day Adventist artist Ken MacKintosh, is reproduced on the cover of this special issue. It is the seventh and culminating

**“The vivid colors of ‘The Seventh Day’ suggest joy and celebration, while its vertical thrust depicts God’s presence.”**

piece of MacKintosh’s creation cycle, “In the Beginning God . . . .” This magnificent mosaic mural of Byzantine smalti tile dominates the foyer of the Fine Arts Center at Walla Walla College. It reflects MacKintosh’s emphasis on design and color and his concern with Christian symbolism. In seven vignette shapes, the mural develops the symbols for each day of creation week, from chaos to the rest and thanksgiving of the Sabbath. The vivid colors of “The Seventh Day” suggest joy and celebration, while its vertical thrust depicts God’s presence. The praying hands symbolize the sanctity of the Sabbath, while its continuity as a day of worship is represented by the Hebrew “Star of David” and the adjacent Christian cross shaded into the tiles. The mural portrays the

trinitarian symbolism also reflected in MacKintosh’s wood engraving, “The Sabbath” (p. 35). The star-burst at the top represents God the Father; a descending dove, the Holy Spirit; a sacrificial lamb, Christ himself. Both the mosaic and the wood engraving are powerful artistic statements of the Sabbath’s holiness, its eternity and its centrality to redemption.

**I**n the history of Christian art, Christ’s ministry on the Sabbath does not receive as much attention as the Sabbath of creation, but some significant actions of Christ on Sabbath have been recreated. The two examples in this portfolio make the Sabbath immediate to the lives of believers. In both instances, Christ’s Sabbath actions are set within the period and place of the artist and his fellow-Christians.

The Byzantine mosaic depicting Christ healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath and then justifying his act to the rulers of the synagogue places Christ in the midst of Byzantine architecture (p. 35).<sup>5</sup> The seventeenth-century Flemish portrayal of Christ and His disciples confronting the Pharisees concerning the plucking of grain on the Sabbath is set in a Flemish farming scene (pp. 32-33).<sup>6</sup> In the field, harvesters scythe the grain. On the left, a horse-drawn cart laden with oats or wheat is brought into a farmyard. The painter, Martin Van Valckenborch, famous for his landscapes, economically combines two scenes in one picture. The painting acts as both a lesson about Christ and as a decorative *genre* scene, a landscape with harvesters. It is further a reminder that Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, is also ruler of the seasons. The central oak tree is a symbol of Christ and His strength.

On the Lord’s Day, Christ appeared in vision to John on the island of Patmos, thus symbolically blessing the Sabbath at the end of the Bible with his last words, just as he had blessed the Sabbath in the beginning.<sup>7</sup> Our portfolio ends (p. 36) with two visualizations of that scene that is described in the first chapter of Revelation. The first is a simple medieval illumination from an apocalypse cycle, popular from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries. It appears crude but is instructive for modern viewers. Among charm-

ing little birds, a mouse, a boat and several bean-shaped islands, John dreams on a token Patmos, wearing his halo and looking rather uncomfortable. Representing the “great voice, as of a trumpet” comes an angel, hovering over John in the sky. Above the Evangelist floats a long scroll, and on it a long speech in Latin from Revelation 1:9-11: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day . . .” The angel’s message is written upside down:

“What thou seest write in a book and send it unto the seven churches” (Rev. 1:11). The second portrayal of John’s vision is taken from Schnorr von Carolsfeld’s great *Bible in Pictures* (cf. p. 30). Here Christ, as described by John (Rev. 1:12-16), comes in Schnorr’s grand manner to the Revelator. He fills the sky of John’s vision, and watches as the apostle scribbles as though his pen were winged, rather than made of a single feather.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. I used three major sources of art information. *The Princeton Index of Christian Art* (I used the copy of the Index at Harvard University’s Dumbarton Oaks Library in Washington, D.C.) is limited to the collection of early Christian and medieval representations of Christian subjects. The Prints Division of the New York Public Library is a valuable source of Bibles from the era of the printed book. And the Frick Art Reference Library in New York City indexes works of art from the early Renaissance to the beginning of this century, but, of course, does not claim to specialize in biblical iconography. It therefore leaves the researcher of the more obscure Christian imagery somewhat at his or her own devices. Obviously, this topic in art history remains wide open for further research.

2. Various quite exciting pieces of sculpture and stained glass simply could not be photographed; and insuperable problems prevented my including in the portfolio an interesting 14th C. MS from the British Library (Add. MS 15277, fol. 40v) illustrating Moses’ dealings with the Sabbathbreaker (Num. 15:32-36).

3. British Library MS Otho B. vi.

4. The tapestries were woven by the Aubusson workshops in France in 1970. John Coburn has exhibited his work very widely, not only in Australia, but also in the Americas, Europe and Japan. He has been interested in religious subjects for a long time and has won prizes specially designated for religious art.

5. Luke 13:11-17.

6. This is described by Matthew in Chapter 12, verses 1-8. The Kunsthistorisches Museum calls this painting, which is part of a set depicting the months of the calendar, *Das Gleichnis von Sabbat* — The Parable of the Sabbath.

7. Many interpretations of the “Lord’s Day” have been advanced. Some have even said that the Revelator meant that his vision came on Caesar’s day. More typically, it has been claimed as having taken place on the divinely appointed day of worship by both those who observe the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week and those who worship on the first. Both of the more widespread viewpoints obviously identify the Lord’s Day with God’s holy Sabbath.

## The Art of the Sabbath

Page 29, upper  
Unknown artist  
*The Seventh Day of Creation*  
Mosaic, 12th century  
Capella Palatina, Palermo  
Photo: Alinari/Scala

Page 29, lower  
Ernst Barlach  
*The Seventh Day of Creation*  
Woodcut, early 20th century  
Rembrandt Verlag, Berlin

Page 30, upper  
Cesare da Sesto  
*Christ in Glory*  
Fresco, c. 1520  
Civic Art Gallery, Milan  
Photo: Alinari/Scala

Page 30, lower  
Schnorr von Carolsfeld  
*The Sabbath*  
Wood engraving  
from *Die Bibel in Bildern*  
Prints Division, New York  
Public Library  
Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Page 31  
Unknown artist  
*God Blesses the Seventh Day of Creation*  
Mosaic, 13th century  
San Marco, Venice  
Photo: Greg Constantine

Pages 32-33  
Martin van Valckenborch  
*The Month of August*  
(Christ encounters the Pharisees in a cornfield)  
Painting, 16th/17th century  
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Page 34  
John Coburn  
*The Seventh Day of Creation*  
Tapestry, 1969/1970  
Kennedy Center for the Performing  
Arts, Washington, D.C.  
Photo: Charles Feise

Page 35, upper  
Ken MacKintosh  
*The Sabbath*  
Wood engraving, 1973

Page 35, lower  
Unknown artist  
*Christ Heals a Crippled Woman*  
Mosaic, 12th century  
Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily  
Photo: Alinari/Scala

Page 36, upper  
Unknown artist  
*St. John’s Vision on Patmos*  
Manuscript illustration, 13th century  
MS Tanner 184, p. 1  
Bodleian Library, Oxford

Page 36, lower  
Schnorr von Carolsfeld  
*The Revelation of Christ to John*  
Wood engraving  
from *Die Bibel in Bildern*  
Prints Division, New York  
Public Library  
Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations









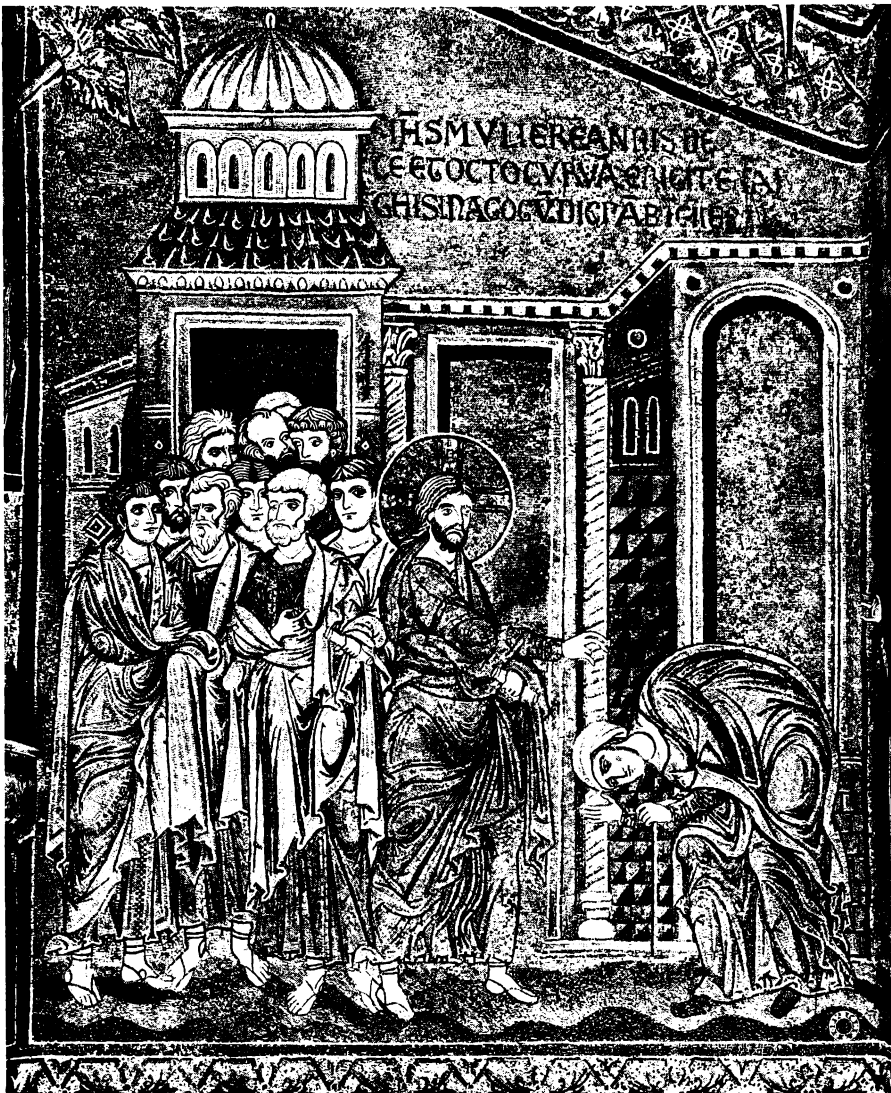
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CAP. 12









# Festival of Fellowship

by Roy Branson

The Sabbath was never a haven of solitude, but always an invitation to fellowship. When man first entered the seventh day, he was accompanied by “every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). God and His creation were closer than they would ever be again. Man and woman could “hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8). They could feel the breath of God’s presence.

Eden was not a refuge for mystics. Instead of private intuition, there was conversation. God directed man and woman to oversee “every beast of the field and every bird of the air,” which the Lord God brought “to the man to see what he would call them” (Gen. 2:19). God did not draw mankind into a mystical oneness with Him. Rather, there was a walking and talking in the garden, the giving and accepting of responsibility. Eden was the joy of fellowship.

The garden of delight became the setting for tragedy when human fellowship wrongly became opposed to fellowship with God. The result of man’s decision was not the creation of evil matter or of demons, but of lone-

liness, separation from God and alienation from the land and God’s other creatures. Work became labor, responsibility turned to drudgery. When “the Lord God sent him forth from the garden to till the ground from which he was taken,” man was doomed to turn even against himself. “The flaming sword which turned every way,” made man an exile from fellowship (Gen. 3:23, 24).

Yet, the Sabbath remained — not a garden, but a moment of delight, not a place to touch divinity, but a time to feel God’s atmosphere. It became a day to remember God, and “all the work that he had done,” a day to fumblingly restore some measure of fellowship with God and His creatures. In remembering, human beings could maintain some sense of their origins, of who they were and what was important. The Sabbath provided a time to experience freedom from the demands of a creation that had become burdensome, a time once again to relish all God’s creatures. Eden was lost, but the Sabbath remained to knit all people with God and creation.

By the time of the exodus from Egypt, space had become an enemy. The alienation from the soil included all that could be fashioned from the soil: palaces, temples and burial places. Huge buildings in space demanded not fellowship, but slave labor. The ground from which man had been formed

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was about to swallow him. Instead of delighting in God's creation, he drew back in fear.

Into this chaos, God entered to restore some semblance of creation's original freedom and fellowship. With a mighty hand and outstretched arm, God released the Hebrews from the dust into which they were being ground. Man was not created to be a beast of burden. Man was made to be free, to converse, to walk and talk in the cool of the day.

The conversation could not be so intimate as in Eden. The distance between God and man had to be bridged with thunders, lightnings, trumpet blasts and smoke. God's first words heightened the sense of His transcendence. First, Yahweh commanded that there could be no other gods. He would countenance no pretenders. Second, He would not allow idols or images. Third, Yahweh would not accept casual and disrespectful use of His name.

In another sense, God was clearing away barriers to His presence. He was rejecting all lesser divinities, spirits or revered ancestors as avenues of communion with Him. Nothing in space — neither buildings, nor kingdoms, nor even deities — was to separate Him from His people. The Sabbath was the alternative to the pagan pantheon. It was a moment when God would be transcendent to human tampering, yet remain present with men. In the Sabbath, man could know God directly, not through incantations, bloodletting or sacrifice of children, but in time shared completely.

**A**s at creation, God did not come to isolated individuals, but to a community. In Eden, He came to the whole creation, but creation, in the form of man, broke that relationship. God did not locate another place for close fellowship with human beings, but He did find a time, the Sabbath day, and a community, Israel.

A day was an appropriate way to restore fellowship. As Abraham Joshua Heschel says:

Every one of us occupies a portion of space, takes it up exclusively. The portion of space which my body occupies is taken

up by myself in exclusion of anyone else. Yet no one possesses time. There is no moment which I possess exclusively. This very moment belongs to all living men as it belongs to me. We share time; we own space. Through ownership of space, I am a rival of all other beings; through living in time, I am a contemporary of all other beings.<sup>1</sup>

Time can be shared. God can be invisible and still share a day with mankind; He can share a day with one person and still share a day with

**“The covenant between God and Israel created solemn obligations among people. No one could ever remember the Sabbath and forget either God or fellow men. For one day in the week, the fellowship of Eden was restored.”**

others. More than that, by sharing a day with many, God can bring all together without crowding any out.

God's restoration of fellowship began with Israel's liberation. Still, God's freeing Israel from tyranny did not free them for fellowship. Before the Sinai experience, Israel was still only a collection of wandering, former slaves. Dissension separated one from another, and discussions turned into strife. But the presence of God transformed freedom into fellowship. By restoring the Sabbath, Yahweh brought out of chaos a new creation: the people of God.

Israel's common relationship to Yahweh brought them into fellowship with one another. Sharing a Sabbath with God and other human beings combined in them a reverence for God with a respect for others. The covenant between God and Israel created solemn obligations among people. No one could ever remember the Sabbath and forget either God or fellow men. For one day in the week, the fellowship of Eden was restored.

The Sabbath is the arch holding together the structure of the law. Coming as it does between the outline of commitment to God



and obligations to fellow men, the Sabbath commandment is the hinge of the two tables of stone. Sabbath fellowship is to renew covenant promises to both God and man. "The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant" (Ex. 31:16).

Of course, Israel did not consistently keep the perpetual covenant. When Israel divorced worship of God from obligations to one another, God sent the prophets as His spokesmen. Jeremiah, at God's bidding, stood before the temple in Jerusalem where Sabbath worship took place and mimicked the invocations of the pious worshipers. Their clichés were a mockery of God's covenant commands:

Do not trust in these deceptive words:  
"This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord" (Jer. 7:5).

Behold you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say "We are delivered" — only to go on doing all these abominations? (Jer. 7:8-10)

The Sabbath should have reminded Israel that worship of God and justice to fellow men go together.

Through the prophets, God announced that Sabbath fellowship burst the bounds of human convention. Isaiah received a special message for those often regarded by Israel as outside the covenant community. The Sabbath was a time when they too could enjoy fellowship with God, when they could know in the present that they would delight in a future fellowship. In the Sabbath, God drew *all* men to Him:

To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,  
who choose the things that please me, and  
hold fast my covenant . . .

And the foreigners who join themselves to  
the Lord . . .

Everyone who keeps the Sabbath, and  
does not profane it, and holds fast my  
covenant —

These I will bring to my holy mountain,  
and make them joyful in my house of  
prayer . . . For my house shall be called a  
house of prayer for *all* peoples (Isa. 56:3-8).  
Clearly, the prophets saw the Sabbath as  
more than a weekly restoration of a past gar-  
den of delight. They looked on the Sabbath  
as a fellowship that was to include all people  
in a covenant of Sabbath joy.

**T**he fulfillment of the covenant did not come at Sinai or in the prophets. The fullest entrance of God into fellowship with man was the life lived with and for human beings — the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

The first three chapters of Matthew dealing with Jesus' life, from His birth to early ministry, are full of references to Jesus' coming as vindicating the words of the prophets and the covenant they renewed. Matthew's first reference emphasizes that as God fellowshiped with human beings in the Sinai covenant and in the prophetic word, so now more completely, in the words of Isaiah, Jesus is "Emmanuel, God with us" (Matt. 1:22; cf. Isa. 7:14). Luke praises Jesus' coming with hymns taken from the prophets. Such central parts of Christian worship as the angel's *Annunciation*, Mary's *Magnificat* and Simeon's *Nunc Dimitis* are all rephrasings of prophetic passages.

The culmination of these hymns and blessings celebrating the incarnation of Christ was Christ's inaugural Sabbath sermon. Jesus announced that He was the embodiment of the prophetic word — the Word that had renewed the covenant. To restore humanity to fellowship with God, the covenant must be reestablished. Quoting Isaiah, Jesus announced:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach  
good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the  
captives, and recovering of sight to the  
blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the  
Lord.

(Luke 4:18, 19; cf. Isa. 61:1, 2 & 58:6)

Nothing could be more dramatic in the long history of the covenant than Jesus' simple statement following this reading: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). No wonder the people thought He spoke as one who had authority. God would not forget His covenant, or His people. Truly the prophetic, covenant Word "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

**"Like the other sacraments celebrated by the Christian community, the Sabbath is a memorial of past relationships with God, a present awareness of God's presence and a promise of God's future fellowship."**

Jesus' public ministry, beginning on that Sabbath day, emphasized the message of the prophets: fellowship with God means fellowship with mankind. It is impossible to share a day with God and simultaneously oppress the sick, the broken and the maimed. Immediately after reporting the inaugural sermon, Luke begins his account of Jesus' healing miracles which took place on the Sabbath. Seven times during his ministry Christ performed miracles on the Sabbath, each time establishing that the God of the Sabbath — of the covenant — was the God who fellowshiped with all people, no matter how poor or oppressed.

In His ministry and nature, Christ united the divine and the human. Many theologians have struggled to establish the nature of Christ in spatial terms. Orthodox Christianity, after a painful period of discussion, agreed that Christ was not partly divine and partly human, but wholly God and wholly man. It has not always been easy to grasp this concept, but the Sabbath, a temporal symbol, provides a fresh perspective. People cannot divide time. They exist fully in the Sabbath, yet share it completely with God.

Each week, in experiencing the Sabbath that is indivisible, people know a Christ whose time and existence were wholly God's and wholly man's. No wonder that Christ's Sabbath actions for human beings were directed to God, and worship of God propelled Him back toward His fellow human beings.

Yet, the ministry and nature of Christ's incarnation did not alone renew God's fellowship with humanity. It was the death and resurrection of Christ that allowed fellowship with God to be a perpetual covenant. The triumph of the cross over usurping powers not only freed mankind from the tyranny of death and fate, but also guaranteed that God and man would not ultimately remain separated. In the Sabbath, a person is renewed by participating in Christ's Sabbath rest from the cross. "We should," as Jonathan Edwards says, "have sympathy with Christ in His joy. He was refreshed on this day; we should be refreshed as those whose hearts are united with His."<sup>2</sup>

Christ conquered the rebellious principalities, powers, dominions and authorities and became the "head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23). It is supremely important that Christ did not merely come to earth, have some visions, speak a few wise sayings and depart. Rather, Christ, like Yahweh at Sinai, created a new covenant community. He chose the twelve and sent out the seventy. He prayed that they would "love one another . . . by this all men will know that you are my disciples" (John 17:6; 13:35). The Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us was not a secret saying, a private word to scattered individuals, but a public ministry. The death and resurrection created a community which lived, flourished and became the body of Christ, the new testament of God in the world.

The church embodied Christ in its communal celebrations of God's redeeming and reconciling acts. The special days and actions of the Christian church recreated for human beings the quality of God's acts of liberation and fellowship. Revered theologians of the Christian church, such as Augustine and

Calvin, so appreciated the Sabbath as a memorial and foretaste of God's reconciling work that they named the Sabbath, along with baptism and the Lord's Supper, a sacrament. Calvin states that in the Sabbath "a very close correspondence appears between the outward sign and the inward reality."<sup>3</sup> Thus, "the Sabbath was a sacrament, since it was visible figure of an invisible grace."<sup>4</sup> Like the other sacraments celebrated by the Christian community, the Sabbath is a memorial of past relationships with God, a present awareness of God's presence and a promise of God's future full and perfect fellowship with liberated and redeemed mankind.

A closer examination of the parallels between baptism, the Lord's Supper and the Sabbath heightens the appreciation of each. Baptism, Paul believed, recreated the experience of two past events. As Israel in the exodus entered the water as slaves and emerged free from the oppressing Egyptian armies, so sinners enter the waters of baptism and emerge free from sin (I Cor. 1:1, 2). Baptism is also a reenactment of Christ's burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3, 4). Moreover, in rising from the water, as Christ rose from the grave, the baptized are promised that they will be part of the future, permanent resurrection. Thus, baptism points back to Israel and Christ, as well as forward to the Second Coming (Rom. 6:6). Likewise, the Sabbath fellowship is not only with redeemed Israel and a risen Saviour, but also with a returning Lord.

The Lord's Supper also draws participants into fellowship with God. Christians sometimes forget that the Lord's Supper (or Last Supper) was indeed a meal, the Passover meal, memorializing Israel's redemption from Egypt. Along with baptism, the Lord's Supper points back to Christ. He was the perfect paschal lamb around which a new Israel, a renewed covenant community, was forming. As Christians partake of the Lord's Supper, they renew within themselves God's unique act of salvation in Christ. They enter into the special fellowship Christ's act creates. Just as baptism points to the future, so also the Lord's Supper invites Christians to look forward to the heavenly marriage

supper with the Lamb. Jesus told His disciples at the Last Supper, "I shall never eat again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16).

What baptism is once in a life, and the Lord's Supper quarterly, the Sabbath is every week — a sacrament of God's redeeming fellowship. Like baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Sabbath stretches man's experience back into the past, to the creation and the redemption of Israel. Sabbath fellowship is the fellowship of man saved from nonexistence and slavery. It includes the stranger within the gates, the prisoner, the blind and the oppressed. The Sabbath points back also to Christ's ultimate act of redemption and reconciliation, His conquering the powers and principalities of evil through His death on the cross. Each Sabbath is a baptism into His death and burial rest and a reviving to a newly refreshed life. Each Sabbath is also a holy communion, a fellowship with Christ, who shares human time and shares Himself.

As baptism and the Lord's Supper refer to the past and anticipate the future, so the Sabbath points to God's past and future fellowship with mankind. The renewing companionship of Sabbath rest assures man that he will be a part of that coming perfect community. The friendship relished in and with Christ on His holy day is a promise of the approaching great Day of the Lord. The Sabbath rest is a weekly baptism into Christ, a holy communion with God the Saviour.

**S**abbath fellowship creates the desire for a more intimate relationship with God. Creation week moved to the crescendo of the final day and communion with God. The Sabbath was not a peaceful interlude, but the climax of creation. The seventh day has always drawn man forward. Celebration of the Sabbath pointed the prophets' vision toward the triumph of the Last Day. Christ Himself identified the Sabbath with the messianic age. Because of His victorious Sabbath of the passion week, Hebrews says "the promise of entering His rest remains" (Heb. 4:1). The church has continued to anticipate in the completion of each week the culmination of history. John Calvin taught the Reformation

that "the Lord through the seventh day has sketched for his people the coming perfection of His Sabbath in the Last Day."<sup>5</sup> In eighteenth-century America, Jonathan Edwards preached that the Sabbath, "a pleasurable and joyful day," was "an image of the future heavenly rest of the church."<sup>6</sup>

The climax towards which the whole creation groans is not an escape for individual souls. God is not merely rescuing isolated individuals, but fulfilling a covenant with His people. The day of the Son of Man is a day when every eye shall see Him: "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in His day" (Luke 17:24). That "future, perfect eternal Sabbath of the Last Day" is no more a private rest than was Eden or the exodus.<sup>7</sup> Hebrews promises that "there remains a sabbath rest for the *people* of God" (Heb. 4:9).

For the believing community, Sabbath rest cannot be Sabbath apathy. Entering the Sabbath does mean one can rest in Christ's completed work of redemption. "Whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from His" (Heb. 4:10) and is released from trying to achieve salvation through diligent effort. But the quality of Sabbath rest is not listless indifference. Christ's work gives the people of God the assurance to make the Sabbath a day of celebration. The Lord's return is certain. Each Sabbath can already participate in the victory of the Great Day of the Lord.

Heschel states that "unless one learns how to relish the taste of the Sabbath while still in this world, unless one is initiated in the appreciation of eternal life, one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come."<sup>8</sup> For centuries, Israel has welcomed the Sabbath in holy festivity. The coming of the Sabbath is the arrival of an honored guest, a queen to be met in the palace of time with beautiful robes and graceful dances, the entering of a bride sanctified to the people of God.

For Christians such as Karl Barth, joyful anticipation is intrinsic to the Sabbath. History's "last day," he believes, "will be a Sabbath day," a time of freedom and joy, of fellowshiping in "the rest of God Himself."<sup>9</sup> In the words of de Quervain, "The joy of Sabbath is . . . the superabundant joy at the blessings which have already been given and joy in expectation of new acts of God, at the coming salvation."<sup>10</sup>

The Sabbath continues to have the power to draw human beings out of their alienation and despair into a community created by the mighty acts of God. The Sabbath is an exodus from chaos and slavery and death, a sacred meal shared with the victor who conquers through the gift of His body. It is a weekly marriage supper with the Lamb, a baptism into the resurrection of the world. On this day, time past and time future enter into time present. The Sabbath is a prism, a multifaceted jewel, refracting throughout our lives the fullness of God's glory.

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4. Calvin, *Commentary on Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas Meyers (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1948), p. 400.

5. Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 396.

6. Edwards, p. 6.

7. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, vol. 3, bk. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), p. 57. Barth indicates his indebtedness to Calvin for this phrase. See *Institutes*, Book II, Chapter 8, Section 30, cited above.

8. Heschel, p. 74.

9. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, bk. 1, p. 218.

10. A. de Quervain, "Das Feiern der Gemeinde," *Die Heiligung* (1942), p. 353. Quoted in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, bk. 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), p. 51.

# Jubilee of Freedom And Equality

by Niels-Erik Andreasen

**The seventh day is the armistice in man's cruel struggle for existence, a truce in all conflicts, personal and social, peace between man and man, man and nature, peace within man. . . .<sup>1</sup>**

Seventh-day Adventists have traditionally associated the Sabbath with creation (nature walks), worship (church attendance) and covenant sign (obedience to God's law). None of these associations is denied by the late Rabbi A. J. Heschel in our opening statement, which will serve as an organizing principle for this essay. Instead, Heschel notes two other areas of the Christian's life which may be blessed by the Sabbath. One is man's attitude towards work, and the other is his attitude towards people, including himself.

First, man's attitude towards work: "The seventh day is the armistice in man's cruel struggle for existence." General agreement exists that the fourth commandment is not a double injunction: man must work on six days and must rest on the seventh day. The commandment assumes that a man (and

woman) will work. Its exclusive concern is to limit work to the six days.

This interpretation does not mean, of course, that the Bible lacks injunctions to work. The most familiar is St. Paul's dictum: "If any one will not work, let him not eat" (II Thess. 3:10). The Old Testament conception of man's work is far broader and somewhat ambivalent.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, work is part of the commission to man received from God Himself (Gen. 1:26, 28; 2:15). According to Genesis 2:5, the earth was originally lacking in two areas — it had no water and no man to cultivate it. The mist mentioned in verse 6 could serve as a potential source of irrigation, but without the work of man "to till it and keep it" (vs. 15), the planting of gardens (vs. 8) would not flourish. The reason for this commission to work must not be sought solely in man's need to extract from the ground such products as he required to live (cf. Ps. 104:14f.), for man is here also called upon to protect the land for its own sake (lit. "to keep it" Gen. 2:15). His work must be seen as a part of God's work of creation (Ps. 104:22f.), and herein lies the real reason for man's commission to work. Nowhere is work in itself understood as a curse or a burden. The work done "in the sweat of your face" (Gen. 3:19) is burdensome only because of the adverse circumstances surrounding it. As a principle, work is not deplored.

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The teachers of Israel ever since the days of Solomon encouraged hard, consistent work as the only way to success and security (Prov. 6:6-11; 24:30-34). However, their teaching is also ambivalent about work, and this is our second point. They do not question work as such, but *hubris* — work that entices the worker into trusting his own strength and forgetting God (Prov. 11:28; 15:16). Perhaps the most vivid warning of such deception is given in Psalm 127:1f. It is at this point that Heschel suggests that the Sabbath can improve the important relationship between man and his work.

To begin with, the biblical warning against *hubris* in the worker is urged by the Sabbath. Exodus 16 illustrates this fact in the teasing story about the Israelites who gathered manna, “some more, some less” (vs. 17). Since each gatherer had just enough, any manna kept overnight bred worms and spoiled (vs. 20). H. W. Wolff has suggested that this story is an almost humorous criticism of man’s restless ever-zealousness for work.<sup>3</sup> That point is made clearly by the worms and the rot, but it is pressed home in a far more effective, yet felicitous way by the Sabbath. The commandment to cease all work on the Sabbath emphasizes the complete adequacy of the manna gathering on six days and undercuts that human *hubris* which drives man into the field once again on the seventh day despite the fact that he has a sufficient supply of manna left over from the sixth day. The record comments tartly that such people “found none” (vs. 27). Seen this way, all the Sabbath laws, of which Exodus 16 contains the first (and earliest) in the Old Testament, may be taken as a judgment upon *hubris* in the worker.

Perhaps a more obvious relationship between the Sabbath and the worker is the permission to stop all work which the Sabbath insists on granting to everyone.<sup>4</sup> The reason, according to Deuteronomy 5, is the exodus deliverance: “You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God

commanded you to keep the sabbath day” (vs. 15). All of Israel, bond and free, must be given the opportunity to participate in the Sabbath’s exodus experience.<sup>5</sup> On the Sabbath Israel is a community of equals.

In this passage, however, the emphasis on equality is overshadowed by the demand for freedom. The Sabbath commands Israel to let her dependents go free. It issues a humanitarian appeal for Israel to extend her experience of the exodus freedom to all workers.<sup>6</sup> It brings freedom not only from human bondage, but also from the demands of nature — the heavy requirements of sowing and harvesting (Ex. 34:21). The Sabbath, then, faithfully protects man from totalitarianism of all kinds, whatever the source.

The armistice in the cruel struggle between man and his world, about which Heschel speaks, provides two benefits: freedom of the worker from his work, but also freedom of the work (that is the world and its resources) from man’s exploitation. The Sabbath has notably contributed to this second aspect of the truce in man’s struggle through its sister institutions, the sabbatical and jubilee years.<sup>7</sup> The Sabbath most likely inspired these institutions whose intentions were to protect people, land and property from exploitation by the worker.<sup>8</sup> In short, the Sabbath brings a respite in “man’s cruel struggle for existence” whether that cruelty is directed towards the worker or the object of his work.

Finally, it may be asked if the Sabbath restrictions on work actually will enhance work. The most familiar version of the Sabbath commandment reads: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is the sabbath to the Lord your God; (in it) you shall not do any work . . .” (Ex. 20:9f.). A general commandment, not concerned with specific tasks such as gathering manna, sowing or harvesting, it encompasses all man’s activities, tasks, business or trade. Whatever occupies man must be completed in six days, before the Sabbath, on which day he must perform no work. By thus demanding that all work stop after six days, the Sabbath commandment invites limits and goals to be placed before man’s work and urges on the worker such creative efforts

as will bring his work to its completion before the seventh day. God brought His work to completion in this way before the Sabbath.

Does such a Sabbath understanding of work mean anything in our time? Recent studies of the theology of work generally begin with the view of Max Weber and R. H. Tawney<sup>9</sup> that the Protestant Reformation, notably the reformed branch, introduced a new concept of work: all work, not only that of priests and monks, represented a religious calling or vocation worthy of the most faithful Christian.<sup>10</sup> While other factors also contributed to the economic system of our time,

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Protestantism certainly did help to alter the meaning of work. It made work worthy, desirable and rewarding. It also helped to pave the way for an expanding, industrious economy with all its blessings and curses.

In recent years, this Protestant work-ethic (as our attitude to work in the West is sometimes called) has been seriously challenged by a new protest against the evils which have accompanied it: materialism, greed, ruthless ambition and empty, bored, depersonalized workers. Many solutions have been proposed. Some have attempted to make work more interesting, creative or varied. I believe that a serious consideration of the Sabbath understanding of work can also help us respond to current problems of the work-ethic. The Sabbath coldly condemns *hubris*, that arrogant, “take-all” attitude of many producers and manufacturers. It introduces an armistice in the struggle between man and work. Both bring freedom to man from drudgery and relieve the world from those

who would exploit it. Finally, the Sabbath urges a completion of work by setting limits and goals for it, thus making it creative. In short, the Sabbath holds the potential for being a catalyst in restoring a proper relationship between man and work.

Heschel’s second point deals with man’s personal and social conflicts. The Sabbath, he notes, brings “peace between man and man, man and nature, peace within man.” The peace to which Heschel refers is not simply absence of war, like a *pax romana*. It is *shalom*, meaning peace, well-being, harmony, security and understanding. A deeply personal word, *shalom*, when spoken, restores broken relationships and heals the inner person. Peace (*shalom*) attends the individual whose person is whole and whose relationship to others is sound.

According to the Bible, a person is whole when soul, spirit, heart and body combine into an ideal of unity and harmony. “The Hebrew,” writes H. Wheeler Robinson in commenting upon the unity of man in Old Testament thought, “conceived man as an animated body, and not an incarnate soul.”<sup>11</sup> By the same token, a community is sound when the relationships within its families, clans, tribes and nation are characterized by the ideal of unity and solidarity. But such ideals of harmony and solidarity are not always achieved. Within the individual, the spirit may “faint” (Ps. 142:3), the soul may be “bowed down to the dust” (Ps. 44:25), intoxication may take away the heart or understanding (Hosea 4:11), the flesh may “waste away” (Job 33:21). Within the community, interpersonal relationships can also break down. Two touching and masterful portrayals of such breakdowns are the Old Testament stories of Michal, David and Paltiel (II Sam. 3:14-16; 6:23) and of Amnon and Tamar (II Sam. 13:1-15). Does the Sabbath offer some solution to these disorders, as Heschel suggests?

Perhaps the most natural place to begin is with the freedom which the Sabbath provides. It is essentially a freedom from work, as we have seen, provided for those not in a position to secure it (Ex. 23:12; Deut. 5:12-

15), but it also includes freedom from servitude imposed by the pressures of work (Ex. 34:21). We further noticed that the Sabbath's sister institution, the sabbatical year, offered the slave permanent freedom in the seventh year of servitude (Ex. 21:1-6; Deut. 15:1-18).

However, such freedom does not necessarily bring *shalom* to the parties involved. The master to whom these laws of liberation are given may still view his fellow as a freed slave or servant. He is not necessarily united to him in a bond of unity and solidarity characteristic of the highest order of interpersonal relationships. To be complete, freedom must become independent of the one who bestows it. Deuteronomy 15:12-18 makes that very clear by urging that the master who sets his slave free should also make that slave independent through generous gifts. Only then does the slave become a free man, not just a liberated slave. The regulations of the jubilee year concerning restoration of land and property on the fiftieth year further contribute to that freedom which becomes independent of its liberator.

Genuine freedom must lead to equality. While the Old Testament Sabbath texts themselves do not advocate complete human equality, Isaiah 56 refers at least indirectly to the equality between all people which the Sabbath provides. Isaiah is here responding to the role of foreigners and eunuchs in the congregation of Israel. Traditionally, they were excluded, but the prophet wants that practice reversed. These outcasts, of whom the Assyrian and Babylonian wars produced many, were to be welcome in the Sabbath worship of the temple, if they genuinely wished to belong to God. The remarkable prominence in this chapter of the Sabbath as a sign of such belonging would suggest that this day was an important symbol of membership in the covenant community of Israel, but it must also have been a powerful symbol of equality among all worshippers, something which these former outcasts desperately needed.

The Sabbath thus represents not only freedom for all but also equality among all. Hence, it brings a truce into social conflicts and establishes solidarity and unity in the

community. This result must also apply today. On the Sabbath the executive and his janitor share the same pew; no one gives the other an order or extracts a service. The Sabbath sets all men free and makes them equal. It restores the ideals of solidarity and unity in the community.

Finally, the Sabbath brings to man a certain kind of serenity, what Heschel calls "peace within man," and what we have called the ideal of inner harmony. It is caused

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partly by man's release from the conflicts of this world, whether through work, or ambitions or social relationships, and partly by the vision of the transcendent which man receives in the worship and joy which this day can provide.

So far, nothing has been said about the Sabbath as a day of celebration and worship, although the Old Testament presents ample evidence that it was not, as some have charged, a day of gloom, but a day of joy. The command to not light fires (Ex. 35:3) and to stay indoors on the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29) are case laws applying the Sabbath principle to specific circumstances, not primitive taboos associated with early Sabbath observance. Whatever glimpses we get of the early Sabbath suggest that in addition to being a day without work, it also provides an occasion for worship.<sup>12</sup> The one psalm (Ps. 92) which is specifically assigned (in intertestamental times) to Sabbath worship is a psalm of thanksgiving, sung in a festive mood with musical instruments (vs. 3). Isaiah's opposition to the Sabbath (Isa. 1:13) was not caused by the festivity it provided, but by the impossible juxtaposition of a religious festival and iniquity.

This festive and worshipful quality of the



Sabbath has enabled it to transform strict prohibitions of work into a freedom from work, and thus it has made room for the experience of joy in the life of man. Such Sabbath joy is nourished by the satisfaction found in the completion of all work. The creation Sabbath itself (Gen. 2:2f) illustrates this point. The creator rested on the Sabbath, blessed it, and sanctified it because his work was completed. Seen this way, the Sabbath becomes symbolic not simply of God's creative work, but particularly of the completion of that work, and this makes the Sabbath symbolic of God's redemption which is but "completed creation." Similarly, on the Sabbath man's inner conflicts which arise over problems with unfinished work, or badly accomplished tasks or strained relationships are neutralized by the Sabbath assurance that all work will be completed in God. Here is an occasion for joy, and this joy is expressed in a temporal experience of divine presence bringing serenity to man, inner harmony, "peace within."

In the opinion of many interpreters, the

beautiful Sabbath text in Isaiah 58:13f ought not to be read as a separate promise of materialistic rewards to those who do not transgress the Sabbath law. After all, the context of these verses deals with a true fast which the prophet interprets as practical religion and personal integrity.<sup>13</sup> Verse 13, which deals with the Sabbath, contributes to these concerns of the chapter by making the Sabbath into a festal occasion which is not inhibited by personal or materialistic interests. It warns against letting religion turn in upon itself. It urges the religious person to transcend his preoccupations with gain and profit by caring for others and serving them by means of redemptive works. Such works are characterized by harmony and completion and, like the finished words of God, they bring true Sabbath joy. Riding on the high places (vs. 14) is therefore not a materialistic reward, but a spiritual experience of sharing in God's finished works and taking delight in them. This is the true Sabbath joy which brings inner personal harmony — "peace within."

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A. J. Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York, 1952), p. 29.
2. H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London, 1974), pp. 128-33.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
4. They are servants, foreigners, children and even domestic animals (Ex. 20:8-11; 23:12; Deut. 5:12-15). Cf. N.-E. Andreasen, "Festival and Freedom," *Interpretation*, 28 (1974), 281-97.
5. Cf. B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London, 1962).
6. Cf. Deut. 5:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22.
7. Ex. 21:1-6; Lev. 25, 26; Deut. 15:1-18; II Chron. 36:21.
8. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel I: Social Institutions* (New York, 1961), p. 174.
9. M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London, 1930); R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1938).
10. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 10, 6.
11. *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1946), p. 70.
12. II Kings 4:23; 11:4-12; I Chron. 23:30f.; Isa. 1:13; Hosea 2:11.
13. There is good reason for accepting the unity of Isaiah 58 in spite of many contrary critical opinions on the matter. Cf. J. Muilenburg, "Isaiah 40-66," *The Interpreter's Bible*, V (New York, 1956), p. 677. In this chapter, the worshipers are accused of fasting to gain material blessing while pretending to offer sincere devotion to God.

# The Presence Of Ultimacy

by Fritz Guy

**T**O the extent that a religious symbol “participates in that to which it points,”<sup>1</sup> the Sabbath is invested with the relatedness and the ultimacy of God. This means that to experience the Sabbath is to affirm these two qualities of God, and to deliberately disregard the Sabbath symbolizes a denial of them. According to Adventist theology, a misrepresentation of the nature of God’s relatedness and ultimacy was the very point over which the “great controversy” began in the first place, and over which sin was first actualized in our world.<sup>2</sup>

God’s relatedness and ultimacy are a theological polarity<sup>3</sup> — a pair of elements or ideas that mutually complement and at the same time mutually limit each other. Other examples of this kind of polarity in our understanding of God include the threeness and oneness of the Trinity, and the humanity and deity of Jesus. In each instance, the meaning of one element of the polarity can be adequately understood only in relation to the other. So the idea of the relatedness of God to

human being makes sense only in connection with the idea of the ultimacy of God — and vice versa. Both elements of this polarity, along with the polarity itself, are symbolized by the Sabbath.

Characteristically, each religious symbol has a dual function. It represents something other (and more) than itself, and it also represents that “other” (and “more”).<sup>4</sup> Thus the “meaning” and the “experience” of the symbol are inseparable in actuality, even if it is sometimes useful to distinguish them theoretically in order to talk about them one at a time in the interest of clarity. The Lord’s Supper, for instance, as a symbol of atonement refers back to the death of Jesus as a historical event, but it is also a means by which we can now encounter, and experience more deeply, the significance of that event for our own religious life. Similarly, as a symbol of the relatedness and ultimacy of God, the Sabbath both points to these two qualities and is a means by which they can be experienced.

We can readily identify four expressions of God’s relatedness to human being, as described in the biblical revelation. All of these expressions are comprised in the idea of a “living God,”<sup>5</sup> and all of them are symbolized by the Sabbath.

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1) The initial expression of the relatedness of God is the original *creation*. At first glance, creation might seem to be a unilateral, one-way affair: obviously, the Creator is active, and the created reality is acted upon. But this view turns out to be too simple. For it can hardly be supposed that what God has created does not matter to Him — as if He had no interest in the consequences of His creativity. Furthermore, whatever God creates, He allows to be itself. He lets it have its own integrity and dignity, and so it has the potential of affecting not only other created reality but even its Creator. This is particularly the case in the creation of personal, free being, such as angelic or human reality.

As every reader of the Old Testament knows, the first theological meaning of the Sabbath is its celebration of God's creative activity.<sup>6</sup> This meaning is evident at the very beginning of the story of humanity, in the designation of the Sabbath as part of the creation of our world. Although the creation narrative itself includes no explicit statement that every seventh day is to be a Sabbath for human being, this intention is surely implied in the affirmation that "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (Gen. 2:3). Otherwise, this particular blessing and sanctification of a day would have no meaning or relevance. In any case, the fourth commandment of the decalogue bases the significance of the Sabbath squarely on the fact that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11). And a little later in the narrative, God is quoted as saying that the Sabbath is "a sign between me and the people of Israel, that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth" (Ex. 31:17).

The Sabbath is thus a weekly symbol and celebration of the fact that God is directly related to the world by His own free, deliberate act of creation. This fact is important not only for what it says about the world, which has value and is "good" because it is the result of God's own creativity, but also for what it says about God. His creative intention is actualized in the production of a kind of reality that is distinct and different from Himself

and yet "in His own image" (Gen. 1:27). A free God has created human being with the awesome liberty to reject and defy its Creator.

2) God's relatedness to human being is also expressed in His *presence* in human existence. God did not create humanity and then leave it alone. He wanted to be with it and to be actively present in its life. This presence occurs in several different modes and is visible at different points of human experience.

The various modes of God's general, continuing and comprehensive presence may be seen in such things as (a) the maintenance of the "natural order" of physical, chemical and biological processes that are the necessary condition for human life; (b) the corporate experience of worship, "where two or three are gathered" in Christ's name (Matt. 18:20); and (c) the ministry of the Holy Spirit in individual human minds.

The various modes of God's special, particular presence, also may be seen (a) in certain historical events, especially in the history of Israel and the earliest Christian community; (b) in places of special sacredness, such as the Hebrew tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem; (c) in the ancient prophetic ministry of persons like Hosea, Jeremiah and John the Baptist, and in the more recent prophetic ministry of Ellen White; and (d) in miracles of many kinds, both biblical and modern.

The one absolutely unique mode of God's presence in human existence is the mission of Jesus as "God with us" (Matt. 1:22-23). God is God not only in creating a million blazing galaxies, but also (and especially) in being with the personal reality He has created and in making His presence known.

As a day of rest, of liberation from the secular pressures and mundane duties that crowd the previous six days, the Sabbath is a day for worship, for celebrating God's presence. "Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work; it is a sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings" (Lev. 23:3).

The Sabbath is an opportunity to *recognize* God's presence, to become more acutely aware of it in its various general and special

modes. It brings with it God's love for, and His claim on, human being. In this way, the primal relationship of the Creator and the created reality is continued and also enriched as it is actualized in ever new ways. God is known not merely as the original architect, engineer and builder, but also as the source of energy, the incentive for activity. The Sabbath is also an opportunity to *reflect on* the implications of this presence for the nature and meaning of our own existence — for its security and its possibilities. And the Sabbath is an opportunity to *respond to* the presence of God in profound gratitude for this grace and in decision to shape our future to be an appropriate expression of our gratitude.

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It is in this sense — as a day of liberation for worship that is the fullest possible experience of God's presence — that “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:28). In another sense, however, it is not merely an *opportunity* to recognize, reflect on and respond to God's presence; the Sabbath is *itself* a recognition and reflection of, and a response to, the presence of God in human existence.

3) Yet another expression of God's relatedness to human being is His *commitment* to humanity and its fulfillment. This commitment is initially suggested in the cessation of fundamental creative activity on the planet Earth after the creation of human being.<sup>7</sup> The basic process of creation was complete; it had reached its goal, and God was perfectly satisfied with the result. “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). So God “rested” — in somewhat the same sense that a lawyer “rests” when he has completed the presentation of his case to the judge and jury.

The commitment becomes explicit in the covenant relationship, which is repeatedly expressed in the biblical formulation, “I am your God, and you are my people.”<sup>8</sup> As human marriage was intended to be, so God's creation of humanity was in fact — not an experiment to “see what will happen,” but instead a total commitment to “make a go of it,” “for better or for worse.” And when the “worse” occurred, God's commitment led Him to give “his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

The Sabbath is a symbol of this covenant-commitment between God and human being. “The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant” (Ex. 31:16).<sup>9</sup> But a covenant with God is a special kind of covenant. It is never made *a priori*; it is never the first word, the initiation of a relationship. Any covenant with God is made, rather, *a posteriori*; it is always a second word, so to speak, a consequence of a relationship that has already been established by God's own initiative and commitment. And this is the way it is with the covenant symbol of the Sabbath:<sup>10</sup> “You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you” (Ex. 31:13). So, as a covenant symbol, the Sabbath may be seen not only as a sign of human beings' commitment to live in relationship to God, and thus to be “His people,” it may be seen also (and more fundamentally) as a sign of God's total and permanent commitment to human being; for this is where the covenant relationship necessarily begins.<sup>11</sup> “Hallow my sabbaths, that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I, the Lord, am your God” (Ez. 20:20).

4) Finally (for this discussion), God's relatedness to humanity is expressed in His *responsiveness* to human decisions and actions. Here we have the most obvious kind of relatedness — in the fact that God's action is to some significant extent determined by the

action of human being, both collective and individual. In regard to the influence of collective human being on a historical scale, the biblical witness includes a direct word from God: "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it" (Jer. 18:7-8). And conversely, "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will repent of the good which I had intended to do to it" (verses 9-10).

Some major illustrations of this responsiveness of God to human action come immediately to mind. Human nature being what it is, most examples are negative: the Flood, the exile of Israel, and (according to Adventist eschatology) the continuation of history into the fourth quarter of the twentieth century. Individually, the influence of human action on God's action may be less dramatic than the influence of collective action. Nonetheless, it is real and, happily, frequently positive. Whatever difficulties may be involved in understanding the effects of prayer on the outcome of human or natural events, the clear and consistent biblical evidence requires the conclusion that prayer does, in fact, result in certain kinds of divine activity that would not otherwise occur.<sup>12</sup>

As a celebration of creation, a day of worship and a covenant symbol, the Sabbath becomes an occasion for God's further activity in response to human decisions and actions. The Bible describes this possibility poetically:

If you turn back your foot from the sabbath,  
 from doing your pleasure on my holy day,  
 and call the sabbath a delight,  
 and the holy day of the Lord honorable;  
 if you honor it, not going your own ways,  
 or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly,  
 then you shall take delight in the Lord,  
 and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;

I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob  
 your father,  
 for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.  
 (Isa. 58:13-14)

Now, it is possible to understand too superficially the relationship between "honoring the sabbath" and "riding upon the heights of the earth." It is possible, for example, to suppose that the connection between the two experiences is only extrinsic and therefore arbitrary, like the connection parents sometimes make between good grades in school and a monetary reward (for example, \$5 for every "A" on a semester grade report).

But such a view of the Sabbath entangles it in a form of social and economic coercion — a relation that is unworthy of the creator and unattractive to humanity. Besides, this view fails to see the religious dynamic of the Sabbath. For the fact of the matter is that human being, individually and collectively, can be genuinely "in love with the seventh day," having discovered that the Sabbath is "a palace in time," "not an interlude but the climax of living."<sup>13</sup> When that happens, humanity has before it unimagined possibilities of experiencing God's creative and transforming power and unprecedented potential for spiritual development.

After a consideration of the relatedness of God, it is appropriate to put equal emphasis on the ultimacy of God. For the relatedness does not in any sense mean a relativizing or a dilution of the ultimacy. On the contrary, an understanding of the relatedness only increases our understanding of — and our admiration and respect for — the ultimacy.

The word "ultimacy" in this discussion refers to the fact that God is not only the supreme reality and value, but also the kind of reality and value beyond which nothing can even be conceptualized.<sup>14</sup> This is the definition of deity in the classical sense of all monotheism, whether Christian, Jewish or Islamic. It implies two further, closely related ideas. One is the idea of "holiness," which is extremely difficult to define precisely,<sup>15</sup> but which evokes the sense of awe and reverence that is regularly associated

with an awareness of the ultimate. The second idea is that of “otherness” or “beyondness” or “hiddenness.” It refers to the fact that God, although related to the world in a variety of ways, still has his own being outside the world, beyond anything and everything that is created. This fact means that the reality of God will always involve infinitely more than can be encountered or comprehended by human being.

The ultimacy of God has two principal dimensions. In the first place, God is the ultimate *reality and power*. He is the source of His own and of all other reality and power. He is neither dependent on, nor limited by, anything outside Himself. God is, in other words, eternal and omnipotent. If he were not, He would not be God. So the fact that God is related to the world and to the human being that He has created and that His activity is in some sense determined by this created reality must be understood as a *self-limitation* of God that results from His own creative intention. That is to say, the relatedness of God comes with His decision to create and is in no way imposed on Him.

An indication of this ultimacy of God may be seen in the fact that the Sabbath is a *temporal* symbol. Here it stands in contrast (but not in contradiction) to the symbols of the bread and wine, the water and basin and towel — all of which are material objects.<sup>16</sup> In the first place, time, from which there is no escape for human being, but which defies every attempt to define it, is an especially apt symbol in relation to a God who is characterized not only by His “closeness” to human being but also his “beyondness.” In a way, therefore, the mystery of time can remind us of the mystery of God.

In the second place, time is the “material” of human existence. When “time is up,” life is over, and human being is no more. And when I give my time to something — a person, perhaps, or an endeavor — I am making an irrevocable investment; I am giving myself. A holy day is therefore an effective means by which to affirm the ultimacy of the eternal God. He is the origin of all time and the course of my own time. To Him, time is no problem, because He is the ultimate reality and power.

But God is more than the ultimate reality and power: He is also the ultimate *goodness and value*. In spite of the fact that reality and power usually seem to generate value (and therefore authority), further consideration makes it clear that this is not necessarily so. There are many familiar instances of reality without goodness, and power without value: the playground bully, the domineering spouse, the illegitimate government. So it is useful to make an explicit point of the fact that God is ultimate goodness and value, as

**“A holy day is therefore an effective means by which to affirm the ultimacy of the eternal God. He is the origin of all time and the course of my own time. To Him, time is no problem. . . . He is the ultimate reality and power.”**

well as the ultimate reality and power. This fact is most clearly evident in the special revelation communicated through the biblical documents, where it is discernible in the nature of God’s relatedness to humanity. Once recognized, it can be formulated as a theological or philosophical corollary of the Christian “good news.” In other words, the fact that “God is love” (I John 4:8) is intrinsically related to the fact that God is the ultimate goodness and value.

This second dimension of ultimacy is, on the one hand, the positive motivation for worship (in contrast to fear of God’s power), and, on the other hand, the central issue of what Adventist theology knows as “the great controversy.” It is not God’s reality or power that is challenged by the enemy, and that is finally to be vindicated for the benefit of the whole moral universe, but His ultimate goodness.

The Sabbath, as a holy day — a day of holiness — symbolizes the ultimacy of God in both of its dimensions. It reminds us of this ultimacy, sharpens our awareness of it and gives us a means to affirm it. In this connec-

tion, we can see most clearly the particular significance of the “seventh-day-ness” of the Sabbath.

Positively, to observe the Sabbath is to acknowledge and affirm the ultimacy of God, not only in terms of his reality and power, but also in terms of His goodness and value. For one thing, the seventh day is regarded as a Sabbath “to the Lord”;<sup>17</sup> it is known as “the holy day of the Lord” (Isa. 58:13); and God is described repeatedly as referring to “my sabbaths.”<sup>18</sup> For another thing, unlike the single day, the month and the year, the seven-day cycle has no “natural” basis. No astronomical, agricultural or physiological period gives it “practical” significance. This means that both its origin and its significance are distinctively religious: it is a command — and a gift — of God. In short, it is a way of saying “Yes” or “No” to the Creator. The “seventh-day-ness” of the Sabbath has this special meaning: it symbolizes God’s ultimacy as reality and power and as goodness and value. The dedication of every seventh day “to the Lord” is a recognition of His lordship over all of our days — which is to say, over all of our existence.<sup>19</sup>

Negatively, making the seventh day a Sabbath experience relativizes all non-transcendent values, including not only economic security and well-being but also personal and professional achievement, success and satisfaction. In this way, the Sabbath offers a useful protection against materialism and status-seeking — the twin gods of modern secularity, to whom even Christians are surprisingly (if unconsciously) obedient. For

it is a day on which both “pleasure” and “business” become unimportant. Furthermore, characteristically, humans tend to identify personal success with the ultimate good. This characteristic is true especially if we are professionally engaged in some humanitarian or religious enterprise. But the Sabbath comes to us as a powerful reminder of our createdness and relativity and as a valuable opportunity to put all of our efforts and intentions into the context and perspective of God’s ultimacy. It is a day primarily for rest and worship. It is not a day for pursuing the personal or professional business of our lives, however beneficent that business may be and however generously it may be motivated (although our motivations are probably much less generous than we like to think).

A recognition of the significance of the Sabbath as a symbol of God’s ultimacy (as reality and power, and as goodness and value) as well as His relatedness to human being (in creation, presence, commitment and responsiveness) makes it easy to understand why the experience of the Sabbath is so important in Adventist life and thought. It is not merely a distinctive religious practice; it is also a profound theological statement. This recognition explains why the establishment of another day of worship in place of the Sabbath is regarded as a crucial departure from authentic biblical religion.<sup>20</sup> It also explains the eschatological significance of the Sabbath as “the seal of the living God” (Rev. 7:2), identifying those persons who have understood the issues of the “great controversy,” have positively affirmed the ultimacy of God and are prepared for existence in an immediate relationship to God.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 42.

2. Compare Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif: Pacific Press, 1958), p. 42: “Satan . . . had sought to falsify the word of God, and had misrepresented his plan of government, claiming that God was not just in imposing laws upon the angels; that in requiring submission and obedience from his creatures, he was seeking merely the exaltation of himself.”

Outside of Adventist thought, a similar idea is put

into somewhat broader terms by C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (London: Collins/Fontana, 1953), p. 92: “The whole philosophy of Hell rests on recognition of the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. My good is my good and your good is yours. What one gains another loses. Even an inanimate object is what it is by excluding all other objects from the space it occupies; if it expands, it does so by thrusting other objects aside or by absorbing them. A self does the same. With beasts the form [is] eating; for us

[demons], it means the sucking of will and freedom out of a weaker self into a stronger. 'To be' means 'to be in competition.'"

3. The polarity of the relatedness and the ultimacy of God is an experiential corollary to the more general, ontological polarity of the immanence and transcendence of God, which is familiar in the classical tradition of Christian theology. Our particular interest here is with God and distinctively *human* being, rather than with God and the created universe in general.

4. Readers who are familiar with the theology of Paul Tillich may recognize a connection between the terms "representation" and "re-presentation" used here to identify the two functions of symbols, and his description of the characteristics of symbols in *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 41-43.

5. The term "living God" occurs at least 14 times in the Old Testament and 16 times in the New Testament, including the famous declaration of Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

6. Ellen G. White's expositions of the Sabbath commonly emphasize its importance as a symbol ("memorial") of God's creative power and activity. See, for example, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 48, 307 and 338; *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1940), pp. 281 and 288; *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1950), pp. 54 and 436-38; *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1952), pp. 250-51.

7. Compare White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 47 and 115: "All was perfect, worthy of its divine author, and He rested, not as one weary, but as well pleased with the fruits of His wisdom and goodness and the manifestations of His glory." "As regards this world, God's work of creation is completed. For 'the works were finished from the foundation of the world' (Heb. 4:3)."

Martin Buber, *Moses* (Oxford: East and West Library, 1946), p. 82, notes that "the Hebrew word *shabat* [which is the verb "to rest"] means exclusively to be finished with an action or a situation, not to do or not to be something any more; it does not mean to rest or to leave something undone. What is involved here is in essence the completion of an activity or a function, its no-longer state."

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936-63), III-1, 214-15, sees important meaning in the fact that God ended His creative activity: "He was content with the creation of the world and man. He was satisfied to enter into *this* relationship with *this* reality distinct from Himself, to be the Creator of *this* creature, to find in *these* works of His Word the external sphere of His power and grace and the place of His revealed glory." In other words, "The reason why He refrains from further activity on the seventh day is that He has found the object of His love and has no need of any further works."

8. This formulation occurs at least 28 times: Gen. 17:7-8; Ex. 29:45-46; Lev. 26:12, 45; Deut. 14:4; 26:17-18; II Sam. 7:24; I Chron. 17:22; Isa. 51:15-16; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ez. 11:20; 36:28; 37:23, 26-27; Hos. 1:9-10; 2:23; Zech. 8:8; 13:9; Rom. 9:25-26; II Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3.

9. The close relationship between the Sabbath and the covenant is apparent also in two instances of poetic parallelism in Isaiah 56:

"To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,  
who choose the things that please me and hold  
fast my covenant . . ." (verse 4).

"Everyone who keeps the sabbath, and does not  
profane it, and holds fast my covenant . . ." (verse 6).

10. The Sabbath is not, of course, the only biblical symbol of the covenant relationship between God and human being. In the Old Testament, there is the rainbow (Gen. 9:12-13) and circumcision (Gen. 17:10-14); and in the New Testament there is the wine of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:28).

11. Compare Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), III, 350: "To those who reverence His holy day the Sabbath is a sign that God recognizes them as His chosen people. It is a pledge that He will fulfill to them His covenant. Every soul who accepts this sign of God's government places himself under the divine, everlasting covenant. He fastens himself to the golden chain of obedience, every link of which is a promise."

12. This idea occurs frequently in the teachings of Jesus. See, for example, Matt. 7:7-11; 18:19; 21:22; John 14:13-14; 15:7; 16:24.

13. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), pp. 15, 12 and 14.

14. This formulation derives from Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109), *An Address (Proslogion)*, chapter 2: "a being than which none greater can be thought"; and from Boethius (480-542), *The Consolation of Philosophy*, book 3, prose 10: "Nothing better than God can be thought."

15. Herbert W. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 123, defines holiness in terms of the "glory" or "dignity" of God that "is the basis of His authority and gives Him the right to command." This definition is of particular interest here because it is offered in connection with a serious consideration of the theological implications of the Sabbath.

16. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, seems to overplay the contrast between time and space, giving a spiritual (and almost ontological) priority to time. This, it seems to me, is both unnecessary and unhelpful. While human being does tend to be obsessed with "the things of space" — that is, material objects of various sorts — the problem is not with their materiality (much less their spatiality), but with our obsession.

17. The translation "of the Lord," familiar from the King James Version, is not quite so accurate as the translation "to the Lord" that appears in the Revised Standard Version in Ex. 16:23, 25; 20:10; 31:15; 35:21; Deut. 5:14; etc.

18. Ex. 31:13; Lev. 19:3, 30; 26:2; Ez. 20:12, 20; etc.

19. Compare Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 84 (1972), 455-58.

20. See White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 49-51 and 433-56.



# Moment of Eternity

by Gerald Winslow

**The Sabbath was made for man. . .**

**Jesus**

In his book, *Toward an American Theology*, Herbert Richardson writes: “[K]eeping the Sabbath holy is nothing other than the way that a man lives to the glory of God. For Sabbath holiness and the glory of God are one and the same thing.”<sup>1</sup> Many of Richardson’s fellow theologians must have been at least mildly surprised. Why would one of America’s leading young theologians tie his search for an “American theology” to a discussion of the Sabbath? How could a symbol which is linked in many minds with legalistic Pharisees and Puritans hold any real value for modern theology?

Could such a symbol be made to live again?

If Richardson’s attempt is measured in terms of stimulating widespread interest in Sabbath theology, perhaps his endeavor will be considered misguided. But in this essay, I assume that Richardson was correct in calling

for more attention to the Sabbath.<sup>2</sup> My stance is undoubtedly informed by a biography. As one reared in the Seventh-day Adventist faith, I have never failed to observe the weekly Sabbath.

But the years have also provided opportunity to think analytically about the symbol. The repeated experience of Sabbath and critical reflection on the symbol have made the question posed by theologian and philosopher Paul Ricoeur exceedingly significant: “How can the immediacy of the symbol and the meditation of thought be held together?”<sup>3</sup> Can the symbol be subjected to searching analysis and still retain its potency in the lived experience of faith?

In seeking an answer, I have taken Ricoeur’s advice and looked for that analysis which allows the richness of the symbol to stand—an analysis which in Ricoeur’s words is “no longer reductive but restorative.”<sup>4</sup> To this end, I have sought aid from those who have thought deeply about the role of symbols in the spiritual life.

Much of importance may be said about the symbolic meaning of the Sabbath. But I have chosen only to emphasize the ways in which the Sabbath may vivify the human experience of duration through symbolic representation of the Beginning and Eternity under the sovereignty of God. Whatever else may

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be said about the Sabbath, it is a symbol which is uniquely well suited to help us see the depths of our existence in time, its beginning and continuance, in the light of Providence.

Scholars have argued about the origin of the Sabbath.<sup>5</sup> But what is of concern here is not the beginning of the Sabbath, but rather the Sabbath as a symbol of *the* Beginning. As Richardson says, “the origin of an idea may affect its relevance, but it never determines its truth.”<sup>6</sup> The truth about Sabbath commences with the words, “In the beginning, God. . . .” Embedded as it is in the Genesis creation story, the weekly cycle with its crowning day, the Sabbath, stands as a perpetual symbol-in-time for the work of creation. Without elaborate explanations, the story simply says: “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in Creation.”<sup>7</sup>

In the earliest forms of the Sabbath literature, no reason is given for the Sabbath except that the sovereign God who has the power to create the world has also made the Sabbath. As one scholar has observed:

Early biblical law rarely gives reasons and theorizes even more rarely. It would not be in the normal range and character of the Bible to verbalize the idea of the sabbath. . . . But the importance of the sabbath and its frequent mention in the Bible have presented a challenge to rationalization since ancient times.<sup>8</sup>

The need for additional reasons apparently made it necessary for later biblical writers to surround the Sabbath with more explanatory statements. But in its most basic form, the keeping of the Sabbath symbolizes the acceptance of the sovereignty of God.

Kenneth Burke has stressed the fact that after the designation of the seventh day as the Sabbath, “God” becomes “Lord God” in the creation story.<sup>9</sup> The Creator is Ruler. Symbolically, the Sabbath places mankind under the order of this Sovereign. It comes at the beginning of the emphasis on God’s dominion. Burke says that the Sabbath is a “polar term.” That is, it stands in the story for *rest* after *work*. In this sense, it is in dialectical

opposition to the six days of labor. The Sabbath with its cessation thus becomes a moral “No.” It is implicitly negative because it is antithetical to the six days of creation.

In Burke’s analysis, the moral “No” is prior to and leads to the Idea of Nothing.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the moral negative drives toward the concept of the Divine, the One who is *no* particular *thing*. Just as a child initially learns the meaning of authority at least partly through hearing “No,” mankind accepts through cessation the sovereignty of that One who transcends all particular things. In somewhat the same vein, Rabbi Heschel writes:

Indeed the splendor of the day is expressed in terms of *abstentions*, just as the mystery of God is more adequately conveyed *via negationis*, in the categories of *negative theology* which claims that we can never say what He is, we can only say what He is not.<sup>11</sup>

The Sabbath is unmatched as a symbol capable of representing the no-*thingness* of God. “Thing,” says Heschel, “is a category that lies heavy on our minds, tyrannizing all our thoughts.”<sup>12</sup> But God is Spirit, not some thing. This is a lesson which materialists, both ancient and modern, have needed to learn. As Jack Provonsha says, “the ultimate sin against God is His ‘thingification.’ ”<sup>13</sup> God may be “thingified” just as certainly through the reification of symbols as through the deification of objects. Holy time, the experience of Sabbath, helps to preserve human beings from such idolatry. The Sabbath returns mankind to the realm of the spirit. As Heschel states, “The Sabbath preceded creation and the Sabbath completed creation; it is all of the spirit that the world can bear.”<sup>14</sup>

**I**t must be emphasized in this context that Sabbath came before the Fall, before the rulership of the Creator was challenged by transgression. Burke claims that disorder is implied in order. Thus, the order of a Sovereign symbolized by the Sabbath must sooner or later be rejected, saying “no” to the “No.” And the disorder in the transgression leads to death. It is true, of course, that dis-

obedience did lead to capital punishment for Sabbathbreakers.<sup>15</sup> But Burke must be reminded that in the narrative Sabbath is prior to sin and death. What is more, the story does not even hint that the order implied in Sabbath would lead inevitably to transgression. Nor is there any indication how many perfect Sabbaths passed before the Fall. In the *beginning* (before sin), mankind's first full day on the Edenic earth was the Sabbath.

Since sin, Sabbath has been a means of recapturing some measure of that Edenic experience. Mircea Eliade claims that "every ritual has a divine model, an archetype."<sup>16</sup>

**“Holy time, the experience of Sabbath, helps to preserve human beings from idolatry. The Sabbath returns mankind to the realm of the spirit.”**

Later, he says: “The Judaeo-Christian Sabbath is also an *imitatio dei*. The Sabbath rest reproduces the primordial gesture of the Lord. . . .”<sup>17</sup> The periodic repetition of this archetypal act reveals the desire to return to the paradisiacal state. That Edenic situation was lost “once upon a time” and is lost again in each individual’s experience. The passage of time brings decay and destruction and guilt. But, as Eliade states elsewhere, “it is interesting to observe a certain continuity of human behavior in respect to Time, both down the ages and in various cultures. This behavior may be defined as follows: To cure the work of Time it is necessary to ‘go back’ and find the ‘beginning of the World.’”<sup>18</sup> This “journey” back to the Origin presents the opportunity for renewal and regeneration. One is placed in touch with the earliest roots of existence and another “birth” becomes possible.

This periodic rediscovery of the Beginning is not just for individuals. Religion is preeminently a social phenomenon. Even the most private religions are usually only variations of the communal faith of a group. So it is

with the Sabbath. It is more than a time for the individual to remember the Creator, for the Sabbath is a supremely social institution. Even the first Sabbath was not celebrated alone. Community, it seems, requires sacred times when the origins can be celebrated and the needs of the group can be represented in ritual. The Sabbath affords time for community. Rabbi Heschel quotes this ancient allegory:

After the work of creation was completed, the Seventh Day pleaded: Master of the universe, all that Thou hast created is in couples; to every day of the week Thou gavest a mate; only I was left alone. And God answered: The Community of Israel will be your mate.<sup>19</sup>

The Sabbath, then, requires memory — an imaginative recalling. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.”<sup>20</sup> Life for individuals and for communities has many beginnings. And yet, in a more important sense, life never begins but is always the gift of other life. In the experience of holiness, one may be reunited with both Creator and creation and thus with one’s community and with oneself. And one may sense anew the magnificence of the gift of life. “Man is made for Sabbath holiness,” writes Richardson. “His end is not in himself, but in the holiness of God which, through the Sabbath, is established in the world as the final joy of all created things.”<sup>21</sup>

The memory of the past seems sufficient reason to believe in the reality of the flow of time. With a celebrated illustration, Edmund Husserl demonstrates the impossibility of denying the “immanent time” of the flow of consciousness. He says, “The evidence that consciousness of a tonal process, a melody, exhibits a succession even as I hear it is such as to make every doubt or denial appear senseless.”<sup>22</sup> But how can this subjective experience of the flow of time be represented more adequately?

In western civilization, the passage of time is generally symbolized as moving in a single direction. Like an arrow which has been

shot, time is pictured as racing from the past through the present toward the future. Unlike the placid pool or endless cycles used to symbolize time in the East, time in the West is the demon which destroys all human efforts. "The feeling prevails," writes psychoanalyst Joost Meerloo, "that what humanity creates is always destroyed by time."<sup>23</sup> Time would probably matter little were it not for an awareness that life will end. The "melody" will not continue forever.

**"The Sabbath permits a foretaste of rest, and a preview of eternity for the time *being*. For the Sabbath points beyond death to the hope of eternity."**

"Fetalized man, wrenched too early from his mother's womb, lives with an inborn death verdict."<sup>24</sup> Given lives which seem to be consumed by time, humans seek the eternal. But even the eternal must be experienced *in* time. Stated with what may be the necessary *double-entendre*: for the time *being*, time remains.

Or does it? Is there no way to transcend the world of appearance and experience the realm of eternity? Van der Leeuw writes: "Duration, then, is the great stream flowing relentlessly on: but man, encountering Power, must halt. He then makes a section, a *tempus*; and he celebrates 'sacred time,' a festival. In this manner he shows that he declines the given as such, and seeks possibility."<sup>25</sup> The experience of eternity is made accessible for those who perceive that not all times are the same. But perhaps this experience requires a more "primitive" view of time.

Such a view of time may be seen in children. Jean Piaget, who has documented the development of the time concept in children, points out that in the child's "primitive" conception of time, "each action still has a time of its own, so that there are as many temporal series as there are schemes of action."<sup>26</sup> If, for

example, the young child works more rapidly or does more work, time is perceived as passing more rapidly. The young child may remember more vividly than the older child or adult, but the memories have their own special times.

Piaget's portrayal of the child's "primitive" time concept bears some interesting similarities to Gerhard von Rad's description of ancient Israel's understanding of time.<sup>27</sup> To be sure, Israel's God is the Lord of history Whose mighty acts follow one after the other. In this sense, Israel has a linear view of time. But von Rad claims that there is no single time line in the Hebrew chronicles; nor is there any *abstract* view of time. Rather, time is associated with events. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven . . ."<sup>28</sup>

For anyone who believes that all times are the same, the Sabbath is surely nonsense. But even to the modern mind, it seems, all times are not the same. Most people do celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and a few holidays. The seasons in America are marked by Labor and Memorial days. But such events often tend only to promote the objectification of time. That is, time is measured in numbered units. It is thought of in terms of marketable packets. And life can be "back-timed" from the threescore years and ten. In many respects, the lesson of numbering our days has been well learned. It cannot be denied, of course, that an objective notion of time does facilitate certain important tasks such as planning for the future. But objectified time, the time of punch clocks and prison sentences, often deprives one of the immediate moment — of savoring the eternal Now.

The Sabbath, sacred time, has the power to liberate one from the bondage of objective time. It is interesting to note that Norman O. Brown, in his discussion of repression, claims that "only repressed life is in time, and unrepressed life would be timeless or in eternity." Brown goes on to symbolize this experience as the "Sabbath of Eternity."<sup>29</sup> And borrowing Brown's phrase, Meerloo states: "Man's yearning for eternization, his longing to be beyond temporariness and beyond his confinement in time, leads to various symbolic actions whereby man tries to reach

beyond the beyond and to live life in an unrepressed way in the Sabbath of Eternity."<sup>30</sup>

The contexts in which these authors adopt the Sabbath symbolism is obviously quite removed from the original biblical imagery. Nevertheless, the appropriation of the Sabbath symbolism to represent unrepressed life demonstrates some of the potency of the symbol. Moreover, such an appropriation is certainly not "untrue" to the biblical Sabbath. Indeed, understanding the Sabbath as a "festival of freedom" or a celebration of liberty is entirely in harmony with the biblical presentation.<sup>31</sup>

**B**ut when is the time to experience eternity? In the commotion of modern society, in the confusion of mastering and obtaining the things of space, time relentlessly devours life. As one theologian has written, we have the "feeling that our existence is slipping ever more rapidly away from us into nothingness — and we can do nothing about it."<sup>32</sup> But the experience of eternity must somehow be associated with cessation. For this experience, symbols are essential. As van der Leeuw states, in myth and symbol is found the timeless "once upon a time." Time is allowed to "stand still" for a while. "This cessation of duration acquires the religious designation of eternity."<sup>33</sup>

Here is the spirit of Sabbath; in cessation, eternity is encountered. Time is no longer money or monuments. Time becomes possibility. As Heschel says: "The essence of the world to come is Sabbath eternal, and the seventh day in time is an example of eternity."<sup>34</sup>

Liberation from objectified time, liberation for Eternity, can never be fully accomplished, however, without altering attitudes toward death. Many reasons have been offered for the discontinuity between life and death as it is perceived in modern culture. But one factor which may deserve

more attention is simply the absence of genuine repose in the lives of many (perhaps most) people today. In the Bible, death is usually portrayed as a rest — a dreamless sleep.<sup>35</sup> But in the course of modern life such respite must seem a very remote symbol. Father Diez-Alegria, the Jesuit author whose recent book, *I Believe in Hope*, is creating considerable stir, makes the point which I think is important:

Death for me, seen from "this side" — that is to say, without stressing transcendent hope — presented itself in a very positive way as fitting into the category of "rest," of "sleep," of the "Sabbath pause." Modern activism, turning even one's vacation into a time of mad activity, has lost to a great extent this concept of "rest," which is so deeply biblical . . . .<sup>36</sup>

Rest after labor is the biblical view of death. And for those who know the Lord of the Sabbath, anticipation of the rest may be calm and even joyous in the deepest sense. The Sabbath permits a foretaste of that rest, and a preview of eternity for the time *being*. For the Sabbath points beyond death to the hope of eternity.

Today, the society which I know best suffers from a lack of sacred time. Observance of the weekly Sabbath continues to wane. "Thank God it's Friday" means little more than the promise of a weekend filled with new and frenzied activities. The yearly "sabbaths" of the American heritage have been converted to long weekends. (Who can even recall what they commemorate?) And the "sabbatical year" of the bicentennial was largely a time of grotesque self-congratulation rather than an opportunity to rediscover the founding principles of justice, to forgive debts, to restore the land and return it to its original owners.

An ancient symbol, the Sabbath, still has important lessons to teach us. In rediscovering the Sabbath, the time *being* may find resources for sustaining a community that experiences both Beginning and Eternity.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Herbert W. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 119.

2. For the most part, I am using the word "Sabbath" to refer to the seventh day of the week which,

according to the biblical account, was hallowed by God and given to humans as a day of rest and worship (Gen. 2:1-3). It should be noted, however, that the Sabbath symbolism in the Bible extends far beyond

the weekly Sabbath. Seven special sabbaths per year were designated as commemorative festivals (Lev. 23). Moreover, every seventh year was specified as a sabbatical year (Lev. 25:1-7). After seven sabbatical years, every fiftieth year, a special Year of Jubilee was celebrated (Lev. 25:8-12). Although the weekly Sabbath is the central concern of this essay, the more extensive symbolism of *holy time* as represented in these other "sabbaths" should also be kept in mind.

3. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 350.

4. *Ibid.*

5. As early as 1883, Wilhelm Lotz suggested that the Hebrew Sabbath (*šabbāt*) was borrowed from the taboo days of the Babylonians (*šabbattu*) which fell on the seventh, fourteenth and twenty-eighth days of the month. Wilhelm Lotz, *Questiones de Historia Sabbati* (Leipzig: J. C. Heinrichs, 1883). More recently, von Rad has agreed that the Sabbath probably did begin as some sort of taboo day. Gerhard von Rad, *The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, Vol. 1 of *Old Testament Theology*, trans. by D. M. C. Stalker (New York: Harper Brothers, 1962), p. 16. But Andreasen has offered some telling arguments against this thesis and states: "The Old Testament does not understand the Sabbath as a taboo day even in the oldest stratum." Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath: A Traditional-Historical Investigation*, The Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, Number Seven (Missoula, Montana: University of Montana, 1972), p. 265.

In a short essay like this, it is impossible to discuss the traditional-historical criticisms of the biblical literature regarding Sabbath. Such a discussion has been provided with admirable clarity and thoroughness by Niels-Erik Andreasen in the work just cited. It is very important, of course, to know as much as is possible about what is "behind the text." But Andreasen comments near the end of his own analysis of the Sabbath literature: "The theological significance of these [Sabbath passages]. . . is largely untouched and remains to be explored" (p. 273). And as David Tracy has observed, the Christian theologian must also be concerned about the meaning "in front of the text." David Tracy, *A Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 77, 78.

6. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology*, p. 119.

7. Gen. 2:3.

8. Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 84 (1972), p. 454.

9. Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 203-204. It may be that Burke ignores the distinction between the two creation stories. But it seems, for purposes of his "logological" analysis, he assumes that there is an underlying reason for the combined structure of the two accounts as we have them.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-23.

11. Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Sabbath: Its

Meaning for Modern Man," in *The Earth Is the Lord's and the Sabbath* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 15.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

13. Jack Provonsha, *God Is with Us* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), p. 34.

14. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 21.

15. Ex. 31:14-16 and Num. 15:32-36.

16. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), p. 21.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

18. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 87, 88. See also Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959), pp. 81ff.

19. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 51.

20. Ex. 20:8 and 11.

21. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology*, p. 116.

22. Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, trans. by James S. Churchill (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 23.

23. Joost A. M. Meerloo, *Along the Fourth Dimension: Man's Sense of Time and History* (New York: The John Day Company, 1970), p. 10.

24. *Ibid.*

25. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, Vol. 2, trans. by J. E. Turner (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 385.

26. Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time*, trans. by A. J. Pomerans (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

27. Gerhard von Rad, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, Vol. 2 of *Old Testament Theology*, trans. by D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), pp. 99, 100.

28. Eccl. 3:1.

29. Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press), pp. 93-95.

30. Meerloo, *Along the Fourth Dimension*, p. 55.

31. See for example, Hans Walter Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 13 (Sept. 1972). The author says: "The fundamental significance of the seventh day is therefore this: rest from our work is to remind us of the freedom we have already been given" (p. 500).

32. Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 289.

33. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, II, 385.

34. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 74.

35. I Kings 2:10; II Chron. 21:1; Eccl. 9:5,6; Matt. 9:24; I Cor. 15:51, 52; I Thess. 4:13-17.

36. José Maria Dies-Alegria, *I Believe in Hope* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 186.

The author wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Roy Branson for helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

# Theology of the Sabbath

## A Selected Bibliography

Much has been written in recent years on the theology of the Sabbath by both Jewish and Christian writers. Especially encouraging is the increasing number of Adventist writings on this topic. The following annotated bibliography, which is limited to studies in English, includes works by Jews, a Seventh Day Baptist, Seventh-day Adventists and other Protestants.

### Jewish Writers

Dresner, Samuel H. *The Sabbath*. New York: Burning Bush Press, 1970.

A less philosophical, more practical approach to the meaning of the Sabbath than Heschel's.

Friedman, Theodore. "The Sabbath: Anticipation of Redemption." *Judaism*, 16 (1967), 443-452.

Develops the view that the Sabbath as a foretaste of the world-to-come should be enjoyed in that manner. Thus, the Sabbath, frees man from "his consciousness of time, the competitiveness that pervades every sphere of life, and the diminishing pleasure man finds in work."

Heschel, Abraham J. *The Sabbath*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951.

The most stimulating, provocative and seminal work on the meaning of the Sabbath by a Jewish theologian. Builds his theology on the concept of holiness in time. Has had great influence.

This annotated bibliography has been compiled by Sakae Kubo and Fritz Guy.

Tsevat, Matitياهو. "The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 84 (1972), 447-459.

Sees the basic meaning of the Sabbath as acceptance of the sovereignty of God, because man renounces on every seventh day his dominion over time. Since it is not related to any agricultural or astronomical phenomenon, this sovereignty is absolute.

### Protestant Writers

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958, 1961. Vol. 3, bk. 1, pp. 98-99, 213-28; vol. 3, bk. 4, pp. 47-72.

Brown, James. "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Sabbath." *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 19 (1966), 409-433.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Doctrine of the Sabbath in Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*." *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 20 (1967), 1-24.

Among Protestant theologians, Karl Barth has been the most original in dealing with the theology of the Sabbath. Barth's wide-ranging theology is represented very well in Brown's articles. Barth's major contributions are his consideration of the Sabbath as a revelation of the nature of God, as the beginning of the covenant of grace, as man's first day to which he comes with nothing to offer, as a type of Jesus Christ "who is the living presence of Eternity in Time," as a sign of Christ's sovereignty and as a sign of justification and redemption.

Jewett, Paul K. *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian's Day of Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971.

Consists mainly of a justification for keeping the first day instead of the seventh (the OT Sabbath has been fulfilled in Christ but the first day is kept as a sign that the rest is still a future hope). Nevertheless, does go beyond this concern and explicates De Quervain's and Barth's theology.

Richardson, Herbert W. *Toward an American Theology*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967. Chapter 5, pp. 108-60.

Connects the Sabbath with the incarnation and with the Holy Spirit. For Richardson, the presence of Jesus, "God with us," is more important than his redemptive activity, "God for us." The meaning of the Sabbath as God's presence with us is extended by the Holy Spirit by the presence in us.

Wolff, Hans Walter. "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament." *Lexington Theological Quarterly*, 7 (July 1972), 65-76.

Draws out the implication of the Sabbath for modern man, especially emphasizing the freedom the Sabbath brings now and that which it points to in the future. It is directed to those who are particularly burdened with work and for those who are overzealous for work.

### Seventh Day Baptist

Saunders, Herbert R. *The Sabbath: Symbol of Creation and Re-Creation*. Plainfield, N. J.: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1970.

Half of this book presents a theology of the Sabbath. Although some familiar themes are treated, this is a notable effort by a seventh-day-keeping Christian to deal with the Sabbath theologically.

### Seventh-day Adventist

#### Books

Andreasen, Niels-Erik A. *The Old Testament Sabbath: A Tradition-Historical In-*

*vestigation*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 7, 1972.

A thorough examination, using the methods and categories of current Old Testament studies, of the materials that must be the starting-point for a biblical theology of the Sabbath, including the Sabbath as an institution and as law, and the relation of the Sabbath to creation and the covenant.

Bacchiocchi, Samuele. *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*. Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977.

Chapter 2, "Christ and the Lord's Day," pp. 17-73, lays part of the biblical foundation for an understanding of the Sabbath in relation to redemption, concluding that "in the light of Christ's teaching and ministry, the Sabbath rest epitomizes the blessings of salvation." Scholarly, but not too technical for the general reader.

Holland, Kenneth J. *This Day Is Yours: Exploring the Many-faceted Wonders of God's Sabbath Day*. Nashville: Southern, 1969.

A devotional-theological consideration of the Sabbath, written in a popular homiletic style and including its biblical basis, religious importance, traditional observance and relationship to various aspects of Christian life.

Kubo, Sakae. *God Meets Man: The Meaning of the Sabbath and the Second Coming*. Nashville: Southern, 1978 (scheduled for publication in the spring).

The theological significance of the Sabbath in various dimensions, including the eschatological, bringing together and developing some of the ideas that have been recently emerging in Adventist thought about the Sabbath.

#### Articles and essays

Bacchiocchi, Samuele. *Rest for Modern Man: The Sabbath for Today*. Nashville: Southern, 1977.



The Sabbath rest in terms of completion, deliverance, peace and consecration. Reprinted from the *Review and Herald*, March 27 and April 3, 1975.

Guy, Fritz. "The Meaning of the Sabbath." *Insight*, February 5, 12 and 19, 1974.

Three highly compressed articles on the Sabbath as a symbol of the relationship between God and man, a celebration of God's activity and an opportunity for personal wholeness.

Larson, David. "Celebrating the Sabbath in the Secular Seventies." *Insight*, March 23, 1971, pp. 4-8.

Identifying "the Sabbath ideas" as creation, liberation and culmination, and briefly elaborating their implications for shaping a life-style.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Does a Sequoia Have Rights?" *Insight*, July 11, 1972, pp. 25-26.

Ecological implications of the Sabbath, which is a reminder that nature has value of its own.

Olsen, V. Norskov. "Theological Aspects of the Seventh-day Sabbath." *Spectrum*, vol. 4 (1972), no. 3, pp. 5-18.

The Sabbath as providing constitutive and corrective norms for other Christian doctrines, such as the concept of God, justification and sanctification, and eschatology, which are "not truly established unless they are erected within the theological framework" of the Sabbath.

Rosado, Caleb. "God's Solution to Man's Problems." *These Times*, March, 1973, pp. 7-11.

The significance of the Sabbath for man's understanding of God, himself and his environment, both before and after sin.

Scriven, Charles. "Beyond Arithmetic: A Look at the Meaning of the Sabbath." *Insight*, September 7, 1971, pp. 14-18.

The Sabbath as a reminder of the essential goodness of life as God's creation, a sign of protest against dehumanization and a celebration of hope.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Day of Gladness," "What the Sabbath Asks You to Be," and "Things Will Turn Out All Right." *Liberty*, January-February, March-April and May-June, 1977.

The Sabbath as fellowship with God, participation in the work of God and movement with God toward the future.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Forgotten Holiday: Why We Should Buck the Establishment to Get It Back." *Insight*, May 1972, p. 5.

The Sabbath as a reminder of the reality of God, the goodness of the created world, the freedom of human existence and the dependence of man upon God.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Sabbath: Day of Rest and Worship." *The Demons Have Had It*. Nashville: Southern, 1976. Chapter 9, pp. 101-11.

Implications of God's rest in the Genesis record of creation in contrast with the Babylonian account: God's rest shared with human beings as a sign of meaning and a form of discipline.

### Unpublished materials

Guy, Fritz. "Holiness in Time: A Preliminary Study of the Sabbath as Spiritual Experience." Term paper, Andrews University, 1961.

Based largely on the work of Heschel and Barth, an initial Adventist attempt to develop a theology of the Sabbath through the ideas of freedom, sanctification and worship.

Jones, John R. "A Theological Study of the Sabbath in Relation to the New Testament Understanding of Redemptive History." Bachelor of Divinity thesis, Andrews University, 1965.

Another early, but more extensive, Adventist effort to understand the Sabbath theologically, viewing it as a unification of the redemptive process, with the Sabbath healings pointing to Christ's authority and the completion of his redemptive activity, and the Crucifixion beginning the future spiritual rest.

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