

THE SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Answers to Questions

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DEDICATED
to my loving wife, Anna,
and to our three children,
Loretta, Daniel, and Gianluca,
whose and support
motivates me to
greater service
for the Lord

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PREFACE

What does the New Testament teach regarding the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping? Does the New Testament view Sabbathkeeping as being clarified or nullified by the teaching and redemptive ministry of Christ? Does it suggest a transference of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week? Many Christian thinkers have addressed these questions, especially in the centuries following the Reformation.

No Rest for the Sabbath. A glance at the hundreds of treatises produced since the Reformation on the Sabbath/Sunday subject suffices to convince anyone of the fact that the Sabbath truly has had no rest. J. A. Hessey's bibliographic survey lists over 1000 treatises for the period up to 1860 and I presume that an equal number of studies have been produced since that time.¹ In recent years over a dozen dissertations and hundreds of articles have examined anew theological and historical aspects of the Sabbath/Sunday question.²

A Vital Institution. The extensive and continuous investigation of this subject is indicative of the great importance attached to it. After all, Sabbathkeeping is not merely an abstract theological concept but a concrete manifestation of the practice of one's faith.

If a Christian ignores God on the day he or she regards as the "Lord's Day," chances are that he will ignore God every day of his life. Perhaps one of the earliest symptoms of defection from Christianity is indifference toward the day regarded as the Holy Day—indifference manifested in treating the *Holy Day* as a *holiday*, a time to seek personal pleasure and profit rather than divine peace and presence.

The Crisis of the Lord's Day. This trend is assuming alarming proportions in Western Europe and North America, where according to the *World Christian Encyclopedia* some 2,765,000 persons each year cease to be churchgoers and practicing Christians.³ This staggering number of *official defections* from Christianity fades into insignificance when compared to the number of *unofficial defectors*—those who seldom attend church services. In most Western European countries, church attendance runs at about 10 percent of the Christian population. Most people attend church services very few times during the course of their lives.

The prevailing indifference toward what is regarded by most Christians as the “Lord’s Day” makes the question of the Biblical validity and value of Sabbathkeeping for today no longer a mere academic issue for scholars to debate, but one which is closely related to the larger question of the survival of Christianity itself as a dynamic religion. In the light of this trend, it behooves us as concerned Christians to reexamine the New Testament teaching on the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping in order to establish its relevance for our contemporary society.

Objective and Procedure. To this subject I have devoted considerable attention during the last several years, publishing my research in two major books and numerous articles.⁴ In this study I will summarize primarily those parts of my research that have dealt with the New Testament teachings on Sabbathkeeping.

For the sake of clarity, I have decided to divide this book into four parts. In the first part, I will summarize briefly the three main prevailing views on the subject of the Sabbath in the New Testament. In the second part, I will present the four main reasons I believe in the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping. In the third part, I will address Paul’s attitude toward the law in general and toward the Sabbath in particular. And in the last part, I will answer the main questions which many have asked me on the Sabbath-Sunday subject in conjunction with Lord’s Day Seminars I have conducted in many parts of the world.

The first three parts of this book were originally prepared and delivered as lectures in several universities in South Africa in August 1984. Subsequently, the editors of *Ministry*, J. Robert Spangler and J. David Newman, requested permission to publish a condensation of the manuscript in four articles which have appeared in the May, July, September, November 1985’s issues. I wish to express my appreciation to them, especially for publishing my articles in those odd-month issues of *Ministry* which are received by over 250,000 clergy in North America.

A special thanks also to my wife, Anna, for taking time to prepare a selection of our favorite Sabbath recipes. On numerous occasions ladies have asked me for my wife’s “secret” recipes of our family favorite Sabbath lasagna, cannelloni, and spaghetti, to which I often refer in my Lord’s Day Seminar. I like to compare the week days without the Sabbath to spaghetti without the sauce. As a tasty sauce gives gusto to the pasta, so a joyful Sabbath celebration gives a festive gleam to all the days of our lives.

It was not an easy task for my wife and daughter to specify the exact quantity of the various ingredients, since in most cases their “mental recipes” asked for “handfuls” and “pinches” rather than for “cups” and “tablespoons.” They hope that their recipes can be followed without major difficulties.

Rest for our Restless Lives. It is my fervent hope that this labor of love will help many Christians to rediscover not only the validity but also the value of Sabbathkeeping for our Christian lives. We live today in a tension-filled and restless society where many are seeking to find inner rest and release by joining stress-management programs, health clubs, meditation groups, or by taking pills, alcohol, drugs, or by taking a vacation to a “fantasy island.” The Sabbath affords us the opportunity to experience inner rest and renewal by releasing us from the pressures of the weekdays so that we can experience more freely and more fully the awareness of divine presence, peace, and rest in our lives.

NOTES ON PREFACE

1. J. A. Hessey, *Sunday, Its Origin, History, and Present Obligation* (London, 1860), two volumes.
2. My bibliographic survey of recent publications is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 333-338; also in *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 311-316.
3. See David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford, 1982), p. 4.
4. See note 2.

Chapter 1

THREE VIEWS ON THE SABBATH

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Historically, three major views have been held regarding the New Testament teaching on Sabbathkeeping. We shall designate these views as (1) abrogation of the Sabbath, (2) transference of the Sabbath, and (3) permanence of the Sabbath. Each of these views has been largely determined by the overall understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

I. ABROGATION OF THE SABBATH

Origin of the View. The “*abrogation*” view of the Sabbath rests upon the understanding of a radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. It can be traced back to some of the Early Fathers who taught that the Sabbath is a temporary ordinance deriving from Moses, enjoined exclusively upon the Jews on account of their unfaithfulness and abrogated by the coming of Christ.¹

Reformation Elaboration. This view was reiterated and elaborated in the sixteenth century by Luther and some radical groups such as the Anabaptists and Mennonites. The *Augsburg Confession* (1530) exemplifies this view when it states: “Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day; for it teaches that since the Gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted.”²

Luther’s radical distinction between Law and Gospel was adopted and developed by Anabaptists, leftist Puritans, Quakers, Mennonites, Hutterites, and by many modern antinomian denominations.

Recent Redefinition. In recent years the abrogation view of the Sabbath has been repropounded and redefined in numerous studies, two of which deserve mention. The first is the work by Willy Rordorf which has been translated into several languages and has touched off a spate of books on this subject.³

Rordorf espouses the thesis that the Sabbath was a “social institution” introduced after the occupation of Canaan and annulled by Christ. He bases

his position especially on the provocative nature of Christ's Sabbath healing ministry, by which, he claims, "the sabbath commandment was not merely pushed into the background . . . it was simply annulled."⁴ This position leads Rordorf to divorce Sunday completely from the Fourth Commandment, viewing the day as an exclusively Christian creation, introduced to celebrate Christ's resurrection through the Lord's Supper celebration.

The second noteworthy study is the newly released symposium, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (1982), edited by Donald A. Carson and sponsored by the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research in Cambridge, England.⁵ Somewhat like Rordorf, but in a less radical fashion, the seven contributors to this symposium argue for the termination of the validity of the Sabbath with the coming of Christ.

The position of these scholars rests primarily on Christ's messianic claims by which, they maintain, He transcended the Sabbath law, thus providing His followers with the necessary freedom to reinterpret the Sabbath and to choose a new day of worship.⁶ Like Rordorf, they emphasize the discontinuity between Sabbath and Sunday, rejecting the notion of the transference of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day. Contrary to Rordorf, however, they trace the origin of Sunday not back to the resurrection/appearances of Christ but rather to the tail-end of the apostolic age. "We maintain," writes M. Max B. Turner, "that first-day Sabbath observance cannot easily be understood as a phenomenon of the apostolic age or of the apostolic authority at all."

Conclusion. Summing up the abrogation view of the Sabbath, we can say that it rests on a radical distinction between the Old and New Testament which is interpreted in terms of discontinuity between Sabbath and Sunday. We shall later show that this notion of a radical discontinuity between Law and Grace, Judaism and Christianity, Old and New Testaments, is based on fantasy rather than on facts. The advocates of the abrogation view agree in affirming the end of the Sabbath with the coming of Christ but disagree in explaining when Sunday observance actually began.

II. TRANSFERENCE OF THE SABBATH

Origin of the View. A second view sees the principle of Sabbathkeeping in the New Testament as transferred to Sunday rather than abrogated. This position basically derives from a recognition of the existence of a basic underlying unity between the Old and New Testaments.

The transference view was developed after tConstantine's Sunday legislation (A. D. 321) as an attempt to give theological sanction and binding solemnity to the imperial legislation demanding rest from work on Sunday. This was accomplished by transferring the requirements of the Sabbath to the observance of Sunday.⁸ The theological justification for this transference was developed gradually during the Middle Ages and reached its classic formulation in Thomas Aquinas (about A. D.1225-1247).

Aquinas' Contribution. Aquinas distinguished between a *moral* and a *ceremonial* aspect within the Fourth Commandment. The moral aspect consists in the principle of setting aside a regular time for worship and rest which, Aquinas believed, was in accordance with natural reason (natural law). The ceremonial aspect, on the other hand, is determined by the specification and symbolism of the seventh day: commemoration of creation and prefiguration of present and future rest in God.⁹

Aquinas' moral-ceremonial distinction of the Sabbath Commandment became the standard rationale for defending the transference of the Sabbath to Sunday and the abrogation of the Sabbath as seventh day. The latter, as stated by the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (1566), occurred "at the death of Christ . . . at the same time when the other Hebrews' rites and ceremonies were to be abrogated."¹⁰

Calvin's Clarification. Calvin repropounded Aquinas' distinction between the moral and ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath with new qualifications. The moral aspect, which, according to Calvin, has been transferred to Sunday, is the pragmatic function of the day, namely, to allow God to work in us, to provide time for church services, and to protect dependent workers.¹¹

The ceremonial aspect is the symbolic significance of the seventh day: a commemoration of creation and a foreshadow of the spiritual rest that was to be manifested in Christ. "There can be no doubt," Calvin affirms, "that, on the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ceremonial part of the commandment was abolished."¹²

To contend that the specification of the *seventh day* is a ceremonial element of the Sabbath, because it was designed to aid the Jews to commemorate creation and to experience spiritual rest, means being blind to the fact that Christians need such an aid just as much as the Jews; it means leaving Christians confused as to the reason for devoting one day to the worship of God.

Recent Redefinition. This transference view of the Sabbath has been adopted by churches in the Reformed tradition such as English Puritans,

Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Baptists. Recently this view has been redefined in such works as *This is the Day* (1978) by Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott and *The Lord's Day* (1971) by Paul K. Jewett.

Beckwith and Stott ignore the traditional moral-ceremonial distinction of the Sabbath, arguing instead for its permanent validity. Jesus never rejected but accepted and clarified the meaning and practice of the Sabbath. They view the change from the seventh to the first day of the week as being “merely ceremonial,” that is to say “one which does not destroy the earlier meanings of the festival, but rather enriches those meanings by relating the festival to Christ.”¹³

The efforts of these authors to define Sunday as the continuation and enrichment of the Sabbath is undoubtedly praiseworthy. Regretfully, however, they fail to show, first, how the Biblical symbolic significance attached to the seventh day can be transferred to the first day without destroying the symbol itself. Second, how Christ's Resurrection caused the change in the day of worship in the first place.

Jewett's position comes very close to that of Beckwith and Stott, though he develops it differently, namely, through the categories of *promise* and *fulfillment*. Basically his argument runs like this: The Sabbath contains both an Old Testament promise of redemption which has been fulfilled by Christ and an eschatological promise of a final rest which awaits Christ's Return. Thus the Christian is free from the observance of the Old Testament seventh day but observes the first day as the new Sabbath to symbolize his hope in the rest that is yet to come.¹⁴

The basic weakness of this argument is that it rests on an obvious contradiction: Why should the Sabbath be terminated by Christ as the seventh day on account of the redemption-rest He has already brought, and yet be retained as first day on account of the final rest that is yet to come? Nowhere does the New Testament invest the first day with the eschatological significance of the Sabbath rest.

Conclusion. In the light of the foregoing observations we conclude that the transference view of the Sabbath represents a noble effort to give a Biblical sanction and a binding solemnity to Sunday observance. Such an effort, however, rests on an artificial distinction between moral and ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath—a distinction which is not present in the New Testament and which has been largely rejected by recent scholarship.

III. PERMANENCE OF THE SABBATH

A third view, to which I subscribe, sees the principle of seventh-day Sabbathkeeping in the New Testament as being not nullified but clarified and enriched by Christ's teaching and redemptive ministry. Historically this view has been held by Sabbatarians whose past existence is now becoming better known.

Existence of Sabbatarians. Seventh-day Sabbathkeepers have existed during the course of Christian history.¹⁵ Recent studies have shown, for example, that Sabbatarians constituted a respectable group at the time of the Reformation, being listed in some Catholic catalogues of sects, immediately after the Lutherans and Calvinists.

Oswald Glait and Andreas Fisher, both former Catholic priests, successfully pioneered and propagated Sabbatarian views among Anabaptists in Moravia, Silesia, and Bohemia.¹⁶

The presence of seventh-day Sabbathkeepers at the time of the Reformation is attested in countries such as Poland, Holland, Germany, France, Hungary, Russia, Turkey, Finland, and Sweden. The Seventh Day Baptists became the leading Sabbatarian church in England during the seventeenth century.¹⁷

The first Seventh Day Baptist church in America was founded at Newport, Rhode Island, in December 1671.¹⁸ Seventh Day Baptists were instrumental in bringing the knowledge of the Sabbath to Seventh-day Adventists in 1845.¹⁹ Since then more than a dozen denominations have accepted and promoted the validity and value of seventh-day Sabbathkeeping.²⁰

The many years of study I have devoted to this subject have convinced me that the New Testament views the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping, not as being abrogated or transferred to Sunday, but as being permanently valid and valuable for Christians. This conclusion rests upon four major reasons which I have discussed at length in other publications. In the following four chapters I will attempt to summarize briefly each of my four basic reasons.

NOTES ON CHAPTER I

1. For a sampling of patristic testimonies, see my treatment in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 223-235.
2. *Concordia or The Book of Concord, The Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis, 1957), p. 25; cf. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, 1919), vol. 3, p. 69.
3. Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, 1968).
4. Rordorf (n. 3), p. 70.
5. Donald A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, 1982), 444 pages.
6. For example, A. T. Lincoln, one of the contributors, writes: "Jesus' personal claims whereby He transcends the Sabbath law provide the Christological key with which His followers could later interpret the Sabbath" (n. 5), p. 113.
7. M. Max B. Turner (n. 5), pp. 135-136.
8. For a brief but perceptive discussion of this development, see Willy Rordorf (n. 3), pp. 167-173; also R. J. Bauckham (n. 5), pp. 303-309; L. L. McReavy, "Servile Work: The Evolution of the Present Sunday Law," *The Clergy Review* 9 (1935): 273-276.
9. My brief analysis of Aquinas' distinction between the moral and ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath commandment is found in *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 45-51. A trenchant criticism of Aquinas' appeal to natural law to defend the moral aspect of divine law is found in D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (New York, 1967).
10. *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, J. Donovan, trans. (New York, 1908), p. 343.
11. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, 1972), p. 343.
12. John Calvin (n. 11), p. 341.
13. Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *This is the Day. The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in its Jewish and Early Church Setting* (London, 1978), p. 44.

14. Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids, 1971), pp. 82-83.

15. For a historical survey of Sabbathkeeping through the Christian era, see the symposium edited by Kenneth A. Strand, *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, D. C., 1982).

16. A valuable survey of the ideas and influence of these Sabbatarians is provided by G. F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 5 (1967): 101-121. On the existence of Sabbathkeepers in various countries, see Richard Müller, *Adventisten-Sabbat-Reformation*, *Studia Theologica Ludensia*, (Lund, 1979), pp. 110-129.

17. See W. Y. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London, 1932), pp. 83-86.

18. Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*, 1910, I, pp. 127, 133, 153.

19. James White, *Life Incidents* (Battle Creek, 1868), p. 268.

20. The 1980 *Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups* lists over 100 different churches and groups that are seventh-day Sabbathkeepers (published by The Bible Sabbath Association, Fairview, Oklahoma). Most of the groups, however, are rather small, consisting of a few thousand members.

Chapter 2

THE CONTINUITY BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

My first reason for believing in the permanence of Sabbathkeeping is the marked continuity between Judaism and Christianity which I perceive in the New Testament. Historically, the abrogation and the substitution views of the Sabbath have been largely based on the assumption that the coming of Christ brought about a radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, Law and Grace, Judaism and Christianity. The abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday is seen as a most obvious evidence of this radical discontinuity.

Alleged Discontinuity. It is alleged that the earliest converts who accepted Christ as their Messiah and Savior immediately perceived themselves as “the New Israel” with a New Moses and a New Faith. Supposedly, they recognized that the dispensation of the Law had passed and now they were living in the dispensation of Grace.

To give expression to their new faith, the earliest Christians immediately felt the urgency to adopt, among other things, a new place and a new time of worship. To put it simply, Christianity originated as a result of an immediate and radical break with Judaism which caused drastic liturgical and calendrical innovations.

A Misconception. This conception of Christian origins is inaccurate and misleading. The New Testament recognizes that Christ’s coming brought about a certain discontinuity by fulfilling Old Testament promises, but this discontinuity is never interpreted in terms of abrogation of the Mosaic law in general or of Sabbathkeeping in particular. The meaning of the discontinuity must be defined in the light of the sense of continuity that is evident in the New Testament. To illustrate the latter, brief reference will now be made to the sense of continuity present in Luke, Matthew, and Hebrews.

I. CONTINUITY IN LUKE

Believing Jews. Luke emphasizes the continuity between Judaism and Christianity in a variety of ways. A good example is provided in his portrayal of the apostolic church. Again and again he reports the mass conversion of thousands of Jews (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 9:42; 12:24; 13:43; 14:1; 17:12; 21:20).

To a modern reader “conversion” implies a radical change in lifestyle and/or religion. This, however, was not necessarily the case with the earliest converts. The “many thousands” of Jews who “believed” (Acts 21:20) did not view their acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah as representing a breaking away from their Jewish religion and a joining to a new religion: Christianity. They simply viewed themselves as “believing Jews.”¹

Jews could be converted by the thousands because their acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah meant to them not a reneging of their religion, but the realization of their Messianic expectations. The situation changed dramatically when the Christian mission reached beyond the Jews or Jewish proselytes to “pure” pagans. Then baptisms no longer occurred daily by the thousands, but generally annually at Easter time in much smaller numbers. The reason was that pagans, contrary to the Jews, had to break away radically from their past beliefs and practices.

Respect for the Law. The sense of continuity is evident in Luke’s respect for the law. He describes the thousands of Jewish converts as “zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20). Paul is described in his speeches as a “Pharisee” (Acts 23:6) who believes everything written in the law and the prophets (Acts 24:14) and who has done nothing “against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple” (Acts 25:8; and 28:17). To prove that he lived “in observance of the law,” Paul agreed to undertake a ritual purification at the temple (Acts 21:24-26).

Repeatedly Luke speaks of “the law of Moses” (Luke 2:22; 24:44; Acts 13:39; 28:23) which he calls “the living oracles” (Acts 7:38). Jacob Jervell notes that “there is no conflict with the law in Jesus’ attitude as described in many disputes about the Sabbath. Luke records no less than four disputes and he is concerned to show that Jesus acted in complete accordance with the law, and that the Jewish leaders were not able to raise any objections.”²

Recognition of Discontinuity. This does not mean that Luke ignores the discontinuity brought about by the coming of Christ. He sees in Christ the fulfillment of everything written “in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms” (Luke 24:44; cf. 24:27; 4:21). The fulfillment implies the inauguration of a new age.

The discontinuity is also present in the saying of Jesus reported in Luke 16:16: “The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the Kingdom of God is preached.” This verse certainly indicates an element of discontinuity since the age of the law and the prophets has given way to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Yet, this discontinuity does not involve an abrogation of the law because the very next verse reads: “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void” (v. 17).

The Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council is generally seen as the watershed in the history of the apostolic church when a definite break was made in principle with the law. Max M. B. Turner, for example, draws this conclusion from two major observations. First, he argues that since the decree imposed on the Gentiles included only the four ritual laws which the sojourner in Israel was expected to observe (Lev 17-18), this implies that other aspects of the Old Testament law, such as Sabbathkeeping, were no longer binding upon Gentiles. In support of this conclusion he writes: “The council’s final court of appeal is not Moses and the law—they are not so much as mentioned in the letter—but the Spirit (Acts 15:28).”³

This conclusion is inaccurate first of all because it ignores the fact that the Gentiles the council had in mind were mostly, if not all, God-fearers who had been instructed in the Jewish faith (Acts 10:2; 11:19-20; 13:43, 44; 14:1). Moreover, the custom of Sabbathkeeping had been accepted by many Gentiles. Philo, in a well-known passage, writes: “There is not a single people to which the custom of Sabbath observance has not spread.”⁴ Tertullian reproaches the pagans for having adopted Jewish customs such as the Sabbath.⁵

Another fact often ignored is that the Jews influenced the Romans to adopt the seven-day week instead of their eight-day market week (*nundinum*). When this adoption took place just before the Christian era, the Romans made Saturday the first and most important day of the week for resting and banqueting.⁶ In the light of these facts, it was hardly necessary for the council to legislate about Sabbathkeeping for the Gentiles.

Appeal to Moses. Turner’s claim that that “council’s final court of appeal is not Moses and the law but the Spirit” is discredited by the fact that the council endorses James’ proposal because he appeals to Moses for his authority: “For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues” (Acts 15:21).⁷

Jervell rightly notes that “No matter how the complicated passage, Acts 15:21, is to be interpreted in detail, the function of the verse is to validate the

decree, and to call upon Moses as witness. Everyone who truly hears Moses knows that the decree expresses what Moses demands from Gentiles in order that they may live among the Israelites.”⁸ Furthermore, how can the authority of Moses be negated when the four ritual laws are drawn from Moses himself (Lev 17-18)?⁹

Gentiles: Exempt from the Law? Turner’s second argument is derived from Peter’s statement in Acts 15:10-11 which reads: “Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” The conclusion that Turner draws from this passage is: “The law is now simply seen as a burden that neither the fathers nor the present generation could bear.” Thus, Peter defends “the law-free salvation of the Gentiles.”¹⁰

This conclusion ignores the immediate context which deals not with the law in general, but specifically with circumcision (15:1, 5, 9). Secondly, it is unthinkable that Peter viewed the whole Mosaic law as an unbearable burden when so much of it contains provisions for atonement and restoration and when it is earlier described as the “living oracles given to us” (Acts 7:38). Moreover, the council does not exempt the Gentiles from the observance of the whole law, but only from the law of circumcision. The four ritual laws are part of the Mosaic law (Lev 17-18).

Gentiles’ Adherence to the Law. A careful look at the decree of the council hardly suggests a “law-free salvation” for the Gentiles. As Jacob Jervell perceptively notes: “The apostolic decree enjoins Gentiles to keep the law, and they keep that part of the law required for them to live together with Jews. It is not lawful to impose upon Gentiles more than Moses himself demanded. It is false to speak of the Gentiles as free from the law. The church, on the contrary, delivers the law to the Gentiles as Gentiles. Thus Luke succeeds in showing complete adherence to the law as well as the salvation of Gentiles as Gentiles.”¹¹

The above observations discredit Turner’s claim that “the Jerusalem council *made a break in principle with the law.*”¹² On the contrary, “the brethren” felt inspired by the Holy Spirit to apply to Gentiles the Mosaic law regarding the “sojourner” who dwelt among Israelites. The application was undoubtedly broader than the Jewish provision for “sojourners, aliens” which regarded them as second-class citizens.

The Jerusalem council granted to the Gentiles full inclusion in the people of God (Acts 15:14). This decision, however, was in harmony with Isaiah’s

view of the “foreigner” who keeps the sabbath and does not profane it and holds fast my covenant.” These persons, the prophet says, God would accept as His people “for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Is 56:6-7).

The View of the Church. The sense of continuity is also evident in Luke’s view of the church not as a new Israel arising out of the rejection of the old, but as the “old Israel” being restored according to God’s promise. This view is especially expressed in James’ speech at the Jerusalem Council where he cites Amos 9:11 to prove that the conversion of the Gentiles is part of the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the restoration of Israel (Acts 15:16-18).

Amos’ prophecy about the Gentiles who would flock to restored Israel is seen as being fulfilled in the mass conversion of the Jews through whom salvation is being extended to the Gentiles. “Thus,” as Jervell writes, “the continuity of salvation history has been also insured; Luke is unaware of a break in salvation history.”¹³

The Places and Times of Christian Gatherings. Another indication of continuity can be seen in Luke’s frequent references to the temple, the synagogue, prayer, and preaching which suggest that Christian worship was viewed as a continuation and re-interpretation of the Jewish religious services. The synagogue is the place of worship most frequently mentioned. Paul met in the synagogue regularly with “Jews and Greeks” and even Apollo met with the believers at Ephesus in the synagogue (Acts 18:24-26).¹⁴

After the martyrdom of Stephen, Paul went searching for Christians in the synagogues at Damascus (Acts 9:2; 22:19), presumably because they still met there. Later in his own ministry, the Apostle, “as was his custom” (Acts 17:2), met regularly on the Sabbath in the synagogues, in the open air, and in homes, both with the Jews and the Gentiles (Acts 13:14; 17:2; 18:4; 13:44; 16:13). This was possible because no radical separation had yet occurred from Jewish places and times of gatherings.

II. CONTINUITY IN MATTHEW

The continuity between Judaism and Christianity we have found in Luke is equally present in Matthew. The following few examples will suffice to exemplify Matthew’s emphasis on continuity.

Christ’s Life and Teaching. The major events of Christ’s life, such as the conception, the birth, the massacre of innocent children, the announce-

ment of Christ's ministry by John the Baptist, the baptism, etc., are all presented by Matthew as the direct fulfillment of Messianic prophecies.

Not only the life, but also the teachings of Christ are presented as the continuation and confirmation of the Old Testament. The "golden rule" in Matthew 7:12 is presented as being in essence "the law and the prophets." In Matthew 22:40 the two great commandments are viewed as the basis upon which "depend all the law and the prophets." In Matthew 19:16-19, Jesus tells the rich young man who wanted to know what he should do to have eternal life, "keep the commandments." Then He proceeds to list five of them.

Fulfillment of the Law. Perhaps Matthew's most emphatic affirmation of continuity is found in the passage where Jesus affirms to have come not "to abolish" but "to fulfill" the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17-20). In the light of the antithesis of verses 21-48, "to fulfill" appears to mean "to clarify," "to explain" the meaning of the law and the prophets. Repeatedly in Matthew, Jesus acts as the supreme interpreter of the law who attacks external obedience and some of the Halakic traditions (Matt 15:3-6; 9:13; 12:7; 23:1-39).

"To fulfill" could also refer to the prophetic realization of the law and prophets in the life and ministry of Christ. This would imply an element of discontinuity which has led some to conclude that the law and the prophets came to an end in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This interpretation goes too far because verse 18 explicitly affirms that the law would be valid "till heaven and earth pass away." This expression clearly goes beyond the earthly ministry of Christ.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, we conclude that Matthew sees in Christ not the termination of the law and the prophets, but their realization and continuation. We might say that in Matthew the law and the prophets live on in Christ who clarifies and, in some cases, intensifies their teachings (Matt 5:21-22, 27-28).

III. CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

IN HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews provides valuable insights into the manner in which the tension between continuity and discontinuity was being resolved in the New Testament times. The book suggests that the sense of continuity with the Old Testament was so profound that some Christians (Hellenistic Jews according to F. F. Bruce)¹⁵ actually returned to the practice of their "ancestral Jewish faith" and "Jewish Liturgy."¹⁶

To counteract the influence of Jewish sacrificial cultus, the author shows the superiority of Christ over the angels, Moses and the priesthood. The last of the three is discussed at great length in chapters 7 to 10, apparently because the Jewish sacrificial cultus still exercised a great attraction upon these Christians.

Discontinuity in Hebrews. The author of Hebrews emphasizes the discontinuity brought about by the coming of Christ, when he says that “if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood” (7:11), there would have been no need for Christ to come. But because the priests, the sanctuary, and its services were “symbolic” (9:9; 8:5), they would not in themselves “perfect the conscience of the worshipper” (9:9). Consequently, it was necessary for Christ to come “once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26). The effect of Christ’s coming is described as “setting aside” (7:18), making “obsolete” (8:13), “abolishing” (10:9) all the Levitical services associated with the sanctuary.

Some have interpreted these affirmations as indicating a radical abrogation of the Old Testament law in general and of the Sabbath in particular.¹⁷ Such an interpretation ignores that the statements in question are found in chapters 7 to 10, which deal with the Levitical, sacrificial regulations. Though the author uses in these chapters the term “law” (10:1) and “covenant” (8:7, 8, 13), he mentions them with reference to the Levitical priesthood and services. It is in this context, that is, as they relate to the Levitical ministry, that they are declared “abolished” (10:9). But this declaration can hardly be taken as a blanket statement for the abrogation of the law in general.

Continuity in Hebrews. Note should be taken of the fact that Hebrews teaches not only discontinuity but also continuity. The latter is expressed in a variety of ways. There is continuity in the revelation which the same God “spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets” and now “in these last days has spoken to us by a Son” (1:1-2). There is continuity in the faithfulness and accomplishments of Moses and Christ (3:2-6).

There is continuity in the redemptive ministry offered typologically in the earthly sanctuary by priests and realistically in the heavenly sanctuary by Christ Himself (chs. 7, 8, 9, 10). There is continuity in faith and hope, as New Testament believers share in the faith and promises of the Old Testament worthies (chs. 11-12).

More specifically, there is continuity in the “*sabbatismos*”—a term used in a technical way by Plutarch, Justin, Epiphanius, *Apostolic Constitutions* to designate Sabbath observance—which “remains” (*apoleipetia*), literally “is

left behind for the people of God” (Heb 4:9).¹⁸ It is noteworthy that while the author declares the Levitical priesthood and services as “abolished” (Heb 10:9), “obsolete” and “ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13), he explicitly teaches that a “Sabbathkeeping is left behind for the people of God” (Heb 4:9).

Further consideration will be given to the significance of Hebrews 4:9 in chapter 4. For the present, it suffices to note that Hebrews endeavors to clarify both the continuity and discontinuity brought about by the coming of Christ. The Levitical priesthood, the temple, and its services are proclaimed to be terminated by the coming of Christ, but other aspects of the law, such as “the Sabbath rest,” are declared to be “left behind for the people of God” (4:9).

CONCLUSION

The above discussion of the continuity and discontinuity of the law in the New Testament is incomplete since we have considered only a few representative writers. The writings of Paul, where the tension between continuity and discontinuity is especially present, will be considered separately in chapters 6 and 7 in conjunction with the Apostle’s attitude toward the law in general and the Sabbath in particular. Yet, the representative writings we have examined do reveal the presence in the New Testament of a strong perception of continuity with the Old Testament religious heritage.

We have seen that the earliest converts were predominantly Jews and God-fearers who were very zealous in the observance of the law (Acts 21:20). They saw in Christ the Fulfiller of the law in the sense of the One who clarified its meaning and realized its promises. Gradually they perceived that certain aspects of the law, such as those relating to the Levitical ministry, had become obsolete by the coming of Christ. We have found no indication, however, that this perception led Christians to doubt or to negate the value and validity of such moral aspects of the law as the principle of Sabbathkeeping. Additional support for this conclusion will be submitted in the following chapters.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 2

1. For an extensive and perceptive analysis of how Luke emphasizes the Christian continuity with Judaism, see Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis, 1972), pp. 41-74, 133-152.
2. Jacob Jervell (n. 1), p. 140.
3. M. Max B. Turner, "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts" in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 117.
4. Philo, *Against Apion* 2, 39
5. Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 1, 13. My analysis of this text is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), p. 249.
6. On the origin of the Planetary Week, see my investigation in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 241-247.
7. M. Max B. Turner (n. 3), p. 117.
8. Jacob Jervell (n. 1), p. 144.
9. For an analysis of the Mosaic basis of the four ritual laws, see H. Waitz, "Das problem des sogenannten Aposteldekrets," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 55 (1936): 277-279.
10. M. Max B. Turner (n. 3), p. 119.
11. Jacob Jervell (n. 1), p. 144.
12. M. Max B. Turner (n. 3), p. 118.
13. Jacob Jervell (n. 1), p. 53.
14. My discussion of Luke's references to the places and times of Christian gatherings is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 135-142.
15. F. F. Bruce, "Hebrews" *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, 1978), vol. 3, p. 87.
16. For a brief discussion, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville, 1965), p. 249.
17. See, for example, A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (n. 3), p. 376.

18. Plutarch, *De Superstitione* 3 (*Moralia* 166A); Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 23, 3; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 30, 2, 2; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2, 36, 7. A. T. Lincoln admits that “in each of these places the term denotes the observance or celebration of the Sabbath. This usage corresponds to the Septuagint usage of the cognate verb *sabbatizo* (cf. Ex 16:30; Lev 23:32; 26:34f.; 2 Chron 36:21), which also has reference to Sabbath observance. Thus the writer to the Hebrews is saying that since the time of Joshua, an observance of Sabbath rest has been outstanding” (“Sabbath Rest and Eschatology in the New Testament” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day* [n. 3], p. 213).

Chapter 3

THE CREATION SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

My second reason for believing in the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping is the implicit allusions to the creation origin of Sabbath which are found in the three New Testament passages examined in this chapter.

The abrogation view of the Sabbath rests on the assumption that the Scripture views Sabbathkeeping not as a creation ordinance for mankind, but as a Mosaic institution given exclusively to the Jews and abrogated by Christ together with the rest of the Mosaic laws. Such a view, in my opinion, is discredited by at least three New Testament passages which we shall briefly consider in this chapter.

I. MARK 2:27

The first New Testament reference to the creation origin of the Sabbath is found in Mark 2:27. In this passage Jesus refutes the charge of Sabbathbreaking leveled against His disciples who were relieving their hunger by plucking raw ears of grain, by saying: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

It is noteworthy that Christ refuted the charge of Sabbathbreaking by referring to the original purpose of the Sabbath which is to ensure physical and spiritual well-being: “The Sabbath was made on account of man and not man on account of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Creation Origin and Function of the Sabbath. Our Lord’s choice of words is significant. The verb “made—*ginomai*” alludes to the original “making” of the Sabbath and the word “man—*anthropos*” suggests its human function. Thus to establish the human and universal value of the Sabbath, Christ reverts to its very origin, right after the creation of man. Why? Because for the Lord the law of the beginning stands supreme.¹

The importance of God's original design is emphasized in another instance when in reproving the corruption of the institution of marriage, which occurred under the Mosaic code, Christ reverted to its Edenic origin, saying: "From the beginning it was not so" (Matt 19:8). Christ then traces both marriage and the Sabbath to their creation origin in order to clarify their fundamental value and function for mankind.²

Human Well-being Superior to Sabbath? Some authors have interpreted this famous pronouncement of Christ as meaning that the "well-being of man is superior to the Sabbath rest"³ and since the Sabbath "no longer spelt blessings but hardship, it had failed in its divine purpose, and as a consequence rebellion against it or disregard of it was no sin."⁴

The least that can be said of this interpretation is that it attributes to God human shortsightedness for having given a law that could not accomplish its intended purpose and which He was consequently forced to abolish. By this reasoning, the validity of any God-given law is determined not by its intended purpose but rather by the way human beings use or abuse it. Such a conclusion would make man rather than God the ultimate arbiter who determines the validity of any commandment.

Furthermore, to interpret this saying as meaning that the "well-being of man is superior to the Sabbath rest" would imply that the Sabbath rest had been imposed arbitrarily upon man to restrict his welfare. But this interpretation runs contrary to the very words of Christ. "The Sabbath," He said, "was made on account of (*dia*) man and not man on account of the Sabbath." This means that the Sabbath came into being (*egeneto*) after the creation of man, not to make him a slave of rules and regulations but to ensure his physical and spiritual well-being.

The welfare of man is *not restricted* but *guaranteed* by the proper observance of the Sabbath. By this memorable affirmation then, Christ does not abrogate the Sabbath commandment but establishes its permanent validity by appealing to its original creation when God determined its intended function for the well-being of mankind.

II. JOHN 5:17

A second allusion to the creation origin of the Sabbath is found in John 5:17. Charged for healing a paralytic on the Sabbath, Christ defended Himself saying: "My Father is working until now and I am working" (John 5:17). In earlier studies of this passage I have shown how God's "working" has been traditionally interpreted as constant care (*cura continua*) or continuous creation (*creatio continua*) and the adverb "until now" has been understood

as meaning “continually, always.”⁵ The unwarranted conclusion resulting from such an interpretation has generally been that the *continuous* working of God, whether in creation or preservation, overrides and rescinds the Sabbath law.

Creative or Redemptive Work? This conclusion ignores first of all, that in the Gospel of John the working and the works of God are repeatedly and explicitly identified not with creation or preservation, but with the redemptive mission of Christ (cf. John 4:34; 6:29; 10:37-38; 14:11; 15:24; 9:3). Second, the adverb “until now” alludes not to the *constancy*, but to the *inauguration* and *culmination* of God’s working. In other words, God is working *until this very hour* since the first Sabbath and until the conclusion of His work—the final Sabbath.

Allusion to Creation Sabbath. The adverb “until now” alludes to the creation Sabbath by presupposing a “beginning” and an “end.” The beginning is the creation Sabbath when God completed creation and the end is the final Sabbath when redemption will be concluded. The Sabbaths in between the first and the final Sabbath are, for God and His creatures (John 9:4), not a time of listless resting but of concerned “working” for the salvation of human beings.

We conclude, therefore, that Christ, by alluding to the creation Sabbath to justify the legitimacy of His redemptive ministry performed on that day, provides in John 5:17 an implicit endorsement of its Edenic origin.

III. HEBREWS 4:4

The third and most explicit reference to the creation Sabbath is found in the book of Hebrews. In the fourth chapter of the book, the author establishes the universal and spiritual nature of the Sabbath rest by welding together two Old Testament texts, namely Genesis 2:2 and Psalm 95:11. Through the former, he traces the origin of the Sabbath rest back to creation when “God rested on the seventh day from all his works” (Heb 4:3; cf. Gen 2:2-3). By the latter (Ps 95:11), he explains that the scope of this divine rest includes the blessings of salvation to be found by entering personally into God’s rest” (Heb 4:3, 5, 10).⁶

Creation, not Settlement Origin. Our immediate concern is not to understand the meaning of the rest mentioned in the passage, but rather to note that the author traces its origin not to Joshua’s day at the time of the settlement (Heb 4:8), as held by Willy Rordorf,⁷ but back to the time of creation, when “God rested on the seventh day from all his works” (Heb 4:4).

The context clearly indicates that the author is thinking of the “works” of creation, since he explains that God’s “works were finished from the

foundations of the world” (Heb 4:3). The probative value of this statement is heightened by the fact that the author is not arguing for the creation origin of the Sabbath, but rather he takes it for granted to explain God’s ultimate purpose for His people. Thus, in Hebrews 4, the creation origin of the Sabbath is not only accepted but is also presented as the basis for understanding God’s ultimate purpose for His people.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that emerges from the three texts briefly considered in this chapter is that the New Testament agrees with the Old Testament in viewing the Sabbath as a creation institution intended for mankind.

Historically some have argued for the Mosaic origin of the Sabbath. Palestinian Rabbis, for example, at the time when Hellenistic forces were pressing for the radical abandonment of the Jewish religion, taught that the Sabbath was given by Moses exclusively to Israel. This exclusive and nationalistic view of the Sabbath was inspired by the necessity to preserve a Jewish identity particularly at the critical time of Antiochus Epiphanes. This notion of the Mosaic origin and exclusive Jewish nature of the Sabbath was later adopted by some of the early Fathers, by radical groups of the Reformation and, more recently, by modern dispensationalists.

On the other hand, the view of the creation origin of the Sabbath can historically be found in the oldest and major Jewish traditions, among the many Sundaykeepers who have sought to justify Sunday as the Christian Sabbath by appealing to the creation origin of the latter and among seventh-day Sabbathkeepers.

The preponderant historical support for the creation origin of the Sabbath is not the criterion for accepting this view as truth. The validity of a Biblical doctrine is not determined by historical majority views. The only claim we can rightfully make is that belief in the creation Sabbath is deeply rooted in both Scripture and history.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 3

1. Donald A. Carson argues that the verb *ginomai* cannot be taken as “a technical word for ‘created,’” since its meaning varies according to the context (“Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 89. The observation is correct, but the context does suggest that the verb refers to the original “making” of the Sabbath, for at least two reasons: First, because the statement (2:27) concludes Christ’s argument on the humanitarian function of the Sabbath (2:23-26) by pointing to its original and thus ultimate purpose. Second, because Christ’s claim of Lordship over the Sabbath (2:28) depends upon the fact the He *made* the day for man’s benefit (2:27). For further discussion, see my analysis of this passage in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 59-61.

2. Donald A. Carson objects to drawing a parallel between Matthew 19:8 and Mark 2:27 because in the latter the phrase “from the beginning” is absent. Thus, Carson argues, Jesus is appealing “not to a determinate time, but to a determinate purpose” (n. 1, p. 90). But, can time and purpose really be separated? Did not Christ establish the *purpose* of marriage by referring back to the time of its origin? Similarly, is not the human *purpose* of the Sabbath established with reference to the *time* the day was made?

3. See, for example, C. S. Mosna, *Storia della Domenica dalle Origini Fino agli Inizi del V Secolo* (Rome, 1969), p. 173.

4. Willy Rordorf, *Sunday, The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 63.

5. For my extensive analysis of this logion, see *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 38-48; also, “John 5:17: Negation or Clarification of the Sabbath?” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 19 (Spring 1981): 3-19.

6. My analysis of Hebrews 4:1-11 is found in *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 164-170.

7. Willy Rordorf argues that the Sabbath was first introduced after the occupation of Canaan because of socio-economic considerations (n. 4, pp. 12-13).

Chapter 4

THE REDEEMPTIVE MEANING OF THE SABBATH

My third reason for believing in the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping is the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath which I find expressed in the Sabbath teaching and ministry of Christ.

The human heart longs for a constant reassurance of divine forgiveness, acceptance, and salvation. We want to know, “Has God really forgiven and saved me?” In the Scripture the Good News of divine forgiveness and salvation is proclaimed not only through words, but also through symbols. Symbols such as circumcision, the tabernacle, baptism, the Lord’s Supper and the Sabbath have helped believers conceptualize and experience the assurance of divine redemption.

Our immediate concern in this chapter is to examine how the last of these sacred symbols, the Sabbath, expresses the theme of redemption in the New Testament. To appreciate the latter, however, it is necessary to understand first of all the Sabbatical typology of Messianic redemption in the Old Testament and Jewish literature.

A brief mention will be made in the first part of this chapter of several significant Sabbatical redemptive themes found in the Old Testament, before we examine the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath in the New Testament.

I. SABBATICAL REDEMPTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Old Testament times the Sabbath served not only to provide personal rest and liberation from the hardship of work and social injustices, but also to nourish the hope for a future Messianic peace, prosperity, and redemption.¹ The latter function was apparently inspired by the role of the Sabbath in God’s original creation.

Genesis provides no information on the actual observance of the Sabbath by Adam and Eve before their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Yet the picture of perfection and satisfaction (note the sevenfold repetition of the phrase “it was good”)² it portrays, especially through the divine blessing and sanctification of the seventh day (Gen 2:3), could easily offer to believers the basis for a vision of the Messianic age.

The parallels and equivalences between the Sabbath of Genesis, Adam’s *First Day* after his creation, and the *Last Days* of the Messianic age, though not always explicitly made, are implicitly present in the Biblical and postbiblical sources. To illustrate how the creation Sabbath became the symbol of Messianic redemption and restoration we shall briefly examine a few significant themes.

Sabbath Peace and Harmony. The peace and harmony that existed between Adam and the animals at the creation Sabbath will be restored in the Messianic age when “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them” (Is 11:6). At that time, according to the same prophet, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea” (Is 11:9).³ This vision of the earth full of peace and of the knowledge of God in the Last Days may well have been inspired by the view of the First Days, of which the Sabbath is the epitome.

The latter is suggested by some rabbinical Sabbath regulations. For example, Beth Shammai prohibited the killing even of worms on the Sabbath. “It was taught, R. Simeon B. Eleazar said: Vermin must not be killed on the Sabbath: this is the view of Beth Shammai . . . If one kills vermin on the Sabbath, it is as though he killed a camel.”⁴

The Mishnah, an ancient collection of Jewish laws, similarly states that on the Sabbath “A man may not go out with a sword or a bow or a shield or a club or a spear . . . for it is written, ‘And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’”⁵

The above rabbinical injunctions are presumably derived from the notion of the absence of death during the primordial Sabbath which served as a paradigm of the world to come. The abstention from any form of killing on the Sabbath represents a foretaste of that world.

Sabbath Prosperity. The material prosperity and abundance which characterized the creation Sabbath presumably inspired the prophetic vision of an extraordinary material abundance during the Messianic age. Amos

declares: “‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine and the hills shall flow with it’” (9:13). Similar descriptions are found in Isaiah (4:2; 7:22; 30:23-25), Joel (4:19), Zephaniah (3:13), Jeremiah (30:19; 31:24), Ezekiel (34:13-14; 47:12).

Later works also abound with descriptions of the material prosperity of the Messianic age.⁶ For example, the Syriac Baruch (latter half of first century A.D.) says that when “the Messiah shall begin to be revealed . . . the earth also shall yield its fruit ten thousandfold and on each vine there shall be a thousand branches, and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster produce a thousand grapes and each grape produce a cor of wine” (29:4-6).⁷

Almost identical descriptions occur in the *Book of Enoch* (10:17-19) and in rabbinical literature.⁸ Papias (c. A.D. 60-130), one of the earliest Church Fathers, also repeats this tradition almost word for word, applying it to the millennium—a thousand-year reign of peace and prosperity enjoyed by Christ and the resurrected saints upon this earth.⁹

It is noteworthy that Barnabas (c. A.D. 135) and numerous Christian writers after him interpret the millennium as the cosmic Sabbath which will follow the six thousand years typified by the six days of creation, and which will be characterized by the peaceful and luminous reign of Christ upon this earth (“He changes the sun and moon and stars, then he will rest well on the seventh day”—15:5).¹⁰

The typological meaning of the Sabbath, as symbol of the future age of rest and prosperity, presumably explains why Beth Shammai prohibited contributions for the poor on the Sabbath in the synagogue or even the giving of a dowry to an orphan to be married.¹¹ Acts of charity on the Sabbath would negate the expectation of the future material prosperity typified by the present Sabbath observance.

The foregoing testimonies suffice to show not only a degree of continuity and similarity between the Jewish and Christian views of the End-time restoration, but also a common dependency upon the vision of Edenic peace, prosperity, and harmony which are typified by the Sabbath.

Sabbath Delight. The delight and joy of the Edenic Sabbath presumably inspired the prophetic vision of the Messianic age. Theodore Friedman notes that “two of the three passages in which Isaiah refers to the Sabbath are linked by the prophet with the end of days (Is 56:1-7; 58:13-14; 66:20-24) . . . it is no mere coincidence that Isaiah employs the words ‘delight’ (*oneg*) and

‘honor’ (*kavod*) in his description of both the Sabbath and the end of days (58:13—‘And thou shalt call the Sabbath delight . . . and honor it’: 66:11—‘And you shall delight in the glow of its honor’). The implication is clear. The delight and joy that will mark the end of days is made available here and not by the Sabbath.”¹²

The concept of “Sabbath delight” appears to derive from the vision of the Edenic Sabbath: a day of joy, light, harmony, and peace which serves as a paradigm of the future time.

Sabbath Lights. Sabbath delight is expressed in the Jewish tradition by kindling lights on that day. This act, a prerogative of the Jewish woman, is interpreted as symbolic of the extraordinary light that God caused to shine out for 36 hours in consideration for the Sabbath, that is, from Friday morning to Saturday night.

This conclusion is drawn from a curious rabbinic interpretation of the title of Psalm 92, “A Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day.” “R. Levi said in the name of R. Zimra: ‘For the Sabbath day,’ that is, for the day which darkness did not attend. You find that it is written of other days ‘And there was evening and there was morning, one day’ but the words ‘There was evening’ are not written of the Sabbath . . . The Sabbath light continued throughout thirty-six hours . . . ”¹³

The Midrash, an ancient Jewish commentary of the Old Testament, interprets the text “God blessed the seventh day” (Gen 2:3) as meaning He blessed it with the blessing of light.¹⁴ Adam was the first to benefit from such a blessing because God let His light shine upon him though he deserved to be deprived of it by reason of his disobedience.

According to the Midrash, the Sabbath acted as Adam’s savior when God was about to destroy him on Friday evening on account of his sin: “At that moment the Sabbath arrived and became Adam’s advocate, saying to the Holy One, blessed be He: ‘During the six days of Creation no one suffered punishment. And wilt Thou begin it with me? Is this my holiness? Is this my rest?’ And thus Adam was saved by the Sabbath’s plea from destruction in Gehenna. When Adam saw the power of the Sabbath, he was about to sing a hymn in her honor.”¹⁵

The redemptive role of the primordial Sabbath in the Jewish tradition is impressive.¹⁶ Being viewed as the symbol of primordial redemption, the Sabbath could effectively typify the future Messianic restoration. The tradition of kindling lights on the Sabbath appears then to be symbolically linked both to the supernatural light that shone during the first Sabbath upon

Adam as an assurance of salvation as well as to the extraordinary light of the Messianic age.

The prophets envision the appearance of refulgent light during the latter days: “Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of the seven days” (Is 30:26). The comparison with “*the light of the seven days*” is presumably an allusion to the seven days of creation, which, according to an ancient Midrash, were bathed by extraordinary light more brilliant than the sun.¹⁷

Zechariah’s remark that “there shall be continuous day . . . not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light” (14:7), probably refers to the seventh day of creation which in Genesis has no mention of “evening and morning.” Such a detail was interpreted as signifying that the Sabbath was especially blessed by supernatural, continuous light.

It is possible, then, that the prophetic vision of the extraordinary light of the Messianic age is derived from the notion of the supernatural light experienced by Adam on the first Sabbath—light which, according to Jewish tradition, disappeared at the close of the creation Sabbath because of his disobedience, but which is expected to reappear in the latter days.¹⁸

Sabbath Rest. The theme of Sabbath rest (*menuhah*) which to “the biblical mind,” as Abraham Joshua Heschel explains, “is the same as happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony,”¹⁹ has served as an effective typology of the Messianic age, often known as the “end of days” or “world-to-come.”

In the Old Testament the notion of “rest” was utilized to express the national aspirations for a peaceful life in a land of rest (Deut 12:9; 25:19; Is 14:3), where the king would give to the people “rest from all enemies” (2 Sam 7:1) and where God would find His “resting place” among His people and especially in His sanctuary at Zion (2 Chron 6:41; 1 Chron 23:25; Ps 132:8, 13, 14; Is 66:1).²⁰

These references to political “rest” (*menuhah*) do not allude specifically to the Sabbath rest. However, it would seem reasonable to assume, as noted by Ernst Jenni,²¹ that it was the weekly Sabbath rest experience that served as a model to typify the larger aspiration for national rest.

The connection between Sabbath rest and national rest is clearly established in Hebrews 4:4, 6, 8, where the author seems to appeal to a familiar concept. In this passage the author speaks of the creation Sabbath rest as the symbol of the promised entrance into the land of Canaan, which the wilder-

ness generation “failed to enter” (v. 6) but which was partially realized when the Israelites under Joshua did enter the land of rest (v. 8).

Another explicit indication is found in a rabbinic comment on Psalm 92: “A Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day—for the day when God’s people abide in peace as is said: ‘And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places’ (Is 32:18).”²² This comment clearly links together Isaiah’s vision of Messianic peace, security, and quiet resting places with the notion and experience of the Sabbath rest.

In the apocalyptic work known as *The Books of Adam and Eve* (about first century A.D.), the archangel Michael admonishes Seth, saying: “Man of God, mourn not for the dead more than six days, for the seventh day is a sign of the resurrection and *rest* of the age to come; on the seventh day the Lord rested from all His works.”²³

A similar view is expressed in *Genesis Rabbah* 17:5: “There are three antitypes: The antitype of death is sleep, the antitype of prophecy is dream, the antitype of the age to come is the Sabbath.” This “age to come” or “world to come”²⁴ is frequently equated with the Messianic age which is characterized by material abundance (Amos 9:13-14; Is 30:23-25; Jer 31:12), social justice (Is 61:1-9), harmony between persons and animals (Is 65:25; 11:6), refulgent light (Is 30:26; Zech 14:6-7) and peace and rest (Is 32:18; 14:3).

These various characteristics of the Messianic age are grouped together in *2 Baruch*, another Jewish apocalyptic work from the latter half of the first century A.D., where the author describes “the time of my Messiah” saying: “And it shall come to pass, when He has brought low everything that is in the world, and has sat down in peace for the age on the throne of His kingdom, that joy shall be revealed, and *rest* shall appear.”²⁵

Rabbinic literature also provides explicit examples where the Sabbath rest and the septenary structure of time are used to signify the world-to-come and the coming of the Messiah. For example, the Babylonian Talmud says “Our Rabbis taught: at the conclusion of the Sabbath the son of David will come. R. Joseph demurred: But so many Sabbaths have passed, yet has he not come!”²⁶

The seventh age associated with the coming of the Messiah is often described as a time of Sabbatical rest. At the end of the *Mishnah Tamid* we read: “A Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day—a song for the time to come, for the day that is all Sabbath *rest* in the eternal life.”²⁷

The foregoing examples suffice to show how the rest experience of the Sabbath served to nourish the hope of the future Messianic peace and rest. The

time of redemption came to be viewed, as stated in the *Mishnah*, as “all Sabbath and rest in the life everlasting.”²⁸

Sabbath Liberation. The freedom, release, and liberation which the weekly and annual Sabbath were designed to grant to every member of the Hebrew society have also served as effective symbols of Messianic redemption.

In the Deuteronomic version of the Fourth Commandment, the Sabbath is explicitly linked to the Exodus liberation by means of the “remembrance clause”: “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” (Deut 5:15).

The connection between the Sabbath and the Exodus deliverance may explain why the Sabbath became ideologically connected with the Passover, the annual celebration of the deliverance from Egypt.²⁹ In a sense, the Sabbath came to be viewed as a “little Passover,” in the same way as many Christians have come to view their weekly Sunday as a “little Easter.”

The redemptive connection between the Sabbath and the Passover may be reflected in the usage of the term “*Shabbat*” (Sabbath) in Leviticus 23 to designate two annual festivals, namely Passover and the Day of Atonement (vv. 11, 15, 32). The latter, like the former, also had an eschatological redemptive meaning. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest, after the censuring of the holy of holies, prayed for a prosperous year and for the coming of the Messiah (*Gemara* 53b).³⁰

Some Rabbis taught: “During the seventh month, the coming month of Tishri, I shall redeem thee. But this Tishri has come and another Tishri as well, and yet Thou has not redeemed me.”³¹ This statement is strikingly similar to the rabbinical comment regarding the Sabbath cited earlier: “At the conclusion of the Sabbath the son of David will come. R. Joseph demurred: But so many Sabbath have passed, yet has he not come.”³²

Sabbath Years and Redemption. The liberation promised to the oppressed of the Hebrew society by the Sabbatical year (every seventh year—Lev 25:8), played a major role in nourishing the vision of Messianic redemption; one reason being that the Sabbath years had at least three significant Messianic features.

First, there was the *promise of release* of personal debts and property which provided an effective imagery to typify the expected Messianic deliverance (Is 61:1-3, 7; 40:2).³³

It is noteworthy that the New Testament term for forgiveness (“*aphesis*”) is the same term used in the Septuagint to designate the annual Sabbaths, technically referred to as “the release,” “the Lord’s release,” “the year of release” (Deut 15:1, 2, 9; 31:10; Lev 25:10). This suggests that the vision of sabbatical release from social injustices came to be viewed as the prefiguration of the future Messianic release from the bondage of sin.³⁴

Isaiah 61:1-3 employs the imagery of the Sabbatical release to describe the mission of the Messiah, who would bring jubiliary amnesty and release from captivity. We shall soon see that Christ utilized this very imagery to announce and explain the nature of His redemptive mission.

A second Messianic feature of the Sabbath years can be seen in *the trumpet blast* by means of a ram’s horn (*yobel*—from which derives the term “jubilee”).³⁵ The imagery of the Jubilee’s trumpet blast is used by Isaiah to describe the Messianic ingathering of the exiles (Is 27:13; cf. Zech 9:9-14). Possibly the New Testament refers to the same Jubilee’s imagery when it speaks of the trumpet announcing the return of Christ (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16; Matt 24:31).

A third Messianic feature related to the trumpet blast is *the date* of the tenth day of the seventh month (*Atonement Day*) on which the ram’s horn was blown to inaugurate the year of jubilee (Lev 25:9). It was the cleansing and new moral beginning offered by God to the people on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:13-19) which inaugurated the Sabbatical release of the Jubilee year.

The connection between the Day of Atonement and the Jubilee year was noticed by Rabbis who said: “The Lord would forgive Israel’s debt on the seventh month, which is Tishri, at the blast of the *shofar*, and just as the Holy One blessed be He has had mercy on Israel in this age at the blast of the *shofar*, also in the future I will have mercy on you through the *shofar* and bring your redeemed ones near.”³⁶

Sabbatical Structure of Time. The unique Messianic features of the Sabbath years apparently inspired the use of the Sabbatical structure of time to measure the waiting time of Messianic redemption. Some call this phenomenon “Sabbatical Messianism”³⁷ or “chronomessianism.”³⁸

The classical place of Sabbatical Messianism is found in Daniel 9, where two Sabbatical periods are given. The first refers to the 70 years of Jeremiah’s prophecy regarding the time to *national restoration* of the Jews (Dan 9:3-19) and consists of 10 Sabbatical years (10 x 7).

The second period is of “seventy weeks (*shabuim*)”—technically “seventy Sabbatical cycles”—which would lead to *Messianic redemption* (Dan

9:24-27). This Sabbatical Messianism is found in later Jewish literature such as *The Book of Jubilees* (1:29) and a fragmentary text discovered in 1956 in Qumran Cave II (known as 11Q Melchizedek).³⁹ Other examples are present in the rabbinic tradition. For example, the Talmud says: “Elijah said to Rab Judah . . . ‘The world shall exist not less than eighty-five jubilees, and in the last jubilee the son of David will come.’”⁴⁰

Conclusion. This brief survey of Sabbatical typologies such as the Sabbath peace and prosperity, the Sabbath rest, the Sabbath liberation, and the Sabbatical structure of time, indicates that in Old Testament times the weekly and annual Sabbaths have served not only to provide physical rest and liberation from social injustices, but also to epitomize and nourish the hope of future Messianic redemption.

Rabbi Heschel captures vividly the Old Testament Messianic typology of the Sabbath when he writes: “Zion is in ruins, Jerusalem lies in the dust. All week there is only hope of redemption. But when the Sabbath is entering the world, man is touched by a moment of actual redemption; as if for a moment the spirit of the Messiah moved over the face of the earth.”⁴¹

II. SABBATICAL REDEMPTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The existence in the Old Testament of a Messianic/redemptive typology of the Sabbath invites us to consider how the New Testament relates the Sabbath to Christ’s redemptive mission and ministry. Is Christ’s redemptive ministry viewed as the *termination* or the *actualization* of the messianic meaning of the Sabbath? To answer these questions we shall briefly examine some Sabbath passages found in Luke, Matthew, John, and Hebrews.

1. The Sabbath in Luke

Nazareth Address. Luke introduces Christ as a habitual Sabbathkeeper (“as his custom was”—4:16) who delivered His inaugural Nazareth address on a Sabbath day, by reading and commenting upon a passage drawn mostly from Isaiah 61:1-3 (also 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).

We noted earlier that in this passage Isaiah describes, by means of the imagery of the Sabbath years, the liberation the Messiah would bring to His

people. Christ used this passage to present Himself to the people as the very fulfillment of their Messianic expectations nourished by the vision of the Sabbath years. The latter is clearly indicated by Jesus' brief exposition of the passage: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21).

The theme of *promise* and *fulfillment* is recurrent in all the Gospels, including Luke. The risen Christ, according to Luke, explained to His disciples that His teaching and mission represented the *fulfillment* of "everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms" (Luke 24:44; cf. 24:26-27). How does the Sabbath fit into this theme of promise and fulfillment? Did Christ fulfill the Messianic typology of the Sabbath by *terminating* or *actualizing* and enriching its function? Let us look for an answer in the Sabbath teaching and ministry of Christ.

Early Sabbath Healings. Christ's announcement of His Messiahship (Luke 4:16-21) is followed in Luke by two Sabbath healing episodes. The first took place in the synagogue of Capernaum during a Sabbath service and resulted in the *spiritual* healing of a demon-possessed man (Luke 4:31-37; Mark 1:21-28).

The second healing was accomplished immediately after the religious service in Simon's house and brought about the *physical* restoration of Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39; Mark 1:29-31). The result of the latter was *rejoicing* for the whole family and *service*: "immediately she rose and *served* them" (Luke 4:39).

The themes of *liberation*, *joy*, and *service* which are present in an embryonic form in these first healing acts are more explicitly associated with the meaning of the Sabbath in the subsequent ministry of Christ.

The Crippled Woman. The healing of the crippled woman, reported only by Luke, further clarifies the relationship between the Sabbath and the Savior's saving ministry. In the brief narrative (Luke 13:10-11) the verb "to free—*luein*" is used by the Lord *three* times, thus suggesting *intentional* rather than *accidental* usage of the term.

The verb is first used by Christ in addressing the woman, "you are *freed* from your infirmity" (13:12).⁴² Twice again the verb is used by Christ to respond to the indignation of the ruler of the synagogue: "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? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be *loosed* from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (13:15-16).⁴³

Arguing from a minor to a major case, Christ shows how the Sabbath had been paradoxically distorted. An ox or an ass could be legitimately *untied* on the Sabbath for drinking purposes (possibly because a day without water could have resulted in loss of weight and consequently in less market value), but a suffering woman could not be released on such a day from the shackles of her physical and spiritual infirmity.

Christ acted deliberately against prevailing misconceptions in order to restore the day to God's intended purpose. It should be noticed that in this as well as in all other instances, Christ is not questioning the binding obligations of the Sabbath commandment, but rather He argues for its true values which had been largely obscured by the accumulation of traditions and countless regulations.

Sabbath Redemption. The imagery of loosing on the Sabbath a victim bound by Satan's bonds (Luke 13:16) recalls Christ's announcement of His mission "to proclaim *release* to the captives . . . to set as *liberty* those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).⁴⁴ Does not Jesus' act of freeing a daughter of Abraham from physical and spiritual bonds on the Sabbath, exemplify how the liberation of the Messianic Sabbath was being fulfilled (Luke 4:21)?

The connection between the two is recognized, for example, by Paul K. Jewett who perspicaciously remarks: "We have in Jesus' healings on the Sabbath, not only acts of love, compassion, and mercy, but true 'sabbatical acts,' acts which show that the Messianic Sabbath, the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest of the Old Testament, has broken into our world. Therefore, the Sabbath, of all days, is the most appropriate for healing."⁴⁵

Acts of healing people such as the Crippled Woman are not merely acts of love and compassion but true "sabbatical acts" which reveal how the Messianic redemption typified and promised by the Sabbath was being fulfilled through Christ's saving ministry.

How did the woman and the people who witnessed Christ's saving intervention come to view the Sabbath? Luke reports that while Christ's "adversaries were put to shame . . . the people rejoiced" (13:17), and the woman "praised God" (13:13). Undoubtedly, for the healed woman and for all the people blessed by Christ's Sabbath ministry, the day became the memorial of the healing of their bodies and souls, of the exodus from the bonds of Satan into the freedom of the Savior.

2. The Sabbath in Matthew

Matthew does not introduce any Sabbath episode until almost halfway through his Gospel. Then he relates two Sabbath pericopes (Matt 12:1-14)

which he connects *temporally* to Jesus' offer of His rest (Matt 11:28-30). We shall proceed by examining first the nature of the "rest" offered by Christ and then its relationship to the two Sabbath episodes.

The Savior's Rest. In Matthew 11:28-30 Christ offers a unique invitation: "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 nature of the "rest" offered by Christ in this well-known passage? To answer this question, it is important to look at the wider and immediate context.

In terms of the wider context, Jesus' offer of His rest is sandwiched between several accounts of rejection of opposition: the doubting of John the Baptist (11:1-6), the rejection by an unbelieving generation (11:7-19) and by the Galilean cities (11:20-24), the plotting of Pharisees (12:14), the rejection of Christ's healing by Pharisees (12:22-37), the rebuke to an unbelieving generation (12:38-45), and the misunderstanding by His relatives (12:46-50).

In the context of this unusual opposition and misunderstanding, Jesus disclosed His Messianic identity by proclaiming Himself to be "the Son" who "knows" and "reveals" "the Father" in a unique way (11:27). To support this Messianic claim, Christ offered the Messianic rest typified by the Sabbath (11:28-30).

Messianic Disclosure. We noted earlier how the Sabbath rest in Old Testament times served to nourish the Messianic hope. The Messianic age was expected to be "wholly Sabbath and *rest* in the life everlasting."⁴⁶ In the light of the existing Messianic understanding of the Sabbath rest, it appears that Christ, by offering His rest immediately after His Messianic disclosure, intended to substantiate His Messianic claim by offering what the Messiah was expected to bring, namely, the peace and rest typified by the Sabbath.⁴⁷

Luke provides a somewhat similar parallel in the Nazareth address where Jesus announces His Messianic program by quoting a Sabbatical passage from Isaiah 61:1-3 which describes the Messianic redemption through the imagery of the Jubilee's liberation. It would seem then that, as in Luke 4:16-21, Jesus inaugurates His Nazareth ministry by affirming to be the fulfillment of the Messianic liberation nourished by the vision of the Sabbath years, so in Matthew 11:25-30 He discloses for the first time His Messiahship by offering the "rest" typified by the Sabbath.

The Savior's Rest and the Sabbath. The connection between Jesus' rest and the Sabbath is also indicated in Matthew by the placement of the

former (11:28-30) in the immediate context of two Sabbath episodes (12:1-14). The two are connected, as noted by several scholars, not only *structurally* but also *temporally* by the phrase “at that time” (12:1).⁴⁸ The time referred to is a Sabbath day when Jesus and the disciples went through a field.

The fact that according to Matthew, Christ offered His rest on a Sabbath day suggests the possibility that the two are linked together not only *temporally* but also *theologically*. The theological connection between the two is clarified by the two Sabbath episodes whose function is to explain how the Messianic rest offered by Jesus is related to the Sabbath. Before examining the two Sabbath pericopes, however, we need to consider the formula for “rest” offered by Christ.

Rest Through Christ’s Yoke. The formula for rest is expressed in a conscious paradox: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . . and you will find rest (*anapausis*) for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (11:29-30). How can a “yoke” be easy and give rest? The answer lies in the nature of the “yoke” offered by Christ.

The metaphor of the “yoke” was commonly used to express subordination and loyalty to God, especially through obedience to His law (Jer 5:5; 2:20; Acts 15:10; Gal 5:1). Rabbis often spoke of “the yoke of the Torah,” “the yoke of the commandments.”⁴⁹ The “yoke” offered by Christ is not a commitment to a new set of *principles* (new Torah) but a dedication to a *Person* who is the true Interpreter and Fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets.

The emphasis on the Person is self-evident: “Come to *me* . . . Take *my* yoke . . . learn of *me* . . . I will give you rest.” Moreover, the parallel structure of vs. 28 and 29 indicates that taking the “yoke” of Jesus is equivalent to “coming to” and “learning from” him, that is, personally accepting Jesus as Messiah.⁵⁰

The acceptance of Christ is an “easy” and “light” yoke, not because Jesus weakens the demands of the law (cf. Matt 5:20), but because Jesus offers His disciples (note the emphatic “*I—kago*”) the rest of Messianic redemption to which the law, and more specifically the Sabbath had always pointed.

Redemption-rest. The two Sabbath incidents, which in Matthew are linked structurally and temporally to the “easy yoke” and “rest” offered by Christ, serve to clarify the relationship between the Savior’s rest and the Sabbath. The first story about the disciples plucking ears of corn on a Sabbath (Matt 12:1-8) interprets Jesus’ rest as redemption-rest, especially through Christ’s appeal to the example of the priests who worked intensively on the Sabbath in the Temple and yet were “guiltless” (Matt 12:5).

Why were the priests “guiltless” though offering more services and sacrifices on the Sabbath (Num 28:8, 9)? Certainly it was not because they took a day off at another time during the week. No such provision is contemplated in the Old Testament. The absence of such a provision constitutes a direct challenge to the *one day-in-seven principle*.

Donald Carson wisely acknowledges that “If the Old Testament principle were really ‘one day in seven for worship and rest’ instead of ‘the seventh day for worship and rest,’ we might have expected Old Testament legislation to prescribe some other day off for the priests. The lack of such confirms the importance in Old Testament thought of the *seventh* day, as opposed to the mere one-in-seven principle so greatly relied upon by those who wish to see in Sunday the precise New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament Sabbath.”⁵¹

The reason for the innocence of the priests is to be found in the redemptive nature of their Sabbath services. An important function of the Temple services and sacrifices on the Sabbath pointed to the special release from sin and guilt offered by God to the people on that day. Christ finds in the redemptive work performed typologically by the priests on the Sabbath a valid basis to justify His own Sabbath ministry because He views it as “something greater than the temple” (12:6).⁵²

The redemption offered *typologically* through the Temple services and sacrifices performed by the priests⁵³ is now being provided *realistically* through the saving mission of the Son of Man, the Messiah.⁵⁴ Therefore, just as the priests were “guiltless” in performing their Sabbath services in the Temple, so were Jesus’ disciples in serving the One who is greater than the Temple.⁵⁵

This redemptive function of the Sabbath is possibly implied also in the following verse where Jesus quotes Hosea (6:6), saying: “If you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matt 12:7). What Jesus seems to be saying is that the disciples were “guiltless” because the meaning of the Sabbath commandment is not merely “sacrifice,” that is, a God-ward directed and outward religious duty, but also “mercy,” that is, a man-ward directed attitude and activity of compassion and concern motivated by God’s redeeming mercy.

In this context, according to Matthew, Jesus proclaimed His lordship over the Sabbath: “For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath” (12:8). The fact that Christ’s lordship over the Sabbath is linked in Matthew to His being “greater than the temple” and to divine mercy contemplated by the Sabbath, suggests that Jesus’ lordship over the Sabbath is determined by His Messianic

fulfillment of the redemption and mercy typified by the Temple and the Sabbath. This interpretation suggests that the Messianic rest (11:28-29) and the Messianic lordship over the Sabbath (12:8) are connected theologically in Matthew by the same fulfillment-motif of the Messianic redemption prefigured by the Sabbath.

Restoration-rest. Christ's proclamation of lordship over the Sabbath is followed immediately by a second episode about the healing of the man with the withered hand (Matt 12:9-14). Its function is to demonstrate how Jesus exerted His lordship over the Sabbath by offering Messianic healing and restoration on that day.

It is noteworthy that all of the seven Sabbath healings reported in the Gospels are performed by Christ on behalf of chronically sick persons. These intentional healing acts performed by Christ on the Sabbath on behalf of incurable persons serve to demonstrate how Jesus fulfilled Messianic expectations nourished by the celebration of the Sabbath.

Donald A. Carson notes that the healing of the man with the withered hand "pictures Jesus performing a messianic healing on that day. Is this not part and parcel of Matthew's fulfillment motifs? The rest to which the Sabbath had always pointed now was dawning."⁵⁶

Conclusion. This brief study indicates that in Matthew the Old Testament Sabbath rest is seen as being actualized by Christ who offers to His followers the Messianic rest. The two Sabbath episodes reported by Matthew qualify the meaning of the Sabbath rest, first as Messianic *redemption* through its references to mercy and to Sabbath services performed by priests, and second, as Messianic *restoration* through the example of the Sabbath rescuing of a sheep and the restoring to health of a sick man. In the light of this redemptive/Messianic understanding of the Sabbath, how was the Sabbath observed in the Matthean community and in the apostolic church as a whole? This question will be considered in Chapter 5.

3. The Sabbath in John

In John the relationship between the Sabbath and Christ's work of salvation is alluded to in the two Sabbath miracles, namely, the healing of the paralytic (John 5:1-18) and of the blind man (John 9:1-41). To refute the charge of Sabbath-breaking for having instructed the paralytic to carry his bedding home, Christ made a memorable statement: "My Father is working until now and I am working" (John 5:17).

What is the nature of the "working until now" of the Father? Does it represent a *negation* or a *clarification* of the Sabbath law? To answer this

question, we shall briefly consider the meaning of the adverb “until now,” the significance of the verb “is working” and the theological implications of the passage.⁵⁷

The Adverb “Until Now.” Traditionally the adverbial phrase “until now” has been interpreted as the *continuous* working of God (whether it be in creation, preservation, or redemption) which allegedly overrides or rescinds the Sabbath law. But does the adverbial phrase “until now” suggest that God is *constantly* working without respect to the Sabbath? The adverb itself (“until”), especially as used in Greek in its emphatic position before the verb, presupposes not *constancy* but *culmination*. The latter is brought out by some translators through the use of the emphatic form “even until now.”⁵⁸

This adverbial phrase presupposes a beginning (*terminus a quo*) and an end (*terminus ad quem*). The former is apparently the initial creation Sabbath (Gen 2:2-3) and the latter the final Sabbath rest envisaged in a similar Sabbath pronouncement as the “night . . . when no one can work” (9:4). What Jesus is saying, then, is that though God rested on the Sabbath at the completion of creation, because of sin He has been “working until now” to bring the promised Sabbath rest to fruition.

The Verb “Is Working.” What is the meaning of the verb “is working” until now of the Father? In the Gospel of John, the working and works of God are repeatedly and explicitly identified, not with a continuous divine creation nor with a constant maintenance of the universe, but with the saving mission of Christ.

Jesus explicitly states: “This is the *work* of God, that you *believe* in him whom he has sent” (6:29).⁵⁹ And again, “If I am not doing the *works* of my Father, then do not *believe* me; but if I do them, even though you do not *believe* me, *believe the works*, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (10:37, 38; cf. 4:34; 14:11; 15:24).⁶⁰

The redemptive nature of the works of God is evident in the healing of the blind man since the act is explicitly described as the manifestation of “the works of God” (John 9:3). This means then that God ended on the Sabbath His *works of creation* but not His *working in general*. Because of sin, He has been engaged in the work of redemption “until now.” To use the words of A. T. Lincoln, one might say, “As regards the work of creation God’s rest was final, but as that rest was meant for humanity to enjoy, when it was disturbed by sin, God worked in history to accomplish his original purpose.”⁶¹

Theological Implications. What are the theological implications of Christ’s defense? Does He appeal to the “working” of His Father to nullify

or clarify the function of the Sabbath?⁶² To understand the implications of Christ's defense, one needs to remember that the Sabbath is linked both to the *cosmos* through *creation* (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:11), and to the *exodus* through *redemption* (Deut 5:15).

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. This was true, not only in the life of the people in general who on the Sabbath were to be compassionate toward the less fortunate, but especially in the service of the priest who could legitimately perform on the Sabbath works forbidden to other Israelites, because such works had a redemptive function.

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. Christ appeals to the temple services to justify His Sabbath activities, because their redemptive functions best exemplify both His Messianic mission and the divinely intended purpose of the Sabbath.

Christ uses again the same line of defense when He appeals to the example of circumcision, to silence the echo of the controversy over the healing of the paralytic (John 7:22-24). The Lord argues that if it is legitimate on the Sabbath for the priests to care for one small part of man's body (according to rabbinic reckoning circumcision involved one of man's 248 members)⁶³ in order to extend to the newborn child the salvation of the covenant,⁶⁴ there is no reason to be "angry" with Him for restoring on that day the "*whole body* of man" (7:23).

Redemptive Ministry. For Christ the Sabbath is the day to work for the redemption of the *whole* man. This is borne out by the fact that in both healings, Christ looked for the healed men on the same day and having found them, He ministered to their spiritual need (5:14; 9:35-38).

Christ's opponents cannot perceive the redemptive nature of His Sabbath ministry because they "judge by appearances" (7:24). For them the pallet and the clay are more important than the social reunion (5:10) and the restoration of sight (9:14) which those objects symbolized. It was therefore necessary for Christ to act against prevailing misconceptions in order to restore the Sabbath to its positive function.

In the Sabbath healing of the blind man recorded in John 9, Christ extends to His followers the invitation to become links of the same redemptive chain, saying: "We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work" (v. 4). The "night" apparently refers to the

conclusion of the history of salvation, a conclusion which we found implied in the adverbial phrase “until now.” Such a conclusion of divine and human redemptive activity would usher in the final Sabbath of which the creation Sabbath was a prototype.

To bring about that final Sabbath, the Godhead “is working” for our salvation (John 5:17) but also “we must work” to extend it to others (9:4). The foregoing considerations indicate that the two Sabbath healings reported by John substantiate the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath we found earlier in Luke and Matthew, namely, a time to experience and share the blessings of salvation accomplished by Christ.

4. The Sabbath in Hebrews

The redemptive meaning of the Sabbath which we have found in the Gospels is reflected in the book of Hebrews. The author draws upon existing eschatological understandings of the Sabbath rest to relate God’s rest of the seventh day of creation (Heb 4:4) to all the rest and peace God intends to confer on His people.

By linking together two passages, namely Genesis 2:2 and Psalm 95:7, 11, the author explains why the divine rest promised at creation was not exhausted when the Israelites under Joshua found a resting place in Canaan, since God offered again His rest “long afterwards” through David (Heb 4:7; cf. Ps 95:7). Consequently, God’s promised Sabbath rest still awaited a fuller realization which has dawned with the coming of Christ (Heb 4:9). It is by believing in Jesus Christ that God’s people can at last experience (“enter”—4:3, 10, 11) the “good news” of God’s rest promised on the “seventh day” of creation (4:4).

Literal or Figurative Sabbathkeeping? What inference can be legitimately drawn from this passage regarding the actual observance and understanding of the Sabbath among the recipients of Hebrews? The position of the majority of commentators is that this passage provides no indication that these Christian “Hebrews” actually observed the Sabbath or that the author intended to give a Christian interpretation to such an observance. What are the reasons advanced for such a position? There are basically three.⁶⁵

First, it is argued that since the author discusses not the actual observance of the Sabbath but the permanence and the fulfillment of its rest through the Christ-event, no inference can be drawn regarding its literal observance.

Second, it is pointed out that since “the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God” (4:9) is a future realization, the exhortation to enter God’s rest (4:10, 11) has no implication for the present observance of the day.⁶⁶

Third, it is assumed that since the author in a number of places indicates that with the coming of Christ, certain old covenant institutions were made “obsolete” (8:13; 7:11-9:28), the Sabbath was presumably viewed as belonging to the past also.

Christian “Hebrews.” In our view none of these arguments are sound. The first argument fails to recognize that the recipients of the Epistle (whether Gentiles or Jewish-Christians) were so attracted to Jewish liturgy (of which the Sabbath was a fundamental part) that it was unnecessary for the author to discuss or to encourage its actual observance. What those Christian “Hebrews” actually needed, tempted as they were to turn back to Judaism,⁶⁷ was to understand the meaning of its observance in the light of Christ’s coming.

Present Experience. With regards to the second argument, it can hardly be said that in Hebrews the Sabbath rest is viewed primarily as a future benefit, unrelated to the present observance of the day. The Sabbath rest that “remains for the people of God” (4:9) is presented primarily as a present experience into which those “who have believed *are entering*” (4:3).

The verb “are entering” (4:3) is in the present tense, and in Greek is placed first in the sentence to stress the present reality of this “rest” experience. The same is true of the verb “remains” (4:9), which if taken out of context could imply a future prospect, but in its context refers back to the time of Joshua (4:8), in order to emphasize the present permanence of the Sabbath rest for God’s people.

Obsolete or Remaining? This leads us to the third argument, which maintains that the Sabbath is an Old Testament shadow or type of that final rest which Christ has made available to His people and that consequently its function terminated with His coming.

Does Hebrews teach that the Sabbath, like the temple and its services, lived out its function with the coming of Christ? We noted in chapter 2 that while the writer declares the Levitical priesthood and its services “abolished” (10:9), “obsolete” and “ready to vanish away” (8:13), he explicitly presents the “Sabbath rest” as a divine benefit that still “remains” (4:9).

The verb “remains—*apoleipetai*,” literally means “to be left behind.” Literally translated verse 9 reads: “So then a Sabbath rest is left behind for the people of God.” The permanence of the Sabbath is also implied in the exhortation to “strive to enter that rest” (4:11). The fact that one must make efforts “to enter that rest” implies that the “rest” experience of the Sabbath also has a future realization and consequently cannot have terminated with the coming of Christ.

The Nature of the Sabbath Rest. What is the nature of the “Sabbath rest” that is still outstanding for God’s people (4:9)? Is the writer thinking of a literal or spiritual type of Sabbathkeeping? Verse 10 describes the basic characteristic of Christian Sabbathkeeping, namely, cessation from work: “For whoever enters God’s rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his” (4:10).

Historically, the majority of commentators have interpreted the cessation from work of Hebrews 4:10 in a figurative sense, namely as “abstention from servile work,” meaning sinful activities.⁶⁸ Thus, Christian Sabbathkeeping means not the interruption of daily work on the seventh day, but the abstention from sinful acts at all times.

In support of this view, appeal is made to Hebrews’ reference to “dead works” (6:1; 9:14). Such a concept, however, cannot be read back into Hebrews 10, where a comparison is made between the divine and the human cessation from “works.” It would be absurd to think that God ceased from “sinful deeds.” The point of the analogy is simply that as God ceased on the seventh day from His creation work, so believers are to cease on the same day from their labors. This is a simple statement of the nature of Sabbathkeeping which essentially involves cessation from works.

Literal Sabbathkeeping. Further support for a literal understanding of Sabbathkeeping is provided by the historical usage of the term “*sabbatismos*—sabbath rest” found in Hebrews 4:9. This term occurs only once in the New Testament, but is used several times as a technical term for Sabbathkeeping in post-canonical literature by Plutarch, Justin, Epiphanius, the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Martyrdom of Peter and Paul*.⁶⁹

A. T. Lincoln acknowledges that in each of the above instances “the term denotes the observance or celebration of the Sabbath. This usage corresponds to the Septuagint usage of the cognate verb *sabbatizo* (cf. Ex 16:23; Lev 23:32; 26:34f.; 2 Chron 36:21), which also has reference to Sabbath observance. Thus the writer to the Hebrews is saying that since the time of Joshua an observance of Sabbath rest has been outstanding.”⁷⁰ We would conclude then that both the reference to cessation from work found in v. 10 and the term “*sabbatismos*—Sabbathkeeping” used in v. 9 make it abundantly clear that the writer is thinking of a literal Sabbath observance.

The Meaning of Sabbathkeeping. Is the author of Hebrews merely encouraging his readers to interrupt their secular activities on the Sabbath? Considering the concern of the writer to counteract the tendency of his readers to adopt Jewish liturgical customs as a means to gain access to God, he could hardly have emphasized solely the physical “cessation” aspect of

Sabbathkeeping. This aspect yields only a negative idea of rest, one which would only serve to encourage existing Judaizing tendencies. Obviously then, the author attributes a deeper meaning to the resting on the Sabbath.

This deeper meaning can be seen in the antithesis the author makes between those who failed to enter into God's rest because of "*unbelief—apeitheias*" (4:6, 11)—that is, faithlessness which results in disobedience—and those who enter it by "*faith—pistei*" (4:2, 3), that is, faithfulness that results in obedience.

The act of resting on the Sabbath for the author of Hebrews is not merely a routine ritual (cf. "sacrifice"—Matt 12:7), but rather a faith-response to God. Such a response entails not the hardening of one's heart (4:7) but the making of oneself available to "hear his voice" (4:7). It means experiencing God's salvation rest not by *works* but by *faith*, not by *doing* but by *being* saved through *faith* (4:2, 3, 11). On the Sabbath, as John Calvin aptly expresses it, believers are "to cease from their work to allow God to work in them."⁷¹

The Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God (4:9) is not a mere day of idleness for the author of Hebrews, but rather an opportunity renewed every week to enter *God's rest*, that is, to free oneself from the cares of work in order to experience freely by faith God's creation and redemption rest.

The Sabbath experience of the blessings of salvation is not exhausted in the present, since the author exhorts his readers to "strive to enter that rest" (4:11). This dimension of the future Sabbath rest shows that Sabbathkeeping in Hebrews expresses the tension between the "already" and the "not yet," between the present experience of salvation and its eschatological consummation in the heavenly Canaan.

This expanded interpretation of Sabbathkeeping in the light of the Christ event was apparently designed to wean Christians away from a too materialistic understanding of its observance. To achieve this objective, the author on the one hand reassures his readers of the permanence of the blessings contemplated by the Sabbath rest and on the other hand explains that the nature of these blessings consists in experiencing both a present-salvation-rest and the future restoration-rest which God offers to those "who have believed" (4:3).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have found that Luke, Matthew, John, and Hebrews share a common understanding of the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath in the light of Christ's mission. The coming of Christ is seen as the actualization, the realization of the redemptive typology of the Sabbath. Through His

redemptive mission, Christ offers to believers the expected Sabbatical “release” (Luke 4:18) and “rest” (Matt 11:28).

In the light of the Cross “the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God” (Heb 4:9) is not only a physical cessation from work to commemorate God’s perfect creation but also a spiritual entering into God’s rest (Heb 4:10) made possible through Christ’s complete redemption. The physical act of resting becomes the vehicle through which one experiences the spiritual rest. We cease from our daily work to allow God to work in us more freely and fully.

The New Testament also recognizes the eschatological dimension of the Sabbath. Christ’s assurance that He and His Father are “working until now” (John 5:17) to realize the final Sabbath rest is reflected in Hebrews’ exhortation to “strive to enter that rest” (4:11). Thus, the Sabbath is viewed as a time to experience the present blessings of salvation which, however, will be fully realized in that final Sabbath, when, as eloquently expressed by Augustine, “we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise.”⁷²

The creative and redemptive meanings of the Sabbath which we have found expressed in the New Testament lead us to consider the actual practice of Sabbathkeeping in New Testament times. How did believers at that time observe the Sabbath? We will turn our attention to this question in the following chapter.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 4

1. For my analysis of the Messianic typologies of the Sabbath in the Old Testament, see *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 134-145; also “Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 17, no. 2, (1987).

2. Gen 1:4, 10, 17, 18, 21, 24, 31.

3. See also Is 11:7-9; 65:25; Hos 2:20.

4. *Shabbath* 12a; cf. also 12b. The quotations from Talmudic treatises used in this chapter are taken from *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (London, The Soncino Press).

5. *Mishnah Shabbath* 6:2. The quotations from the Mishnah used in this chapter are taken from *The Mishnah*, ed. Herbert Danby (London, 1933).

6. For a convenient collection of texts, see Joseph Klausner, *The*

Messianic Idea in Israel (New York, 1955), pp. 43-44, 62-63, 85-86, 99-101, 158-160, 175-177, 283-284, 342-345, 377-378, 409-410, 505-512.

7. Translation from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford, 1913), vol. 2, pp. 497-498.

8. *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, an apocryphon of the Old Testament composed between A.D. 1-50, alludes to the seven-day millennial scheme, when it says: "And I blessed the seventh day which is the Sabbath . . . God shows Enoch the age of this world, its existence of seven thousand years" (32:3). A similar scheme was developed by the rabbis. *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* asserts: "The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven aeons, and of them all He chose the seventh aeon only; the six aeons are for the going in and coming out . . . The seventh aeon is entirely Sabbath and rest in the life everlasting" (trans. Gerald Friedlander [New York, 1971], p. 141). See also *Shabbath* 30b; *Kethubboth* 111b.

9. Irenaeus, in his *Against Heresies* 5:33, 3-4, reports the following description of the millennium given by Papias: "The days will come when vines will grow each with ten thousand shoots, and ten thousand branches on each shoot, and ten thousand twigs on each branch, and ten thousand clusters on each twig, and ten thousand grapes in each cluster and each grape when crushed will yield twenty-five jars of wine" (trans. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers* [New York, 1950], p. 263).

10. For my analysis of Barnabas and of the patristic interpretation of the cosmic Sabbath, see *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 218-223, 278-285.

11. Tosephta *Shabbat* 16:22 reads: "Beth Shammai says: 'Contributions for the poor are not allotted on the Sabbath in the synagogue, even a dowry to marry an orphan young man to an orphan young woman. Quarrels between husband and wife are not adjudicated and one does not pray for the sick on the Sabbath.' Beth Hillel permits these activities."

12. Theodore Friedman, "The Sabbath: Anticipation of Redemption," *Judaism* 16, (1967): 445.

13. *The Midrash on Psalms*, trans. William G. Braude (New Haven, 1959), vol. 2, p. 112. In a similar vein *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* says: "He created the seventh day, (but) not for work, because it is not said in connection therewith, 'And it was evening and it was morning.' Why? For it is reserved for the generations (to come), as it is said, 'And there shall be one day which is known unto the Lord; not *day* and not *night*' (Zech 14:7)" (trans. Gerald Friedlander [New York, 1971], p. 137). Cf. also *Shabbath* 11b; *Berakhoth*

58b; *Rosh Hashanah* 31a. Church Fathers also took notice of the absence of any mention of “evening and morning” in conjunction with the seventh day of creation, and interpreted it as representing the future eternal peace and rest of the saints. For example, Augustine in his *Confessions* offers this sublime prayer: “O Lord God, grant Thy peace unto us . . . the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, which hath no evening. For all this most beautiful order of things . . . is to pass away, for in them there was morning and evening. But the seventh day is without any evening, nor hath any setting, because Thou hast sanctified it to an everlasting continuance; that that which Thou didst after Thy works, which were very good, resting on the seventh day . . . that we also after our works (therefore very good, because Thou has given them unto us) may repose in Thee also in the Sabbath of eternal life” (*The Confessions of St. Augustine* 13, 50-51, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff [Grand Rapids, 1979], first series v. 1, p. 207). See also Augustine’s *City of God*, book 22, chapter 30.

14. *Bereshith Rabbah* 12:6.

15. *The Midrash on Psalms* (n. 13), vol. 2, p. 112; cf. also *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* (n. 13), p. 126.

16. The redemptive role of the Sabbath is reflected especially in the belief expressed by R. Eliezer of Modihim, that if Israel kept the Sabbath, the Lord would give her the land of Israel, the kingdom of the house of David, the future world, the new world (*Mekilta, Vayassah* 5:66-73). See also *Shabbath* 118b, 119b, 3a; *Mishnah Aboth* 5:8; *Jubilees* 2:28.

17. See, for example, *Bereshith Rabbah* 3:6; 11:2. For other sources, see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1946), vol. 5, p. 8, n. 19.

18. See *The Midrash on Psalms* (n. 13), vol. 2, p. 112; *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* (n. 13), p. 144.

19. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York, 1951), p. 23.

20. On the development of the rest-theme in the Old Testament, see Gerhard von Rad, “There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays* (New York, 1966), pp. 94-102.

21. Ernst Jenni, *Die Theologische Begründung des Sabbatgebotes im Alten Testament* (Zurich, 1956), p. 282.

22. *The Midrash on Psalms* (n. 13), vol. 2, p. 113. The author of Hebrews

presents what may be called three different levels of meaning of the Sabbath rest: creation-rest (4:3), national-rest (4:6, 8), redemption-rest (4:3, 7, 9, 10). For my analysis of the passage, see *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 135-136, 164-170; and *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 63-69.

23. *The Books of Adam and Eve* 51:1-2, in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913), vol. 2, p. 153.

24. Willy Rordorf notes that “in the overwhelming majority of passages the sabbath of the end time was thought to be paradise restored” which was associated with the days of the Messiah. Some of the supporting references he gives are: “Is 2:2-5; 25:6ff.; 60-61 and *passim*; *Assumption of Moses* 10:1; 111:367-380, 652-660.” Other references, however, according to Rordorf, indicate that the Messianic age precedes or anticipates the actual establishment of the new age. See his discussion in *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 48-50.

25. 2 *Baruck* 73:1, in R. H. Charles (n. 23), vol. 2, p. 518, emphasis supplied.

26. *Sanhedrin* 97a.

27. *Mishnah Tamid* 7:4 (n. 5), p. 589.

28. See note 27.

29. See *Mishnah Pesahim* 10:5.

30. The underlying connection among the Sabbath, Passover, and the Day of Atonement appears to be not only theological (i.e., redemption motif) and terminological (i.e., *Shabbath* designation) but presumably also numerical. Saul J. Berman notes that “The fact that the Jewish calendar can be begun with either the month of Tishrei or with the month of Nissan will allow us to recognize a further relationship of the term, ‘Shabbat,’ to the number seven. Counting from the month of Tishrei, the seventh month, Nissan, contains a Shabbat, namely Pesah. Counting the months of the year from Nissan yields Tishrei as the seventh month, and that month too, contains a Shabbath, Yom Kippur . . . Pesah, in the seventh month from Tishrei, and Yom Kippur, in the seventh month from Nissan, together constitute the Sabbath of months” (“The Extended Notion of the Sabbath,” *Judaism* 22 (1973):343). The weekly Sabbath appears then to share in common with the Sabbath of months and the Sabbath of years (sabbatical and jubilee years) the theme of redemption.

31. *The Midrash on the Psalms* (n. 13), vol. 2, p. 444.

32. *Sanhedrin* 97a.

33. For a perceptive discussion of the redemptive features of the Sabbath years, see George Wesley Buchanan, *Revelation and Redemption* (Dillsboro, North Carolina, 1978), pp. 9-10; also *The Consequences of the Covenant* (Leiden, 1970), p. 18.

34. A most valuable analysis of the connection between the Sabbatical “release” and the New Testament “forgiveness” is offered by Robert B. Sloan, *The Favorable Year of the Lord. A Study of Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke* (Austin, Texas, 1977).

35. Julian Morgenstern maintains that “in all likelihood the ‘great trumpet’ (Is 27:13), a blast from which would inaugurate a new and happier era for conquered and dispersed Israel, was a *yobel*. All this suggests cogently that the ram’s-horn trumpet was of unusual character, used only upon extraordinary occasions and for some particular purpose (cf. Ex 19:13) . . . This year acquired its name just because this unique, fiftieth year was ushered in by this blast upon the *yobel*, whereas the commencement of ordinary years was signaled by a blast upon only a *shophar* (2 Sam 15:10; cf. Lev 23:24)” (*The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* [Nashville, 1962], s. v. “Jubilee, Year of,” vol. 2, p. 1001).

36. *Behodesh Hashebihi* 172a, cited in George W. Buchanan, *Revelation and Redemption* (Dillsboro, North Carolina, 1978), p. 13.

37. The term and concept of “sabbatical eschatology” is used and explained by George W. Buchanan, in *Revelation and Redemption* (Dillsboro, North Carolina, 1978), pp. 3-6; also in *The Consequences of the Covenant* (Leiden, 1970), pp. 9-17.

38. The terms “sabbatical messianism” and “chronomessianism” are used by Ben Zion Wacholder in his article, “Chronomessianism. The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles,” *Hebrews Union College Annual* 46 (1975): 201.

39. For an edition and analysis of 11Q Melchizedek, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave II,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 25-41; M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, “11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 12 (1865-1966): 301-326.

40. *Sanhedrin* 97b.

41. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern*

Man (New York, 1951), p. 68.

42. Emphasis supplied.

43. Emphasis supplied.

44. Emphasis supplied.

45. Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids, 1972), p. 42.

46. *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, trans. Gerald Friedlander (New York, 1971), p. 141.

47. For my extensive analysis of the literary context and of the Sabbatical nature of Christ's rest, see "Matthew 11:28-30: Jesus' Rest and the Sabbath," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (Summer 1984): 1-23.

48. See, for example, J. Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy* (South Bend, Indiana, 1956), p. 226; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London, 1972), pp. 209-210; D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day. A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 66.

49. "The yoke of the Torah": *Pirkê Aboth* 3:5; *Sanhedrin* 94b; *Gen. Rab.* 67:7. "The yoke of the kingdom of heaven": *Sota* 47b; *Sanhedrin* 111b. "The yoke of the commandments": *M. Ber.* 2:2. "The yoke of God": *Pss. Sol.* 7:8. For additional references to the "yoke" see H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* (Munich, 1933), 1:608-610; I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 4-14. Cf. also *Ecclesiasticus* 51:26; *Acts* 15:10; *Gal* 5:1; *1 Clem.* 16:17; *Did.* 6:1.

50. The emphasis on the "rest" to be found in the *Person* of Christ is made even more emphatic, as noted by William Hendriksen, in the Syriac (Peshitta) translation: "Come to me . . . and I will rest you . . . for *I am restful* . . . and you shall find rest for yourselves" (*The Gospel of Matthew* [Edinburgh, 1973], pp. 504-505).

51. Donald A. Carson (n. 48), pp. 66-67.

52. The term "release" (*aphesis*) is commonly used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew designations for the sabbatical and jubilee years. The same term is used in the NT almost always with the meaning of "forgiveness." This suggests that the vision of the sabbatical release from social injustices functioned as the prefiguration of the Messianic release from the bondage of sin.

For an informative treatment of this question, see Robert B. Sloan (n. 34), p. 27.

53. The book of Jubilees explains that “burning frankincense and bringing oblation and sacrifices before the Lord . . . shall be done on Sabbath-days in the sanctuary of the Lord your God; that they may atone for Israel with sacrifice” (50:10-11).

54. This view is held by various scholars. Gerhard Barth, for example, comments that by the phrase “something greater than the temple is here . . . undoubtedly Jesus is meant, for in him the Messianic fulfillment and consummation has come and he is therefore more than the Temple” (*Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* [Philadelphia, 1963], p. 82).

55. Ellen G. White perceptively notes: “The priests were performing those rites that pointed to the redeeming power of Christ, and their labor was in harmony with the object of the Sabbath. But now Christ Himself had come. The disciples, in doing the work of Christ, were engaged in God’s service, and that which was necessary for the accomplishment of this work it was right to do on the Sabbath” (*The Desire of Ages* [Mountain View, California, 1940], p. 285).

56. Donald A. Carson (n. 48), p. 75.

57. For my analysis of John 5:17, see my article “John 5:17: Negation or Clarification of the Sabbath?” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 19 (Spring 1981): 3-19.

58. See, for example, George Allen Turner, Julius R. Mantey, O. Cullman, E. C. Hoskyns, F. Godet on John 5:17.

59. Emphasis supplied.

60. Emphasis supplied.

61. A. T. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, ed. Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 204.

62. Paul K. Jewett argues that “by his redemptive work, Jesus sets aside the Sabbath” (n. 45), p. 86. The same view is defended by O. Cullmann in *Early Christian Worship* (London, 1953), pp. 90-91.

63. *Yoma* 85b.

64. On the redemptive meaning of circumcision, see Rudolf Meyer, “*peritemno*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, (Grand Rapids, 1973), vol. 6, pp. 75-76.

65. For a presentation of the three reasons, see A. T. Lincoln (n. 61), pp. 212-214.

66. Among the commentators who view the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest as an exclusive future experience, are: E. Käsemann, O. Michel, H. Windisch, W. Manson, F. F. Bruce, F. Delitzsch, and R. C. H. Lenski.

67. Bruce Metzger rightly remarks: "Many of them felt themselves drawn to Jewish liturgy and were on the point of renouncing Christianity and returning to their ancestral Jewish faith" (*The New Testament. Its Background, Growth and Content* [Nashville, 1965], p. 249).

68. For examples and discussion of the spiritual interpretation of the Sabbath Commandment, see W. Rordorf (n. 24), pp. 100-108; Franz X. Pettirsch also notes: "The early fathers of the Church applied the law of Sabbath rest only allegorically to absention from sin; a literal application to work was foreign to their thinking" (A Theology of Sunday Rest," *Theology Digest* 6 [1958]: 116). The author explains how during the Middle Ages the formula "servile work" was interpreted in a literal sense as meaning "field work, any heavy work" (p. 117). The spiritual interpretation of the Sabbath rest as "self-renenciation" is advocated also by John Calvin, in *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, C. W. Bingham, trans. (Grand Rapids, 1950), p. 436.

69. Plutarch, *De Superstitione* 3(*Moralia* 1660); Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 23, 3; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 30, 2, 2; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2, 36.

70. A. T. Lincoln (n. 61), p. 213.

71. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, 1972), vol. 2, p. 337. Karl Barth keenly observes that by resting on the Sabbath after the similitude of God (Heb 4:10), the believer "participates consciously in the salvation provided by him [God]" (*Church Dogmatics* [Philadelphia, 1958], vol. 3, part 2, p. 50).

72. Augustine, *City of God*, XXII, 30.

Chapter 5

SABBATHKEEPING

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

My fourth reason for believing in the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping is found in the New Testament allusions to the *fact* and *manner* of its observance.

This chapter briefly examines both the implicit and explicit indications of the practice of Sabbathkeeping in New Testament times. It will be shown, perhaps to the surprise of some who believe otherwise, that New Testament believers observed the Sabbath, though with a new meaning and in a new manner.

I. THE FACT OF SABBATHKEEPING

Implicit Indications. The New Testament provides both implicit and explicit indications of the existence of Sabbathkeeping in the Christian communities. Implicitly, it is suggested by the unusual coverage given by the Evangelists to the Sabbath ministry of Jesus.

It is generally recognized today that the Gospels were composed not as mere biographies of Christ's life but as theological handbooks to help promote the Christian faith. The selection that the Evangelists made of what Jesus said and did was determined by the prevailing concerns of their time.

The fact that the Evangelists report no less than seven Sabbath healing episodes in addition to the ensuing controversies¹ indicates the great importance attached to Sabbathkeeping in their respective communities at the time they wrote their Gospels. The Sabbath example and teaching of Jesus received ample coverage because they provided for those young Christian communities the norm by which to determine the new meaning and manner of Sabbath observance.

Explicit Indications. Several explicit indications of Sabbathkeeping can be seen in the Gospels. Matthew, for example, explains that the “disciples were hungry” (12:1) on the Sabbath when they plucked ears of corn. The Evangelist’s concern to explain that the disciples did not carelessly break the Sabbath suggests that, as Gerhard Barth writes, “in Matthew’s congregation the Sabbath was still kept, but not in the same strict sense as in the Rabbinate.”²

Christ’s Warning Regarding the Sabbath. Another indication of Sabbathkeeping is found in Christ’s unique warning regarding the destruction of Jerusalem: “Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath” (Matt 24:20). The fact that the Sabbath is here mentioned not polemically, but incidentally as a factor unfavorable to a flight of Christians from Jerusalem, implies on the one hand that Christ did not foresee its substitution with another day of worship, and on the other hand that, as stated by A. W. Argyle, “the Sabbath was still observed by Jewish Christians when Matthew wrote.”³

The Example of the Women. Luke provides a significant indication of Sabbathkeeping in his Passion narrative. He describes how the women followed their Lord to the Cross at the risk of their lives. After seeing their Lord laid in the tomb, they hastened home to “prepare spices and ointments” because “the sabbath was beginning” (Luke 23:54-55).

It is noteworthy that in spite of their devotion to their Master, the women felt they could not proceed to embalm His body, because this would have meant violating the Sabbath. Thus “on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56) and then at early dawn on the first day of the week they went to the tomb to continue their work. The fact that Luke takes pains to report that the women felt that they could not violate the Sabbath even to give honor to their dead Master, is indicative of the high regard in which the Sabbath was held at the time of his writing.

The Example of Paul. Luke refers repeatedly to Paul’s custom of teaching and worshiping on the Sabbath in the synagogue. After the martyrdom of Stephen, Paul went searching for Christians in the Synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:2; 22:19), which would imply that they still attended Sabbath services.

In his later ministry Paul “as was his custom” (Acts 17:2) met regularly on the Sabbath in synagogues or open air, not only with the Jews (Acts 13:14; 17:2; 18:4) but also with the Gentiles (Acts 13:44; 16:13; 18:4). This indicates that no radical Christian separation had yet occurred from Jewish places and times of worship.

The Curse of the Christians. It is impossible to determine how long Christians continued to attend Sabbath services at the synagogue. We know that some of them still attended synagogue services by the end of the first century, because at that time rabbinical authorities introduced a test to detect their presence in the synagogue.⁴

The test consisted in a curse that was incorporated in the daily prayer—*Shemoneh Esreh*—and was to be pronounced against the Christians by any participant in the synagogue service. The function of the curse was to bar the Christians' presence and/or participation in the synagogue services. The obvious implication is that some Christians still attended Sabbath services at the synagogue.

The Nazarenes. A significant evidence of the practice of Sabbathkeeping among primitive Palestinian Christians is provided by the testimony of Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (c. A. D. 315-403), regarding the Jewish Christian sect of the Nazarenes. The Bishop, a native of Palestine, explains that the Nazarenes were the direct descendants of the Christian community of Jerusalem which migrated to Pella prior to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem.⁵

In spite of Epiphanius' attempt to treat the Nazarenes as "heretics" because "they practice the customs and doctrines prescribed by the Jewish law," nothing heretical about them appears in the rather extensive account he gives of their beliefs. The basic difference between Nazarenes and the "true Christians" is, according to Epiphanius, the fact that the former "fulfill till now such Jewish rites as the circumcision and the Sabbath."⁶ The latter practices hardly qualify the Nazarenes as "heretics" since they were held by the primitive Jerusalem Church.

The fact that the Nazarenes, who represent the direct descendants of the Jerusalem Church, retained Sabbathkeeping as one of their distinguishing characteristics until at least the fourth century shows convincingly that the Jerusalem Church observed the Sabbath during the apostolic age. This fact discredits any attempt to make the Jerusalem church the pioneer of Sundaykeeping.

Conclusion. The foregoing indications make it abundantly clear that New Testament believers continued the practice of Sabbathkeeping. The necessity to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday arose after the end of the apostolic age in the early part of the second century. The political, social, pagan, and religious factors which have contributed to this change are examined at length in my book *From Sabbath to Sunday*.

II. THE MANNER OF SABBATHKEEPING

New Worship Places. How did New Testament believers observe the Sabbath? Initially most Christians attended Sabbath services at the Jewish synagogue (Acts 13:14, 43, 44; 17:2; 18:4). Gradually, however, Christians established their own places of worship.

Matthew suggests that the process of separation had already begun at the time of his writing, because he speaks of Christ entering “*their* synagogue” (Matt 12:9).⁷ The pronoun “*their*” suggests that the Matthean community as a whole no longer shared in the Sabbath services at the Jewish synagogue by the time the Gospel was written. Presumably they had organized their own meeting places of worship by then.

The distinction in Sabbathkeeping between the Christian and the Jewish communities soon became not only topological but also theological. The various Sabbath pericopes reported in the Gospels reflect the existence of an ongoing controversy between the Christian congregations and the Jewish synagogues, which in some cases may have been located across the street from one another.

The controversy centered primarily on the manner of Sabbathkeeping. Was the day to be observed primarily as “sacrifice,” that is, as an outward fulfillment of the Sabbath law? Or was the Sabbath to be observed as “mercy,” that is, as an occasion to show compassion and do good to those in need? (Matt 12:7).

A Day to Do Good. To defend the Christian understanding of Sabbathkeeping as a day to celebrate Messianic redemption by showing “mercy” and doing “good” to those in need, the Evangelists appeal to the example and teaching of Jesus. For example, in the healing of the crippled woman, Luke contrasts two different concepts of Sabbathkeeping: that of the Ruler of the synagogue versus that of Christ. For the Ruler, the Sabbath consisted of rules to obey rather than people to love (Luke 13:14). For Christ, the Sabbath was a day to bring physical and spiritual liberation to needy people (Luke 13:12, 16).

Christ challenged the Ruler’s misconception by appealing to the accepted customs of watering animals on the Sabbath. If the daily needs of animals could be met on the Sabbath, how much more the needs of “a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years”! Shouldn’t she “be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (Luke 13:16).

A Day to Save. This humanitarian understanding of the Sabbath is expressed also in the episode of the healing of the man with the withered hand,

reported by all the three Synoptics (Mark 3:1-6; Matt 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11). In this instance, Jesus responds to the testing question posed by a deputation of Scribes and Pharisees, regarding the legitimacy of healing on the Sabbath by asking a question of principle: “Is it lawful on the sabbath, to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9).

It is noteworthy that in both Mark and Luke Christ substitutes for the verb “to heal” (*therapeuein*), used in the question, the verbs “to do good” (*agathopoiein*) and “to save” (*sozein*). The reason for this change is Christ’s concern to include not one type but all kinds of benevolent activities within the intention of the Sabbath law. Such a broad interpretation of the function of the Sabbath finds no parallel in rabbinic concessions.

A Day of Benevolent Service. According to Matthew, Christ illustrated the principle of Sabbathkeeping as a time of benevolent service by adding 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).⁸ Both by the question of principle and by its illustration, Christ reveals the *original value* of the Sabbath, as a day to honor God by showing concern and compassion for others.

Unfortunately, with the accumulation of restrictions (Mark 7:9), the observance of the day had been reduced to a legalistic religiosity rather than an opportunity to offer loving service to the Creator-Redeemer by serving needy fellow beings. The believer who on the Sabbath experiences the blessing 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 celebrating God’s goodness on the Sabbath by being involved in a saving ministry, they engaged in destructive efforts, *looking for faults* and devising methods to *kill* Christ (Mark 3:2-6).

Understanding or Misunderstanding? The new humanitarian value which Christ placed upon the Sabbath is expressed in Matthew with uncompromising positiveness: “So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matt 12:12). Unable to accept such a positive interpretation of the Sabbath, Willy Rordorf accuses Matthew of “beginning the moralistic misunderstanding of Jesus’ attitude toward the Sabbath.”⁹

Is it fair for a modern scholar to charge a Gospel Writer with *misunderstanding* Christ’s teaching regarding the Sabbath? Even if the trustworthiness

of Matthew's report could be discredited, does not his interpretation still represent the view of an Apostle and of his community?

Is not Matthew's understanding of the Sabbath as a day "to do good" (Matt 12:12) and to show "mercy" rather than religiosity (Matt 12:7) fully shared by the other three Gospels? In both Mark and Luke, Christ is cited as saying the same thing by means of a rhetorical question, precisely that on the Sabbath it is lawful "to do good" and "to save" (Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9).

In Luke, Christ is reported as saying that the Sabbath is the day to loose human beings from physical and spiritual bonds (Luke 13:12,16). In John, Christ invites His followers to share on the Sabbath in the divine redemptive activity (John 9:4; 5:17; 7:22-23). Therefore, the unanimous view of the Gospels is that Christ presented the Sabbath as a time to serve God especially by rendering loving service to human needs.

A New Christian Understanding. The new Christian understanding of the Sabbath as a time not of passive idleness, but of active, loving service to needy souls, represents a radical departure from contemporary Jewish Sabbathkeeping. This is attested also in an early document, known as the *Epistle to Diognetus* (dates between A. D. 130-200), where the Jews are charged with "speaking falsely of God" because they claim that "He [God] forbade us to do what is good on the Sabbath-days—how is not this impious?"¹⁰

The positive humanitarian understanding of Sabbathkeeping is rooted in Christ's fulfillment of the redemptive typology of the Sabbath, which we found brought out in the Gospels in several ways. Viewing the rest and redemption typified by the Old Testament Sabbath as realized by Christ's redemptive mission, New Testament believers regarded Sabbathkeeping as a day to celebrate and experience the Messianic redemption-rest by showing "mercy" and doing "good" to those in need. What this means to us Christians today is that on and through the Sabbath we celebrate Christ's creative and redemptive accomplishments by acting redemptively toward others.

CONCLUSION

In the last four chapters I have submitted indications for the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping in the New Testament. The first reason, explained in chapter 2, is that Sabbathkeeping is implied in the New Testament by the strong perception of continuity with the Old Testament religious heritage.

The second reason, presented in chapter 3, is that the New Testament views the Sabbath not as a Mosaic ordinance for the Jews but as a creation institution for mankind. The third reason, submitted in chapter 4, is that the New Testament sees the coming of Christ not as the termination but as the actualization, the realization of the redemptive typology of the Sabbath. In the light of the Cross, the Sabbath memorializes not only God's creative but also His redemptive accomplishments for mankind.

The fourth reason, discussed in chapter 5, is that the New Testament offers both implicit and explicit indications regarding the fact and manner of Sabbathkeeping. My conclusion then is that the New Testament views the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping, not as being abrogated or transferred to Sunday, but as having permanent validity and value for Christians. The Sabbath is not *nullified* but *clarified* by Christ's teaching and saving ministry.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 5

1. Matt 12:1-14; Mark 1:21-34; 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Luke 4:16-21; 4:31-41; 6:1-11; 13:10-17; John 5:1-47; 9:1-41.

2. Gerhard Barth, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London, 1963), p. 81; cf. also pp. 79, 83, 163, 244.

3. A. W. Argyle, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, 1963), p. 183. Similarly E. Lohse remarks, "Matt 24:20 offers an example of the keeping of the Sabbath by Jewish Christians" ("*Sabbaton*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, [Grand Rapids, 1968], vol. 7, p. 29).

4. My discussion of the malediction of the Christians is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 157-159.

5. Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 29, 7, *Patrologia Graeca* 42, 402. My treatment of the Nazarenes is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 156-157.

6. See n. 5.

7. Emphasis supplied.

8. Emphasis supplied.

9. Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 68.

10. *Epistle to Diognetus* 4, 3, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1973 reprint), vol. 1, p. 26.

Chapter 6

PAUL AND THE LAW

In the Sabbath-Sunday debate, it has been customary to appeal to Paul in defense of the abrogation-view of the Old Testament law in general and of the Sabbath in particular. In view of the immense importance attributed to Paul's comments regarding the law and the Sabbath, in this chapter we shall consider Paul's attitude toward the law in general. This study will provide the basis for examining in the following chapter Paul's view of the Sabbath in particular.

Procedure. To determine Paul's view of the law we shall proceed by examining first the apparent tension between Paul's negative and positive statements about the law. Second, we shall attempt to find a resolution to this tension by distinguishing in Paul's writings between the moral and saving (soteriological) functions of the law and by recognizing that his criticism of the law is directed not toward Jewish-Christians but toward Gentile Judaizers.

I. USAGES OF THE TERM "LAW"

Various Meanings. Paul uses the term "law-*nomos*" at least 110 times in his epistles, but not in a uniform way. The same term "law" is used by Paul to refer to such things as the Mosaic Law (Gal 4:21; Rom 7:22, 25; 1 Cor 9:9), the whole Old Testament (1 Cor 14:21; Rom 3:19, 21), the will of God written in the heart of Gentiles (Rom 2:14-15), the governing principle of conduct (works or faith—Rom 3:27), evil inclinations (Rom 7:21), and the guidance of the Spirit (Rom 8:2).

Sometimes the term "law" is used by Paul in a personal way as if it were God Himself: "whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law" (Rom 3:19). Here the word "law" could be substituted with the word "God" (cf. Rom 4:15; 1 Cor 9:8).

Our immediate concern is not to ascertain the various Pauline usages of the term “law,” but rather to establish the apostle’s view toward the Old Testament law in general. Did Paul teach that Christ abrogated the Mosaic law in particular and/or the Old Testament law in general, and that consequently Christians are no longer obligated to observe them? This view has predominated in much of Christian history and is still tenaciously defended by numerous antinomian churches.

II. A DOUBLE CONCEPT OF THE LAW

An Apparent Tension. Several recent studies have challenged this traditional interpretation. It is pointed out, for example, that Paul has a “double concept” of the law, “sometimes saying that it is good and has been fulfilled in Christ and sometimes that it is bad and has been abolished in Christ.”¹

In Ephesians 2:15, Paul speaks of the law as having been “*abolished*” by Christ, while in Romans 3:31 he explains that justification by faith in Jesus Christ does not overthrow the law but “*establishes*” it. In Romans 7:6, he states that “now we are discharged from the law” while a few verses later he writes that “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (7:12).

In Romans 10:4, Paul writes that “Christ is the end of the law” while in chapter 8:3-4, he explains that Christ came “in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us.” In Romans 3:28, he maintains that “a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law,” yet in 1 Corinthians 7:19 he states that “neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.” In 2 Corinthians 3:7 Paul designates the law as “the dispensation of death” while in Romans 3:2 he views it as part of the “oracles of God” entrusted to the Jews.

A Resolution of the Tension. Is it possible to reconcile Paul’s apparently contradictory statements about the law? How can Paul view the law both as “*abolished*” (Eph 2:15) and “*established*” (Rom 3:31), unnecessary (Rom 3:28) and necessary (1 Cor 7:19; Eph 6:2, 3; 1 Tim 1:8-10)?

A popular explanation has been to say that Paul’s negative statements refer to the Mosaic, ceremonial law, while the positive ones refer to the moral law of the Ten Commandments. Such an explanation, however, is based on an arbitrary distinction between moral and ceremonial laws which cannot be found in Paul’s writings.

The correct explanation is to be found in the different contexts in which Paul speaks of the law. When he speaks of the law in the context of salvation (justification—right standing before God), he clearly affirms that law-keeping is of no avail (Rom 3:20).

On the other hand, when Paul speaks of the law in the context of Christian conduct (sanctification—right living before God), then he maintains the value and validity of God's law (Rom 7:12; 13:8-10; 1 Cor 7:19). For example, when Paul speaks of the various forms of human wickedness in 1 Timothy 1:8-10, he explicitly affirms "now we know that the law is good" (v. 8).

The Cross of Christ. Central to Paul's understanding of the law is the Cross of Christ. From this perspective, he both negates and affirms the law. Negatively, the Apostle repudiates the law as the basis of justification: "if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal 2:21).

Positively, Paul teaches that the law is "spiritual, good, holy, just" (Rom 7:12, 14, 16; 1 Tim 1:8) because it exposes sin and reveals God's ethical standards. Thus, he states that Christ came "in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us" through the dynamic power of His Spirit (Rom 8:4).

Three times Paul states: "neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision" and each time he concludes this statement with a different phrase: "but keeping the commandments of God . . . but faith working through love . . . but a new creation" (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15). The parallelism suggests that Paul equates the keeping of God's commandments with a working faith and a new life in Christ. The Christian, then, is under the law as a revelation of God's ethical standards for his life, but he is not under the law as a method of salvation. Paul rejects the law as a *method of salvation* but upholds it as a *standard for Christian conduct*.

III. THE LAW AND THE GENTILES

To see Paul's criticism of the law in perspective, it is important to realize that Paul's letters were written to congregations made up predominantly of Gentile converts, most of whom were former "God-fearers" (1 Thess 1:9; 1 Cor 12:2; Gal 4:8; Rom 11:13; 1:13; Col 1:21; Eph 2:11). A crucial problem among Gentile-Christians was their right as Gentiles to enjoy full citizenship in the people of God, without becoming members of the covenant community through circumcision.

A Jewish Problem. This was not a uniquely Christian problem. W. D. Davies has recently pointed out that the relationship of Israel to the Gentile

world was the foremost theological problem of Judaism in the first century.² Basically the problem for the Jews consisted in determining what commandments the Gentiles had to observe in order for them to have a share in the world to come.

No clear-cut answer to this question existed in Paul's time. Some Jews held that Gentiles had to observe only a limited number of commandments (Noachic laws). Other Jews, however, like the House of Shammai, insisted that Gentiles had to observe the whole law, including circumcision. In other words, they had to become full-fledged members of the covenant community to share in the blessings of the world-to-come.³

Gentile Legalism. Lloyd Gaston perceptively notes that "it was because of this unclarity that legalism—the doing of certain works to win God's favor and be counted righteous—arose a Gentile and not a Jewish problem at all."⁴ Salvation was for all who were members of the covenant community, but since the God-fearers were not under the covenant, they had to establish their own righteousness to gain such an assurance of salvation.

Marcus Barth has shown that the phrase "works of the law" is not found in Jewish texts and designates the adoption of selected Jewish practices by the Gentiles to ensure their salvation as part of the covenant people of God.⁵ Recognition of this legalistic Gentile attitude is important to our understanding of the background of Paul's critical remarks about the law.

A Christian Problem. The Jewish problem of whether Gentiles were saved within or without the covenant, soon became also a Christian problem. Before his conversion and divine commission to the Gentiles, Paul apparently believed that Gentiles had to conform to the whole Mosaic law, including circumcision, in order for them to be saved. The latter is suggested by the phrase "but if I still preach circumcision" (Gal 5:11), which implies that at one time he did preach circumcision as a basis of salvation.

After his conversion and divine commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, Paul understood that Gentiles share in the blessing of salvation without having to become part of the covenant community through circumcision. To defend this conviction, Paul appeals in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 to the example of Abraham who became the father of all who believe by faith before he was circumcised.

In proclaiming his non-circumcision Gospel, Paul faced a double challenge. On the one hand, he faced the opposition of Jews and Jewish-Christians because they failed to understand ("Israel did not understand"—Rom 10:19) that through Christ, God had fulfilled His promises to Abraham

regarding the Gentiles. On the other hand, Paul had to deal with the misguided efforts of the Gentiles who were tempted to adopt circumcision and other practices to ensure their salvation by becoming members of the covenant community (Gal 5:2-4).

IV. PAUL'S CRITICISM OF THE LAW

Law as Document of Election. To counteract the double challenge from Jewish and Gentile Christians, Paul was forced to speak critically of the law as a document of election. Several scholars have recently shown that the concept of the covenant—so central in the Old Testament—came more and more to be expressed by the term “law” (*torah—nomos*).⁶ One’s status before God came to be determined by one’s attitude toward the Law (*torah—nomos*) as a document of election and not by obedience to specific commandments.⁷

The law came to mean a revelation of God’s electing will manifested in His covenant with Israel. Obviously this view created a problem for the uncircumcised Gentiles because they felt excluded from the assurance of salvation provided by the covenant.

This insecurity naturally led Gentiles to “desire to be under law” (Gal 4:21), that is, to become full-fledged covenant members by receiving circumcision (Gal 5:2). Paul felt compelled to react strongly against this trend because it undermined the universality of the Gospel.

To squelch the Gentiles’ “desire to be under law,” Paul appeals to the Law (Pentateuch), specifically to Abraham, to argue that the mother of his two children, Ishmael and Isaac, stand for two covenants: the first based on works and the second on faith (Gal 4:22-31); the first offering “slavery” and the second resulting in “freedom.” The first, Hagar who bears “children of slavery,” is identified with the covenant of Mount Sinai (Gal 4:24).

The Sinai Covenant. Why does Paul attack so harshly the Sinai covenant which, after all, was established by the same God who made a covenant with Abraham? Besides, did not the Sinai covenant contain provisions of grace and forgiveness (for example, tabernacle—Ex 25-30) besides principles of conduct (Ex 20-23)? The answer to these questions is to be found in Paul’s concern to establish the legitimacy of the salvation of the Gentiles as Gentiles.

To accomplish this goal, Paul attacks the understanding of the law (covenant) as an exclusive document of election. This does not mean that he denies the possibility of salvation to Jews who accepted Christ as the

fulfillment of the Sinai covenant. On the contrary, he explicitly acknowledges that just as he was “entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised,” so “Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised” (Gal 2:7).

Two Gospels. Paul does not explain what was the basic difference between the two Gospels. We can presume that since the circumcision had become equated with the covenant, the Gospel to the circumcised emphasized that Christ was the fulfillment of the Sinai covenant. This would make it possible for Jews to be saved as Jews, that is, while retaining their identity as a covenant people. Christ would be seen as the One who through His blood ratified the covenant by making it operative (Matt 26:28).

Note that Paul does not deny the value of circumcision for the Jews. On the contrary he affirms: “Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision” (Rom 2:25). Again in Romans 9 to 11 Paul does not rebuke the Jews for being “Jewish” in their lifestyle (11:1) but rather for failing to understand that the Gentiles in Christ have equal access to the Kingdom as Gentiles.

Absence of the Term “Forgiveness.” To defend his Gospel to the uncircumcised, Paul emphasizes that justification (right standing with God) is “by faith apart from works of law” (Rom 3:28; Gal 3:8).

It is noteworthy that while the term “justification” and words related to it occur in Paul’s writings over eighty times, the terms “forgiveness” and “repentance” are spectacularly absent.⁸ One wonders why? One reason is suggested by the fact that “repentance” implied turning back to the God of the covenant, but Paul was appealing to the Gentiles to turn to God for the first time.

A second reason is that “forgiveness”—a predominant concept in most of the Scripture—has to do with the personal dimension of salvation. This he does by teaching justification “by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom 3:28). This doctrine enables Paul to defend the universality of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles, as the very following verse indicates: “Or is the God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also” (Rom 3:29; cf. 1:16-17).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that emerges from the foregoing considerations is that Paul does not attack the validity and value of the law as a moral guide to Christian conduct. On the contrary, he emphatically affirms that Christ

specifically came “in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:4). What Paul criticizes is not the moral but the soteriological understanding of the law, that is, the law viewed as a document of election that includes the Jews and excludes the Gentiles.

The mounting pressure of Judaizers who were urging circumcision upon the Gentiles, made it necessary for Paul to attack the exclusive covenant-concept of the law. “But,” as George Howard points out, “under other circumstances he [Paul] might have insisted on the importance of Israel’s retention of her distinctiveness.”⁹

The failure to distinguish in Paul’s writing between his moral and soteriological usages of the law, and the failure to recognize that his criticism of the law is directed not toward Jewish-Christians but toward Gentiles Judaizers, has led many to fallaciously conclude that Paul is an antinomian who rejected the value and validity of the law as a whole. Such a view is totally unwarranted because, as we have shown, *Paul rejects the law as a method of salvation but upholds it as a moral standard of Christian conduct.*

NOTES ON CHAPTER 6

1. Lloyd Gaston, “Paul and the Torah” in *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. by Alan T. Davis (New York, 1979), p. 62. Gaston provides a most perceptive analysis of Paul’s attitude toward the law.

2. W. D. Davies, “From Schweitzer to Scholem. Reflections on Sabbatai Svi,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 547.

3. For an informative discussion of the Jewish understanding of the salvation of Israel and of the Gentiles, see E. P. Sanders, “The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism,” *Jews, Greeks and Christians* (Leiden, 1976), pp. 11-44; also Lloyd Gaston (n. 1), pp. 56-61.

4. Lloyd Gaston (n. 1), p. 58.

5. Marcus Barth, *Ephesians* (Anchor Bible, 1974), pp. 244-248.

6. See D. Rössler, *Gesetz und Geschichte* (Neukirchen, 1960); E. P. Saunders (n. 3), p. 41, concludes: “salvation comes by *membership* in the covenant, while obedience to the commandments *preserves* one’s place in the covenant.”

7. Lloyd Gaston rightly asks: “Why did Christian interpreters not learn this long ago from such classic words as S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York, 1909), or A. Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement* (Oxford, 1928), especially pp. 1-118?” (n. 1), p. 70.

8. Krister Stendahl points out this fact, saying: “If one looks into a Greek concordance of the New Testament one is struck by the fact that in the Pauline epistles ‘justification’ (*dikaiosisune*)—and the words related to it . . . are pervasive in certain strata of Paul’s thought. But the word ‘forgiveness’ (*aphesis*) and the verb ‘to forgive’ (*aphienai*) are spectacularly absent” (*Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 1976, p. 23).

9. George Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia. A Study in Early Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 81.

Chapter 7

PAUL AND THE SABBATH

Did Paul teach his converts that they were under no obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath? Historically most Christians have held and still hold this view. They have generally believed that Paul taught the termination at the Cross of the Old Testament law in general and of Sabbathkeeping in particular.

In the preceding chapter we examined Paul's attitude toward the law in general. We established that Paul rejects the law as a method of salvation but upholds it as a moral standard of Christian conduct. In this chapter we shall consider Paul's view of the Sabbath in particular. We shall endeavor to establish whether Paul advocated the abrogation or the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping.

One Explicit Reference. It should be noted at the outset that while Paul refers to the law constantly in his writings, he mentions the Sabbath explicitly only once, in Colossians 2:16, where the term occurs in the plural form (in Greek: "sabbaths—*sabbaton*"). Two other Pauline passages have been traditionally cited, namely, Galatians 4:8-10 and Romans 14:5-6, as alluding to the Sabbath.

On the basis of these texts, the predominant historical consensus has been that Paul regarded the Old Testament Sabbath as no longer binding, especially for Gentile Christians.¹ Paul K. Jewett well exemplifies the historical interpretation when he writes: "Paul's statement (Col 2:16) comes as near to a demonstration as anything could, that he taught his converts they had no obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament."²

Of the three references, greater importance has been attached to Colossians 2:14-17, inasmuch as the passage explicitly speaks of Christ's nailing something to the Cross (2:14) and warns against paying heed to regulations regarding several things, including "a sabbath" (2:16).

Procedure. This investigation into Paul's attitude toward the Sabbath will be conducted by examining primarily Colossians 2:14-17 and secondarily the information provided by Galatians 4:8-11 and Romans 14:5-6.

I. THE COLOSSIAN HERESY

Paul's reference to the observance of "Sabbaths" in Colossians 2:16 is only one aspect of the "Colossian heresy" refuted by Paul. It is necessary, therefore, to ascertain first of all the overall nature of the false teachings that threatened to "disqualify" (2:18) the Colossian believers. Were these teachings Mosaic ordinances and can they be identified with the "written document—*cheirographon*" which God through Christ 'wiped out . . . removed, nailed to the cross" (2:14)?

Most commentators define the Colossian heresy as syncretistic teachings which incorporated both Hellenistic and Jewish elements. Such a false teaching had both a *theological* and *practical* aspect.³

Theological Aspect. Theologically, the Colossian "philosophy" (2:8) was competing with Christ for man's allegiance. Its source of authority, according to Paul, was human "tradition" (2:8) and its object was to impart true "wisdom" (2:3, 23), "knowledge" (2:2-3; 3:10) and to assure access to and participation in the divine "fulness" (2:9-10; 1:19).

To attain divine fulness, Christians were urged to do homage to cosmic principalities (2:10, 15), to "the elements of the universe" (2:8, 20), and to angelic powers (2:15, 18) and to follow ritualistic ascetic practices (2:11-14, 16, 17, 21-22). Essentially, then, the theological error consisted in interposing inferior mediators in place of the Head Himself, Jesus Christ (2:9-10, 18-19).

Practical Aspect. The practical outcome of the theological speculations of the Colossian heretics was their insistence on strict ascetism and ritualism. These consisted in "putting off the body of flesh" (2:11—apparently meaning withdrawal from the world); rigorous treatment of the body (2:23); prohibition to either taste or touch certain kinds of foods and beverages (2:16, 21), and careful observance of sacred days and seasons—festival, new moon, Sabbath (2:16).

Christians presumably were led to believe that by submitting to these ascetic practices, they were not surrendering their faith in Christ, but rather they were receiving added protection and were assured of full access to the divine fulness. This bare outline suffices to show that the Sabbath is

mentioned not in the context of a direct discussion on the nature of the law, but rather in the context of syncretistic beliefs and practices advocated by the Colossian “philosophers.”

II. THE WRITTEN DOCUMENT NAILED TO THE CROSS

To combat the above false teachings, Paul chose to extol the centrality and superiority of Christ who possesses “the fulness of deity” (2:9) and provides full redemption and forgiveness of sin (2:11-14). To emphasize the certainty and fulness of Christ’s forgiveness, Paul utilizes three metaphors: circumcision, baptism, and “the written document” (2:11-14). Of the last he says that God through Christ has “cancelled . . . set aside, nailed to the Cross . . . the written document—*cheirographon*” (2:14).

Mosaic Law? What is the “written document—*cheirographon*”? Traditionally it has been interpreted to be the Mosaic law with all its ordinances, including the Sabbath, which God allegedly set aside and nailed to the Cross. This popular interpretation is unwarranted for at least two reasons. First, because as E. Lohse points out, “in the whole of the epistle the word law is not used at all. Not only that, but the whole significance of the law, which appears unavoidable for Paul when he presents his gospel, is completely absent.”⁴

Second, this interpretation detracts from the immediate argument designed to prove the fulness of God’s forgiveness. The wiping out of the moral and/or ceremonial law would hardly provide Christians with the divine assurance of forgiveness. Guilt is not removed by destroying law codes. The latter would only leave mankind without moral principles.

Record-Book of Sin. Recent studies have shed light on the meaning of *cheirographon* which occurs only once in the Scripture (Col 2:14). Its usage in apocalyptic literature indicates the *cheirographon* is the “record-book of sins” or a “certificate of sin-indebtedness” but not the moral or ceremonial law.⁵ This view is supported also by the clause “and this he has removed out of the middle” (2:14). “The middle” was the position occupied at the center of the court or assembly by the accusing witness. In the context of Colossians, the accusing witness is the “record-book of sins” which God in Christ has erased and removed out of the court.

By this daring metaphor, Paul affirms the completeness of God’s forgiveness. Through Christ, God has “cancelled,” “set aside,” “nailed to the cross” “the written record of our sins which because of the regulations was

against us.” The legal basis of the record of sins was “the binding statutes, regulations” (*tois dogmasin*) but what God destroyed on the Cross was not the *legal ground* (law) for our entanglement into sin, but the *written record* of our sins.

By destroying the *evidence* of our sins, God has also “disarmed the principalities and powers” (2:15) since it is no longer possible for them to accuse those who have been forgiven. There is no reason, therefore, for Christians to feel incomplete and to seek the help of inferior mediators, since Christ has provided complete redemption and forgiveness.

We conclude then that the document nailed to the Cross is not the law in general or the Sabbath in particular, but rather the record of our sins. Any attempt to read into it a reference to the Sabbath, or to any other Old Testament ordinance, is unwarranted, gratuitous fantasy.

III. APPROBATION OR CONDEMNATION OF SABBATHKEEPING?

The Sabbath: A Bygone Shadow? Having refuted the *theological* speculations of the Colossian false teachers by reaffirming the supremacy of Christ and the fulness of His redemption (2:8-15), Paul turns to some *practical* aspects of their religious practices, saying: “Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (2:16-17).

Historically this passage has been interpreted, as stated by Luther, that “here Paul abolished the Sabbath by name and called it a bygone shadow because the body, which is Christ himself, has come.”⁶

To test the validity of this traditional interpretation, we will consider the following questions: (1) Is Paul warning the Colossians against the practices of “eating, drinking, festival, new moon, and sabbath” as such or against those false teachers who were imposing “regulations” on the manner of observing these practices? (2) What is the nature of the “regulations”? Are they derived from Mosaic prescriptions or from a syncretistic ideology?

Warning Against False Teachers. The statement “Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you . . .” has been traditionally interpreted as a warning from Paul against the five mentioned practices. This interpretation is totally wrong because in this passage Paul is warning the Colossians not against the

observances of these practices as such, but against “anyone” (*tis*) who passes judgment on how to eat, to drink, and to observe sacred times.

Note should be taken of the fact that *the judge who passes judgment is not Paul but Colossian false teachers* who impose “regulations” (2:20) on how to observe these practices in order to achieve “rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body” (2:23).

D. R. De Lacey, writing in the newly released symposium *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, rightly comments: “the judge is likely to be a man of ascetic tendencies who objects to the Colossians’ eating and drinking. The most natural way of taking the rest of the passage is not that he also *imposes* a ritual of feast days, but rather that he *objects* to certain elements of such observation.”⁷ Presumably the “judge” wanted the community to observe these practices in a more ascetic way (“severity to the body”—2:23, 21), to put it crudely, he wanted the Colossian believers to do less feasting and more fasting.

Implicit Approbation. By warning against the right of the false teachers to “pass judgment” on how to observe festivals, Paul is challenging not the validity of the festivals as such but the authority of the false teachers to legislate on the manner of their observance. The obvious implication then is that Paul in this text is expressing *not a condemnation but an approbation of the mentioned practices*, which include Sabbathkeeping.

It is noteworthy that even De Lacey reaches this conclusion, in spite of his view that Paul did not expect Gentile converts to observe the Sabbath. He writes: “Here again (Col 2:16), then, *it seems that Paul could happily countenance Sabbathkeeping* . . . However, we interpret the situation, Paul’s statement ‘Let no one pass judgement on you,’ indicates that no stringent regulations are to be laid down over the use of festivals.”⁸ In the light of these observations, we conclude that in Colossians 2:16, Paul expresses not a condemnation but an implicit approbation of practices such as Sabbathkeeping.

IV. THE NATURE OF THE REGULATIONS

Syncretistic Practices. What is the nature of the “regulations” promoted by the false teachers regarding the way to eat, to drink, and to observe festivals? Regrettably, Paul gives us only few hints. He mentions that they consisted of “self-abasement and worship of angels,” “rigor of devotion . . . severity to the body” (2:18, 23) and that they taught: “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (2:21).

These catch phrases indicate that the regulations did not derive from the Levitical law since nowhere does the latter contemplate such an ascetic program. Though the nomenclature of the festivals is Jewish, the motivation and manner of their observance stems from a syncretistic ideology.

Eduard Lohse perceptively notes that “In the context of Colossians, the command to keep festival, new moon, and sabbath is not based on the Torah according to which Israel received the sabbath as a sign of her election from among the nations. Rather the sacred days must be kept for the sake of ‘the elements of the universe’ who direct the course of the stars and also prescribe minutely the order of the calendar . . . The ‘philosophy’ made use of terms which stemmed from Jewish tradition, but which had been transformed in the crucible of syncretism to be subject to the service of ‘the elements of the universe.’”⁹

Condemnation of Perversion. In the ancient world there was a widespread belief that ascetism and fasting enabled a person to come closer to a deity and to receive divine revelation.¹⁰ In the case of the Colossian “philosophy,” the dietary taboos and the observance of sacred times were apparently regarded as an expression of subjection to and worship of the cosmic powers (elements) of the universe.

Paul’s warning against the “regulations” of the false teachers, can hardly be interpreted as a condemnation of Mosaic laws regarding food and festivals, since what the Apostle condemns is not the teachings of Moses but their perverted use by the Colossian false teachers. A *precept* is not nullified by the condemnation of its *perversion*.

Shadow of the Reality. Paul continues his argument in the following verse, saying: “These are the shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col 2:17). To what does the relative pronoun “these” (*ha* in Greek) refer? Does it refer to the five practices mentioned in the previous verse or to the “regulations” (*dogmata*) regarding these practices promoted by the false teachers?

In a previous study I argued for the former, suggesting that Paul places dietary practices and the observance of days “in their proper perspective with Christ by means of the contrast ‘shadow-body.’”¹¹ Additional reflection has caused me to change my mind and to agree with E. Lohse that the relative pronoun “these” refers not to the five mentioned-practices as such, but rather to the “regulations” regarding such practices promoted by the false teachers.¹²

A Reference to “Regulations.” This conclusion is supported by two considerations. First, in verse 16, Paul is not warning against the merits or

demerits of the Mosaic law regarding food and festivals, but against the “regulations” regarding these practices advocated by the false teachers. Thus, it is more plausible to take “the regulations” rather than the actual practices as the antecedent of “these.”

Second, in the verses that immediately follow, Paul continues his warning against the deceptive teachings, saying, for example, “Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement . . .” (2:18); “Why do you submit to regulations, ‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’” (2:20-21)?

Since what precedes and what follows that relative pronoun “these” deals with the “regulations” of the Colossian “philosophy,” we conclude that it is the latter that Paul describes as “a shadow of what is to come” (2:17).

Presumably the proponents of the Colossian “philosophy” maintained that their “regulations” represented a copy which enabled the believer to have access to the reality (“fulness”). In such a case, Paul is turning their argument against them by saying that their regulations “are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (2:17). By emphasizing that Christ is the “body” and the “head” (2:17, 19), Paul indicates that any “shadow” cast by the regulations has no significant value.

In the light of the above indications, we conclude that what Paul calls a “bygone shadow” is not the Sabbath but the deceptive teachings of the Colossian “philosophy” which promoted dietary practices and the observance of sacred times as auxiliary aids to salvation.

V. THE SABBATH IN COLOSSIANS 2:16

Annual Sabbaths? The “regulations” advocated by Colossian “philosophy” had to do not only with “food and drink” but also with sacred times referred to as “a festival or a new moon or a sabbath” (2:16). Commentators agree that these three words represent a logical and progressive sequence (annual, monthly, and weekly), as well as an exhaustive enumeration of sacred times. This interpretation is validated by the occurrence of these terms in similar or reverse sequence five times in the Septuagint and several other times in other literature.¹³

Some view the “sabbaths—*sabbaton*” as a reference to annual ceremonial Sabbaths rather than the weekly Sabbath (Lev 23:6-8, 21, 24- 25, 27- 28, 37- 38). Such a view, however, breaks the logical and progressive sequence and ignores the fact that in the Septuagint the annual ceremonial Sabbaths are

never designated simply as “sabbath” (*sabbaton*), but always with the compound expression “Sabbath of Sabbaths” (*sabbata sabbaton*). Indications such as these compellingly show that the word “*sabbaton*” used in Colossians 2:16 cannot refer to any of the annual ceremonial sabbaths.

Week-days. Does the plural form “sabbaths” (*sabbaton*) refer exclusively to the seventh-day Sabbath? The fact that the plural is used in the Scripture to designate not only the seventh-day Sabbath but also the week as a whole (LXX Ps 23:1; 47:1; 93:1 Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; Acts 20:7), suggests the possibility that the term may refer to week-days.¹⁴ The latter view harmonizes better with the sequence of the enumeration which suggests yearly, monthly, and weekly festivities.

A similar sequence, though in a reverse order, is given by Paul in Galations 4:10 where he opposes a strikingly similar teaching which included the observance of “days, and months, and seasons, and years.” The fact that the Galatian list begins with “days” (*hemeras*, plural), suggests the possibility that the “sabbaths” in Colossians may also refer to week-days in general rather than to the seventh-day Sabbath in particular.

Superstitious Observance. Assuming for the sake of inquiry that the “sabbaths” in Colossians do refer to or include the Sabbath day, the question to be considered is: What kind of Sabbath observance would the false teachers advocate? The data provided by Colossians are too meager to answer this question conclusively. Yet the nature of the heresy allows us to draw some basic conclusions.

The rigoristic emphasis on the observance of dietary rules would undoubtedly be carried over to Sabbathkeeping as well. The veneration of “the elements of the universe” would also affect the observance of the Sabbath and of sacred times, since it was commonly believed that the astral powers, which direct the stars, control both the calendar and human lives.¹⁵

We know that in the pagan world Saturday was regarded as an unlucky day because of its association with the planet Saturn.¹⁶ In view of the prevailing astral superstitions associated with the days of the week, any Sabbath observance promoted by the Colossians’ ascetic teachers—known for their worship of the elements of the world—could only have been of a rigorous, superstitious type. A warning against such a superstitious type of Sabbathkeeping by Paul would have been not only appropriate but also desirable. In this case Paul could be attacking not the principle of Sabbathkeeping but its perversion.

VI. THE SABBATH IN ROMANS

Two Types of Believers. The Sabbath is not specifically mentioned in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. However, in chapter 14, the Apostle distinguishes between two types of believers: the "strong" who believed "he may eat anything" and the "weak" who ate only "vegetables" and drank no wine (Rom 14:2, 21). The difference extended also to the observance of days, though it is not clear which of the two esteemed "one day as better than another" and which esteemed "all days alike" (Rom 14:5).

Many have maintained that the weekly Sabbath comes within the scope of this distinction respecting days. They presume that the "weak" believers esteemed the Sabbath better than other days while "the strong" treated the Sabbath like the rest of the week-days.

No Reference to Mosaic Law. Can the Sabbath be legitimately read into this passage? In my view this is impossible for at least three reasons. First, the conflict between the "weak" and the "strong" over diet and days can hardly be traced back to the Mosaic law, because nowhere does the Mosaic law prescribe strict vegetarianism, total abstinence from wine, or a preference over days presumably for fasting.

That the Mosaic law is not at stake in Romans 14 is also indicated by the term "*koinos*—common" which is used in v. 14 to designate "unclean" food. This term is radically different from the word "*akathartos*—impure" used in Leviticus 11 (Septuagint) to designate unlawful foods.

Apparently the dispute was over meat which per se was lawful to eat but because of its association with idol worship (cf. 1 Cor 8:1-13) was regarded by some as "*koinos*—common," that is, unfit for human consumption.

The whole discussion in Romans 14 is not about freedom to observe the law versus freedom from its observance, but concerns "unessential" scruples of conscience dictated not by divine precepts but by human conventions and superstitions. Since these differing convictions and practices did not undermine the essence of the Gospel, Paul advises mutual tolerance and respect in this matter.

Not "All Days Alike" Second, Paul applies the basic principle "observe it in honor of the Lord" (14:6) *only* to the case of the person "who observes the day." He never says the opposite, namely, "the man who esteems all days alike, esteems them in honor of the Lord."

In other words, with regard to diet, Paul teaches that one can honor the Lord both by eating and by abstaining (14:6) but with regard to days, he does

not even concede that the person who regards all the days alike does so to the Lord. Thus Paul hardly gives his endorsement to those who esteemed all days alike.

Sabbathkeeping: For “Weak” Believers? Third, if as generally presumed, it was the “weak” believer who observed the Sabbath, Paul would classify himself with the “weak” since he observed the Sabbath and other Jewish feasts (Acts 18:4, 19; 17:1, 10, 17; 20:16). Paul, however, views himself as “strong” (“we who are strong”—15:1); thus, he could hardly have been thinking of Sabbathkeeping when he speaks of the preference over days.

Support for this conclusion is provided also by Paul’s advice: “Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind” (14:5). It is difficult to see how Paul could reduce the observance of holy days such as the Sabbath, Passover, and Pentecost to a matter of personal conviction, without ever explaining the reasons for it. This is all the more surprising since he labors at great length to explain why circumcision was not binding upon the Gentiles.

If Paul had taught his Gentile converts to regard Sabbathkeeping as a personal matter, Jewish Christians would readily have attacked his temerity in setting aside the Sabbath law, as they did regarding circumcision (Acts 21:21). The fact that there is no hint of any such controversy in the New Testament indicates that Paul never discouraged Sabbathkeeping or encouraged Sundaykeeping instead.¹⁷

Fast Days. The preference over days in Romans presumably had to do with fast-days rather than feast-days, since the context deals with abstinence from meat and wine (Rom 14:2, 6, 21). Support for this view is provided by the *Didache* (ch. 8) which enjoins Christians to fast on Wednesday and Friday rather than on Monday and Thursday like the Jews.

Paul refuses to deliberate on such private matters such as fasting, because he recognizes that spiritual exercises can be performed in different ways by different people. The important thing for Paul is to “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Rom 14:19).

No Hint of Conflict. If the conflict in the Roman Church had been over the observance of holy days, the problem would have been even more manifest than the one over diet. After all, eating habits are a private matter, but Sabbathkeeping is a public, religious exercise of the whole community. Any disagreement on the latter would have been not only noticeable but also inflammatory.

The fact that Paul devotes 21 verses to the discussion of food and less than two verses (Rom 14:5-6) to that of days suggests that the latter was a very

limited problem for the Roman Church, presumably because it had to do with private conviction on the merit or demerit of doing certain spiritual exercises such as fasting on some specific days.

In the Roman world there was a superstitious belief that certain days were more favorable than others for undertaking some specific projects. The Fathers frequently rebuked Christians for adopting such a superstitious mentality.¹⁸ It is possible that Paul alludes to this kind of problem, which at his time, however, was still too small to deserve much attention. In the light of the above consideration, we conclude that it is hardly probable that the Sabbath is included in the “days” of Romans 14:5.

VII. THE SABBATH IN GALATIANS

Similarities and Differences. In Galatians, as in Romans, the Sabbath is not explicitly mentioned. Paul does mention, however, that some Galatian Christians had themselves circumcised (Gal 6:12; 5:2) and had begun to “observe days, and months, and seasons, and years” (Gal 4:10).

In many respects the polemic in Galatians 4:8-11 is strikingly similar to that of Colossians 2:8-23. In both places the superstitious observance of sacred times is described as slavery to the “elements.” In Galatians, however, the denunciation of the “false teachers” is stronger. They are regarded as “accursed” (Gal 1:8, 9) because they were teaching a “different gospel.” Their teaching that the observance of days and seasons was necessary to justification and salvation perverted the very heart of the Gospel (Gal 5:4).

Week-days. Whether or not the Sabbath is alluded to in Galatians depends upon the interpretation of “days” (*hemeraí*—Gal 4:10). Some critics argue on the basis of the parallel passage of Colossians 2:16, where “sabbaths” are explicitly mentioned, that “the ‘days’ certainly indicate even the Sabbaths.”¹⁹

We do not deny this possibility, but we have shown earlier that the plural “sabbaths” used in Colossians was the common designation not only for the Sabbath day but also for the whole week. Thus, the plural “days” of Galatians could well indicate that the Colossians’ “sabbaths” are “week-days” and not vice versa. If Paul in Galatians 4:10 meant the Jewish festivals, why did he not give them their customary names as he does in Colossians 2:16?

Assuming without conceding that the Sabbaths are part of the “days” observed by the Galatians, the questions to be asked are: What motivated the observance of the Sabbath and of festivities? Furthermore, is Paul opposing

the observance of the Sabbath and of festivals, or is he denouncing the perverted use made of these religious practices?

Superstitious Motivation. It is generally agreed that the Galatians' observance of sacred times was motivated by superstitious beliefs in astral influences. This is suggested by Paul's charge that their adoption of these practices was tantamount to a return to their former pagan subjection to elemental spirits and demons (Gal 4:8-9). Apparently, on account of their pagan background, the Galatians, as aptly stated by W. Rordorf, "could discern in the particular attention paid by the Jews to certain days and seasons nothing more than religious veneration paid to stars and natural forces."²⁰

Paul's concern is not to expose the superstitious ideas attached to these observances, but rather to challenge the whole system of salvation which the Galatians' false teachers had devised. By conditioning justification and acceptance with God to such things as circumcision and the observance of days and seasons, the Galatians were making salvation dependent upon human achievement. This for Paul is a betrayal of the Gospel: "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal 5:4).

It is within this context that Paul's denouncement of the observance of days and seasons must be understood. If the motivations for these observances would not have undermined the vital principle of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, Paul would only have recommended tolerance and respect (as he does in Romans 14), even if some ideas were foreign to Old Testament teaching. The motivations for these practices, however, adulterated the very ground of salvation. Thus the Apostle has no choice but strongly to reject them. In Galatians as in Colossians, then, it is not the principle of Sabbathkeeping that Paul opposes, but rather the perverted use of cultic observations which were designed to promote salvation as a human achievement rather than as a divine gift of grace.

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions emerge from this study of Paul's attitude toward the law in general and the Sabbath in particular.

First, the three texts (Col 2:14-16; Rom 14:5, Gal 4:10) generally adduced as proof of Paul's repudiation of the Sabbath deal not with the validity or invalidity of the Sabbath commandment for Christians, but rather with ascetic and cultic practices which undermined (especially in Colossians and Galatians) the vital principle of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Second, in the crucial passage of Colossians 2:16, Paul's warning is not against the validity of observing festivals as such but against the authority of false teachers to legislate on the manner of their observance. Implicitly, Paul expresses approval rather than disapproval of their observance. Any condemnation had to do with a *perversion* rather than a *precept*.

Third, Paul's tolerance with respect to diet and days (Rom 14:3-6) indicates that he would not have promoted the abandonment of the Sabbath and adoption of Sunday observance instead. If he had done so, he would have encountered endless disputes with Sabbath advocates. The absence of any trace of such a polemic is perhaps the most telling evidence of Paul's respect for the institution of the Sabbath.

In the final analysis, Paul's attitude toward the Sabbath must be determined not on the basis of his denunciation of heretical and superstitious observances which may have influenced Sabbathkeeping, but rather on the basis of his over-all attitude toward the law.

The failure to understand that Paul rejects the law as a method of salvation but upholds it as a moral standard of Christian conduct has been the root-cause of much misunderstanding of Paul's attitude toward the law in general and toward the Sabbath in particular. It is our fervent hope that this book will help to clarify this misunderstanding and to discover, with Paul, that "the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully" (1 Tim 1:8).

NOTES ON CHAPTER VII

1. A brief historical survey of this interpretation is given in the appendix "Paul and the Sabbath" of my book *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 339-343.

2. Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids, 1971), p. 45.

3. For an extensive list of commentators holding to a syncretistic nature of the Colossian heresy, see *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), p. 343, n. 13.

4. Eduard Lohse, *A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Philadelphia, 1971), p. 116. In a similar vein, Herold Weiss emphasizes that in Paul's argument (Col 2:8-19), the law "plays no role at all" ("The Law in the Epistle to the Colossians," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 [1972]: 311).

5. For bibliographic references and discussion see (n. 1) pp. 349-350.

6. Martin Luther, "Wider die himmlischen Propheten," in his *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. by Johann Georg Walch (1890), vol. XX, col. 148.

7. D. R. De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," *From Sabbath to Lord's Day. A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Donald A. Carson, ed. (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 182.

8. D. R. De Lacey (n. 7), pp. 182-183. Emphasis supplied.

9. Eduard Lohse (n. 4), p. 155.

10. For texts and discussion, see G. Bornhamm, "*Lakanon*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, 1967), vol. 4, p. 67; also J. Behm writes in the same *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, IV, p. 297: "The Greeks and Romans knew that abstention makes receptive to ecstatic revelations."

11. See my discussion in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (n. 1), pp. 356-357.

12. Eduard Lohse (n. 4), p. 116.

13. See Septuagint, 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Ezek 45:17; Hos 2:11. Also *Jub* 1:14; *Jos. Ber.* 3:11; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8:4.

14. This is the view of Nbert Hagedé, *Commentaire de L'Épître aux Colossiens* (Paris, 1969), p. 144. On the plural usage of "Sabbaths" to designate the week as a whole, see Eduard Lohse, "*Sabbaton*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, 1971), vol. 7, pp. 7, 20.

15. Günter Bornhamm emphasizes this view when he writes: "Paul mentions New Moon and Sabbath (Col 2:16), days, months, season, and years (Gal 4:10), i.e. in each case days and seasons that do not stand under the sign of the history of salvation, but under the sign of the periodic cycles of nature, i.e. corresponding to the movement of the stars" ("The Heresy of Colossians," in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks, *SBL Sources for Biblical Study* 4, 1973, p. 131).

16. Texts and discussion are found in my book *From Sabbath to Sunday* (n. 1), pp. 173f. and p. 243.

17. Paul K. Jewett wisely acknowledges that "if Paul had introduced Sunday worship among the Gentiles, it seems likely Jewish opposition would have accused his temerity in setting aside the law of the Sabbath, as was the case with reference to the rite of circumcision (Acts 21:21)" (n. 2), p. 57.

18. For texts and discussion, see my book *From Sabbath to Sunday*, p. 254.

19. See, for example, Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 131; C. S. Mosna, *Storia della Domenica dalle Origini Fino agli Inizi del V. Secolo* (Rome, 1969), p. 183.

20. Willy Rordorf (n. 19), p. 133.

Chapter 8

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

During the last few years I have spent countless hours answering questions from readers of my books who have written to me concerning the Sabbath. Moreover, I have devoted one session of Lord's Day Seminar, which I have conducted in many parts of the world, to answering specific questions asked by the participants on various aspects of the Sabbath.

The constant effort to answer questions by letter and by word on the subject of the Sabbath, has encouraged me to publish my answers and make them available to a larger public. I thought that this book, where I present my reasons for believing in the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping in the New Testament, would be an appropriate publication in which to include my answers to questions people have often asked me about the Sabbath.

For the sake of clarity I have divided the questions according to the following four categories, each of which is treated in a separate chapter:

- Chapter 8: Questions about the Sabbath in the Old Testament
- Chapter 9: Questions about the Sabbath in the New Testament
- Chapter 10: Questions about Sabbathkeeping
- Chapter 11: Our Favorite Sabbath Recipes

It is my fervent hope that this effort to provide clear and concise answers to questions often asked about the Sabbath will help many to understand and accept the validity and value of Sabbathkeeping for their personal lives.

QUESTION:

How can the creation origin of the Sabbath be accepted as historically true, when so many people view the early chapters of Genesis as mythological?

ANSWER:

Biblical truth is not determined by majority vote. To treat the creation account of Genesis 1-2 as a mythological story means to ultimately reduce much of the Bible to an unbelievable myth, because the Biblical proof for the doctrine of creation is found not exclusively in Genesis 1-2, but extensively throughout the Bible.

Biblical Proof of Creation. There are many cross-reference's scattered throughout the Bible which refer to creation as a fact of history. Some passages stress the omnipotence and wisdom of God manifested in the work of creation (Is 40:12-14, 26-28; Amos 4:13). Some passages speak of creation as a fundamental work of God (1 Cor 11:9; Col 1:16; Is 42:5; Rev 4:11). Some passages speak of God's purpose in creation (Is 45:18; Rom 1:25). Other passages refer to details of the creation story such as the order of creation of Adam and Eve (1 Cor 11:8-9) and the temptation by the serpent (1 Tim 2:13).

One of the most explicit statements about God's creation of this world is found in Nehemiah 9:6: "Thou art the Lord, thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth and all that is in them; and thou preservest all of them." Passages such as these, which are scattered throughout the Bible, clearly show that the creation story of Genesis 1-2 is widely accepted as fact in the Scriptures.

QUESTION:

How can a person accept the creation origin of the Sabbath when modern science teaches that our world came into existence not in six days but in millions of years, and not by divine choice but by natural chance?

ANSWER:

The Limitations of Science. Is it really necessary to be able to explain the creation week in the light of modern scientific theories in order to accept the Sabbath as a creation ordinance? Has modern science the know-how and the instruments to test and explain how long it takes to "create" a solar system such as ours with its multiform life?

We seem to forget that science can observe and measure only the ongoing processes of *conservation* and *disintegration*. In fact, modern science, by assuming that these ongoing processes have always functioned in the past essentially as in the present (uniformitarianism), excludes the possibility of a divine *fiat* (spoken-into-existence) process.

Ultimately the problem is not how to reconcile the creation-week with modern theories of origin, but how to conciliate the Biblical teaching of a *Divine creation* with the prevailing scientific theory of *spontaneous generation*. Is it possible to harmonize the two? Obviously not, since the two views rest on entirely different premises. The latter accepts only natural causes while the former acknowledges God as the Supernatural Cause: “By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear” (Heb 11:3).

Rooted Downward or Upward? The problem with scientific logic is that it refuses to be informed by divine revelation. When a person insists on believing only what can be demonstrated in a laboratory, he chooses to trace his roots *downward* from biological specimens rather than *upward* from the image of God. Ultimately, this leads a person to believe in nothing else but himself. The tragic consequence of such a philosophy is that it empties life and human history of ultimate meaning, leaving both life and history with no divine beginning or destiny. Life is reduced to a biological cycle which by chance alone determines its own beginning and end.

For science the ultimate reality is not God but matter, which historically has been viewed as eternal or as evil. The creation story with its Sabbath-memorial challenges this nihilism, urging each generation, whether burdened with scientific facts or with mythological fantasies, to acknowledge that this world is a creation and a gift of God entrusted to man, whose life is meaningful because it is rooted in God.

A Divine Perspective. If we accept by faith that God created this world, then why should we not believe what He has revealed to us about the time He took to accomplish it? Someone could object that the notion of God creating and resting according to the limitations of a seven-day human week militates against His very eternal and omnipotent nature.

It is evident that Almighty God did not need geological ages or literal days to create our world, but only the will to call it into existence (Ps 33:6). But does not the fact that in His revelation God tells us that He chose a human rather than a divine time-schedule to create our world point to another equally important quality of His divine nature: love? Is not God’s willingness to enter into the limitations of human time at creation a reflection of His concern to

give a divine example or perspective to the work-and-rest week of His creatures? Is not this also a prefiguration of God's willingness to enter, if the need should arise, into human flesh in order to become "Emmanuel," "God with us"?

We conclude that to question the creation-origin of the Sabbath, because of difficulties in harmonizing the creation-week with modern theories of origins, means rejecting not only the message of Genesis 1:1-2:3, but also its commentary given in the Fourth Commandment. The latter speaks of six literal days of creation and one literal day of rest, sanctified by God when this world was created (Ex 20:11).

QUESTION:

Does not the omission in the creation account of "the evening and the morning" in connection with the seventh day indicate that the Sabbath is not a literal 24-hour day like the preceding six days, but a symbolic time representing eternal rest?

ANSWER:

Eternal Rest. It is a fact that both Rabbis and Christian writers have interpreted the absence of any reference to "the evening and morning" in connection with the seventh day of creation as representing the future, eternal rest of the redeemed. Augustine offers a most fitting example of this interpretation in the last page of his *Confessions*, where he offers this exquisite prayer: "O Lord God, grant Thy peace unto us . . . the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath which has no evening. For all this most beautiful order of things, 'very good' . . . is to pass away, for in them there was morning and evening. But the seventh day is without any evening, nor hath it any setting, because Thou hast sanctified it to an everlasting continuance; . . . that we also after our works . . . may repose in Thee also in the Sabbath of eternal life."¹

This spiritual, eschatological interpretation of the creation Sabbath has some merits, because, as shown in chapter 4, the vision of the peace, rest, and prosperity of the first Sabbath inspired the prophetic vision of the peace, delight, and prosperity of the world-to-come. This interpretation is also found in Hebrews 4 where believers are urged to strive to enter into the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God (vv. 9, 11).

Literal Day. The symbolic interpretation of the creation-seventh-day which has no evening, does not negate its literal 24-hour duration, for at least four reasons:

First, because the seventh day is enumerated like the preceding six days. Note that in the Bible whenever “day—*yom*” is accompanied by a number it always means a day of 24 hours.

Second, because the Decalogue itself clearly states that God, having worked six days, rested on the seventh day of creation week (Ex 20:11). If the first six days were ordinary earthly days, we must understand the seventh in the same way.

Third, Because every passage which mentions the creation-seventh-day as the basis of the earthly Sabbath regards it as an ordinary day (Ex 20:11; 31:17; cf. Mark 2:27; Heb 4:4).

Last, because the commandment to keep the Sabbath as a memorial day of the creation-Sabbath (Ex 20:11) implies a literal original 24-hour Sabbath. God could hardly command His creatures to work six days and rest on the seventh after His example, if the seventh day were not a literal day.

QUESTION:

Does not the absence of an explicit command to observe the seventh day in Genesis 2:2-3 indicate that the Sabbath is not a creation ordinance binding upon mankind, but a temporary institution introduced by Moses for Israel alone?

ANSWER:

The argument makes Moses guilty of distortion of truth or, at least, a victim of gross misunderstanding. He would have traced back the Sabbath to creation when in reality it was his own new creation. Such a charge, if true, would cast serious doubts on the integrity and/or reliability of anything else Moses or anyone else wrote in the Bible.

What is it that makes any divine precept moral and universal? Do we not regard a law moral when it reflects God’s nature? Could God have given any stronger revelation of the moral nature of the Sabbath than by making it a rule of His divine conduct? Is a principle established by divine *example* less binding than one enunciated by a divine *command*? Do not actions speak louder than words?

“God’s mode of operation,” as noted by John Murray, “is the exemplar on basis of which the sequence for man is patterned. There can be little doubt that in Genesis 2:3 there is at least an allusion to the blessings of the seventh day in man’s week.”²

The fact that the Sabbath is presented in the creation story as a divine example rather than a commandment for mankind could well reflect what God intended the sabbath to be in a sinless world, namely, not an alienating imposition but a free response to a gracious Creator. By freely choosing to make himself available to his Creator on the Sabbath, man was to experience physical, mental, and spiritual renewal and enrichment. Since these needs have not been eliminated but heightened by the Fall, the moral, universal, and perpetual functions of the Sabbath precept were repeated later in the form of a commandment.

QUESTION:

In Genesis 2:2-3 there is a threefold reference to the “seventh day” but no mention of the Sabbath. Does not this omission indicate that the Sabbath as an institution originated not at creation but later at the time of Moses?

ANSWER:

Verbal Form. It is true that the name “Sabbath” does not occur in the passage, but the cognate verbal form *shabat* (to cease, to stop, to rest) is used and the latter, as noted by U. Cassuto, “contains an allusion to the name ‘the Sabbath day.’”³

Moreover, as Cassuto sagaciously remarks, the use of the name *seventh day* rather than *Sabbath* may well reflect the writer’s concern to underline the *perpetual order* of the day, independent and free from any association with astrological “sabbaths” of the heathen nations.⁴

Perpetual Order. It is a known fact that the term *shabbatu*, which is strikingly similar to the Hebrew word for Sabbath (*shabbat*), occurs in the documents of ancient Mesopotamia. The term apparently designated the fifteenth day of the month, that is, the day of the full moon. By designating the day by number rather than by name, Genesis seems to emphasize that God’s Sabbath day is not like that of heathen nations, connected with the phases of the moon. Rather it shall be the seventh day in perpetual order, independent from any association with the cycles of heavenly bodies.

By pointing to a *perpetual order*, the seventh day strengthens the cosmological message of the creation story, precisely that God is both Creator and constant controller of this cosmos. In Exodus, however, where the seventh day is given in the context of the genesis not of this cosmos but of the nation of Israel, the day is explicitly designated “sabbath,” apparently to express its new historical and soteriological function.

QUESTION:

Does not the absence of example of Sabbathkeeping for the whole patriarchal period, that is, between Genesis 2 and Exodus 16, indicate that the Sabbath was not known and observed before Moses?

ANSWER:

The absence of explicit references to Sabbathkeeping between Genesis 2 and Exodus 16 does not necessarily mean that the principle of Sabbathkeeping was unknown. The apparent silence could mean that between Adam and Moses, the Sabbath, though known, was not observed. The non-observance of the feast of the Booths between Joshua and Nehemiah, a period of almost a thousand years, would provide a parallel situation (Neh 8:17).

Taken for Granted. A more plausible explanation is that the custom of Sabbathkeeping is not mentioned simply because it is taken for granted. A number of reasons support this explanation.

First, we have a similar example of silence regarding the Sabbath between the books of Deuteronomy and 2 Kings. Such silence can hardly be interpreted as non-observance of the Sabbath, since when the first incidental reference occurs in 2 Kings 4:23, it describes the custom of visiting a prophet on the Sabbath.

Second, Genesis does not contain laws like Exodus, but rather a brief sketch of origins. Since no mention is made of any other commandment, the silence regarding the Sabbath is not exceptional.

Third, there are throughout the book of Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus circumstantial evidences for the use of the seven-day week, which would imply the existence of the Sabbath as well. The period of seven days is mentioned four times in the account of the Flood (Gen 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12).

The “week” is also apparently used in a technical way to describe the duration of the nuptial festivities of Jacob (Gen 29:27) as well as the duration of mourning at his death (Gen 50:10). A like period was observed by the friends of Job to express their condolences to the patriarch (Job 2:13). Probably all the mentioned ceremonials were terminated by the arrival of the Sabbath.

Presupposed. Lastly, the Sabbath is presented in Exodus 16 and 20 as an already existing institution. The instructions for the gathering of the double portion of the manna on the sixth day presuppose a knowledge of the

significance of the Sabbath: “On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily” (Ex 16:5). The omission of any explanation for gathering a double portion on the sixth day would be inexplicable, if the Israelites had no previous knowledge of the Sabbath.

Similarly in Exodus 20, the Sabbath is presupposed as something already familiar. The commandment does not say “Know the Sabbath day” but “Remember the Sabbath day” (Ex 20:8), thus implying that it was already known. Furthermore, the commandment, by presenting the Sabbath as rooted in creation (Ex 20:11), hardly allows a late Exodus introduction of the festival.

To speculate on how the patriarchs kept the Sabbath would be a fruitless endeavor since it would rest more on imagination than on available information. Considering, however, that the essence of Sabbathkeeping is not *a place to go* to fulfill rituals, but a set *time to be* with God, ourselves, and others, it seems entirely possible that the patriarchs spent the Sabbath holy hours within their households, engaged in some of the acts of worship described in Genesis, such as prayer (Gen 12:8; 26:25), sacrifice (Gen 12:8; 13:18; 26:25; 33:20), and teaching (Gen 18:19).

QUESTION:

Have not Rabbis and Church Fathers taught that the Sabbath is a Mosaic institution established by Moses for Israel alone? Does not this historical view negate the creation origin and universal validity of the Sabbath?

ANSWER:

Mosaic Institution. Some Palestinian Rabbis and some early Church Fathers did reduce the Sabbath from a creation ordinance for mankind to a Mosaic institution for the Jews. Their teaching, however, does not negate the validity of the Biblical view of the creation origin and universal scope of the Sabbath, because the teachings of the Scriptures are not “a matter of one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet 1:20).⁵

Jewish Identity. Furthermore, note should be taken of the factors which contributed to the adoption of the Mosaic origin of the Sabbath. It was the strong desire to preserve a Jewish identity, at a time when Hellenistic forces were pressing for the abandonment of the Jewish religion, that apparently led Palestinian Rabbis to reduce the Sabbath from a creation ordinance established for mankind to a Mosaic ordinance given exclusively to Israel.

Such a development occurred in response to the determined efforts of the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes to implement a program of radical Helle-

nization of the Jews through the prohibition of sacrifices and Sabbathkeeping (175 B.C.). The result was that many Jews fell away, “sacrificed to the gods and desecrated the Sabbath” (1 Macc 1:43).

Pious Jews passionately resisted the Hellenization efforts of Antiochus Epiphanes, preferring to be slaughtered rather than desecrate the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:32-38). The need to preserve a Jewish identity at that critical time inspired an exclusivistic and nationalistic view of the Sabbath.

The notion was introduced at this time by some Rabbis that the privilege of Sabbathkeeping was denied to the Gentiles and reserved exclusively for Israel. As stated in the book of *Jubilees*, “He [God] allowed no other people or peoples to keep the Sabbath on this day, except Israel only; to it alone he granted to eat and drink and keep the Sabbath on it” (2:31). If the patriarchs are sometimes mentioned as keeping the Sabbath, this is regarded as an exception “before it [the Sabbath] was given” to Israel.⁶

A Secondary Development. The notion of the Sabbath as an exclusively Jewish institution, established not at creation for all mankind but by Moses for Israel alone, Makes God guilty, to say the least, of favoritism and discriminatory practices.

It must be said, however, that the notion of a Mosaic origin of the Sabbath represents a late secondary development rather than an original tradition. This is borne out by the fact that in Hellenistic (Greek) Judaism the Sabbath was viewed as a creation ordinance for mankind. Moreover, even in Palestinian literature (both apocalyptic and rabbinic) frequent mention is made of God, Adam, Seth, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph as scrupulously observing the Sabbath.⁷

Apologetic Need. The early Fathers adopted the notion of the Mosaic origin and exclusive Jewish nature of the Sabbath, to challenge those Christians who defended the binding obligations of the Sabbath commandment in the Christian dispensation. The standard and frequent argument is that the patriarchs and righteous men before Moses did not observe the Sabbath, and thus the day must be regarded as a temporary ordinance, deriving from Moses, and enjoined exclusively on the Jews on account of their unfaithfulness.⁸

The reduction of a creation ordinance to an infamous sign of Jewish disobedience may reflect the need for short-term apologetic arguments, but it lacks a comprehension of the permanent and lofty values placed upon the Sabbath by Scripture.

QUESTION:

Has not the observance of the Sabbath in Old Testament times often resulted in the ritualism and legalism which the Scripture condemns? Does not this factor discredit the validity and value of Sabbathkeeping for today?

ANSWER:

Antidote to Legalism. The validity of a divine precept is not negated by the fact that some have perverted it. Legalists unfortunately tend to forget that by His actions and words, the Savior made the Sabbath a day of “mercy” rather than of “sacrifice” (Matt 12:7-8), a time to love God and one’s fellow beings rather than to parade one’s righteousness by fulfilling rituals.

A correct understanding and experience of the Sabbath can prove to be powerful antidotes against legalism. Why? Because the Sabbath teaches us not to work for our salvation (legalism), but to cease from all our works, in order, as Calvin so well expressed it, “to allow God to work in us.”⁹

QUESTION:

Does not the Sabbath commandment contain both a ceremonial element—that is, the specification of the seventh day—and a moral element—that is, the principle of resting one day in seven? If so, does not Sunday observance fulfill the intent of the Fourth Commandment?

ANSWER:

Origin of Distinction. The Fourth Commandment does not contain such an artificial distinction between moral and ceremonial elements. Such a distinction was introduced following the Constantinian Sunday law of 321, in order to give a theological sanction to the imperial legislation demanding rest from work on Sunday. Church leaders applied the Sabbath commandment to Sunday by arguing that the commandment contains both a ceremonial aspect—the specification of the seventh day— and a moral aspect—the principle of resting one day in seven to worship God.¹⁰

Role of Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas (about 1225-1247) offers the most articulated exposition of this artificial and unwarranted distinction in his *Summa Theologica*. He argues that “the precept of the Sabbath observance is moral . . . in so far as it commands man to give some time to the things of God . . . but it is a ceremonial precept . . . as to the fixing of the time.”¹¹

How can the Fourth Commandment be *ceremonial* for specifying the *seventh day* but *moral* for enjoining to set apart *a day* of rest for worship?

Basically because for Aquinas the moral aspect of the Sabbath is grounded on Natural Law, that is to say, the principle of a regularly stated time for worship and rest is in accordance with natural reason. The ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath, on the other hand, is determined by the symbolism of the seventh day: commemoration of “Creation” and prefiguration of the “repose of the mind in God, either, in the present life, by grace, or, in the future life, by glory.”¹²

One wonders, How can the Sabbath be ceremonial (transitory) for symbolizing God’s perfect creation and the rest to be found in Him both in the present and future life? Is it not this reassurance that provides the basis for setting aside *any time* to worship God? To reject as *ceremonial* the original message of the seventh day Sabbath, namely that God is the perfect Creator who offers rest, peace, and fellowship to His creatures, means to destroy the very *moral* basis for devoting any time to the worship of God.

Reformers’ Elaboration. The Reformers adopted and elaborated Aquinas’ distinction between the moral and the ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath commandment. Melancthon, for example, explains, “In this commandment there are two parts, one general, which is always necessary for the Church, and one specific, which refers to a special day that pertains only to the government of Israel . . . For the *general* in this commandment pertains to that which is moral and natural and permanent, namely the keeping of the Church’s worship; and the *specific*, which points to *the* seventh day, pertains to ceremony . . . it is not binding on us; therefore we have gatherings on the first day, namely on Sunday.”¹³

It is hard to understand the logic behind such reasoning. How can the principle of setting aside *one day* or some time of the week “to maintain the office of preaching and public worship” be considered as *moral*, while the actual specification of the *seventh day* be treated as *ceremonial*, that is, pertaining “only to the government of Israel”?¹⁴

No Basis in Natural Law. To argue that the seventh day is ceremonial because it cannot be discovered by unaided human reason (Natural Law), is to fail to recognize that neither can human reason alone discover the principle that some time must be set aside for maintaining “the office of preaching and public worship.” The latter principle, in fact, cannot even be explicitly derived from the Fourth Commandment, where mention is made not of attending public preaching services on the Sabbath, but only of resting unto the Lord (Ex 20:10).

The notion that the Decalogue is based on or supported by Natural Law is a fabrication of Scholasticism (influenced by classical moral philosophy).

In the Scriptures the Sabbath and the rest of the Ten Commandments are rooted not on human reason but on a special divine revelation. The fact that unaided human reason can discover some of the ethical values of the Decalogue may show their rationality but not their origin.

Calvin's Distinctions. John Calvin re-proposed with new qualifications Aquinas' distinction between the moral and ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath. He taught that at creation the Sabbath was given as a perpetual ordinance but "afterwards in the Law, a new precept concerning the Sabbath was given, which should be peculiar to the Jews, and but for a season."¹⁵

What is the difference between the Jewish (Mosaic) Sabbath and the Christian (creation) Sabbath? The difference is not easy to detect, especially for someone not trained to distinguish theological nuances. Calvin describes the Jewish Sabbath as being "typical" (symbolic), that is, "a legal ceremony shadowing forth a spiritual rest, the truth of which was manifested in Christ."¹⁶ The Christian Sabbath [Sunday] on the other hand is "without figure."¹⁷ By this he apparently means that it is a more pragmatic institution, designed to accomplish three basic objectives: first, to allow God to work in us; second, to provide time for meditation and church services; and third, to protect dependent workers.

An Unresolved Contradiction. Calvin's attempt to resolve the tension between the Sabbath as "a creation perpetual ordinance" and as "a ceremonial temporal law" can hardly be considered successful. Did not the Sabbath fulfill the same pragmatic functions for the Jews as it does for the Christians? Moreover, by teaching that for Christians the Sabbath represents "self-renunciation" and the "true rest" of the Gospel, did not Calvin also attribute to the day a "typological-symbolic" significance, much like the type he assigned to the Jewish Sabbath?

To contend that the specification of the *seventh day* is a ceremonial element of the Sabbath, because it was designed to aid the Jews in commemorating creation and in experiencing spiritual rest, means to be blind to the fact that Christians need such an aid just as much as the Jews; it means to leave Christians confused as to the reasons for devoting one day to the worship of God. R. J. Bauckham rightly acknowledges the existence of such a confusion when he notes that most "Protestants in the mid-sixteenth century had as imprecise ideas about the basis of Sunday observance as most Christians at most times have had."¹⁸

A Direct Challenge. A most direct challenge of the *one day-in-seven* notion is provided by the absence in the Old Testament of any day-off provision for those priests who had to work on the Sabbath. Donald Carson

wisely acknowledges this fact when he writes: “If the OT principle were really ‘one day in seven for worship and rest,’ we might have expected OT legislation to prescribe some other day off for the priests. The lack of such confirms the importance in OT thought of the *seventh* day, as opposed to the mere one-in-seven principle so greatly relied upon by those who wish to see in Sunday the precise NT equivalent of the OT Sabbath.”¹⁹

QUESTION:

Why does Isaiah 66:23 speak of all flesh coming to worship before God in the new earth “From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath”? Does this mean that the day of the new moon will be observed in the new earth together with the Sabbath?

ANSWER:

Stability of Religious Life. Isaiah speaks of gathering for worship in the new earth “from new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath” because for the prophet the monthly new-moon day and the weekly Sabbath day are essential to the stability of the religious life in a future restoration of Jerusalem.

It is important to note that Isaiah speaks of “the new heavens and the new earth” in the context of the restoration of Jerusalem and the regathering of the Jews “from all the nations . . . to my holy mountain Jerusalem” (Is 66:20). This means that the description of all flesh coming to worship “from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath” refers first of all to the hoped-for political restoration of Jerusalem and its religious services, and second, to the End-time restoration of this earth, of which the former was a type.

Prophetic Perspective. Elsewhere I have shown how the prophets often intermingle imminent historical events with far distant events.²⁰ The prophet Isaiah, for example, announces the *nearness* of the Day of the Lord with reference to the destruction of Babylon by the Medes, saying: “Wail, for the day of the Lord is *near*; as destruction from the Almighty it will come” (Is 13:6). In the context of this impending historical judgment, Isaiah describes the final Day of the Lord which will be accompanied by the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars and which “will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity” (Is 13:10-11).

As the imminent destruction of Babylon is seen by Isaiah as a partial realization of the ultimate accomplishments of the Day of the Lord, so the restoration of Jerusalem and its worship services are seen by the same prophet as part of the final restoration of this earth. This capacity of the prophets to see the ultimate divine accomplishments through the transparency of imminent historical events is generally called “prophetic perspective.”

Proof of Social and Religious Stability. The regular assembling for worship on the new moon and on the Sabbath is given by Isaiah as proof of the stability of life in the restored Jerusalem. This assurance of stability is conveyed also in the preceding verse which says that “the new earth . . . shall remain . . . so shall your descendants and your name remain” (Is 66:22). In other words, Isaiah reassures the people of the permanence (“shall remain”) and stability of both the social and religious life in the new restored Jerusalem.

The prophet Ezekiel offers a similar description of stability in the restored Jerusalem, when he writes, for example, “The people of the land shall worship at the entrance of that gate before the Lord on the sabbath and on the new moons” (Ezek 46:3).

Importance of New Moon. The day of the new moon is specifically mentioned because of the vital role it played in determining not only the beginning of each month but also the time to celebrate key festivals. The feasts of Passover and Booths were established on the basis of the month in which they occurred. Pentecost depended on Passover and thus indirectly on the new moon. Christian Easter and Pentecost reflect the same pattern today. The new moon of the seventh month was especially important (Lev 23:24; Neh 8:2), presumably because it marked the beginning of the year and the announcement of the forthcoming Day of Atonement 10 days later (Num 29:1, 6-7).

Since the dates of the new moon were determined in ancient Israel by actual observation, the appearance of the new moon was essential to the stability of the civil and religious calendar. This explains why Isaiah and Ezekiel speak of the regular assembling in the restored Jerusalem on the new moon and on the Sabbath. To them this signified worship regularity, not only on the weekly Sabbath—which occurred every seven days irrespective of lunar cycles—but also on the annual feasts—which were dependent upon appearance of the new moon.

New Moon and New Earth. Will the day of the new moon be observed in the new earth together with the Sabbath? My answer is no, because, as noted earlier, the primary function of the day of the new moon was to aid ancient Israel in calculating the time of their annual feasts and in preparing for them. The blowing of the trumpets on the new moon of the seventh month served to warn the people about the impending Day of Atonement which was to come 10 days later (Num 29:1, 6-7). Inasmuch as the primary function of the new moon—namely, to aid ancient Israel in calculating the annual feasts—terminated with the coming of Christ, there is no reason to believe that it will be restored again in the new earth.

Why then does Isaiah mention the new moon as a time of regular worship gathering in the new earth? Because, as explained earlier, the prophet describes by means of the prophetic perspective the ultimate restoration of this earth in the context of the historical repatriation of the Jews and rebuilding of Jerusalem. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between those elements which applied to national Israel, such as the new moon, and those elements which will continue in the new earth such as the Sabbath.

Distinction Between Historical and Eschatological. The same distinction must be made in other prophetic visions of the new world. John the Revelator, for example, describes the New Jerusalem as having a wall “a hundred and forty-four cubits” high (Rev 21:17). It is hard to believe that the New Jerusalem will need the protection of such a high wall when there will be no enemies to fear.

The conclusion, then, is that as John portrays the sense of security of the New Jerusalem through the familiar imagery of an exceedingly high wall, so Isaiah describes the stability of the religious life in the new earth through the imagery of regular worship gathering at the new moons and Sabbaths in the expected political restoration of Jerusalem and its people. By distinguishing between the historical and eschatological functions of Isaiah’s description, it becomes evident that the reference to the new moons applies to the former and not to the latter.

QUESTION:

We read in Joshua 10:13 that “The sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.” Did not this miracle disrupt the seven-days cycle by adding one day that apparently remained uncounted?

ANSWER:

No New Calendar Day. The miraculous lengthening of the day which provided Joshua and his army additional time for the total destruction of the enemies of Israel did not disrupt the seven-day cycle because no new calendric day was gained or lost. The only alteration was the lengthening of the daylight time of one day. Such a lengthening resulted in one longer day but not in the addition of one calendric day.

A calendric day is determined by the alternation of day and night which results from the rotation of the earth on its axis with respect to the sun. How the daylight time was lengthened at Gibeon is not explained. The inspired writer used the popular language of the day when he wrote, “The sun stood

still” (Jos 10:13). Even in our modern scientific age we speak of the sun rising or setting. Obviously it is not the sun that stands still or rises or sets.

Lengthening of Daylight. We do not know what caused the apparent halting of the sun. Since a slowing down of the rotation of the earth can have disastrous effects, some have suggested that the phenomenon could have been produced by some refraction of light. Whatever miraculous method was used by God, the fact remains that the duration of the daylight was lengthened by several hours.

The Hebrew is not specific on the length of time the sun was delayed in its course. The sun “did not hasten to go down as a perfect day” or “about a whole day.” Thus the text allows for the lengthening of the daylight in Palestine. In either case the lengthening of the daylight did not disrupt the weekly cycle because no new calendric day was either gained or lost.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 8

1. Augustine, *Confessions* 13, 24, 25, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, 1979), vol. 1, p. 207.
2. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids, 1957), p. 32.
3. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (New York, 1961), p. 63.
4. Cassuto (n. 3), p. 68.
5. On the alleged Mosaic origin of the Sabbath see my discussion in *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 42-44; also in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 225-229.
6. *Genesis Rabbah* 11:7; 64:4; 79:6.
7. For examples and discussion see *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 43-44.
8. The argument appears for the first time in the writings of Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 19,6; 23,3; 27,5; 29,3; 46,2-3. It is later reiterated by Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos* 2; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1, 4, 8; *Demonstratio Evangelica* 1, 6; also by the Syriac *Didascalia* 26.
9. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, 1972), vol. 2, p. 339.

10. For a brief survey of the application of the Sabbath law to Sunday observance, see L. L. McReavy, "Servile Work: The Evolution of the Present Sunday Law," *Clergy Review* 9 (1935): 273-276.

11. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (New York, 1947), Part I-II, Q. 100, 3, p. 1039.

12. Thomas Aquinas (n. 11), p. 1042.

13. Melancthon, *On Christian Doctrine, Lou Communes 1555*, Clyde L. Manschreck, ed. and trans. (Grand Rapids, 1965), p. 96.

14. Melancthon (n. 13), p. 97.

15. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, 1948), p. 106.

16. See (n. 15), p. 106.

17. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, 1972), vol. 1, p. 343.

18. R. J. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in Protestant Tradition," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 323.

19. Donald A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels" (n. 18), pp. 66-67.

20. My discussion of the prophetic perspective is found in the second chapter of *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness*, p. 42.

Chapter 9

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

QUESTION:

Where is the Sabbath found in the New Testament?

ANSWER:

Implicit Indications. A reader can hardly miss finding the Sabbath in the New Testament. More coverage is given to the Sabbath teaching and ministry of Christ by the Evangelists than to any other aspect of Christ's ministry.

It is important to remember that the Gospels were written, not immediately after Christ's death as mere biographies of His life, but about 30 to 60 years after His departure as theological handbooks to promote the Christian faith. The unusual coverage given by the Gospel writers to what Jesus said and did on the Sabbath is indicative of the great importance attached to Sabbathkeeping in their respective communities at the time of their writing.

Explicit Indications. Besides the implicit indications suggested by the unusual coverage, the New Testament contains explicit indications of the fact and manner of Sabbathkeeping. The reader is referred to chapter V where these indications are presented.

QUESTION:

Was not the provocative manner of Sabbathkeeping of Christ designed to pave the way for the abandonment of the Sabbath and adoption of Sundaykeeping instead?

ANSWER:

Nullify or Clarify? This is a popular view defended in much recent research. In my opinion, such a view rests on an arbitrary interpretation of the Sabbath episodes of the Gospels. What the defenders of this view fail to recognize is that Christ's provocative manner of Sabbathkeeping was designed not to nullify but to clarify the divine intent of the Fourth Commandment.

Repeatedly in the Gospels Christ acts as the supreme interpreter of the law by attacking external obedience and human traditions which often had obscured the spirit and intent of God's commandments (Matt 5:21-22, 27-28; 9:13; 12:7; 23:1-39).

Divine Intent. It is noteworthy that in all instances where Christ or His disciples were accused of Sabbathbreaking, He defended their conduct—often by appealing to the Scripture (“Have you not read . . .”—Matt 12:3, 5)—and thus showing that their actions were in harmony with the divine intent of the Sabbath.

An objective reading of those Sabbath pronouncements where Christ declares the Sabbath to be a day “to do good” (Matt 12:12), “to save life” (Mark 3:4), to show “mercy” rather than religiosity (Matt 12:7) and “to loose” men and women from physical and spiritual bonds (Luke 13:16), offers unmistakable proof of Christ's intent to clarify and not to nullify the Sabbath.

QUESTION:

If God wanted Christians to observe the Fourth Commandment, why did He not reenact it in the New Testament as He did the other nine commandments?

ANSWER:

No Reenactment. This frequently asked question is based on the assumption that all of the Ten Commandments, with the exception of the Fourth, are reenacted in the New Testament. This assumption is totally wrong because none of the Ten Commandments are in fact reenacted in the New Testament. An important reason is that New Testament writers saw in Christ not a new Lawgiver who enacted a new or a modified Decalogue, but rather

a Revealer of the intent of God's laws (Matt 5:17-18; Luke 16:17; Rom 8:4; John 7:19; Matt 7:12).

Taken for Granted. Most of the Ten Commandments are referred to, but not reenacted, because they are taken for granted. The Second Commandment against the making of graven images is never mentioned in the New Testament, yet Protestants in general accept such a commandment as binding.

The New Testament is not a book of new laws. It does not enact new moral laws but it takes for granted the Old Testament moral law, because, as Paul affirms, "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12).

QUESTION:

How can the Ten Commandments be binding upon Christians when they were given to the Jews and include specific references to Jewish social conditions?

ANSWER:

Bible is Jewish. If a person chooses to reject the revelation which God gave to the Jews, he will have to reject the whole Bible because all of it was given to Jews. The Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse, and the Great Commission were all spoken to Jews. The reason is that the Jews were the race chosen by God to receive and communicate His truth to other nations (Deut 28:9-10; 7:6).

Many forget that the earliest Christians who, according to the book of Acts, responded by the thousands to the Messianic proclamation (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 21:20) were Jews. When they accepted Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah, they did not cease to be Jews, but simply became "believing Jews" who are described as "zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20).

No Ethnic Distinction. The attempt to make the Cross the dividing line between Judaism and Christianity, Law and Grace, Sabbathkeeping and Sundaykeeping, is based on a fictitious construct of redemptive history which is devoid of Biblical and historical support. The Scripture teaches that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him" (Rom 10:12).

Timeless Principles. The moral principles embodied in the Decalogue, namely loyalty, worship, reverence, holiness, respect to parents, love, purity, honesty, truthfulness, and contentment, are principles which transcend racial, linguistic, and cultural boundaries. The application of these principles may vary in the course of time, but their essential truth is timeless.

The Tenth Commandment condemns coveting “your neighbor’s house; . . . or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass” (Ex 20:17). Obviously today most people covet not their neighbors’ animals, but their cars, boats, pools, etc. This means that the form of covetousness has changed but its principle is the same. If people today were no longer covetous, untrue, dishonest, or unfaithful, etc., then it would be obvious that the principles of the Decalogue which condemn these sins would be no longer relevant. But that is far from true. Experience tells us that if ever there was a time when the moral guidance of the Ten Commandments was needed, it is today.

QUESTION:

Paul emphasizes that justification is “by faith apart from works of law” (Rom 3:28; cf. Gal 2:16). If Paul’s teaching is true, then why should a Christian feel obligated to observe the law? Is not the guidance of the Spirit sufficient?

ANSWER:

Method and Standard. People who raise this question ignore the fact that Paul emphasizes not only the *method* of salvation, that is, righteousness by *faith* apart from works of the law, but also the *standard* of salvation, that is *righteousness* which is manifested in the obedience to God’s commandments through faith in Jesus. To ignore this distinction mean to accuse falsely Paul of promoting justification of *sinfulness* rather than justification of *sinner*s by faith.

God’s Gift and God’s Claim. In his presentation of the dynamics of salvation both in Romans and in Galatians, Paul discusses first the method and then the standard of salvation. In the first eleven chapters of Romans as well as in the first four of Galatians, Paul explains with a variety of illustrations that the method of salvation is God’s gift of grace and not human achievement (Rom 3:21-28; 10:9-10; Gal 2:16; 3:10-11; 4:28-30). However, after his exposition of God’s gift (method) of salvation, in both epistles Paul devotes the remaining chapters to discussing God’s claim (standard) to conformity to His commandments through the grace of Christ.

To focus on *God’s gift* of salvation while overlooking *God’s claim* to conformity to His commandments means to sell short not only the teachings of Paul but also those of the Scriptures as a whole.

The divine grace that saves us from the penalty of sin continues to operate to the end in our lives by leading us to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4) and to a new conformity to God’s commandments which are the standard of the final judgment: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed

by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2).

An Indissoluble Connection. Paul recognizes the indissoluble connection between what God gives to us through Jesus and what He claims of us through the power of His Spirit. Salvation is a gift of grace, but the acceptance of this gift requires a response of obedience which shows the genuineness of our faith.

The gift of God’s grace teaches us “to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12, 13). It is because God has given us, through Christ, freedom from the penalty and power of sin “that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:4).

God’s claim is not a demand for absolute perfection, yet His claim confronts us with an unquestionably high standard of righteousness to be reached through the power of His Spirit (1 Cor 7:19; Rom 8:3-4). The purpose of God’s gift of grace is not to excuse our sinful nature but to transform it into His likeness (Rom 12:2).

The Proof of Our Transformation. The proof of the transformation of our sinful nature is obedience to God’s commandments or what Paul calls the “fruits of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22). This explains why in the final judgment God “will render to every man according to his works” (Rom 2:6). “Works” or “fruits” are decisive in the final judgment because they constitute the proof of the acceptance by faith of God’s gift of salvation.

The conclusion then is that Paul’s emphasis on justification “by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom 3:28) is not intended to release a person from obedience to God’s law, because as the same Apostle explains, God’s gift of salvation through Jesus Christ is designed to enable us to fulfill “the just requirements of the law” (Rom 8:4).

QUESTION:

Does not Paul clearly teach that Christ “abolished in his flesh the law of commandments” (Eph 2:15) and consequently believers “are discharged from the law” (Rom 7:6)? Does not this mean that a person who accepts Christ is released from the obligation of observing the law?

ANSWER:

A Double Concept. This question, like the previous one, ignores the fact that Paul speaks about the law both positively and negatively. He says not

only that Christ “*abolished*” the law (Eph 2:15), but also that He “*establishes*” it (Rom 3:31); not only that “we are discharged from the law” (Rom 7:6) about also that “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12); not only that “a man is justified by faith apart from the law” (Rom 3:28) but also that “neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God” (1 Cor 7:19).

Different Contexts. The proposal I have submitted and discussed in chapter VI is that Paul’s contradictory statements about the law can be explained by recognizing the *different contexts* in which Paul speaks of the law. When he speaks of the law in the *context of salvation* (justification—right standing before God), he clearly affirms that law-keeping is of no avail (Rom 3:20). On the other hand, when Paul speaks of the law in the *context of Christian conduct* (sanctification—right living before God), then he maintains the value and validity of God’s law (Rom 7:12; 13:8-10; 1 Cor 7:19). For example, when Paul speaks of the various forms of human wickedness in 1 Timothy 1:8-10, he explicitly affirms “now we know that the law is good” (v. 8).

Three times Paul states: “neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision” and each time he concludes this statement with a different phrase: “but keeping the commandments of God . . . but faith working through love . . . but a new creation” (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15). The parallelism suggests that Paul equates the keeping of God’s commandments with a working faith and a new life in Christ. The very purpose of Christ’s coming, Paul explains, is so that “the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us” through the dynamic power of His Spirit (Rom 8:4).

The Christian, then, according to Paul, is not under law as a means of salvation, but is under the law as a revelation of God’s ethical standards for his life, because Christ has abolished the law as a *method of salvation* but has established it as a *standard for Christian conduct*.

QUESTION:

Does not Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:16, as Paul K. Jewett puts it, “come as near to a demonstration as anything could, that he taught his converts that they had no obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament”?¹

ANSWER:

Historical Interpretation. Throughout Christian history, Colossians 2:16-17 has been consistently interpreted to mean that Paul regarded the Sabbath as an Old Testament typological institution fulfilled by Christ and

therefore no longer binding on Christians. The statement “Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath” (Col 2:16) has been historically interpreted as a warning from Paul against the five mentioned practices, the last of which is the sabbath.²

Approbation, not Condemnation. We have shown in chapter VII that this historical interpretation is totally wrong because in this passage Paul is warning the Colossians not against the observances of these practices as such, but against “anyone” (*tis*) who passes judgment on how to eat, drink, and observe sacred times. In other words, *the judge is not Paul but Colossian false teachers* who impose “regulations” (2:20) on how to observe these practices in order to achieve “rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body” (2:23).

By warning against the right of the false teachers to “pass judgment” on how to observe festivals, Paul is challenging not the validity of the festivals as such but the authority of the false teachers to legislate on the manner of their observance. The obvious implication then is that Paul in this text is expressing *not a condemnation but an approbation of the mentioned practices*, which include Sabbathkeeping.

This is the conclusion that D. R. De Lacey himself draws, in spite of his conviction that Paul did not expect Gentile converts to observe the Sabbath. He writes: “Here again (Col 2:16), then, *it seems that Paul could happily countenance Sabbathkeeping* . . . However, we interpret the situation, Paul’s statement ‘Let no one pass judgment on you,’ indicates that no stringent regulations are to be laid down over the use of festivals.”³ In the light of these observations, we conclude that in Colossians 2:16, Paul expresses not a condemnation but an implicit approbation of practices such as Sabbathkeeping.

QUESTION:

Does not Paul teach in Romans 14:5 that it does not matter whether a person esteems one day better than another or all the days alike? Does not this teaching imply that the observance or non-observance of the Sabbath is a matter of personal choice?

ANSWER:

We have already shown in chapter VII that the Sabbath cannot be legitimately read into Paul’s statement: “One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike” (Rom 14:5). In brief, the reasons we have submitted are five.

No Reference to Mosaic Law. First, the controversy in Romans 14 between the “weak” and the “strong” believers over diet and days can hardly be traced back to the Mosaic law, because nowhere does the Mosaic law prescribe strict vegetarianism, total abstinence from wine, or a preference over days presumably for fasting. That the Mosaic law is not at stake in Romans 14 is also indicated by the term “*koinos*—common” which is used to designate “unclean” food (14:14). This term is radically different from the word “*akathartos*—impure” used in Leviticus 11 (Septuagint) to designate unlawful foods.

Not “All Days Alike” Endorsement. Second, Paul applies the basic principle “observe it in honor of the Lord” (14:6) *only* to the case of the person “who observes the day.” He never says the opposite, namely, “the man who esteems all days alike, esteems them in honor of the Lord.” In other words, with regard to diet, he teaches that one can honor the Lord both by eating and by abstaining (14:6) but with regard to days, he does not even concede that the person who regards all the days alike does so to the Lord. Thus Paul hardly gives his endorsement to those who esteemed all days alike.

Paul Observed the Sabbath. Third, if, as it is generally presumed, it was the “weak” believer who observed the Sabbath, Paul would classify himself with the “weak” since he observed the Sabbath and other Jewish feasts (Acts 18:4, 19; 17:1, 10, 17; 20:16). Paul, however, views himself as “strong” (“we who are strong”—15:1), thus, he could hardly have been thinking of Sabbathkeeping when he speaks of the preference over days.

Sabbathkeeping: No Personal Matter. Fourth, Paul’s advice “Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom 14:5), can hardly refer to the observance of holy days such as Sabbath, Passover, and Pentecost. If Paul had taught his Gentile converts to regard Sabbathkeeping as a matter of personal conviction, Jewish Christians would readily have accused him of temerity in setting aside the Sabbath law, as they did it with regard to the circumcision (Acts 21:21).

If the conflict in the Roman Church had been over the observance of holy days, the problem would have been even more manifest than the one over diet. After all, eating habits are a private matter, but Sabbathkeeping is a public, religious exercise of the whole community. Any disagreement on the latter would have been not only noticeable but also inflammatory.

The absence of any controversy between Paul and Jewish Christians over Sabbathkeeping is perhaps the most telling evidence that Paul never made the observance of such a day a personal matter.

A Limited Problem. Fifth, the fact that Paul devotes 21 verses to the discussion of food and less than two verses (14:5-6) to that of days suggests that the latter was a very limited problem for the Roman Church, presumably because it had to do with private conviction on the merit or demerit of certain days for doing some spiritual exercises such as fasting. Support for this view is provided by the *Didache* (ch. 8) which enjoins fasting on Wednesday and Friday rather than on Monday and Thursday, like the Jews. On these matters, Paul refuses to deliberate because he recognized that spiritual exercises can be performed in different ways by different people.

In the light of the above considerations we conclude that Romans 14:5 does not imply that the observance or non-observance of the Sabbath is a matter of personal choice, because the “days” referred to had no connection with Biblical holy days.

QUESTION:

Did not the Jerusalem Council make a definite break with the Mosaic law by exempting Gentile believers from the circumcision? Is it not plausible to believe that the same Council exempted the Gentiles from Sabbathkeeping also since the latter is not part of the four regulations which the Gentiles were to observe (Acts 15:20)?

ANSWER:

No Break with Mosaic Law. Contrary to the prevailing view, the Jerusalem Council did not make a break with the Mosaic law in general or with Sabbathkeeping in particular with regard to the Gentiles. My three main reasons for this conclusion are given in chapter II and can be summarized as follows.

Appeal to Moses. First, the Council endorsed James’ proposal to exempt Gentiles from the circumcision because James appealed to Moses for his authority: “For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues” (Acts 15:21). In other words, James argues that his proposal is to be accepted because it expresses what Moses expects from the Gentiles who wish to live among the Israelites. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the four ritual laws are part of the Mosaic law (Lev 17-18).

Gentile God-fearers. Second, the Gentiles the Council had in mind were mostly, if not all, God-fearers who had been instructed in the Jewish faith in general and on Sabbathkeeping in particular (Acts 10:2; 13:42-44; 14:1). In fact the custom of Sabbathkeeping had been accepted not only by

Gentile God-fearers but also by pagan Gentiles who had no interest in becoming Jews.

In a well-known passage, Philo writes: “There is not a single people, to which the custom of Sabbath observance has not spread.”⁴ Tertullian reproaches the pagans for having adopted Jewish customs such as the Sabbath.⁵ Another fact often ignored is that the Jews influenced the Romans to adopt the seven-day week instead of their eight-day market week (*nundinum*).

Offense to Jewish Christians. Third, if the Gentiles were instructed by the Council to abstain from ritual acts such as eating food offered to idols, in order not to offend Jewish Christians, they could hardly have been instructed to ignore Sabbathkeeping which would have been even a greater offense to Jewish Christians. It is only the fact that Gentile Christians were already observing the Sabbath that made it unnecessary for the Jerusalem Council even to discuss it.

In the light of these considerations the Jerusalem Council could hardly have considered exempting Gentile Christians from Sabbathkeeping.

QUESTION:

The Roman government had recognized Judaism as a lawful religion (*religio licita*). This legal recognition enabled the Jews to freely practice their religion and even to be exempted from civil duties on the Sabbath. Since we have no historical indications that the Romans granted the same Sabbath privileges to Gentile Christians, would not this have made it difficult for them to observe the Sabbath? Is not the absence of any reference to problems encountered by Gentiles in observing the Sabbath a strong indication that they did not observe it?

ANSWER:

This question ignores three important facts which I have discussed elsewhere, and which I will summarize briefly in this context.⁶

Saturday: First Day. First, in the first century A.D. Saturday was the first day of the Roman planetary week, as attested by several literary and archaeological evidences. Saturday, that is, the day of Saturn (*dies Saturni*) was followed by Sunday, that is, the day of the Sun (*dies Solis*). The priority of Saturday over Sunday continued until about the middle of the second century, when the primacy and prestige of the day of Saturn was taken over by the day of the Sun.

It is not clear how the Romans observed Saturday in the first century. Some texts indicate that it was regarded as an unlucky day (*dies nefastus*) for

doing business. Tibullus (about 30 B.C.), for example, explains that he could have justified his staying in Rome with his beloved Delia on Saturday by arguing that “the sacred day of Saturn held one back.”⁷ Similarly Sextus Propertius, a contemporary of Tibullus, speaks of “the sign of Saturn that brings woe to one and to all.”⁸

Texts such as the ones quoted suggest that in the first century Saturday was the day in which the Romans restricted their activities out of a superstitious veneration for the god Saturn. The superstitious veneration of Saturn would obviously facilitate Sabbath observance by Gentile Christians.

Influence of Jewish Sabbath. A second important consideration, closely related to the first one, is the widespread influence of Jewish Sabbath customs in the Roman world. In fact, it is generally recognized that it was the popularity of the Jewish seven-day week, with its Sabbath, that influenced the Romans just before the beginning of Christianity to adopt the seven-day planetary week in place of their eight-day (*nundinum*) week.

The Stoic philosopher Seneca laments that “the customs of this accursed nation [Jews] have gained such influence that they are now received throughout the world. The vanquished have given laws to their victors . . . the greater part of the [non-Jewish] people go through a ritual not knowing why they do so.”⁹

The testimony of Seneca is confirmed by the Jewish historian Josephus when he writes: “There is not one Greek or barbarian nor a single nation to whom our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread, and where the fasts and the lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed.”¹⁰

The Christian apologist Tertullian confirms the widespread Roman adoption of the Jewish Sabbath as a time for “ease and luxury.” Responding to the pagan charge that Christians had adopted Sun-worship because they observed Sun-day, Tertullian writes: “We have some resemblance to those of you who devote the day of Saturn to ease and luxury, though they too go far away from Jewish ways, of which indeed they are ignorant.”¹¹

Willy Rordorf rightly points out that the spread of Jewish Sabbath customs in the Roman empire offers a plausible explanation for the origin of Saturn’s day by association with the Jewish Sabbath. Astrological and superstitious beliefs apparently came to be associated with the observance of Jewish Sabbath customs, especially since many Romans who adopted such customs were not aware of their Jewish origin.¹²

The widespread influence in the Roman empire of Jewish Sabbath customs which indirectly seems to have contributed to the superstitious

regard for Saturn's day as a day for "ease and luxury," would facilitate Sabbath observance by Gentile Christians.

Gentile God-fearers. A third important consideration, often ignored, is that many, if not most, of the Gentiles referred to in the New Testament were God-fearers who had been instructed in the Jewish faith (Acts 10:2; 13:42-44; 14:1; Gal 5:2). This explains why some of them "desired to be under law" (Gal 5:18) by adopting such practices as circumcision (Gal 5:2). When the Gospel proclamation reached beyond Gentile God-fearers to pagans untouched by Judaism, then new problems arose. Gnosticism and docetism became more important problems than legalism.

Christians who had been Gentile God-fearers would benefit from the legal protection the Romans granted to the Jews, which included freedom to observe the Sabbath. Moreover, it is generally recognized that Christians, whether of Jewish or Gentile background, were initially seen by the Romans as a kind of Jewish sect. Thus they benefited from the same religious freedom granted to the Jews.

Problems with Any Day. A fourth and final consideration is that Gentile Christians would have encountered problems with the observance of any day. Considering the length of the early Christian meetings and the time needed to travel and to attend such meetings, it is easy to imagine how that would swallow up much of the day. This means that Christians who were dependent workers would have encountered problems with their employers no matter which day of the week they attended religious services. The fact that the New Testament makes no reference to such problems can hardly be interpreted as proof that Christians did not worship and rest on any day, since Christians gathering for worship are often mentioned (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 14:1; 16:13; 18:4; Heb 10:25).

The silence of the New Testament on this matter suggests that the problem of Sabbathkeeping must have been a limited problem, both because Saturday, as we have seen, was a day of reduced activity for the Romans and because presumably most Christians, as today, were able to make arrangements to obtain their Sabbath free.

QUESTION:

Does not Paul teach in Colossians 2:14 that the law was nailed to the Cross? If this is true, are not Christians released from the obligation to observe the law in general and the Sabbath in particular?

ANSWER:

Absence of “Law.” In spite of its antiquity and popularity, this interpretation is totally unfounded for at least two reasons. First, because as E. Lohse points out, “in the whole of the epistle the word law is not used at all. Not only that, but the whole significance of the law, which appears unavoidable for Paul when he presents his gospel, is completely absent.”¹³

Second, this interpretation detracts from the immediate argument (v. 13) designed to prove the fulness of God’s forgiveness. The wiping out of the moral and/or ceremonial law would hardly provide Christians with the divine assurance of forgiveness. Guilt is not removed by destroying law codes. The latter would only leave mankind without moral principles.

Record-book of Sin. What was nailed to the Cross was not the “law—*nomos*” but the *cheirographon*, a term which occurs only in Colossians 2:14. Its meaning has been clarified by its occurrence in apocalyptic literature where *cheirographon* is used to designate the “record-book of sin” or the certificate of sin-indebtedness but not the moral or ceremonial law.¹⁴

By this daring metaphor Paul affirms that through Christ, God has “cancelled,” “set aside,” “nailed to the cross” “the written record of our sins which because of the regulations was against us.” The legal basis of the record of sins was “the binding statutes, regulations” (*tois dogmasin*) but what God destroyed on the Cross was not the *legal ground* (law) for our entanglement in sin, but the *written record* of our sins.

By destroying the evidence of our sins, God has also “disarmed the principalities and powers” (2:15) since it is no longer possible for them to accuse those who have been forgiven. There is no reason therefore for Christians to feel incomplete and to seek the help of inferior mediators, since Christ has provided complete redemption and forgiveness.

We conclude then that the document nailed to the cross is not the law in general or the Sabbath in particular, but rather the record of our sins. Any attempt to read into it a reference to the Sabbath or to any other Old Testament ordinance is an unwarranted and gratuitous fantasy.

QUESTION:

Is not the Sabbath part of the Old Covenant based on salvation by works that was done away with the coming of Christ? Does not the New Covenant based on salvation “by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom 3:28) release Christians from the observance of the law, including the Fourth Commandment?

ANSWER:

A Faulty Assumption. This popular view rests on the faulty assumption that under the Old Covenant people were saved on the basis of obedience to God's commandments, while under the New Covenant people are saved by faith in the God's gracious provision of salvation.

If this were true, it would surely open to question the consistency and fairness of God. It would imply that in redemptive history God has offered salvation on two radically different basis: on the basis of human obedience in the Old Covenant and on the basis of divine grace in the New Covenant. It would further imply that presumably God learned through the experience of His chosen people, the Jews, that human beings cannot earn salvation by themselves because they tend to disobey. Thus, He finally decided to implement a New Covenant whereby salvation is offered to believing persons as a divine gift rather than a human achievement.

If such a construct were true, it would make God changeable and subject to learning by mistakes as human beings do. The truth of the matter is that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8). Salvation has always been in the Old and New Covenants first and foremost a divine gift and not a human achievement. No person will ever be saved because of what he has done or failed to do.

Old Covenant Based on Grace. Part of the problem is the failure to realize that in the Old Covenant God revealed to the Israelites not only *principles* of moral conduct but also *provision* of salvation through the typology of the sacrificial system. It is noteworthy that when God invited Moses to come up on the mountain, He gave him not only "the table of stone, with the law and the commandment" (Ex 24:12), but also the "pattern of the tabernacle" (Ex 25:9), which was designed to explain typologically His provision of grace and forgiveness.

The major difference between the Old and New Covenants is not one of methods of salvation, but, we might say, of shadow versus reality. The Old Covenant was "symbolic" (Heb 9:9) of the "more excellent" redemptive ministry of Christ (Heb 8:6). Consequently, it was necessary for Christ to come "once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26).

The effect of Christ's coming is described as "setting aside" (Heb 7:18), making "obsolete" (Heb 8:13), "abolishing" (Heb 10:9) all the Levitical services associated with the Old Covenant. Some have interpreted statements such as these as indicating that Christ by His coming has abrogated all the Old

Testament laws, including the Sabbath. This interpretation ignores that such statements deal with the Levitical priesthood and services of the Old Covenant, and not with the principles of God's moral law, which includes the Fourth Commandment.

It is noteworthy that while Hebrews declares the typological services of the Old Covenant as "abolished" (10:9), "obsolete" and "ready to vanish away" (8:13), it explicitly teaches, as we have shown in chapters 2 and 4, that a "Sabbathkeeping is left behind for the people of God" (4:9).

Paul and the Law. Similarly, Paul repudiates the law as a system that could save by itself apart from Christ: "if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal 2:21). Yet he upholds the law as a revelation of God's ethical standard for Christian conduct. For instance, he states that Christ came "in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom 8:4) through the dynamic power of His Spirit.

Three times Paul states: "neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision" and each time he concludes this statement with a different phrase: "but keeping the commandments of God . . . but faith working through love . . . but a new creation" (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15). The parallelism suggests that a believer who has been saved by faith under the New Covenant, is not released from the observance of God's commandments, but empowered to observe them.

QUESTION:

Does not Hebrews 4 teach that the Sabbath rest is a symbol of our salvation-rest in Christ? If so, does not this mean that the observance of the day is superfluous?

ANSWER:

Yes, the Sabbath rest is a symbol of our redemption-rest in Christ. In fact, it is also a symbol of the final rest which awaits the people of God. This symbolic function of the Sabbath, however, does not negate but necessitates its actual observance, for at least two reasons.

Symbol Needed to Experience Reality. First, a believer can hardly experience the redemptive rest symbolized by the Sabbath rest, if the actual experience of the physical Sabbath rest is done away with. It is through the experience provided by symbols that we conceptualize and appropriate spiritual realities. The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are not viewed as unnecessary simply because they are symbols of our redemption through Christ's atoning death.

To retain the Sabbath rest as a symbol of our redemption-rest in Christ while denying its actual observance is flagrant contradiction. How can the physical Sabbath rest help a person experience Christ's redemption-rest, when the physical experience of such a rest is renounced or denounced?

Sabbath Rest Remains. Second, it is noteworthy that while the author of Hebrews declares the Levitical priesthood and its services as “abolished” (Heb 10:9), “obsolete” and “ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13), he explicitly teaches that a “Sabbathkeeping is left behind for the people of God” (Heb 4:9). The reason for the permanence of Sabbathkeeping is because its symbolic function can effectively help the believer conceptualize and experience the reality of God's marvelous accomplishments: creation, redemption, and final restoration.

The present Sabbath-rest experience enables the believer to appropriate the reality both of the past creation-redemption and of the future restoration-reunion. To do away with such a vital symbol means to deprive Christians of a most effective vehicle given by God to understand and experience His creative, redemptive, and restorative love.

QUESTION:

What is the meaning of Sabbathkeeping in Hebrews 4?

ANSWER:

Historically, the Sabbathkeeping mentioned in Hebrews 4:9-10 has been interpreted as figurative abstention from sinful acts, rather than literal cessation from work. In support of this view appeal is made to Hebrews' reference to “dead works” (6:1; 9:14). Such a concept, however, cannot be read back into Hebrews 4:10, where a comparison is made between the divine and the human cessation from “works.” It would be absurd to think that God ceased from “sinful deeds.” The point of the analogy is simply that as God ceased on the seventh day from His creation work, so believers are to cease on the same day from their labors. This is a simple statement of the nature of Sabbathkeeping which essentially involves cessation from works.

Literal Sabbathkeeping. Clear support for a literal understanding of Sabbathkeeping is provided by the usage of the noun “*sabbatismos*—sabbath rest” and of the verb “*apoleipetai*—remains,” both of which occur in Hebrews 4:9. The verb “*apoleipetai*” literally means “to be left behind.” Thus, the verb implies that Sabbathkeeping has not terminated with Christ's coming, because it “has been left behind for the people of God.”

The noun “*sabbatismos*—Sabbath rest,” which occurs only once in the New Testament, supports this conclusion. We have shown in chapter 4 that this noun is used several times in post-canonical literature as a technical term for Sabbathkeeping. This usage corresponds to the Septuagint usage of the cognate verb *sabbatizo* (cf. Ex 16:30; Lev 23:32; 26:34f.; 2 Chron 36:21), which also has reference to Sabbath observance. Thus, we would conclude then that the references to cessation from work in Hebrews 4:10, and to the verb “remains” and the noun “Sabbathkeeping” in v. 9, make it abundantly clear that the writer is thinking of a literal Sabbath observance.

The Meaning of Sabbathkeeping. Considering the concern of Hebrews to counteract the tendency of his readers to adopt Jewish liturgical customs as a means to gain access to God, the author could hardly have emphasized solely the physical “cessation” aspect of Sabbathkeeping. This aspect yields only a negative idea of rest, one which would only serve to encourage existing Judaizing tendencies. Obviously then, the author attributes a deeper meaning to the resting on the Sabbath.

This deeper meaning can be seen in the antithesis the author makes between those who failed to enter into God’s rest because of “*unbelief—apeitheias*” (Heb 4:6, 11)—that is, faithlessness which results in disobedience—and those who enter it by “*faith—pistei*” (Heb 4:2, 3), that is, faithfulness that results in obedience.

The act of resting on the Sabbath for the author of Hebrews is not merely a routine ritual (cf. “sacrifice”—Matt 12:7), but rather a faith-response to God. Such a response entails not the hardening of one’s heart (4:7) but the making of oneself available to “hear his voice” (Heb 4:7). It means experiencing God’s salvation rest not by *works* but by *faith*, not by *doing* but by *being* saved through *faith* (Heb 4:2, 3, 11). It means ceasing from our work to allow God to work in us more fully and freely.

In Hebrews the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God (Heb 4:9) is not a mere day of idleness but rather an opportunity renewed every week to enter *God’s rest*, that is, to free oneself from the cares of work in order to experience freely by faith God’s creation and redemption rest.

This expanded interpretation of Sabbathkeeping in the light of the Christ event was apparently designed to wean Christians away from a too materialistic understanding of its observance. To achieve this objective, the author on the one hand reassures his readers of the permanence of the blessings contemplated by the Sabbath rest and on the other hand explains that the nature of these blessings consists in experiencing both a present-salvation-rest and the future restoration-rest which God offers to those “who have believed” (Heb 4:3).

QUESTION:

Can a person who does not keep the Sabbath be saved?

ANSWER:

A Divine Gift. Salvation is first and foremost a divine gift and not a human achievement. No person will ever be saved or lost because of what he has done or failed to do. What is essential is a whole-hearted acceptance of the provision of salvation offered to us through Christ's atoning death.

A Human Response. Accepting God's gift of salvation means, however, also accepting God's claim to conformity to His will through the grace of Christ. Salvation is a gift of grace but the acceptance of this gift requires a response of obedience which shows the genuineness of our faith. Sabbathkeeping offers us a unique opportunity to respond to God because the consecration of the Sabbath time to the Lord enables us to consecrate our life to Him.

Moreover, the Sabbath, by enjoining us to stop our work, makes us free and available for God's omnipotent grace to work in us. Thus the act of resting on the Sabbath represents the acceptance of salvation by grace and not by works. It represents our resignation to human efforts to achieve salvation and our willing acceptance of God's gracious provision of salvation. We stop our work on the Sabbath to allow God to work in us.

QUESTION:

Does not the principle of Sabbathkeeping consist in observing *one day-in-seven* rather than the actual seventh day of the week? Thus, does not Sundaykeeping fulfill the intent of the Sabbath commandment, since it respects the *one day-in-seven* principle?

ANSWER:

Popular View. The notion that the principle of Sabbathkeeping consists in observing *one day-in-seven* rather than the *seventh day*, has been historically held both by Catholics and Protestants. In spite of its antiquity and popularity, this notion is devoid of Biblical support, as I have shown in *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, pp. 45-56.

This notion is based on the fictitious argument that while the actual *specification of the seventh day* is *ceremonial*, that is, was given by Moses to the Jews to teach them about the spiritual rest to be manifested in Christ, the principle of *one day-in-seven* is *moral*, was given by God to mankind at creation. Christ allegedly annulled the ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath

commandment, that is, the specification of the seventh day, while reaffirming the moral aspect of it, that is, the principle of one day-in-seven.

This arbitrary and artificial distinction between the so-called *moral* (creational principle of one day-in-seven) and *ceremonial* (Mosaic specification of the seventh day), is based on fiction rather than fact. In the Scripture the notion of one day-in-seven is totally absent. Both at creation and in the Sabbath commandment God specifies “*the seventh day*” (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11) and not one day-in-seven. The reason is because God has specifically chosen the *seventh day* to memorialize his creative (Ex 20:11) and redemptive activities (Deut 5:15).

Moreover, do not Christians today, like the Jews in the Old Testament, need the typologic-symbolic function of the Sabbath to conceptualize and experience the blessings of creation and redemption?

If indeed the Scripture taught the principle of one day-in-seven for worship and rest, then it would have prescribed some other day off for people like the priest who had to work on the Sabbath. The absence of such a provision proves the crucial importance Scripture attributes to the *seventh day*, as opposed to the notion of one day-in-seven so greatly relied upon by those who wish to make Sunday the equivalent of the Biblical Sabbath.

QUESTION:

How can the Sabbath be a divine precept when its observance has often led people to become legalistic, that is, to seek to be saved by their own works rather than by divine grace?

ANSWER:

The fact that some Christians have perverted the principle of Sabbathkeeping into a legalistic system of salvation, does not nullify the validity of the principle per se. A *precept* is not nullified by the fact that some *pervert* it. Legalists tend to forget that the Savior made the Sabbath a day of “mercy” rather than “sacrifice” (Matt 12:7-8), a time to love God and one’s fellow beings, rather than a time to parade one’s righteousness by fulfilling rituals.

A correct understanding and experience of the Sabbath can prove to be a powerful antidote against legalism. Why? Simply because the Sabbath teaches us not to work for our salvation (legalism), but to cease from all our works, in order to allow God to work more fully and more freely in our lives.

QUESTION:

Was not the Sabbath given to guarantee physical rest especially to dependant workers? What need is there for the Sabbath today as a day of rest when most people work only five days a week and can enjoy a weekend of rest and leisure?

ANSWER:

The purpose of the command to rest on the Sabbath is God-centered rest and not self-centered relaxation. We are invited to rest on the Sabbath not merely for ourselves, but primarily for God: “the seventh day is *a sabbath to the Lord your God*” (Ex 20:10; 31:15; Lev 23:3).

The Sabbath is given to mankind (Mark 2:27-28) but it belongs to God (Ex 20:10; Mark 2:28). If the Sabbath were given to mankind merely to meet physical, social and economic needs, then it would have outlived its usefulness since most people today can enjoy two or more weekly days of rest and relaxation. But the real purpose of the Sabbath is to enable us through the physical rest to enter into God’s rest (Heb 4:10). The Sabbath invites us to lay aside our daily work in order to allow God to work more fully and freely in our lives.

God does not need our Sabbath rest, nor does He need our week days work. What He needs is a responsive heart, mind and soul, willing to experience the reality of His presence, peace and rest. Through the Sabbath God invites us into this special experience.

The act of resting for God on the Sabbath is a most meaningful act of worship because it signifies the total consecration of our life to God. It is an act of worship which is not exhausted in an *one-hour* church service, but which lasts *twenty-four hours*. By resting specifically for God on the Sabbath the Christian shows his commitment of the week days as well when it is not possible to offer to God the same undivided and conscious acknowledgment.

QUESTION:

For the Christian is not every day now a Sabbath to the Lord?

ANSWER:

The belief that every day is Sabbath (pansabbatism) is as absurd as the belief that everything is God (pantheism). The end result in both instances is that no real worship is offered to God, because nothing really matters. These views are deceptive devices designed to do away both with the belief and the worship of God.

The theory that every day is Sabbath ultimately results in no Sabbath at all. This truth is brought out perceptively in the following poem:

Shrewd men, indeed, these reformers are!
Each week-day is a Sabbath, they declare:
A Christian theory! The unchristian fact is
Each Sabbath is a week-day in their practice.

QUESTION:

Will Sabbathkeeping ever become a test of obedience for the whole world?

ANSWER:

A Test in the Manna Experience. The very first time the Sabbath is mentioned by name as “Sabbath” in the Scripture, it is in conjunction with the manna experience in Exodus 16:23, 29. In this context the testing function of the Sabbath is evident. Loyalty to God was to be expressed by gathering one omer per person the first five weekdays and two omers per person on the sixth day (Ex 16:16, 22). The reason for gathering a double portion on the sixth day was to teach the people to make themselves free and available for God on the seventh day.

The testing function of the Sabbath in the manna experience (“that I may prove them”—Ex 16:4) is alluded to also in Deuteronomy 8:2-3 where it says: “God has led you these forty years in the wilderness . . . testing you to know what was in your heart . . . and he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna . . . that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”

The Sabbath is a test because it teaches people to seek not only for physical nourishment during the six days, but also for the spiritual nourishment of God’s Word on the seventh day. To those who “went out to gather” manna on the seventh day, God said: “How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?” (Ex 16:28-29).

A Test in the History of Israel. In the subsequent history of Israel Sabbathkeeping is equated with loyalty to God and Sabbathbreaking with apostasy (Lev 26:2; Num 15:32; Neh 9:14; 10:31; 13:15-22; Is 56:2, 6; Jer 17:21, 22, 24, 27). Ezekiel, for example, correlates rebellion with Sabbath desecration. He writes: “But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness . . . my Sabbath they greatly profaned” (Ezek 20:13; cf. 20:16, 21).

The reason why the Sabbath is presented in the Scripture as a test of loyalty to God is not hard to see. The person who makes himself free and available for God on the Sabbath day, is the person who is committed to God every day. On the other hand, the person who ignores God on His Holy Day is the person who ultimately neglects God every day.

A Test at the End-time. The testing function of the Sabbath will become particularly evident at the End-time when the conflict between true and false worship will intensify. The last book of the Bible summons “every nation and tribe and tongue and people” (Rev 14:6), on the one hand to renounce the perverted system of worship promoted by “Babylon,” “the beast and its image” (14:8-11), and on the other hand to “fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come,” and to “worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water” (14:7).

This solemn call to abandon false worship and to restore true worship is presented in Revelation 14 as part of the preparation for “the harvest of the earth” (14:15). Christ Himself alluded to the end-time crises concerning true worship in His rhetorical question: “When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Though the problem of worshipping man-made realities such as money (Matt 6:24), power (Rev 13:8; Col 3:5), pleasure (Rom 6:19; Titus 3:3) or even human systems of salvation (Gal 4:9), has been present in every age, it is particularly acute in our time. The triumph of modern science, technology, and rationalistic thinking has led many to worship human figments rather than the Creator Himself.

The mission of the Church at this time, as portrayed effectively by the three apocalyptic angels, is to promote the *true worship* of “him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water” (Rev 14:7). The Sabbath is a most effective vehicle through which the Church can promote the restoration of true worship. By focusing on God’s creative and redemptive accomplishments, the Sabbath functions as an antidote against false worship. It challenges men and women to worship not their human achievements and ambitions, but their Creator and Redeemer.

The Church, by inviting individuals to take time out on the Sabbath to celebrate God’s past, present, and future accomplishments, challenges them to renounce their autonomy and egocentricity and accept instead God’s lordship over their life and time.

A Test of Genuine Commitment. At a time when many Christians treat what they call “Lord’s Day” as a holiday rather than as a holy day, as a day

to seek for pleasure and profit rather than for divine peace and presence, Sabbathkeeping is and will increasingly become a test of genuine commitment to God. It will serve more and more to distinguish those who offer to God merely lip service from those who offer Him the service of their total being.

The prevailing crisis of the Lord's day could well set the stage for the rising of the politico-religious power of Revelation 13, which will cause many to receive "the mark of the beast" through the legal enforcement of Sundaykeeping. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this will take place in connection with the last religious crisis affecting mankind (Rev 13:16-17). Because of this the observance of the Sabbath is and will become more and more a test of loyalty and commitment to God.

QUESTION:

Since Jesus observed the annual Jewish feast days, should not Christians observe them also?

ANSWER:

Termination of Annual Feast Days. A distinction must be made between what Jesus did and what He taught. The former is not necessarily mandatory as is the latter. Being born and brought up as a Jew, obviously Jesus observed the religious customs of His people, including the annual feasts.

In His teaching ministry, however, Christ never suggested a permanent validity or value of the annual holy day in general. The only exception could be Passover, which Jesus celebrated with His disciples before His death, by transforming it into a symbol of His atoning sacrifice (Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:12). Thus the Lord's Supper is seen by many Christians as the continuation and transformation of the Passover Supper.

The termination of the function of the annual feasts, which were closely linked to the sanctuary services, is indicated by the fact that at Christ's death "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Matt 27:51). By this dramatic act the typological function of the temple services which included the annual feast days, was declared fulfilled and terminated by Christ's atoning sacrifice. This conclusion is clearly drawn in Hebrews where in speaking of the sanctuary services, which included the annual feast days, it says that they are "symbolic for the present age . . . imposed until the time of reformation" (Heb 9:9-10). The latter is said to have dawned with the coming of Christ (Heb 9:11).

Permanence of the Sabbath. Contrary to Christ's remarkable silence on the annual feast days, the Gospels report extensively on the Sabbath teachings and ministry of Christ. Through His teachings and example, Christ explained that the Sabbath was a day "to do good" (Matt 12:12), a day "to save life" (Mark 3:4), a day to liberate men and women from physical and spiritual burdens (Luke 13:15-17), a day to show "mercy" rather than religiosity (Matt 12:7).

The reason why Christ clarified the meaning and manner of observance of the Sabbath, while he remained silent on the annual feast days is to be found in their different functions. While the Sabbath was made for mankind at creation (Mark 2:27) to meet a permanent human need, the annual feast days were established at the time of Moses in conjunction with the liturgical calendar of the tabernacle to typify the divine deliverance which culminated with the coming of Christ. The types of Messianic redemption ceased to have significance with the coming of the Messiah Himself.

QUESTION:

Which is the "Lord's day" mentioned in Revelation 1:10? Do you accept the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation which views it as the seventh-day Sabbath?

ANSWER:

The expression "Lord's day" found in Revelation 1:10 has been interpreted in four major different ways. For my extensive treatment of these differing views, the reader is referred to my book *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 111 to 131. For the sake of brevity I will summarize succinctly in this context the four major interpretations.

Sunday. The prevailing interpretation equates the expression "Lord's day" with Sunday. This equation is based not on internal evidences of the book of Revelation but on three second-century patristic testimonies, namely, *Didache* 14:1, Ignatius' *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:1 and the *Gospel of Peter* 35 and 50. Of these, only in the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter*, which is dated in the latter half of the second century, is Sunday unmistakably designated by the technical term "Lord's—*kuriake*."

The designation of Sunday as "Lord's day" which unmistakably appears before the end of the second century cannot necessarily be read back into Revelation 1:10. A major reason is that if Sunday had already received the new appellation "Lord's day" by the end of the first century, when both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation were written, we would expect this new name for Sunday to be used consistently in both works, especially since

they were apparently produced by the same author at approximately the same time and in the same geographical area.

If a new term prevails and is more readily understood, a writer does not confuse his readers with archaic time designations. Moreover, if the new designation “Lord’s day” already existed and expressed the meaning and nature of Christian worship, the Gospel writers would hardly have had reasons to use the Jewish phrase “first day of the week.” Therefore, the fact that the expression “Lord’s day” occurs in John’s apocalyptic book but not in his Gospel—where the first day is explicitly mentioned in conjunction with the resurrection (John 20:1) and the appearances of Jesus (John 20:19, 26)—suggests that the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 can hardly refer to Sunday.

Easter-Sunday. Other scholars maintain that the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10, designates Easter-Sunday rather than the weekly Sunday. This conclusion rests primarily on the assumption that since in the New Testament and in the sub-apostolic literature little importance is attached to Sunday as a day of Christian worship, the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 must then refer to the annual Easter Sunday, out of which the weekly Sunday later developed.

The major weakness of this interpretation is that it ignores the fact that the book of Revelation was addressed by John to the seven churches of Asia Minor, which we know strongly rejected the Easter-Sunday custom, holding fast instead to the Nisan 14 dating of the Passover. How could John have meant “I was in the Spirit on Easter-Sunday” when he wrote to Christians who, we know, would rather be excommunicated by Bishop Victor of Rome than accept Easter-Sunday?

Seventh-day Sabbath. A third view, held by seventh-day Sabbathkeeping churches, including Seventh-day Adventists, maintains that the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 designates the seventh-day Sabbath. This conclusion is based especially on the fact that Christ declared Himself to be “lord even of the sabbath” (Mark 2:28).

While it must be granted that conceptually there is a connection between “Lord of the Sabbath” and “Lord’s day,” linguistically it is difficult to defend this interpretation because the phrase “Lord’s day” is never used in the early Christian literature as a designation of the seventh-day Sabbath.

Historically, Seventh-day Adventists have interpreted the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 as a reference to the seventh-day Sabbath. Ellen G. White expresses this view saying, for example: “The Lord’s day is the seventh day, the Sabbath of creation. On the day that God sanctified and blessed, Christ

signified ‘by His angel unto His servant John’ things which must come to pass before the close of the world’s history.”¹⁵ Again she writes: “It was on the Sabbath that the Lord of glory appeared to the exiled apostle. The Sabbath was as sacredly observed by John on Patmos as when he was preaching to the people in the towns and cities of Judea.”¹⁶

Personally I accept this interpretation, especially since I have shown in my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* that there are compelling indications that Sundaykeeping did not originate before the reign of Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117-138). Moreover, there are also indications that even when Sunday was introduced by the Church of Rome, many Eastern Christians adopted Sundaykeeping in addition to, rather than as a substitution for the Sabbath. What this means is that only the Sabbath could possibly be known to John as the “Lord’s day” before the end of the first century when he wrote the book of Revelation.

In spite of this conviction, in *From Sabbath to Sunday* I argue in favor of the eschatological interpretation of “Lord’s day,” namely, as meaning the day of Christ’s coming and judgment. I took this position in my dissertation, not because it reflects my personal convictions, but simply because contextually and linguistically it is more defensible.

In doing research sometimes a person presents a working hypothesis which may not necessarily reflect one’s innermost convictions. In my case, after I had discredited the Sunday and Easter-Sunday interpretations, I needed to submit an alternative explanation. For the sake of argument I chose to defend the eschatological interpretation of the “Lord’s day,” even though it was contrary to my personal conviction, simply because I felt it was contextually and linguistically a more defensible explanation.

My aim in my dissertation was not to establish whether or not the Sabbath was viewed or called “Lord’s day” in early Christianity, but rather if, as is generally believed, Sunday was called and observed as “Lord’s day” from the very inception of Christianity. Much of the documentation and argumentation of my dissertation disproves and discredits the latter claim.

My defense for the eschatological interpretation of the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 must be seen in the context of the primary aim of my dissertation, which was not to ascertain whether or not theologically the Sabbath was the “Lord’s day” already in John’s time. The failure to see my primary aim has regrettably led a few of my fellow-believers to conclude that I do not accept the Sabbath as the “Lord’s day.” Obviously this conclusion is totally wrong, because I believe not only that the “Lord’s day” on which

John was taken into vision was the Sabbath day, but also that only the Sabbath can be legitimately called and observed as the “Lord’s day.”

The Day of the Lord. A fourth interpretation, which has been defended by such distinguished scholars as J. B. Lightfoot and A. Deissmann, views the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 as a variation of “the day of the Lord” which is commonly employed in the Scripture to designate the day of Christ’s coming and of His judgment. The reasons for this interpretation are discussed at length in *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 123-131.

The basic support for this interpretation is provided by the immediate and larger contexts, both of which speak of the day of Christ’s coming. Additional support is provided by Origen’s use of the term “Lord’s day” to refer explicitly to the day of Christ’s Return,¹⁷ by John’s reference to “the great day of God” (Rev 16:14; 6:17), by the unique parallelism between Revelation 1:10 and 4:1-7. The parallelism consists of similarities of expressions, context, and content which suggest that the “Lord’s day” of Revelation 1:10 may be understood, in the light of the parallel expression, “what must take place after this” (Rev 4:1), to mean the Day of Christ’s coming.

It may be possible to combine the last two interpretations by viewing the “Lord’s day” both as a Sabbath day on which John was taken in vision and as the great day of Christ’s coming which John saw in vision. What greater vision could have given courage to the aged apostle in exile for his witness to Christ! Moreover, the Sabbath is closely linked to the Second Advent. The meeting of the invisible Lord in time on the weekly Sabbath is a prelude to the meeting of the visible Lord in space on the final day of His coming.

QUESTION:

Do not the Gospels clearly tell us that Jesus resurrected “on the first day of the week”? Does not this fact constitute a valid reason for observing Sunday in honor of Christ’s resurrection?

ANSWER:

Yes, the Gospels clearly tell us that Jesus resurrected on the first day of the week (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19). This fact, however, does not constitute a valid reason for observing Sunday as memorial of Christ’s resurrection, for the simple reason that nowhere does the New Testament indicate that the day of Christ’s resurrection is to be memorialized by a weekly Sunday or annual Easter Sunday festival.

If this reasoning was correct, then we should observe also Friday as a memorial of Christ’s atoning death, since the Gospel clearly tells us that Jesus

was crucified on “the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath” (Mark 15:42; cf. Matt 27:62; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42). But, the truth of the matter is that the New Testament offers no indications regarding a weekly or annual celebration of Christ’s death and/or resurrection.

The silence of the New Testament on this matter is very important since most of its books were written many years after Christ’s death and resurrection. If Christ or the apostles had enjoined the observance of Sunday as a memorial of the resurrection, then we should find in the New Testament some indications of such a commandment and of its observance. Instead, we find no trace of any commandment regarding the celebration of the resurrection on a weekly Sunday or annual Easter Sunday, or even of any reference where Sunday is called “the day of the resurrection” until the fourth century. The obvious reason is that in earliest centuries Sunday was not viewed as the weekly memorial of the resurrection.

QUESTION:

Was the Sunday resurrection of Christ the primary factor which caused the Apostles, as many Christians believe, to introduce Sundaykeeping instead of Sabbath- keeping in order to commemorate Christ’s resurrection by means of the Lord’s Supper celebration?

ANSWER:

This view, though it is widely held among Sundaykeeping Christians, is devoid of Biblical and historical support. My reasons are given at length in the third chapter of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. In this context I will limit myself to the brief mention of seven significant indications which discredit the alleged role played by Christ’s Sunday-resurrection in causing the change from Sabbathkeeping to Sundaykeeping.

No Command in the New Testament. First, the New Testament contains no command or suggestion by Christ or the Apostles enjoining or hinting at a weekly or annual Sunday celebration of the resurrection. This is all the more surprising in view of the explicit instructions which are given regarding other practices such as baptism, the Lord’s Supper, or footwashing.

No “Day of the Resurrection.” Second, in the New Testament Sunday is never called “day of the resurrection” but consistently “first day of the week.” It is not until the fourth century that the designation of Sunday as “day of the resurrection” first occurs in Christian literature. The absence of such a designation indicates that during the first three centuries Sunday was not seen as the weekly memorial celebration of Christ’s resurrection.

No Completion of Christ's Earthly Ministry. Third, the Sunday-resurrection does not mark the completion of Christ's earthly ministry. The latter ended on a Friday afternoon when the Savior said, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and then rested in the tomb according to the commandment. It is noteworthy that divine rest marks the completion of both creation and redemption. The resurrection, however, marks not the completion of Christ's earthly redemptive ministry but the inauguration of His new intercessory ministry (Acts 1:8; 2:33). Like the first day of creation, the first day of Christ's ministry presupposes work rather than rest.

No Invitation to Rest and Worship. Fourth, the words uttered by Christ on the day of His resurrection are an invitation to work rather than to rest and worship. On the day of His resurrection, the Savior did not say "Come apart and worship . . . Let us take time today to celebrate My resurrection." On the contrary, He told the women, "Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee" (Matt 28:10) and later to His disciples "Go . . . make disciples, teach, baptize" (Matt 28:19-20).

No Lord's Supper Commemoration of the Resurrection. Fifth, the Lord's Supper, which many Christians view as the core of their Sunday celebration of Christ's resurrection, was initially celebrated at night on *different days* of the week (1 Cor 11:18, 20, 33) and was seen as the commemoration of Christ's *sacrifice* and Second Advent, rather than of His resurrection. Paul explains that by partaking of the bread and wine, believers "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

No Easter Sunday Celebration of the Resurrection. Sixth, the Passover, which many Christians today observe on Easter Sunday as a celebration of the resurrection, for at least a century after Jesus' death was observed not on a Sunday but on any day of the week on which the date of Nisan 14 fell. This implies that no special significance was attached to the actual day of the week in which Passover was celebrated. Moreover the earliest documents indicate that Passover was a celebration of the Passion—death, rather than of Christ's resurrection.¹⁸

Resurrection was not a Predominant Justification. Seventh, the earliest explicit references to the Christian observance of Sunday, which are found in the writings of Barnabas (about 135) and Justin Martyr (about 150), mention the resurrection but only as the second of two reasons for Sundaykeeping. The first theological reason given by Barnabas for Sunday observance is the eschatological significance of the "eighth day" which, he claims, represents "the beginning of another world."¹⁹ Justin's first reason is the commemoration of the inauguration of creation: "because it is the first day

on which God, transforming the darkness and prime matter, created the world.”²⁰ These testimonies indicate that Christ’s resurrection was not seen initially as the predominant justification for Sunday observance.

The seven reasons submitted above suffice to discredit the contention that Christ’s resurrection on the first day of the week was the major reason for the adoption of Sunday observance instead of the Sabbath.

QUESTION:

It is widely held that the Apostolic Church of Jerusalem pioneered the abandonment of Sabbathkeeping and the adoption of Sundaykeeping instead. Is not this a legitimate explanation, in view of the fact that the Jerusalem Church was the Mother Church of Christendom, and thus the only one with the necessary authority to change the day of worship?

ANSWER:

This explanation, though widely held, rests on gratuitous and unfounded assumptions. It is assumed, for example, that since Christ was resurrected on a Sunday in Jerusalem, Sunday worship must have originated in the city itself by apostolic authority to commemorate this important event by a distinctive Christian worship. It is also presumed that since the Jerusalem Church enjoyed pre-eminent authority, she was the only church that could successfully pioneer Sunday observance. These assumptions are discredited by several historical data which I will briefly mention below.

Jewish Composition and Orientation. First, according to the book of Acts and Judeo-Christian documents, both the ethnic composition and the theological orientation of the Jerusalem Church were profoundly Jewish. Throughout the book of Acts, Luke reports mass conversion of the Jews (2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 9:42; 12:24; 13:43; 14:1; 17:10ff; 21:20). Among the thousands who believed there were “devout” Jews (Acts 2:5, 41), “many of the priests” (Acts 6:7) and “many thousands” who remained “zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20).

The misconception which has prevailed through the centuries is that the Cross brought about a radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity. Before the Cross there was Judaism, law, and Sabbathkeeping. After the Cross there was Christianity, grace, and Sundaykeeping. This historical explanation is challenged by Luke’s account of the many thousands of Jews who believed in Christ. These viewed their acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah not as the termination but as the continuation and integration of their Jewish faith.

The conflict in Acts is not between Jews and Christians, but between believing and unbelieving Jews. Believing Jews are said to be “zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20). It is hard to see how Christians who viewed themselves as believing Jews, zealously observing God’s law, would pioneer the abandonment or change of the Sabbath commandment.

Jerusalem Council. Second, the first Christian Council held (about 49-50) in the city of Jerusalem, did not exempt Gentile Christians from the Mosaic law in general or from Sabbathkeeping in particular. The only exemption was from the circumcision. This exemption was not seen as a repudiation of the Mosaic law in general. On the contrary, the final court of appeal of the apostolic decree regarding the Gentiles is the very authority of Moses. This is indicated indirectly by the fact that the four ritual laws enjoined upon the Gentiles, namely, abstention from pollution of idols, unchastity, strangled meat and blood (Acts 15:20), are all part of the Mosaic law regarding the “sojourner” who dwelt among Israelites (Lev 17 and 18).

More directly, respect for the Mosaic law is indicated by James’ appeal to Moses’ authority to validate the endorsement of the four ritual laws: “For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues” (Acts 15:21). What James is saying here is that, as Jacob Jervell rightly points out, “Everyone who truly hears Moses knows that the decree expresses what Moses demands from Gentiles in order that they may live among Israelites.”²¹ The concern at the Jerusalem Council to show complete adherence to the Mosaic law discredits any attempt to make the Jerusalem Church the pioneer of the change of the day of rest and worship.

The Jerusalem Church after A.D. 70. Third, even after the Roman destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, and until the destruction of Jerusalem by Hadrian in A.D. 135, the Jerusalem Church, according to the historians Eusebius (about 260-340) and Epiphanius (about 315-403), was composed of and administered by converted Jews. These are characterized as “zealous to insist on the literal observance of the law.”²²

More significant still is that the Nazarenes, who are regarded as the direct descendants of the Christian community of Jerusalem which migrated to Pella before the A.D. 70 destruction of the temple, according to Epiphanius, still insisted on the observance of the Sabbath until the fourth century.²³ The implication is clear. If the traditional custom of Sabbathkeeping survived among Palestinian Christians long after the destruction of the temple, then the Jerusalem Church could hardly have promoted the abandonment of its observance and the adoption of Sunday worship instead. Historical testimo-

nies indicate that of all the Christian churches, the Jerusalem church was, both racially and theologically, the most deeply attached to Jewish religious tradition.

QUESTION:

According to your investigation, when, where, and why did Sunday worship originate?

ANSWER:

Difficult to Pinpoint Origin of Festivals. It is extremely difficult to pinpoint with accuracy the exact date of the origin of any new festival. This holds true not only for the weekly Sunday, but also for the annual Easter-Sunday, Christmas, Epiphany, etc. These festivals first appear in historical records after they had already been introduced.

While it is difficult to determine the exact place and date of the origin of Sunday, in the course of my investigation I found cumulative indications, pointing to the Church of Rome as the place where the change first began, approximately one century after Jesus' death, sometime during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117-138).

Antijudaic Repressive Measures. A major factor which contributed to the change of the Sabbath to Sunday was the extreme repressive measures Hadrian adopted against Judaism in general and Sabbathkeeping in particular. These measures were adopted by Hadrian to stem the violent Jewish uprising against the Romans which was fueled by a resurgence of Messianic expectations.

After suppressing the second major Palestinian Jewish revolt—called after its leader, the Barkokeba revolt—Hadrian in A.D. 135 not only destroyed the city of Jerusalem and prohibited Jews to enter the city, but he also outlawed categorically the practice of the Jewish religion in general and of Sabbathkeeping in particular. These measures were designed to suppress the Jewish religion, which was seen as the cause of all the uprisings.

Measures Taken by the Church of Rome. The repressive measures adopted by the Romans against the practice of the Jewish religion encouraged the Church of Rome to clarify to the imperial authorities the Christian separation and distinction from Judaism by changing the date and manner of observance of two characteristic Jewish festivals: the Sabbath and Passover. The weekly Sabbath was changed to Sunday and the Passover date was moved from Nisan 14 to the following Sunday.

The anti-Judaic motivation for these changes is best expressed by Constantine in his Nicene conciliar letter, where he urges Christians to adopt unanimously the Easter-Sunday practice championed by the Church of Rome, in order to “have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd . . . and to avoid all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews.”²⁴

To promote the abandonment of Sabbathkeeping and the adoption of Sundaykeeping the Church of Rome adopted significant theological, social, and liturgical measures which are discussed at length in chapter 6 of *From Sabbath to Sunday*.

Theologically, the Sabbath was reduced from a universal divine institution to a Mosaic institution, given exclusively to the Jews as, to quote Justin Martyr, “a mark to single them out for punishment they so well deserve for their infidelities.”²⁵

Socially, the Church of Rome endeavored to kill the festive gleam of the Sabbath by turning the day from a time of feasting and joyful celebration into a time of fasting and sadness.

Liturgically, the Sabbath was made a non-religious day in which no Lord’s Supper was to be celebrated and no religious assemblies were to be held.

The conclusion, then, of my investigation is that the change from Sabbath to Sunday occurred not immediately after Jesus’ death by the apostolic authority of the Jerusalem Church to commemorate Christ’s resurrection, but rather it began about one century after Christ’s death, during the reign of Emperor Hadrian by the authority of the Church of Rome.

The primary cause was the prevailing Roman repression of the Jewish people and religion. This condition made it expedient for Christians to show their separation and differentiation from the Jews and Judaism, by adopting a different day of worship. Expediency, however, is not a legitimate motive for changing a divine precept. Jesus never taught His followers to feel free to ignore or change His commandments whenever it became difficult to observe them.

QUESTION:

Did Sun-worship with its Sun-day influence the Christian adoption of Sunday as the new day of worship?

ANSWER:

The popularity of Sun-worship with its Sun-day influenced significantly the Christian adoption of Sunday as the new day of worship.

Sun-worship and the Planetary Week. To appreciate how Sun-worship influenced the Christian adoption of Sunday, it is important to note first of all that the cult of *Sol Invictus*—the Invincible Sun—became very popular in ancient Rome by the middle of the second century. The increased popularity of Sun-worship caused a significant change in the order of days of the planetary week, which the Romans adopted just before the beginning of Christianity.

Numerous archeological and literary calendars clearly show that initially Saturday was the first day of the week, followed by Sunday which was the second day. This sequence, however, was changed as a result of the increased popularity of Sun-worship. What happened was that in recognition of the popularity of the Sun-god, the day of the Sun was advanced from the position of second day to that of first and most important day of the week.²⁶

Sun-Worship and Christian Sunday. The advancement of the day of the Sun to the position of first day of the week, influenced especially those Christians who had known the day and the worship of the Sun-god to choose the self-same day as their new day of worship. This conclusion is corroborated by indirect and direct evidences.

Indirectly, Sun-worship influenced Christianity in the adoption of such practices as the eastward orientation for prayer, the Christmas date of December 25, and the adoption of the symbology of the sun to depict Christ in art and literature.

More directly Sun-worship influenced the development of theological justifications for Sunday observance. This is indicated by the fact that the two predominant justifications found in the early Christian literature for Sunday observance are: the creation of light and the rising of the Sun of justice on the first day of the week. Jerome provides a fitting example when he explains, “If it is called day of the Sun by the pagans, we most willingly acknowledge it as such, since it is on this day that the light of the world has appeared and on this day the Sun of justice arose.”²⁷

The conclusion then is that two major factors contributed to the change from Sabbath to Sunday, namely, anti-Judaism and Sun-worship. The former led many Christians to abandon the observance of the Sabbath to differentiate themselves from the Jews. The second influenced many Christians to adopt the observance of Sunday to facilitate their identification and integration with the customs and cycles of the Roman empire.

QUESTION:

Is there any real difference between the observance of the Sabbath and the observance of Sunday? Is not this simply a matter of two different names or numbers?

ANSWER:

Many Christians see no real difference between the observance of the Sabbath and that of Sunday. For them the only difference that exists between the two days is one of names, that is, Saturday versus Sunday, and one of numbers, that is, seventh day versus first day.

Undoubtedly this view is held by many sincere Christians. Sincerity, however, does not make wrong views right. The fact remains that the difference between Sabbathkeeping and Sundaykeeping is not simply one of names or number, but one of authority, meaning, and experience.

Authority. First, the difference is one of authority because while Sabbathkeeping rests upon an explicit Biblical command (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11; Mark 2:27-28; Heb 4:9), Sundaykeeping derives from a questionable church tradition, somewhat similar to that which gave origin to the December 25 Christmas celebration. The lack of a Biblical authority for Sundaykeeping may well be a major reason why, especially in the Western World, the vast majority of Christians view their Sunday as a holiday rather than a holy day, a day to seek for personal pleasure and profit rather than for divine presence and peace.

It is only when there is a strong theological conviction that a certain principle, such as the one of Sabbathkeeping, is divinely established to ensure our physical, moral, and spiritual well-being, that a person will feel compelled to act accordingly. The lack of such a strong conviction for Sundaykeeping on the part of many Christians may well explain why they see nothing wrong in devoting their Sunday time to themselves rather than to the Lord.

Meaning. Second, the difference between Sabbath and Sunday is one of meaning. While the Sabbath memorializes in the Scripture God's perfect creation, complete redemption, and final restoration, Sunday is justified in the

earliest Christian literature as the commemoration of the creation of light on the first day of the week, as the cosmic-eschatological symbol of the eighth day which was seen as a type of the new eternal world, and as the commemoration of Christ's Sunday-resurrection.

None of the historical meanings which have been attributed to Sunday require per se the observance of the day by resting and worshipping the Lord. For example, nowhere do the Scriptures suggest that the creation of light on the first day ought to be celebrated through a weekly Sunday rest and worship. Even the resurrection event, as we have seen earlier, does not require per se a weekly or annual Sunday celebration.

Some Christians view their Sunday as the Biblical Sabbath and thus they transfer to Sunday the Biblical authority and meaning of the Sabbath. Such an attempt fails to recognize that it is impossible to retain the same authority, meaning, and experience, when the date of a festival is changed. For example, if a person or an organization should succeed in changing the date of the Declaration of Independence from the 4th to the 5th of July, the new date could hardly be viewed as the legitimate celebration of Independence Day.

Similarly, if the festival of the Sabbath is changed from the seventh to the first day, the latter day can hardly memorialize the divine acts of creation, redemption, and final restoration which are linked to the symbology of the Sabbath. To transfer the symbolic meaning of the Sabbath to Sunday means ultimately to destroy the meaning of the Sabbath.

Experience. Third, the difference between Sabbath and Sunday is one of experience. While Sundaykeeping began and has remained largely *the hour* of worship, Sabbathkeeping is presented in the Scriptures as *24 hours* of rest and worship. In spite of the efforts made by Constantine, church councils, and Puritans to make Sunday a total day of rest and worship, the fact remains that the day has been traditionally observed primarily as the one or two hours of church attendance.

At the conclusion of their Sunday church services, many Christians in good conscience will go to a restaurant, a shopping mall, a football game, a dance hall, a theater, etc. The recognition of this historical reality has led scholars such as Christopher Kiesling to argue for the abandonment of the notion of Sunday as a day of rest and for the retention of Sunday as the hour of worship.²⁸ His reasoning is that since Sunday has never been a total day of rest and worship, there is no hope to make it so today when most people want not holy days but holidays.

Celebrating the Sabbath, however, means not merely to attend church services but to consecrate its 24 hours to the Lord. The Sabbath commandment does not say, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy by attending Sabbath school and church services.” What the commandment requires is to work six days and rest the seventh day unto the Lord (Ex 20:8-10). This means that the essence of Sabbathkeeping is the consecration of time. The act of resting unto the Lord makes all the activities of the Sabbath, whether they be the formal worship or the informal fellowship and recreation, an act of worship because all of them spring out of a heart which has decided to honor God.

The act of resting on the Sabbath unto the Lord becomes the means through which the believer enters into God’s rest (Heb 4:10) by experiencing the fuller awareness of the divine rest of creation, redemption, and final restoration. This unique experience is foreign to Sundaykeeping because the essence of the latter is not the consecration of time through which to experience the reality of God’s creative and redemptive activities, but rather an hour of worship which is generally followed by pleasure-seeking or profit-making.

The foregoing considerations suggest that ultimately the difference between Sabbath and Sunday is the difference between a Holy Day and a holiday.

QUESTION:

Is there any evidence of seventh-day Sabbathkeeping in early Christianity?

ANSWER:

Both the New Testament and the early Christian literature contain implicit and explicit indications of the existence of Sabbathkeeping. A brief allusion will be made in this context to the most significant evidences.

The Witness of the New Testament. The earliest indication of Sabbathkeeping comes to us from the New Testament. We have examined in chapter V the numerous New Testament allusions to the *fact* and *manner* of Sabbathkeeping. We noted that the unusual coverage given by the Evangelists to the Sabbath healings and teachings of Christ is indicative of the great importance attached to Sabbathkeeping at the time of their writing.

More significant still is the New Testament witness to the new Christian understanding of Sabbathkeeping, namely, a day “to do good” (Matt 12:12), “to save” (Mark 3:4), “to loose” physical and spiritual bonds (Luke 13:16),

and to show “mercy” rather than religiosity (Matt 12:7). This new Christian interpretation indicates that the Apostolic Church did observe the Sabbath, but with a new meaning and in a new manner.

Early Post-New Testament Testimonies. The existence of Sabbathkeeping is attested also in the early Post-New Testament references to Sundaykeeping. *The Epistle of Barnabas*, for example, dated between A.D. 130 and 138, speaks of the observance of the “eighth day” (that is, Sunday) in addition to, rather than as a substitution from the Sabbath. After having argued for the superiority of the eighth-day, Sunday, over the seventh-day Sabbath, the author writes, “This is why we *also* observe the eighth day with rejoicing” (15:9).²⁹ The “also” (*dio kai*) suggests that initially Sunday was observed in addition to rather than as a substitution of the Sabbath.

Justin Martyr, writing from Rome by the middle of the second century, differentiates between two different types of Sabbathkeepers. He speaks of some Sabbathkeepers who compelled Gentiles to observe the Sabbath and of other Sabbathkeepers who did not induce others to do likewise.³⁰ This clearly implies that Sabbathkeepers existed in Rome by the middle of the second century, though they appear to have been a minority.

In the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas*, dated in the middle of the second century, Jesus is reported to have said, “If you fast not from the world, you will not find the kingdom; if you keep not the Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father” (chapter 27). Though this saying can hardly be authentic, it does reflect a high view of the Sabbath in the community where the document circulated.

Another document known as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, dated about A.D. 120, records that Polycarp’s death occurred on “a Festival Sabbath day” (8:1). This phrase could well reflect Sabbath observance among some Christians in Asia Minor, in spite of their hostile attitude toward the Jews exhibited in the narrative.

Early in the third century, the Alexandrian theologian, Origen, refers to Sabbath observance in a sermon, saying: “Forsaking therefore the Judaic Sabbath observance, let us see what kind of Sabbath observance is expected of the Christian. On the Sabbath day, nothing of worldly activity should be done. If therefore desisting from all worldly works and doing nothing mundane but being free for spiritual works, you come to church, listen to divine readings and discussions and think of heavenly things, give heed to the future life, keep before your eyes the coming judgment, disregard present and visible things in favor of the invisible and future, this is the observance of the Christian Sabbath.”³¹

Origen's mention of Sabbathkeeping in Alexandria is significant, since two centuries later two church historians, Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen, inform us that the custom of assembling together on the Sabbath was practiced everywhere except in Rome and Alexandria.³² A major factor which contributed to an earlier abandonment of Sabbathkeeping in these two cities was, as I have shown elsewhere, the presence of strong anti-Judaic feelings.

Sabbathkeeping in the East. The existence of Sabbathkeeping in later centuries is attested in different sources. John Chrysostom delivered eight sermons at Antioch in 386 and 387, warning Christians against Judaizing practices such as Sabbathkeeping: "We are become a laughingstock to Jews and Greeks, seeing that the Church is divided into a thousand parties . . . There are many among us now, who fast on the same day as the Jews, and keep the sabbaths in the same manner; and we endure it nobly or rather ignobly and basely."³³

Similar warnings against Sabbathkeeping are sounded by such Greek churchmen as Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, and Aphrahat.³⁴ The strong condemnation of Sabbathkeeping on the part of numerous church leaders offers a most compelling evidence of its observance.

Influx of Jewish-Christians. A major fact which contributed to the permanence of Sabbathkeeping in early Christianity was the constant influx of converts from the synagogue, who were keen to retain their Sabbathkeeping. John Damascus (c. 675-c. 749), the last of the great Eastern Fathers, wrote a treatise entitled "*Against the Jews, Concerning the Sabbath*" to counteract the perennial attraction of Sabbathkeeping.³⁵

In another treatise from the same century entitled *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew* (c. 730-c.770), Syrian Christians are quoted as saying, "If Christianity is good, behold, I am baptized as a Christian. But if Judaism is also, behold I will associate partly with Judaism *that I might hold on to the Sabbath*."³⁶

Sabbathkeeping in the West. Sabbathkeeping survived not only in the East but also in the West, as indicated by its denunciation by popes, councils, and churchmen. Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) wrote in an epistle: "It has been reported to me that men of a perverse spirit have spread among you some despicable doctrines that are completely opposed to our holy faith, teaching that all work must be interrupted on the Sabbath. Who could I call them but preachers of the Antichrist?"³⁷

The Council of Friuli, held in Northern Italy in 796 or 797, condemns in the thirteenth canon those farmers who kept the Sabbath.³⁸ In the tenth

century, recently converted Bulgarians wrote to Pope Nicholas I to ask whether they should observe the Sabbath.³⁹ Such an inquiry suggests that Sabbathkeeping was practiced among them, at least by some.

A council held toward the end of the ninth century decreed, “For it is not proper for Christians to Judaize and be idle on the Sabbath but they should rather work on that day, giving greater veneration to Sunday if they want to rest, as Christians do.”⁴⁰ This decree repeats essentially the earlier Canon 29 of the Synod of Laodicea (c. 364) which states, “Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord’s Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.”⁴¹ The frequent repetition of this anti-Sabbath canon of the Synod of Laodicea is indicative of the persistence of Sabbathkeeping during the Middle Ages.

On Going Controversy. One of the most telling evidences of the Sabbathkeeping in early Christianity which is often ignored is found in the ongoing polemic against Sabbathkeeping. The bizarre and sometimes ridiculous arguments which were fabricated to show the superiority of Sunday over the Sabbath, are indicative not only of the existence of, but also of the influence exerted by Sabbathkeepers.

Justin Martyr (about 150), for example, argues that Christians must not observe the Sabbath because it is a Mosaic ordinance given exclusively to the Jews as a sign of their wickedness to distinguish them for punishment they justly deserve. Instead, Christians are to assemble for worship on Sunday to commemorate the first day creation of light and the resurrection.⁴² Justin’s false and senseless denunciation of Sabbathkeeping as a trademark of Jewish depravity must be seen as a desperate attempt to wean Christians away from such a practice.

Another fitting example of the ongoing Sabbath/Sunday controversy is found in the *Syriac Didascalia* (c. 250), where several bizarre arguments are adduced to show the superiority of Sunday over the Sabbath. The author appeals to Sabbathkeepers to stop saying “that the Sabbath is prior to the first day of the week” because, he argues, when the first day, Sunday, was made at creation “the seventh day was yet unknown.” He continues, “which is greater, that which had come into being, and existed, or that which was yet unknown, and of which there was no expectation that it should come to be?”⁴³

The author draws another argument from the paternal blessings which are bestowed not on the last but on the first child and also from Matthew 20:16, which says, “The last shall be first and the first last.” On the basis of such senseless reasoning he concludes that Sunday is greater than the Sabbath.⁴⁴

Similar bizarre and artificial arguments are found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and the treatise called *On the Sabbath and Circumcision*.⁴⁵ The variety and frequency of these arguments are indicative of the existence and persistence of Sabbathkeepers who must have constituted a noticeable and vociferous group to deserve literary refutation.

The Nazarenes. A final and most compelling evidence of Sabbathkeeping in early Christianity is provided by the Jewish Christian sect of the Nazarenes. These Christians represent the direct descendants of the primitive community of Jerusalem, who, according to the Palestinian historian Epiphanius, retained Sabbathkeeping as one of their distinctive beliefs and practices until at least the fourth century.⁴⁶

The survival of Sabbathkeeping among the direct descendants of the Jerusalem Church is a most significant fact. It tells us not only that the Sabbath was the original day of worship of the Jerusalem Church but also that its observance was retained by some Christian groups, even when most of Christendom had adopted Sundaykeeping.

The evidences for Sabbathkeeping in early Christianity which I have submitted here are very selective. My only intent was merely to prove the fact of the persistence of the observance of the Sabbath in the early Christian centuries. For a more comprehensive documentation and discussion, the reader is referred to the symposium edited by Kenneth A. Strand and published under the title *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982).

NOTES ON CHAPTER 9

1. Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids, 1971), p. 45.

2. My brief historical survey of the interpretation of Colossians 2:14-16 is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 339-343.

3. D. R. De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, 1982), pp. 182-183. Emphasis supplied.

4. Philo, *Against Apion* 2, 39.

5. Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 1, 13.

6. My discussion is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 241-251.

7. Tibullus, *C armina* 1, 3, 15-18.

8. Sextus Propertius, *Elegies* 4, 1, 81-86.

9. Quoted by Augustine in *City of God* 6, 11.

10. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2, 40. A similar statement is found in Philo, *Vita Mosis* 2, 20.

11. Tertullian, *Apology* 16, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1973), vol. 3, p. 31.

12. Willy Rordorf, *Sunday, The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 29-34.

13. Edward Lohse, *A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Philadelphia, 1971), p. 116.

14. For examples and discussion see my treatment in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 347-351.

15. E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California, 1948), vol. 6, p. 128.

16. E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, California, 1911), p. 581.

17. Origen, *Commentary on S.t. John* 10:35: "When all these things will be resurrected in the great Lord's Day."

18. My analysis of documents related to the date and meaning of the Passover is found in *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome, 1980), pp. 233, 239-240, 300-305; also *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 80-84.

19. *Epistle of Barnabas* 15, 8.

20. Justin Martyr, 1 *Apology* 67.

21. Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis, 1972), p. 144.

22. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3, 27, 3; 4, 5, 2-11; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 70, 10, *Patrologia Graeca* 47, 355-356.

23. Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 29, 7, *Patrologia Graeca* 42, 407. Epiphanius' text is cited and discussed in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), p. 157.

24. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3, 18-19, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1973), vol. 1, p. 525.

25. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 23, 3; cf. 29, 3; 16, 1; 21, 1. Justin's texts are quoted and discussed in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 101-114.

26. My discussion of the texts related to the introduction of the planetary week and of the advancement of the day of the Sun is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 238-251.

27. Jerome, *In die dominica Paschal homilia*, *Corpus Christianorum* 78, 550, 1, 52.

28. Christopher Kiesling expresses this view in his book *The Future of the Christian Sunday* (New York, 1970).

29. *The Epistle of Barnabas* 15:9.

30. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 47.

31. Origen, *Homily 23, on Numbers*, *Patrologia Graeca* 12, 749-750.

32. Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5, 22; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 7, 19.

33. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Galatians* 1:7, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1973), vol. 13, p. 8.

34. The texts are cited and discussed in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 217-218; also in Kenneth A. Strand, ed., *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, D.C., 1982), pp. 154-156.

35. John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, *Patrologia Graeca* 94, 1201-1206.

36. A. P. Hayman, ed. and trans., *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew* (Louvain, 1973), p. 75; emphasis supplied.

37. Gregory the Great, *Epistola* 13, 1, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1973), vol. 13, p. 92.

38. J. P. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Graz, Austria, 1960), vol. 13, p. 852.

39. Nicolas I, *Epistola* 97, 10, *Patrologia Latina* 119; 984.

40. Karl Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, trans. H. Lecterca (Paris, 1907), vol. 2, p. 1224.

41. Synod of Laodicea, Canon 29, as translated in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1971), Second Series, vol. 14, p. 148.

42. Justin's texts are cited and analyzed in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 223-233.

43. *Syriac Didascalia* 26, ed. R. Hugh Connolly (Oxford, 1929), p. 233.

44. See note 43.

45. The texts are cited and discussed in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 276-277.

46. My treatment of the Nazarenes, including Epiphanius' text, is found in *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 156-158.

Chapter 10

QUESTIONS

ABOUT

SABBATHKEEPING

QUESTION:

Which activities are appropriate or inappropriate on the Sabbath? Should the Sabbath be viewed and observed primarily as a time of inactivity?

ANSWER:

Special Activities. It is hard for me to believe that God is especially pleased when He sees His children on the Sabbath in a motionless position. What pleases God is not the action or inaction per se but the intention behind the action. The Savior spent the Sabbath not in restful relaxation but in active service. Thus the Sabbath should be viewed as the day of special activities rather than of inactivity.

No Standard Formula. No standard formula can be given to determine which activities are appropriate or inappropriate on the Sabbath. The reasons are at least two. First, the physical needs of people vary according to age and profession. A teenager bubbling over with energy has different Sabbath needs than a middle-aged bricklayer or a farmer who has spent much of his/her physical energy during the week.

Second, any attempt to classify or specify “legitimate” Sabbath activities engenders legalistic attitudes which stifle the spirit of freedom and creativity of the Sabbath. Thus, rather than prescribing a standard formula, I will submit three simple guidelines that can help in determining suitable Sabbath recreational activities.

God-Centered. Sabbath activities should be first of all *God-centered* rather than self-centered. They should be a means not of doing our own pleasure but of taking “delight in the Lord” (Is 58:13-14). This means that any recreational activity on the Sabbath should be viewed not as an end in itself, but as a means to express delight in the Lord.

It is possible to plan for a Sabbath afternoon hike to see who can endure the longest or to play a Bible game to see who can score the most points. When activities such as these are performed for the sake of competition rather than of communion, for the sake of scoring rather than of fellowshiping, then they do not fulfill the intent of the Sabbath which is to teach us how to honor God not by competing but by communing with one another. The challenge then is not only to choose appropriate Sabbath activities, but also to engage in them in a way that will contribute to honoring the Lord, to celebrate His creative and redemptive love.

Freedom and Joy. A second guideline is that Sabbath activities should ensure the freedom and joy of everybody. The Sabbath should be a time to celebrate the redemptive freedom offered by the Savior. Sometimes the same activity can be an experience of freedom and joy for some and of restraint and pressure for others.

A Sabbath afternoon picnic with friends, for example, can be a joyful and free celebration of the goodness of God’s creation and recreation in Christ, if adequate preparations have been made before the beginning of the Sabbath. On the contrary, if some persons have to spend many hours during the Sabbath preparing the food for the friends who are to come, then that picnic becomes inappropriate for the Sabbath, since it deprives some persons of the freedom and joy of the Sabbath.

On the basis of this principle any activity which deprives a person of the freedom and joy of the Sabbath, is inappropriate because it militates against the intended function of the commandment, which is to ensure freedom and joy for all.

Recreative. A third guideline is that Sabbath activities should contribute to our mental, emotional, and physical renewal, restoration, and not exhaustion or dissipation. The renewal experienced on the Sabbath foreshadows in a sense the fuller restoration to be experienced at Christ’s Second Coming.

It is important to remember that all our Sabbath recreational activities have a spiritual quality because they represent the restoration realized and yet to be realized by God in the life of His people. Thus any Sabbath activity which leaves a person exhausted and with a “hangover” on the following day

fails to conform to God's intended use of the Sabbath, which is to renew us physically, mentally, and spiritually, in order to be better equipped to meet the demands of our week-days' work.

Sports which require intense physical exertion may be good at other times but they are out of harmony with the Sabbath celebration. First, because they destroy the spirit of worship and celebration which characterizes the Sabbath. It is impossible to cultivate the awareness of God's presence on the Sabbath while intent on scoring points and beating the other team. Second, because they exhaust rather than renew the person. Third, because the spirit of competition fostered by sports undermines the spirit of fellowship and communion of the Sabbath.

No single criterion is per se adequate for determining suitable Sabbath activities. The combination of the three guidelines suggested above, namely, God-centered activities, freedom and joy for all, and recreative nature, should offer a safe guidance in selecting and in engaging in appropriate Sabbath activities.

QUESTION:

How can a pastor "rest unto the Lord" on the Sabbath when his workload is greater on the Sabbath than on weekdays?

ANSWER:

Special Role. There is no question that for the pastor who ministers to his congregation, the Sabbath may be the most exhausting day of the week. Thus in a sense pastors do not generally observe the "rest" aspect of the Sabbath commandment. Jesus recognized this fact when He said that "on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath" (Matt 12:5).

On the Sabbath the workload of the priests was intensified, as additional sacrifices were prescribed for that day (Num 28:9-10; Lev 24:8-9). Yet, though the priests worked more on the Sabbath, Christ said that they were "guiltless" (Matt 12:5). The reason is not because they took a day off at another time during the week. No such provision is contemplated in the Old Testament. Rather, the reason is to be found in the special redemptive role and ministry performed by the priests on the Sabbath.

Redemptive Work. The intensification of the ministry of the priests at the temple on the Sabbath (four lambs were sacrificed instead of two—Num 28:8-9), pointed to the special provision of forgiveness and salvation which God offered through the priests to the people on that day. Thus, through the Sabbath ministry of the priests the people could experience the rest of God's forgiveness and salvation.

Like the priests of old, pastors today are called upon on the Sabbath to intensify their redemptive ministry on behalf of God's people. While this may deprive them of the physical relaxation provided by the Sabbath, it will refresh their souls with the restful satisfaction that comes from ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of others.

Rest of Service. It is important to remember that the Savior spent the Sabbath not relaxing in splendid isolation, but actively involved in offering a living, loving service to human needs. The teaching and the example of the Savior suggests that resting unto the Lord on the Sabbath is accomplished not only by resting physically but also by acting redemptively on behalf of others.

The Sabbath is linked both to creation (Ex 20:11) and redemption (Deut 5:15; Heb 4:9). By interrupting our secular activities we remember the Creator-God and by acting mercifully toward others we imitate the Redeemer-God who works redemptively on the Sabbath on behalf of His creatures (John 5:17). The pastor is in a special sense called to work redemptively on the Sabbath. This work may deprive him of physical rest (which he can have on other days), but will enrich and renew him with the restful satisfaction of having served God's people.

QUESTION:

Is it proper to conduct church business activities on the Sabbath, such as church board meetings, community services meetings, Sabbath School workshops, church school committees, etc.?

ANSWER:

All church activities that are of a business nature should be avoided on the Sabbath, because they detract from the spirit of worship and celebration of God's creative and redemptive love. Holding church business meetings on weekdays serves to remind us not only of the sacredness of the Sabbath, but also of the fact that we serve the church during all the seven days of the week.

Emergency Meetings. At times it may be necessary for the elders or church officers to meet on the Sabbath to deal with emergency problems arising from sickness or accidents. To postpone such meetings could mean to fail to provide urgent assistance. Christ condemned emphatically the neglect of human needs on the Sabbath (Matt 12:11-12; Luke 13:15-16).

Ordinary Meetings. Most church business meetings held on the Sabbath do not fall under the category of "emergency meetings." Meetings held on the Sabbath to discuss such matters as church finances, appointment of church officers, ingathering planning, fund raising for special projects,

periodical campaigns, etc., detract from the spirit and ideals of the Sabbath and should be avoided during its sacred hours. Such meetings are part of the ordinary administration of the church and should be scheduled for other days.

There is a tendency to fill the Sabbath with too many meetings and activities so that little time is left for needed reflection and meditation. In planning for our Sabbath celebration, let us plan for a time of meditation which can restore the equilibrium between the physical and spiritual components of our being. Church meetings and activities can deprive us of the needed climate of freedom and tranquility to experience the Sabbath renewal.

QUESTION:

Should weddings be celebrated on the Sabbath? Since marriage is a sacred institution, is it not appropriate to perform its ceremony on the Sabbath?

ANSWER:

Both the Sabbath and marriage are sacred institutions which have come down to us from Eden. Thus in itself it would not be out of harmony with the spirit of Sabbathkeeping to celebrate a wedding on the Sabbath.

Wedding ceremonies, however, involve considerable work in preparing for the services and in holding the receptions. The ultimate result is that a secular atmosphere can easily develop which disrupts the spirit of the Sabbath celebration. Thus, to preserve the quiet worshipful spirit of the Sabbath, the holding of weddings on the Sabbath should be discouraged.

QUESTION:

Should funeral services be conducted on the Sabbath?

ANSWER:

In some countries climatic conditions and limited mortuary services may dictate the holding of funerals without delay on any day including the Sabbath. In these cases all the possible arrangements ought to be made in advance to reduce the labor and commotion on the Sabbath.

As a general rule, however, it is advisable to avoid conducting funerals on the Sabbath, since these disrupt the spirit of rest, joy, and celebration of the Sabbath. It is noteworthy that in Bible times, even mourning was interrupted on the Sabbath in order to experience the Sabbath joy and delight, which were seen as a foretaste of the blessedness of the world to come.

As Christians we are called upon to comfort the bereaved on the Sabbath by sharing with them the hope of the resurrection and of the new world, of which the Sabbath is a symbol. Funeral services, however, should be avoided on the Sabbath because they require considerable work in preparing both for the service and for the subsequent interment. In accordance with the example of the women who followed Jesus, it is well on the Sabbath to interrupt all funeral preparations and to rest according to the commandment (Luke 23:55-56).

QUESTION:

Should ingathering be done on the Sabbath?

ANSWER:

Although the solicitation of funds for humanitarian projects at home and abroad is a worthy endeavor which can bring many spiritual benefits both to the solicitor and to the donor, it is preferable for several reasons to engage in ingathering solicitation outside the Sabbath hours.

First, the solicitation of money from house to house, even though for a good cause, tends to generate a commercial atmosphere which is contrary to the spirit of the Sabbath.

Second, a person intent to reach the \$25 or \$50 ingathering goal on the Sabbath may lose sight of the goal of the Sabbath itself, which is to offer us the opportunity to reach not financial goals, but closer communion with God and fellow believers.

Third, it is difficult to keep one's mind on spiritual realities on the Sabbath, while involved in collecting and handling money. In our society money has become associated with business and purchasing power. Thus it is difficult for anyone soliciting funds on the Sabbath not to think of the business aspect of money.

Fourth, ingathering solicitation on the Sabbath may also give rise to misconceptions in the minds of donors who may learn about the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the first time through an ingathering contact. They may think that Adventists spend their Sabbath raising money for their church, when they should perceive our Sabbathkeeping as the time when we celebrate God's creative and redemptive love by seeking to give rather than to receive. These are some of the reasons why in my view it is preferable not to engage in ingathering solicitation on the Sabbath.

QUESTION:

How should the Sabbath be observed in Seventh-day Adventist medical institutions?

ANSWER:

Sickness and pain know no distinction between holy and secular days. Thus the needs of the sick and the suffering must be met without regard to days. The example of Christ is significant in this regard since He used the Sabbath to heal the sick, restoring them to physical and spiritual wholeness. Seventh-day Adventist medical institutions in their policies and practices ought to reflect Christ's example of Sabbathkeeping in providing a willing and compassionate medical service on the Sabbath.

It is the responsibility of each institution to develop and implement policies that reflect the principles of Sabbathkeeping found in the Scriptures and exemplified by Christ. The following suggestions represent in my view an application of the Biblical principles of Sabbathkeeping.

High Quality of Medical Care. Needed medical care should be given on the Sabbath willingly, cheerfully, and at the same high level of quality as on the week days. Patients should not feel neglected on the Sabbath because physicians or nurses are so busy observing their Sabbath that they can give only limited attention to their needs. On the contrary, the celebration of God's creative and redemptive love on the Sabbath ought to motivate medical personnel to show added personal interest and concern toward their patients.

Reduced Rates. In the light of the example of Christ who healed people on the Sabbath not for financial gain but out of love and in view of the fact that no personal gain or profit is to be sought for services rendered on the Sabbath, reduced rates should be charged on the Sabbath for medical services. Such rates should reflect the actual cost of rendering any needed medical service.

It is customary for non-SDA physicians and medical institutions to charge a higher weekend fee for services rendered on Saturday and Sunday. Such a practice ought not to be implemented by SDA medical personnel and administrators who believe that the Sabbath is a day not for greater gain, but for greater missionary service.

A reduced Sabbath rate which covers the basic operating costs would serve as a most powerful testimony to patients and to the community at large that Sabbathkeeping is truly an occasion for Adventists to follow the example of Christ in offering an unselfish, loving service to human needs. Whenever possible voluntary service on the Sabbath should be encouraged.

Essential Services. All the ordinary activities which are not immediately related to patient care should be discontinued on the Sabbath. Usually this means the closing down of certain facilities and departments and the postponement of elective diagnostic and therapeutic services. Emergency service should not be interrupted but rendered willingly and cheerfully.

Payment of Bills. The rendering and payment of bills should be avoided on the Sabbath. Administrative and business offices that do routine business should be closed on the Sabbath. If it is necessary to admit or discharge a patient on the Sabbath, it is advisable to make financial arrangements either before or after the Sabbath.

Relaxed Atmosphere. The suspension of all routine work on the Sabbath should provide a relaxed atmosphere where the medical staff can more freely and fully interact with the patients, counseling them and sharing with them their Christian love and concern. Patients in a Seventh-day Adventist hospital should perceive the Sabbath as the day when the environment, the personnel, and the services are more delightful. Such a positive perception can have a lasting impact upon the patients and eventually lead some to seek for a continued blessing of the Sabbath celebration in their personal lives.

Rotating Sabbath Work. Adventist medical institutions should exercise great care in scheduling all personnel so that the same workers will not have to be on duty every Sabbath. On the other hand no worker should expect to be always off duty on the Sabbath. Supervisors should be as fair as possible in preparing the work schedules so that Sabbath services can be rendered on a rotating basis by all. The keeping of the Sabbath should never be made a burden to a few workers but a privilege for all.

QUESTION:

Should a Sabbathkeeper employed by a secular or religious organization which provides essential social services, agree to work routinely on the Sabbath?

ANSWER:

Indispensable humanitarian services are not negated but contemplated by the Biblical view of the Sabbath. Christ stated unequivocally that “The sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27), that is, to ensure human wellbeing. The Sabbath encompasses not only the cessation from secular work to honor God more freely and fully (Ex 20:8-10; 31:15-16; Is 58:13-14), but also the rendering of needed services to show concern toward fellow beings (Deut 5:12-15; Matt 12:12; Luke 13:12).

A Distinction in Essential Services. A distinction must be made between essential services rendered on the Sabbath in a Seventh-day Adventist institution and those rendered in a non-SDA institution. In an Adventists fire station, for example, no routine maintenance work will be done on the Sabbath and the staff will be reduced to a minimum indispensable. This means that a person working in such a fire station, when called upon to work on the Sabbath, will be expected to perform only those services which are essential to guarantee readiness in case of emergency.

The situation is altogether different in a normal fire station where the firemen on duty are expected to perform routine maintenance of the fire trucks and of the station. This does not mean that a Sabbathkeeper should not accept employment in such organizations as police and fire stations, hospitals, schools, or social agencies which provide essential services. In seeking or holding employment in such organizations, however, a Sabbathkeeper should consider following guidelines such as these:

Request Sabbath Exemption. A Sabbathkeeper who accepts employment in institutions which provide essential social services should make known at the outset to the employers his or her Sabbathkeeping principles and courteously request exemption from Sabbath duties. In exchange for these Sabbath privileges, great willingness should be shown to work at any other time and to sacrifice, if necessary, even vacation time. In most cases exemption from Sabbath duties is granted without major difficulties, especially because there are other workers who desire to be free on Sunday.

Explain Type of Essential Work. When because of factors such as shortage of personnel, it becomes impossible to obtain regular exemption from work on the Sabbath, Sabbathkeepers should courteously explain to their supervisors the type of essential work they are willing to perform on the Sabbath, in harmony with their religious convictions.

Rotating Schedule. Sabbathkeepers who are frequently called upon to perform essential services on the Sabbath should courteously request their employers to be scheduled for work on a rotating basis in order to be allowed as often as possible to enter into a fuller celebration of the Sabbath.

True to Principle. Where the above conditions cannot be met, a Sabbathkeeper should be willing to remain true to principle, even if this involves suffering the loss of a job or of other benefits.

Emergency Situations. When emergency situations arise which threaten life or property, the principles taught by Christ dictate that one be willing to work on the Sabbath and do all in one's power to save life (Matt 12:11-12; Luke 13:15-16).

QUESTION:

What should a Sabbathkeeper do when he or she is denied the privilege to observe the Sabbath by military, educational, political, industrial, or other institutions?

ANSWER:

Stand for Principle. When in spite of the best efforts a Sabbathkeeper has put forth to clarify his or her religious convictions, the employing organization persists in denying Sabbath privileges, the believer should choose to stand by faith for the principle of Sabbathkeeping, even if such an action may result in the loss of the job.

Intervention by Church Official. A competent church official should be asked to contact the employing organization, to clarify to its management why their employee cannot work on the Sabbath. Great willingness should be shown, however, to work at any other time and to sacrifice, if necessary, even vacation time to compensate the company for any possible loss caused by exempting the worker from the Sabbath duties.

Church Support. The local church should offer spiritual, emotional, and, if needed, financial support to a member experiencing Sabbath problems. Such support will serve to strengthen the commitment to the Lord not only of the individual member facing Sabbath problems but of the church as a whole.

QUESTION:

Should a Sabbathkeeper purchase goods or services on the Sabbath from persons or places which are doing business anyhow on the Sabbath?

ANSWER:

Freedom for All. The Fourth Commandment enjoins us to grant freedom to all on the Sabbath, including the stranger. Any attempt to enjoy the freedom and joy of the Sabbath at the expense of others represents a denial of the values of the Sabbath.

The fact that certain persons or businesses do not observe the Sabbath is not a valid justification for purchasing their goods or services on the Sabbath. By such an action a Sabbathkeeper would be sanctioning the business transacted by others on the Sabbath. Moreover he would himself be transgressing the Sabbath by purchasing goods or services—an activity which is clearly condemned by the Scriptures (Jer 17:21-23; Neh 13:19-22).

Promotes Secularism. Purchasing goods or services on the Sabbath, such as eating out in restaurants, will turn the mind of the believer away from the sacredness of the Sabbath to the secularism and materialism of the world. With proper planning, adequate provisions can be made in advance for foreseeable Sabbath needs.

Emergency Situations. In spite of one's best plans and intentions, a situation may arise when a person may need on the Sabbath, for example, to buy food or hire a taxi. In such emergency situations, God understands the intentions of the heart. Care should be taken to avoid the recurrence of such situations and to maintain at all times the awareness of the sacredness of the Sabbath.

QUESTION:

Should a Sabbathkeeper attend professional meetings on the Sabbath, especially if they are in the field of Religion?

ANSWER:

The attendance of professional meetings on the Sabbath, including those of theological societies, can hardly be seen as a legitimate substitute for joining church members in the regular church services. The very name "professional meetings" suggests that the aim of such gatherings is to develop professional skills and thus they must be seen as part of the work performed during the six days.

Attending meetings of theological societies on the Sabbath is no better than attending any other type of professional meeting. The technical issues which are generally addressed in such meetings are designed not to enhance the Sabbath worship experience but to sharpen one's knowledge and professional competency.

The principle of making the Sabbath experience distinct from the gainful occupation of the six days will lead Sabbathkeeping Religion teachers to join fellow believers at church rather than fellow professionals at "work."

QUESTION:

What should be the time for beginning and ending the Sabbath in the Arctic regions where the sun sets very early, or very late, or not at all during part of the summer?

ANSWER:

Broader Meaning of Sunset. Historically, Seventh-day Adventists have endeavored to follow the principle of sunset reckoning even in the Arctic regions by broadening the meaning of “sunset” to include, for example, the end of twilight, the diminishing of light, the moment when the sun is closest to the horizon.

Sunset Reckoning not Dictated by Commandment. Personally I respect this conviction, but I have difficulty in accepting it as the only valid Biblical option, for at least three reasons.

In the first place, the sunset reckoning is not dictated by the Fourth Commandment, where no instruction is given regarding the time to begin and end the observance of the Sabbath. The absence of such an instruction may be indicative of divine wisdom in formulating a principle adaptable to different geographical locations.

Completion of Six Days of Work. Second, the application of the sunset reckoning in the Arctic regions when, for example, the sun sets by noon, makes it impossible to observe the first part of the Fourth Commandment which enjoins: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work” (Ex 20:9).

To stop any gainful employment on Friday sometime before noon in order to be ready to begin the observance of the Sabbath at noon-sunset, means to reduce the working time of the sixth day, which in Biblical thought consists of approximately 12 hours from sunrise to sunset (John 11:9; Matt 20:1-8), to only the first two or three hours of the morning.

Moreover, to resume work on Saturday after the noon-sunset means to fulfill the working time of the sixth day, half during the “daytime” of the sixth day and half during the “daytime” of the seventh day. Such a practice can hardly reflect the intent of the Fourth Commandment, which explicitly enjoins completing one’s work in six days and then resting unto the Lord on the seventh day.

Daytime Defined by the Clock. A third reason why the sunset reckoning is not suitable in or near the Arctic regions to determine the beginning and end of the Sabbath is simply because in these areas the daytime is defined by the clock and not by the sun.

While in Bible lands the time between sunrise and sunset ranges constantly between 12 and 14 hours during the course of the year, in the Arctic regions the range can be from less than 3 hours in December to more than 18 hours in July. What this means is that while in Bible lands sunrise and sunset

provide a logical and balanced division between daytime and nighttime, or working time and resting time, in the Arctic regions this division must be defined, not by sunrise and sunset, but rather by the clock.

Equatorial Sunset Time. In light of the foregoing discussion, the most suitable method of Sabbath reckoning in the Arctic regions is, in my view, according to the equatorial sunset time, that is from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Integrity of Sixth Day of Work. My reasons for favoring the equatorial sunset time for the Arctic regions are essentially three. First, the observance of the Sabbath in the Arctic regions from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m. would preserve the integrity of the working time of the sixth day which is presupposed in the first part of the Fourth Commandment: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work” (Ex 20:9).

To respect the integrity of the working time of the sixth day, however, does not imply that one ought to be engaged in gainful employment until the very end of the day. On the contrary, Friday was rightly called “Day of Preparation” because part of the work done on that day was in preparation for the Sabbath.

Compatible with Palestinian Sunset Time. A second reason for favoring the equatorial sunset time for the Arctic regions is the fact that it is quite compatible with the sunset time of the Bible lands.

A comparison between the sunset tables at the latitude of Palestine with those at the equator reveals that on the average there is less than one hour of difference between the two during the course of the year. Thus the equatorial sunset time comes very close to that of Bible lands while providing at the same time a consistent method of day reckoning.

Compatible with Working Schedule. A third reason is suggested by the fact that equatorial sunset time is compatible with the working schedule of most people living in the Arctic regions.

Compatibility with the equatorial or Palestinian sunset time per se is not a determining factor because nowhere does the Bible or even common sense suggest that the sunset time of Palestine or of the equator must be the normative time for determining the end of the day and the beginning of a new day in all the regions of the earth. What makes this compatibility recommendable, however, is the fact that the sunset time of Palestine, like the one of the equator, does respect the working schedule of most people living in such northern countries as Alaska, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

In these northern countries, as in most industrialized nations, the working day of most people terminates between 5 and 6 p.m. This hour of the day is rightly known as the “rush hour” because it is the hour when most people are rushing home at the end of their working day.

The equatorial sunset time, then, by being compatible with the termination of the working day of most people living in the Arctic regions, offers a rational method for observing the Sabbath from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m.

My intent in proposing the equatorial sunset time for the Arctic regions is not to make an already difficult situation worse, but rather to contribute to the resolution of the complex problem of Sabbath reckoning in these northern regions.

If differing views should persist on the time for beginning and ending the Sabbath in the Arctic regions, it is my hope that the spirit of mutual respect, compassion, and charity will prevail. May we never forget the Sabbathkeeping expresses obedience to God and, as Ellen White perceptively writes, “The Lord accepts all the obedience of every creature He has made, according to the circumstances of time in the sun-rising and sun-setting world” (Letter 167, March 23, 1900).

QUESTION:

Does not the international date line create uncertainty about which day should be observed as the seventh day?

ANSWER:

The international date line creates uncertainty primarily for travelers who have either to add or to drop a day from their calendar when crossing such a line in the Pacific Ocean.

It may be helpful to explain that the date line is a north-south line which runs through the Pacific Ocean, approximately along the 180th meridian. Meridians are lines which extend from the North to the South pole and which divide the globe into 360 equally spaced lines. At the line of the 180th meridian the date changes, so that east of it is one day earlier and west of it is one day later.

Need for Date Line. The date line is necessary because the earth is divided into 24 one-hour time zones (of 15 degrees longitude each) which make up a full day upon the earth. Since the earth rotates eastward, when people travel westward or eastward, they must of necessity either drop a day from or add a day to their reckoning of time.

In October 1884 the commercial nations of the world agreed to make the meridian going through the astronomical observatory at Greenwich, England, as the prime meridian from which all other meridians were to be numbered. As a result of this decision, the international date line, which is the 180th meridian, runs from north to south through the Pacific Ocean. In some places the date line bulges eastward and in other places westward to enable certain land areas and islands to have the same day.

Though the date line was established on the basis of geographical, political, economic, and social considerations, the decision must be accepted as appropriate, since it has produced order out of that which would otherwise have been confusion.

Date Line Israel. Some Sabbathkeepers argue that the international date line should be located at the eastern border of Israel where there is the time zone line. Their reasoning is that since the Sabbath was first given to the Jews, then Jerusalem must be the place where the seventh day must begin and end (Is 2:3; Mic 4:2).

This reasoning, in my view, is faulty. First, because the Sabbath was given by God not exclusively to the Jews but inclusively to mankind (Mark 2:27). Second, because nowhere does the Scripture suggest that the reckoning of the day should begin and end at Jerusalem. Third, because the Jews themselves never dropped or added a day when forced to emigrate east or west of Jerusalem.

Lastly, because if the date line had been set at the 35th meridian crossing Israel, utter confusion would have prevailed in all the northern and southern countries crossed by this line (Russia, Turkey, Lebanon, and all the eastern African countries). Millions of people would have had to constantly add or drop a day whenever crossing the date line. This problem is largely avoided by the present date line, which, because of its location mostly in the open waters of the Pacific Ocean, affects only very few inhabited areas.

Providential Decision. In the absence of any Biblical injunction, it is perfectly right for human judgment to determine the location of the date line. The fact that the decision to place the line at the 180th meridian in the Pacific Ocean has produced order and has met the satisfaction of all the world, must be seen as an indication of providential guidance on the matter.

The Scriptures teach that political powers are instituted by God (Rom 13:1) and when they exercise their powers legitimately to ensure law and social order, they are fulfilling a divine mandate. In the case of the date line,

the decision of the international community must be accepted as divinely sanctioned, because it detracts no honor from God, it exalts no individual, political, or religious organization, and it benefits all people.

Adoption of Local Calendar. The travelers who reach the islands of the Pacific from the East or from the West, should adopt the day of the people who inhabit the islands, as it is customary to adopt the time of the day of any place one goes.

It is important to remember that in a round, rotating earth the seventh-day cannot possibly be observed at the same time everywhere. When the Sabbath is beginning in Los Angeles, California (Friday evening), it is already ending in Sydney, Australia (Saturday evening).

The principle of Sabbathkeeping consists not in observing the seventh day at the same time everywhere around the globe, but rather in observing the seventh day when it arrives in the part of the earth where one lives. This principle applies both to the hour for beginning the Sabbath and to the day for observing it. Obedience to the Fourth Commandment demands that we observe the seventh day as it comes to us in the place where we live.

Chapter 11

OUR FAVORITE

SABBATH RECIPES

The twenty recipes I have selected for this chapter represent some of our family's favorite Sabbath dishes. It has not been an easy task for me writing out these recipes, unaccustomed as I am to American measurements and terminology.

Preparing for the special Sabbath dinner does require some effort. In fact, I generally cook our main Sabbath dishes on Thursday or earlier, in order to have more time on Friday for house cleaning and family preparation for the Sabbath. The effort put forth in preparing the Sabbath dinner is amply compensated by the satisfaction of seeing happy faces enjoying the blessings of the Sabbath food.

My recipes are drawn mostly from my Italian cooking tradition. I sincerely hope that some of them, at least, will add some *gusto* to your Sabbath celebration. Feel free to contact me by letter or by phone for any clarification. My address and phone are as follows: Mrs. Anna Bacchiocchi, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103. Phone (616) 471-2915.

RISOTTO CON FUNGHI**Rice with Mushrooms**

2 lbs. fresh mushrooms

4 or 5 cloves garlic

1/2 cup chopped parsley

1/3 cup olive oil

2 cups brown rice (cooking time 40 min.)

4 cups water

1 vegetable bouillon cube or 1 or 2 envelopes of George Washington Seasoning

salt

1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese

Mushrooms. Wash mushrooms and slice them. In a large skillet pour olive oil, add minced garlic, chopped parsley, and the sliced mushrooms. Add the seasoning and salt to taste, stir well. Cook over medium heat, stirring often until the liquid formed by mushrooms is dried.

Rice. Clean rice and rise it with *hot water* (it lessens the cooking time) in a colander (obviously with holes smaller than the rice!). Cook rice in boiling water. When rice is tender, spoon it into the cooked mushrooms. Stir well over medium heat until all liquid is absorbed. Salt to taste. When prepared for the Sabbath, let the rice absorb only part of the liquid, leaving the rest for heating just before serving.

Optional. Stir in 1 to 2 tablespoons butter. Serve rice with grated Parmesan cheese over it. Yield: 6 to 8 servings.

MANICOTTI RIPIENI**Crepes with Spinach-Ricotta Filling****3 cups all-purpose flour****1 tsp. baking powder****1/2 tsp. salt****4 cups milk****4 eggs****4 tsps. butter, melted**

Mix flour, baking powder, and salt. Stir in remaining ingredients. Beat with hand beater until smooth. Over medium heat, in a lightly buttered 6 to 8 inch skillet, pour 1/4 cup of the batter. Immediately rotate skillet until a thin film covers the bottom. When firm, turn the spatula and cook the other side. Repeat until all batter is used up.

Yield: 25-27 crepes.

Filling for Crepes:**4 10-oz. pkgs. chopped frozen spinach****3 medium onions, chopped****3 envelopes G. Washington Seasoning (Golden) or 2 vegetable bouillon cubes****1/4 cup olive oil****2 lbs. ricotta cheese****1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese****1/3 cup Parmesan cheese**

In a large skillet, heat olive oil. Add onion and cook over a low flame until yellow. Add the thawed spinach and seasoning. Cook over medium heat for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. In a large bowl combine the three cheeses, then add the spinach and stir until well blended. Place 2 heaping tablespoons of filling on crepe and roll up until filling is well secure.

Tomato Sauce:**1/2 cup olive oil**

2 15-oz. jars Buitoni spaghetti sauce (or your favorite brand)

2 med. onions, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

2 med. carrots, grated

1 stalk celery, chopped

2 tsps. of fresh basil or 1 tsp. dried basil

1/2 tsp. dried oregano

3 vegetable bouillon cubes or 3 envelopes G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

Salt to taste

In a large saucepan pour olive oil, add the chopped onions and minced garlic. Cook over medium heat until onion is yellow. Add the grated carrots and chopped celery. Cook 10 more minutes, stirring frequently. Add tomato sauce and remaining ingredients. Stir well. Let sauce come to a boil, cover and let simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. If sauce is a little sour, add 1/2 tsp. confectioners sugar.

White Sauce:

6 tsps. butter

6 tsps. flour

1/2 tsp. salt

3 cups milk

Melt butter over low heat in a heavy saucepan. Use wooden spoon for stirring. Blend in flour and salt. Cook over low heat, stirring until mixture is smooth and bubbly. Remove from heat and stir in the milk. Stirring constantly, bring the mixture to a boil. The sauce will thicken as it cooks. Boil one minute.

To Bake Manicotti: On the bottoms of two baking pans (10" x 14" x 2"), pour some of the tomato sauce to coat evenly. Place manicotti (filled crepes) in a pan, side by side in one layer, with the overlapped side down. Spoon white sauce over manicotti. Cover the white sauce with tomato sauce, sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top and bake in 350 F. oven (preheated) for 25-30 minutes. If manicotti are prepared in advance to eat on the Sabbath, bake only 15 minutes and then 15 minutes when reheating. Let stand 10-15 minutes before serving.

LASAGNE ALLA BOLOGNESE CON FUNGHI**Lasagne Bolonese Style with Mushrooms****Tomato Sauce:**

1/2 cup olive oil

2 15-oz. jars Buitoni spaghetti sauce (or your favorite brand)

2 medium onions, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

2 medium carrots, grated

1 stalk celery, chopped

2 tsps. of fresh basil or 1 tsp. dried basil

1/2 tsp. dried oregano

3 vegetable bouillon cubes or 3 envelopes G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

Salt to taste

In a large saucepan pour olive oil, add the chopped onions and minced garlic. Cook over medium heat until onion is yellow. Add the grated carrots and chopped celery. Cook 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add tomato sauce and remaining ingredients. Stir well. Let sauce come to a boil, cover and let simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. If sauce is a little sour, add 1/2 tsp. confectioners sugar.

Mushroom Filling:

2 lbs. fresh mushrooms

5 cloves garlic

1/2 cup chopped parsley

1/3 cup olive oil

2 envelopes G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

Salt to taste

Wash mushrooms and slice them. Pour olive oil in a skillet, add minced garlic, chopped parsley, the sliced mushrooms and the seasoning. Cook over medium heat, stirring often until the liquid formed by the mushrooms is dried.

White Sauce:

8 tsps. butter

8 tsps. flour

1 tsp. salt

4 cups milk

Melt butter over low heat in a heavy saucepan. Use wooden spoon for stirring. Blend in flour and salt. Cook over low heat, stirring until mixture is smooth and bubbly. Remove from heat and stir in the milk. Stirring constantly, bring the mixture to a boil. The sauce will thicken as it cooks. Boil 1 minute.

Combining Ingredients:

Boil the lasagne noodles. Generally the best way to cook any kind of pasta is to follow the directions on the package. Italian lasagne does not always need to be boiled in water. Sometimes they can be placed in a baking dish uncooked. This, of course, cuts the preparation time almost in half.

Oil bottom and sides of a 10" x 14" x 2 1/2" baking dish. Spread some tomato sauce. Arrange one layer of noodles, covering it first with a layer of white sauce and then of tomato sauce. Sprinkle on some Parmesan cheese and add mushrooms. Repeat in this order until all ingredients have been used. For the top layer, have a more generous spread of white sauce and tomato sauce. It will prevent the lasagne from becoming hard.

Baking Time:

20 minutes in oven at 350° F. if the noodles have been precooked, 40 minutes if uncooked noodles are used. This applies only to Italian lasagne noodles. Any other type of noodles must first be cooked in boiling water and then baked in the oven for 30 minutes at 350 F.

When baked, remove from the oven and let sit for 10 minutes before cutting into portions.

This recipe can be prepared without the mushrooms and will still taste delicious.

If the lasagne are prepared in advance for the Sabbath meal, bake half the time stated above. When reheating, bake for the remaining time. This dish will be a special Sabbath treat for your family.

PIZZA

10 cups flour

1 tsp. salt

2 3/4 - 3 cups lukewarm water

2 tsps. & 1 tsp. dry yeast (dissolved in 1 1/2 cups warm water)

1 tsp. sugar

2 or 3 tsps. olive oil

The Yeast: In a small bowl, dissolve sugar in 1 1/2 cups lukewarm water. Then add the yeast and stir well until the yeast is dissolved. Let it stand 2 or 3 minutes, until risen.

The Dough. Combine flour and salt on a board. Make a large well in it and pour the dissolved yeast in the well. Use a fork to blend the yeast with the flour. Gradually add the lukewarm water and gather up. Knead until smooth. If the dough is a little sticky, add the olive oil. If still sticky, sprinkle a little flour. Grease a large bowl and place the dough in it.

Grease the top part of the dough and cover. Let rise in a warm place away from drafts for 1 or 1 1/2 hours or until double in bulk.

Tomato Sauce:

1/2 cup olive oil

2 15-oz. jars Buitoni spaghetti sauce (or your favorite brand)

1 large onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp. of fresh basil or 1/2 tsp. of dried basil

1 tsp. dried oregano

3 vegetable bouillon cubes or 3 envelopes G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

Salt to taste

Pour olive oil in a heavy saucepan with thick bottom. Add chopped onions and minced garlic. Cook over medium heat until onion is yellow. Add tomato sauce and seasoning. Let sauce come to a boil, cover it and let it simmer 40-45 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Toppings for Pizza:

3 8-oz. pkgs. of Mozzarella cheese, shredded

1/2 cup parmesan cheese, grated

**2 cups cooked mushrooms or 1 1/2 cups sliced onions
or 1 1/2 cups thinly sliced sweet red or green peppers**

1/2 tsp. dried oregano

3 tsps. olive oil

Mushroom Topping:

See recipe for lasagne mushroom filling.

Combining. When dough has risen, punch down and divide it into 5 parts. If you prefer a thinner pizza, divide the dough into 6 parts. Roll out dough to fit five lightly oiled 12" round baking sheets. Let rise (away from draft) for half an hour. You do not need to preheat oven. Place pizza in oven on the middle rack and turn the dial to 350 F. Let it bake for about 15-20 minutes or until bottom (lift up pizza with a spatula) of pizza is golden in color.

Take the pizza out of the oven. Brush olive oil on crust, add tomato sauce, sprinkle some oregano and some Parmesan cheese. Add your favorite topping. Put back in the oven to bake for an additional 5 minutes. Take pizza out of the oven and sprinkle shredded Mozzarella cheese on it. Place back in the oven for one more minute, until the Mozzarella is melted.

I like to treat my family to pizza on Friday night, making extra ones for Saturday evening. On the latter, do not sprinkle Mozzarella cheese until ready to reheat and serve.

SPAGHETTI AL PESTO GENOVESE**Spaghetti Genoa Style**

1 lb. spaghetti

1 cup fresh basil

1/2 cup fresh parsley

2 cloves garlic

3 tsps. olive oil

1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

2 tsps. pine nuts

1 tsp. butter

1/8 tsp. salt

Sauce. Chop very fine: basil, parsley, garlic, pine nuts and then place them in a medium bowl. Add olive oil and salt. Stir well until all ingredients are blended together.

Spaghetti. Cook spaghetti in boiling water following the instructions on the package. Drain the spaghetti well. In a large bowl, place butter and a tablespoon of the sauce. Add spaghetti and remaining sauce. Stir well. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese over the top and serve.

For the Sabbath, the sauce can be prepared in advance and kept refrigerated. Only the spaghetti needs to be boiled.

MELANZANE ALLA PARMIGIANA

Eggplant with Parmesan Cheese

2 large eggplants

Salt

2-3 eggs

3 cups dried bread crumbs

1 1/2 cups cooking oil

Sauce:

2 15-oz. jars Buitoni spaghetti sauce (or your favorite brand)

1/3 cup olive oil

1 large onion, chopped

1 tsp. fresh basil or 1/2 tsp. dried basil

2 envelopes G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

Salt to taste

In a heavy saucepan with thick bottom, pour olive oil. Add chopped onion and cook over medium heat until yellow. Add tomato sauce and seasoning. Let come to a boil. Cover and simmer 40-45 minutes, stirring occasionally. If sauce is a little sour, add 1/2 tsp. confectioners sugar.

Topping:

2 16-oz. bags shredded Mozzarella cheese

1/3 cup parmesan cheese

Preparing Eggplant. Wash and cut eggplant lengthwise into 1/4 inch thick slices. Place them in a single layer on absorbent paper. Sprinkle salt over them and let sit for 30 min. Shake off the liquid that will form and turn them over and repeat salting procedure. Shake off the liquid and dry them with absorbent paper.

In a shallow bowl beat eggs. Dip eggplant slices in eggs, coat with bread crumbs and lightly sprinkle with salt. Heat the oil in a large skillet and fry eggplant slices until golden brown on both sides. Drain on absorbent paper.

Combining. Oil a 9 1/2" x 13" baking dish. Coat the bottom with a little sauce. Cover with eggplant slices, then some sauce. Sprinkle shredded Mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. Continue process until all ingredients are used. Bake in preheated oven at 350° F. until sauce is well heated and Mozzarella melts (about 15 min.). Serves 6 to 8.

When this dish is prepared for the Sabbath, place all the ingredients in the baking dish, as described, and refrigerate it. The baking in the oven can be finished on the Sabbath in 15 minutes.

INSALATA DI RISO**Rice Salad**

1 cup long-grain or brown rice

1 cup small green olives filled with pimento

1 cup pitted black olives cut in half

1/2 cup pearl onions (pickled)

1/2 cup small cucumbers (pickled), cut into slices

1 10-oz. package tender peas (cooked)

1 15-oz. can pinto beans

3 eggs boiled, sliced

1 med. onion, grated

2-3 tsps. olive oil

Seasoning:

2 tsps. lemon juice

1/2 to 3/4 tsp. Lawry's seasoned salt

1 or 2 dashes Lawry's garlic powder

2-3 tsps. of Miracle Whip salad dressing

Cook rice. When done, rinse in a colander under cold water. Let rice drain well. In a large bowl mix all ingredients except olive oil and seasonings. Spoon over the rice, pour the olive oil and gently stir until all ingredients are well mixed. In a small bowl stir salad dressing with seasoning. Pour only half the lemon juice and taste. If needed, add the other Tbsp. Store in refrigerator. This dish can be prepared completely on Friday and dished out to the enjoyment of all on the Sabbath. Serves 6 to 8.

FRITTATA DI ZUCCHINI

Zucchini Omelet

4 eggs

1 lb. fresh small zucchini

1 medium onion, chopped

1/4 cup olive oil

1 envelope G. Washington Seasoning (Golden).

Salt to taste

Scrub zucchini well. Remove stems and blossom ends. Cut in thin slices. In a 9" diameter skillet pour olive oil, add chopped onion, zucchini, and G. Washington Seasoning. Cook over medium heat and stir frequently. When zucchini are tender, add the beaten eggs with a pinch of salt. Cover and lower heat. When the omelet is firm and golden on one side, turn and brown the other side. When prepared for the Sabbath, cook the zucchini ahead of time and on the Sabbath simply add the eggs. Serves 4.

FRITTATA DI CARCIOFI**Artichoke Omelet****5 eggs****1 9-oz. pkg. frozen artichoke hearts****1/4 cup olive oil****1 clove garlic, minced****1 sprig fresh parsley, chopped****Salt**

In a 9" diameter skillet, pour olive oil, then add garlic, parsley, and the artichoke hearts. Cook over low heat until tender and golden. Season lightly with salt. Beat eggs. Pour over artichokes. Cover and lower heat. When the omelet is firm and golden on one side, turn and brown other side. When prepared for the Sabbath, store in refrigerator and heat in oven before serving. Serves 4 to 6.

FRITTATA DI PATATE**Potato Omelet****5 eggs****4 large potatoes****1/4 cup olive oil****Salt**

Peel potatoes and cut them into thin slices. In a 9" skillet pour olive oil and add the sliced potatoes. Cover and cook over medium heat stirring often. Sprinkle some salt when stirring potatoes. When potatoes are cooked and golden brown, add the beaten eggs. Add a little more salt. Cover and lower the heat. When the omelet is firm and golden on one side, turn and brown the other side. When prepared for the Sabbath, store in refrigerator and heat in oven before serving. Serves 4 to 6.

SPAGHETTI CON POLPETTE DI NOCI**Spaghetti with Meat Balls**

1 lb. spaghetti

Salt

2 tsps. butter

Tomato Sauce:

1/2 cup olive oil

2 15-oz. jars Buitoni spaghetti sauce (or your favorite brand)

2 med. onions, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

2 med. carrots, grated

1 stalk celery, chopped

2 tsps. fresh basil or 1 tsp. dried basil

1/2 tsp. dried oregano

3 vegetable bouillon cubes or 3 pkgs. G. Washington Seasoning (Golden).

Salt to taste

In a large saucepan, pour olive oil, add the chopped onions and minced garlic. Cook over medium heat until onion is yellow. Add the grated carrots and chopped celery; cook 10 more minutes, stirring frequently. Add spaghetti sauce and remaining ingredients. Stir well. Bring to a boil, cover and let simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. If sauce is a little sour, add 1/2 tsp. confectioners sugar.

Meatballs:

3/4 cup pecan or walnut meal

1/3 cup bread crumbs

1/4 cup oatmeal

1 large onion, chopped

- 1 sprig fresh parsley, chopped**
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, grated**
- 1 3-oz. pkg. cream cheese, room temp.**
- 1 pkg. G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)**
- 2-3 eggs**
- 2 cups bread crumbs**
- 1 1/2 cups Mazola oil**

Mix all ingredients, except the 2 cups of bread crumbs. Form into small balls, the size of a walnut, roll in bread crumbs and fry in oil. Oil a baking dish. Place meatballs in baking dish and cover with about half the tomato sauce. Bake in preheated oven at 350° F. for 15-20 minutes. Meanwhile cook spaghetti. Follow directions on package. When done al dente (firm, not overcooked), drain. In a large bowl, place butter, spaghetti, and cover with sauce. Stir well. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve. Serves 6. When prepared for the Sabbath, only cook the spaghetti on the Sabbath, drain them and serve them with the prepared sauce and meatballs.

POLPETTE CON FUNGHI ALLA PANNA

Patties with Sour Cream and Mushrooms

- 3/4 cup pecan or walnut meal**
- 1/3 cup bread crumbs**
- 1/3 cup oats**
- 1 large onion, chopped**
- 1 3-oz. pkg. cream cheese**
- 3 eggs**
- 1 envelope G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)**
- 1 1/2 cups Mazola oil**

Mix ingredients. Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes. Meanwhile, pour oil into frying pan. When oil is warm, drop mixture by spoonfulls. Press down with spoon and fry on both sides. Drain on absorbent paper.

Sauce:

1 10 3/4-oz. cream of mushroom soup

1/2 cup sour cream

1/3 cup milk

1 cup cooked mushrooms

How to Prepare Mushrooms:

2 lbs. fresh mushrooms

5 cloves garlic

1/2 cup chopped parsley

1/3 cup olive oil

2 envelopes G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

Salt

Wash mushrooms and slice them. Pour olive oil in a skillet, add minced garlic, chopped parsley, sliced mushrooms and seasonings. Cook over medium heat, stirring often until the liquid (that the mushrooms form) is dried.

Place patties in a 10" x 12" x 2" oiled baking dish. Spoon over the sauce and cook in a preheated oven at 350° F. for 15-20 min. Serves 6 to 8. Refrigerate and reheat to serve on the Sabbath.

PEPERONATA**Green Peppers, Eggplant, Tomato Stew**

2 medium eggplants, cut into 1" cubes

2 sweet yellow or green peppers cut into 1" cubes

1 10-oz. can stewed tomatoes

1 large onion, chopped

3 vegetable bouillon cubes

1 tsp. sugar

1/4 cup olive oil

Salt to taste

Pour oil in heavy skillet. Add onions, tomatoes, sugar, and one bouillon cube. Stir and cook over medium heat for 10-15 min. Add eggplant and pepper and remaining bouillon cubes. Stir well and cover. Cook with lid on for 20 min., stirring often. Take lid off and cook additional 20-25 min. or until vegetables are crisp-tender. This vegetable dish can be served over cooked rice. Serves 6. When prepared for the Sabbath, store in refrigerator and reheat before serving.

TORTA DI CIPOLLE

Onion Pie

1 unbaked pie crust

6 large onions, chopped

3 eggs

1/2 tsp. salt

1/3 cup milk

2 tsps. flour

1/4 cup olive oil

Pour olive oil in a heavy skillet, add onions and cook over medium heat until onions are yellow. Spoon into pie crust. Beat eggs, add salt, milk, and the flour. Beat again and pour over onions. Bake at 350°F. for 30 min. Serves 6. Refrigerate and reheat to serve on the Sabbath.

INSALATA DI FAGIOLI

Bean Salad

1 large or 2 med. heads of escarole lettuce

1 15-oz. can Northern Beans

2 tsps. chopped parsley (fresh)

Olive oil

Lawry's seasoned salt

Lawry's garlic powder

Onion powder

Lemon juice

Wash lettuce. Drain well. Cut into bite size pieces and dry rolled up in kitchen towel. Rinse beans in colander. Pour into bowl. Add 3-4 tsp. olive oil, chopped parsley, 1/8 tsp. garlic powder, 1/8 tsp. onion powder, a dash of Lawry's seasoned salt and 2 tsp. of lemon juice. Stir well and taste. If necessary add more seasoning. Place the dry lettuce in a large bowl. Pour 2-3 tsp. olive oil over it, Add a dash of Lawry's seasoned salt, a dash of onion powder, and 1 tsp. lemon juice. Stir well. Taste, and if necessary, add more seasoning. Place the beans in center of bowl and serve. Serves 4 to 6.

PISELLI AL POMODORO

Peas with Tomato Sauce

2 10-oz. pkgs. frozen tender peas

1/4 cup olive oil

1 onion chopped

1/3 cup tomato sauce

2 pkgs. G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

Salt to taste

Sauté onion in olive oil. Add tomatoes and seasoning. Cook for 2-3 minutes and then add peas. Stir well and bring to a boil. Cover and lower heat. Cook for 20-25 minutes stirring occasionally. Add a little water if necessary. Very tasty. Serves 4.

Note: Lentils can be cooked in exactly the same way and they are very tasty. Soak lentils in water overnight before cooking in tomato sauce.

CECI ALLA ROMANA

Garbanzos Roman Style

2 cups dried garbanzos

2 cloves garlic

1/4 cup olive oil

1/2 cup tomato sauce

2 pkgs. G. Washington Seasoning (Golden)

2 small stems of fresh rosemary or 3 tsp. of dried rosemary wrapped in a piece of gauze

Salt to taste

Soak garbanzos overnight in hot water. In pressure cooker, sauté garlic. When golden, remove the garlic. Add tomato sauce, seasoning, and rosemary. Stir and cook for a few minutes. Add garbanzos, stir over them adding water. Put lid on pressure cooker and cook for 3 to 3 1/2 hours. After 2 hours of cooking, open pressure cooker to check if extra water is needed. Add water if garbanzos are dry or if they begin to stick. Continue cooking for remainder of time. As a Sabbath dish, it can be prepared ahead of time, refrigerated and then heated on the Sabbath in a regular saucepan.

CROSTATA

Italian Strawberry or Raspberry Pie

14 oz. flour

7 oz. butter

1 egg

Salt

1 tsps. lemon peel, grated

1 tsps. water, if needed

3/4 cup raspberry or strawberry jam

Mix flour and salt on a board. Make a well. Add egg, lemon peel, and butter. Mix with fork until pastry is thoroughly mixed. If pastry is too dry, add 1 tsp. of water. Press firmly together into a ball with hands. Refrigerate for one hour.

Butter and flour one 9" pie plate. Roll out pastry and carefully place in pie plate. Spread with strawberry or raspberry jam and bake at 400° F. for 20-25 minutes.

TORTA MARGHERITA**Margherita Tart****1 cup potato flour****6 eggs, separated****1/2 cup of sugar****Juice of one lemon****3-4 tsps. vanilla extract****Confectioners sugar, sifted**

In a large mixing bowl beat egg yolks at high speed until foamy. Gradually add sugar. Add lemon juice and beat for 10 minutes. At low speed add the flour.

In a small mixing bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Fold into egg mixture. Pour into a 9" or 10" greased baking pan which has been powdered with confectioners sugar. Bake in preheated oven at 375 F. for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Insert a wooden pick in center of cake and if it comes out clean, the tart is done. If not, bake a few minutes longer. When cool, sprinkle with vanilla extract and confectioners sugar.

BIGNE**Cream Puffs****1 cup water****1/2 cup butter****1 cup flour****4 eggs**

In a saucepan heat water and butter to a rolling boil. Stir in flour. Stir vigorously over low heat until mixture forms a ball. Remove from heat. Beat in the eggs, one at a time. Drop mixture with a spoon on an ungreased baking sheet into 12 little mounds 2" apart. Bake in preheated oven at 400 F. for 40-50 minutes or until the puffs are puffed and golden brown. Cool away from drafts. With a sharp knife cut the top half and remove soft dough. Fill puffs with your favorite filling. Replace tops and dust with confectioners sugar.

Filling Options:**1. Sweetened Whipped Cream Filling**

1 cup whipping cream

1/4 cup confectioners sugar

1/2 tsp. vanilla

In a small mixing bowl beat cream until frothy. Add sugar and continue beating until stiff. Add vanilla and stir gently.

2. Cream Filling

4 egg yolks, slightly beaten

4 tps. butter, room temperature

3 tsp. vanilla

4 cups milk

1/8 tsp. cornstarch

2/3 cup sugar

Mix sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Put into heavy saucepan and slowly stir in the milk. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture boils. While stirring, let it boil for one minute. Pour some of the hot mixture into the egg yolks. Stir well until well blended. Pour the egg mixture into the remaining mixture in the saucepan and boil for one more minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, stir in butter and vanilla. When cool, fill puffs.