Sabbath / Sunday:
Their spiritual Dimensions in the Light of Selected Jewish and Christian Discussions

A DISSERTATION

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Their Spiritual Dimensions in the Light of Selected Jewish and Christian Discussions

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The Sabbath as the central commandment of the Law relates all of Judaism to God, to creation, to redemption, and to the final fulfillment of the promises in the eternal Sabbath of the end-time. However, early in the inception of Christianity, Sunday replaced the Sabbath as the day of worship for Christians.

This dissertation is a study of the various aspects of the Sabbath in order to gain a deeper insight into Jesus’ relationship to the day and to understand the implications of his appropriation of the Sabbath to himself. Scholars have not looked significantly into Jesus and the Sabbath from the point of view of its meaning in Judaism.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel gives insight into the Sabbath in his description of the day as a window into eternity bringing the presence of God to earth; Rabbi André Chouraqui contends that the Sabbath is the essence of life for Jews. According to S. Bacchiocchi when Christianity separated from Judaism by the second century, Sunday worship was established as an ecclesiastical institution. In contrast, H. Sturcke advocates a Christological view of Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath and considers observance of Sunday as initiated by the resurrection appearances. W. Rordorf presents Sunday Eucharist as the tradition practiced in the early Church and confirmed in the writings of the Church Fathers. The Catholic theologian Jean Daniélou S.J. explains that, for the Christian, the Hebrew Scriptures are a type of the fullness of
revelation in Jesus Christ and contends that the Paschal Mystery is the Passover from the power of sin and death to new hope and life.

I have concluded that in appropriating the Sabbath to himself, Jesus as a Jew in a Jewish milieu, is definitively indicating that the Sabbath is no longer the recurrence of a twenty-four hour time-frame, that all of the aspects of the Sabbath are now in his person, and that the presence of God is found in mercy and love. Jesus’ death, resurrection, and first of the week resurrection appearances confirm that the promised glory has become a reality in him and his teachings are the new Law of grace. This initiated Sunday as the new time of Eucharistic worship.

___________________________________________
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Dedicated to
Mary
The joy of Israel; the glory of Jerusalem
The highest honor of our people
Θεοτόκος
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Introduction

The Sabbath is the most mysterious of days. As the seventh day of creation the Sabbath has defined time as a weekly cycle since the beginning of civilization. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Sabbath is the summit of all creation and that in which all creation finds its fullness. Observance of the Sabbath has been a central focus of Judaism since the granting of the Law to Moses, was observed even before that in the gathering of the manna in the desert, and is attributed to the patriarchs as implicitly a part of revelation. The manner of Sabbath observance has evolved over the centuries from a day of absolute inactivity and virtual darkness and cold because of the prohibition against the kindling of a fire, to a time of joy and sharing with family, friends, and others with pre-prepared meals, music, study, and prayer. The prophets looked upon the Sabbath as the instrument of Israel’s salvation or downfall, dependent upon her fidelity to its observance with a true heart dedicated to love of neighbor and justice.

The twentieth century Jewish theologian, Abraham Joshua Heschel, considers the Sabbath as Judaism’s great cathedral in which time is sanctified and man’s path made holy in the journey to eternity. According to Heschel, the Sabbath is a window into heaven that lets the presence of God come to man each seventh day bringing the graces necessary to transform the earth and restore the damages done by sin since the initial transgression at creation. A contemporary of Heschel, Rabbi André Chouraqui, considers his family’s dedication to Sabbath rituals as having had the greatest impact on his life and desire to serve God in the government of the newly formed State of Israel. The essentially eschatological nature of the Sabbath brings the end-time of glory into the present each week to remind man that God is true to his promises.
The Sabbath assumes importance in Christianity because of Jesus’ relationship to the day which Judaism considers the epitome of its faith and understanding of God’s presence on earth. Therefore, Jesus’ appropriation of the Sabbath to himself is crucial in understanding who Jesus is with respect to the Law and to the prophetic tradition of faith into which he was born.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter one probes the fullest meaning of the Sabbath in the Hebrew Scriptures and the post biblical age in order to gain a perspective on Jesus’ relationship with the Pharisees who were questioning of his cures on the Sabbath and his seeming inattention to Sabbath rules. Through a study of the gospel Sabbath accounts and the resurrection appearances, this chapter presents the argument that Jesus fulfills prophecy by assuming unto himself the entirety of the meaning of the Sabbath as the essence of the Judaic revelation. Also examined here are the Sabbath synagogue traditions in the time of the rabbinical reconstruction of Judaism in the centuries after the destruction of the Temple, and some consideration is given to the eighteenth century teachings of the Bal Shem and the Hasidic masters.

Against this background, chapter two examines the theology of Abraham Heschel and his understanding of the Sabbath as the gift of time in which the holiness of relationship to God, to others, and to the beauty of creation penetrates the soul as man leaves aside all the devices of civilization. This chapter gives particular attention to mitzvot and the necessity for the practice of virtue for the sake of peace.

Various domestic rituals and prayers, as described by the Judaic scholar Francine Klagsbrun, are the subject of chapter three. Rabbi Klagsbrun describes the origin of certain
customs to clarify their meaning and emphasizes the significance of candle lighting for Jewish
women and the place of music in the proceedings of the day. Light and melody are as nourishing
as the meals shared as these connote the esoteric nature of the day and its relationship to eternity.

Chapter four turns to the Catholic theologian Jean Daniélou S. J. for an understanding of
the transition from Sabbath observance to Christian Sunday Eucharistic worship. Daniélou
explains Christianity as a new perception of creation and the Exodus, the essential memorials of
the Sabbath. Since man sinned in the beginning, the initial Sabbath covenant of creation was
ruptured and the later covenants proved difficult for Israel to continue to observe. Daniélou
points out that the obedience of Christ in his death on the cross is the new Sabbath, which, in the
resurrection, becomes the first day of eschatological time, a definitive new day, Sunday. He
further looks at the Exodus, which confirmed for Israel the power of God over human
institutions, and then looks at the merits of Christ as freedom from the power of sin and death.
Daniélou presents the Old Testament as a typology of the New, a prefigure of the fullness of the
revelation in Christ.

In his dialogue with Rabbi André Chouraqui, Daniélou acknowledges the indebtedness of
Christianity to Judaism with respect to the history of salvation and, therefore, the unique
relationship of Christians and Jews. He draws attention to the fact that Christianity started as a
Jewish sect in the Temple and that, with the destruction of the Temple in the first century,
Judaism and Christianity went separate ways. Rabbinical Judaism experienced little of the
teachings of Christianity. Chouraqui expresses the prophetic nature of Judaism and the central
position of the Sabbath as that which defines a Jew. He places emphasis on the eternal nature of the covenant with Abraham and the Jewish people as the elect.

These two theologians then discuss questions concerning prophecy, the presence of God, the Sabbath, and Sunday. Both Chouraqui and Daniélou concede there is great need and significance for mutual understanding between Jews and Christians as their moral concerns for the world are historically founded in the same revelation.

The Apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II is the subject of the fifth chapter. The Pope reviews the history of the Sabbath and the transition from Sabbath to Sunday in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ. He then discusses Sunday as the weekly feast of Easter and the day of faith in Jesus’ promises of eternal life. He stresses the nature of Eucharist as bringing all the faithful together in the common bond of the table of the body of Christ for the sake of the sanctification of the world, a Judaic notion in terms of the light of nations. He essentially reminds Catholic Christians of the presence of Christ in the liturgical year centered in Sunday worship.

A study of the Sabbath to understand its depth of meaning is essential for understanding Jesus who was born into the covenant of Abraham and chose relationship to the Sabbath as the means of revealing who he is. By looking at revelation as the entirety of the Word of God bestowed to Abraham, but unraveled slowly throughout salvation history, this dissertation respects the Jewish tradition of the patriarchs’ knowledge of the Sabbath as a creation covenant, and explains the Christian understanding of Jesus as the fullness of revelation precisely in his appropriation of the Sabbath to himself.
Chapter 1
The Sabbath and Sunday in Historical Scriptural Perspective

Introduction

As the central commandment and focus of worship of ancient Israel, the Sabbath has singular importance in the history of Judaism. As Israel’s sacred institution, which Jesus appropriated to himself, the Sabbath has profound meaning for Christianity.

The intent of this chapter, which is foundational for the subsequent discussions, is basically twofold. Firstly, it will present an in-depth, though not exhaustive, study of the Sabbath in the Old Testament to elaborate its features, the manner of its observance, its character as covenantal sign, and its eschatological nature as presence of God in time that directs to the eternal presence of God in the end-time. There will be reference to the corruptions that were exposed by the prophets who proclaimed the necessity for proper worship and for justice based on a more interior experience of God’s love. Also, consideration will be given to the post-biblical judaic understanding of its own history in terms of God’s presence through saving events in contrast to salvation through obedience to the law. Secondly, attention will be turned to the New Testament and Jesus’ relation to the Sabbath. The Old Testament passages selected for this study will lay the foundation for an examination of Jesus’ self-identity with the hallmarks of this day. A thorough review of the Sabbath incident of the disciples of Jesus in the grain field in the Gospel of Matthew, together with supplementary texts from the other gospels, will serve to present the thesis that the movement from Sabbath to Sunday has a foundation in Jesus’
appropriation to himself of the entire meaning of the Sabbath and in his death and resurrection as
the confirmation of a new time and manner of worship as children of God in Christ. This
christological and eschatological approach will be shown to contrast to views that consider
Sunday as simply an ecclesiastical institution not founded on divine law. As confirmation of the
very early transition of Christian worship to the Lord’s Day, Sunday, references to selected
Fathers of the Church and to early Church documents will be given.

As a final part of this investigation of the spiritual nature of the Sabbath and Sunday,
attention will be given to the intertestamental period and the rabbinical schools that restructured
Jewish thought with respect to the Sabbath because of the destruction of the Temple and the
elimination of the sacrificial system for the forgiveness of sin.

I. The Sabbath in the Old Testament

A. Selected Old Testament Passages Indicative of the Sabbath’s Spiritual Dimensions

The Sabbath is the most ancient of the feasts of Judaism. Observance of the Sabbath is
indicated in the incident of the grumbling in the desert just after the Exodus (Exod 16:1-8),
although this event is prior to the granting of the commandments. In the desert, when the

1 Biblical quotations throughout this paper are from The New American Bible, trans. Members of the

2 Even before the Exodus, Moses’ demand of Pharaoh to let the people go implies that the Sabbath has been
neglected. Moses states, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may celebrate a feast to
me in the desert” (Exod 5:1). The response of Pharaoh equates such permission to a granting of “rest” from their
work. He observes: “Look how numerous the people of the land are already and yet you would give them rest from
their labor” (Exod 5:5). Pharaoh’s interpretation of the feast of the Lord of the Israelites is “rest”. That the feast in
the desert is the Sabbath rather than some other feast, is supported by the fact that the Israelites had no harvests of
people asked for bread, manna and quail appeared. When gathering the manna, the people were instructed to take twice as much on the sixth day, thus revealing that no work should be done on the seventh day, “Tomorrow is the day of complete rest, the Sabbath, sacred to the Lord” (Exod 16:23). That the manna did not rot, but remained fresh for their consumption over the twenty-four hour period, confirmed that God would provide so that man could have rest on the Sabbath. Moses exhorted them, “Eat it today, for today is the Sabbath of the Lord. On this day you will not find any of it on the ground…Take heed! The Lord has given you the Sabbath” (Exod 16:25, 29a). What is found here is a command to rest in order to enjoy the fruits of the earth which are provided by God who is watchful over his creation. Man’s obedience in recognition of his condition of dependence leads him into the holiness and peace only God can bestow. Man is to live in this awareness of the nature of the Sabbath, even when Sabbath time has passed.

Further expression of divine benevolence is found in other passages. An example is at the conclusion of the description of the dwelling that is to be made for the Lord. Here, the injunction their own to celebrate under Egyptian rule, and such yearly feasts as Passover, Booths, Simchat Torah etc. are post-Exodus events.

is given to Moses to instruct the people to keep the Sabbath because it is to be a reminder that the Lord has made the Sabbath a covenant in holiness:

Take care to keep my Sabbaths, for that is to be the token between you and me throughout the generations, to show that it is I, the Lord, who make you holy...So shall the Israelites observe the Sabbath, keeping it throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. Between me and the Israelites it is to be an everlasting token; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day he rested at his ease (Exod 31:13-14a, 16-17).

In contrast to the generosity of God’s offer of holiness, there are also consequences for infractions of the Sabbath. These are found in several places. Central to the passage just cited, which follows God’s commands concerning the building of the meeting tent (Exod 31:1-11), are these words, “Therefore, you must keep the Sabbath as something sacred. Whoever desecrates it shall be put to death. If anyone does work on that day he must be rooted out of his people” (Exod 31:14b). A repetition of such dire threats is found at the beginning of another account of the building of the Lord’s dwelling (Exod 35:10-19). Here it states, “On six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be sacred to you as the Sabbath of the Lord. Anyone who does work on that day shall be put to death. You shall not even light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day” (Exod 35: 2-3).

A brief look at Exod 20:8-11 and Deut 5:12-15 demonstrates still other aspects of the Sabbath. In each of these there are no warnings to instill fear. Instead, there are imperatives to include all persons in the rest and renewal of life the Lord offers on his day. These passages emphasize that no work may be done and they indicate specifically those who are to refrain from labor: a son, a daughter, a male or female servant, and any alien in residence. Even beasts of
burden should do no work. However, these two texts exhibit a significant difference. Exodus 20:8-11 concludes with a reference to creation as to why the Sabbath is holy, whereas Deuteronomy 5:12-15 concludes with a reference to the Exodus, the freedom from Egyptian slavery, as the reason for observance. The former text sees human holiness as centered on God because of creation, whereas the latter text sees human holiness as centered on God because of redemption.

The holiness of Exodus 20:8-11 comes from God as man recognizes and imitates the creator who has blessed the day as the fullness of creation. The spiritual dimension here is the capacity offered to man to rest in God and participate in the holiness that sanctifies time. The latter passage (Deut 5:12-15) focuses on the deliverance from Egypt and the importance of recognizing God’s saving power. Man is reminded that he has come out of slavery, so his own slaves and servants should have rest just as he has. The spiritual dimension here is the sense of equality and justice offered to man in the light of his own experience of slavery and mistreatment.³

³ J. Morgenstern makes this observation, “the inclusion of the provision for Sabbath observance in these two older decalogues suggests that already in the beginning of the ninth century B.C. the Sabbath had lost in Israel much of its original character as an evil day, closely linked with evil spirits, and had become integrated, as a day of desistance from all labor, with the cult of Yahweh.” The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible 4, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, s.v. “Sabbath” p. 138. W. Robertson Smith holds that the religion of the Israelites in its most formative stage retained a resemblance to the practices of the civilizations from which it had removed. He states, “No positive religion that has moved men has been able to start with a tabula rasa and express itself as if religion were beginning for the first time…Religion is a series of acts and observances, the correct performance of which was necessary or desirable to secure the favor of the gods or to avert their anger.” The Religion of the Semites (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) 2, 28. Although the Babylonian and Assyrian days of enforced rest to avoid evil consequences were not the model for the Sabbath, nevertheless, the Sabbath Laws of Exod 31: 14-15 and 35: 2-3 with their penalty of death for doing work or lighting a fire, commanded observance based on fear, a primitive manner of relating to God. The restriction of Exod 16: 29 to remain at home and not go out implied a similar taboo about the day.
In the pre-exilic and exilic periods, new understandings of the Sabbath arose. For example, the Holiness Code of Leviticus contains several different insights into the meaning of Sabbath. Here the path of holiness is found in the context of reverence for parents and reverence for the sanctuary, as well as in the keeping of the Sabbath laws (Lev 19:1-3, 30). Reverence is commanded because reverence is the proper response to the sanctity now perceived in persons and places because of the day. The Sabbath as understood here is in terms of relationships and more authentic worship. In addition, there is an emphasis on sacred assembly as important to the celebration of both the Sabbath and special feasts. However, the passage in Leviticus contains no directives as to the conduct of these assemblies:

The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: The following are the festivals of the Lord, my feast days, which you shall celebrate with a sacred assembly. For six days work may be done but the seventh day is the Sabbath rest, a day for sacred assembly, on which you shall do no work. The Sabbath shall belong to the Lord wherever you dwell (Lev 23:1-3).

A final insight about the Sabbath gleaned from this passage is that its celebration is not tied to any specific place. Therefore, the sacred assembly of the day is not necessarily connected to the Temple. Prayer, then, could be offered independently of the priestly sacrifices, although these remained the prescribed worship that represented the whole people before God and effected the forgiveness of sin.

The fear and isolation which marked the early observance of the Sabbath eventually turned to open delight in pre-exilic Israel as the providence of God’s goodness became more
evident to the people. However, the nation also began to lapse into destructive practices.\(^4\) The prophets’ warnings about violation of the covenant laws singled out idolatry as the fatal national sin and neglect of the sabbatical year as the cause of national doom.\(^5\) Jeremiah warned about another transgression, the trafficking in commodities on the Sabbath. He condemned this and preached a new covenant, written on the heart, that would restore wholeness to the people (Jer 17:24-25, 27; 31:31-34). Somewhat later, Ezekiel too referred to the Lord’s condemnation of the crimes of Israel against the Sabbath (Ezek 22:9), but he also wrote of the Lord’s consolation and the hope of a new heart so that a new spirit, God’s own spirit, could reside in it (Ezek 36: 23-28). That spirit was a return to the life-giving freedom of the Exodus, a spirit that connoted total dependence upon God for salvation. In this spirit, and only in this spirit, could the tenets of the Law be obeyed.\(^6\)

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\(^4\) The festival nature of Sabbath celebrations in pre-exilic Israel finds witness in the observations of the prophets. However, they saw in such celebrations the seeds of excess and abandon. Hosea recognized the depths of the perversity into which Israel had fallen and declared, “I will bring an end to all her joy, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her solemnities’ (Hos 2:13). Isaiah considered the assemblies as no more than wickedness. In the first chapter of Isaiah the Lord declared, “Trample my courts no more; bring no more worthless offerings…New moon and Sabbath, calling of assemblies, octaves with wickedness: these I cannot bear” (Isa 1:13).

\(^5\) The Book of Leviticus exposes the consequences of idolatry while reaffirming the centrality of the Sabbath as the heart of worship. The desolation of the land due to non-observance of the sabbatical year over a course of time is cited as the final devastation of the people themselves (Lev 26:32-35).

\(^6\) Israel’s life in the redemption and freedom of the Exodus was her true joy. The Exodus was a constant reminder to Israel of her dependence upon Yahweh. Dependence upon Yahweh as creator and redeemer was the spiritual essence of the Sabbath, the entire basis of the cult, and the reason for Sabbath celebration. Salvation came from these events of God, and not from man’s observance of the Law. According to the later prophets, Israel was guilty of a deadened conscience and therefore was incapable of continuing to realize the salvation attested to in the Exodus. Stephen Westerholm gives this explanation for the Law: “God’s purpose in giving his Law was not to provide a path to justification, but to awaken an awareness of sin and the need for salvation.” Peter Richardson and Stephen Westerholm, *Law in Religious Communities in the Roman Period: the Debate over Torah and the Nomos in Post Biblical Judaism and Early Christianity* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1991) 60.
The end of the Book of Isaiah expresses the essential nature of the Sabbath in terms of the necessity for man to defer to the will of God in order to experience the rest that enables a true vision of life. Here the Lord states:

If you hold back your foot on the Sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight, and the Lord’s holy day honorable; if you follow it by not following your own ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice – then you shall delight in the Lord (Isa 58:13-14).

The vision of life that comes in proper observance of the Sabbath is one that sees ahead to the messianic age when all will be rest in the glory of God. Isaiah’s final message expresses the eschatological nature of the Sabbath, “From one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind shall come to worship before me, says the Lord” (Isa 66:23). In Isaiah’s understanding, there is a new dimension of living because of the holiness of the Sabbath which is pervading all the earth. That dimension is a universality which consists in a definitive awareness of the sacredness of time as time moves towards the Day of the Lord.

Post-exilic Israel, however, was preoccupied with the Law and that made Sabbath observance filled with demanding attention to details. Obedience to Torah was established as the divine will in contrast to the obedience that arose in the past because of awe of a God who stood by his people against all odds, a God whose saving acts were not dependent upon cultic sacrifices. In essence, Sabbath cultic sacrifices in observance of the Law were not the desire of Yahweh who bestowed his blessings because of his election of Israel as his own. Yahweh’s
desire for his people was adherence to justice, love of mercy, and a humble life in awareness of his presence. Such a manner of life was always the cry of the prophets (Is 1:16-17; 2:5).\(^7\)

Emphasis on the Law instead of God’s loving nature and forgiveness, caused the focus to be turned on man and his perfection vis-à-vis the demands of the Law. Richardson makes this remark about the new direction of Judaism in this period, “When the laws were detached from their basis in the sacral association, which was in turn founded on the divine redemption from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai, the decisive emphasis shifted from divine activity to the behavior of men.”\(^8\) This had a profound effect on the practice of Judaism.

With this background in mind, I will now discuss the spiritual dimensions of the Sabbath that derived from this unfolding of Israel’s history.

**B. Hallmarks of the Sabbath in the Old Testament**

1. Cessation and Rest

The various qualities of the Sabbath indicate its special nature as God’s gift to his people. Each Sabbath passage offers a distinct interpretation of the meaning of the day. Each provides a new insight into the nature of God, his relationship to the people, and their relationship to one another and to the earth. Genesis presents the Sabbath in the context of creation. Just as God created the six days, he also created the Sabbath in which the only new thing that came into

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\(^7\) The desire of Yahweh for justice rather than sacrifice differentiated him from all the other gods and made him relevant to all peoples. H. W. Robinson explains: “The prophetic idea of God is known as ethical monotheism, by which is meant that the emphasis on the moral nature of Yahweh universalized him beyond all nationalistic limits.” *The Old Testament: Its Making and Meaning* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1937) 126-7.

\(^8\) Richardson and Westerholm, *Law*, 32.
existence was rest. It is the culmination of days; it is that toward which everything moves and in
which everything finds its fulfillment. In this special time, no new thing is made. Sabbath rest is
man’s first experience of God and stands in contrast to the other days of work.

The seventh day belongs to God, because God is the author of all creation through his
word and because his holiness pervades it. In imitation of God, man rests. Nothing made by
man can be of value in comparison to what has been made by God and is held in existence by
him. Therefore, the only appropriate activity for man on this day is inactivity, the setting aside
of worldly endeavors to adore God for what he is in himself and for the goodness and beauty he
has provided. So in this sense, simply ceasing, a very basic translation of the verb נס תונס ,ש
inaccurate in describing the observance of the day, no matter what specific reasons are given
later in Torah for refraining from various works. As has been discussed in the previous section,
by the time of Moses the consequences for breaking the Sabbath became indicative of the grave
nature of the day, both as God’s chosen time and man’s occasion for sanctification. The Sabbath
is the initial and essential relationship of God and man, the first covenant.

In the course of the history of ancient Israel, “ceasing” on the Sabbath accrued a meaning
other than simply stopping all activity and remaining inside without light or heat from fire, as
fire was forbidden. By the time of the conquest of the land, a deeper meaning was understood,
that of resting in God’s presence, of actively enjoying the benefits of the land, and of giving
thanks in specific rituals that were carried out by the priests in the temple through sacrifice and
prayer. Rest, then, was experienced as joy and the harmony of having one’s being perfectly
aligned with the divine plan as was man’s original condition in creation. Given such accord man
was to spend the other six days engaged in the work of his dominion over the earth. Sabbath rest was to permeate all the other days so that all would be right and just. The beneficial effect of man’s will being in accord with that of God was a life of blessedness. Sabbath rest offered man peace in his recognition of the truth of his nature as dependent. Rest, then, is man’s greatest worship as it is the acknowledgment that God alone is creator and Lord of all. In essence, all creation tends towards Sabbath rest which manifests the truth that all being has its source in God. Sabbath rest, therefore, is proper worship, pure worship; it is the source of the ability to have relationships according to the instruction of the commandment to love God and to love one’s neighbor (Exod 20:2-6; Lev 19:18). Man was created for this purpose; it alone is man’s true joy.

In the light of this, the spiritual dimensions of the Sabbath consist in: God as the creator of all, man’s total dependence upon God for his being and continuance in being, life as gift, and

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9 Abraham Block maintains that man’s dominion over the earth is linked to the institution of the Sabbath. This has far-reaching humanitarian repercussions not only for the ancient world, but for all time where man and earth are misused, where life and its beauty are not extolled. Although the Sabbath is a time reserved for God, it is also a safeguard for all creation so that life be protected and cherished. Block states, “The primary function of the Sabbath was to restrict the self-proclaimed right of primitive man to exact unlimited servitude from his children, slaves, and beasts of burden. The Sabbath and parental honor laws stressed man’s social obligations to the most helpless elements of the population – the elderly, the young, the slave, the stranger, and even the beast of burden.” The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1978) 3-4.

10 A parallel to this understanding of man’s relationship to God is found in Psalm 46:10 (11): “Be still and know that I am God.” NAB.

11 Pope Benedict XIV makes this comment about worship, “The more man’s whole existence is directed toward God, the more he accomplishes true worship.” Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week; from the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 234. In another context, the Pope equates worship to sacrifice in which one gives up oneself to acknowledge what is greater. Worship always involves sacrifice. In the beginning, sacrifice was the joy of submitting to God in rest. In post-biblical Judaism, obedience to Torah became rest. Pope Benedict explains, “In its purest form worship is sacrifice; the only real gift man should give to God is himself.” As the Sabbath, Jesus becomes the perfect sacrifice, the perfect self-gift to the Father. Pope Benedict XVI, The Spirit of the Liturgy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 35.
persons as reflections of God’s goodness in their sharing of life and concern for relationship with each other and with the earth. Hence, man’s recognition of his utter nothingness without God’s sustaining of his existence, elicits the response of awe and worship. Through such proper relationship, the spiritual dimensions of the Sabbath seek to restore the original harmony which was disrupted by sin, the consequences of which plagued the entire history of Israel. Because Israel lost this harmony through disobedience, rest continued to be elusive in proportion to Israel’s deviation from the covenant. The Law revealed at Sinai understood the Sabbath as a moral obligation to acknowledge God’s sovereignty and his will for the creation.¹²

Emphasis on Sabbath rest is found in many Scripture passages. For example, Exod 23:12 carries the command, “…you must rest, that your ox and your ass may also have rest, and that the son of your maid-servant and the alien may be refreshed.” Here, rest is linked to refreshment and has humanitarian connotations rather than specific implications of holiness. Exodus 34:21 adds insistence on rest even during the time of harvest: “For six days you may work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; on that day you must rest even during the seasons of plowing and harvesting.” This specification implies that there were problems of observance at those times of

¹² Pope Benedict asserts that as the central tenet of the Law, the Sabbath has moral implications. He states, “The Bible… could take up the fundamental notion of the universe as existing for the sake of worship, but at the same time it had to purify it. This idea is to be found there… in the context of the Sabbath. The Bible declares that creation has its structure in the Sabbath ordinance. But the Sabbath is in its turn the summing up of Torah, the Law of Israel. This means that worship has a moral aspect to it. God’s whole moral order has been taken up into it; only thus is it truly worship. To this must be added the fact that Torah, the Law, is an expression of Israel’s history with God. It is an expression of the covenant, and the covenant is in turn an expression of God’s love, of his “yes” to the human being that he created, so that he could both love and receive love.” Pope Benedict XVI, In the Beginning…: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall, trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995) 29.
the year because of the need to attend to crops. Two deductions can be made from this passage. Firstly, no man can change the law of God to suit his own needs, and secondly, the people did not realize that the Sabbath sustains man’s transcendent nature above the need for earthly food. They failed to see that obedience is the linchpin that occasions the enjoyment of their harvests as gifts of creation. In other words, there was a failure to recognize that the harvests were not solely the products of their own efforts. God would always provide beyond man’s ability to take care of himself.

As the central commandment of the covenant, observance of the Sabbath was a unifying force among the Israelites. In this common practice there was a sense of togetherness. Sabbath rest was also peace. Ratification of the covenant carried with it a promise of fidelity to the recurrence of rest in God as the basis of right relationship. In such solidarity before God, Israel received blessing. Blessing came in the form of peace. Psalm 95 is a poignant expression of the teleological nature of rest. In this psalm, rest is the sublime blessing, the blessing reserved

13 Sabbath observance evolved from the most primitive unrecorded times. As far as the nomadic period is concerned, Morgenstern contends that “animal husbandry would not admit for suspension of work activity… the later desistance from labor was a safeguard against mishap at the hands of supernatural agencies hostile to mankind.” Interpreter’s Dictionary, 135,139. Werner Schmidt refutes this understanding of the pre-history of Israel. He states, “Only after the migration into Canaan is it possible to deal with Israel as a self-contained subject for historical inquiry; even then, however, its self-understanding is based on traditions from the time before the settlement.” Old Testament Introduction, 6. Graetz maintains that in the history of the Sabbath there was a radical severance from the past. He asserts that “the particularity of the biblical day was its positive sanctity – so that abstention from work on it expressed piety, and that sanctity was a divine ordinance not a matter of lucky and unlucky times.” Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., s.v. “Sabbath,” 618. Association with Yahweh is cited by Georg Fohrer as instrumental in this change of attitude toward observance of the Sabbath. As the God of righteousness and moral purpose, Yahweh stood alone. Fohrer points out that “Yahweh’s demands concern not only a man’s relationship with him but also to his fellowman and the society in which he lives.” History of Israelite Religion, trans. David E. Green (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972) 79. North has a comparable view, “The distinctive trait of the Sabbath lies in the fact that it is a day made holy because of its relation to the God of the Covenant.” New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. “Sunday.” Rordorf’s comment, “in the earliest stratum of the Pentateuch, the Sabbath is to be understood as a social institution,” corroborates this perception. Sunday, 12.

This brief sketch of the history of Sabbath observance indicates the various modes of understanding of the Sabbath which the Israelite settlers of the land inherited from their ancestors. Their deviance from an absolute form of observance to attend to practical matters of the harvest is a consequence of the complexity of this background.
exclusively for God’s faithful ones. However, while God was always ready to share his rest, the people often chose against his gift, even though they had sworn fidelity. The psalmist thus recapitulates the events in the desert right after the Exodus and the consequences that inevitably ensued:

Oh, that today you would hear his voice: Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works. Forty years I loathed that generation and I said: they are a people of erring heart and they know not my ways. Therefore, I swore in my anger: they shall never enter into my rest (Ps 95:7b-11).

This passage indicates that disobedience and lack of trust in Yahweh occasioned exclusion from Sabbath rest. Inattentiveness to the providence of Yahweh brought about ruin even when the Sabbath was observed in practice. The prophets recognized that sacrifice and temple prayer alone did not honor God; a just and upright conscience that strove for the common good was required as well.

Rest then was the great gift of God to those who sought justice. Such rest poured out beyond the Sabbath in blessing, peace, and harmony of body and spirit in the performance of daily labor. Rest bespoke a life lived in the awareness of God’s presence manifested through attention to his laws. Israel knew rest when she acknowledged the will of God by living the Law. Rest in the form of peace intermittently permeated time for Israel as the people looked toward permanent settlement in the land and the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. These instances of rest were temporal intimations of the final blessing of “rest with the ancestors,” an eternal rest for those who had loved the Lord.
2. Remembrance

In the Decalogue of Exod 20:1-17, the Sabbath commandment begins with the word, “remember” (זכור): “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day…” (Exod 20:8). Remember means that there is some subject to which the mind is to turn, something already known. The passage refers to creation and what is to be remembered is the holiness that is equated to God’s rest at the end of his creative acts. “In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; that is why the Lord has blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exod 20:11). Remembrance, therefore, will bring back and re-instill the blessing and holiness God meant for man from the beginning. The Sabbath will remind man of his transcendent nature, a nature explicitly created by God to participate in his own holiness, a nature totally different from all the rest of creation. Man must keep the Sabbath in order to remember that “good” is the truth of his nature, and he is created to be like unto God.

The Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5 contains a different reason for remembrance. Here there is a broader understanding of what is included in Sabbath rest and the reference is to the deliverance from Egypt. The people are now directed to share Sabbath rest with the aliens who dwell among them, with their male and female slaves, and even with their beasts. All are to “remember that you were once slaves in Egypt and the Lord, your God, brought you from there with his strong hand and outstretched arm” (Deut 5:15). Remembrance of slavery and of the Lord’s deliverance is now the reason for observance. This is quite different from keeping the

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14 The use of the word ד֣אֶמֲ in the description of the goodness of the sixth day of creation indicates something exceedingly beyond the goodness of the other days. That goodness is man; man is the good and “much more” (Gen 1:31). The use of the words מָאָרָה אֶלְּהִ ceases to refer to the transcendent nature of man, the special gift of God so man may share in God’s own holiness as his image, and grow in his likeness. Nothing else that was created is like this.
day holy as a creation ordinance. The passage from Exodus invites man to enter into a holiness that God has brought about and to remember that this is the meaning for his being created. By remembering this purpose from week to week, man’s life will be filled with the holiness of God and this will direct his actions. The passage from Deuteronomy directs man to consider how God has rescued him and to use the Sabbath as a reminder of God’s entrance into the people’s plight. In Israel’s history, the Exodus salvation event took a very central place. It manifested to the Israelites in a concrete way their utter dependence upon their God in their hope to live in freedom. It dominated their vision of their future and verified the truth of their own historical story. It brought about a certain conviction that God was always there to rescue and that a definitive messiah would eventually arise to manifest this. Samuele Bacchiocchi describes the Israelites’ perception of the weekly Sabbath in relation to the Exodus as a confirmation of their divine election. He emphasizes that the Sabbath re-instates the events of the Passover to make salvation a present fact. He remarks:

The weekly release from the hardships of life which the Israelites experienced in the present epitomized also the past Passover liberation as well as the future Messianic redemption. Because of their close nexus, both Passover and Sabbath could symbolize the future Messianic deliverance. The Sabbath as a re-enactment of the Passover deliverance from slavery gave hope for the future. Liberation from the hardship of work and social inequalities, which both the weekly and annual Sabbath granted to all members of the Hebrew society, was viewed as foreshadowing the fuller redemption the Messiah would one day bring to his people.”

In observance of the Sabbath, whether creational or redemptive, the relationship to God in terms of dependence is the keynote. In creation, man is dependent on God for his existence.

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and for the fullness of his particular being in his participation in divine holiness, which enables him to carry out his life in goodness as God wills. In redemption, man is dependent on God for rescue from any evil that would frustrate or impede his progress in holiness or in the establishment of justice in society. Remembrance is much more than a simple awareness of the obligation to set aside a certain day. It is all-encompassing in that it demands that the Israelites accept and live their own history as it has been molded by God so that they may be the light for all nations. In his discussion of postexilic Judaism, Robinson confirms this perception of the obligation of remembrance. He points out that “the nation maintained its distinctive religious life by the practice of circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath…An aspect of Israel’s history is the self-consciousness of the nation as being the bearer of a unique religion, one that cherished its own destiny.”\(^{16}\) The destiny of Israel to be the light for all nations is rooted in its dynamic remembrance of the salvific events of God that lead to the eternal Sabbath as foretold by Isaiah (Isa 66:22-23).

The Israelites’ remembrance of their election to promulgate the Law as centered on Sabbath observance had a far-reaching influence. It brought the blessings they knew, both in the promises to Abraham and in their salvation from slavery, to everyone who dwelt with them.\(^{17}\)


\(^{17}\) Niels Andreasen includes in his understanding of Israel’s call to remembrance, the need for Israel to keep in mind her times of infidelity and inattentiveness to the prophets. If Israel is to bring others into God’s rest, she herself must be an example of the proper disposition of mind and heart the Sabbath requires. Israel can do this only if she herself seeks forgiveness in the acknowledgment of her failings. Andreasen states, “The purpose of the Sabbath is to remember. Israel must remember her past with all its faults. She must extend the Sabbath regulations to the entire family including servants and animals.” *The Old Testament Sabbath: A Traditional-Historical Investigation*, SBL Dissertation Series 7 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972) 130.
offered respite even to their beasts. Their remembrance through Sabbath observance arched backwards to creation and made explicit the activity of God; that God worked for six days but on the seventh day he rested. This put work in the positive perspective of God’s expectation of man’s stewardship of the earth and it emphasized the necessity for ceasing this work to direct attention back to God as the source and origin of life. It is important to indicate that in the creation story there is no mandate for man to act as God has acted. However, the statement “man created in God’s image; in the divine image, male and female” (Gen 1:27), provides the basis for the understanding that man is to imitate God.

In the sequence of creation, God created man on the sixth day and then ceased his activity. On the seventh day God took rest (Gen 1:26-2:3). Thus, man’s first experience as a living being was of God’s rest. Since there was as yet no sin, or anything to distance man from God, man was perfectly within God’s rest. This initial intimacy oriented man toward the divine in every aspect of his being. Even sin was not able to deflect this orientation, though sin later deprived man of the manner of this first intimacy. However, God, in his great goodness, granted his rest in the gift of the Sabbath.

It is necessary to note that within God’s rest the cosmos continues in motion. God’s rest, then, is an active rest that holds everything in order. That all is in order and that the peace of God’s rest is an ever-recurrent saving gift are what man is to “remember” on the Sabbath.
3. Holiness and Joy

From the previous discussion it becomes clear that there are many facets to the understanding of the Sabbath. God’s rest, his Sabbath, is in some sense a completion of creation, but the creation lives and moves even as God rests. However, man’s misuse of his freedom caused him to forsake this rest and thus initiate a new human condition and a new time. In turning from God’s will, man removed from the peace that was to pervade his labor; thus, his labor became joyless toil. In turning from God’s will, man had to confront both his limitation in knowing and doing justice and his loss of the holiness that founded right relationship. The revelation to Abraham was the beginning of a path to bring man back to the holiness and rest for which he was created. But again sin intervened in the betrayal of Joseph by his brothers. Because of this betrayal, enslavement eventually ensued for all the Israelites. However, enslavement proved to be the vehicle of the manifestation of God’s fidelity to his plan for man’s holiness. The salvation in the Exodus became another new time, made evident in the giving of the Law. Insofar as these events were interventions of God in history, they were revelations of God’s nature as faithful and merciful. Insofar as man is the image of God, man began to learn of his own holiness in these interventions. Holiness resided in the God who intervened in history and who gave the Sabbath to insure that his presence would be known throughout time for the benefit of the people.

Because Israel’s self-understanding was very much tied to the land, rest was as much a matter of the necessities of agriculture as it was of reverence for God. Rordorf observes, “In the
oldest stratum of the Pentateuch the Sabbath is to be understood as a social institution.”\(^{18}\) The sabbatical year and the year of jubilee witness to this. Yet, even within an essentially agrarian culture, the Sabbath set Israel apart from other civilizations for reasons deeper than agrarian.

The Sabbath became a subject for contemplation of the meaning of God’s presence and the mission of Israel. In setting aside a day each week exempt from labor in the fields or commerce in the markets, Israel demonstrated a way of life dependent on another source of existence and was willing to risk the consequences of a day devoid of economic gain to honor this belief. The Israelites’ practice of the Sabbath caused other nations to wonder about the God of such a people who ceased labor in the time of harvest and refused to engage in warfare on the seventh day even as the enemy struck them down.\(^{19}\)

Thus, Israel had a definitive effect on the world by her interpretation of time, specifically by her detachment each seventh day from time as the medium of human production. Holiness resided in this “unbinding” of time because it released people from worldly concerns and allowed them to be open to the salvation and rest of the divine presence. The holiness of God’s presence in the Sabbath reassured Israel that there would be even greater manifestations of his power. The Sabbath thus was a confirmation of the election of Israel as the chosen people of God.\(^{20}\) The Priestly authors emphasized this point to inspire to renewed observance (Exod 25:8; 34:21).

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\(^{18}\) Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*, 12.

\(^{19}\) Exod 34: 21 is explicit about rest during the agricultural seasons: “For six days you may work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; on that day you must rest even during the seasons of plowing and harvesting.” However, by the time of the Maccabees, to withdraw from warfare in deference to the Sabbath became tantamount to self-destruction. When a thousand soldiers, their wives, children, and cattle were massacred by the enemy because of Sabbath passivity, Mattathias instituted the rule that Jews may defend themselves on the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:31-41).

\(^{20}\) Reference to election is found in the account of Abraham’s purchase of a burial place when the Hittites refer to him as “an Elect of God” (Gen 23:6) and also in the account of the building of the meeting place (Exod
They explained rest in terms of eschatological expectations, and the Sabbath became the day of sacred assembly where the people were brought together. Gathering was a sharing in holiness and a prefiguration of when all nations would be drawn together in worship. Even in dispersion, Sabbath time came, independent of place, and observance of it bestowed holiness.

Among Jews the Sabbath continues as a perennial encounter with God in time because holiness is the one desire of God for His people. God is holy; therefore, to be the image of God means to be holy. But God alone is holy, thus presenting a seeming contradiction. However, in the Sabbath this paradox is resolved. God comes to man in the Sabbath, bringing him into holiness and revealing his will in the Law. As man lives by the will of God, he experiences Sabbath rest even beyond the time boundaries of that particular day. The Sabbath as the presence of God is the entirety of the Law. The Sabbath enables the Law to be lived out through the pursuit of justice and peace. To live outside this is death. To violate the Sabbath is to cut oneself off from the community of the people, and, consequently, from community with

25:8). The book of Isaiah refers directly to election, “For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel my chosen one, I have called you by name, giving you a title, though you knew me not” (Isa 45:4).

21 In the writings of Ezekiel, the Lord reveals himself as the one who gathers. One will recognize God by his ingathering of the people, “…I will bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries over which you are scattered;…Thus you will know that I am the Lord, when I bring you back to the land of Israel” (Ezek 20:34, 42).

22 Although observance of Sabbath time is the preeminent duty in Judaism, there is a connection between time and space in the history of Israel. The Book of Leviticus references this, “Keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary. I am the Lord” (Lev 26:2). Here, the sanctuary is noted as the place for the Presence of God: the tent of the Ark in the desert and, later, the Temple in Jerusalem. The elusiveness of time as sanctification was grounded in the presence of God in a specific place. The interconnection of time and space was recognized in the additional sacrifices offered in the Temple on the Sabbath. However, the place of the presence of God was understood in a whole new context through the prophets who perceived that God resided in a heart of flesh and that all mankind must come to the Lord (not the Temple) to worship (Ezek 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Isa 66:23). With the actual destruction of the second Temple in 70 A.D. and the rabbinical reconstruction of Judaism, the home assumed a pre-eminent place in Sabbath observance. See Francine Klagsbrun, The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day (New York: Harmony Books, 2002) 4.
God. In other words, community with God resides in community with the people. During the Babylonian Captivity, the Sabbath gave the Israelites their identity and was the source of their perseverance. It retained its significance when the Temple was rebuilt following their return to Jerusalem in 516 B.C. In the catastrophe of the Temple’s destruction in 70 A.D., the Sabbath again sustained the people. While the Temple could undergo obliteration, the Sabbath remained intact, coming unceasingly with time. This gave credence to the closing words of the book of Isaiah in which the Sabbath is seen as a movement in time to the new creation. Isaiah predicts, “From one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind shall come to worship before me, says the Lord” (Isa 66:23). And those who would come would be far more than the kingdom of Israel.23

The new creation Isaiah predicts is intended for those who fear God. He describes them as blessed because they do what is right and just in keeping the Sabbath free from profanation and themselves from any evildoing. Though the righteous may not receive recognition in this life, God gives them peace.24 Isaiah expands the implications of the Sabbath with the profound insight that the Sabbath is about the will of God, not one’s own. He explores new dimensions that put the Sabbath in the light of joy and festival (עונג שבת) when approached with the right disposition. The right disposition is to envision the earth as God sees. Therefore, Isaiah exhorts:

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23 Isaiah includes among those welcome in the Lord’s house foreigners, eunuchs, the homeless, and the dispersed (Isa: 56:1-8).

24 Isaiah has a very astute insight into the true Sabbath heart that receives no visible reward for doing good. Isaiah implies that God’s reward is a clear conscience. He writes, “The man perishes but no one takes it to heart; devout men are swept away, with no one giving it a thought. Though he is taken away from the presence of evil, the just man enters into peace; there is rest on his couch for the sincere, straightforward man” (Isa 57:1-2).
…loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke. Deal your bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out to your house…Then shall your light break forth as the morning (Isa 58:6-8).

This understanding of Sabbath worship, abandoning one’s self to the ways of God, is echoed in the injunctions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to circumcise the heart.25

As has been stated, the depth of relationship of the Jews to the Sabbath had particular importance during the years of exile in Babylon (587-537 B.C.). In captivity, prayer became the sacrifice of their lips, and the Sabbath the day of contemplation, superseding rest and festive enjoyment.26 With the return to Jerusalem, the Sabbath continued to maintain its singular stature. Nothing was able to efface this sacred Jewish institution: neither the Hellenization by Alexander’s successors, nor the Roman domination of Judea, nor the final destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.

Having examined the nature of the Sabbath under all these aspects, I will turn now to the post-exilic situation of Judaism and consider the Sabbath in the light of the influence of the Greek and Roman worlds.

25 Consider Jer 9:24-25; 24:7; 31:33-34 in which the law will be written on the heart and God will remember their sin no more and Ezek 36:26-27 in which a new heart and a new spirit are given to replace the hearts of stone with natural hearts. These texts indicate the emptiness of the ceremonial observances that riled Hosea, as seen in his indignation over Israel’s harlotry (Hosea 2:13,15; 6:5-7), and also Amos, as seen in his fury against greed (Amos 8:4-7).

26 While there is no specific biblical reference to the observance of the Sabbath during the Captivity, the Book of Daniel contains his prayer which addresses God as the great and awesome one who “keeps his merciful covenant toward those who love him and observe his commandments” (Dan 9:4). Daniel recognized that the destruction of Jerusalem was because of the sinfulness of the people who did not live by the Law or listen to the prophets (Dan 9:9-10). He was familiar with the prediction of Jeremiah (Jer 17:27) and the infidelity of the people which brought about its fulfillment (Dan 9:7). Thus, he continued his own prayer life even to his own detriment (Dan 6:11). The essential prayer of the Jew being Sabbath observance, Daniel, and the remnant of faithful ones, would have kept some form of the Sabbath.
II. The Sabbath in Post Biblical Judaism

A. The Sabbath in Second Temple Judaism: Philo

In the world of Greece and Rome, as in all the ancient civilizations, religion was centered on sacrifice. Judaism was not an exception to this pattern and because it practiced sacrificial slaughter of animals, it fitted into a certain understood manner of worship. Sacrifices and rites of purification were common religious practices among all peoples. However, contrary to the Greeks and Romans, who had numerous temples scattered everywhere in their empires and sanctioned sacrifice even where there was no temple, the prevailing practice among the Jews was to have one sanctuary, one place of sacrifice, one center of worship. The entire Diaspora of Jews supported the Temple by offerings of money, animals, and agricultural produce, and in this way remained involved with the rituals and participated from a distance in their efficacy before God. Thereby, they maintained their affiliation with sacrificial Sabbath worship and atonement for sin. Judaism’s single Temple to the one God also differentiated itself by having a centralized cult with a sizable hereditary priesthood. The responsibility of this influential body was to bring the entirety of Jewish life under the auspices of Divine Law and to promulgate the Sabbath as the instrument for the study of the Law. E. P. Sanders explains:

As a religion, it (Judaism) was not strange because it included sacrifices, but because it included ethical, family and civil law as well. Jews sometimes spoke of their philosophy, a term that is justified by the scope of a law that includes an entire way of life. Judaism was not just a cult…the peculiarity of Judaism is exemplified by its treating of deceiving one’s neighbor as being just as serious as accidentally eating food that should have gone to the priests or the altar.
Judaism’s fundamental moral and humane direction is best seen precisely in its refusal to separate cult from other aspects of behavior.  

So the cult existed to permeate daily living with a sense of divine Law and moral value - in essence, to bring the hallmarks of the Sabbath into everyday occurrence.

Because of the cult’s emphasis on correct action in every sphere of life, fidelity to prayer and moral integrity enabled Judaism to survive even when the cult disappeared. The fact that Judaism had three foci of its religious practice, The Temple, the synagogue, and the home, exemplifies the inclusiveness of its understanding of its relationship with God. Jews amazed contemporary cultures by their manner of moral life emanating from their cultic worship, their obedience to the Law, their adherence to prescribed food laws, and their observance of the Sabbath. Philo, in the early first century A.D. gives this description of Jewish attention to moral development and its relation to the Sabbath:

Moses commanded them at the end of each period of six days to keep the seventh holy; abstaining from all other works which are done in the seeking after and providing the means of life, devoting that day to the single object of philosophizing with a view to the improvement of their morals, and the examination of their consciences.

It is because of the singular importance of the contemplation of life and the Law that Philo attributes to Moses this recommendation concerning the Sabbath.

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29 Josephus also considers study and pensive thought to be a necessary part of Sabbath observance. He writes, “…Our legislator (Moses)… did not leave practical training in morals inarticulate; nor did he permit the
As has been discussed, pre-exilic Judaism understood the Sabbath as a cessation of routine activities and a certain seclusion in the home with the injunction not to go out or to go beyond a restricted distance. There were no prescribed prayers or rituals for the day. The sacrifices and public rites were done by the priests in the Temple and did not require the presence of the people. However, with the conquests of Alexander (334-323 B.C.) and the later conquests by Pompey which brought about Roman dominance (63 B.C.), a new social order spread its influence. The effect of this influence on the practices of Judaism was in the rise of the synagogue assembly. Philo attests to Sabbath gatherings for the purpose of instruction and discussion for the sake of wisdom. In his treatise *The Special Laws* he states:

> Accordingly, on the seventh day there are spread before the people in every city innumerable lessons of prudence, and temperance, and courage, and justice, and all other virtues; during the giving of which the common people sit down, keeping silence and pricking up their ears, with all possible attention, from their thirst for wholesome instruction; but some of those who are very learned explain to them what is of great importance and use, lessons by which the whole of their lives may be improved. And there are, as we may say, two most especially important heads of all the innumerable particular lessons and doctrines; the regulating of one's conduct towards God by the rules of piety and holiness, and of one's conduct towards men by the rules of humanity and justice.\(^{30}\)

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Although a specific building is not designated in this reference to the Sabbath assembly, in his *Treatise on the Life of Moses*, Philo is more explicit in his description both of the place of gathering and of the format and subject matter of the discussions held there. These were all similar to the philosophical schools of the Greeks. Philo gives this account concerning Sabbath-keeping:

> For it was invariably the custom, as it was desirable on other days also, but especially on the seventh day, as I have already explained, to discuss matters of philosophy; the ruler of the people beginning the explanation, and teaching the multitude what they ought to do and to say, the populace listening so as to improve in virtue, and being made better both in their moral character and in their conduct through life; in accordance with which custom, even to this day, the Jews hold philosophical discussions on the seventh day, disputing about their national philosophy, and devoting that day to the knowledge and consideration of the subjects of natural philosophy; for as for their houses of prayer in the different cities, what are they, but schools of wisdom, and courage, and temperance, and justice, and piety, and holiness, and every virtue, by which human and divine things are appreciated, and placed upon a proper footing?  

These descriptions of Sabbath assembly do not indicate the specific nature of the houses of prayer. However, in a reference to the efforts of a member of the ruling class of Egypt to denigrate the Sabbath by suggesting that observance would be abandoned in time of adversity, Philo states that the discussions were in fact held in such a way that those attending could sit in an orderly manner and participate according to set prescriptions. He records this in describing a pointed question by the Egyptian official:

> If an invasion of enemies were to come upon you on a sudden, or the violence of a deluge from the river… or any other evil, whether caused by men or inflicted by God, would you still remain quiet and unmoved at home? And would you still go

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on in your habitual fashion, keeping your right hand back, and holding the other under your garments close to your sides, in order that you might not, even without meaning it, do anything to contribute to your own preservation? And would you still sit down in your synagogues, collecting your ordinary assemblies, and reading your sacred volumes in security, and explaining whatever is not quite clear, and devoting all your time and leisure with long discussions to the philosophy of your ancestors?

Heather McKay points out that “Philo is painting a picture of educational gatherings in προσευκτήρια (places of prayer) where religious, social, and moral topics are discussed.”

These gatherings were attended only by men who then were expected to pass on what they had learned to their wives, children and slaves. In essence, these assemblies were not to worship but to read, study and discuss Torah. They were also venues for dealing with matters of concern to the community, for arguing political issues, and for disciplining members for religious shortcomings. Eventually, though, when sacrificial worship was brought to an end with the destruction of the Temple in the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. under the Emperor Titus, prayer, the singing of The Therapeuta were a Jewish community of ascetic contemplatives established in the last years of the second Temple 1st century A.D.) in the vicinity of Alexandria. Philo

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32 The Therapeuta were a Jewish community of ascetic contemplatives established in the last years of the second Temple 1st century A.D.) in the vicinity of Alexandria. Philo describes them in De Vita Contemplativa.


describes them in De Vita Contemplativa. psalms, and the use of sacred music in the synagogue took the place of sacrifice.

It is significant to note that the practices of the Jewish sect, the Therapeutae, allowed women to attend the synagogue assemblies. The building was designed to accommodate their presence. In the treatise On the Contemplative Life, Philo presents details of the Sabbath devotions of the Therapeutae. He also describes the manner of construction of their synagogue. Orthodox Jews still conduct their services and construct their synagogues in the manner recorded by Philo:

But on the seventh day they all come together as if to meet in a sacred assembly, and they sit down in order according to their ages with all becoming gravity, … And this common holy place to which they all come together on the seventh day is a twofold circuit, being separated partly into the apartment of the men, and partly into a chamber for the women, for women also…have adopted the same sect with equal deliberation and decision; and the wall which is between the houses rises…upwards to the roof without any opening, on two accounts; first of all, in order that the modesty which is so becoming to the female sex may be preserved, and secondly, that the women may be easily able to comprehend what is said being seated within earshot, since there is then nothing which can possibly intercept the voice of him who is speaking.35

Notwithstanding the importance of these various public assemblies for study and discussion, the home remained the most explicit place of prayer in Judaism. The lighting of lamps just before the Sabbath was a regular practice before the first century B.C. as it developed from the lighting of the Hanukkah candles. By the twelfth century the lighting of candles was accompanied by prayer by the woman of the household. The practice became recognized as a

form of worship because that prayer welcomed the presence of God into the home. Concerning prayer and the home, Sanders states:

While they (the faithful Jews) may have prayed when they assembled in the synagogues, it is evident in all the discussions that they ordinarily said the Shema and prayed at home….The rabbis and Josephus alike assume that morning and evening worship took place at home.\(^{36}\)

Such prayer would also be part of Sabbath observance, and, according to Josephus, the practice of a midday meal on the Sabbath was well established among Jews in the Greco-Roman world.\(^ {37}\) The Friday meal was a festive gathering of welcome with special foods. The joy and pleasure of the Sabbath was reflected also in the custom of married couples having sexual relations Friday night and thereby affirm the Judaic commitment to the sacredness of life.

Despite the rise of the synagogue assembly and the joy of Sabbath celebration in the home, the Torah interpretations of the Pharisees and their strictness of observance began to permeate the Judaic world. Gradually the Sabbath, which was meant to be a source of joy and comfort, became the tragedy of legalism with Sabbath violation a criminal offense.

With this background on the Sabbath in Second Temple Judaism in view, I will turn now to a discussion of the Sabbath and the Judaism that emerged after the destruction of the Temple.

\(^ {36}\) Sanders, Judaism, 197.

\(^ {37}\) Josephus records that “in a general assembly in the prayer-house in Tiberias, a huge building capable of accommodating a large crowd, the discussion became so heated that a riot would inevitably have ensued, had not the arrival of the sixth hour, at which it is our custom on the Sabbath to take our midday meal, broken off the meeting” Life of Josephus in The Works of Flavius Josephus, vol. 1 The Loeb Classical library, ed. T. E. Page, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge: William Heinemann, 1961) 54.
B. Rabbinic Judaism and the Sabbath

Jeremiah prophesied that there would be horrible destruction if the people continued to profane the Sabbath. His prediction was that Jerusalem would be consumed in unquenchable fire (Jer 17:27). This was just prior to the invasion of the Babylonians who destroyed the first temple and took the people off into captivity (587 BC). However, the final and complete devastation of the temple and the termination of its manner of worship, which had been re-instated with the return of the remnant in the years after 538 BC, came in the wake of the civil war in Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The Pharisees, who were not involved with the Zealots and Siccarii who had perpetrated this violence, fled to Yevneh where Johanan ben Zakkai, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, had been allowed by the Romans to open a house of teaching. This became a center for training rabbis and it also performed some of the juridical functions formerly exercised by the Sanhedrin.

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38 In the initial uprising, Christians suffered terrible punishments at the hands of Bar Kokbar. Then, according to Eusebius, “Rufus, the governor of Judaea…took merciless advantage of their (the Jews) crazy folly (Sabbath rest) and marched against them destroying at one stroke unlimited numbers of men, women, and children alike…and confiscating all their lands.” Eusebius The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, Bk. 4, chapt. 6, part 1, trans. G.A. Williamson (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 107.

Under Hadrian, Old Jerusalem was destroyed, the practice of the Jewish religion forbidden, and both circumcision and Sabbath-keeping were interdict. A Hellenized city was built, Colonia Aelia Capitolina, and “From that time on, the entire Jewish race was forbidden to set foot anywhere in the neighborhood of Jerusalem… not even from a distance might Jews have a view of their ancestral soil” Eusebius, History, Bk. 4, chapt. 6, part 3, 108.

39 The town of Yevneh (Jabneh) was the center for the study of Torah and, even before the destruction of the Temple, had a well known bet din, a house of judgement and court of Jewish law. Ben Zakkai became the leader and made it the center for halakhic studies and the new seat of self-governing administration. There, several important rules and traditions, the takhanot, were established. Included among these was the formulation of the eighteen blessings of the Amida. These were recited on the Sabbath. The exact form and order of these blessings were codified in the first century C.E. The Amida was then expanded from eighteen to nineteen blessings in the 2nd century C.E., under the leadership of Rabbi Gamliel the Elder. The additional blessing (against heretics) was initially meant to combat the threats posed by Samaritan and Sadducee sects, and was permanently added to the liturgy when Jewish converts to Christianity began to inform on Jews to the Roman authorities. Shira Schoenberg, “The Amidah”, The Jewish Virtual Library. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaism/amidah.html
With the destruction of the Temple, sacrificial atonement for sin was no longer possible, and a sense of despair arose among the people. Ben Zakkai ascribed the destruction of the Temple and Rome’s domination of Jerusalem to Israel’s failure to observe the Sabbath and to do the will of God. He then described a new means of atonement, “deeds of love”, in accord with the words of Hosea that God desires “kindness and not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6). However, this means of atonement would now be regulated by the rabbis whose goal was to re-define orthodoxy and to rid Judaism of all those who would not conform to it. Here developed the rabbinic view that prayer, the study of scripture, good works, and deeds of loving kindness could become matters of worship and sacrifice. Study, prayer, and good works then replaced the temple cult, and the teaching academy of Yevneh became the symbol of Jewish survival and new birth. Since worship was no longer centered in Temple sacrifice, sacrifice was no longer the ritual that unified the Jewish people.  

This new understanding of the nature of Judaism placed singular importance upon the Sabbath as the particular time for such study, recollection, and prayer. The place of these practices became the home, although the synagogues maintained their function as places of assembly. In accord with the rabbinic emphasis on the study of the Law, recommended Sabbath practices included public discussions of Torah as well as prayer at the synagogue on Friday.

Daniel Boyarin makes this observation about the Temple as a force for the unity of the various sects of Judaism, “Judaism suffered internal differences that were not entirely irenic … Yet, while the temple stood and served as a focus of sectarian controversy, it formed at the same time a unifying roof under which all the competing groups stood together including the earliest Christians.” In other words, the sectarianism that had been accepted throughout the time of the Temple and the Roman governance ceased under the new Pharisaic domination and what remained were diverse groups at odds with one another as to the nature of their beliefs and with no ground of common worship. Consequently, a list of the proscribed was adopted by the rabbis of Yevneh. The proscribed were those who denied resurrection, divine providence, or the oral Torah’s origin from heaven. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 45, 62.
night, Saturday morning, and in the evening on Saturday before twilight ended the special time. The Sabbath was considered an opportunity to imitate the creator in rest from work and the toil of making a living, because life was essentially a gift from God and not the product of man’s endeavors.

In the second century also many restrictions were added to the forbidden works of the Sabbath. Rabbinic prohibitions were considered a “fence” around the Torah and included all activities which in any way related to those forbidden. In this way, occasions of temptation were avoided. Correct observance obtained forgiveness of sins—even if the sin were idolatry. In this way, Sabbath observance became tantamount to the sacrificial worship of the Temple. It was also believed that if all of Israel kept the Sabbath as it should be kept, the Messiah would come because the Sabbath was equal to all other precepts of Torah. With the temple no longer a reminder of the presence of God and the place of Sabbath sacrifice, it was necessary to substitute prayer. Rabban Gamaliel II, the successor of Ben Zakkhai, made it the duty for each individual to pray thee times a day the eighteen blessings of the Amidah. As the spokesman for the new Judaism, he was a decisive opponent of heretics and introduced the “Berakat ha-Minim” into the eighteen blessings recited daily. This was actually a curse against all those not living the Law under the new directives. Although the “Berakat ha-Minim” was not originally directed against

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41 Nehemiah indicated that the destruction of Jerusalem was because of profanation of the Sabbath (Neh 13:17-18). Therefore, strict observance of the Sabbath was required to redeem Israel. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the Sabbath Tractate of the Mishnah (2nd century A.D.) carefully outlined correct observance. The later rabbinic commentaries on the Mishnah (4th century) contained the assurance that a single observance of the Sabbath by all of Israel would occasion the coming of the Son of David. (Yerushalmi Ta’anit 1:1, IX.) See also: Jacob Neusner, Making God’s Word Work: A Guide to the Mishnah (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2004) 344.
Jewish Christians, it eventually became a significant factor in driving them out. While Ben Zakkhai was avid in his opposition to heretics, he was, at the same time, sensitive to the plight of the poor and sought to bring about a certain social equality by abrogating ornate rituals, especially with respect to the burying of the dead. This would help to alleviate the condition of the *am ha-aretz*, the simple peasants of the land.

Although Torah remained the sole foundation of relationship with God, its discussion, commentary, and interpretation, which comprised the oral tradition, was compiled by the new rabbinic order into the Talmud to be used for study especially on the Sabbath. The first part of the Talmud, the Mishnah, contained both the treatise on the Sabbath with the regulations about what is lawful and unlawful and also the treatise on the Erubim, modifications of the Law to

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42 An early version of this curse is cited by Hans Küng. It states: “For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the Nazarenes (nosrim) and the heretics (minim) be destroyed in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous.” *Judaism*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1992) 359.

Pieter van der Horst clarifies that the *minim* were heretical Jews and that the nosrim (natsrim) were non-Jewish Christians and not the Christian Jews known as the *nasrim* (*natsrim*). *Hellenism-Judaism-Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1994) 109.

43 There was a great cleft between the Pharisees and the common people. Aaron Oppenheimer studies this situation, citing the standard for the estimation of persons attributed to Rabban Hillel which stated: “Whoever studied Scripture but had not studied the Mishnah was a Bor, an uncultivated person not afraid of sin and whoever studied the Scriptures and the Mishnah but did not consult the scholars was an Am ha’Aretz, one who is not pious. And whoever had neither read the Scriptures nor studied the Mishnah was a beast.” *The Am Ha-Aretz* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 105.

44 The Judaic oral tradition, the Mishnah, was written down by the second century and the rabbinic notes on the Mishnah, the Gemara, were put together by the fourth century. This combination is known as the Jerusalem Talmud and it predates the Babylonian Talmud by two hundred years.

45 Sabbath regulations of the “Tractate Shabbat” may be found in the Jewish Virtual Library @www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Talmud/shabbattoch.html (accessed October 22, 2011).
legitimize travel and the moving of items on the Sabbath.\textsuperscript{46} Study as part of Sabbath observance included also the commentary on the Mishna (the Gemara) and the Hagadah which preserved the ancient lore comprised of rituals for celebration, books of ethics, and theological reflections. An even later part of the rabbinic corpus, the Midrash, explained the underlying significance of Biblical texts. All of Jewish life was governed by these commentaries; so knowledge of them was imperative. Rabbinic piety was centered in the study of the Law as the highest spiritual activity. Such study was, therefore, an essential part of Sabbath observance, not just in the synagogue, but in the home.\textsuperscript{47}

The original rabbinic compilations remained in flux until the fourth century when the Palestinian Talmud was put together. However, in the sixth century, even the Palestinian Talmud interpretation was redacted to produce the final version of the Talmud that included the unattributed sources “the stammaim, the anonymous voices which the Pharisees professed were the heritage of Israel” \textsuperscript{48} and which the rabbis claimed penetrate the scriptures and demand

\textsuperscript{46} McKay emphasizes that the “Tractate Shabbat” contains no section that deals specifically with Sabbath worship. The equating of Sabbath observance and forgiveness of sin implies a new form of worship, but this is not the substance of “Tractate Shabbat”. The forgiveness of sin as centered on Sabbath observance is attributed to Johanan Ben Zakkai who said: "Just as the sin and guilt offerings make atonement for Israel, so charity and kindness make atonement for the nations of the world" (Baba Bathra 10b; see also Dikduke Soferim, ad loc.). \textit{Sabbath and Synagogue}, 202.

\textsuperscript{47} Küng points out that the dictates of Talmud were so minute that they regulated such things as hair style, clothing, food, washing, types of prayer, housing, and sexual life. Judaism as a religion of the Book became as well a religion of praxis in which there was a prescription for every situation. \textit{Judaism}, 144, 150.

\textsuperscript{48} Boyarin, \textit{Border Lines}, 198.
continual discussion of them.\textsuperscript{49} These anonymous redactors (the stammaim) took the elements of tannaitic and amoraic material and transformed them into a continual running argument.

Through their singular fidelity to the study of these texts and to Sabbath-keeping, Jews maintained their own identity, and their appearance, customs, and foods set them apart. Although they were restricted to living in certain areas, their culture and religious philosophy experienced a flourishing in the Middle Ages.

C. The Sabbath in Later Jewish Culture: The Middle Ages

As civilization emerged from the Dark Ages (the early Middle Ages after the fall of Rome in 476 AD), the celebration of the Sabbath had its own re-emergence. By then, the rabbis understood the Sabbath as the presence of God coming to dwell among His people. Seclusion within the home was no longer the standard. Instead, the rabbis hailed the Sabbath as a bride or a queen whose coming brought in for a brief time the peace of the Messianic age. By the time of the later Middle Ages in the thirteenth century, it had become the custom of the men to go out into the fields, dancing in the manner of David before the ark, to welcome the Sabbath just as the

\textsuperscript{49} This concept of continuity undergirded the contention of the rabbis that the Sabbath was a precious gift of God and a sacred day kept even by the Patriarchs. The Sabbath afternoon service includes reference to this:

Glorious greatness and a crown of salvation is the day of rest and holiness Thou has given unto thy people – Abraham was glad, Isaac rejoiced, Jacob and his sons rested thereon – a rest granted in love...

Furthermore, since Sabbath rest is initiated by God in creation, and Adam and Eve, who were made in the image of God, are a part of this first rest, it is assumed that all mankind continued to live in accord with this pattern.

first stars of twilight became visible. The Sabbath was Sophia, the wisdom of the presence of God, the Shekinah (שכינה). She brought release from the troubles of the world. No one was to think of worldly concerns or anxieties. Petitionary prayers were not to be offered, as these reminded one of needs and cares. As the men accompanied the Sabbath into their homes, the woman of the household lit the Sabbath candles. These represented primordial light, the light that existed before the creation of the sun and the moon. Harold Weiss sees candle lighting as participating with God in creation. He contends, “The kindling of the Sabbath lights is therefore a repetition of the archetypal act of God that kept the light of the not-yet-fallen creation willfully shining on that first primordial Sabbath and will restore that supernal light in the age to come.”

Therefore, as the anticipation of the world to come and as the glory of the messianic age, the Sabbath offered a sacred time in the present for living by this superior light. Preparation for

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51 The shekinah (שכינה) in Jewish understanding is the light of the splendor of God which man was not able to retain in his body at creation, and which was then sent away to roam the universe until the Sabbath welcomed it. It is associated with the last emanation of the attributes of God in kabbalistic thought and temporarily brings about the restoration of the communion of God with man lost in creation. See Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah (New York: Meridian Books, 1978) 143.

52 Maimonides makes this statement about the precedence of Sabbath candles over all other lights: "If a person must choose between candles for the Sabbath or candles for Hanukkah ... Sabbath candles take precedence because of the household peace (which the Sabbath lights symbolize). ...The Torah was given only in order to make peace in the world; as it is written: 'Its paths are paths of pleasantness, and all its roads lead to peace'" (Chapter 4, Law 13). The implication is that Sabbath lamp-lighting predates the time of the Maccabees. Jewish tradition attributes the first lamp-lighting to Sarah (Midrash Rabbah, Bereishit 60). Although Hanukkah candles specifically represent the energy of the primordial light, the Sabbath candles, lit every week, bring sparks of that light to sustain illumination and peace through time.

the Sabbath required recognition of the distinct nature of the day. Not only was food prepared beforehand and special tableware set out, but the persons celebrating donned select Sabbath garments which were worn only on that day. In order to emphasize the expectation of the new world to come, one even walked and spoke in a different manner. One’s pace was leisurely and one’s speech filled with poetic phrases and words of kindness, compliment, and affirmation. And, to enhance the beauty of the day, there was reading and discussion of Torah, and the singing of joyous hymns.54

The coming of the Sabbath also occasioned a deep reflection on man’s nature and his capacity for experiencing the presence of God. Because the human person is weak and the spirit divided, Jews believe that God grants each person a special Sabbath soul in order to be able to experience the profound meaning of the day. Walter Wurzburger gives this explanation:

There is a two-fold nature to the Sabbath; everything is doubled. This is symbolized by two loaves of bread (לחם). An extra soul, neshamah yetera (יתרה נפש), is given so that one can truly be a part of the eschatological nature of the feast. Such abundance is a prototype of divine redemption, a process that will be completed only in the messianic redemption when the kingdom of God will be acknowledged by all of humanity. Sabbath is the promise of the future realization of our eschatological hopes. This vision and orientation is the basis for the

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54 The music and poetry of the Sabbath captured the essence of the day. Especially during meals, songs were sung and verses recited. The following Sabbath song illustrates this. It admits to the brokenness of the people and the need for supernatural assistance to rise above the disheartening conditions of life. This hymn is attributed to Isaac Luria, the sixteenth century Kabbalist (1534-1572):

Treasure of heart for the broken people
Gift of new soul for the souls distresed.
Soother of sighs for the prisoned spirit –
   The Sabbath of rest.
This day is for Israel light and rejoicing,
A Sabbath of rest.

Translation: Nina Davis
exhilaration and jubilation, which need the help of God to sustain-and thus the extra soul.55

The additional soul, neshamah vetera (נשמה וטרה), insures that each person has the capacity to receive the joy and fullness of Sabbath time, so permeated with divine presence.56 This soul descends upon each individual with the light ushered in by the lighting of the candles.57 Because of this soul, the light enables one to see the world at a glance with understanding. It becomes a light that cannot be resisted. Wurzburger understands the Sabbath soul as enabling one to see a greater depth of value in persons:

The Sabbath experience makes us aware of the fact that our ontological status is based not on what we make but on what we are...Persons must not be thingified and reduced to self-alienated commodities or tools, but must be accorded the dignity due to creatures endowed with infinite, intrinsic spiritual value (because of the one from whom they come). A person’s worth does not depend upon social utility as an agent of production but derives from the intrinsic sanctity of the human person.58

Because the Sabbath is the time of encounter with divine holiness, with the holiness of nature, and with the holiness of personhood, everything moves into the Sabbath for fulfillment. But the Sabbath is an intermittent time; it comes and goes. Judaism perceives in created reality a


56 According to the Kabbalah, during creation man’s nature was insufficient to absorb the gift of divine attributes that would make him into the likeness of God. The receptive vessels ordained to hold these divine qualities shattered within him. The second soul, bestowed on the Sabbath, makes up for this incapacity. An explanation of the emanations of God present in man is given by Scholem, Kabbalah, 137.

57 Since fires are forbidden on the Sabbath, the woman lights the Sabbath candles just before the appointed time, and then immediately covers her eyes so the light is not seen. With her hands before her face she recites the kiddush. Then, when she uncovers her eyes, the light is there--as if bestowed by God.

58 Wurzburger, Jewish Theology, 33.
separation of the sacred and the profane. This separation affects all facets of life. It is evident in the concept of clean and unclean and in the dietary stipulations. With reference to time, the separation is between Sabbath time and ordinary time. Sabbath time is distinct. It is rest and the presence of God when man relinquishes his domination over his own life. Sabbath time is divided from ordinary time during which man is in control and traffics in the things of the earth. It is the Sabbath soul that enables man to have an altered state of perception for the duration of the day. But when Sabbath time comes to an end, the soul departs. This is necessary in order that man be able to return to the reality of the world as it exists in its brokenness. However, once lifted up to the things of God, separation is wrenching and cannot be accomplished without some process of transition. In other words, man cannot easily readjust to life without the Sabbath because even in his recognition of his sinfulness, he is aware that he is created for such sanctity. Consequently, at the end of the day, special aromatic spices are set out to create a lingering fragrance to refresh and sustain the soul in its passage back to ordinary time.

The final ceremony of the Sabbath is also indicative of the need to extend the blessings of God’s presence into the week. The lighting of the havdullah candle in the twilight of the evening symbolizes this projection of grace into the days of toil. This candle has many wicks to represent the pouring out of light into the week about to begin. In this way the Sabbath is spread into time to cover the gap before the next Sabbath descends. Since the Sabbath provides a glimpse into the realm of unity and innocence from which man originated, and to which man is destined, life for the Jew is a perennial pilgrimage to the seventh day.
The theology of the Sabbath is a theology of Judaism in miniature. The medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides (1135-1204) described the Sabbath as presenting God’s twofold interaction with man. He states:

Thus God commanded us to abstain from work on the Sabbath, and to rest, for two purposes; namely, (1) That we might confirm the true theory, that of the Creation, which at once and clearly leads to the theory of the existence of God. (2) That we might remember how kind God has been in freeing us from the burden of the Egyptians. --The Sabbath is therefore a double blessing: it gives us correct notions, and also promotes the well-being of our bodies.  

Here Maimonides takes into account the whole being of man, his spiritual nature as informed by God and his physical nature which requires time away from worldly concerns. As creator, God has put His mark on His creation, especially on man made in his image and likeness. This orients man to his origin and the Sabbath is the medium through which man may experience something of the purity and beauty of his source of life and offer gratitude and praise. Charles Huestis comments “that the Sabbath law is grounded in the necessities of man’s nature… Everywhere and always, in all stages of his development and in all ranges of his environment, man has been a worshipping being.” The Sabbath obliges man to acknowledge his dependence and limitations, and to recognize that he has a destiny to which he is already being drawn. In the Book of “Ecclesiastes” Qoheleth affirms, “God has made everything appropriate to its time and has put the timeless into men’s hearts” (Eccles 3:11). Following this line of thought, the fifteenth century Spanish Talmudist, Rabbi Isaac Arama, asserts that “the Sabbath teaches three


fundamental principles of Judaism: belief in creatio ex nihilo, belief in revelation and the Sabbath as time to study Torah, and belief in the world to come of which the Sabbath is the foretaste.”\textsuperscript{61} A more contemporary appreciation of the benefits of the Sabbath is given by Samson Hirsch in his insight that “man must not look upon the world entrusted to him to govern according to God’s will as his own property, regarding himself as master… for on the seventh day, he is forbidden by Divine behest to fashion anything for his own purpose. In this he acknowledges that he has no rights of ownership or authority over the world.”\textsuperscript{62} Hirsch indicates here that the Sabbath connects man to God without any effort on man’s part. Man rests on the Sabbath so that God can effect his beneficent governance.\textsuperscript{63}

These varied insights into the Sabbath are the foundation for the following examination of the way in which Jesus related to this day that formed the very person of the Jew.

III. The Sabbath in the New Testament

The Sabbath assumes particular importance in the New Testament because of Jesus’ appropriation of the entire meaning of the Sabbath to himself. Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath


\textsuperscript{63} McKay understands the Sabbath as “having power to influence the cosmic harmony on behalf of Israel and perhaps the proper keeping of the Sabbath on earth has influence over God himself, encouraging him to act on behalf of Israel…devotion to Sabbath-keeping connects heaven and Israel in a perpetual, reciprocal linking.” \textit{Sabbath and Synagogue}, 57.
is revelatory of his divine person and caused reaction among the people and religious leaders. What he says and what he does with respect to the Sabbath establishes both who he is and who people are. This study of Jesus and the Sabbath will serve to indicate that the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection is a confirmation that the Sabbath, all of the Law, has been fulfilled and that the messianic end time is now in him and in his eucharistic presence in the sacrifice of the Mass: a new time and a new manner of worship. Such a christological and eschatological approach contrasts with views that regard Sunday as an institution established by the Catholic Church and not founded on divine law. A close examination of Jesus, the Sabbath, and the Law in the Gospel of Matthew, with supplementary reference to the other two synoptic gospels and also to John, will serve to demonstrate that as the fullness of the Sabbath (the Law), Jesus, in His death and resurrection, has initiated the beginning of the time of glory, and by the gift of His indwelling Spirit has enabled persons to love in the manner of the Father and thus to effect the justice sought by the prophets.

A. Jesus and the Sabbath in Selected Gospel Accounts

Jesus performed several miracles on the Sabbath, and he frequently entered the synagogue on the Sabbath to teach. It is not the intent of this paper to address the numerous

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64 Boyarin affirms that it is the person who elicits belief and confidence by what he is. He observes, “…most traditional cultures see the loci of both truth and authority primarily in persons and their utterances, not in documents and records. In such contexts, the teacher who knows the sacred text by heart and has devoted his or her life to studying and explicating it is the one and only reliable guarantor of the sacred truth. The power of the holy word is realized only through the human word of the seer, prophet, or spiritual master, not through a manuscript, even where the latter is also important. However exalted its status in a particular tradition, the written text alone is typically worthless, or at least worth little, without a human teacher to transmit both it and the traditions of learning and interpretation associated with it.” Border Lines, 171.
times throughout the gospels in which Jesus engaged in Sabbath activities. The intention here is rather to examine more closely those instances which define Jesus’ relationship to this day so essential to Jewish life and worship.\textsuperscript{65} This examination will address Jesus’ purpose in his Sabbath works and what he made known about himself in doing them. Furthermore, it will provide a foundation for understanding the perception of time and the manner of worship of Jewish-Christians after the resurrection. This study will serve to indicate that all that has been said about the Sabbath is ultimately present in the person of Jesus whose teaching opens up the Law to new dimensions of life that reflect his own relationship to God as Father. This will be done through a close analysis of the account in Matthew of the incident where the disciples of Jesus plucked the grain while walking through the fields on the Sabbath. After this analysis I will point out some unique elements associated with this story in the gospels of Mark and Luke.

1. Matthew’s Account of the Disciples in the Grain Field on the Sabbath (Matt 12: 1-8)

The story of the disciples in the grain field is preceded by two passages that are significant with respect to Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath. In the first of these passages

\textsuperscript{65} For reference, I include here a selection of various passages in the gospels in which Jesus taught or effected cures on the Sabbath. His doing so did not necessarily evoke controversy.

The Gospel of Mark: 1:21-28 (the demoniac in the synagogue); 1:29-34 (the cure of Peter’s Mother-in-law); 2:23-28 (the disciples in the grain field); 3:1-6 (the man with the withered hand); 6:1-6 (teaching and minor miracles).

The Gospel of Matthew: 12:1-8 (the disciples in the grain field); 12:9-15 (the man with the shriveled hand); 24:20 (difficulty to flee from abomination on a Sabbath).

The Gospel of Luke: 4:14-30 (interpreting scripture in the synagogue in Nazareth); 6:1-5 (the disciples in the grain field); 6:6-11 (the man with the withered hand); 13:10-17 (the crippled woman); 14:1-4 (the man with dropsy).

The Gospel of John: 5:1-18 (the invalid at the pool of Bethesda); 9:1-41 (the man born blind).
Matthew presents Jesus in a self-revelation more in the manner of the fourth gospel. He records Jesus as saying, “Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son – and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Matt 11:27). Immediately following this profound disclosure, is a second passage in which Jesus gives an invitation to all to come to him for rest, “Come to me all who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). In this rest in him, Jesus is offering to everyone the possibility of knowing the Father, because he is the true medium of this knowledge. Essentially, what Jesus is offering is rest from the anxieties of the world so that one can find the peace in which the love of the Father can be experienced. These passages present Jesus as the rest which was the great gift of God in creation, but which was disrupted by sin in the beginning. However, such rest remains the destiny of every restless soul and is the substance of the Sabbath which Jesus offers in his person. This rest is not dependent upon a time frame.

Such a revelation of relationship to the Father and such an offer of rest in the speech of Jesus were a consolation to a population of Jews who lived in poverty and derision. The concluding words of this Matthean passage are no less pregnant with meaning, “Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will

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67 A large part of the Jewish population in Palestine at the time of Jesus were very unschooled about the Law and could not in their social strata make it their pre-occupation to be carefully observant. They were the lower classes that could barely eke out subsistence. They were disdained by the perushim, the Pharisees, who kept themselves apart from them and their ignorance. These were the “am-ha-aretz” (אַמְ-הָ-אֵרֶץ) the people of the land, who were not considered righteous. It was for the most part to these that Jesus directed his preaching. See Rordorf, Sunday, 53; Boyarin, Border Lines, 59.
find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt 11:29-30). Here the reference is to the Law. Jesus is offering an alternative to the burdensome obligations imposed especially in the time of the second Temple, and which occasioned disobedience not just of the individual, but collectively of the nation. Jesus is offering rest in his own person in order to achieve the essence of the Law, the love of God and neighbor (Deut 6: 4-5; Lev 19:18b). Since he has the knowledge of God’s love, he is offering to impart it to all who come to him. Furthermore, he has described himself as gentle and humble in the manner of the servant in Isaiah, who brings about justice through the proper disposition of the heart (Matt 11:29; cf. Isa 42:1). In other words, Jesus is indicating that he is the way in which the Shema will be realized, because he is the fullness of God’s gift of Sabbath rest.

Directly after these passages, Matthew continues with an account of Jesus’ walking with his apostles through a grain field on the Sabbath. Matthew records that, “They felt hungry, so they began to pull off the heads of grain and eat them” (Matt 12:1). The Pharisees

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68 Phillip Sigal explains that the complexity of Shabbat halakhah was “like a mountain hanging by a hair” so vast were the restrictions derived from the original forbidden works, and yet so fragile the enforcement. However, with respect to these laws, Sigal describes the Pharisees as “stringent in their interpretation of Halakhah, very precise, meticulous, and zealous in their observance… fastidious about ritualism and strict constructionists in their hermeneutics and exegesis.” The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; 18, 2007) 5.

The later rabbinic reconstruction of Judaism contained even more restrictions for Sabbath observance. Dayan Grunfeld describes the very specific works, melachot (מלאchestra), that were to be avoided on the Sabbath. These, he explains, derived from the thirty-nine works done in the construction of the temple. A description of the building of the dwelling place for God is given twice in Exodus (Exod 25: 1-31:18 and Exod 35:1-40:33). Each of these lengthy descriptions includes a specific reference to the Sabbath and its observance (Exod 31:12-17 and Exod 35:1-3). Both accounts prescribe punishment of death for infractions. It was assumed that the works mentioned in these accounts constituted the works forbidden on the Sabbath. To insure that these works were not done, the later tradition added other restrictions. These are gezerah (גזרה), works that in some way are related to the primary ones, and which might inadvertently lead to the performance of a more serious transgression. Dayan Grunfeld, The Sabbath: A Guide to Its Understanding and Observance (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2003) 29-30, 34, 36, 42-43.
who observe this, remark, “Your disciples are doing what is not permitted on the Sabbath” (Matt 12:2). There are two possibilities of infraction here: one is the disregard for the permitted length of a Sabbath journey, and the other is the deliberate performance of purposeful manual work on the Sabbath. If the first stipulation did not apply, for certain the second one did; so the disciples stood accused. Jesus used their accusations to bring up an incident concerning David and the priest of Nob. This incident involved not just David’s situation, but also priestly authority, the Temple, and sacrifice. I will examine each of these, keeping in mind that the hunger of the disciples could not have been life-threatening, and thus not an occasion for permitted breaking the Sabbath under the rubric piquah nephesh. Jesus used the occasion to teach something else.

a) The Sabbath Incident: Priestly Authority

According to the first Book of Samuel, David went alone to the priest Ahimelech to ask for food to take to his men who were on a special commission from the king (1 Sam 21:2-7). Ahimelech gave David the showbread that only the priests were to eat. There is no mention that it was the Sabbath, so no violation of the Sabbath was involved. By citing the incident with David, Jesus was indicating that the priest had the right both to give David the bread meant solely for sacred purposes, and to temper the demands of Torah according to specific circumstances. The priest’s compassion was in contrast to the critical and accusatory tone of the Pharisees toward the actions of Jesus’ disciples. The protests of the Pharisees reflected their own

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69 Piquah nephesh refers to what endangers life. This form of argumentation would permit the breaking of the Sabbath if circumstances posed a danger to life.
particular halakhah, the oral law that had evolved with respect to the writings of Moses, and which the Pharisees considered as binding as the Torah. But more important in this reference to David and the priest is the inference, not that Jesus could do as David did in terms of giving bread to his men, but that Jesus could interpret the Law in a manner even more authoritative than the priests by allowing his followers to do a forbidden work on the Sabbath. Authority with respect to the Law is the essential issue.

b) The Sabbath Incident: Temple and Sacrifice

With regard to the Temple and sacrifice in Jesus’ reference to David’s request for food from Ahimelech, it is necessary to look into the Judaic priesthood. The priests were not bound by the Sabbath in regards to the work required for the offering of sacrifice in the temple on that day. Sacrifice, necessary for the worship of God and for the forgiveness of sins, took precedence over the Sabbath ‘rest’ obligation. In other words, mercy and forgiveness were the true meaning of the cult, rather than the rest imposed by Law. This is an important consideration because Jesus used the incident involving David to point out that while Temple sacrifice remained an acceptable way of relating to God, compassion surpassed this, or was the more true sacrifice. The rather innocent and somewhat insignificant action of the disciples in plucking the grain serves to expose some profound truths about the Law and the authority that interprets it. Jesus’

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70 The argument based on gezera shawa (analogy: what is allowed in one situation must be allowed in another) is not exactly applicable here, because the accusation is not against the eating, but against the breaking of the Sabbath.

71 An initial incident in the gospel of John is the cleansing of the Temple. Here Jesus overthrows the dealers in animal sacrifice in anticipation of the true sacrifice of crucified love laid down for one’s friends (John 2:13-22).
concluding remarks to the Pharisees are very explicit in pointing out what takes precedence. He states, “I assure you, there is something greater than the temple here. If you understood the meaning of the text, ‘It is mercy I desire and not sacrifice’ you would not have condemned these innocent men” (Matt 12:6-7).

The complete passage from Hosea to which Jesus refers concludes, “I desire…knowledge of God rather than holocausts” (Hos 6:6b). This text contains the truth that knowledge of God is more important than what the temple has to offer. In essence, what Jesus is saying is that knowledge of God is the fulfillment of temple worship. In the previous chapter of Matthew (Matt 11:25-27), Jesus has revealed that he is the one who has the knowledge of the Father and that this knowledge is imparted to those who have the heart of a child (Matt 11:27, 25). Jesus affirms here that he knows the love and mercy of the Father and that the exercise of this love and mercy takes precedence over Sabbath rest. Jesus’ final statement to the Pharisees, “The Son of Man is indeed Lord of the Sabbath,” (Matt 12: 8) confirms his authoritative relationship to the Sabbath.

The position of Jesus has come full circle; the cult with its sacrifices supersedes the Sabbath’s restrictive practices, but mercy supersedes the cult. Therefore, mercy is greater than the Sabbath. This can also be expressed as follows: mercy is the fulfillment of the Sabbath. The something greater than the temple, which is the place of Sabbath sacrifice and prayer, is mercy. Just prior to this pericope, Jesus has described himself as gentle and humble of heart. Jesus, then, is the place of mercy; mercy is both the new Sabbath and the new Temple sacrifice in the person of Jesus (Matt 11:29). Through the reference to David and the cult, Jesus has shown a
greater depth of meaning for the Sabbath than what the Pharisees propagated.\textsuperscript{72} As the epitome of everything contained in the Law and the Prophets, and as the one who knows the Father, Jesus was offering a fuller manner of Sabbath observance.\textsuperscript{73} His final assertion, “The Son of Man is indeed Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12:8), confirmed this.

That Jesus’ Sabbath activity is indicative of a new authoritative perspective is witnessed a second time on that particular Sabbath by a healing (Matt 12: 9-15). Jesus healed the withered hand of a man in the synagogue. This was challenged by the Pharisees. In response, Jesus employed a traditional form of argument, \textit{qal whomer,}\textsuperscript{74} an acceptable manner of discussion among the learned. He pointed out that if an animal can be rescued on the Sabbath, how much more should a person in need receive attention. Jesus’ restoration of the man’s shriveled hand and his argument for the validity of his action, thus presented an occasion for the Pharisees to re-examine their interpretation of observance. But rather than concede to Jesus’

\textsuperscript{72} In his assessment of this periscope, Sigal does not see Jesus’ self-reference “gentle and humble of heart” as a personification of the mercy that is greater than the temple. He holds that there are no Christological implications in this incident and that “What is here greater than the Temple is not Jesus because the two are not a natural analogy. What is greater than the Temple is the call to provide for human life, the required response to the love command.” Sigal, \textit{Halakah}, 161.

However, in this he fails to take into consideration the preceding passage that makes a definite reference to the relationship of the Father and the Son. Jesus’ disclosure about knowledge of the Father then undergirds any subsequent statement he makes about himself and places the following incident in a Christological light. In addition, the following passage describes the many who followed Jesus whom he cured in deep compassion and without public acclaim (Matt 12:16). The insertion of Isaiah’s description of the suffering servant (Isa 42:1-4 quoted in Matt 12:17-21) is meant to indicate that Jesus is the personification of the servant. In other words, mercy is a person, and not an abstract benevolence for which one pleads.

\textsuperscript{73} Problems with observance are attested to throughout the prophets ( Hosea 6:5-6, Isaiah 1:12-15, Jer 17:27, Ezek 20:13). Deeper insight into proper observance is found in Jeremiah’s understanding of the Law as inscribed in the heart (Jer 31:33) and Ezekiel’s understanding of the nature of the heart as humble flesh (Ezek 36:26). The new sign of Sabbath sacrifice given by Jesus is the pierced heart. The mercy Jesus offers to the weary ultimately flows from the crucifixion

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Qal whomer} is an argument in which the truth in a lesser situation is used to affirm the necessity of that truth in a greater situation.
vision of the Law, their resolve was to seek to find a way to kill him, “ἐξελθόντες δὲ οἱ Ἔφαρισαῖοι συμβούλιον ἐλαβον κατ’ αὐτοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσι” (Matt 12:14).

In Judaism the entire meaning of Sabbath observance is to affirm life. The Pharisees’ condemnation of Jesus for restoring the man to wholeness negated this essential understanding of the Sabbath. Their avoidance of forbidden works\(^\text{75}\) so that the Sabbath might be made holy and so that man might become Godlike, in effect led to an exoneration from responsibility for pressing human needs. In this Sabbath confrontation with Jesus, their resolute determination to hold to the Law as they saw it actually devolved into a plot to destroy life. This interpretation of Law was the antithesis of what Jesus represented.\(^\text{76}\) Yong-Eui Yang is correct in his evaluation that, “It is not Jesus’ stance towards the Law so much as how the Law stands with regard to him as the one who brings the Law to fulfillment. Attention is no longer primarily to the Law but to Jesus as the one who lives the Law to its fullness.”\(^\text{77}\) In other words, to live the Law is to live, even on the Sabbath, in the mercy and affirmation which Jesus’ works demonstrated.

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\(^{75}\) According to Sigal, Judaism at the time of Jesus was a legalistic system, a perversion of prophetic religion. Its soteriology was based on performance of works according to the Law. The Pharisees had introduced rigid standards of conduct that were to insure their own holiness and differentiate them from other Judaic sects they considered ignorant and squalid. *The Halakhah of Jesus*, 8.

\(^{76}\) There is a certain tension in the Judaic understanding of the works of the Law. Doing the works of the Law is salvation. Yet, the epitome of the Law, which is the Sabbath, does not permit any work to be done. This paradox arises from the Jewish concept of boundaries which differentiates the sacred and the profane. In this perception of reality, the delight and reward for each six days of “mitzvoth” (נְתיָּקָם) are experienced on the seventh day. The Sabbath, then, as a different time (a boundary time), prefigures the end time when gratification for all works will be experienced in eternal rest.

2. Jesus, the Sabbath, and the Law

At this point it is necessary to examine an earlier part of Matthew’s gospel to shed a further light on Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath and to the Law of which it is the summit. Almost directly after the instructions of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus discusses the Law. He affirms that holiness is imparted by sincere observance and that he, Jesus, is the Law’s fulfillment. What Jesus is saying is to observe him and to do likewise in order to know true holiness:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. Of this much I assure you: until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the law, not the smallest part of a letter, shall be done away with until it all comes true. That is why whoever breaks the least significant of these commands and teaches others to do so shall be called least in the kingdom of God. Whoever fulfills and teaches these commands shall be great in the kingdom of God. I tell you, unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of God” (Matt 5: 17-20)\

There are three interwoven elements in this saying of Jesus that reveal who Jesus is and his purpose. The first is the permanent nature of the Law until it is fulfilled; the second is the necessity for obeying the Law as it has been fulfilled (in Jesus); and the third is the true holiness one attains in living the fullness of the Law. Each of these has something to say with respect to the overall Matthean Christology that Jesus is Emmanuel and, as Lord of the Sabbath, will be with his disciples to the end of time.

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78 The American Standard Version (1901) has this translation for Matt 5: 18:
For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things are accomplished.
In addressing the first part of this saying, we recall that Jesus defended his disciples who were plucking of the grain on the Sabbath, and that he favored compassion rather than exactness of observance. Yet, Jesus affirms that he has not come to abolish the Law; the Law remains. This leads to an investigation of some alternative approaches to the Law at the time of Jesus that might help explain his position.

The two centuries prior to the birth of Jesus saw some radical changes in the Judaic world. The time of the great prophets had come to an end with the return from exile, so the voice of the prophets (נביאים) and its truth went into decline. With the conquests of Alexander, Hellenism infiltrated the culture and the practices of the Jews. Then the direct line of the Zadokite priesthood was broken and suffered further defilement through the Hasmoneans. So the priesthood lost credibility. What emerged from all this by the early first century B.C. was the synagogue and the teachers of wisdom. The teachers of wisdom were non-hereditary, sometimes charismatic, spiritual leaders who engaged in prayer and welcomed students, often without fee. They offered instruction and counsel, developed their own concepts in the application of the Law to life practice, and taught wisdom. They were lenient in interpretation. In the formulation of their halakhic decisions they assumed a spirit of compassion, having as their primary consideration the welfare and needs of persons as opposed to the letter of the Law. They acquired a certain status of their own which served to diminish further the already waning influence of the priesthood. They, therefore, enjoyed a particular kind of individualistic authority. Their knowledge, compassionate attitude, and compelling presence made them capable of providing perspectives about life and faith that changed people’s vision of holiness.
and the world. Sigal observes that “they were capable of changing previous halakhah and thus they unsettled tradition and inaugurated new trends.” Since they practiced an individual interpretation of halakhah, “I say” statements were a frequent part of their teachings. They constituted one distinct sect among the many sects in Judaism in the late intertestamental period.

In the light of these various trends, one can see that the position of Jesus was not altogether unique. While Jesus insisted on leniency, he was very careful to keep the greatest commandment, to love God and neighbor, as central and the reason for his position concerning the Sabbath. What became evident in Jesus’ interactions with the Pharisees was that visible, rigid, external piety was not accomplishing the commandment to love. Jesus’ activity was; and Jesus’ activity brought him primarily among the am ha-aretz: the despised, the ignorant, the laborers for hire, the people of the streets. It was also evident that people experienced new life in hearing Jesus’ preaching and in observing his concern for the neglected condition of so many. Jesus demonstrated a more humanitarian interpretation of the Law. Sigal considers Jesus’ manner of relating to the Sabbath and to the human condition as an event before its time, a prophetic enactment of what was to come after the destruction of the Temple.


80 The Pharisees were not a part of this development. The Pharisees were more of a philosophical faction, educated, but above all dedicated to strict observance of the Law and rituals. “The Pharisees formed a league or brotherhood of their own, admitting only those who, in the presence of three members, pledged themselves to the strict observance of Levitical purity, to the avoidance of closer association with the am ha-aretz (the ignorant and careless who were considered boors), to the scrupulous payment of tithes and other imposts due to the priest, the Levite, and the poor, and to a conscientious regard for vows and for other people’s property. As such they were separatists in the manner of the perushim, those who separated themselves from persons or things impure in order to attain the degree of holiness or righteousness required in those who would commune with God.” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. “perushim.”
Sven-Olav Back presents another view of Jesus in the milieu of first century Palestine with its itinerant preachers, wonder workers, mystery religions, and diverse cults. He sees Jesus in contrast to these because of his interpretation of the Law which was indicative of some immediate awareness of God’s will. Back states that “Jesus was unconcerned with Sabbath halakah and did not defend himself by engaging in halakhic or exegetical discussions because his vision was in the context of the eschatological kingdom. As such, Jesus did not intend to abrogate the Sabbath or provoke reactions.”

This description of Jesus as concerned with the eschatological kingdom makes him a far greater figure than a wisdom teacher or humanitarian. William Dale corroborates this perception of Jesus. He considers the Pharisees as trying to inhibit the mission of Jesus in establishing the kingdom. He takes this view, “Stopping the flow of messianic blessing for any reason, including appeal to the Sabbath regulations, is morally evil. It is in this way (messianic blessing) that Jesus demonstrates that he is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Dale is indicating here that Jesus was always living the Law in being about his Father’s business, the business of establishing the messianic kingdom of which the Sabbath was the prototype.

The second part of the above saying involves the necessity for obeying the Law. The Law is now presented in relation to the Kingdom of God and not with respect to Pharisaical judgment (Matt 5:19). Jesus has revealed himself as the fullness of the Law, so he is now the standard against which man will be judged; holiness consists in following Jesus in the work of the kingdom (Matt 5:20). I have pointed out that Jesus has returned to the essential meaning of

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the Law which is love of God and neighbor. In this light, the Law has been re-evaluated in a new dimension of holiness as expressed in the third part of Jesus’ proclamation, “I tell you, unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter the kingdom of God” (Matt 5:20). Holiness, which comes from walking in the way of God, must be greater than what has been demonstrated by the ruling interpreters of the Law who insist on their own concept of Sabbath observance. What is the standard of this new obedience? The standard is the prophets, which is the other institution to which Jesus has referred and of which he is also the fullness.

The prophets represent expectations beyond the normal fulfillment of the Law. Abraham was called to a mission far beyond his understanding. The Father of Nations set the pattern for his descendants to accomplish the will of the invisible God. All of the prophets were called to be more than what was thought possible. But to Moses, the greatest of the prophets, God said, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. If any man will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it” (Deut 18:17-19). This set an expectation for a future prophet of great holiness.

Jesus’ insisting that a greater holiness is necessary (Matt 5:20), places him in this tradition of the prophets. Jesus anticipates that his followers will live in this spirit because he himself is the fulfillment of God’s words to Moses. His followers will be able to accomplish greater and more difficult things beyond the dictates of the Law because their trust is in the God Jesus has revealed as Emmanuel. As Jesus exemplifies awareness of God and walking in His
will, so his followers, through Him, will also exemplify awareness of God and obedience to God’s will. It is a new time and a new creation in grace.³³

There is one last statement in the above passage that must be addressed. It is the remark that the Law will remain until ‘heaven and earth pass away’ (Matt 5:18). A correct understanding of this provides the final justification of the disciples’ actions on the Sabbath. In Jesus, heaven and earth, as they have been known, have indeed passed away. In the imminence of the realized mission of Jesus as Messiah crucified and resurrected, the Law has undergone a transformation.³⁴ Jesus’ assertion of his authority as Lord of the Sabbath is ushering in a new time which is confirmed definitively in his death and resurrection. Jesus himself is the fullness of the sacrificial love and mercy, which the Sabbath Temple sacrifices could not accomplish and which ultimately were obliterated with the Temple’s destruction.³⁵ The eternal Sabbath, promised from the beginning, is now permeating all time and gathering everything to the Father. In this light the Sabbath never passes away but becomes the fullness of the ‘rest’ promised in the beginning and in every episode of salvation history. The new age and the new creation are now in Jesus and the end time of glory is unfolding in the one Law: to love as one has been loved.

³³ That the fulfillment of the Law also indicates the necessity for a new day and manner of worship is a moot issue. Dale points out that “there is nothing in Jesus’ teaching to encourage transfer to another day.” “Jesus and the Sabbath,” 133.

However, Jesus’ resurrected and glorified body revealed to the disciples the transformed life promised in the messianic kingdom. Through the resurrection appearances, the glory of God was witnessed and new hope offered in the spiritual presence of the glorified one and the sending of His Spirit. This is a new time, the fullness of the Sabbath time which could offer only the promise.

³⁴ The transfiguration is a revelation to the chosen apostles that all of the Law and prophecy has been subsumed by Jesus and has been made manifest in a new form in his glorified person (Matt 17:1-8).

³⁵ Saint Paul attests to this fullness in the person of Christ crucified, “It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, both on earth and in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19-20). See also Heb 1:1-4.
Sabbath rest is in the heart of the one who bears the suffering of the world. Jesus alone is the source of the active rest of the Father’s love.

3. The Plucking of the Grain in Mark and Luke

The new time, the new Law, and the new creation, in essence the new Sabbath of the eschaton just discussed, is suggested in a veiled way in the verses just previous to the account of the grain field in both Mark and Luke. Both evangelists caution that new wine cannot be poured into old wine skins (Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-8). There must be new wine skins for the new wine. The new wine is the person of Jesus and his interpretation of the Law, and the new wine skin is the heart of love experienced by persons transformed by the death and resurrection of Christ and living in the eschatological intimation of the glory to come. The new wine skin is derived from the grace bestowed now in sacrament, in particular the eucharist, the very meal which the gathered disciples were sharing when Jesus appeared on the evening of the first day of the week after his passion and death.\(^86\) The essential Law, which became obscured by attention to avoidance of any works associated with the building of the temple, has been loosed from those...

\(^{86}\) Rordorf does not see Jesus’ assuming the Lordship of the Sabbath as a bringing of the Sabbath to a fullness which would legitimate a new day of worship, the first day or eighth day, to honor the eschatological time of the new creation brought about through the resurrection. He perceives the Sabbath activity of Jesus as making clear that the Sabbath has been annulled. He holds that, “in the face of the inner compulsion of his divine commission Jesus saw that every outward restraint, even that of the Sabbath command, became irrelevant. The Sabbath commandment was not merely pushed into the background by the healing activity of Jesus: it was simply annulled.” \textit{Sunday}, 70.

Such a position disregards the manner of God’s revelation from the first communication of God to Abraham, the granting of the Law to Moses, and the message of the prophets. Each phase of salvation history becomes a greater fullness until the fulfillment, not the annulment, in Jesus Christ who constantly refers to the Law and the Prophets in order to show the ongoing goodness of the Father and the present gift of divine life which he, Jesus, embodies. That Jesus comes forth from the tradition of the divine revelation first made to Abraham, cannot be set aside. Jesus does not annul the Sabbath, but transforms every aspect of it. Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath is a manifestation of the continuous ineffable wonders of God in which the new now has totally subsumed the old but remains related to it as God’s eternal plan.
bonds and made available to those who come to its source in the risen Lord. It is the beginning of a new day. Jesus’ proclamation in the gospel of John, “I am the Light of the World; no follower of mine shall ever know darkness” (John 8:12) refers to creation when God said, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3). This first light of creation is not dependent upon the heavenly bodies; it is the light through which all else is created and perceived. (This is the light the Sabbath candles represent; the light that penetrates to eternity.) What Jesus is saying in his proclamation is, “I am the day, I am the Sabbath, I am the light through which all things come into existence and have their being.”

Mark’s statement, unique to his gospel, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,” is an allusion to Christ. Mark offers a Christology of creation and redemption where Christ is the Sabbath made for man, and is always pro nobis.

4. Jesus and the Sabbath: a Christology and Eschatology

Judaism looked upon the Sabbath as the time set aside not only to recognize God as creator and redeemer, but to live more fully the joy and awe of human nature as receptive of God’s continuous creative act. The Sabbath obliges, therefore, to put aside human productivity and to honor God as the giver of all gifts and abilities which enable the performance of daily work. The Sabbath then is a participation in the life of God and the life of eternal blessedness. The Sabbath brings the end time of rest in God into the present moment. It is the presence of the divine brought into time.
Something of this presence appears as the experience of those who encountered Jesus. In each of the four gospels Jesus is shown to have an authority more commanding than that of the teachers of the Law. He is recognized by the common people as well as the leaders as committed to his own word and as faithful to his own actions. As such, his influence is dynamic; it is a source of solace and hope to the humble who experience the debilitating condition of need, and at the same time it is a threat to those closed within their own concepts of the ways of God. The response of the former is discipleship, while the response of the latter is the effort to destroy him.

There are several instances throughout the New Testament of this ambivalence with regard to Jesus. One such example is in the beginning of the gospel of Luke. Here, Jesus initiates his ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath. He reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 61:1-2) and then states that these scriptures have been fulfilled in him. Those who have heard him, at first marvel at his discourse: “All who were present spoke favorably of him; they marveled at the appealing discourse which came from his lips” (Luke 4:22). However, this shocked amazement morphs into wariness when Jesus reminds them that there were several favored by God who were not of the house of Israel. This declaration of truth ultimately causes those in the synagogue to expel him and seek his death: “At these words, the whole audience in the synagogue was filled with indignation. They rose up and expelled him from the town, leading him to the brow of the hill on which it was built intending to hurl him over the edge” (Luke 4:28-30).
A similar reaction is recorded in the gospel of Matthew on the occasion of Jesus’ curing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath (Matt 12:9-14). This action of Jesus causes the Pharisees to take counsel against him about how to destroy him: “When the Pharisees were outside, they began to plot against him to find a way to destroy him” (Matt 12:14).

The first chapter of the gospel of Mark recounts Jesus’ cure of a demoniac (Mark 1:23-27). This is not a Sabbath incident, but the amazement of the onlookers is a recognition of a spirit of authority in Jesus: “All who looked on were amazed. They began to ask one another: “What does this mean? A completely new teaching in a spirit of authority! He gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey!” (Mark 1:27).

The question of authority is of even greater significance in the gospel of John. After the cure of the sick man at Bethesda on the Sabbath (John 5:1-15), the Jews begin to persecute Jesus for his actions: “It was because Jesus did things such as this on the Sabbath that they began to persecute him” (John 5:16). Jesus’ answer, “My father is at work until now and I am at work as well” (John 5:17) brings further criticism because Jesus is speaking of God as his father, making himself equal to God. For this blasphemy they are determined to kill him, “The reason why the Jews were even more determined to kill him was that he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but, worse still, was speaking of God as his own Father, thereby making himself God’s equal” (John 5:18).

Authority is an important issue in understanding the movement from Sabbath to Sunday worship. Each of these gospel accounts indicates that Jesus stirred strong reactions in people. In the incident recorded by Luke there are messianic overtones that the one to bring reconciliation
and justice is already in their midst. The Matthean account of the cure of the man with the
withered hand follows Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees about the disciples’ plucking the
grain on the Sabbath and Jesus’ declaration that “the Son of Man is indeed the Lord of the
Sabbath.” Jesus’ doing the work of bringing wholeness to body and spirit confirms his lordship.
The confrontation in John’s gospel serves to disclose the dynamic nature of God, even on the
Sabbath. Here, Sabbath rest is seen as issuing from God’s constant activity in holding creation in
order, and pouring out life. Such rest in activity affirms any actions for the good that sustain and
foster life, perhaps especially on the Sabbath.

There are several elements to consider here in order to understand a Christology as
undergirding the movement from Sabbath to Sunday. One consideration is Jesus’ statement that
he is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning a prophet of mercy (Isa 61:1-2). Referring
to Isaiah’s description of the one who will bring glad tidings and heal the brokenhearted, Jesus
states “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). This recalls the
claim of Jesus, in the incident of the grain field, that there is “something greater than the temple
present” (Matt 12: 6). What is greater than the temple is mercy, and the one who embodies
mercy, as a living enactment of the propitiatory of the Ark of the covenant, is greater than the
authority of the priests.

Jesus has also identified himself as Son of the Father to whom everything has been given
over (Matt 11:27). Therefore, he can issue an invitation to all to come to him and find
refreshment and rest, the essence of the Sabbath (Matt 11:28). Jesus is rest because he is gentle
and humble of heart, the essence of mercy (Matt 11:29). Furthermore, Jesus establishes himself
as the Law, “Take my yoke upon your shoulders” (Matt 11:29). His law is not the meticulous constraints of the Pharisees, but a heart of love and compassion that initiates a transformed perception of the great commandment to love God above all things and neighbor as self (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). The essence of Jesus’ love is, as the Sabbath requires, imitation of the Father; his love flows from his union with the Father (John 5:19-20; 10:30, 38; Matt 11:27). Through Jesus’ love and mercy for persons, they also become capable of imitating God and, consequently, of doing what the Sabbath requires. Imitation of God now is through union with Jesus who alone knows the Father and is the yoke (the Law) that holds persons securely in this love. To imitate God is to do his will through the intermediacy of Jesus.

Imitation of God has a whole new meaning in this context. Imitation of God is no longer rest, but participation in the active love of God which is an outpouring of life. To pour out life means to live in the awareness of the presence of God and that all is for his glory and the sanctification of persons, not the sanctification of time which is the concern of the Sabbath. This is what Jesus is doing in his healing, forgiveness, and compassionate attention to the needs of those around him and the multitudes that come to him. He has begun the work of the shepherd for the wandering sheep; he initiates the kingdom of the lamb.

In contrast, the Sabbath activity of the priests in offering sacrifices does not have this effect. In Jesus, the sacrificial system has been fulfilled. One now honors God through activity reflective of divine hesed (חסד). The true Sabbath is conversion of heart by resting in the one heart that knows God in the intimate relationship of Father. Through this rest, one can perform deeds of mercy and love and bring about the healing that initiates the kingdom of God. Jesus
does not abrogate the Sabbath, but fulfills it as the time in which the desire of God for the wholeness of his people takes concrete effect at every moment. This new reality calls into question the relevance of time divisions. The Sabbath in which the Jewish heart longs to find rest has become in Jesus an existential way of life that affirms the eschaton in the very movement of time. Furthermore, Jesus shares this ability to give rest to all who reside in his love.

An event that gives a subtle insight into Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath as eschatological fullness is the first of the signs in John’s gospel. The marriage celebration Jesus attends can be interpreted as a foretaste of the Messianic feast (John 2:1-11). The true bridegroom is hidden in the person of Jesus who insures that the feast suffers no interruption but rather continues the joy through the superabundance of the wine he provides. This wine is indicative of the Divine Providence that does not allow evil to interfere with the unfolding of the kingdom of God. Marriage, as a sign of right relationship, is an image of Yahweh’s espousal of Israel. Hosea affirms that even when Israel was unfaithful “God allured her into the desert, away from all distraction, and spoke to her heart to bring her back” (Hos 2:16-17). Jesus’ miracle of the wine that never ceases is an image of the kingdom where God’s hesed continuously abounds for all. It points to the Sabbath observance where the kingdom is

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87 Walter Wurzburger explains that “in the hierarchy of values of the theocratic state of Israel, hesed has a primacy. For all its concern for justice, biblical morality treats justice not just as a formal property but views it as the proper distribution of love.” “Religion and Morality,” in Toward Greater Understanding: Essays in Honor of John Cardinal O’Connor, ed. Anthony Cernera (Fairfield: Sacred Heart University Press, 1995) 137.
represented symbolically by special foods, elaborate dress, exalted manner of speech, and kingly bearing as a prolepsis of the glory of the end time and as a reaffirmation of hope.  

The Sabbath has now been shown in various perspectives in relation to Jesus. Imitation of God as central to Sabbath observance becomes now imitation of Jesus. One imitates Jesus by healing and forgiving so that the kingdom of God is established. One imitates Jesus not specifically by obeying laws, but by willingly walking the path of self-sacrifice. Just as Jesus is beloved of the Father and then imitates the Father by loving people (John 15: 9), so Jesus gives the command “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). This command, the new law, is given just after Jesus washes the feet of the disciples (John 13:3-9). At another time, Jesus expresses His love by calling the disciples, friends, because friends confide the truth of themselves to one another (John 15:15). Imitation of God is now seeing the other as friend. The Sabbath thus finds fullness knowing and serving others. The accusation that Jesus has broken the Sabbath (John 5:18) reflects a genuine truth in the sense that he has unbound the day and set it free for the correct love of God in forgiveness and affirmation of life.  

Jesus’ cleansing the temple of the animal vendors is another subtle reference to the Sabbath. Here, the corruption within the sacrificial system was exposed (John 1:13-22). The commercial nature of obtaining the sacrificial victim distanced the offerer from the sacrificial act and gave him little place in the actual atonement for his sins. The double number of animals sacrificed on the Sabbath, ultimately had little effect on Israel’s condition of sin. In ridding the Temple of the greed of the vendors, Jesus was preparing for the true sacrifice of laying down one’s own life for the sake of the kingdom.

Jesus’ breaking the Sabbath is found in John’s Gospel, διὰ τούτου οὐν μᾶλλον εξητόν αὐτὸν ὁ Ιουδαῖος αποκτείναι, οτι οὐ μονὴν ἐλευν το σαββατον: Jesus was not only breaking the Sabbath…” (John 5:18). The verb ἐλευν is from λυω meaning to “release, set free, unbound, even destroy.” The implication is clear that Jesus desires to release the Sabbath from the ceremonial codes that have bound the simple people who already have little joy in their lives and who are as “sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Jesus does not break the Sabbath in the sense of disregarding the statutes meant to protect its holiness. Breaking here means rather “breaking up” the Sabbath so that the light of God can shine forth and
There is one other perspective relevant to the Sabbath that is prominent in the writings of John, and that is light. The light which the darkness is not able to overcome opens his gospel (John 1:5-9). This is a reference to the original light of creation not dependent upon the heavenly bodies and symbolized by the candles lit as the Sabbath descends. John presents Jesus in two specific instances when he uses light in reference to himself. In the first he states, “I am the light of the world, no follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness” (John 8:12). Here, Jesus, as the light, is including his followers in its protection. The second reference to light occurs in the encounter with the man born blind. Here, Jesus makes this enigmatic remark, “The night comes on when no one can work. While I am in the world I am the light of the world” (John 9:4-5). Jesus is intimating that nothing can impede the work of the Father because the light he bestows does not depend upon the world. Jesus bestows the light of the eternal Sabbath of the end time, the time of glory when all will be handed over to the Father. In his statement, Jesus is saying that he is the new time. Life now is in his light that was there also at the beginning and through which everything came about (John 1:1-5). Therefore, pregnant with meaning is this statement by Jesus, made when the disciples caution him about entering Judea for fear of the hostility of the Jews, “If a man goes walking by day he does not stumble because he sees the world bathed in light. But if he goes walking at night he will stumble since there is no light in him” (John 11:9-10). Jesus is insistent that his disciples realize that the light of life is his presence with them; that he is the day, the true Sabbath that leads to eternal life. As such, he is leaving with them his illumine the image of God in all people to form a basis for truly seeing the gift of personhood. The image of God has become evident in Jesus in his oneness with those rejected and infirm, the am ha-aretz. Jesus is the pure manifestation of the image of God. Rest in Jesus restores that image in mankind.
spirit along with the bread of life that will sustain them to the end and unite them to both God and one another in the restored image he himself incarnates.

The statement “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” is found in all three synoptic gospels (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). Through the discussion of this statement it has been shown that lordship is expressed by mercy, and that authority resides only in the compassionate heart. It has been demonstrated that the Sabbath is the fullness of the Law and in appropriating the Sabbath to himself, Jesus has subsumed all of the Law. The Law has been transformed and divine hesed is now manifested in the person of Jesus and those who have accepted his teaching. Just as Jesus is the new Law, he is also the new covenant meant for all. This covenant is the new relationship with God that finds expression in Jesus’ own sacrifice poured out and shared in his giving of the bread of life.

The revelations and instructions which Jesus imparted to his apostles became clearer to them after the crucifixion when they were gathered in fear in the upper room, and the Lord appeared to them. I will look now at the Sunday appearances with respect to the injunction Jesus gave at the last supper to “do this as a remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

5. The Apostles and the Sunday Resurrection Appearances

After the Passover supper with Jesus, the disciples scattered. Only John and the women were present at the crucifixion. However, after the Sabbath, the disciples gathered again in the

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90 Wurzburger explains that “abundance” applies only to God in his loving kindness, hesed. However, the inbreaking of the kingdom in the person of Jesus allows the abundance of God’s hesed to flow through Jesus’ heart into the hearts of his followers and permeate the world. It is precisely God’s hesed, the very life of God, that is now shared with man. Wurzburger, “Religion and Morality,” 137.
upper room, in great confusion and in fear. According to the gospel of Mark, when the disciples were at table on the evening of the first day of the week, Jesus appeared to them (Mark 16: 14). In the gospel of Luke, on the first day of the week, the disciples at Emmaus experienced the Lord in the breaking of the bread. Then, upon their return to the assembly of the disciples, Jesus appeared in their midst. Because of their persistent inability to believe the reality of his presence, Jesus asked for something to eat. They offered him the cooked fish that was the remnant of their dinner (Luke 24:13-45). In John’s gospel the disciples were locked together in a room on the evening of the first day of the week. Jesus came among them and imparted to them the Holy Spirit. The following week, in a similar manner, Jesus appeared again and specifically addressed the unbelief of Thomas (John 20:26-29).

These evening appearances took place at the time of gathering for a meal. The final sharing before the crucifixion had been the breaking of bread at the Passover supper. The appearance of the Lord now in the upper room would occasion their recalling this last time together. Remembrance of the Lord’s Supper and the experience of the resurrected Lord’s presence with them on the first day of the week, became the foundation of “the Lord’s Day”.

The resurrection appearances confirmed that Jesus’ words about the kingdom were definitive and

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91 Jewett understands the Easter appearances of Christ as the origin of the Lord’s Day. He states, “Eating together after the resurrection in an evening meal context must have been a remembrance of their Last Supper together. Sunday observance, then, finds its roots in the Easter evening appearances where the disciples were gathered together.” The Lord’s Day, 64.

Rordorf contends that the Christian meal of the breaking of the bread at the Lord’s Supper was fundamentally different from the Jewish meals. Therefore, this meal necessitated a new name. This was the immediate cause for the title “the Lord’s Day” given to the first day of the week. “The name the ‘Lord’s Day’ does therefore derive less from the once-for-all historical event of the resurrection than from the experience of the weekly presence of the exalted Lord among the community assembled for the Lord’s Supper, and this practice originated in the appearance on Easter evening. The Lord’s presence occurred afresh whenever and wherever the Eucharist was celebrated in remembrance of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and return at the end.” Sunday, 275.

Resurrection implies new life, new beginning, new creation: the first day and the eighth day, a newness that entirely transforms.
that all were now living in a new concept of life. Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, had suffered death, had overcome the sin that scarred the first Sabbath rest, and was now the resurrection and the life. The new life of the resurrected Christ and participation in that life through the common meal, effected a new creation, a new time continuum, and a new manner of worship in sacramental community. While the Judaic Sabbath used various symbolic practices to anticipate the end time of God’s gracious rest, the resurrected Christ now manifested the glory of God’s saving presence to those who believed in him. In Christ, the boundary of the temporal and the eternal was dissolved.92 The Judaic separation of sacred and profane was transformed by God’s entering his creation in the person of Jesus Christ. Sabbath time and sacrificial ritual were fulfilled. Thus, time in Christianity became permeated with the Eucharistic presence of Christ which unveiled persons as God’s image. Within such a common vision, a just and true charity could arise, foundational to the beatitudinal life Jesus preached, and concretely formative of the kingdom of God of which every Sabbath was a foreshadowing.

It is understandable that the experience of the disciples on the first day of the week caused them to have an entirely different perception of relationship to God and worship. In the resurrected Lord’s presence to them, the former manner of worship was fulfilled. Their worship became the table fellowship they experienced in Christ’s glorious presence on the first day of the

92 In each of the Synoptic gospels (Mark 15:38; Matt 27:51; Luke 23:45), there is reference to the tearing of the sanctuary curtain at the time of the death of Jesus. It was torn from top to bottom. This curtain was woven of several materials: a neutral linen enhanced with cloths of blue, purple, and scarlet which were, in turn, embellished with golden threads to form cherubim. In all, it was exceedingly large and heavy, and hung in an overlapping pattern which the high priest had to part to enter the holy of holies. That this veil was completely torn, is a most extraordinary occurrence. In Christianity it is considered the opening of the path to God, made possible by Jesus’ offering of his life to God for man’s sake. The barriers between heaven and earth have been removed. Pjmiller.wordpress.com/2008/03/18/the-holy-of-holies-and-the-rent-veil/ (accessed April 2, 2013)
week. It sustained them when sacrifices ceased with the destruction of the Temple and when their presence was no longer welcome in the synagogue assembly. The resurrection, as the initiation of messianic time, fulfilled the Sabbath and represented the first day of the new creation and the new day of worship.

93 Sunday gathering is confirmed in Paul’s breaking bread with the community of Troas on the first day of the week (Acts 20: 7-12). This is not specifically referred to as the Lord’s Supper, but a Sunday gathering, especially to honor Paul, would suggest the Eucharist. Paul also reprimands the Corinthians for not celebrating the Lord’s supper with charitable sharing at their gatherings (1Cor 11: 20).

Reference to the Lord’s Day is found also in the Book of Revelation where John refers to his vision as happening on “The Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10). Acceptance of this as meaning Sunday is based on the specific difference between Lord’s Day (εἰς τὴν κυριακὴν ημέραν) and Day of the Lord (ημερὰ τοῦ κυρίου), the latter meaning the day of the end times and judgment. John is not situating his vision in the end time, but is referencing the day as designated for Eucharist by the apostles.

A contrary view is held by Bacchiocchi who contests that “Sunday arose not as a divine precept demanding the sanctification of time (as is the fourth commandment), but as an ecclesiastical institution designed to force a differentiation from Jewish Sabbath-keeping.” From Sabbath to Sunday, 316.

In Bacciocchi’s meticulous study of the Sabbath, he notes that a proper understanding of the day recognizes the dimension of deeds of loving kindness emphasized by Christ and the rabbis of the first century A.D. see From Sabbath to Sunday, 54-55. Bacchiocchi does not consider Jesus’ death and resurrection as fulfilling the Sabbath and all that the Sabbath means in terms of the Law and revelation. He, therefore, does not consider Sunday as a new time for worship. He continues to hold that the Ten Commandments are divine Law and Christian Sunday worship is not the sanctification of time the Sabbath requires. He asserts that Sunday worship is a church institution. see From Sabbath to Sunday, 316-17. Bacchiocchi, therefore, does not accept the position that Christ (as Creator and Lord and as the origin of the Law) has brought everything into a new creation in his resurrection, and has thus laid the foundation for the Christian way of life and worship as distinct from Judaism.

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95 The actual designation Sunday as alternative to Lord’s Day occurred under Justin Martyr in the middle second century. The Romans had named the days after the planets. However, Justin re-interpreted Sunday for the Christians as the day of the light of the world and of the risen one as the sun of justice. Thus he absorbed and transformed the pagan implications of the day. “First Apology of Justin,” in Early Christian Fathers, ed. and trans. Cyril R. Richardson (NewYork: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1970) 287. Eusebius in the third century confirms this rationale for Christian Sunday worship. “Commentaria in Psalms 91 in Patrologia Graeca 23, 1169-1172. However, it was the Emperor Constantine who formally declared Sunday an official day of rest for the Roman Empire in 321 AD, but this was not specifically to honor Christianity. Pagan sun worship continued to prevail. Codex Justinianus, lib.3, tit.12, 2-3.
B. The Sabbath in Pauline Perspective

The question of the Sabbath and the necessity for its observance was a decisive question in the apostolic church. Paul considered the Mosaic covenant exclusive to the Jews and, in the sense that the Sabbath was the sign of that covenant, its observance was not binding on those outside of Judaism, that is, the Gentile converts to Christianity. For Paul, God’s salvific act is now the life and death of Jesus. The Mosaic covenant is fulfilled in the life of grace. The new heavens and the new earth promised by the Lord in Isaiah have been realized in the resurrection of Christ. Douglas De Lacey points out that “Jesus had died by crucifixion and so according to the Law had become a curse of God. God vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead. God’s action through Jesus had transcended the Law that pronounced him accused. Law is now active in a new way. It is now Jesus and not the Law or the Mosaic covenant that has become the locus of God’s saving work for both Jews and Gentiles.”96

The Sabbath in this new creation is a new time. The prophecy of Isaiah that foretold that “from one Sabbath to another, all mankind shall come to worship” (Isa 66:23) finds its realization in Jesus’ injunction to the Apostles “to go and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19). The covenant which underwent transition from the promises to Abraham, to the Law of Moses, to the circumcised heart in Jeremiah, and to the heart of flesh in Ezekiel, has now become the pierced heart of Christ which manifests itself in the indwelling spirit.

Paul contended that the Law led to boasting of deeds (Rom 2:17, 23; 3:27), but submission to the spirit instilled humility and fostered authentic service to others. Furthermore, since the Law separated the Jews from the Gentiles, the vision of the prophets whereby all nations would come together to worship (would come to the Sabbath) had been thwarted. Now, however, faith in Jesus Christ removed the constraints of the Law and opened the doors of salvation for the in-gathering of nations, Isaiah’s prophecy of the new Sabbath. Under the grace of faith, the Sabbath in its ceremonial expression was no longer binding. Paul made this clear in his letter to the Romans where he recognized the diverse modes of conscience toward observance. He states “One man regards this day as better than that; someone else considers all days alike. Each should be certain of his own conscience. The man who observes the day does so to honor the Lord…How can you sit in judgment on your brother?” (Rom 14:5-6; 10). In the letter to the Colossians he further warns about judging others on these matters. Here he admonishes, “No one is free, therefore, to pass judgment on you in terms of what you eat or drink or what you do on yearly or monthly feasts, or on the Sabbath. All these were but a shadow of things to come; the reality is the body of Christ” (Col 2:16-17). In this statement Paul is censuring the judging of others while he himself is casting judgment on certain religious practices as shadows, almost non-existent, and certainly not the reality. That this evaluation of former religious practices is Paul’s true sentiment is confirmed in his remonstrance to the Galatians:

In the past, when you did not acknowledge God, you served as slaves to gods who are not really divine. Now that you have come to know God - or rather, have been known by him - how can you return to those powerless, worthless, natural elements to which you seem willing to enslave yourselves once more? You even
go so far as to keep the ceremonial observance of days and months, seasons and years! I fear for you; all my efforts with you may have been wasted” (Gal 4:8-11).

Though Paul was accepting of a continuation of Judaic practices among those Jewish converts who desired to honor their traditions, these were not to be imposed on new converts. Any factions which insisted on the imposition of Judaic rituals, especially circumcision, met with opposition from Paul (Acts 15:1-2). Such dissension finally resulted in Paul’s meeting with the Church leaders in Jerusalem who agreed on a very basic framework of traditional demands for those who desired to profess faith in Christ. The Council held in Jerusalem made only these requirements:

It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too, not to lay on you any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from illicit sexual union (Acts 15:28-29).

This conclusion indicates that observance of the Sabbath was not a necessity for the Christian community, and certainly was not to be forced upon the Gentiles. Yet, at the same time, Paul took full advantage of the Jews’ adherence to their Sabbath obligation. On his various travels he visited the synagogues to promote the message of the gospel. The Acts of the Apostles records, “Every Sabbath in the synagogue, Paul led discussions in which he persuaded certain Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4). Paul never denied that he himself was a Jew and he even engaged in certain Jewish practices to insure that converts felt comfortable in the new faith (Acts 21:20-24; 23:6).
Paul’s purpose in all this was not to discredit the law, which he believed served to hold man within boundaries for the coming of the Messianic age. His purpose was, “to have man see the breathtaking sweep of God’s new act in Christ which makes one new humanity in him.”

With these understandings about the Sabbath in mind, I will turn now to a discussion of Sunday worship in the first Christian communities. Reference to the writings of the church fathers will show the practice of Sunday Eucharistic worship to date from the late first century.

IV. The Sabbath and Sunday in Post-New Testament Christianity

With respect to Sunday and the Sabbath in the first century, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Roman empire recognized the Jewish day of prayer and rest and tolerated Sabbath observance. By contrast, Sunday for Christians was not a holiday but a work day. There was no imperative to establish Sunday as a day of rest. Their evening service did not interfere with work. However, under the rule of the Emperor Trajan (98-117 A.D.), evening gatherings became suspect of having political implications and were condemned as illegal for fear of their having a seditious purpose. This may account for the transfer of Christian worship to Sunday morning before work. A letter of Pliny, Governor of Pontus and Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan in 112 AD attests that Christians met before daybreak on an appointed day for religious services:

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They (the Christians) were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food.  

That Sunday was the established day of worship very early in the church is attested to in the writings of several apostolic fathers. For example, Saint Ignatius of Antioch before the year 117 A.D. explained in the Letter to the Magnesians that:

Those then who lived by ancient practices arrived at a new hope. They ceased to keep the Sabbath and lived by the Lord’s Day, on which our life as well as theirs shone forth, thanks to him and his death, though some deny this. The “Epistle of Barnabas” written in the time of Hadrian somewhere between 117 and 132 A.D. also attests to Sunday worship as a contrast to the Sabbaths of the Old Testament:

Your new moons and Sabbaths I disdain. Not the Sabbaths of the present era are acceptable to me but that which I have appointed to mark the end of the world and to usher in the eighth day that is the dawn of another world. This is the reason why we joyfully celebrate the eighth day – the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead; after which he manifested himself and went up to heaven.

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100 The author of the Epistle of Barnabas, written in the early second century, is concerned with “Millenarianism” the concept that time is experienced in intervals of thousands based on a set of seven that leads to the final eighth in which all will find reckoning and the end time will come. Since in millenarianism there is such a projection into the future of the definitive eighth day, there is question by this author of the validity of any real sanctification in Sabbath practice: hence, the disdain for the new moons and Sabbaths. However, the day of resurrection is the dawning of a new world, an initial overcoming of the sin and flesh that grasps man and restrains him. Sunday, as the day of resurrection, is a day of hope that launches forward to the final seventh millennium when the power of the “Lawless One” will be destroyed and the wicked come to judgment through the full power of the Resurrected One. Then the stage will be set to usher in the definitive eighth and final era, the age of glory of which Sunday observance has been the prefigurement. Sunday here is closely linked to the second coming of Christ.
In addition, Eusebius’ commentary on Psalm 92 describes Sunday as the true rest:

Wherefore, being rejected of them [the Jews], the Word [Christ] by the new covenant translated and transferred the feast of the Sabbath to the dawn of light, and handed down to us a likeness of the true rest: the saving day of the Lord and the first day of light. 101

In his dialogue with Trypho the Jew in the early second century, Justin questions him as to his objections to Christianity. It is evident in this questioning that Christians do not worship on the Sabbath or observe the Law in the same manner as the Jews, although they profess the same God. Justin inquires:

Is there any accusation you have against us other than this, that we do not observe the Law, nor circumcise the flesh as your forefathers did, nor observe the Sabbath as you do…Or do you only condemn us for believing in such doctrines and holding opinions which you consider false?...There never will be, nor has there ever been from eternity, any other God except him who created and formed this universe. We do not claim that our God is different from yours, for he is the God who, with a strong hand and outstretched arm led your forefathers out of the land of Egypt. Nor have we placed our trust in any other but only in him whom you also have trusted, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. But our hope is not through Moses or through the Law, otherwise our customs would be the same as yours. 102

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It is evident in Justin’s statement that the God of the Christians is the same as the God of the Jews, but the Christian manner of worship is no longer through the Law as interpreted by Moses but through the Law as interpreted by Christ. Christian celebration of the Lord’s Day, therefore, was not a Sabbath celebration and Christians did not adhere to the same restrictions. The faithful met on Sunday in the evening or the early morning and then went about their particular work. As noted, in the Pauline communities observance of the Sabbath and Jewish rituals were not obligatory; such observances were even discouraged. According to the Didascalia (250 A.D.) rest from work on Sunday was not required and the people were advised that whenever they were not in church, they should devote themselves to their work because the ceremonial laws of the Sabbath had been abrogated. Thus, before Constantine, Christians had no interest in rest from work on Sunday. With the Emperor Constantine’s Edict of Milan (313 A.D.), Sunday was made the statutory day of worship. Further regulations were made at the time of the Council of Nicea. However, the

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103 “There is a sharp distinction between the Decalogue and the ceremonial legislation; the one given before the other; the one to be fulfilled, the other to be abrogated by Christ.” Didascalia Apostolorum, trans. Hugh Connolly (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1929) 240.

104 Constantine made this declaration concerning labor in 321: “On the Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting... Codex Justinianus, lib. 3, tit. 12. 3, trans. Philip Schaff , History of the Christian Church, vol. 3, 5th ed. (New York: Schribner, 1902) 380, n. 1.

Furthermore, the Council of Laodicea made this declaration in 364: “Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring 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.” Canon 29. reluctantmessenger.com/council of Laodicea.htm (accessed April 2, 2013)

105 Though not present himself at the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), Pope Sylvester I, through his legates Vitus and Vicentius, approved the decisions of the Council and confirmed the rulings of Constantine. He also designated the five week days as ferias to insure a greater focus of holiness for Christendom. Communion.stblogs.org/2010/12/saint-sylvester-pope.html (accessed April 2, 2013)
first Christians observed Sunday gathering as a joyous eucharistic celebration independent of the restrictions of Sabbath observance.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a comprehensive history of the Sabbath, its overriding significance to the Jews in their worship and life, and Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath in its many aspects, ultimately resulting in a new manner of worship and life.

The Sabbath, as initially an agrarian observance, somewhat after the manner of the taboos of the surrounding civilizations, has been shown to be differentiated from these by its uniqueness as the culmination of creation: a day emanating from the divine plan for holiness. Creation and redemption through the Exodus have been shown as the particular reasons behind Sabbath celebration: creation because it demonstrates rest in God as the final end of man, and the Exodus because it confirms God’s sustaining gift of salvation.

The Jews’ difficulty in keeping the Sabbath has been addressed and the admonitions of the prophets cited. The prophets’ re-evaluation of the Sabbath has been shown as introducing a more interior way of observance. In relation to this, the hallmarks of the Sabbath (cessation and rest, remembrance, holiness and joy) have been discussed as the spiritual dimensions of this day set apart in time to represent eternity.

The Sabbath in the New Testament has been examined with respect to Jesus’ activity on that day as revelatory of his person as Son of God and the true rest for man. Jesus is shown as constituting a new spiritual dimension of the Sabbath through his relationship to the Father and
his self-revelation as mercy and love. It has been shown that Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, suffered death and was raised by God into the fullness of life, the fullness of the end time toward which all life is directed. Therefore, the Sabbath as celebrated in Judaism is shown to no longer be the dimension of time or the manner of worship for Christians who had experienced Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

The Pauline perspective has also been presented in order to examine the position of the new Christian community with respect to the Law and Sabbath observance. The Pauline study indicates Sunday Eucharistic gathering of the community.

I have indicated that the movement from Sabbath to Sunday eucharistic worship is based on Christ’s self-identity as Lord of the Sabbath and man’s true rest, grounded in the resurrection appearances on the first day of the week, which confirmed the in-breaking of the end-time of glory. Reference has also been made to writings of the New Testament and documents of certain early church Fathers that attest to Christian Sunday Eucharistic worship from the first century.

Against this background, the following chapters will examine the works of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Francine Klagsbrun to provide some insight into present Jewish understanding of the significance of the Sabbath and its observance. Jean Daniéloú’s typological interpretations of the Old Testament with respect to the Sabbath will be presented as part of his demonstration of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. Daniéloú’s dialogue with Rabbi André Chouraqui will be examined to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity and of the dedication to justice and charity which the Mosaic covenant demands.
Finally, the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, will also be used to assess the significance of Christian dependence on Judaism as the root in which the Christian faith is anchored, as Saint Paul attests. This papal document will be referenced in order to assess the challenges both faiths face in the modern world in insuring that justice prevail and values be protected.
Chapter 2

The Theology and Sabbath Understanding of Abraham Joshua Heschel

Introduction

This chapter will probe the understanding of the Sabbath and its observance that is presented by Abraham Joshua Heschel in his writings overall and in his work specifically on this topic, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. Some attention will be given to the mystical aspects of Judaism and the diverse aspects of Hasidism as developed by the two great masters, Israel ben Eliezer (the Bal Shem Tov) and Menehem Mendl of Kotzk (the Kotzker), since these were influences upon Heschel in his own struggle to preserve the relevance of Judaic Sabbath observance in a secularized society. As a twentieth century Jewish theologian dedicated to both orthodoxy and the Sabbath as the divine gift of sanctification of time, he became a voice in the modern world for rededication to halakhic life and for attention to mitzvot in order to redirect present-day currents seemingly oblivious to the paths of virtue.

There will be four divisions in this discussion. The initial segment will provide essential background for an appreciation of Heschel’s dedication to Sabbath Observance. Therefore, the first part will make reference to the central position of Sabbath observance in his Hasidic upbringing, in which knowledge, discussion, and prayer come together in that sacred time to shed meaning on life. It will then address the extraordinary manner and extent of his education, exemplified by the intensity of his rabbinical training from earliest childhood through a discipline of learning at the hands of masters. This overview of his early background and
university experience provides the foundation for a deeper understanding of the theology Heschel developed which reflected his insistence upon the validity of revelation, the urgent need for prayer, the redemptive nature of mitzvot, and especially the providence of the living God whose presence was palpable in the sanctified time of the Sabbath. It will be shown that Heschel’s understanding of the biblical God, and especially the God of the prophets, gave him a particular perspective on the work of Martin Buber and later a certain stance with respect to the position of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in the discussions for the Vatican Council II document Nostra Aetate.

The second part of this chapter will delineate what Heschel refers to as “depth theology,” the insights he accrued through the Sabbath devotion of his family, through the influence of the Hasidic masters who centered their lives in Sabbath prayer and study, and through his own dedication to intellectual life and committed observance, insights foundational to his ecumenical outreach and applicable to all people seeking truth.

The third part of this chapter will be an extensive study of Heschel’s understanding of the Sabbath derived from his life experience and study. It will set forth Heschel’s perception of the need for the meditative approach to life the Sabbath offers to the present world harassed by the unremitting pressures of work, the attraction of ever alluring commodities, and the disappointments of shallow relationships.

The fourth part of the chapter will discuss Heschel’s dedication to ecumenism, an outcome of his conviction that the peace of the blessed relationships experienced on the Sabbath is meant to be shared with all people as Judaism’s call to be the light for the nations. For
Heschel, the atmosphere of acceptance created by Sabbath devotion is the foundation for the redress of injustice through the sincere realization of man’s inherent good. Therefore, some attention will be given to Heschel’s role in the discussion of Jewish – Catholic relations in preparation for the Vatican II document “Nostra Aetate.”

I. Abraham Heschel: Hasidic Formation Grounded in Sabbath Observance and Academic Secularism

A. Formation in Sabbath-centered Hasidic Family Life

At the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1972, Abraham Joshua Heschel offered the following prayer which showed his concern over the secular turn Judaism had taken and the need to return to the prayer-filled moments of Sabbath to release man from the devastating effects of the relentless demands and distractions of modernity. His words reflect his awareness of an obligation to be faithful to his Judaic heritage and of a need to expound its depth of beauty and meaning as indispensible vis-à-vis the undermining currents of the world. He prayed:

At this hour, O Lord, we open our thoughts to thee, in tears and contrition. We teachers in Israel stand at this present moment between all of the past and all of the future of the people of Israel. It is upon us to hand over the Torah, the holiness, the spirit of the prophets, sages, and saints, to all the generations to come. If we should fail, much of Judaism will be lost, gone and forgotten. O Lord, we confess our failure. Day after day we have betrayed Thee. Steeped in vanity, envy, and ambition we have often labored to magnify our own names, although we said, ‘Magnified and sanctified be His great name.’ Dazzled by the splendor of intellectual fads, we have accepted platitudes as dogmas, and
prejudices as solutions, although we repeated, ‘And eternal life He has planted in our midst’. 106

The eternal life of which Heschel speaks in this prayer was the focus of the Sabbath upbringing he received in a Hasidic home in Poland in the beginning of the twentieth century. Heschel’s remarkable life of study, prayer, teaching, and commitment to social activism began in his earliest childhood. Born in Warsaw in 1907, he was the scion of Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, a descendant of Dov Baer, the principal disciple of the Baal Shem Tov. However, he claimed Mezhbizh in the Ukraine as home because it was the birthplace of his father and the simple town in which the Baal Shem lived and taught for the last twenty years of his life. His maternal ancestry traced to Rabbi Jacob Perlow, who established the yeshiva in Minsk-Mazowiecki, Poland to insure the study of Torah and Talmudic learning, and to nurture the spirit of inner piety. With such an ancestry, everything of the Heschel home hinted at transcendence. From his earliest years, Abraham was surrounded by Sabbath discussion of rabbinical literature, the subtle dialectic of Talmudic argumentation (pilpul) 107, and the mystical prayer and symbolic representations of the Kabbalah. In his account of the family life of young Abraham Heschel, Fritz Rothschild intimates that the environment in which he was raised set the tone of his entire


107 Jewish men often gathered to discuss passages from the Torah. Such discourse, known as pilpul, afforded an opportunity to demonstrate acuteness of perception. Since Torah and the Oral Law come from the infinite mind of God, “Judaism sees meaning in every word of scripture and, therefore, centers in constant study to delve deeper and deeper into the sacred mystery of life and the God who is its source…Pilpul is this striving to search and discuss more and more. Here, concepts acquire a dynamic quality, a color and meaning that, at first thought, seem to have no connection with one another. The joy of discovery, the process of inventing original devices, of attaining new inventions and new insights, quickens and elates the heart.” Abraham Heschel, The Earth Is the Lord’s: The Inner World of the Jews in East Europe (New York: Henry Schuman Inc., 1950) 108, 54.
life. He states, “For the Heschel household the presence of God was a daily experience and the sanctification of life a daily task.” Such an assessment is indicative of the Heschel family’s belief that the holiness of Sabbath observance permeates all of ordinary time and transforms life.

As a descendant of an aristocratic line, Abraham was not sent to heder (חדר), the typical Jewish elementary school, but was tutored at home and personally guided in every aspect of his young life. Because of his astute attention to his studies and eagerness to learn, his family considered him a tzaddik (קדצ) from an early age. His father, who established a Hasidic court in the Jewish district of Warsaw, was a dominant influence on many, especially in his Sabbath discourses which were attended by his young son. Abraham learned religious ideals by observing the bearing and interactions of his elders. Therefore, it is not surprising he became exceedingly proficient in his studies, committing to memory the standard texts of the prayerbook and the Torah, and later the interpretations of the Pentateuch by the early medieval scholar, Rashi, whose work made the Law understandable to common people and whose commentaries are a necessary part of Jewish study to this day. He also learned the elements of the Shulkhan Arukh, the standard code of Jewish law that pertains to every aspect of social, personal, and ritual life. He mastered this important code because a rebbenc needed to be well grounded in

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109 A tzaddik (יוחנן) is a righteous person with a certain spiritual prowess. A tzaddik is held in reverence by the community.

110 This standard code of Jewish law was compiled by the Sephardic Rabbi Joseph Caro in the mid sixteenth century.

111 In a Hasidic community a rebbec is the spiritual master and guide. He is a tzaddik (יוחנן) who has the final word over every decision in a Hasid’s life.
giving advice, especially with regard to legal matters. Yet, just as important, was knowledge of ancient lore and legends that acted as inspiration and encouragement in the daily grind of life in the ghetto.

Abraham’s education continued in a shtiebl, a small assembly hall where the traditions of the Hasidic practices of village life could most faithfully be reproduced. Students assisted one another in their studies and followed the ancient custom of swaying and chanting and rocking back and forth so that the sacred text would be absorbed into their very bodies. The meticulous study of Talmud, with its intricate and relentless dialectic, not only familiarized the students with the ins and outs of halakhah, but produced a sharp intellect for secular dealings.

The sheltered atmosphere of the shtiebl and the affirmative character of Heschel’s first years of education met a definitive challenge after the death of his father when he was nine. He was then entrusted to the care of a new tutor, Bezalel, who followed Hasidism as was practiced by Menehem Mendl of Kotzk. Known as the Kotzker, this rebbe looked upon life as a battlefield, a constant struggle for personal and spiritual authenticity. Because of the preponderance of evil that he saw in the world, the Kotzker allowed no place for mediocrity, but demanded adherence to absolute standards. His principles were so lofty that his judgments came with a severity that made human endeavor almost a futile effort. Above all, he decried pride and dismissed every facet of it as foolishness. Such was the influence that now surrounded the young scholar with his new mentor, who subjected him to humiliation to produce humility, and to a radical honesty that only served to undermine confidence. These tactics were not uncommon in the education of a prospective rebbe and the marks of these austerities remained
with Heschel for the rest of his life. However, he later considered this exposure to the Hasidism of the Kotzker as a blessing because it reminded him of the pressing need for careful attention to the practice of virtue to curb the evil tendencies of human nature.\textsuperscript{112} It put a balance into his life so that, when he became too taken up in his own involvements, the lightning force of the notion of man’s insignificance with respect to the divine would crash upon him.

Although the stern and exacting Bezalel dominated every moment of Abraham’s preparation for Bar Mitzvah, his maternal uncle proved an assuaging presence in his devotion to the values of the Baal Shem in the family environment. This uncle, Rebbe Alter Israel Perlow of Novominsk, Poland, presided at each Sabbath in the Heschel family, and the entire community would in some way participate. Abraham was often allotted the place at his right side. So the young scholar imbibed, so to speak, the charisma of his ancestors by simply being a part of the prayers, studies, discussions, songs, and \textit{nigunim}\textsuperscript{113} that occurred every Saturday. It was a mystical time that brought meaning to all the incessant hours of study and duress. The intense

\textsuperscript{112} Throughout his life, Heschel, in accord with the view of the Kotzker, considered the paramount problem of human nature to be the ego. His own position as youngest in a family that considered him a prodigy, caused him to have a high opinion of himself and a certain satisfaction in his own accomplishments. The Hasidism that formed his early upbringing was conducive to such thought. The Baal Shem Tov, who founded Hasidism in Poland in the eighteenth century, viewed creation as a gift which reflected the goodness of the creator. He taught that this goodness is in all things. So the Baal Shem exercised a leniency of judgment based on his idea that all aspects of a person can be turned to good and that vices can be purified. His was a positive process of transformation and not the self condemnation that leads to depression or even to despair because of sin. The teachings of the Baal Shem were quite different from those of the Kotzker who had a significant influence on Judaism in the nineteenth century. He preached a severity of life in order to overcome the vulnerability of the will to self-deception. This influence is evident in Heschel’s statement, “The ‘I’ becomes the central problem as in the Kotzker’s thinking; it is the primary counterpart to God in the world. The sin of presumptuous selfhood is the challenge and defiance that God faces in the world.” Abraham Heschel, \textit{A Passion for Truth} (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973) 97.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Nigunim} are songs without words that express the over-fullness of the heart or accompany scriptural meditations. They are often intoned at the end of the Sabbath after the last meal to assuage the heart as the moments of ordinary time descend. They are improvisations and have no set formulas.
awareness of God as a real presence, as a real part of man’s being in the world, was manifest in these gatherings. Much later, Heschel described his uncle with respect to those Sabbath moments as follows:

Awareness of God is as close to him as the throbbing of his own heart, often deep and calm, but at times overwhelming, intoxicating, setting the soul afire. The momentous reality of God stands there as peace, power, and endless tranquility, as an inexhaustible source of help, as boundless compassion, as an open gate awaiting prayer.¹¹⁴

The impact of these encounters during all his childhood and youth would later find expression in Heschel’s insistence on the reality of God as a God of pathos who shares man’s agony in his own condition. Those experiences explain the importance he would give to revelation as a true communication of a God of pathos so that man would see and be aware of the predicament of his condition and the need for a depth of introspection in order to envision God’s will rather than his own. Heschel was poignantly aware of the necessity for personal prayer.¹¹⁵

The understanding of the transcendent as a God of pathos, and the need for man to pray to know


¹¹⁵ At the Annual Convention of Conservative Rabbis in June 1953 Heschel made this statement, “The basic problem at service was not with proper decorum or ceremony or the giftedness of the cantor, but with the people who had left inner devotion to just these things.” He then referred to the need for chen (חן), grace, which he compared to the special soul which comes in Sabbath time as the neshamah vetera (נפש אתורה). The Sabbath, as the day of the presence of God, would bring that presence to the world through Sabbath worship. He stated, “A person has chen (חן) when the throbbing of his heart is audible in his voice; when the longings of his soul animate his face. And prayer is the vehicle of grace because it expands the presence of God in the world. Although God is transcendent, our worship of Him makes him immanent.” Heschel was keenly aware of the necessity for people to have a deep and personal experience of the God they worshipped in the propriety of prayer and a established liturgical setting. Edward K. Kaplan, Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940-1972 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 147, 148.
the will of this God, became the basis of his major graduate work, which he later revised as a book, *The Prophets*.  

Heschel spent his high school years studying secular subjects as well as a traditional Jewish program at the progressive Mesivta Yeshiva in the city of Vilna, where he was able to integrate Hasidic literature and the complexities of Kabbalah spirituality with more modern thought. He was encouraged in this by Rabbi Fishl Schneersohn, a Hasidic scholar and medical doctor, who was a regular visitor to the Sabbath discourses of Rebbe Perlow. As a descendant of the founders of the Habadic tradition, he was trusted. He was influential in Heschel’s decision to leave Warsaw and continue his studies at the University of Berlin.

Schneersohn was not the only harbinger of the enlightenment for Heschel. Hillel Zeitlin, another frequenter of Rebbe Perlow’s Sabbaths, was not only a Kabbalah and Hasidic scholar, but learned in Russian and German as well. He was familiar with the new philosophy expounded by Hegel and Nietzsche. His esoteric tendencies and his vast store of traditional

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116 Heschel explains that insensitivity to the reality of God places mankind in jeopardy, just as it did in the time of the Prophets, who cried out against injustice and violation of the Sabbath. Only attentive Sabbath worship can defuse man’s evil tendencies, since there is in human beings “a passion and drive for cruel deeds which only the fear of God can soothe; there is a suffocating sensuality in man which only holiness can ventilate.” The joyous presence of God and holiness are such Sabbath gifts. Therefore, Heschel affirms that revelation is God’s answer for man. He states, “We have never been the same since the day on which Abraham crushed his father’s symbols, since the day on which the Voice of God overwhelmed us at Sinai.” That voice proclaimed the Sabbath, and then the prophets, who heard God’s calling, warned of the consequences of disobedience and held man responsible. Heschel, “A Preface to an Understanding of Revelation,” in *Moral Grandeur*, 188, 189, 185.

117 The Sabbath discourses and courts of the rebbes were the settings for displaying knowledge of Torah, the Talmud, midrash, and Hasidic literature in general.

118 Habad (Chabad) is a Jewish religious philosophy, a movement of Hasidism. Founded in Lubavitch (city of brotherly love) in White Russia in the eighteenth century, the name is an acronym for three intellectual faculties: chokhmah (חוכמה) - wisdom, binah (בינה) - understanding, and da’at (דעת) - knowledge. It teaches the deepest dimension of the Torah: understanding and recognition of the creator, the role and purpose of creation, and the importance and unique mission of each creature. This philosophy guides a person to refine and govern his every act and feeling through wisdom, understanding and knowledge.
knowledge coupled with his belief in metaphysical questioning, made him very appealing. His contention was, “The modern person needs to seek a revealed and hidden secret which, if we gain even the slightest awareness of its existence, fills us with awe and amazement, with an unendurable shudder.” This statement (the context of which will find further expansion in Heschel’s later writings) invites a combination of approaches to truth. In its own way, it unites the solidity of the tradition with the pressing questioning of modernity. Zeitlin’s reference to a “revealed secret” encourages an intensified search of scripture and study of Torah, and thus establishes a concrete foundation for securing knowledge of the will of God. However, his choice of “hidden” to describe this secret, challenges one to probe into one’s interior life and also the transcendent life of the divinity, which investigations were in accord with the endeavors of the Kabbalists to know the mystery of God’s nature and its relation to the created order.

Although Zeitlin was a participant in the new secular awareness (Haskalah), he retained his devotion to prayer, to the reality of the presence of God in Sabbath observance, and to the practice of Mitzvot. He deplored those who did not, those who mistook the new freedom to reduce Hasidism to a manner of dress and posture, those who no longer saw in prayer the resonance with the heavens that brought their endeavors into the heart of a God that shared their pathos. He considered that wealth and position had diverted attention from inwardness and from obedience to Torah. Zeitlin saw deviation from observance, prayer, and mitzvot as evidence for the criticisms of the Kotzker who had railed against ignorance, mediocrity, and compromise.

119 Kaplan and Dresner, Prophetic Witness, 63.
The influence of these masters sharpened Heschel’s mind to be vigilant in the course of his studies. Much later he expressed his concern about the deterioration in the manner of Sabbath observance and recorded the following as his own experience of the lack of depth of devotion:

Observance has, at times, become encrusted with so many customs and conventions that the jewel was in the setting. Outward compliance with externalities of the law took the place of the engagement of the whole person to the living God.\(^{120}\)

B. Secular Rabbinical School and the University of Berlin

At the time of Heschel’s departure for the Vilna Real-Gymnasium, his uncle, Rabbi Perlow pronounced this admonition, “Avrumele, you, you are holy flesh. Do not become polluted by the world.”\(^{121}\) Such a statement underscored the uniqueness of Heschel’s Jewish education which actually was enfleshed because of the singular manner of learning in which students engaged. Studies and prayer were enhanced by the physical movements of shukling\(^{122}\) and the sing-song of chant. Therefore, when he left Warsaw in 1927, Heschel was well prepared to undertake the curriculum of secular literature and philosophy at Berlin University as well as matriculate at the Berlin Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, a Jewish rabbinical school which maintained traditional Jewish laws, but believed in a liberal education lest the


\(^{121}\) Kaplan and Dresner, *Prophetic Witness*, 71.

\(^{122}\) Shukling refers to the swaying motions done during the recitation of Jewish prayers. This movement involves the body in prayer. Since man is enfleshed spirit, his whole person should be incorporated in his prayer. Such motion assists concentration and intensity of devotion. It also helps the memory in the process of learning.
students be ignorant of the happenings in the world of scholarship. Through the program of studies at the Hochschule, Heschel received ordination as a liberal rabbi.

Confronted now by a range of broad-minded speculations in these institutions, Heschel engaged neither in refuting the new historical hypotheses nor in defending rabbinical authority. He was open to the new methodology, and acknowledged that science had a place in the investigation of truth. True to his own perspective of wonder at the heart of things, he maintained that “science points to antecedents and consequences that evoke curiosity.” Yet, at the same time, his religious convictions precluded any concession that the findings of science were ultimate. He asserted that, “religion points to the ground and power that stands behind all facts and perceptions.” In other words, Heschel, at this time, was grappling with what was to be one of his main religious themes, the sublime nature of the transcendent. He held that this nature was elusive and beyond what is available to the senses, which stand incapable of analysis before it. Almost as a paradox, he also posited that man’s most rational faculties perceive this, and this awareness is common to all men. In other words, man’s rational faculty knows that there is that which is beyond its capability.

123 The Berlin Rabbiner-Seminar für das Orthodoxe Judentum (the Orthodox Seminary where Heschel chose not to matriculate) criticized this institution as undermining the divine authority of biblical and rabbinic texts. This Orthodox Seminary was founded to combat Reform Judaism because, “Reform considered Judaism to be the product of a complex cultural evolution, rather than of revelation in the supernatural event at Mount Sinai. It rejected Orthodox dogma that the Bible was written by Moses as one document… It took an historical-philological approach to the Jewish religion founded on the scholarly work of Julius Wellhausen whose findings revealed four different sources of the biblical text… It accepted Judaism as a cultural synthesis, the integrity of which was preserved by scientific research.” Kaplan and Dresner, Prophetic Witness, 104.

124 Rothschild, ed., Between, 12.

125 Ibid.
Many trends of thought challenged Heschel’s Hasidic Orthodox beliefs that flowed essentially from the Sabbath discourses in which he participated from a very early age and from the prayerful, observant manner of life, which was the fruit of these investigations into the font of sacred scripture and Jewish wisdom. A brief look at a few of these influences will clarify the reasons for the positions Heschel took with respect to them and will lay the foundation for the theology of the Sabbath he developed.

Among those Heschel encountered at the Hochschule was Julius Guttmann whose approach to philosophy was through the lens of phenomenology. According to Guttmann’s understanding, emotions are capable of conveying both ethical and religious insights because of the dynamics of consciousness. For him, man’s religious experience was in the realm of encounter, specifically through mitzvot (deeds). This way of thinking is later reflected in Heschel’s view of consciousness. Heschel insists that at some time in all men there arises an inner spontaneous perception of transcendence, manifested in a consciousness of utter dependence. This awareness transforms the meaning of mitzvot from mere obedience to Rabbinic law, to more perfect attention to the One who knows what is truly the good that needs to be done. Such a perception of mitzvot gives a new depth to interactions and to the unfolding of life through them. For Heschel, the practice of mitzvot in this dynamic leads to the experience of awe that speaks of the presence of God.

At that time, also at the Hochschule, among the myriad voices propounding philosophical insights, was Hermann Cohen. He was revered as an eminent interpreter of Kant. He advanced a different perspective. His theory of religion had a subtle closeness to the phenomenology of
Guttmann, but, in essence, it made no allowance for the transcendent. His conviction was that, “religious truth is a consequence of ethical truth and its contents can be deduced from ethical principles.”¹²⁶ This perception of religion ruled out revelation as a basis of faith. Guttmann, in contrast (though very receptive to the thought of Cohen), held to the validity of a private experience of faith. His argument was that, “true religious life occurs only where the certainty of God seizes us with the full force of feeling, and personal certitude is alive in us with immediacy.”¹²⁷ His particular avowal of the existence of God made no reference to revelation either, but it did have openness to transcendence which conferred a different perspective on the practice of mitzvot. Guttmann was a firm believer in the practice of mitzvot which he placed at the center of Judaism as indispensible to the good of the world. His thought was, therefore, a mixture of modernity and Jewish faith expressed in the doing of good.

The University of Berlin provided another arena for spirited discussion. Here, the prevalent Kantian philosophy met opposition in the philosophies of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher had challenged Kant with his view that religion’s essence is neither thinking nor acting, but rather intuition and feeling. Whereas Kant held that concepts must constitute every sort of insight, Schleiermacher taught that insight was unmediated by concepts, that religion was constituted by the feeling of absolute dependence, and that intuition provided the ground for immediate relation. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Wilhelm Dilthey (who occupied Hegel’s chair at the University of Berlin) was teaching

¹²⁶ Kaplan and Dresner, Prophetic Witness, 114.
¹²⁷ Ibid.
that lived experience was not merely a theoretical representation. It was directly present to the person as embodying values relevant to present circumstances. Dilthey described religion in an existential way. He proposed, “When life is experienced religiously according to its true nature – full of hardships and a singular blend of suffering and happiness throughout – it points to something strange and unfamiliar, as if it were coming from invisible sources, something pressing in on life from outside, yet coming from its own depths.” Martin Buber studied with Dilthey and then developed his own theology of relationships which impacted religious circles in America as well as in Europe.

While these varied philosophies proved valuable to Heschel in the development of what he termed “depth” theology, his thought took its own distinct direction different from the relational theology of Buber and the Kantian speculations of the professors at the Hochschule. The implacable faith of his forebears, which fashioned his perception of God as the mysterious “other” who chose to speak to man for man’s benefit, and who came in Sabbath time for man’s sanctification, remained the dominant influence on his thought as he addressed issues and confronted the various religious interpretations of the times. Yet, in spite of differences, Heschel remained friends with Buber, and the latter was instrumental in securing for him a position at the Jüdisches Lehrhaus in Frankfurt in 1937.

C. Last Years in Europe: the Shoah

The position at the Jewish school in Frankfurt proved short-lived because the German government demanded Heschel’s return to his native Poland. This proved a fortunate occurrence as, within a week of his departure, German Jews were subjected to the destructive forces of the Nazis in the episode that became known as Kristallnacht. However, circumstances in Warsaw became no less tense, which hastened his making contacts with American Jewish institutions in order to secure a more permanent teaching position. Although his efforts brought an appointment to the faculty of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, it was necessary for Heschel to pursue the proper visa work in London. One month after his arrival there, German forces invaded Poland perpetrating the same horrors they had inflicted on the Jews in Germany. Heschel had escaped Kristallnacht and now he had also escaped the tragedy of the Nazi invasion of his homeland. But he could not escape the anguish of heart that remained throughout his life for all those he knew and loved who were sent to their deaths.¹²⁹ For this reason he later described himself as, “a brand plucked from the fire of an altar to Satan on which my people was burned to death” (Zech 3:2).

Heschel did not let these catastrophes completely undermine everything in his life. Instead, he became resolute in his own thoughts. During his temporary stay in London, he opened the “Institute for Jewish Learning” where he reminded those that came that faithfulness to God and to the community remained the fundamental idea in Jewish education. His

¹²⁹ As a consequence of this invasion, Heschel’s sister Esther Sima was killed in a bombing raid and his other sister Gittel died in the Warsaw Ghetto. Subsequent horrors brought about his mother’s death and two years later his sister Devorah and her husband were murdered in Auschwitz. This was only the beginning of the numerous deaths that were reported of persons he knew and loved. He confided that mourning them was too massive for anything else than silence. Kaplan and Dresner, Prophetic Witness, 305.
description of prayer in these intolerable moments when people were abandoning hope, demonstrates his refusal to forsake the God of the Fathers of Judaism, the God of his personal fathers who were now dying for their convictions. Of prayer he says:

The essence of prayer bespeaks the power of piety (attention to holy presence) as a metaphysical event that transforms our vision of the world. The praying person is heroic for, intentionally or not, he puts his life in danger. He surrenders himself to the One to whom his being and essence belong; he makes a decision, he accuses God, gives notice, confesses himself, makes a vow, accepts the yoke of His rule, pawns his soul, accepts an acquisition, and seals a covenant.¹³⁰

Revealed here is Heschel’s conviction that God is present in the agony and pathos of existence, but His ways are unfathomable. Man lives in faith, perhaps the Messianic hope that justice will eventually prevail.

Heschel was finally able to obtain passage to America in March, 1940. His basic views, formed in the Hasidic atmosphere of his childhood and youth, had been tested in fire in the secular environs of the University of Berlin, and had been put through the final test of veracity amidst the inhuman campaigns of the Nazis. Through it all, God remained for Heschel the living God, the God whose voice spoke through the prophets to insist on obedience to the Law and the sacredness of the Sabbath.

D. Heschel in America

The reform atmosphere of Hebrew Union College, which had obtained for Heschel the visa to America, eventually led him to seek a more traditional surrounding. When the Jewish

¹³⁰ From: “Al mahut ha-tefillah” (1939) as reprinted in Kaplan and Dresner, Prophetic Witness, 301.
Theological Seminary in New York offered him the chair of the department of ethics and mysticism, it was neither his professional reputation nor his European Hasidic background that singled him out, but rather his ability to blend scholarship, theology, and social activism. Heschel remained unique with regard to this blend all his life.¹³¹

Heschel’s writings brought both criticism and commendation. Irving Kristal, the editor of Commentary, commented that Heschel’s work “did not have high enough aesthetic-religious grounds to support his arguments” and that “Heschel was a prisoner of his own notion of religious rhetoric.”¹³² In contrast, Jacob Agus’ review in Congress Weekly pointed to the “logical argument behind the rich and haunting imagery.”¹³³ Such critique of Heschel’s style and religious interpretation occasioned Rabbi Eugene Kohn to affirm Heschel’s work from a practical perspective. He took this view, “Heschel helped to ponder on the ultimate mysteries of life. His mystical approach did not represent a flight from reality and a denial of empirical fact. The mystical experiences to which Heschel referred were psychological reactions shared in greater or less degree by all human beings.”¹³⁴ Kohn furthermore explained Heschel’s style as “indicative,” one that points out certain things, as opposed to “descriptive,” which characterizes

¹³¹ Heschel’s major work Die Prophetie (1933) exemplifies this. Published in English in 1962 it is arguably his most influential work. Evidence of Heschel’s ability to combine theological insights with the complexity of feelings is found also in his poetry. In “Der Shem Hameforash: Mensch. Lieder” (1933), he describes man as the physical representation of God, who is in relation to God, the one who is ineffable. In the controversial Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion Heschel attests to his belief that man can encounter God directly (as did the prophets). This is a contrast to the positions of Franz Rosenweig and Martin Buber whose works reduced man’s encounter with God to a human level that did not allow for true transcendence.

¹³² Kaplan, Spiritual Radical, 122.

¹³³ Ibid., 121.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 123.
things explicitly. He held that those who objected to Heschel’s style did not understand this distinction.

Heschel continued to encounter such challenges to his theological views and his positions on social and political issues for the rest of his life. His concept of mitzvot led him to espouse causes which exposed the violent and inhumane treatment suffered by many in the world and which revealed the subtle workings of evil everywhere. In the last years before his death in 1972 he became involved in protests against the war in Vietnam and in the civil rights movement. His last book dealt with such manifestations of the consequences of sin through a study of the Kotzker who perceived man as riddled with evil in a world of deception. Heschel grappled with the tension between evil and God’s Providence to the end of his life.

A contrast to this dark perception of the human situation is Heschel’s love of the Sabbath disclosed in his book *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (1951). This writing is a witness to the all-pervading holiness that descends each week with the Sabbath to lift man above the mediocrity and perversity which seethes through the moments of ordinary time to waylay his spirit. As background for a study of this work, it is necessary to say something about what Heschel refers to as “depth theology.” Although this theology is derived from specifically Jewish sources, he is aware that the salvation offered through the Sabbath is meant for all mankind.

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135 Subsequent works such as *Man’s Quest for God* (1954), *God in Search of Man* (1954), and *Who Is Man* (1965) were received with mixed reactions.
II. Heschel: Depth Theology and the Sabbath

A. Mitzvot and the Sabbath

The core of Heschel’s Judaism is involvement in mitzvot, actions which flow from an intensity of Sabbath prayer and study. Mitzvot, which does not equate to humanitarianism, is the doing of good through the transformation that comes from resting in the Sabbath presence of God. Heschel explains, “The Sabbath does not represent a substance but the presence of God, His relationship to man…The Sabbath is the presence of God in the world, open to the soul of man. It is possible for the soul to respond in affection…The name of the Friday evening service is Kabalat Shabbat… Kabbalah means ‘to receive’.”

Heschel reminds us that “the name of the Friday evening service is Kabalat Shabbat… Kabbalah means ‘to receive’.” On the Sabbath, one receives into one’s being the presence of God through the power of the Sabbath soul, neshamah yetera (יתרה נשמה), which is bestowed by the Shekhinah (שכינה). Kabbalat Shabbat enables one to receive the sovereignty of the day and to welcome its presence.

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137 Shekinah (שכינה) derives from the root (שכִּין) meaning “to dwell, to abide”. The presence of the Shekinah (שכינה) on the Sabbath is an indwelling that raises man to a deeper awareness and knowledge of God.

138 In their study on the Sabbath, Rabbis Aaron Alexander and Sharon Brous interpret the Shekinah (שכינה) as the internal strength of the Sabbath to live the freedom granted in the Exodus and to bring redemption to the world. They state, “Shabbat actually has redemptive power – a power that can shape our experience of the world and help turn the tide of human history because it leaves us with a mandate to live differently in the coming week than we did in the past…to see each week as an opportunity to elevate our reality to reflect a bit more of what ought to be.” *Shabbat and the Possibility of Transformation* (Bel Air, CA: Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies of the American Jewish University, 2010), 16.
Heschel demonstrates his commitment to Sabbath observance as the essential rite of Judaism in his statement, “We are Jews as we are men.” In this statement he asserts that the very nature of the Jew derives from the Sabbath presence of God which instills the Law in man’s being and prompts a sense of responsibility in man’s conscience. Furthermore, Heschel does not impute this commitment to the Law exclusively to Jews, but to all people because the stamp of the creator is on every human being. The imperative rests on everyone to attend to conscience so that man’s inclination to evil may be diverted to good. He comments:

Mankind does not have the choice of religion and neutrality. We are in need of an endless purpose to absorb the immense power (of God) if our souls are not to run amok. We are either ministers of the sacred or slaves of evil… To be a Jew is to hold one’s soul clean and open to the stream of endless striving so that God may not be ashamed of his creation… By being what we are, by attuning our own yearning to the lonely holiness (the Shekhinah) in this world, we will aid humanity more than by any particular service we may render.

Obligation in terms of mitzvot does not derive solely from the revelation at Sinai; it comes also from Kabbalistic thought, especially that of the Middle Ages. Always associated with creation and the initial unity of all being, Kabbalah seeks to describe creation (מהרשא הראיה) as

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139 Heschel, Earth, 108.
140 Ibid., 107-8.
141 The revelation at Sinai demands that man be attentive in his inmost being to the voice of the God who created him in his image. What was given as truth at Sinai was to be heard and obeyed. Because of Sinai, listening and obeying are one. The prayer to be recited each morning and evening exemplifies this basic premise of Judaism with reference to the Law. It is a prayer of hearing to know the truth: “Hear, Israel, the Lord our God is Lord alone (שמעו ישראל יהוה אלהינו יחיה)” Deut 6:4. The implication is to listen and act accordingly.
142 The term “kabbalah,” from the root word קבל, refers to that which is received. Kabbalah, then, is a type of tradition within Judaism that provides a depth beyond the observances of halakah and the celebratory rituals. It acknowledges God as transcendent being and also as immanent to the person. This interconnection of God and man is more than an in-depth spiritual relationship. It hinges on the very nature of creation wherein the inner workings of God are transferred to man, marking man definitively as God’s image. According to the Kabbalah, God and creation are thus interwoven.
with regard to two specifics: creatio ex nihilo and imago Dei. According to the Kabbalah, creatio ex nihilo flows in a unique way from a contraction of the essence of the Divine Being, and the notion of Imago Dei finds its basis in man’s initial reception of the divine attributes. Since God creates through his own essence, all creation reflects the divine attributes and is oriented to their source. However, because the Imago Dei was somewhat shattered in the process of its initial transference to man, the performance of good works poses difficulty, but remains the way of restoration of the perfect harmony of the human and the divine.143 Evil, though, remains the powerful reality that thwarts man’s efforts to return to the Creator. Life with its choices reflects this struggle against evil which is subtle and alluring and preys upon man’s concupiscent nature.144 With respect to this struggle, the Sabbath, as a celebration of creation, recognizes man’s condition, both his utter dependence upon God (creatio ex nihilo) and his need to shape his acts through attention to the divine gifts (Imago Dei). The work of mitzvot, inspired by Sabbath prayer and study, must continue to the time of the Messianic Age. It is done always

143 The Kabbalists’ attempt to attain a deeper perception of the inner nature of God occasioned greater and greater intensity of meditation and theological speculation, which created a pre-occupation with the power of evil and consequently an urgency for purity of intention in prayer kavanah to overcome the demonic forces. Concomitant with this was a concentration on asceticism, such that the joy of life evaporated and ascesis diminished the spirit. Such an extreme position with regard to prayer and asceticism is found in the nineteenth century Hasidic rabbi, Menehem Mendl of Kotzk, Poland, the Kotzker. His position was that man had to wage a constant struggle against himself because of the baseness of his nature. He saw corruption in Judaism because of half-truths, mediocrity, and compromise, the same abandonment of values the prophets condemned in their outcry: “Hear the Word of the Lord, O people of Israel… There is no truth or kindness and no knowledge of God in the land” (Hos 4:1); “Everyone deals falsely” (Jer 8:10); “Every man lies” (Ps 116:11). The Kotzker believed that “a gaping chasm separated man from God and that one must purify oneself before undertaking the fulfillment of a commandment because man had a heart of stone, blocked and ossified.” Abraham Heschel, A Passion for Truth (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973) 17. The consequence of such a perception of man was suspicion, because of the seeming inherent lie at the center of human intercourse as the prophets had proclaimed.

144 Kabbalah partakes of the cultic nature of Gnosticism. It does this not only in the abstruse form of knowledge it purports to possess, but also in its perception of the forces of evil. As Gnosticism presumes an opposition of matter and spirit, Kabbalistic teaching holds that the evil force within the heart is the appeal of brute matter. This occasions the need for a continual regime of fasting and mortification.
in association with the patriarchs and leaders of Israel who have gone before and now surround the throne of God in adoration and watchfulness as the ones initially entrusted with God’s will. Through their commitment to the direction of man on the path of righteousness, each good work performed on earth interacts with this heavenly host to repair the image of God (ג‑ה פ‑ו) in man shattered in the beginning. Because of the Judaic identification of Law (the Word of God) with the inner nature of God, man’s good actions, done freely under the Law, have their effects in heaven. Thus the Kabbalah, in its interpretation of the inner workings of divinity and in its understanding of man as reflecting the attributes of God, offers a way of prayer and action that finds its sustenance in the fulfillment of the Sabbath obligation to rest and to pursue a path of ever deepening sanctity. The esoteric depiction of God presented in the Kabalah sets a framework within which the system of mitzvot receives its preeminent importance in the Judaic insights of Abraham Heschel whose faith saw the ineffable God as the Creator who is never absent from his creation. This explains the importance Heschel gives to Sabbath observance.

145 Heschel explains, “The spiritual is not an idea to which one can relate his will but a realm which can even be affected by our deeds. What distinguishes the kabbalist is the attachment of his whole personality to a hidden spiritual realm. Intensifying this attachment by means of active devotion to it, by meditation upon its secrets, by perception of its reality, the Kabbalist becomes allied with the dynamics of hidden worlds.” Heschel, “The Mystical Element in Judaism,” in Moral Grandeur, 166.

146 Heschel makes this statement about such interaction: “Inspired by the idea that not only is God necessary to man, but that man is also necessary to God, and that man’s actions are vital to all worlds and affect the course of transcendent events, the Kabbalistic preachers and popular writers sought to imbue all people with the consciousness of the supreme importance of all actions…By every holy action, by every pure thought, man intervenes in the supernal worlds… Man does not know the extent of the impact of his deeds” Earth, 71.

147 Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D. affirms the Kabalistic notion that the Law is intrinsic to the nature of God, and, therefore, is meant for all peoples, in his statement, “As God himself pervades the cosmos, so has our Law found its way among all men.” Flavius Josephus, Against Apion, Book II, 40 in Early Jewish Writings. [accessed February 12, 2013]
as a celebration in time of that Sabbath toward which creation moves through mitzvoth; it also explains his devotion to social issues.  

B. The Sabbath and Creation: the Contrasting Influences of Menehem Mendl and the Baal Shem Tov

Throughout his life, Heschel sought a balance between the harsh self-scrutiny taught by the Kotzker in his conviction concerning the baseness of human nature, and the more lenient view of the Hassidism promulgated by the Baal Shem Tov among the eastern European Jews of the eighteenth century who had neither voice nor place in society and whose religious atmosphere offered no affirmation of personhood but amplified their pathetic image of themselves. In contrast to the corruption preached by the rebbe of Kotzk, the Baal Shem

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148 The interconnection of the spiritual and material worlds has been given significant consideration by the twentieth century Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin who explains, in the manner of Heschel, but in a Christian framework that, “each one of our works, by its more or less remote or direct effect upon the spiritual world, helps to make perfect Christ in his mystical totality...In fact, through the unceasing operation of the Incarnation, the divine so thoroughly permeates all our creaturely energies that, in order to meet it and lay hold on it, we could not find a more fitting setting than that of our action.” Pierre Teilhard De Chardin, The Divine Milieu (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960) 62.

149 Teilhard acknowledges the original union of wills of man and God in the setting of the seventh day of creation, but recognizes the disjunction caused by sin that must be overcome. He sees in the fervent exercise of charity the path to the oneness once shared. He states, “The will to succeed, a certain passionate delight in the work to be done, forms an integral part of our creaturely fidelity. It follows that the very sincerity with which we desire and pursue success for God’s sake reveals itself as a new factor – also without limits – in our being knit together with him who animates us. Originally we had fellowship with God in the simple common exercise of wills; but now we unite ourselves with him in the shared love of the end for which we are working; and the crowning marvel is that, with the possession of this end, we have the utter joy of discovering his presence once again.” Ibid., 63.

150 Gershom Scholem describes the Kabbalistic manner of knowledge of God as always having a concrete foundation in our physical being, no matter how exalted the spiritual experience. He states, “All Kabbalists agree that no religious knowledge of God, even of the most exalted kind, can be gained except through contemplation of the relationship of God and creation. God in himself, the absolute essence, lies beyond any speculative or even ecstatic comprehension.” Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah (New York: Meridian Books, 1978) 88.
(Besht) affirmed that the tradition of Sabbath devotion made all suffering bear fruit when united to the sorrows of the world and the vision of redemption for all men. According to the Besht, God created delight and joy on the seventh day. This perception of the creation of the Sabbath refuted the dualism of the material and the spiritual in its insistence that what was created by a holy and just God must also reflect that holiness and justice. Therefore, the Jews, no matter what their circumstances, embodied the holiness and justice of God. In realizing this notion of creation and living it through Sabbath devotion, the Jews were the light for all nations.

Though recognizing the extent of evil in the world brought about through man’s misuse of his freedom and his turning from God, Heschel tended to favor the teachings of the Besht because of his insistence on the possibility of finding some good in everything. According to the Bal Shem, concentration on good is the way in which evil is transformed. This is the challenge that mitzvot undertake. Such mitzvot are accomplished only through the profound love of God offered in Sabbath observance where man’s original relationship to God on the seventh day of creation is experienced anew through the rest from all worldly endeavors and anxieties that is the essence of the day. Such rest in God recapitulates man’s original natural state, to love God and

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151 The Kotzker considered melancholy a proper condition of soul because it allowed one to resonate with the true condition of mankind. Without this interior sense of gloom as a spiritual necessity, one could be deceived by the superficial ploys of people. Therefore, suspicion was the inevitable ground of interaction among people because of the seeming inherent lie at the center of human intercourse. See Heschel, Passion, 12.

152 In accord with this affirmation, the Baal Shem challenged the prevalent notion that the body and soul were in conflict and that the material and the spiritual were incompatible. He taught instead that the things of the earth were precious and, above all, man was precious in the sight of God and God had called Israel by name. Dignity and purpose pervaded everything because God was present to his creation. While other rebbes ruled over people through reference to their sinfulness and their need for a routine of prayer and performance of good deeds, “the Baal Shem reminded that spontaneity was as important as pattern, and faith was as essential as obedience, because obedience without fervor led to stultification of the spirit.” Thus “vanity” in this understanding would be not to live in joy. Heschel, Passion, 9.
to rejoice in his presence. Such rest provides the quietude to contemplate all God’s saving acts, especially the redemption of the Exodus. Heschel makes clear that “in the thought of the Baal Shem, love (God’s Sabbath love of man and man’s response of love) was the beginning of all experience.”  

The experience of Sabbath rest sanctifies, gives life, and restores hope. Sabbath observance, in restoring man to the presence of God, orients him to the rest of the eternal Sabbath to come in the Messianic Age.

The Baal Shem’s vision of person and his belief in God’s continued presence and rest in creation became the roots of the sense of wonder that sustained life for Heschel and gave it meaning. The constant return to Sabbath rest in the forward movement of life united him to the faith of his forebears and provided spiritual affirmation for his religious convictions.

C. Tradition and Modernity: Heschel and the God of the Sabbath

Heschel’s background, and specifically the influence of the Sabbath courts of his maternal uncle (the Rebbe of Minsk-Mazowiecke), set a tone for his approach to the speculative thinking that permeated the academic milieu of his studies in Germany and which proved a challenge in his later teaching career in America. The fervor and profound belief in the Sabbath presence of God of the Minsker was picked up by Heschel and became the clear lens through which he filtered the new speculations about Judaism which were influencing others to adopt positions which he considered compromising. There are three notions in particular that Heschel addressed that need to be presented in order to understand his theological position which founds  

153 Ibid., 27.
his statement, “We are Jews as we are men,” persons grounded in the Sabbath presence of God.\footnote{Heschel, \textit{Earth}, 108.} First is Kant’s position with respect to morality, second is the meaning of symbolism, and third is Buber’s concept of relationships. I will present Heschel’s position on each of these.

1. Heschel and Kantian Philosophy

Heschel was outspoken in criticizing the Kantian proposition that morality was not contingent upon God, that it was based on human freedom, that it did not necessarily arise because of the interconnectedness of mankind, and that religion was merely a complement and support to morality. Heschel’s objections to this humanistic approach to moral action rested on his belief that revelation is God’s presence in and concern for the world through the giving of the Law which sets the boundaries of human behavior.\footnote{In the Kabbalistic understanding of the nature of God to which Heschel subscribed, Torah is the essence of the divine being. Because man is made in the divine image, man innately knows Torah and it influences his conscience. “Torah, as the unique product of divine revelation, was considered the one object which could be apprehended by man in its absolute state in a world where all other things were relative.” Scholem, \textit{Kabbalah}, 168. See also pp. 46; 74; 99; 169; 177.} Furthermore, as man is created free but in God’s image, human acts and the divine realm are interrelated; no act is without its consequences on earth and in the heavens. This was the substance of the Sabbath study he experienced from earliest childhood and which he took with him in his matriculation into the program of studies at the University of Berlin. For the Jew, such study determines how he lives the ordinary days from one Sabbath to the next and also creates an atmosphere in which work attains a quality of sacredness. Basically, the Sabbath is awareness of the presence of God which projects into the following days to transform each moment into an occasion for doing good against the incursions
of evil. Such performance of good is redemptive for the world. Deeds, then, assume the quality of prayer and enable one to pray always. Heschel was convinced that prayer united people and that the Jewish people formed its very identity through God’s presence wrought by prayer and in particular the prayer of Sabbath worship. Therefore, man’s sincere intention to do the will of God through prayer-deeds becomes the vehicle through which God’s saving presence comes into the world. However, prayer is not some arbitrary choice; there must be some structure in the life of prayer, some guidance to keep one directed in the truth of tradition lest one go astray. Heschel considered halakhah the essential structure on which to found deeds so they would be efficacious.

There was a definite distinction between the propositions of modern existentialist thought and Heschel’s God-centered perception of man’s reality. Heschel saw in the philosophical and social trends of European secularism a reduction of truly religious actions to mere humanism.

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156 The seriousness of mitzvot is embedded in this comment made by Heschel about the Eastern European Jews, “Life for the Eastern Europeans was not an opportunity for indulgence but a mission entrusted to every individual.” Samuel H. Dresner, Heschel, Hasidism, and Halakha (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002) 91.

157 In Judaism, there are certain specifications in prayer; prayer is not simply a self-directed practice. Prayer has a goal, maturah (מתורה), and an intention, kavanah (קבונה). Prayer is meant to connect man to the divine presence and prepare him to act more justly and compassionately. This is accomplished through focused intent on specific desires in one’s prayers. Prayer occasions greater awareness, da’at (דעת), of the world and people. It opens the mind and heart to deeper wisdom and joy and moves one to cultivate personal virtues, middot (מדים): humility, patience, and generosity. Prayer is always rooted, framed, and understood within the tradition inherited over the centuries, masoret (מסורת), so that what one chooses to do, ma’aseh (מעשה), is a commitment from the integrity of prayerful decision.

158 Heschel realized that ceremonies, rituals, and customs appealed to the emotions and the psyche of persons, but they in themselves were devoid of the spiritual meaning needed to bridge to the divine. Deeds needed to be united to the revelation that brought the presence of God. Deeds needed to be united to Sabbath observance. Through halakhah the Sabbath is fulfilled, the will of God is accomplished, and the presence of God is made manifest in the world. He states of himself, “I am not always in the mood to pray. I do not always have the vision and the strength to say a word in the presence of God. But when I am weak, it is the Law that gives me the strength; when my vision is dim, it is duty that gives me insight.” Heschel, “Toward an Understanding of Halacha,” in Moral Grandeur, 131.
Such humanistic practice could be defined as religious behaviorism. Heschel realized that humanism diverted the practice of mitzvot from the higher motive of doing God’s will. Mitzvot, in Heschel’s understanding, was a much deeper commitment, engaging the entire person in the fulfillment of the Law. The distinctive nature of mitzvah rested in the light of the otherness of God who breaks through into the world in compassion and love, and communes with man. For the Jew, any good that is done arises from man’s response to God’s communication. The reality for Heschel was that God speaks and man listens in order to obey.

2. Heschel and Symbolism

The second area of contention with modernity was in the understanding of symbolism. A symbol, Heschel stressed, is, in essence, not the essence of that which it signs or signifies. No matter how profound the representation, no matter how intense the signification, the actual reality of the symbolized is not present. He emphasized this aspect of symbolism to point out a corresponding truth about concepts and constructs. Just as a symbol is not the reality, a concept

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159 Referring to the pitfalls attendant upon the performance of mitzvot, Heschel comments, “We are taught to be mitzvah conscious in regard to the present moment, to be mindful of the constant opportunity to do good. We are also taught to be sin-conscious in regard to the past, to realize and to remember our failures and transgressions...The exclusive fear of sin may lead to a deprecation of works; the exclusive appreciation of mitzvot may lead to self-righteousness. The first may result in a denial of the relevance of history, in an overly eschatological view; the second in a denial of Messianism, in a secular optimism.” The latter part of this statement reflects an awareness of the necessity for the assistance of God in the accomplishment of good and the essential need for hope that all deeds will lead to a final gathering in of all people for the glory of God. Heschel, God in Search of Man, 363.

160 The biblical referent for this statement is the ratification of the covenant. Heschel points out that “When Moses came to the people and related all the words and ordinances of the Lord, they all answered with one voice, ‘We will do everything that the Lord has told us’” (Exod 24:3). With respect to this affirmation, Heschel explains that faithfulness to the covenant means more than just belief because, “the event must be fulfilled...What was expected at Sinai comes about in the moment of the good deed. A commandment is a foresight, a deed is a fulfillment. The deed completes the event.” Ibid., 217.
or construct of the mind is not the reality. God could never be a concept of the mind. Heschel stood by his affirmation that the divine reality is its own existence and comes to man through revelation and the awe of the transcendent. Revelation and awe, he insisted, are not contrary to reason, but above categories of reason, and denote the ineffable God. Heschel’s faith was the basis on which he trusted in human reason. He was aware that faith allows man to move beyond what reason can comprehend to that which does not contradict reason, but elevates it to a greater perception. “Faith could never compel reason to accept that which was absurd.” Rothschild makes this comment about Heschel’s wrestling with the seeming conflict of philosophy and religion, “In his writings on religion he combines the yearning for holiness and spirituality of his Hasidic ancestors with the yearning for free inquiry and objective truth of the modern Western scholar…because true piety must include intellectual honesty.” Since the content of faith for Heschel was so rich, he was able to view the happenings of past and present through a lens different from that of his contemporaries and came to believe in this perception as the greater truth.

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161 Heschel’s manner of thinking could not be limited to the scope of the German philosophical milieu in which he studied. He considered this milieu to be “fettered in categories which presupposed certain metaphysical assumptions which could never be proved.” He further noted that “the neo-Kantian theory of knowledge was the accepted standard; scholars examined seriously only what could be derived from sense data as processed by structures of the mind, the categories. It was not appropriate to consider the holy or the supernatural dimension…God was an idea, a postulate of reason, a logical possibility. One could not even have knowledge of the world because the categories that housed knowledge were representational constructions; things in themselves were ungraspable.” Kaplan and Dresner, Prophetic Witness, 154.

162 Kaplan, Spiritual Radical, 153.

163 Rothschild, ed., Between God and Man, 9.
Faith for the Jew is grounded in events effected by the living God, as well as in recollection of the content of the experience of the ancestors.\(^{164}\) Such events and recollections challenge reason to acknowledge what is beyond it and to yield to wonder.\(^{165}\) Heschel’s perspective insists that reason itself indicates its own limitations in this regard and that there are possibilities beyond it.\(^{166}\) On the significance of mystery which evokes wonder and which wonder ponders, he comments, “Awareness of mystery has been common to all ancient men, but to the moderns, mystery does not exist. It is simply what we do not yet know or is unanswerable and, therefore, meaningless.”\(^{167}\) With regard to this contemporary position, Heschel contends that revelation places mystery in a different perspective by demonstrating its origin in a loving God. While acknowledging that “mystery without revelation is unqualified and is usually

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\(^{164}\) Event in Jewish understanding is neither tangible nor substantial. The invisible God speaks in events and no concrete or material representation can be made of these. They reveal God to man so man will know how to live. In other words, man’s life lived in accordance with revelation is the only representation of God. Judaism makes no use of symbols because a symbol suggests the divine by reason of relationship, association, or convention. Therefore, there is danger that people will give to the symbolic object what is due to God and direct their soul to express itself by proxy. Symbolism can degenerate into a vicarious religion. A symbol is not the reality; ultimately, it is a fiction. Worship is not a symbolic act. Heschel observes, “Symbolism reduces belief to make-believe, observance to ceremony, prophecy to literature, and theology to aesthetics.” Heschel, “Symbolism and Jewish Faith,” in *Moral Grandeur*, 98.

\(^{165}\) Donald Moore has an interesting comment on faith, not in terms of wonder, but of human freedom. He states, “Being able to have faith is a sign of humanity’s greatness; it is an act of freedom, asserting independence from our own limited faculties.” Moore, *The Human and the Holy: The Spirituality of Abraham Joshua Heschel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989) 59.

\(^{166}\) To underscore his opposition to the Kantian understanding of the perception of reality that all thought must fit into categories, Heschel emphasized that “Jews have no concepts; all that they have is faith, faith in his (God’s) willingness to listen to us.” At the same time, Heschel was aware of the magnitude of evil Judaism had experienced in the Shoah. In the light of this, the Kabbalistic notion that evil precludes the presence of God made it seem there was no longer any God to be receptive to prayer. He saw this as the cause for the substitution of social action and cultural functions for the more authentic practices of prayer and Sabbath keeping. Statement made by Heschel in discussion about prayer at the fifty-third annual Convention of Conservative Rabbis in Atlantic City, New Jersey, June, 1953. See Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 151.

perceived as divine wrath and experienced as constant threat," he maintains that in the light of revelation, mystery is ever more deeply knowable and draws man forward into new facets of life because in revelation God enters the pathos of the human condition. Heschel perceives revelation as event because it is beyond the capacity of the human search for truth. Revelation, therefore, assumes a central position with respect to Heschel’s approach to philosophical questions and matters of ethics. He states, “What is contained in the divine message can neither misrepresent reality nor contradict any truths taught by science since both reason and revelation originated in the wisdom of God who created all reality and knows all truth.”

Heschel explains both creation and freedom as events: creation because it transcends causality, and freedom because it allows man to integrate many factors in novel ways so as to produce something not experienced before whereby man can deal with the unexpected or extraordinary. As a celebration of creation, the Sabbath recognizes life as pure gift and divine providence as the protector and preserver of that gift. As a celebration of freedom, the Sabbath bestows the essence of the liberation from Egypt, which is a sharing in God’s conquest of the forces of evil and his assurance that man is not alone in the pursuit of goodness. In the context

168 Ibid., 24.

169 In his understanding of revelation as having its summit in the Incarnation and the transformation of the earth it effects, Teilhard de Chardin is in accord with this manner of seeing reality and counsels the faithful “to cling to a blind and absolute faith in the meaning that all things – even the diminishments- must hold for a man who believes that God is the animating force behind every single event.” De Chardin, Divine Milieu, 24.

of event, each Sabbath is such an occurrence. As the day of God’s rest shared with man, it is beyond human experience and necessitates an elevation of the purely human to participate in its duration. This is the foundation for the belief that an additional soul is imparted to each person observing the Sabbath as the sun sets on Friday evening. It is the gift of the Shekhinah (שכינה), the divine presence that descends from the celestial realms to fill the Sabbath with holiness and joy and to uplift the lives of the faithful.\(^1\) As the Sabbath draws to a close, these spiritual souls depart and the Sabbath observers return to their routines. Because there is a lingering sadness at the departure of the Shekhinah (שכינה), to assuage the loss, a third Sabbath meal has become the custom, an augment to the simple tradition of enjoying the fragrant aromas of the Havdalah spice box.

Just as a biblical event changes the history of the people in a definitive way, the Sabbath transforms man through a fuller awareness of the image of God (-être, לְמַעַן אֱלֹהִים) impressed on each person. As the recurrent weekly movement into God’s presence for the sake of sanctification, the Sabbath is the event that underlies all Judaism. There is no going backward from an event. Each event is a new beginning and as such a new life. One emerges from Sabbath time more conscious of the truth of one’s being and more committed to being the light for the nations. The Sabbath has the capacity to change those who participate in the day.

Despite his openness in evaluating the new trends, it was becoming clear to Heschel that the serious doubts about the supernatural, induced by the present

\(^1\) The Plotinian and Gnostic elements of Kabbalistic thought are seen in particular in the notion that an additional soul comes into the person as Sabbath time descends. These are supernal souls that inhabit the court of God. According to the Zohar, these souls are sent down to earth to open the righteous to a greater depth of participation in the mysteries of the nature of God and his relationship to creation. They assist in the study of Torah, a usual Sabbath occupation. When the Sabbath departs, the souls depart also. Heschel, Sabbath, 87-88.
materialistically-oriented environment, could not be handled adequately by a metaphysics of culture. So, in his approach to religion, Heschel put aside rationalism and ideologies because these reduced religion to a fiction, a set of concepts. He turned instead to revelation and scripture in which man is addressed by God such that man is God’s object. His contention was that man learns who he is and what he is to do with his life most essentially through revelation and scripture, not his own formulations of human interaction. Therefore, theology, which deepens knowledge of God, and ethics, which establishes standards of behavior, are inextricably intertwined. Heschel maintained that in revelation and scripture man attains a dignity impossible through the constructs of the human mind. In revelation and scripture man assumes the dignity of being sought out by the creator. The consequence of God’s choosing to communicate to man, therefore, is man’s perception of his own worth and a sense of awe before the source of creation. These two consequences of God’s self-communication are an essential part of Sabbath celebration and Jewish identity.

In a broader sense for Heschel, authentic living for all persons comes from an experience of the transcendent, even if this phenomenon is not recognized as such. Because of man’s innate experience of the transcendent, Heschel avers that man’s very being is oriented to God, and reality, as a reflection of the creator, is before man at all times as a reminder of this orientation. This essential orientation of the person to the transcendent, this universally shared sense of the holy, Heschel terms “the a priori structure of consciousness.”172 The formulation of thoughts as a consequence of confrontation with reality, then reveals that reality is always more than what

172Ibid., 55.
can be contained in concepts. For Heschel, what is beyond conceptualization is perceived as infinite and ineffable: transcendent. Therefore, apprehension is greater than comprehension, awareness greater than knowledge, and experience greater than expression. Heschel’s referent for this position is twofold: the Book of Proverbs where true knowledge of life begins with “fear of the Lord” (Prov 1:7) and the Book of Job where Job is commanded to “harken and stand and consider the wondrous works of God,” because “God does great things past finding out, marvelous things beyond reckoning” (Job 37:14, 9:10).

3. Buber, Relationship, and the Significance of the Prophets

Familiarity with Martin Buber’s thought about relationship brought Heschel to a further conviction about his own. Buber was Heschel’s contemporary in the intellectual atmosphere of Berlin. His concept of interrelationship, known as I and Thou, was a definite influence in the philosophical milieu in which Heschel was involved. In Buber’s theory, communication indicates a certain equality between the communicants. Buber then fits God’s communication with man into this framework. Man, therefore, does not meet God as heaven communicating with earth. Man meets God as simply transcendent, somewhere in between heaven and earth, which makes man and God of similar stature and removes the tension of awe witnessed for example in the interaction between Job and the God who spoke out of the whirlwind to let Job know the wonder of almighty power and his own place as creature.

To clarify his position on the relationship of God and man, Heschel cites the particular case of the prophets where God initiates the call and the reaction of the prophet is inevitably an
affirmation of inability to proclaim the divine judgment to Israel. Hence, the prophets’ competence in exposing the truth of the state of the nation was entirely a gift. Heschel describes the prophets as mouthpieces of revelation. He explains, “The significance of prophetic revelation lies not in the inner experience of the prophet, but in its character as a manifestation of what is in God…the prophet experiences revelation as an ecstasy of God who comes out of his imperceivable distance to reveal his will…Knowledge about the inner state of the divine in relationship to Israel determined the inner life of the prophet.”

This knowledge of God’s perception of Israel was granted to the prophet. It did not come through conversation or some manner of interchange, but through revelation, so that Israel might know the truth of God through a human voice living in her midst.

In Buber’s structure of belief, Heschel saw the disintegration of the prophets’ claims to divine inspiration. The intercommunication between God and man described in his theory undermined the otherness of God such that divine communication became unfounded, and the prophet became no more than a sign of meaning without intrinsic value. In other words, the prophet was speaking on his own authority instead of in oneness with the vision and will of God. Through his study of the prophets’ relationship with God, Heschel concluded that “the incompatibility of God’s ways with human understanding was the very essence of our being…God is God and man is man and the two rarely meet. God’s thoughts are not man’s (Is

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55:8). “So the case of the prophets was unique in so far as they allowed God to speak the truth through them.

There is a correlation between the experience of the prophets and the weekly Sabbath. Essential to the Sabbath is the descent of the presence of God. Heschel affirmed man’s ability to commune with God as essential to Sabbath worship. However, being able to address God and having a correct insight into the ways of God are two different things. Man approaches God in the special divine presence of the Sabbath in humility to gain an insight into the path of truth for his life and to obtain the strength to pursue it. Man’s dignity lies in his engagement with God to know what is good and to do it with right intention, kavanah (כָּוָּנָה). The Sabbath is the ever-recurring time in which the otherness of God moves man to a deeper self-knowledge and a greater wholeness of person. On the Sabbath, the usual daily activities are set aside for the sake of attention to the holy time, and use of man-made devices is suspended in recognition of God’s preeminence as creator. The acknowledgment of God as other and prayer within this understanding of relationship allows the otherwise ineffable God to be the source of communion. Within this atmosphere, the joyous meals, blessings, conversation, study, and prayer impart a peace and affirmation unattainable by man’s own efforts. The mystery and the marvel is that God comes to man independently of human efforts so that man can have rest.

D. Revelation, Holiness, and the Sabbath

While the revelation made known through the medium of the prophets was unique for the sake of the conscience of the nation, Israel also knew God in the revelation of Sinai and the

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174 Heschel, Passion, 295.
events of her history. In revelation, the totally other breaks in upon the human situation.

Heschel, therefore, clearly distinguishes the God of revelation from any god of philosophy. This is in accordance with his understanding of concepts. In philosophical understanding, the idea of the good is exalted, but in biblical understanding, it is the holy that is of highest value. On each day of creation all that was made was called good. However, the seventh day God blessed and made it holy (Gen 1:3). The creation of the seventh day was menuchah (מנוחה), rest in God’s presence which gives quietude of mind and heart, the quietude that constitutes peace. Biblical religion, therefore, seeks to purify and to sanctify. This can be done only through a recognition of the true presence of God. In other words, necessary to Sabbath observance is belief in the true presence of God. Sabbath worship as commanded in Torah, the rest of the seventh day, is indicative of dependence upon the divine. This requires faith, a faith strong enough to abrogate the cynicism of the modern age.

Heschel is very honest in his confrontation with the problems within Judaism with respect to observance. He cites four main concerns:

1. diminishment of faith – God is a concept. To project existence onto this concept is a breach of epistemology. The synagogue is a social center.

2. religious behaviorism – Judaism is a civilization where tradition and culture identify the group but these have lost meaning with respect to God’s entrance into the life of his people. People let the rabbi and cantor do the praying.

3. God is an ideal – Because God has become a symbol for social action, prayer becomes a communal act to build enthusiasm and zeal for works and to pledge support in endeavors for the good.

4. the individual as the focus of prayer – God is a process carried out in a person; God is an interior source of power and prayer reminds the person of this.  

175 Kaplan, Spiritual Radical, 147.
Heschel saw the general trend of religious practice in contemporary society as detrimental to authentic worship.

1. Modernity and the God of Revelation

The emphasis upon rationality in the modern world demands that everything be expressed in some specific formulation. God then is reduced to a form of thought circumscribed by the limits of the one envisioning the notion of God. Heschel contends that such a god could not be the living, self-existent God of revelation who enters into history at will. Furthermore, to equate the God of Abraham with a mere concept is to deny the living presence that communicated with the people, brought them together as a nation, and affirmed their freedom. To have a conceptualization as a religious foundation would undermine worship and prayer and result in a form of agnosticism. It would undermine the meaning of Sabbath observance which focuses on the presence of God and man’s delight and renewal in this sacred time. In his address to the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1953, Heschel commented, “There is a duty to worship, a law to remind the distraught mind that it is time to think of God, time to disregard my ego for at least a moment.”

2. Worship, Tradition, and Culture

Tradition and culture become empty when disassociated from their roots and the ancient meanings relevant to all times. Rituals and ceremonies become performances of habit, devoid of

the ardor that attends an authentic understanding of their origins. Instead of regenerating the awe of the ancestors, tradition and culture assume a new perspective as a mark of identification for the group. The Sabbath then becomes primarily a way of integrating into the community. The meaning is sublimated and no longer directs the mind and heart to God. The Sabbath no longer stands as witness to God’s entrance into the life of his people. Heschel refers to this as religious behaviorism.

3. The Nature of Community

The rationale behind religious assembly often can become a desire for organized humanitarian pursuits, projects dedicated to alleviating the human condition. People come together to affirm each other in such commitment, to build enthusiasm, and perhaps to acknowledge their own successful endeavors. The spirit of worship becomes subservient to an expression of mutual support in continued good works.

4. Prayer

If God is not perceived as the one who spoke to Abraham and the patriarchs, the one who gave the Law to Moses, and the one who warned Israel through the prophets of its neglect of justice, then the God one purports to worship is not the living God of Judaism and prayer has no significance. The synagogue becomes a place of social engagement especially when prayer is enacted through the formalism of the cantor and the rabbi. Prayer becomes at best by proxy and
not personal participation. Such a liturgical set-up precludes the experience of heart-felt meaning.

There is another facet to the problem of prayer in the synagogue assembly: self-centeredness. Here, the individual becomes involved with himself and his own progress on the path of holiness through mitzvot. God is an enabling force in this process, a source of power, and is sought as such.

To Heschel these several trends in contemporary culture were serious aberrations from the truth of Judaism which saw in Sabbath-dependence upon God, a way of letting go of stressful ties to work and possessions in order to turn attention to relationships, blessings, gratitude, and joy. A Sabbath without the real presence of the God of revelation who chose to speak to man and guide him in providential care, was not a Sabbath, was not the source of rest that gives the peace that becomes the light for all nations.¹⁷⁷

Since the Sabbath is the recurring time-frame through which the presence and peace of God come to man so that he may deepen his knowledge and awareness of the divine will for himself and for the world, the next section will present the particular aspects of the Sabbath Heschel emphasizes in his work on this subject.

¹⁷⁷ Further information on Heschel’s evaluations of the present state of religion and comments on how they can be addressed can be found in his essays on life and on prayer. See Heschel, “Choose Life” and “On Prayer,” in Moral Grandeur, 251-56; 257-67.
III. The Sabbath: Heschel and Time

A. Time as Gift

Heschel commences his description of the Sabbath by presenting it as a day that contrasts with all other times. To elucidate the distinct nature of this day, Heschel explains that in the moments of Shabbat, time penetrates into the heart of being to bring forth blessing, gratitude, sharing, joy, and peace. One enters into the fervor of Shabbat, not through a spatial door, but through prayer, meditation, study, conversation, discussion, the taste of fine food, the enjoyment of nature, the delight of the presence of family and friends, and the holiness of the presence of God. Through the explicit attention to life the Sabbath offers, one experiences a different unfolding of the surroundings of daily living. In the quietude of menuchah (מְנֻכָּה, Hebrew for Sabbath rest, life becomes a new reality untouched by the demands of business and the market place. The technologies of modernity are put aside. Heschel makes this general statement about the restrictions the Sabbath imposes which he interprets as a bestowal of freedom. “To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the

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178 Heschel makes it clear that “abstaining from work is not a depreciation but an affirmation of labor, a divine exaltation of its dignity…” “Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work”…Just as we are commanded to keep the Sabbath, we are commanded to labor, The duty to work for six days is just as much a part of God’s covenant with man as the duty to abstain from work on the seventh day.” Heschel, The Sabbath, 28.
economic struggle with our fellow men and the forces of nature – is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for man’s progress than the Sabbath?”

Because the daily routine is set aside on the Sabbath and everything made ready in advance for the enjoyment of the day, life assumes sacredness in the mystery and majesty of the Divine and emphasis moves to being rather than having; the being that is marked by the image of God. In this perception of man’s nature, the Sabbath becomes an atmosphere of holiness that reaffirms the beauty of virtue and the necessity to spread holiness through virtuous living. Heschel maintains that it is through the practice of virtue, the deeds of good will (mitzvot), that redemption takes place. He states, “Redemption will not take place at the end of days. It is a continual process. Not only the people of Israel, but the whole universe, must be redeemed.” Cooperation with the will of God for man, then, is especially the mitzvah of the Sabbath. It is a day of discernment and obedience to uplift the indifference and discouragement of the world through the praise and glory of God and the recognition of the image of God in the other. As John Merkle states Heschel sees “the ultimate concern of the Jew as not personal salvation, but universal redemption.”

179 Ibid.

180 In regard to the goodness that comes forth from the Sabbath in the lives of the faithful, John Merkle makes this statement, “The divine mercy (experienced on the Sabbath) flows through our lives to heal the innocent who suffer.” In other words, the Sabbath is experienced in ordinary life as consolation for all the suffering of the world. The Sabbath is the source of divine mercy poured out. John Merkle, The Genesis of Faith: The Depth Theology of Abraham Joshua Heschel (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985) 216.

181 Heschel, The Earth, 71.

182 Merkle, Genesis, 215.
Because the seventh day of creation brought man to God, but their relationship was marred by sin, God’s intention that man live life within his holiness was reaffirmed by the command of Sinai to “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day” (Exod 20:8). For this reason, Heschel considers “the Sabbath as the most precious present mankind has received from the treasure house of God.”  

On the Sabbath man recognizes creation as an act of the present moment where God holds everything in being. The only appropriate response to this gift of life is gratitude. Lawrence Perlman contends that “man cannot think of himself as human without being conscious of his indebtedness, and thus it is not a mere feeling but a constitutive feature of being human. Indebtedness lifts the mind to the transcendent and evokes an experience of the reality of God. The further secret of being human is care for the meaning that flows from the relationship that follows from the gift of life, from God’s gift in making man His image (יהוה לוהים).

According to this interpretation, the Sabbath as gratitude for relationship is the epitome of being human.

As a celebration of time which is not comprehended through the senses but through an awareness of duration or stillness, the Sabbath elicits “faith in the unembodied, in the unimaginable.” Therefore, the fervor of the Sabbath and its effect upon man are not man-made, but come from the mystery of God who reveals himself in events that save and affirm life. In his discussion of the Sabbath, Heschel begins with the image of a window in eternity that

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opens into time. The window is the gift of God that makes known his eternal presence. It is always open but available to man according to the passage of created time. As the last day of creation, the Sabbath is this window through which man is called to rest. Evening does not fall on this day, nor does morning follow. It is meant to be a passing participation in the final destiny of mankind when God will reign and the faithful will be crowned with glory. The cycle of God’s intervention into time, therefore, has an infinite dimension. While the cycle of nature sustains man and provides nourishment, beauty, and variety to delight his life, it leads to death. The window in eternity which is the Sabbath gift and beyond the capacity of man to access, is the pathway to God. The Sabbath is the food of eternal life. It leads man forward; it moves toward the end time in its disclosure of the plan of God that all people be one through man’s welcoming others into Sabbath rest by the redemptive power of the practice of virtue. It is, what Heschel calls, an event; the inbreaking of the totally Other. 

God’s Sabbath rest shared with man is beyond man’s ability to initiate or to contain. It gives life through the extra soul believed

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186 Something of this glory enters the spirit of man on the Sabbath. It has its source in the creational light thought to be imparted as evening falls on Friday. It is a partaking in the original light that appeared with God’s words on the first day of creation “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3). Light was brought forth before the heavenly bodies were created. This original light is a form of glory through which creation proceeded and which continues to sustain creation. It awakens the dormant heart of people. Because of this glory and light, the Sabbath is understood to prefigure the resurrection. Heschel describes the phenomenon thus, “Every seventh day a miracle comes to pass, the resurrection of the soul, of the soul of man and of the soul of all things.” Ibid., 83.

187 The celebration of important events has occurred in all civilizations throughout history. The events celebrated have been mostly bountiful harvests and the beauty and power of nature, but also conquests and subjugations of people. Heschel points out that “one of the most important facts in the history of religion was the transformation of agricultural festivals into commemorations of historical events. The festivals of ancient peoples were intimately linked with nature’s seasons. ...the value of the festive day was determined by the things nature did or did not bring forth...To Israel the unique events of historic time were spiritually more significant than the repetitive processes in the cycle of nature. The deities of other peoples were associated with places or things, but the God of Israel was the God of events: the Redeemer from slavery, the Revealer of the Torah.” Israel was called to have faith in an invisible God who had no representation but lived in the virtue of the obedience of his people. The Sabbath is the feast of obedience to the will of God onto the end. Ibid., 7-8.
to descend to enable a fruitful experience of Sabbath time and time in general because the Sabbath as God’s time permeates all time. The truth of the Sabbath is the presence of God for everlasting life. As an event, the Sabbath transforms those who participate in it into a deeper awareness of life and its sanctity. Others then receive the benefits of the virtuous living carried out through mitzvot practiced by those faithful to Sabbath observance.

Heschel describes Judaism as a religion of time because the messianic hope of Judaism finds expression in the continuous movement from one Sabbath to the next, linking the present to the end time and bringing the end time of the eternal Sabbath, when all will rest in God, into the present. Regarding this interconnection of the Sabbath and eternity, Heschel states, “That the Sabbath and eternity are one, or of the same essence, is an ancient idea. The Sabbath is an example of the world to come…The Sabbath possesses a holiness like that of the world to come…unless one learns how to relish the taste of Sabbath while still in this world, unless one is initiated in the appreciation of eternal life, one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come.”

The Sabbath is the last day of creation, but the first in the intention of the divine mind because it is the source of sanctification. It is redemptive because it saves one from the continuous distraction of the world and demands attention to being as image of God (יִּהוָֹה). The Sabbath is the time through which all other time can be experienced as meaningful. Heschel comments, “Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be

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188 Ibid., 73,74.
attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals.” 189

The sanctuaries to which Heschel refers are the times of refuge offered by God each week to draw the moments of time together in his presence and to remember, rejoice, and be grateful for the gifts of life and work. Heschel uses the image of cathedral because he considers “time the dimension wherein man meets God, wherein man becomes aware that every instant is an act of creation.” 190 He further describes creation as God’s constant presence with what he has brought into existence. He explains, “Creation is not an act that happened once upon a time, once and forever. The act of bringing the world into existence is a continuous process. God called the world into being, and that call goes on. There is this present moment because God is present. Every instant is an act of creation. A moment is not a terminal but a flash, a signal of beginning.” 191 In the light of this understanding of creation, the Sabbath offers a specific time to recognize what is immanent to man always, i.e., God’s presence and providence in life’s forward movement. With respect to creation, all time partakes in the relational quality of the seventh day.

As the final gift of creation, the Sabbath marks time while being above time. The Sabbath cannot be averted or destroyed. In that sense, the Sabbath bespeaks the wisdom of the Almighty in placing before man a repeated opportunity to experience his true value within divine

189 Ibid., 8.
190 Ibid., 108.
191 Ibid.
love and the teachings of the Law. The Sabbath affirmation of being, of each individual’s being, in the beauty and security of family and home and the shared assembly at the synagogue, affords the strength to approach life as a giver and sharer and to act in harmony to promote peace in the world of commerce and toil. Without the Sabbath, man would know only himself and his limitations. God would be distorted in man’s small vision or appear so distant that the divide would be unbridgeable. As God’s movement of man through time into God’s final presence, the Sabbath is the essence of the covenant and the cornerstone of Judaism. In the gift of the Sabbath, God fulfills the promise that he will be their God and be with them always. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘You must tell the Israelites: take heed to keep my sabbaths, for that is to be the covenant between you and me throughout the generations, to show that it is I, the Lord, who make you holy’” (Exod 31:12-13).

Because time and holiness for Jews are gifts in which man continuously lives, he becomes aware that he is a recipient. Man does not own these gifts as he owns material possessions. What is learned on the Sabbath is that life is received and there is, therefore, a primary importance to giving. God shares the gifts of existence and holiness in freedom. What is learned is the goodness of sharing rather than controlling. In the holiness of God there is peace. What is learned is the necessity for proper stewardship of the earth rather than greed and its misuse. With the gifts of the Sabbath a different perspective of labor is realized. Work is as much a command as is Sabbath observance:

8 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work;
but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work.  

Because of the Sabbath, the labor of the other days becomes a form of mitzvot, a way of using the activities of the moment to turn time into holiness. Man is on earth to do as God does. God sanctifies time, so it becomes the task of man to enter into ordinary moments with a vision of transforming them. “There is a presence of eternity in each single moment. One must live and act as if the fate of all time would depend on a single moment.”  

On the Sabbath and in every moment in which the work of holiness is pursued, time is “collected” and placed in a proper orientation toward eternity. The message of Sinai is gradually fulfilled, “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod 19:6).  

B. The Significance of the Sabbath

The Sabbath comes and the Sabbath goes. It is a time element of created time. In one sense, there is a certain assurance that so long as there is time, the Sabbath will be with man. However, man must contend with the departure of Queen Sabbath, and the return to the ordinary concerns of life. There is difficulty in letting the Sabbath go and in living without this presence during the interim. The departure of the Sabbath elicits a sense of bereavement and emptiness so


193 Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 76.
strong that the Baal Shem Tov created a third Sabbath dinner on Saturday evening to allow the essence of the day to linger and continue its peace-filled ministrations. Traditionally, beautiful boxes of aromatic spices have been opened at the end of the day to spread their fragrance into the incoming time and prolong the sweetness of the Sabbath into the new week. As the three stars that herald the temporal end of the time of rest make their appearance in the heavens, the night air remains redolent with Sabbath and all that it bestows on the earth. Likewise, there is the tradition of lighting a candle with multiple wicks in order to waft the illumination of creational light forward in time to inspire the impending tasks and responsibilities, and to insure the fulfillment of mitzvot. The havdalah candle is always beautifully fashioned, and its intertwining wicks represent the unity its sacred light seeks to effect through the enlightened deeds of mitzvot.

Through these human endeavors, the first days of the incoming week become moments of Sabbath remembrance, and the subsequent days become moments of anticipation of the Sabbath to come. The Sabbath is the underlying momentum of life; it is the source of the sanctification of the world because of obedience to God in mitzvot. The Sabbath and mitzvot are inseparable. The fruitful accomplishment of the work of ordinary days is the outcome of the attention to the will of God shown in devout observance. In Jewish understanding, such mitzvot change the course of human events. The Kabbalistic idea of the interconnection of the world of man and the world of God where every good deed has a palpable effect, is very much at the core of this perception of the transformative nature of the Sabbath.

The far-reaching effects of Sabbath observance and the bringing together of heaven and earth through mitzvot became the basis for Heschel’s participation in many humanitarian
endeavors for the benefit of society. He believed that “what is creative comes from responsive merging with the eternal in reality, not from an ambition to say something.”  The eternal in reality is the Sabbath carried out in the practice of goodness. The Kabbalistic idea of the interconnection of the world of man and the world of God where every good deed has a palpable effect in heaven is very much at the core of this perception of the transformative nature of the Sabbath. Heschel saw in such commitment to the doing of good, a spiritual elevation of the Jewish people and a way of promoting association with people of other persuasions in the understanding that goodness has only one source. Heschel proposed that goodness was the prerequisite for God’s gift of holiness to which all are destined. Goodness, he held, was “the mark of saintliness” and the way for the salvation of mankind.

IV. The Sabbath as an Instrument of Peace

A. Heschel and the Common Human Condition

The core of Heschel’s thought is centered on the belief that human history is sacred and does not run its course unattended. God has entered the life of his people, all people, in a terrible watchfulness, a watchfulness that touches the individual most earnestly. While Judaism sees this presence of God specifically in the recurrence of the Sabbath, in the Judaic interpretation of

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194 Heschel, The Earth, 9.

195 The importance of carrying out mitzvot in conjunction with the general needs of the world was of so grave consequence to Heschel that he equated it to saintliness. He concludes, “A saint is he who does not know how it is possible not to love, not to help, not to be sensitive to the anxiety of others.” Ibid., 20.
reality, all men are in some way aware of the transcendent and make a choice as to their
response. With respect to this choice, Heschel notes the gravity of the gift of freedom which
must contend with the propensity of the human spirit to seek its own satisfaction to the detriment
of others. He contends that in the depth of his nature, man is made to live in community and to
work out a path of goodness that overcomes any evil inclination. Man, whose nature seeks
community, endangers himself with the choice to “go it alone.”196 Judaism affirms that the
Sabbath, which gathers people for prayer, study, and enjoyment, is the essence of this path,
because the Sabbath asserts man’s dependence and puts man in proper order with respect to his
capacity to govern his freedom. Heschel maintains that the truth of all persons lies in the
recognition of dependence upon the transcendent and that Jews’ belief in the Sabbath, coupled
with deeds of mitzvot, links all goodness to the heavens and transforms the earth. In other
words, Sabbath observance assimilates all goodness and offers it to God for the sanctification of
mankind.

Acknowledgment of these presuppositions is the basis of Heschel’s belief in the
fruitfulness of dialogue which is the basis of peace. He holds these preconditions as a common
ground beyond individual tenets of faith. Concurrence in this understanding of human nature,
Heschel maintains, creates trust, and in trust there is an openness and willingness for sharing.
The other area that affords the possibility of mutual exchange according to Heschel is
conscience. Heschel makes reference to the encyclical of Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, to

196 The influence of the Kotzker is evident in this observation of Heschel, “Freedom, left to its own devices,
is subject to a passion and drive for cruel deeds and suffocating sensuality.” “A Preface to an Understanding of
Revelation,” in Moral Grandeur, 188.
describe the unitive nature of conscience. He notes in particular that the Pope’s description of freedom is inclusive of all persons. He quotes from the encyclical this parallel to his own thoughts on conscience:

Every human being has the right to freedom in searching for truth and in expressing and communicating his opinion…Every human being has the right to honor God according to the dictates of an upright conscience… The world’s creator has stamped man’s inmost being with an order revealed to him by his conscience; and his conscience insists on his preserving it. Men show the work of the law written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness to them…All created being reflects the infinite wisdom of God.197

With reference to this message of Pope John XXIII, Heschel asserts that the crimes of history devolve from failure to respect each other’s commitments as they are dictated by conscience. Therefore, attention to a certain commonness of conscience becomes a key step toward the justice that brings peace. Three factors have been discussed thus far that provide a foundation for mutual communication: awareness of dependence which in turn has its effect on the use of freedom; an intelligent use of freedom which in turn promotes trust; attention to conscience which in turn counteracts self-centeredness, warns against a preponderance of self-interest, and directs toward the common good. Having established these shared aspects of personhood, Heschel then addresses four dimensions of religious existence that people have in common: (1) some teaching or guiding principle; (2) a basic understanding and faith in the teaching or principle; (3) a law to be observed, or a sacred act to be carried out with respect to

that faith or principle; (4) a context in which these may be lived, such as a community, a
traditional practice, or a covenant.

Because of these shared experiences of religion, Heschel insists that “all religions have in
common the power to refute the fallacy of absolute expediency, and to insist that the dignity of
man is in his power of compassion and in his capacity for sacrifice and self-denial. Religion’s
task is to cultivate disgust for violence and lies, and to promote sensitivity to other people’s
suffering and the love of peace…”198 Because such religious expectations may seem
overwhelming and too difficult in the light of the extent of discord in the world, Heschel adds
from his own religious faith that “God never exposes humanity to a challenge without giving
humanity the power to face the challenge.”199

B. Religious Commitment and the Pursuit of Peace

Heschel is certain that the weakening of the moral fiber in the world can be mended by a
common effort to see the truth and change ways of acting. In his opinion, doing this is, above
all, the domain of the churches and the synagogues. It cannot be left to government. He
espouses this approach to the reform of society because the tradition of his faith is grounded in a
spirituality that accepts the presence of God as a reality of goodness for man’s inspiration and
benefit. The God of Judaism is part of history and does not leave the creation to falter
unattended. However, man must recognize the responsibility for the earth God has shared with

199 Ibid.
him and act in the strength of divine goodness. Heschel emphasizes that “one must be ready to perceive the presence of eternity in a single moment. One must live and act as if the fate of all time would depend on a single moment.” With respect to his own religious faith, he believes that “the survival of the world depends upon the holiness of the seventh day. Without holiness, there is nothing.” Therefore he avows that through the guidance of wisdom and truth, which churches and synagogues offer, the insidious inroads of evil can be overcome and proper relationships established.

From his own tradition which has a unique relationship to Christianity, Heschel points out the impact on civilization of the revelation to Abraham and the later deliverance of the Law to Moses. In the Judeo-Christian tradition these events “initiated the elimination of the demons, the gods and demigods from the consciousness of man.” In so doing, the Judeo-Christian

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200 The necessity to work for the common good within the fabric of created reality is evident for the Christian in the gospel message. As a theologian contemporary to Heschel, de Chardin shares a like stance toward cooperation in achieving the sanctity God desires for his people. Reminiscent of Jeremiah he states, “Salvation was no longer to be sought in abandoning the world but in active participation in building it up.” De Chardin, Divine Milieu, 22.

201 Heschel, The Sabbath, 76.

202 Ibid.

203 Through the prayerful observance of the faithful, the Sabbath spreads its influence over the entire world, lifting everything to God and making amends for all injustice. This is tikkun olam (חזרת עולם), the restoration of the world. The connection between Jewish practice and the world is disclosed in the mystical tradition of the Kabbalah. See Scholem, Kabbalah, 143, 153, 164-5.

204 Heschel, “What We Might Do Together,” in Moral Grandeur, 290-1. A continual problem with Judaism was the drifting back into the worship and power of these gods. The Jews were constantly warned against this and admonished to trust in the living God who reveals Himself as compassionate love and requires recognition of this in Sabbath worship. As they were about to enter the promised land, Moses again gave a strict caution against submission to foreign deities. “When you come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the abominations of the peoples there. Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a fortune-teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the
tradition placed man in relationship with the living God.\textsuperscript{205} Therefore, with respect to the imbalance of world social conditions, Heschel offers the words of the prophets who claimed no real insights of their own but opened their hearts to God’s vision of humanity. Heschel asserts that this vision is available today as a remedy for our failures, and that it is imperative that man take it seriously. He confronts the present generation with this poignant assessment of so many of the atrocities of history:

Vicious deeds are but an aftermath of what is conceived in the hearts and minds of men. It is from the inner life of men and from the articulation of evil thoughts that evil actions take their rise. It is, therefore, of extreme importance that the sinfulness of thoughts, suspicion, and hatred, and particularly the sinfulness of any contemptuous utterance, however flippantly it is meant, be made clear to all mankind. This implies in particular to such thoughts and utterances about individuals or groups of other religions, races, and nations. Speech has power and few men realize that words do not fade. What starts out as a sound, ends in a deed.\textsuperscript{206}

\textsuperscript{205} This essential understanding of revelation as event, as a living and loving God communing with man and thus changing forever man’s perception of the transcendent, can be appreciated more fully when placed in juxtaposition with the impact of myth on the human psyche. Emmanuel Levinas discusses this especially with respect to depth psychology and its emphasis upon human nature as impacted by primordial situations of inordinate desires and relationships. He proposes that rationalism finds its terminus in psychoanalysis. He comments, “Psychoanalysis is, in its philosophical essence, the end result of rationalism: It places the same demands on reflection that reflection placed on naively thinking thought. The non-philosophical end result of psychoanalysis consists in a predilection for some fundamental, but elementary, fables - the libido, sadism or masochism, the Oedipus complex, repression of the origin, aggressivity – which, incomprehensibly, would alone be unequivocal, alone in not translating a reality more profound than themselves...The fact of their having been collected from among the debris of the most diverse civilizations and called myths adds nothing to their worth as clarifying ideas, and at most evinces a return to the mythologies which is even more amazing since forty centuries of monotheism have had no other goal than to liberate humanity from their obsessive grip.” Emmanuel Levinas, \textit{Entre nous: On Thinking of the Other}, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 31.

\textsuperscript{206} Rabbi Ismar Schorch, “Catholic-Jewish Dialogue and the New Millennium,” in \textit{No Religion Is an Island: The Nostra Aetate Dialogues}, 101-108, quote 105. Rabbi Schorch quoted this statement by Heschel in his presentation to the \textit{Nostra Aetate} Dialogues held at Fordham University in 1998. He did this to demonstrate Heschel’s intense concern for a deeper understanding of the insidious nature of evil and the necessity for mankind to work together to face the cause of evil in themselves. Schorch pointed out that Heschel’s personal sufferings and
As a Jew himself, Heschel gives this description of the plight of the Jews with regard to righteous living in the midst of the deceitful practices of the world, “The Jews have been God’s stake in human history, regardless of merit and often against our will.” He explains this as God’s use of his chosen ones to bear in their flesh man’s inhumanity to man. As God’s stake in human history, the Jews are impelled to work for righteousness and they see the urgency for all people to recognize the impact combined efforts will have on the task of social justice for the sake of peace. 

C. Heschel and Vatican II

By the mid twentieth century, Abraham Heschel was the most widely known Jewish theologian in America. He had much in common with the other well known American Rabbi, Joseph B. Soloveitchik. In 1959 Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council and charged Cardinal Augustin Bea to prepare a draft on the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. An advisory group of six Rabbis was set up to address this issue and present their positions. Rabbi Soloveitchik and Rabbi Heschel were the foremost spokesmen. Their theologies were somewhat similar, both holding prayer and Sabbath observance as the losses in the Shoah, as well as his depth theology, brought him an invitation by the Vatican to participate in creating a document for new understanding and relations with the Jews. Consequently, Heschel was instrumental in developing the content of the Vatican Council II document Nostra Aetate.


208 Heschel's passion for the cause of social justice led to his participation in the Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in March 1965 at the invitation of Dr. Martin Luther King. It was a palpable demonstration of his devotion to the cause of human dignity and the respect for the Image of God in all persons. Of this endeavor for equality he said, “Our legs uttered songs; our legs were praying…our march was worship. What is required is a continuous effort to overcome hardness of heart, callousness, and above all to inspire the world with the biblical image of man… the opposite of human is demonic.” “What We Might Do Together,” in Moral Grandeur, 293.
preeminent religious experience of the Jew. With regard to halakhah they were of accord that it was the way in which Jewish life was actually lived. In all other areas they concurred as well. They saw Judaism as religious anthropology in the manner of the prophets’ vision of the world which exposed the truth of all circumstances, sought solutions, and demanded redress. They likewise understood religious life as obedience to the rubrics of the accepted faith, and human existence as centered in meaning. They did not speak primarily of Torah and Israel, as did the other rabbis, but of the “ultimacy of God.” Both, though, acknowledged the necessity of the state of Israel in terms of its potential redemptive significance. Rabbi Soloveitchik, however, opposed the presence of Jews as observers or as having any formal status at the Ecumenical Council. His main objection was the traditional position of the Catholic Church as proselytizers who had in mind conversion. He found this offensive to the integrity of the Jew as an authentic religious person in covenant with the God of Revelation. Heschel, though not opposed to Soloveitchik’s position, was more open to discussion of these problems and answered a request by Cardinal Bea to submit a memorandum for the document on the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. This memorandum began with those areas of faith where Judaism and Christianity concur. He followed this with his suggestions for improvement of the relationship between them. The substance of his proposal was as follows:

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209 There are other significant areas where Heschel holds that Jews and Christians have commonality; for example on the basis of the Image of God in all persons. He also lists many other beliefs they share. Heschel states, “However divided we are by doctrine, we are united by our being accountable to God, our being objects of God’s concern. More specifically, we are united by a commitment to the Hebrew Bible as Holy Scripture, faith in the Creator, the God of Abraham, commitment to many of His commandments, to justice and mercy, a sense of contrition, sensitivity to the sanctity of life and to the involvement of God in history, the conviction that without the holy the good will be defeated, and prayer that history may not end before the end of days.” Reuven Kimelman, “Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations,” Modern Judaism 24 (2004) 260.
Both Judaism and Christianity share the prophet’s belief that God chooses agents through whom His will is made known and His work done throughout history. Both Judaism and Christianity live in the certainty that mankind is in need of ultimate redemption, that God is involved in human history, that in relations between man and man, God is at stake; that the humiliation of man is a disgrace of God.

Recommendations:
1. That the council brand anti-Semitism as a sin and condemn all false teachings, such as that which holds the Jewish people responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus and sees in every Jew a murderer of Christ.
2. That Jews be recognized as Jews …and that the council recognize the integrity and the continuing value of Jews and Judaism.
3. That Christians be made familiar with Judaism and Jews.
4. That a high-level commission be set up at the Vatican, with the task of erasing prejudice and keeping a watch on Christian-Jewish relations everywhere.\(^{210}\)

When the draft for the document *Nostra Aetate* was presented to Heschel, he objected to the inclusion of the statement about eschatological hope for the union of Israel and the Church. Such a statement intimated once again the necessity for some kind of Jewish affiliation with the church and it placed the authenticity of the covenant in doubt. Heschel had an audience with Pope Paul VI to persuade him to change or remove this language from the document and revert to the original wording that had been proposed. The final draft of *Nostra Aetate* honored his appeal. There is no mention of conversion or unity. The document emphasizes rather aspects of faith to which Christianity is indebted to Judaism. The patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets are recognized as the source of revelation and faith, both the Virgin Mary and Christ are acknowledged as belonging to the Jewish people, blame for the death of Jesus is ascribed to the

individuals responsible at the time and not the whole Jewish people, anti-Semitism is
condemned, and a call for greater mutual knowledge is put forth.

Heschel’s intuitive trust that involvement of a Jew in Vatican II would be beneficial
proved a great benefit to both faiths. Heschel states, “The supreme issue is whether we are alive
or dead to the challenge and the expectation of the living God. The crisis engulfs all of us. The
misery and fear of alienation from God make Jew and Christian cry together…The world is too
small for anything but mutual care and deep respect; the world is too great for anything but
responsibility for one another.” Such a statement illustrates Heschel’s confident belief that the
blessings of the Sabbath provide the strength to meet the challenge to defeat ignorance and the
hostility among nations.

The voice of Abraham Heschel has reverberated throughout the twentieth century in
wisdom and genuine concern for the religious situation not just of Judaism but of all persons
seeking truth. His devotion to Sabbath observance, to the integrity of the prophets in their
steadfast openness to God’s Word, and to the humility of obedience to halakhic life are an
inspiration to a world very lacking in principles and discipline. The words of John C. Bennett,
the president of Union Theological Seminary where Heschel was invited as a visiting professor,
are a fitting tribute to everything he represents:

Abraham Heschel belonged to the whole American religious community. I know
of no other person of whom this was so true. He was profoundly Jewish in his
spiritual and cultural roots, in his closeness to Jewish suffering, in his religious
commitments, in his love for the nation and land of Israel, and in the quality of his
prophetic presence. And yet he was a religious inspiration to Christians and to

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211 Kimelman, “Rabbis,” 259.
many searching people beyond the familiar religious boundaries. Christians are
nourished in their own faith by his vision and his words.\textsuperscript{212}

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the background that formed the foundation of the
theological thinking of Abraham Joshua Heschel. I have shown that the values of the Hasidic
family dedicated to Sabbath observance in which he was raised proved to be the dominant
influence in his life, even though he attended a secular rabbinical school and the University of
Berlin. I have demonstrated that Heschel examined carefully the validity both of his formative
training and of the Sabbath courts of his grandfather as he dealt with the philosophies and
ideologies of the thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century. Heschel’s belief in the living
God, in Revelation as a genuine communication of God to Man, in the Sabbath as the heart of
that communication, and in the importance of events as the bases of faith have been presented as
the substance of his depth theology. His religious convictions have been shown to be in contrast
to those of other prominent scholars such as Martin Buber who promoted the I-Thou theory of
relationship and Immanuel Kant whose theory of categories of the mind dominated German
philosophy at the time. Some mention has also been made of the socio-political situation of the
Jews of Eastern Europe and of the personal tragedies Heschel suffered in the Shoah. This was

\textsuperscript{212} Judith H. Banki and Eugene J. Fisher, eds., \textit{A Prophet of Our Time: An Anthology of the Writings of
done to emphasize Heschel’s extraordinary ability to continue to believe in God and in religion in general.

The description of the Sabbath as God’s gift of time is discussed as Heschel’s main contribution to the meaning of revelation and the covenant. He presents the Sabbath as primarily involving the presence of God through which there is delight and joy, healing and consolation and thus redemption. The time of the Sabbath is depicted as a stillness that brings the eternal into the present moment and gives a foretaste of the end time when all will rest in God. The Sabbath is also seen as an insight into creation that acknowledges the initial gift of life and rest in the beginning and God’s sustaining power which holds everything in existence in the present moment. In essence, the Sabbath is the ongoing gift of love of the creator God who remains with his creation and desires all to find rest in his presence.

Heschel depicts the Sabbath as a celebration of time within time. It cannot be forestalled; it descends with the nightfall of the sixth day unremittingly, bringing blessing and holiness. Heschel contends that the proper response to God’s gift of the Sabbath is gratitude and also a firm resolve to live in awareness of the presence of God through his image in all persons. As the time for a renewed dedication to the image of God in persons, he considers the Sabbath the source of inspiration for virtuous living through mitzvot.

A certain emphasis is placed by Heschel on Sabbath observance as obedience. This is a unique contribution in Sabbath understanding. Heschel contends that the Sabbath is the fullness of the Law in so far as it is worship of God in obedience to the demands of the day. The Sabbath instills attentiveness to the requirements of the Law in daily life and mindfulness of service to
others. Although refreshment and pleasure in the sacredness of the day are the reasons for removal from the demands of worldly tasks, obedience to observance and dedication to mitzvot remain the true values of the moments of Sabbath. These values counteract the indifference, discouragement, and sinfulness so rampant everywhere.

Because the Sabbath bestows the shekhinah (שְׁכֵּחִין) as the presence of God and a divine gift, Heschel refers to the Sabbath as an event. As event, the Sabbath brings to man the voice of God that will not let him fall into complacency.

With respect to the cooperation needed for universal justice and peace, Heschel’s thoughts on human nature have been explored, especially his conviction that all persons at some time are touched by their own limitations and the presence of the transcendent. His thoughts on conscience as a constitutive element of personhood were also discussed. According to Heschel, the acknowledgment of the transcendent and attention to the dictates of conscience become the basis for choice. For fruitful dialogue among different people, this rationale for the basis of choice is to be taken into consideration. Heschel maintains that acknowledgment of a stance of conscience elicits trust, and trust brings people together. His delineation of four dimensions of religious existence also leads toward a positive encounter among those seeking to alleviate the human condition riddled with violence and deception.

Heschel’s belief in the possibility for people to come together in peace was the basis for his involvement in writing the memorandum for “Improving Catholic-Jewish Relations” in preparation for Vatican Council II. He openly acknowledged the shared beliefs of Jews and Catholics especially God’s involvement in human history and the divine inspiration of the
Hebrew Scriptures. His sincerity in dialogue with Pope Paul VI in presenting the Jewish position with respect to the death of Christ and the permanence of the Covenant enabled those drafting Nostra Aetate to present the prophets as sources of revelation, the Virgin Mary and Christ as belonging to the Jewish people, and to attribute blame for the death of Christ to the individuals responsible at the time and not to the entire Jewish people.

In conclusion, Abraham Joshua Heschel had enormous influence on the religious thinkers of the twentieth century, opened channels of insight within his own faith, and challenged others to review their understanding of the otherness of God and yet his intimate relation to man. Perhaps above all, Heschel’s understanding of the ineffable God who spoke to Job from the whirlwind is seen in his presentation of the prophets who did not want to be chosen, but allowed themselves to be the mouthpieces of the call for justice amidst the viciousness of a callous world. He saw in the message of the prophets a medium for the establishment of the peace that comes from devotion to the Sabbath and the rest found only in the Sabbath presence of God. So for Heschel, the words of the prophets were a cry to heed God’s injunction to “remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.” His hope never wavered that people will see the image of God in all, will act in conscience to eradicate injustice, will come together in cooperation, and will know something of the joy God desires for the earth, the joy of the Sabbath.

For Christians, the theological insights of Heschel and his description of the Sabbath in all its varied aspects shed a profound light on the person of Jesus in his appropriation of the Sabbath to himself and his proclamation of being Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8).
Chapter 3

The Sabbath as Jewish Identity and Messianic Vision

with Reference to the Work of Francine Klagsbrun

Introduction

While the previous chapter discussed the theology and Sabbath understanding of Abraham Heschel as formed by his Hasidic background and university studies, this chapter will examine the Sabbath with particular attention to its meaning both as a domestic feast centered in the home and as a foretaste of the world to come. The Sabbath will be shown to be a source of strength for the practice of good within the adversities of the present world and also a vessel of hope for the ultimate reign of God as the Lord of all creation in a future realm of peace. This discussion will involve an examination of the writings of Francine Klagsbrun, a contemporary Judaic scholar whose orthodox background and education undergird her explanations of ritual and her insights into the present relevance of Sabbath celebration. Although her basic theology of the Sabbath substantially parallels that of Heschel and the Hasidic tradition, I will present Klagsbrun’s contribution in terms of her ability to depict the moments of the day through actual descriptions of the preparations, the customs, and the activities that are the substance of this sacred weekly time. Then, with respect to the re-evaluations modern thought has suggested about observance, I will address problematic areas about which Klagsbrun is candid in giving her own perspectives.
Particular consideration will be given to Klagsbrun’s commentary on the all pervasive nature of the Sabbath, not just for the immediate twenty-four hours of its time-frame, but for its penetration into all moments of time, bringing the presence of God to the person as he moves from Sabbath to Sabbath. This perspective raises questions about the nature of the Sabbath as eschatological sign, as the foretaste of the final revelation of the covenant in the end-time. Klagsbrun’s presentation of the eschatological Sabbath as the ultimate gathering-in of all people into the peace of God will thus be examined in the context of the Judaic understanding of the plan of creation.

There will be three parts to this discussion. The first part will present a general overview of the background of Francine Klagsbrun as a major influence in the world of Judaism today. It will describe her upbringing in the Jewish faith and her affiliation with the Jewish Theological Seminary. Then there will be a discussion of her interpretation of Jewish life as centered in Sabbath observance.

The second part will concentrate on the reasons why the Sabbath takes precedence over all the other feasts of Judaism. In this part I will examine the Sabbath in relation to both creation and the end-time. The purpose of this discussion is twofold: first, to understand the similarities that exist in Jewish and Christian thought especially with respect to dedication to good works grounded in an ever-deepening awareness that all persons are an image of God, and second, to probe the richness of the Judaic Sabbath as God’s revelation for man’s sanctity. This will involve a discussion of the “messiah” as that which draws man forward to the fullness of time. In this discussion I intend to show that there is some mutual understanding about the messiah,
the meaning of the kingdom, and man’s part in its formation. Also discussed will be the correlation of rest and dependency and of human dignity and the image of God as foundational to an understanding of Sabbath restrictions. Particular attention will be given to the home as the center of Jewish celebration to offer a contrast to contemporary religious practices which tend to ignore ritual, to schedule life around activities outside the home, and to experience religious functions solely in church settings. With respect to the manner of Sabbath celebration, particular attention will be given to the meaning of light, to the importance of study, and to the refreshment that enjoyment of Sabbath time brings to the spirit. Finally, some issues particular to observance in modern times will be addressed.

In the third part, I will examine various aspects of the Sabbath as they resonate with Christian understandings, in particular: divine presence: the shekhinah (שְּכִינָה) the Eucharist; mitzvah and works of mercy as the way of personal holiness in daily life; and the anticipation in hope of God’s gift of final glory.

I. Francine Klagsbrun: a Contemporary Jewish Scholar

A. Diversified Educational Background

As a child born into the orthodox community of Jews in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn, New York in 1931, Francine Klagsbrun (née Francine Lifton) received her first level of education in the Shulamith Orthodox School for Girls. Such an education grounded her in the traditions of her Jewish faith and instilled in her a halakhic approach to life and family. After
twelve years of such formation, she went on to attain an undergraduate degree with honors from Brooklyn College. From there she entered the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University where she received a Master’s degree in Art History. However, her love of Judaism eventually brought her to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary where her passion for classical texts and languages earned her a Bachelor’s degree in Hebrew literature. This diversified background has served her well in the different areas in which she has participated in the Jewish community.

B. Religious Philosophy and Contribution to Jewish Life

Primarily a writer, Klagsbrun has approached many topics of contemporary concern with careful research and astute investigation. Her interest in psychology and human development has led to the publication of articles and books on emotions and sibling relationships, marriage and divorce, and problems of youth.\(^{213}\) Her commitment to Jewish values and heritage is reflected in her extensive scholarly study of Jewish history and traditions which find expression in her work entitled *Voices of Wisdom: Jewish Ideals and Ethics for Everyday Living* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). She has also written about the annual feasts and festivals in her book entitled *Jewish Days: Jewish Life and Culture around the Year* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996) For this accomplishments the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded her the honorary degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters. Sensitive to the situation of Jewish women in the contemporary practice of their faith, Klagsbrun has espoused the cause of the feminist movement as it calls for a re-evaluation of the place of women in Orthodox understanding. As an

\(^{213}\) Outstanding among her writings designed to heal fragmented family situations and to foster holistic human relationships are her books: *Too Young to Die: Youth and Suicide* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985) and *Married People Staying Together in the Age of Divorce* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985).
expression of her involvement with the reassessment of woman’s role in Judaic practices, she has a monthly column in *Jewish Week* entitled “Thinking Aloud.”

In the light of her academic background and her devotion to a deeper discernment for women in Judaism, she was appointed to serve on the Commission for the Study of Women in the Rabbinate. This commission was involved in the process of deliberation on the question of ordaining women as rabbis in the conservative movement. Consequently, the Seminary faculty voted to admit women to rabbinical school in 1983.

Her art history degree brought her to the position of co-chair of the exhibitions committee of the Jewish Museum and qualified her as a consultant member of the Artistic Advisory Committee of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. Because of her continued affiliation with the Women’s Dialogue Group of the American Jewish Committee and her membership on the Board of Directors of the National Jewish Book Council, she is considered a leader in Jewish religious life. The esteem in which she is held found expression in her being chosen as the first woman to carry the Torah to the Western Wall as part of a prayer service during the First International Jewish Feminist Conference.

While Klagsbrun affirms that she is supportive of modern age movements, she does not consider herself a mystic or a spiritualist or associated with the “New Age.” Her book *The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day* (New York: Harmony Books, 2002), brought her recognition as a National Jewish Book Award finalist. This in-depth description of the Sabbath is witness to her knowledge of and sensitivity to Jewish traditions. In it she offers a historical perspective with reference to Biblical observance of the day, the influence of the
Kabbalists, and present observance. Her presentation is clear in showing the complexities of this sacred day, the ethical values that define it, and the beauty inherent in it. Her writing demonstrates the ardent devotion of her own personal involvement in Sabbath practice and the central place of woman in this Jewish observance. In his discussion of the importance of tradition, the English biblical scholar Robert H. Charles makes this comment, “There are among the faithful those who assimilate and verify the truths of the past and thus preserve the spiritual tradition; for spirit is born of spirit as flesh is born of flesh. There are others who do more; they not only verify the religious truths of the past but they add to them others won in personal communion with the immediate living God.”

The dedication, scholarship, and devotion of Francine Klagsbrun to her Jewish heritage merits inclusion with those thus described.

The following discussion of the Sabbath will draw from the writings of Francine Klagsbrun.

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II. Aspects of the Sabbath: Meaning and Celebration

A. Meaning of the Sabbath in Jewish Life

A tradition recorded in the Talmud states that if every Jew properly observes two consecutive Shabbats, the messiah will come. The book of Isaiah describes the proper observance of the Sabbath so that there is no mistake as to what God desires of those he has chosen so that the Messiah will come and there will be peace in the land. According to Isaiah, the day acceptable to the Lord entails a dedication to righteousness and demands rather specific actions of the faithful which include: “releasing those bound unjustly…, setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke, sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, and not turning your back on your own” (Isa 58: 6-7). These requirements do not indicate that one should pray at home or in the synagogue, but point immediately to that which will bring about the messianic kingdom promised to Israel and prefigured especially in the sabbatical years and the years of Jubilee when the fields are left fallow and open for the poor to glean, when debts are forgiven, and when land is returned to its original owners so that families can again be integral and resettled on their native soil. In other words, the Sabbath is the day when the ways of God are honored, when man recognizes his responsibility to the earth and to others, and when peace descends on all. Such concentration on righteousness is the heritage that comes from the prophets and later from the Pharisees who taught, at the time following the

destruction of the Temple, that “one is credited for his knowledge and deeds rather than inherited wealth or family position.”

Francine Klagsbrun attests that “Shabbat is stamped indelibly on Jewish consciousness.” She contends that what the prophets have stated is ingrained in the heart of the Jew. Therefore, it is imperative to honor the Sabbath through proper observance, study, and examination of life with respect to what God asks, and in thanksgiving for all that God has bestowed. Study of Torah and the tradition is therefore necessary in order to have an understanding of the nature of God, and thus be able to imitate God. Since Jews believe that persons are made in God’s image, to act in accordance with this image is the way in which the Jew blesses time and makes up for the evil that pervades the creation. As Jews bless the Sabbath day, pray, enjoy meals, and affirm life through sharing with family and friends, concern for the difficulties and demands of daily labor evaporates.

In the light of this insight into the correct disposition for celebration, the words of Isaiah become the atmosphere that surrounds all Sabbath celebration, “your righteousness shall go before you…the light shall rise for you in the darkness…and the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land…you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring

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218 The concept that evil is scattered all over the world comes from the Kabbalistic interpretation of creation and the emanations of the Godhead. See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian Books, 1978) 122-8. The containment of the scattered evil becomes the work of man by the doing of good deeds. Klagsbrun asserts, “Men and women participate in the ongoing act of creation, and the things we do and the way we behave influence the nature of the world.” *Voices*, 391.
whose water never fails…they shall call you restorer of ruined homesteads” (Isa. 58: 8, 10-12). This last image has particular value as the Sabbath is meant to gather the treasures of time together so that a renewed disposition will see things more in the perspective of God and direct choices toward the common good. One’s labor thus becomes a venue of sanctification.

While the command to rest sets aside twenty-four hours each week for man to recollect the gift of life, the beauty of creation, and God’s unfailing goodness especially in the granting of the Law, it also maintains that the other six days are for work. Work in this respect is as much a gift as is Sabbath rest. Work also is a part of the covenant; it is only at the end of daily work that the Sabbath comes with its opposite message of not working. Imitation of God in Sabbath observance and a proper disposition toward work allow man to assist God in the establishment of the kingdom. Such is the historical background of Judaism. Hugh Schonfield comments, “Hebrews are a people who beyond all other people have held before mankind that there is a Divine Plan operating in history to which they are witnesses, and assures that ultimately the world will come under God to peace and harmony.”

A proper understanding of the Sabbath intimates this future end-time when all temporal instances of justice will be brought together in God, injustice will hold no sway, and there will be rest. Richard Bauckham describes this notion of Sabbath. He states, “The Sabbath is the anticipation of the eschatological goal of all God’s creative work in which he will come to rest in his creation and his creation will participate in his rest.”

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Judaism lies in the peace that will come from the righteous living of all the earth. Such righteousness was the task of the kings of Israel and Judah, but it did not come about and hence was relegated to the messiah, the idealized king, who would have true knowledge of God and perfect obedience to God’s will. In looking toward the end-time, the Sabbath also anticipates the messiah.

Francine Klagsbrun offers this description of the Sabbath, “The Sabbath is the most mysterious and unique of all days…It came into being at the beginning of time, at the moment the cosmos was created, a divinely inspired institution.” She then affirms this ardent belief of the Jewish people, “It (the Sabbath) exists from the earliest days of Israel’s history. It shapes the life of the Israelites as they flee Egypt and wander in the desert giving substance and rhythm to their days even before they receive the commandment at Mount Sinai to remember and observe it.”

Here Klagsburn is indicating that the Sabbath, as existing from the first moments of creation, is embedded in the consciousness of all persons. Orientation towards the transcendent

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221 Because of their orientation toward a future which will vindicate not only them, but through them, all of mankind, Jews continue to remain the model of steadfastness in their ability to endure the present. Schonfield attests, “The Jews have been a perpetual challenge and rebuke so that no society bent on self-aggrandizement and acting with intolerance and injustice has been able to stomach them. Their otherness, their confident assertion of Divine claims upon them, which made them necessarily different, has been a constant irritant.” Politics, 47.

222 The recurrent problem with Israel was disobedience, which had its greatest manifestation in the neglect of Sabbath duty. The Sabbath is realized only when work toward economic gain and toward self-satisfaction in creative endeavors is totally set aside. In its demands for observance, the Sabbath addresses the mind, the heart, and the will. It is the messiah figure that holds up the ideal of Sabbath behavior. By his obedience to the divine will, the messianic figure demonstrates to man the sanctification which dedication to the Law will bring about. Since the Law points to the moral nature of man, which undergirds his ability to do acts of justice and love, fidelity to the Law becomes the substance of hope that God’s Providence will guide through to the end. Fidelity to the Law is expressed in Sabbath observance.

223 Klagsbrun, Fourth Commandment, xi.

224 Ibid.
and the need for time to recognize this in some form of worship is man’s eternal heritage and the end to which he is destined. The revelation at Sinai confirmed this. Klagsburn explains, “The Sabbath has no ties to solar rotations or lunar cycles. Set aside as a sacred day, it became the source for the seven-day week, a time period unrelated to planting or harvesting. With its emphasis on rest and sanctity for every person, the Sabbath transformed human dependence on nature into something moral and, in doing so, it transformed the world.”

Both creation and redemption are recalled in the sacred time of the Sabbath. The exhortation in Exodus is to “remember the Sabbath and keep it holy…in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them” (Exod 20:8, 11). In the story of creation, man is created on the sixth day. Therefore, man’s first experience of God is rest. This closeness to God is meant to permeate all the days of man’s labor until the return of the day of rest. There are no prescriptions in the creation story about the observance of the day, but, in imitation of God, one ceases work and rests. The ancient rabbis, though, puzzled over God’s

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225 Ibid., xii.

226 Because man’s first experience is Sabbath rest in God, there is an urgency that Jewish boys participate in the Sabbath before they are circumcised. The prescribed day for circumcision is the eighth day after birth in order to ensure this. Circumcision on the eighth day marks the first day of new life as descendant of Abraham. The eighth day in Judaism is, therefore, a kind of new creation. This has implications for the Christian understanding of Sunday and the new life in the risen Lord. See Hebrews 4: 8-11; 14-16.

227 The more restrictive Sabbath regulations devolve from the labors done in the building of the sanctuary in the desert. At each completion of a labor, the report to Moses was “just as the Lord commanded” (Exod. 36:1-40:43). The manner in which these statements are recorded has a resemblance to the repetition in Genesis of God’s asserting that the creation “was very good” (Gen. 1:18, 25, 31). Thus the saving event of the Exodus, celebrated in the sanctuary, is linked to creation. God’s presence in both events becomes the basis of Sabbath observance, and rest consists in abstaining from any manner of work done in the building of the tabernacle. Westermann observes that “Exodus is the account of a happening that took place once only… and history begins with the encounter with the saving God at the Exodus from Egypt which determines all that follows and gives rise to a continuous historical exchange between creature and creator. …from Exodus on, time is presented in a succession of contingent historical events.” Westermann examines the connection between the accounts in Exodus and creation in Genesis and points out that there is a succession of geneologies in the Biblical creation story that progresses from
rest on the Sabbath because the Friday evening Kiddush states, “On the seventh day God finished the work of creation… and ceased from all the work that had been done.” So it seemed that God did some work on the seventh day to finish creation. Their conclusion was that God created menuchah (מנוחה), the serenity, tranquility, peace, and quiet necessary in order for man and all the earth to enjoy the goodness creation has to offer. Enjoyment of creation in the presence of God is what constitutes rest, and holiness comes from this rest.

Redemption is the other reason for observance of the day. One is to observe the Sabbath in remembrance of the saving event of the Exodus, “…For remember that you too were once slaves in Egypt and the Lord, your God, brought you from there with his strong hand and outstretched arm. That is why the Lord, your God, has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (Deut 5:15). However, rooted in the Exodus event is the marvel of creation, because God has brought his people out of the darkness of slavery to new life. The God who brings order out of chaos and holds the sea to its boundaries, has again controlled the forces of nature in the deliverance of the Israelites. Salvation is then further confirmed in the granting of the Law which binds the desert wonderers to the justice that will safeguard all life.

Klagsbrun considers the Exodus a new creation. She aligns the words spoken at creation with the ten utterances of divine speech on Sinai and comments, “The statements at Sinai created

the first created pair to Abraham who introduces the patriarchal cycle. He contends that “this gives continuity to all that happens and makes the biblical account of the origins unique in its kind in the history of religions.” Since Genesis creation stories are linked to the creation stories of other ancient civilizations, he asserts that “Israel’s confession of the God who rescued Israel from Egypt was extended back into the primeval events, and Israel spoke of its rescuer as the creator of heaven and earth,” precisely to show both the link to other narratives and the singular historical continuity of Israel’s history. Claus Westermann, Genesis 1-11 (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress Press, The Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 4, 601, 458, 6.
a new world order that corresponded to the creation of the universe.”228 She emphasizes that the words to Moses are presented in Hebrew in the singular and in the second person, so that they speak to everyone individually because everyone has the ability to live by them.229 With reference to the universal scope of God’s words in granting the law, Klagsburn states, “The commandments are all in the singular so that each person will feel that he or she, alone in the world, is responsible for studying, performing, and upholding them.”230 That the commandments are not beyond man’s capacity to obey is verified by Moses who instructs the people, “This command is not too mysterious and remote for you. It is not up in the sky… or across the sea…It is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out” (Deut 30: 11-14). Attention to the commandments is the way in which the new life of the Exodus people will bring peace and prosperity to the world because the words at Sinai suggest dialogue and connectedness. The communication with God experienced by the Israelites is to bring brotherhood among men, especially in the peace of Sabbath observance.

The Exodus, then, is the basis of Jewish awareness of the power of God to bring new life when human hope is at an ebb. The commandments granted directly after this event acknowledge and protect the sacredness of life and address the relationship of man both to God and to other persons. The Sabbath, as the central commandment, offers God’s presence as the place wherein man can meet others in truth and peace. The Sabbath binds heaven and earth in a way prefigured by the ladder of Jacob. However, man is responsible for the welcome the divine

228 Klagsbrun, *Fourth Commandment*, 20.
229 Ibid., 21.
230 Ibid.,
presence receives as the Sabbath descends to draw man into God. As reflective of both creation and redemption, the Sabbath is a renewal of the cosmic order and makes each week an Exodus, a new beginning.

Klagsbrun contends that the Sabbath is different from the other days because it takes its uniqueness from the descent of the shekhinah (שכינה), the last emanation of God that brings the divine presence to earth according to Kabbalistic understanding of the divine nature. The Sabbath presence of God brings newness, joy and delight. Klagsbrun maintains that “the Sabbath calls for making a new world every week by transcending the world and entering a different realm of existence – the realm of the holy.”

The realm of the holy to which Klagsbrun refers is initiated by the lighting of the Sabbath candles which beckons the Shekhinah (שכינה) to bring down a protection of celestial peace and holiness. However, such divine holiness cannot be experienced by man without divine assistance. This assistance comes in the form of “Sabbath souls” (נשמה יתרה) which, according to the Kabbalah, are carried by the Shekhinah (שכינה) from the celestial heights. In the heavens, robes of light wrap around these special souls, which then attend the descent of the Shekhinah (שכינה) who imparts them to participants in the Sabbath gathering. In this way, the ability to participate in every aspect of the day is deepened. As the candles provide warmth and glow to the evening, the Sabbath souls (נשמות יתרה) provide interior light and spiritual insight.

The Sabbath souls (נשמות יתרה) have particular significance with respect to Israel’s destiny. While the Exodus is a singular event in the history of Israel, it has an effect on Israel’s entire

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231 Ibid., 86.
future. Commemorated on the Sabbath, the Exodus recalls the definitive nature of God’s power, and it prefigures the final bringing to perfection of all human history. The Sabbath is a concrete foretaste of this perfection and through their reception of the additional soul (נשׁמה יתרה), the faithful are temporarily drawn into the sanctity of the messianic kingdom. Klagsbrun explains, “Shabbat is an appetizer, a whisper of a different time and place, a world the rabbis said is completely Shabbat…all beauty and light and peace and serenity… the flavor of paradise”232 In other words, Shabbat is such a transformation in time into the end-time that it brings the end-time into the present moment. In Hasidic understanding, “the future world takes its source from the Sabbath and is, therefore, just an offshoot of it.”233 The Sabbath, as the presence of God, draws everything forward and moves all creation to its culmination when all will worship the Lord together. The paradox of end-time within time reveals that “Jews live simultaneously in two worlds, as on two levels: the real, material here and now world, and an eternal world of the spirit, dreamed of and hoped for.”234

The two worlds in which the Jew lives are interwoven through human actions that have repercussions in the spiritual realm. Such actions bring the holiness of the heavens to earth in the form of wholeness of life. The Sabbath, as the seventh day, enjoys the perfection attributed to the number seven. Klagsbrun offers this explanation for the relationship of Judaism to the number seven:

232 Ibid., 228.
233 Ibid., 234.
234 Ibid., 229.
Standing for harmony and divine perfection, seven easily found its place as a sacred number to many groups. Some Bible critics see in the seven-day biblical story of creation a reflection of the significance of the number seven throughout the ancient world…Although the biblical description of creation in seven days may relate to the widespread use of the number seven, no other people portrayed the creation of the world as occurring in seven days. Although other societies celebrated seven-day festivals, none consistently divided the week into seven days – the ancient Hebrews invented the week as we know it. And although other people had days when work was forbidden, no other people had a persistent pattern of work and rest, a regular, recurring seventh-day Sabbath for all persons. This remains one of Judaism’s great contributions to civilization.  

As a spiritual gift of God in the beginning and as the final destiny of joy and love, the Sabbath provides intervals of perfection that have a temporal culmination in the Sabbatical year, the seventh year, when in the past slaves were freed, debts canceled, and the fields left fallow to grow on their own and provide natural sustenance to any who came to harvest. The Sabbath found further perfection in the Jubilee year, the fiftieth year after seven sabbaticals, when all property reverted back to the original owners to ensure that families remain within their ancestral heritage and be identified with a particular lineage. In these instances, the Sabbath provided a balance of justice. The Sabbath continues to be a reminder of the necessity for the sharing of wealth.

B. The Sabbath as the Messianic Hope of the End-Time

Judaism is based on promise. When God appeared to Abraham, God said he would make Abraham’s reward very great and give him descendants as numerous as the stars (Gen 15:1, 5). Then God promised to give Abraham the land (Gen 15: 18-21). These promises were then

235 Ibid., 51, 52.
repeated with particular regard to Sarah, to the son she would bear, and to Abraham’s other son, Ishmael (Gen 17:15-16, 19-20). God further declared that circumcision was to be the sign of the covenant (Gen 17:10-14). In these promises, the faith of Jews has resided throughout their history. God’s faithfulness to the promises was evident to them in the power bestowed on Joseph in the time of the famine in Egypt, and later in the power granted to Moses to confront pharaoh and then lead the Israelites to freedom. Over and over, God moved the children of Abraham through every crisis. The Hebrews then marked these special interventions of divine goodness by permanent times of celebration so that they would never forget that they were the chosen people. These promises were the foundation of Israel’s great trust that God would continue to honor his word and move the nation into a future of justice and peace.²³⁶

Inchoate in these first revelations to Abraham is messianism, the expectation of a final anointed one who would eventually come to rule with justice and establish a permanent kingdom of goodness and righteousness. With the call of Abraham there was implanted in history a direction towards history’s fulfillment. When the promises of the covenant came to a certain fruition in the birth of Isaac, the foundation of hope was established for Abraham’s descendants.

The events witnessed in the time of Moses confirmed that God directs the path of history through the interjection of a newness that changes the course of time.²³⁷

²³⁶ Klagsbrun reminds that the three meals eaten on the Sabbath were designated by the Kabbalists as representative of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob so that the promises would permeate Sabbath celebration and remind Jews of their election. Fourth Commandment, 95.

²³⁷ That God’s universal design is constant from the beginning and operating within time toward a universal fullness is discussed by Walther Eichrodt. In his examination of Deutero-Isaiah he observes, “The kingship of Yahweh acquired the sense of the bringing in of the new age in which all nations would obey the sceptre of the one universal God (Isa 52:7). This close association of the title of king with Yahweh’s eschatological act of salvation is peculiarly the achievement of the prophet (Isaiah). This manner of kingship prefigures the certainty of a higher
The beginnings of the nation of Israel exemplify hope as expressed by Richard Bauckham in his analysis of the theology of Jürgen Moltmann. He states, “The effect of the promised future on the present is the element of the theology of hope…salvation is living in the message (of the future attainment of the promise).”

God’s actions in the history of Israel bespeak this unprecedented way of looking at time. From the initial revelation to Abraham, time has no longer been homogeneous, a future that will be and then subsequently cease to be. Time has become adventus, the final end breaking into the present to draw the world to it. “Adventus is the future that comes to meet us. It enables one to think of God as exercising the power of the transcendent over time; to think of God as the transcendent novum (the ever new).”

For Israel, the promised future is the eternal Sabbath, life in the eternal presence of God. In the light of God’s salvific actions for his chosen ones, their hope resides in the possibility of every manner of revolutionary change. Bauckham gives this description of the nature of hope and the change it points to:

Eschatologically inspired hope, therefore, promotes revolutionary rather than evolutionary change in the sense that it envisages a new state of affairs radically different from the present. This hope for the new state then becomes the criterion dispensation which in the end would triumph…The divine dominion embracing the whole world is seen not so much as a hope, a blessing longed for and expected in the future, but as a fact of the present moment…It is this present reality which blessingly orders the world here and now…As a result of thinking along these lines, the conception was arrived at of a Kingdom of Yahweh subsisting from the beginning of time and already established at the creation (Chron 29:11; Dan 3:33; 4: 31, 34). …Moses’ work only laid the initial foundation for the revelation of God he mediated. From those beginnings was to develop a permanent intercourse between God and the nation, with all the possibilities which that implied of further self-imparting by God.” Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament Volume One, trans. J. A. Baker (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1961), 199, 294.


for identifying those aspects of the present which will establish a continuity to the new.”  

Isaiah’s vision of the eternal Sabbath in the new Jerusalem and of the in-gathering of all peoples (Isa 65: 17-19; 66: 18-20, 23) sets the precedent for renewed and fervent Sabbath observance as the link to the new time of the parousia.

The initial promises to Abraham were an extraordinary assurance about the life to come. The impossibilities overcome in the conception and birth of Isaac set a precedent as to the nature of what could be accomplished. The God who revealed himself to Abraham disclosed from the beginning that the path of his truth would lead through events beyond the scope of man’s human abilities. Sigmund Mowinckel describes Israel in terms of God’s eschatological plan not just for the Jews but for all people. He explains,

Through Moses and the historical events of the Exodus and the settlement, Israel had experienced Yahweh as a God of action who of His own initiative came and revealed himself, freely choosing Israel as his own people, and manifesting this choice through historical events. Yahweh is directing history toward a goal, the salvation of Israel. But in time this comes also to mean the salvation of the whole world. No human power can thwart Yahweh’s will for the world… In one way or another he would fulfill his covenant and his promises. There was purpose in his act of election.

Through the election of Israel as the light of nations, revelation becomes a constant source of renewal, bringing life out of seemingly impossible circumstances. In other words, God’s final desire for all that he made will be accomplished because of his word in the promises,

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culminating in the Law and the gift of his continuous presence in the Sabbath. Revelation, as the action of God in time, creates a perspective on the work of man in the progress of the world. Revelation in the gift of the Law emphasized the separation of the seventh day from the other six. In doing so, the Law affirmed man’s position with respect both to divine worship and to the stewardship of the earth. Klagsbrun describes the relationship of the Sabbath with the other six days as a tightness. She states, “Twinned with the necessity to rest one day a week is the duty to work on the other days…And according to the rabbis, just as the Torah was given as a covenant, so was work given as a covenant.”

Therefore, through Sabbath observance, man lives oriented toward the presence of God, and through work, the holiness of the Sabbath permeates ordinary time, offering hope through a God who had overcome the oppressions of the world.

Judaism’s recognition of God’s part in history was essential to its attempt to understand the end to which mankind was moving. Judaism was keenly aware of the difference between man’s ability to negotiate material reality and God’s saving actions. While progress based on process remains within the scope of man’s creative abilities and social programs for the benefit of mankind can be envisioned, the ultimate questions of death and man’s destiny are of a different magnitude. In the light of Judaism’s acceptance of the marvelous, Bauckham points out the insufficiency of the modern theory of progress which asserts that movement forward is maintained through ever increasing knowledge that considers present problematic conditions simply as situations needing further investigation and study for resolution. He rightly states, “…the negative as lack or inadequacy in the present is the driving force of process which

242 Klagsbrun, *Fourth Commandment*, 137.
proceeds dialectically as negative is negated and the ‘not’ is taken up into a ‘not yet’. This dialectic overcomes the negative only insofar as the negative has the possibility of becoming a ‘not yet’. It cannot overcome the abyss of nothingness into which all being sinks. At the point where all possibilities of humanity or nature run out in hopeless suffering or in the face of death, it offers no negation of the negative. Immanent transcending can awaken hope for new possibilities in the area of ‘not yet’ being, but not in the area of ‘no longer being’.”

In this evaluation of modernity, Bauckham intimates that man’s efforts find true fulfillment only in the mystery of the divine plan which brings all effort to culmination in eternal happiness, something man is incapable of harnessing himself. Biblical eschatology is a reminder of those aspects of existence man cannot surmount. Biblical eschatology rests on what is the essence of every Sabbath, namely, a God who creates out of nothing and who has demonstrated that, when earthly possibilities fail, his power of creation continues to sustain, even beyond death. Through the promises and the covenant renewed in Sabbath prayer and study, God continues to enter into history to ensure that his righteousness is carried out and that his lordship prevails. The trust engendered by the experience of God in the Sabbath has made the faithful observers capable of extraordinary endurance throughout the centuries in anticipation of the messianic age as predicted by Jeremiah who proclaimed, “If you keep the Sabbath holy, abstaining from all work on it, then, through the gates of this city, kings who sit upon the throne of David will continue to enter…This city will remain inhabited forever” (Jer 17: 24-5).

243 Bauckham, Moltmann, 18. Process here is understood as man’s use of the earth to move forward into areas not yet developed. The dialectic of man and the earth is dependent upon available resources that produce something new, something not yet realized. What can be perceived from what is already present can be accomplished, but before the utterly negative, man stands helpless.
The havdalah ceremony, which closes the Sabbath rituals, is the medium through which the power of the Sabbath continues into ordinary time. Since the coming week embodies the unknown, the security of the Sabbath must be spread out across the incoming time. This is done through the lighting of the many-wicked havdalah candle, the inhaling of aromatic spices, prayer, and song. Klagsbrun notes that “as the verses continue, the comfort of trusting in God’s providence and protection begins to outweigh anxiety about the future.”\textsuperscript{244} Words from the Book of Esther which remind of victory over evil give reassurance as all recite, “For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness, and honor (Esther 8:16). So may it be for us.”

It was Jeremiah who reminded the people of the power of the Sabbath to restore the integrity of Israel through the anticipation and coming of an eschatological kingly figure who would restore obedience to the will and Law of Yahweh. Through him, the Sabbath would be fully realized because his own submission to the divine mandate to care for the afflicted and for the children of the poor would be the inspiration for the people to do God’s will also. Mowinckel describes what faithful observance of the Sabbath was to bring about, “contentment amongst the brethren under the covenant, the fear of God on every hand, decent living, good demeanor, and sound morals…in a word, all that is meant by the word ‘yesu’ (ישוע), salvation.”\textsuperscript{245} Faithful observance of the Sabbath would initiate the glory of the end-times and the true messianic reign where there is knowledge of God (יְהֹוָה יִדְעַת) and therein “deliverance from

\textsuperscript{244} Klagsbrun, \textit{Fourth Commandment}, 217.

\textsuperscript{245} Mowinckel, \textit{Cometh}, 69. Mowinckel further explains that after the fall of Israel and the conquest of Judah, at the time of the later prophets, “the ideal of kingship crystallized into a present expectation and a specific promise of a definite person, who had already come or would come soon, and who was supposed to be the full realization of the ideal.” The earlier prophets were concerned with their own contemporary situations and the reform of the morals of the people, not the one who was to come. \textit{Cometh}, 98.
error and from the consequences of sin, remission of the punishment for sin, and the establishment throughout the world of the propitious rule of true religion and of right relationship to God.”

Sabbath observance accomplishes these ends through a transformation of heart that allows God to enter each individual life and be the source of strength for the performance of mitzvah (מִצְוָה), because mitzvah (מִצְוָה) moves all of time in a meaningful direction. Israel does not think of the messianic kingship as beyond this world. The restoration of the kingdom is not a return to the creational glory as in the beginning. The restoration of the kingdom rests on the concrete expectation of future righteousness and mercy which engenders a tension in the present that drives forward and gives hope. In Judaism, each Sabbath reminds of the miraculous newness God brings about in contrast to the transient material accomplishments that are the extent of man’s capacity. The final everlasting Sabbath will partake in the ultimate newness only God can provide, eternal life. Isaiah gives expression to this truth in his statement, “Salvation we have not achieved for the earth, the inhabitants of the world cannot bring it forth. But your dead shall live; their corpses shall rise; awake and sing, you who lie in the dust. For your dew is a dew of light and the land of shades gives birth” (Isa 26: 18-19).

The mystery of time and man’s participation in it find expression in the words of Qoheleth who recognizes that man vis-à-vis God confronts the timeless within time and achieves a new perspective on his own actions. The insight of Qoheleth is actually an insight into the essence of the Sabbath. Consider his observation:

246 Ibid., 207.
God has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into men’s hearts, without men’s ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work which God has done. I recognized that there is nothing better than to be glad and to do well during life. For every man, moreover, to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all his labor is a gift of God. I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever, there is no adding to it or taking from it. Thus has God done that he may be revered. What now is has already been; what is to be, already is; and God restores what would otherwise be displaced (Eccles 3: 11-15).

Enjoyment of the fruits of labor as a gift of God is directly bound to Sabbath rest which allots the time to find meaning in the quietude of inactivity and to rejoice in the accomplishments of all that has been undertaken as the work of God in one’s life. The Sabbath as a time that removes from diminishments, disappointments, and a pragmatic assessment of existence, acknowledges a positive flow of life in God who brings all things to fullness.

That God has put the timeless into man’s heart implies that man will endure and that creation will not be abandoned, but undergo restoration. In Sabbath understanding, man and creation are intertwined. An insight into this interconnectedness is given by Bauckham who explains, “Human nature is bodily existence and is linked, with all the senses, to the natural

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248 Isaiah describes peace as man’s recognition of God’s gifts as the source of all his abilities. “O Lord, you mete out peace to us, for it is you who have accomplished all we have done (Isa 26:12). The role of humility with regard to accomplishment and to man’s abilities is expressed in the gospel of Luke: “When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, ‘We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty” (Luke 17: 10).

249 In its vision of all persons as the Image of God, in the concrete blessings family members bestow and receive, in the affirmation of all persons celebrating together, and in the absence of technological and commercial resources, the Sabbath overcomes any superficial interaction such as described by Teilhard de Chardin who rightly observes, “It may be that in our human inter-relationships we come into contact with our fellows only ‘tangentially,’ through our interests, through our functions, or for business dealings – in either case, we are generally working, or seeking, enjoying ourselves or suffering, without loving – without even suspecting that it is possible for us to love – the thing or person with which we are concerned. Thus our interior life remains fragmented and pluralized.” Jean Maalouf, ed., Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: Reconciliation in Christ (Hyde Park, N. Y.: New City Press, 2002) 236.
world on which it is dependent… for it is in this world that our human world is embedded. Because there is no such thing as a soul separate from the body, and no humanity detached from nature… there is no redemption for human beings either without the redemption of nature.”

The newness of God’s ever-creative activity and the redemptive mercy of the divine heart underpin the messianic implications of the Sabbath. Each Sabbath is a newness imbued with communion with God who draws life forward and overcomes the restraints of evil. What is found in Isaiah, and what is celebrated in each Sabbath is a newness that is different from what has ever been experienced. Yet, in some way, this newness will be seen as having derived from its original created form. The new clothes, special foods, and elevated way of speaking and acting that give substance to the ritual of Sabbath observance are but human attempts to indicate the transformative glory God has planned for those who are faithful. The solemn serenity of the Sabbath in its removal from worldly affairs intimates a movement from transience and death, from sin and evil to a perfecting in glory of what has been imperfect. Klagsbrun points out that in a yet imperfect world, “the best we can do is search for the spark of God within ourselves and destroy our inner hametz, whatever internal evil stands between us and redemption.”

The following comment of Moltmann brings a further perspective to Klagsbrun’s insight, “The new creation does not come simply to perfect the old creation but to do something radically new which transcends any capacities latent within it. There is no natural capacity for the new within

250 Bauckham, ed., God Will Be, 13-14.

251 “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See, I am doing something new!” (Isa 43:18-19).

252 Klagsbrun, Fourth commandment, 220.
the old. The proper question is not about the latent capacities of the created, but rather about the capacities of the God of the future to do with his creation that which he has promised."\textsuperscript{253} By living the Law as Klagsbrun indicates, man disposes himself to receive the transformation about which Moltmann speaks.

For Jews, each Sabbath is an instance in time in which they can open their hearts to the transforming graces God bestows in the prayerful stillness and human communion of the day. While the Sabbath stands as a reminder of the sacred events that have shaped Jewish history, it also has a singular importance as a shelter in which the faithful can rejoice in their lives and share the goodness with which God has blessed them. This turns us to a discussion of the home as central to Sabbath worship.

C. The Sabbath as Rest and Human Dignity

A comment that may be made about the condition of modern society is that it seems never to rest. Activity is constant and diversion has subtly displaced genuine relaxation. So much of what presents itself as advantageous to life is usurping life by creating the false impression that more advanced technology will save time for better things. Pierre Hadot makes the following observation about this phenomenon, “The contemporary period is one in which man perceives everything in the form of a device and an exploitable supply, including himself, and simultaneously loses his own being.”\textsuperscript{254} Such a condition is the situation which observance

\textsuperscript{253} Bauckham, ed., \textit{God Will Be}, 68.

of the Sabbath is meant to overcome. However, cessation of activity in Sabbath observance is not just a removal from the demands of the world and its transient nature in order to calm and renew the spirit. Cessation of activity on the Sabbath is a recognition that God alone creates and all man’s efforts are futile and have no permanence. Cessation of activity acknowledges that the efforts of man are limited and incapable of assuaging the longing for peace. Cessation of activity, then, serves to turn attention beyond man’s self-centeredness to the need for worship and adoration. Removal from ordinary affairs offers the opportunity to express gratitude and to find meaning in areas that are frequently overlooked in daily routines. Because activity so dominates present life styles and technical devices superabound, time for reflection is often eliminated and prayer ignored. The physicist Werner Heisenberg has this comment about the danger to one’s aesthetic nature the modern environment poses, “We live in a world so completely transformed by man that we everywhere encounter structures of which he is the author: the use of instruments in daily life, the preparation of food by machines, the transformation of the countryside…, so that man no longer encounters anything but himself.”

This situation of modern man is further expressed by Romano Guardini who sees present-day society as imposing upon itself a manner of life that is impersonal and consequently incapable of creating any real authenticity in relationships. He contends that “consciously or unconsciously modern man imposes his spiritual will upon the cosmos. According to that will, existence is to be natural, an interweaving of natural powers and substances. At the same time, it must be ideal,

an interweaving of laws, values, norms. Never is it to be personal. Only impersonal (abstract) reality, impersonal norms are granted existence. The idea of a personal power behind nature is all very well in poetry; however, as soon as it becomes serious prose, it is branded mythology and superstition."

The Sabbath was given as gift to rescue man from such pitfalls. On the Sabbath man is brought back to the recognition of his own limitations and is reminded that the environment he has created has come from materials which he has not fabricated. By removing herself from all labors, from all gainful productivity, and from monetary transactions, man is confronted with only himself and his deepest purpose in life. The contrast between the ultimate end of man’s labor and the ends that God has for the earth for the sake of man’s happiness is aptly expressed in this remark by Bauckham, “When human beings anticipate the completion of creation by keeping the Sabbath, not interfering in their environment by labour but simply letting it be itself, then they acknowledge creation to be God’s creation with its own value for God." Man’s need to recognize that God alone brings life and directs history is the wisdom of the Sabbath.

Here, it is useful to keep in mind that it is the Jews who have given the world the seven day week, a cycle not dependent upon the heavenly bodies or the harvest seasons, but on revelation. Six days of labor culminate in rest. Rest derives not just from a removal from activity, but from the refreshment of love bestowed by the one who brought life into existence, personal existence attended by providential care. Consequently, the movement of time through

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Sabbath observance lifts man from the drudgery of continuous sameness and of his own oppressive responsibilities, and allows him to relinquish everything to God who alone knows how to tend his creation. In Sabbath worship and adoration, man places himself before the God who has demonstrated his saving power in the Exodus and in the granting of the Law, and who will bring man through time to the eternal Sabbath where the peace of the kingdom will reign. The foundation of Sabbath joy is dependence upon God’s kindness and merciful love which transform existence and reassure hope for the transformation of the world. In his acknowledgment that God is engaged in both the events of history and the events of personal life, man finds relief from the burden that all depends upon his own efforts. The Sabbath assures that God’s salvation already reigns. Francine Klagsbrun intimates this in her statement, “It is a day when we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time; to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation.”

The Sabbath is witness that the mystery of creation is embedded in redemption; that God is creating at every moment and renewing man in his own image. The strength of this truth carries on into ordinary time and sustains. It is the source of the ability to be an inspiration and a comfort to others, and to accomplish the works of the Law. Bauckham refers to the ongoing nature of God’s creative act with this comment, “It is God’s creative act in which he, as creator who is faithful to his creation, does not annihilate but

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258 Klagsbrun, *Voices*, 306.

259 It is clear from the manner in which Klagsburn describes the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages that the greatest emphasis is not on God’s existence but God’s gracious mercy and how man lives in that. She explains, “Later scholars grappled with questions of God’s existence, but the biblical teachers and Talmudic masters rarely dealt with such matters. Belief in God was assumed. The issue rather was understanding the nature of God and striving to imitate him in our dealings with one another. ‘Just as he is gracious and merciful, so be you gracious and merciful,’ the sages taught.” *Voices*, 391.
renews his creation. The continuity of the old and new is not provided by the old, but created by God’s act of new creation.”

For Jews, trust in what God has accomplished in the past is the keystone of the faith that believes God will be true to his promises even when man turns from the path of righteousness. God’s fidelity in the reality of man’s condition of sin, is the salvation in which Jews moves forward in their sojourn through life. Elie Wiesel recounts the dissolution of anxiety and sinfulness the Sabbath occasions, “The jealousies and grudges, the petty rancors between neighbors could wait; as could the debts and worries, the dangers. Everything could wait. As it enveloped the universe, the Sabbath conferred on it a dimension of peace, an aura of love.” With every Sabbath rest, man returns to a dignity of personhood and a solemn hope for the transformation of the world.

D. Home: the Center of Celebration and Place of Holiness

The Sabbath is intriguing to those who are not part of the Jewish world. It seems that the Sabbath is fraught with regulations that bind up time rather than free the person to enjoy the moments of the day. Prohibitions on monetary exchange, restrictions on the carrying of items outside of the domestic setting, travel beyond certain distances, and a ban on the use of man-made devices, mark the general setting in which Sabbath time is experienced. Such an approach to religious celebration is alien to prevalent culture and very different from the practices of other

260 Bauckham, ed., God Will Be, 6.

denominations. Nonetheless, these remain the precepts that govern those who hold the seventh
day holy. The origins and explanations for them have been described in other sections of this paper. What I will elaborate on here is the actual way in which the Jews carry out the day of
rejoicing while abiding by these laws.

Lev Gillet addresses this paradox of joy amidst boundaries. He explains, “It is a deep
error to consider the Jewish Sabbath as a time of rigorous and exacting observance. The Sabbath
is essentially a festal day, a day of joy and loveliness…Sabbath feeling is found in the hymn
“Lekha dodi” (לכה דודי) sung on Friday evening comparing the Sabbath to a bride, and God to
her husband.” He follows this aesthetic image with another image, that of the household
awaiting those who have gone out to meet and welcome the bride. The concept of the bride
derives from the Kabbalistic notion of the nature of God, which pictures the Shekinah (הַשְּׁקִינָה)
descending from above and covering everything with a tent of peace. As the feminine and last
emanation of God in kabbalistic mysticism, it is the most distant and removed from the divine
being and, in a sense, is estranged from the Godhead. It thus has the closest contact to earth, and
therefore to the spirits of evil which roam freely to perpetrate their pernicious designs. The
stillness of the Sabbath night brings the presence of the Shekinah (הַשְּׁקִינָה) in all its purity to
the earth and upon every household. Through the Shekinah (הַשְּׁקִינָה), God is present in the
moments of the day, restoring his people and bestowing life. To welcome this presence is to

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262 A full explication of this hymn as representative of Sabbath music and as containing a fullness of the
meanings of the Sabbath is given later in the paper in the discussion of light as presence and music as spiritual
nourishment.

263 Lev Gillet, Communion in the Messiah (London: Lutterworth Press, 1942), 129.
effect a reunion of the emanations of God. This is foundational for the harmonious union of all those celebrating. As God is a joyful union, those who imitate God become a joyful union. The Sabbath is so important as a gathering together of people to bring them to God that Klagsbrun emphasizes that “though the Sabbath was fashioned last, it existed in God’s thoughts before any other part of creation.”

All the preparations that have been made in the home have the awareness of this spiritual encounter in mind. The Sabbath celebrates the perfection God desires of earth and the perfection to which all are being drawn in the righteousness of the kingdom to come. The entire atmosphere of the home on the Sabbath is a contrast to the environment of all daily routine. The setting is basically the same in every place the Sabbath is recognized. It is the woman of the household who initiates the time of the Sabbath by lighting two candles eighteen minutes before sunset. Since it is forbidden to light a fire on the Sabbath, the candles must be lit beforehand. However, the blessing may not be said until the Sabbath begins. Since a blessing must precede an action, the candles must be blessed before they are lighted. This conflict is resolved by the woman covering her eyes after lighting the candles just before sundown. At the prescribed moment, with her eyes covered, she recites the blessing. When she uncovers her eyes, she beholds the light of the Sabbath as if by a miracle. In this way the rules are kept. As it is the custom for the men to go to shul at the start of the Sabbath, this ceremony is the particular

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264 Bauckham describes the presence of the Shekinah (שְׁכִּינָה), in terms of “dwelling” which evokes the thought of the wandering in the desert when the Israelites dwelt in tents. The Shekinah (שְׁכִּינָה), the Sabbath presence of God, becomes the gift of his dwelling with the Jews as they wander through life. Bauckham explains, “The Shekinah is God’s dwelling in the midst of his people, his wandering in exile and suffering in the midst of his people awaiting redemption and the eschatological indwelling of God in the whole creation, which thus becomes his dwelling place.” God Will Be, 25.

265 Klagsbrun, Fourth Commandment, 200.
domain of the woman of the home. The moments of self-imposed darkness before the start of the Sabbath have been considered a time of great intimacy between God and the woman of the home. It is always believed that God would never refuse anything requested by the woman at this time. So intense is this interval that its efficacy is considered greater than that of the prayers at shul. Because the woman of the home is the medium of the Sabbath light and the first blessing, and because she has prepared the meals and has made the home beautiful, the woman is considered the heart of the Sabbath. “By bringing light into the world with the Sabbath candles,” Klagsbrun comments, “a woman celebrates and sustains life.” The responsibility of lighting the Sabbath candles has been a treasure to Jewish women throughout the ages.

The Sabbath is a new creation each week. As representing the kingdom of God’s justice and the glory God has prepared for those who keep his commands, the Sabbath resonates with the proclamation of the prophets that Israel is to be the light unto the nations (אורה לגוים). The two candles represent the twofold reason for the Sabbath; to remember (זכור) and to observe (מפרשים). As has been explained, remember denotes creation and rest in God’s presence as his gift to man, while observe refers to the worship and praise fitting to God because of his deliverance from slavery. The light of the candles makes the home the center of holiness. Klagsbrun notes the importance of the home in this celebration by referring to the time of the reformation of Judaism in the first century. She reminds that “with the temple gone, the Talmudic

266 Ibid., 122.

267 The prophecies of comfort (נשもあります) in the Book of Isaiah refer to Israel as the light of the nations in several places: “I formed you and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations” (Isa 42:6); “I will make you a light unto the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6); “Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance (Isa 60:3). This, the destiny of Israel, will bring the peace of the kingdom on earth. “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again (Isa 2: 4).
sages said the home would become a center of holiness. This holiness is confirmed with the blessing of the Kiddush cup after candle lighting. Two loves of bread adorn the Sabbath table representing the double portion of manna found in the desert on the sixth day so that no work of gathering would be done on the seventh day.

To carry out the instruction to glorify God and rest, the day requires that all things be different from the structures of the days of labor. Consequently, the table must be set with the best cloths and dishes, and those participating must wear special clothes or at least have their attire cleaned and pressed. The same applies to the manner of talking and even walking. Everything must be different because the Sabbath simulates the end-time of eternity with God when the earth will be transformed through God’s power and man will partake in this transformation. Rest is not the usual experience of this life. Thus, careful attention must be given if one is to have any true rest. Rest is of the world to come and is only prefigured here.

However, in putting aside worldly care, the atmosphere of the day undergoes change. For example, conversations lose their business tone and revolve instead around the interests of the family and friends gathered. Stories are told and things of the past are remembered. There are songs and prayers, reading and study of Torah (תורה), and various activities that do not require

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269 It is not just the subject matter of one’s conversation on the Sabbath that has a different character, but the tone and style of articulation assume a more unhurried and aesthetic quality. When walking (a common choice of activity for the Sabbath afternoon), one uses a leisurely stride with hands behind the back to indicate that time is of no concern in one’s enjoyment of the surroundings.

270 Bauckham points out that the Sabbath is “an anticipation of the eschatological future which is totally new and gift but in some way derived from the things of time. The Sabbath is the weekly interruption of God’s history by the anticipation of that history’s goal: God’s presence.” *Theology*, 239.
elements forbidden for use. After *shul* on Friday evening, the meal consists of specially prepared dishes. At the commencement of dinner, the mother of the home is blessed and extolled by her husband.\(^{271}\) The children in their turn are blessed also. This is in accordance with the Jews having been designated as a priestly people and instructed to be a blessing for the earth.\(^{272}\) The tone of the evening is festive and is meant to bring delight.\(^{273}\) The nature of Shabbat is life-giving. It is anticipated that husbands and wives will have marital relations that night and in the morning gather the family for prayer in the synagogue and have social interchange with others. The afternoon meal, while not as lavish as the meal of sundown, still retains the festive mood. However, as sundown approaches there is a mounting sense of sadness because Sabbath time has come to an end and the return to ordinary time is immanent.

The initial holiness of the Sabbath derives from the meticulous preparations that put everything in order and create an atmosphere of beauty in the home. The fact that such attention is given to detail each week has its effect on the lives of those participating. Not only is there respite from all the stresses of life, but the stresses are supplanted by a variety of positive experiences. The Sabbath is the exemplar of an orderly existence and is witness to the fruits such order bears. The possible fatigue or anxiety occasioned by the toil involved in making

\(^{271}\) Often this blessing takes the form of the praise given to the wife at the end of the Book of Proverbs. See Prov. 31: 10-31.

\(^{272}\) When the Israelites arrived at Sinai, Moses went up the mountain to God. Referring to the necessity for obedience to the commandments, God told the people, “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod19: 6).

\(^{273}\) It is Isaiah who introduces the Sabbath as delight with regard to the doing of God’s will for this special day.

אַם תִּשְׁתַּבְּשֵׁנָה מֵשְׁבַּת נֶגֶּב יָבֹא וְכֵלָי חַלְגָּת לְשֻׁבָּב נֶגֶּב If you hold back your foot on the Sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight... (Isa 58:13) The Sabbath as delight is the atmosphere of the day and the theme of שְׁבָטָה נְעָן (Sabbath delight) remains dominant in the songs and music.
ready for the feast dissipates in the first moments of candle lighting when eyes are shadowed and prayers are whispered in darkness as peace descends. While all the preparations provide a proper setting, the essential gift of the Sabbath is God’s presence in the prayer-filled stillness. Thus, the Sabbath becomes that “which the liturgy calls the “loveliest of days” (המדת ימיִים).

As the candlelight envelopes the room, Jews believe the extra soul descends on each one present to enlarge the capacity of the person to partake of the great graces of the day.

There is a particular holiness in the departure of the Sabbath. It derives from a central religious understanding in Judaism that concerns boundaries. “As God is distinct and separate from everything else in the world, so the Jewish people need to differentiate themselves from other people by establishing distinctions and separations in their lives - in the way they worship, the foods they eat, even the manner of their rest.”

Torah (תּוֹראָה), itself, through its instruction in the commandments (מצוֹת), is a set of boundaries beyond which man must not venture for fear of risking the loss of the integrity of his humanity. Based on these considerations, there is the necessity in Judaism to separate things. Separateness is a source of holiness in that it allows one to see true distinctions. The dietary laws not only forbid certain foods, but require that certain foods not be served at the same time as others. With clothing, different materials may not be woven together because of the differentiation of plant from animal. This manner of perception of things in terms of separations is also applied to time. While it is essential that man remain intimately related to God, at the same time, man’s human nature requires that he till the earth and

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274 Klagsbrun, *Fourth Commandment*, 188.

275 Ibid., 88.
make it productive so he can live. However, relentless occupation with the soil does not feed man’s spirit and “leads to the compulsive notion that man is what he produces”276 So a balance of life is given in the recurrent nature of the Sabbath.

Because of the Sabbath, man is continually directed into the future of his history even as he is living in the present and he is confirmed in his hope for the final transformation of the end-time. So engaging is the holiness of this day in its promise of eternal rest, that the aura of the Sabbath overshadows all the other days. As the Sabbath ebbs, the longing for its return is already in the heart. As the three stars that signal departure appear, and the Sabbath souls return into the heavens, those who have celebrated are bereft. This condition was well understood by the Baal Shem whose people were already so denigrated by their social position that their only solace was the Sabbath. When it was over, their state was worse than before. It was the Baal Shem who therefore initiated the third meal of the Sabbath so that the day could be extended into the evening and the beauty of the memory of the Shekinah (ה' לשניא) take a lasting hold to brighten the days to come before the Sabbath’s return.

To compensate for the double departure, that of the shekinah (שכינה) and that of the Sabbath soul (נפשית), aromatic spices became a part of the havdalah (הבדלה) meal. These spices, often contained in elaborate boxes, are to revive the weakened spirits and add one last pleasure to the final moments. The havdalah (הבדלה) candle with its many braided wicks is lighted to shed its illumination out into the future and be a beacon of hope. Klagsbrun explains, “The havdalah (הבדלה) torch represents God’s light, too powerful to draw close to. The light of

276 Bauckham, Molitmann, 51.
the torch symbolizes the extension of God’s light into this world and with it the hope for
redemption, reuniting with the great light of the divine….The havdalah (הבדלה) candle has
strength and luminosity to indicate the clearest distinction between light and darkness, sacred and
ordinary.”277 Along with this light, the sounds of the nigunim (נוגנ), those wordless melodies
that arise from the fullness of the heart, flow out into the darkness to permeate with holy music
the unknown that is to come.

The spices, the special candlelight, the prayers and songs move out into the week and
continue to permeate time until anticipation for the next Sabbath lifts the spirit and preparations
commence for a new celebration. This continuous cycle expresses an eschatological hope for the
future that God has prepared for those who have remained faithful. Light initiates and light
culminates the Sabbath gathering. The Sabbath dispenses light and blessing into the coming
days.

Since light symbolizes the presence of God and the providential care he has for creation,
and since the melodies of the nigunim (נוגנ) sustain the heart at the Sabbath’s close, I will turn
now to a consideration of these topics.

E. Light as Presence: Music as Spiritual Nourishment

Because the Sabbath is the loveliest of days (המדת ימם), it must begin in a most lovely way.
The Sabbath recalls creation and foresees the future in God. The beginning of creation is light
and the end of creation is glory. Therefore, the Sabbath begins with light, remains in light

277 Klagsbrun, Fourth Commandment, 220.
throughout, and culminates with the burst of light of the havdalah candle. This light of the Sabbath represents the pure and steadfast light that God created before the sun and celestial bodies were brought into existence. It represents the light that emanates from God alone, a light that does not need any intermediary to produce its effect.\footnote{The differentiation of the original light from any light that would derive from the heavenly bodies is very important. The fact that vegetation and the seed-bearing plants are brought forth on the third day, before the placement of the sun, moon, and stars, indicates that the sustenance of human life comes from God and not the energies of the universe. This recognition of God’s provision is repeated in the granting of the manna in the desert. The order of creation in Hebrew understanding stands in contrast to the religious ideas of the ancient civilizations that associated their gods with the sun and the planets.} It is the light in which man sees God. It is the light that will be in the end-time when all the created universe will yield to God’s power and his light will be all in all. Even the commencement of the Sabbath simulates the end-time because its descent is inevitable; man can neither evade nor ignore it. It comes as light in the darkness, enclosing time, compressing everything together, and separating man from anything that would take his concentration from the warmth and beauty of the presence of this spiritual light. The Sabbath lamps, in their awe and mystery, stand witness to the presence of God, just as did the menorah in the Temple. According to the Kabbalists, this presence of light, the shekinah (שְׁכִいָנָה), the last emanation of God), fills space making all things holy and at peace. The candle flames represent the rule of the shekinah (שְׁכִיָּה) over the world and reaffirm the teaching of the prophets that Israel is to be the light of the nations.

Light is the medium of vision. In an analogous way the special light of the Sabbath penetrates into the hearts of the faithful observers and allows them a new vision of themselves and those with whom they are celebrating.\footnote{The heightened ability to see and to enjoy is all part of the Sabbath mystery. It is the mystery that causes the senses to intermingle beyond normal perception. This mystery, which is the center of the Sabbath,}
uncritical manner, accepting and affirming so that all may return to ordinary time in a greater fullness of personhood. Therefore, conversations must find substance other than business concerns, career worries, or the affairs of the world in general. A positive sharing is required in an unhurried exchange.

The light of the Sabbath illumines the mind and the heart of the Jew through prayer, worship, study, and leisure activity. Assurance of God’s providence comes from the shared experience of the day and the depth of friendship. The light of the Sabbath is symbolic of the accomplishment of all the laws of Judaism and is dispensed out into the world through the Havdalah candle. The loving presence this candle embodies lives in the words and deeds of the Sabbath observers even though the shekinah (שחקנה) has returned to her unknown wanderings in the universe.

As a day of quiet and reflection, the Sabbath lends itself to an enjoyment of literature and music. Study of Torah (תורה) and discussion of the Mishnah are also traditional ways of spending Sabbath time. While such preoccupations dominated the Sabbath afternoons of the European communities, modern observers favor readings which allow a focus on Jewish life and history, especially since the formation of the state of Israel.

The Hebrew language is rich in literature from the classic philosophical tracts of the Middle Ages, through the scholars of the enlightenment, to the modern age of the writers of the

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derives from the revelation at Sinai when God “spoke” to Moses. The interpretation of God’s speaking is beyond human ability and lends to a confusion about which senses should be its vehicle. According to Rashi, the medieval Jewish scholar, the people saw the thunder and the sound of the horn. Klagsbrun indicates that “the letters of the Hebrew word for light, or (אור), have the same numeric value as the letters of the Hebrew word raz (razy meaning mystery.” This gives them a particular interrelationship. The light that permeates the Sabbath is the mystery of God unfolding within. Klagsbrun, Fourth, 6.
Holocaust and the Zionist movement.\textsuperscript{280} But even more important to Sabbath celebrations are the traditional songs that are cause for lingering around the table on Friday night. I will describe three of these to indicate how they embody the spirit and symbolism of the day.

The song that always welcomes the shekinah (נְכָשְׁנָ) as she descends in the twilight is the Lekha Dodi (לכה דוֹדִי), the hymn that invites the bridegroom to meet the bride with the words “Come, my beloved.” Several themes interweave throughout this song. The first is the recognition of the shekinah (נְכָשְׁנָ) as bride and queen. This theme is repeated as a refrain after each verse. The hymn commences with the reminder that the Lord has given the commandment to observe and remember the Sabbath; the Lord, the one God, is glorified and praised by this. Next, the origin of the day is cited as the last desire of God in creation and it is from the gift of menuhah (נְחָנָה) that the blessings flow. With the blessings, all cares and tears are banished so that each person is renewed and shares the glory of God. Such experience is a prefigurement of the final glory of the eternal Sabbath in which God’s promises will be fulfilled. A further verse indicates the requital that God will bring on those who have brought misery to the nation. This requital will provide the freedom for the people to be the light of the nations and live in the gladness of the Lord. Klagsbrun refers to Lekha Dodi (לכה דוֹדִי) as a ‘jewel’ because “it dwells on love and sorrow and a longing for a better place and ends as it began, an ode to the adored Sabbath Queen, the presence of God.”\textsuperscript{281}

\textsuperscript{280} Perhaps the most endearing writings are the poetry, legends, and short stories of such authors as Chaim Nachman Bialik and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Then there are the novels of Chiam Potok and the more intense works of such as Nobel Prize winner Smuel Yosef Agnon.

\textsuperscript{281} Klagsbrun, \textit{Fourth commandment}, 200.
It is clear in this hymn that the Sabbath anticipates the world to come and that what God has promised cannot be deterred by any human actions. As such, the Sabbath is portrayed as a perennial source of hope.\(^{282}\)

A second Sabbath hymn worth consideration is one attributed to Isaac Luria, the sixteenth century Safed Kabbalist. His hymn refers primarily to Sinai and the necessity to keep the Law, exemplified by the Sabbath, until the fullness of years. His imagery is of a broken people whose spirit has been imprisoned by strife. He then recalls the safety that comes with the light of the seventh day and the renewal that accompanies the reception of the second soul. A final reference to the Sabbath as a command reiterates that, through obedience, the kingdom of God will come to all who suffer now.\(^{283}\)

An interesting poem that has a somewhat different tone is one by the twentieth century poet Philip M. Raskin. I refer to it because it is more of a memorial to his mother and her dedication to candle lighting. Such a poem betokens how indelibly the sacred actions of the Sabbath take root in the soul. This poem refers to neither the creation nor the exodus but to his mother who, with face covered, kindles and blesses the lights. There is reference to Queen Sabbath, and gratitude is expressed for the joy of rest. The poet also alludes to his mother’s prayer for blessing upon him, her son, that he remain righteous before the Law. This is a very

\(^{282}\) Further discussion of Lekha Dodi may be found in, Trude Weiss Rosmarin ed., *The Oneg Shabbath Book* (New York: The Jewish Book Club, 1940), 53-4.

\(^{283}\) Klagsbrun acknowledges the generations of Jews that have labored in faithfulness to the Sabbath as the mark of their Jewishness. She refers to her own family, “We knew, of course, that most of our parents and grandparents and generations before them had suffered far greater consequences for upholding their religion than any of us ever had or would, but we felt proud anyway (to celebrate Shabbat). Keeping the Sabbath publicly became a mark of our Jewishness, a sign of our commitment.” *Fourth Commandment*, 67-8.
touching stanza. It is eclipsed only by the conclusion of the poem which is obviously set in a different time. It hints that the Sabbath is no longer being observed in the same traditional way. However, since the Sabbath inevitably descends in the first moments of the seventh day, the image of his mother at candle-lighting arises in his heart and deep inside him the Sabbath lights kindle.

In a very unique way this poem captures the essence of the Sabbath as presence; presence in the form of light, in the form of prayer that finds its meaning in hope, and in the form of memory that will not let go of persons who have been faithful. The mother and the Sabbath have become one, and the image imparts meaning even when the ceremony is not kept.284

There are specific songs for the conclusion of the Sabbath; notably one by Alice Lucas, the nineteenth century scholar of Talmudic legends and hymns and medieval literature. In her poem “Hymn for the Conclusion of the Sabbath” she portrays God as “He who sets the holy and profane apart.” Havdalah, the time of separations, is not portrayed here simply as ordinary time, but is cast as harboring within it a foreboding of impending evil. Havdalah retains within its boundary the delight in personal goodness that the safety and wholeness of the Sabbath engender, but it also portends the dangers of temptations to sinfulness that lie ahead. The tone of this poem is one of apprehension in the face of the gloom that stems from the possibility of transgressing the law. This malaise is mitigated, however, by the remembrance that God preserves from sin and saves from despair as his Sabbath gifts. This poem is a poignant

reminder of the treacheries that threaten the path of righteousness, and of our total dependence on God not just for Sabbath rest but for deliverance from evil.²⁸⁵

A final word needs to be said about the songs that do not have words but are simply melodies, more like meditative humming. These are the nigunim (נוגענים) which were mentioned in the discussion of havdalah (הבדלה). They are always the last of the music of the Sabbath as their melodies seem to trail off the structure of the day into the formless mystery of God, the infinite and ineffable. The origin of these expressions of emotion is attributed to the Hasidim whose manner of prayer was contemplative. Hasidic absorption in prayer often led to an inability to formulate in words the love of God thus aroused. The result of the attempts to communicate these experiences was the wordless utterings that had no formulations but emanated from the promptings of the heart. The melodies of the nigunim have a mystic quality and though they may seem a simplistic way of singing, the devotion and intensity of feeling that produce them are hard to imitate. This music is particular to the havdalah meal. The strains of these quiet sounds fill the evening and have a haunting aura that seems to linger long after the melodies have ceased. The nigunim penetrate into the non-Sabbath time and sustain the spirit.

F. Modern Issues

The richness of the whole Jewish tradition, founded on the Law given to Moses and the Sabbath as its center, has prevailed into the present time as an ethic of living that continues to exert a powerful influence on believers and on the world. This tradition remains a living vital resource that still has relevance in this most decidedly secular of generations. Klagsbrun asserts

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 73-5.
that the Jewish tradition is not stagnant, but addresses the needs and problems of every age.\textsuperscript{286}

From the beginning of the second century, the Rabbis of the Talmud were intent on pursuing the search for meaning in the scriptures to interpret the times subsequent to the destruction of the Temple.\textsuperscript{287} The study of the precepts of Judaism continues through the ages so that the truth of the past finds relevance in the new ways of ensuing generations.

While the essential premises of Judaism stand firm (that God the Creator is one and guides the world with justice and love), in our secular times, mitzvah ( מצווה ) has assumed a humanistic tone. How people act to create better human fellowship and a more wholesome environment is perceived as an expression of faith not necessarily linked to divine worship or Sabbath observance. This situation presents the problem of man not recognizing that his ability to act and to know in wisdom what that action should be, is centered in God. True mitzvah ( מצווה ) flows from humility and awareness of the need for the constant practice of good.

Klagsbrun sees mitzvah ( מצווה ) as service necessary in our time to build society and assuage the suffering of the world. She holds that it is up to the individual to realize this obligation in her

\textsuperscript{286} From her own vast study Klagsbrun concludes about the Jewish tradition, “to our ever-deepening absorption in self, these teachings point to ways of reaching beyond ourselves and outside our own needs. Even in biblical days, a body of oral teachings began to grow up around the written codes, elaborating on their rulings, explaining difficult concepts, and adapting the law they laid down to changing social conditions.” Klagsbrun, \textit{Voices}, xxiii-xxiv.

\textsuperscript{287} Klagsbrun notes the impact of these scholars on the reformation of Judaism. She rightly states, “The Rabbis of the Talmud changed the scope and impact of the Bible for all time. More than any other group of scholars, they revised, expanded on, and extrapolated from the Bible not only to meet new conditions in their society, but to make it conform to their own ideals of justice and morality… They established techniques for interpreting and reinterpreting Scripture that would keep it eternally meaningful.” Ibid., xxviii.
assertion that “Responsibility for what we do rests squarely on us, and we are judged both by God and by other people, by the choices we make.”

There is danger here that the choice to do good become purely for the sake of creating a better environment and life for more people. While this is laudable, such intent is basically humanism and not Judaism. Abraham Heschel presents a deeper perception of the source of man’s desire to build the earth and to form relationships. Heschel understands man’s actions as a response to God. The Jew listens to God and when God makes Himself known to man, it is so that man can hear His words and know how to act with respect to the stewardship of the earth and to his relationship with others. What God reveals so that man can accomplish this is that man is His image (צלם) and is capable of imitating the Creator. Heschel states, “Redemption will not take place at the end of days. It is a continual process. Not only the people of Israel, but the whole universe must be redeemed.” It is in the intimacy of the bond with God that man can achieve good, even though God has left man free to choose how he will act. In other words, God is necessary to man so that man can know his true nature, and man is necessary to God for the stewardship of the earth. For Heschel, God’s being in relation to man is pathos. God does not control man’s choices within the human condition, but remains with man in the midst of those choices and suffers, so to speak, in the continuing process of His will for the creation.

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288 Ibid., 392.

289 Abraham Heschel, The Earth is the Lord’s: The Inner World of the Jew in East Europe (New York: Henry Schuman Inc.), 72.

290 The understanding that God “suffers” is intricately connected with the dynamic of God’s involvement with history. Schonfield gives this insight into how God relates to history; it indicates how imperative it is for man to direct himself to God’s will. “History as the action of God is the realization of the intention of God…A statement of what the intention of God is in history is also a statement of what will in fact be realized in the future.” In effect,
Heschel, actions have an impact both on earth and in the heavens. Nothing is the work of man alone precisely because the whole of creation remains the work of God who will exert his will to the ends He alone foreknows.\textsuperscript{291} The Sabbath is the continuing source of strength to do good in the midst of life’s pathos.

Because of her position on man’s relation to the performance of deeds, the problem of the suffering of the innocent engages Klagsbrun in the same manner in which it puzzled the reformers of Judaism in the first century. She admits, “Jewish thinkers have struggled to reconcile their belief in God’s providence, His care and concern for the world and its inhabitants, with the existence of suffering and misery.”\textsuperscript{292} There is an even greater perplexity with this problem because of the Holocaust. Since Klagsbrun does not envision God in terms of pathos, she leaves this paradox to the resolution given by the sages who taught, “the ways of God cannot be fathomed by human beings, and we must accept on faith things that defy our reason.”\textsuperscript{293} Although her ability to accept God on these grounds is a commendation to her faith, it avoids an issue that continues to plague the modern mind.

As a rationalist and intellectual in the modern Jewish community, Klagsbrun supports the position that texts need to be reread and history re-examined in the light of woman’s place in the current fabric of Judaism. For example, in relation to the particular functions of women on the

\textsuperscript{291} The Kabbalistic preachers and popular writers sought to imbue all people with the consciousness of the supreme importance of all actions. By every holy action, by every pure thought, man impacts the supernal worlds. Heschel, \textit{The Earth}, 71.

\textsuperscript{292} Klagsbrun, \textit{Voices}, 393.

\textsuperscript{293} Ibid.
Sabbath (candle lighting and the baking of challah), there is need for reassessment. According to the Haggadah (הגדה), women’s obligations do not arise from any positive value of womanhood but result from Eve’s disobedience. Adam was separated from the dust of the land as the priest’s tithe is separated. Such separation is a form of consecration. However, Eve corrupted Adam and reduced him again to dust. Therefore, a woman must separate a piece of challah from the loaf and toss it in the fire before baking Sabbath bread in order to simulate Adam’s separation again from the dust. Each Sabbath, therefore, becomes a reminder of Eve’s sin. In a similar manner, Eve’s sin is considered to have extinguished Adam’s soul, and this becomes the reason why a woman must light the Sabbath candles. Lighting the candles represents the rekindling of Adam’s spirit.

Such references make the Sabbath, which is to be a delight, an oppressive source of sadness for modern women who do not accept the corruption and death associated with the fall of man as the responsibility solely of woman. Jewish women insist that the lighting of candles symbolizes their sustaining of life and associate it with the high priest’s lighting of the great menorah. They also consider the challah they bake as representative of the breads displayed in the sanctuary and the piece thrown into the fire as the tithe that was the sole sustenance on which the priests depended. Such an interpretation underscores the virtue of humility demonstrated in the care women have always taken in tending to the needs of others. In other words, although women may not go to shul, their work, like that of the priests, is sacred.

With respect to candle-lighting, women perform another significant function; they call the shekinah (שכינה) from her wanderings to spread the mantel of her peace over the household
so that through the peace of the household, the world will know peace. As medium of the presence of the shekinah (הנ réalité), the woman of the home is the instrument of the imparting of the Sabbath souls which are the shekinah’s (הנ реально) gift. Klagsbrun has this to say about the shekinah (הנ реально) and woman’s relationship with her:

The shekinah (הנ реально) glows only with the light of the sefirot above her...those higher sefirot assert their influence on the world by shining through her. She is the ultimate conduit for conveying the divine will on earth. If she is closest to the material world and can be corrupted by it...her closeness to that world can also help change and improve it...The best reason for why women light the Shabbat candles is because the women represent the shekinah (הנ реально) on earth; they too spread a canopy of peace through the ligts they kindle.” medium of that light and, as closest (emanation of God) to the world, she has the power to change and improve it. Women light candles because they represent the shekinah (הנ реально) on earth.294

In this discussion of the diverse aspects of the Sabbath, I have shown the crucial importance of this feast above all the other observances in Judaism. This discussion has also served to demonstrate the particular importance of women in this celebration and the necessity modern women have felt to change the negative understandings of women deriving from interpretations of Genesis.

III. Sabbath Understanding and Jewish-Christian Dialogue

A. The Sabbath as Divine Presence: the Shekinah (הנ реально) as Intermediary

While Judaism and Christianity may seem quite different in the expression of their worship of God, certain religious insights interweave to recall that the roots of faith are deeply

294 Klagsbrun, Fourth, 128-29, 30.
embedded in the biblical promises. Abraham was chosen to be the Father of many nations and the original bearer of the revelation that would bring all peoples together. Moses, then, became the vehicle of the Law to provide a concrete path to the attainment of that unity. The prophets sought to preserve a purity of obedience for the sake of justice so that the Sabbath would be fulfilled and the foundation laid for the peace the Messiah would herald. In such an understanding, the Sabbath is the link to the Messiah and the gathering in of all peoples. With the destruction of the Temple and the restructuring of Judaism by the Rabbis, emphasis was placed on mitzvah (מִצְוָה) as the way to build the earth and achieve holiness of life. However in the Kabbalistic perception of man and God, of the heavens and the earth, mitzvah (מִצְוָה), as the expression of obedience to the Law, became secondary to the personal experience of God as the inspiration for relation to others. A deeper insight into divine election elevated the performance of deeds to a communion with God through concern for others. Speculation about the nature of God as a unity of the emanations which extend to the earth turned the Sabbath into a living experience of the spiritual presence of God in the form of the Shekinah (ָּשְׁכִּינָה) and a renewed hope for the coming of the messianic kingdom.

The Trinitarian understanding of God expressed in Christianity has a certain parallel to the Judaic belief. In the Incarnation, God, in the person of Jesus, enters his creation and fulfills all justice in the transformation only God can achieve by his presence. This is not a transitory presence as with the descent of the Shekinah (ָּשְׁכִּינָה), but the substantial beginning of the messianic time. The event of the descent of the Spirit confirms the new age to be celebrated around the Eucharistic table with the Lord’s body as the food of everlasting life. The salvific
event of the cross is the bridge to the messianic age. In Jesus, God reveals himself as Father and in the brotherhood of the Son, all are adopted children empowered to care for one another. That the true Israelite is a Son of God is realized in this. Here is seen the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham that all may be one. Thus, the relationship of God and the Jewish people is never negated, but transformed and brought to fulfillment because of the bond of the flesh in the incarnation.

From the beginning, even in the pre-history covenant with Noah, God has been reaching out to man in a visible way, a way that acknowledges man’s sacredness and integrity. The Exodus affirmed that God would never abandon his people; the giving of the manna in the desert confirmed this. Then, the events of Sinai that brought the Law, revealed God as the Sabbath presence that dwelt in the Ark of the Covenant and later in the Temple. With the destruction of the Temple, the place of the presence of God became the circumcised heart as the prophets had taught and the Sabbath became more intensely the time to celebrate this.

As early as the eighth century A.D., speculations about the esoteric nature of God imagined God as an ordered set of emanations, the tenth of which, the Shekinah (שֶׁכְינוֹת), remained closest to the earth to shed divine holiness each Sabbath. This emanation most approaches personification. It is the presence of God that comes as the Sabbath falls. It is both light and peace. It is protection and it enriches the soul by enrobing it in another soul that can endure the elevated atmosphere that the Sabbath creates. The Shekinah (שֶׁכְינוֹת) is unique within the nature of God in that it roams in the universe and encounters the evil splinters that are scattered there. It also comes to the earth to unite man to the invisible God. Lev Gillet describes
Israel as “a community of people in connection with the Shekinah (השכינה).”295 He further comments that, “such frequent expressions as ‘God sent his Shekinah (השכינה), God caused his Shekinah (השכינה) to dwell’ might be legitimately interpreted in their obvious and literal sense i.e. in the sense of a personal distinction which, however, does not exclude an identity of essence.”296 In other words, the Shekinah (השכינה) may possibly be interpreted as a person within God that remains one with God but definitely has an importance and a place that is different from the invisible God of ‘event’. The necessity to bring God to man in a more palpable way seems to dominate the whole experience of the Sabbath. It tends to indicate that man needs a more explicit model to know how to overcome evil and to perform the works of mitzvah (מגזרה) in disinterested love. A concept of God that allows God to be closer to man is an area for discussion between Jews and Christians.

B. Sabbath and Mitzvah (מגזרה): Eucharist and Works of Mercy

That God has a plan for history and that the people of Israel are integral to that plan have been of singular importance to the Jews since the deliverance from Egypt which confirmed that their God was righteous and would sustain the ways of righteousness against all opposing forces. Ancient Israel had the support of a God who saves and the wisdom of a Law that defined the will of God so that there would be peace. The Law as the will of God meant for them that God’s intentions would indeed be realized in the future even if they became heedless of their responsibilities. It also meant that the will of God extended beyond the confines of their nation

295 Gillet, Communion, 149.
296 Ibid., 84.
and was not solely dependent upon their co-operation. God was the director of history; they were the servants of God’s desires for all mankind.

That God has a purpose for creation remains the unquestioned gift of Israel to the world. This belief, which Jews celebrate every Sabbath, has sustained them through the ages. It is the Sabbath that maintains Jewish identity. Hugh Schonfield points out that for Jews, the content of their beliefs gives purpose to life against the wayward occurrences of chance. He comments, “Intelligence of purpose at work in our affairs…is so much more satisfying than that which deems us to be the product of a blind and blundering activity of nature giving rise to higher forms of life quite irresponsibly and motivelessly.”

Because of their conviction of their election as a dynamic force for the nations and to be the people through whom the messiah would come to bring righteousness, the Jews have survived through all manner of rejection and persecution. Schonfield further describes the Jewish commitment to history and their witness to the justice of their Law. He states, “Always and uniquely as a people they have moved through time as enduring the present for the sake of the future, a future which was to be not only their vindication but that of all mankind. Their only imperialism was to claim the world not for themselves, not for any partisan interests, but for the God who made it, to whom it rightfully belongs.”

What has carried the Jews through every circumstance is the performance of mitzvah (מִצְוָה). Mitzvah (מִצְוָה) is primarily a form of obedience. This particular understanding of commitment to life arises from the time of the destruction of the Temple which also marked the obliteration of

297 Schonfield, Politics, 34.

298 Ibid., 48.
sacrifice. Sacrifice was the medium for their atonement for sin. Sacrifice was never again instituted, so a new form of satisfaction for wrongdoing had to be devised. The rabbis of the first century looked to the words of the later prophets who portrayed God as denouncing the order of sacrifice as an empty human gesture that did not represent a contrite heart. A contrite heart requires the person to face his own failings and limitations, humbly admit his dependence, and accept with gratitude the good that others offer. 299 Jeremiah explains the new form of behavior as issuing from a heart which has been purified because the Lord has removed man’s evildoing and no longer holds man in his sin (Jer 31:34). This action by God creates the possibility of the “pure of heart” who see God and see others in their true nature as God’s image. The Book of Jeremiah recognizes that man does not accomplish reconciliation and peace, God does. Through man’s openness to God’s power and forgiveness, man’s deeds become efficacious. With this new understanding of man’s relationship to God, the rabbis established the obedience of mitzvah (מצווה) as the required sacrifice. 300 Each person has a responsibility to do good in all circumstances and to alleviate suffering wherever possible. R. H. Charles describes the kingdom now envisioned as “within man, realized on earth, worldwide and ignoring the limitation of language and race, and having its true consummation in the world to come.” 301

299 The first chapter of the Book of Isaiah contains a diatribe against sacrifices and all the Temple offerings as well as the ceremonial observances of Sabbaths and feasts. What is called for is goodness through the practice of justice; in other words, a true commitment to the performance of the Law. (Isa. 1: 11-20).

300 There is a singular importance to obedience in Judaism. Gillet explains, “this obedience is not a mere legalism. Mitzvah ( מצווה), commandment in rabbinical terminology, means every moral and religious duty grounded on God’s will. It expresses also any act of human kindness, any good action… bar mitzvah (בר מצווה) means “son of command.” Gillet, Communion, 135.

301 Charles, Religious Development, 71.
The observant Jew becomes keenly aware of opportunities for doing good and performing acts of kindness in his daily life. Just as correct observance of the Sabbath by all Jews will hasten the coming of the messiah, in a similar way the performance of mitzvah ( מצווה ) will bring about the messianic kingdom of righteousness on earth. Jacob Neusner sees the destruction of the Temple as God’s way of moving his divine will out into the entire world and as placing a profound responsibility on the Jewish people. The importance of mitzvah ( מצווה ) is evident in his comment, “With the destruction of the Temple the realm of the sacred had finally overspread the world. Therefore, we must now see in ourselves, in our selfish motives, to be immolated, the noblest sacrifice of all…His will is that we love our neighbors as ourselves. Just as willingly as we would contribute bricks and mortar for the building of a sanctuary, so willingly we ought to contribute love, renunciation, self-sacrifice, for the building of a sacred community. In a time when the Temple is no more, the offering must be the gift of selfless compassion. The holy altar must be the streets and market-places of the world.”

The Kabbalah also addresses the meaning of mitzvah ( מצווה ). According to the Kabbalah, the universe at creation could not contain the great goodness of God and experienced a shattering. The restoration of the universe to its original design is tikkun olam ( תיקון עולם ) the “repair of the world”. It is accomplished by mitzvah ( מצווה ). Such work “will remove the world from the forces of evil and help to achieve a permanent blissful state of communion between every creature and God, which the forces of evil will not be able to disrupt or

Kabbalistic thought further affirms that there is an interconnection between the heavens and the earth. All actions (physical and spiritual) that are done on earth cause a movement in heaven that is either positive or negative. “Man alone has been granted free will. It lies in man’s power to either advance or disrupt through his actions the unity of what takes place in the upper and lower worlds.”

This understanding of the cosmos has a direct relationship to the Shekinah (שכינה). The Shekinah (שכינה) has been described as a wanderer. Distant from the other emanations of God, she encounters the splinters of evil that are scattered throughout the universe. The Shekinah (שכינה) is constantly seeking rest which she finds only on the Sabbath, but which she finds also in the hearts of all who do good deeds. So the Shekinah (שכינה) presides where there is charity and performance of mitzvah (מצוה), but especially where there is joy. Through mitzvah (מצוה) it is understood that the Shekinah (שכינה) will return from exile, be reunited to God, and the universe made whole.

While the work of mitzvah (מצוה) has cosmic implications, it also has effects on the individual person. Just as mitzvah (מצוה) serves to restore the Shekinah (שכינה) within the emanations of God, it also serves to create a calming force within the person by assuaging the tension between the evil and good urges that beset conscience. Mitzvah (מצוה) makes man whole. Mitzvah (מצוה) restores the world and brings about holiness. Mitzvah (מצוה), in the form of prayer (תפלה) and meditation (כואנה), brings the peace of the Sabbath into the world. Scholem

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303 Scholem, Kabbalah, 143.
304 Ibid., 153.
describes the place of mitzvah (מִצוּתָּה) in man’s life with respect to the necessity to overcome the condition of sin. He explains, “It is the concrete destiny of the human race, and of the Jew as the principal bearer of this mission and the recipient of God’s revelation through the Torah, to overcome this polarization from within the human condition created by the first sin. It is the function of good in the world, whose tools are the Torah and its commandments, to bridge the abyss of separation that was formed by man’s sin and to restore all existence to its original harmony and unity. The final goal, in other words, is the reunification of the divine and the human wills.”

Christianity does not have the elaborate imagery the Kabbalists have created to explain the situation of evil in the world and man’s relationship to the heavens. The Christian always turns to the cross to penetrate the mystery of evil, especially with respect to the suffering of the innocent. In the cross man confronts his own sinfulness but also realizes that all evil has been assumed into the freely accepted sufferings of Christ who offers the gift of himself to the Father in perfect obedience. The Christian life is lived with respect to this one sacrifice which becomes an interior dynamic. Everything is seen through this perspective and this becomes the ground of deeds and relationships. The cross for the Christian exposes human misery as embedded in sin which must be recast through a new dimension of life. The new dimension of life resides in the hope and strength that flow from the resurrection and the promise of man’s transformation in glory. This knowledge and hope make the present struggle an effort in joy. This is the

305 Ibid., 154.

306 A discussion of the hope for the transformation that comes from Christ’s resurrection is given by Saint Paul. See Rom 8: 18-27.
foundation of the life of grace; a reception of and submission to the life of God that flows from the sacrifice of the cross. The Law for the Christian becomes the person of Christ who has fulfilled the promises through his perfect obedience unto death.\(^{307}\)

To love the Lord for the Christian is to take on the suffering love of the messiah by entering into an empathetic understanding of others and in such sharing alleviate the aloneness that is so much a cause of the misery of the world. Because God has entered history and has suffered the humiliation of crucifixion, he has made all of humanity the sphere of his presence and has moved history forward by the power of this suffering love that is now left to the world to bestow on one another. “The Christian’s suffering is thus a loving solidarity with the whole of the suffering creation… The turn to the theology of the cross represents a return to the root from which Christian hope and love can be sustained in the face of failure and contradiction and in solidarity with the suffering world. It is as well a critique of the false optimism which holds aloof from suffering.”\(^{308}\)

While the Jew approaches the world through the Sabbath recognition of God in Torah study and mitzvah (מִצְוָה,), the Christian approaches the world through the gospel and the Eucharistic presence of God for the sake of the works of mercy. A passage from the gospel of Saint Matthew stresses the urgency of the need for attention to the plight of others. It is an eschatological reference to the Son of Man as messianic Lord of his kingdom who will judge all

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\(^{307}\) A perspective on the performance of works is given by Bauckham who contrasts the disposition of the present society with the motives the gospel requires of people. He makes this observation, “Faith sets the Christian free from the compulsion to make himself by doing good works. In contemporary society one’s being is achieved by doing and having; faith in the Lord who saves restores the priority of being over doing. Then good works are no longer under the necessity of legalism, but are free works for the glory of God.” Bauckham, \textit{Moltmann}, 50.

\(^{308}\) Ibid., 39, 56.
persons on the good that they have done for their neighbors. It describes what is necessary to be pleasing to God and as such it applies to both Jew and Christian: “I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me; I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me… I assure you, as often as you did this for one of my least brothers, you did it for me” (Matt. 25: 31-40).

As Emil Brunner puts it, “There is no sentimentality about the Messianic message. Revelation is neither a mystical feeling nor an intellectual conception, but the Word of God and its absolute demand. To believe means to have a Lord, a King, an absolute Lord with no democracy. The meaning of the revelation is the dethronement of the self, of the rebel, by the rightful monarch… The Messiah is King and the King Messiah requires radical obedience.”

It is understood that those who witness others’ sincere attention to the misery of mankind will see the goodness of God, turn from sin, and go and do likewise. Such acts of kindness in empathy with suffering humanity are the leaven that brings about the justice of the kingdom of God which God himself will transform in glory in the end.

C. A Mutual Vision: the Eternal Sabbath

There are many similarities in the ways in which Christians and Jews see God and the world. Firstly: God is Father who creates the world and has a plan for it. Creation is a continuous act of God who is ever-present to his creation keeping it in existence according to his plan. God is not impervious to the sufferings of man but intervenes in history to safeguard and redeem him. God is to be worshipped and glorified in communal gathering and in personal

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prayer and study. Second: Evil has caused damage to the creation and has weakened man’s will to pursue the path of righteousness. The Law, then, becomes a guide to keep man on the path of truth. The Law brings the presence of God to Jews in the Sabbath for this purpose. The Incarnation brings the presence of God to Christians. It is for man to pray and ponder about his state in life to understand the will of God within the circumstances allotted to him. However, God’s plan will be realized even despite the attempts of evil to thwart it. Third: The prayer and worship of both the community and the individual become evident in virtuous living and concern for the well-being of others. Obedience to the command to love prompts to service so that all may share in God’s goodness and be seen as his image. Fourth: Involvement with political and economic issues of society for the sake of justice for all people becomes an imperative, as was called for by the prophets. Fifth: Because God has come to his people in saving events, the disposition of heart in the midst of all earthly struggle is joy. Sixth, God will gather up all of time in the end and judge man for his purity of heart in all his deeds.

The liturgical worship of Jews and Christians differs in accord with their views with respect to revelation and the Law. Catholic Christian worship centers in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the fullness of revelation and the personification of the Law lived in perfect obedience and sacrificial love. In the Eucharist, the believer unites himself to this paschal mystery in order to know the transforming love of the cross and bring it into his relationships with others. Jews celebrate the Sabbath as the coming of the presence of God in the Shekinah (שֶׁקִינָה). They offer prayers and worship in the synagogue, bestow solemn blessings on their family while delighting in the company of friends in the holiness of shared meals, study,
and quiet leisure. They experience rest in the joy of knowing that God permeates all of reality from creation to the messianic fullness of the end-time.

Each of these celebrations acknowledges the creator-redeemer God, his personal concern for the world, and his desire for his chosen ones to bring his love to others in justice and peace through his presence with them in all their good works. Both the Jew and the Christian have a vision of the kingdom. For the Jew it is the eternal Sabbath, joyous rest in the presence of God. For the Christian it is the resurrected and glorified Christ who brings the eternal Sabbath into the present as the foundation of hope and the assurance that the obedience of the cross has overcome the power of evil. The eternal Sabbath is the Incarnation – Emmanuel.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the many different aspects of the Sabbath that set that day apart for Judaism as a time of holiness permeated by the presence of God. I have discussed the singular nature of this day drawing on the insights of several scholars and in particular Francine Klagsbrun who addresses the eschatological nature of the day, the central position of women in the preparation and solemn consecration of the feast, and the special issues with respect to celebration which the modern world presents.

A particular emphasis has been placed on the home as the center of this prayerful celebration which focuses on the family as God’s instrument for the experience of rest, for the affirmation of human dignity, and for the realization of the blessedness of life. Attention has
been given to the Sabbath as messianic hope which is engendered in the spirit through the glow of candle light and the strains of music. Light and song have been shown to carry the sentiment of the Sabbath down through the ages keeping alive meaning from generation to generation by their spiritual nourishment.

With respect to the Sabbath as a prefigurement of the messianic kingdom, I have made reference to Isaiah and his vision of time as a sequence of Sabbaths that creates the condition of peace for the in-gathering of nations. I have presented the concept of future as “adventus” that which comes from the fullness of the parousia into the present to move life forward into the depths of what God has promised. I have indicated the perspective of hope this gives to the present time lived with an incarnational view of reality rooted in the paschal mystery that understands Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath, the one who moves time to its fullness.

I have indicated areas where Jewish and Christian understandings have similarities, particularly the common belief in God as creator and redeemer who has entered the pathos of the human condition to move history forward to the promised glory. Finally, I have presented mitzvah (מִצְוָה), the fruit of Sabbath observance, and the works of mercy, the fruit of sacramental participation, as parallel ways of advancing the kingdom of God and personal holiness.
Chapter 4

The Biblical Theology of Jean Daniélou and

the Sabbath of Judaism according to André Chouraqui:

A Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Introduction

The substance of the Sabbath as the presence of God for the sake of the sanctification of man has been presented in the previous chapters. This has been discussed in relation to man’s final end and his transformation in the glory of God that is to come. The Sabbath, as the means by which man can follow a path of truth and walk with God through time to final rest in God’s glory, has been explored particularly in the thought and works of Abraham Heschel and Francine Klagsbrun. The Shekinah (הנשך), the presence of God that descends on the Sabbath, has been shown to be the medium through which man atones for and restores what was shattered by sin at the beginning of creation. As the bringer of the gift of illumination through the bestowal of the Sabbath soul, the Shekinah (הנשך) is also the medium of insight into the wisdom of Scripture for the sake of the practice of mitzvot and the transformation of the world. For these reasons, the Sabbath is perceived as the sine qua non of Judaism.

Christianity as originally a sect of Judaism, was the subject of the first part of this work. The identification of Jesus and the Sabbath through Jesus’ appropriation of the Sabbath to
himself has been shown to have had a definitive effect on the Law, the nature of worship, the fulfillment of prophecy, the meaning of the Messiah, and the nature of God. In other words, every aspect of Judaism has undergone re-creation in the event of Christ and his appropriation of the Sabbath to himself.

This chapter will present the views of two twentieth century theologians: one a Jesuit, Jean Daniélou and the other a Jewish Rabbi, André Chouraqui. Each grapples with the mystery of revelation from different, but complementary, perspectives. There will be three parts to this chapter. The first part will give a description of the life and work of Jean Daniélou that will include the basic tenets of his theology, his notion of truth, his interpretation of the events of Scripture as typology, and his understanding of the Sabbath as the overcoming of sin and death in the person of Jesus Christ. Against this background, the Sabbath will be discussed as the recurrent event of the coming of the presence of God in the Shekinah (השכינה) in contrast to Sunday as the celebration of the paschal event made present in the Eucharistic Christ.

The second part will describe the quite diverse background of Rabbi André Chouraqui and present his understanding of the Sabbath as central to Judaism, especially with respect to the formation of the state of Israel. His views with regard to the Sabbath as the fullness of revelation that moves toward the end time will be examined. Then Daniélou’s study of the Old Testament as a prototype of the New will also be examined with particular attention to the Sabbath in order to understand Jesus’ relationship to this day.

The subject of the third part will be the dialogue between Chouraqui and Daniélou and their discussion of the emergence of Christianity from Judaism. This dialogue will be analyzed
with respect to the essential areas of convergence and divergence of these two faiths. This conversation will also address Daniélou’s position concerning the central place of Jesus Christ in any discussion of Christianity. Sabbath and Sunday will be considered with regard to the understanding of the presence of God, worship, and man’s obligation to live the holiness God offers. The rationale for such dialogue is a renewal of hope through mutual understanding and cooperation in works of justice and peace throughout the world.
I. Jean Daniélou:
A Voice of Dialogue in the Discussion of the Sabbath and Christianity

A. Family Background and Multifaceted Education

Born into a staunch Catholic family in 1905 in the Parisian suburb Neuilly-sur-Seine, Jean Daniélou, the oldest of six children, was raised under the tutelage of a devout mother, who was an educator in her own right. He advanced in his education in the sophisticated atmosphere of Paris, eventually matriculating at the Sorbonne where he pursued various studies in the literary arts between 1920 and 1929 finally attaining *une licence ès lettres*, *une agrégation de grammaire*, and *une doctorat ès lettres*. The rather diverse nature of his studies and devotion to the humanities during his university years occasioned his calling this period of his life *les grandes vacances* and his referring to himself as *un dilettante*.

The Catholicism he experienced as a youth, especially through his mother’s commitment to the faith, provided the support to sustain his own thinking among the philosophers and literary giants he encountered during his years of study. At the Sorbonne he engaged in discussion with such outstanding intellects as the Greek scholar Paul Mazon, the personalist philosopher Emanuel Mounier, and the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. Although he was particularly drawn to the works of André Gide and François Mauriac, these influences were brought to a greater depth by his discovery of the works of Charles Péguy whose writings were permeated by a certain spiritual quality and ethical character.

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310 Daniélou’s erudite scholarship and extensive literary background merited his election to the Académie française in 1972.
However attractive the intellectual atmosphere of the Sorbonne, the desire for a spiritual counterbalance led him to choose a life in the Society of Jesus and to study for the Catholic priesthood. Consequently, he obtained a licentiate in philosophy at the novitiate in Laval and then did a course of theological studies at La Fourvière in Lyon. It was here that he became acquainted with the thought of the early church in his study of patristics under the guidance of Henri de Lubac, with whom he later established the series *Sources Chrétiennes* for the translation and study of early church texts. It was de Lubac who brought him to an awareness of Christianity as specifically salvation history, a perspective which would prove to be a solid foundation for Daniélou’s understanding of the Sabbath as the instrument of God’s salvific presence in Judaism in the discussion of the interrelationship of these two faiths. Although de Lubac was a dominant influence, Daniélou acquainted himself with other innovative thinkers of his time as well. He read the works of Karl Marx, knew the Christology of Teilhard de Chardin, the Blondelian orientation of Yves de Montcheuil, and the Hegelian bent of Gaston Fessard. In 1943 he received his doctorate from the Institut Catholique de Paris where he then taught and eventually became dean of the Faculty of Theology in 1961.

With the initiation of Vatican Council II, Pope John XXIII invited Jean Daniélou to be a peritus, a scholarly advisor in the drafting of documents. Subsequently, in the light of his commitment to the church, he was both consecrated a bishop and made cardinal by Pope Paul VI in 1969. He died in 1974, leaving a vast heritage for inter-religious dialogue for the church in the modern world.311

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311 This apt description of Jean Daniélou was published shortly after his death: “Aristocrate de l’intelligence et de la culture, doté par la naissance, son education, sa formation religieuse et toute une vie de travail
B. Theological Perspectives as Foundation for Dialogue

1. Theological Investigation: Fundamental Certainties

In order to understand the approach Jean Daniélou uses in his discussion of theological topics and to appreciate the position he takes with respect to the Sabbath in Jewish-Christian dialogue, it is necessary to present certain convictions that underlie his thought and permeate the way he perceives reality. Firstly, he holds that there is truth, that man has a capacity for attaining truth, and that truth is one; second, he affirms that transcendence is constitutive of human nature, and, third, he maintains that God has revealed himself in salvation history. Some elaboration on these points is required here.

With respect to truth, Daniélou first posits that truth is what is real and that the intellect is the instrument for perceiving this reality. There is no denying the relationship of reality and truth. The function of the intellect is to probe reality for this purpose. One does not create truth, but encounters it and submits to it. Therefore, sincerity based on subjective suppositions, or

acharné, d’un instrument merveilleusement souple et sensible qui fit de lui, dans les milieux étudiants et intellectuels, un témoin de Jésus Christ apprécié même de ce qui ne partageaient pas sa foi, mais accueillant aux humbles, qui l’aimaient, accordant sans compter son temps et son dévouement à toutes les détresses qui le sollicitaient, comme il l’a prouvé par sa mort même… Il déborde surtout d’une allegresse qui issue de sa totale confiance en l’amour de Dieu, transfigurait toutes choses et parfois aussi les personnes. Il était interlocuteur attentive, perspicace, très humble, libéral de son temps et de sa richesse spirituelle, et une personne avec qui l’on ne s’ennuyait jamais et avec qui l’on riait si souvent.” M. J. Rondeau, “Avant-Propos,” Axes 7 (1974-1975), 8-9.

312 Because of his conviction about truth, Daniélou rejects any notion that denies metaphysics as a legitimate process of the mind. He is fundamentally aware that the search for truth inevitably involves certain obstacles that can deter the intellect from attaining what is real in the material, personal, and spiritual realms. In his study of the theology of Daniélou, Dominic Veliath, a Salesian of Don Bosco, points out various deterrents to the attainment of truth. Such deterrents include: curiositas, which diverts into irrelevancies that can usurp the place of more proper ends; doubt, which questions the worth of the pursuit; diffidence, which distrusts innate ability, and reluctance in affirmation, which reflects an underlying pride that refuses to submit to the discovery truth presents. Dominic Veliath, Theological Approach and Understanding of Religion: Jean Daniélou and Raimundo Panikkar; A Study in Contrast (Bangalore: Kristu Jyote Publications, 1987), 14.
effectiveness that does not necessarily evaluate means, can never be substitutes for truth. Truth points to human limitations and this, Daniélou posits, is what opens man to the realm of metaphysics, his second point. Here he holds that it is constitutive of man’s nature to probe beyond his immediate capacities and that inherent in man is awareness of the realm of transcendence and the presence of the totally other. For Daniélou, orientation to God as the transcendent is an essential quality of human nature and precludes any notion that science will eventually explain all aspects of existence, reduce life to a continuum of material progress, and diminish religion to mere sentiment. This orientation to God is foundational to human relationships which determine the actual manner in which persons live through time. Daniélou’s third contention concerns revelation. Here he indicates that man’s affirmation of the transcendent opens him to the revelation this source may confer, and to knowledge he would not ascertain through his own efforts. That God has entered into time through revelation remains the central focus of Daniélou’s thought and his study of Sacred Scripture as salvation history. He acknowledges God’s association with time in the Sabbath rest of the seventh day of creation, in the revelation to Abraham and his descendants, in the granting of the Law, and in the fulfillment of both prophecy and the promises in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the light of his convictions, Daniélou posits three fundamental certainties namely: existence as comprising three realms, relationship as intrinsic to human nature, and history as the aspect of time in which all things assume meaning. These fundamental certainties are of

313 For a more complete insight into Daniélou’s understanding of the nature of man and his relationship to God and to the world, see Veliath, *Theological Approach*, 11-112.
particular importance when examining his perspectives on non-Christian religions, since Judaism is such a religion. History defined as “meaning within time” stands unique among these certainties in the Jewish-Christian dialogue where the Sabbath, as sacred time within time, is seen by Daniélou in relation to the Incarnation, which assumes all time. A brief overview of these dimensions of Daniélou’s premises will be helpful in understanding the positions he takes on the questions that arise about prophecy, the messiah, and worship, all of which find meaning in Sabbath observance.

To begin, Daniélou has a perception of reality as encompassing three realms of being: matter, person, and the supernatural. Matter, he holds, is defined through scientific study and the field of mathematics. On the other hand, person, as a composite of body and spirit, is defined through the finesse of philosophy, which reaches beyond the tangible. The third realm, the supernatural, is the realm of God. It is defined through prophecy, which penetrates the course of time to reach fulfillment. Each of these realms has its own proper methodology, and, although there are analogies among these realms, they remain distinct.\footnote{Ibid., 13}

Now, to exist means to be within these realms. Therefore, Daniélou insists that “man is in confrontation with what he cannot refuse the right to exist… Man is in relation. To exist means my being in connection with another. And ratifying my existence means recognizing this relationship, a responding…”\footnote{Jean Daniélou, \textit{The Scandal of Truth}, trans. W. J. Kerrigan (London: Catholic Book Club, 1962), 67-68.} This leads immediately into the second of his certainties, the interconnectedness of all things, including the supernatural. Here is where Daniélou asserts that
the spiritual aspects of man direct him beyond his perceived limits by releasing him from the burden of himself into an openness to the divine. His statement that “the real progress of man is not a progress of pure reason,”\textsuperscript{316} clearly expresses his position about the depths of human nature. Such a statement assumes that there is something in man that is more than his own rational capacity, which cannot attain to God on its own power. There is a definitive gap between man and God that is overcome by God’s designs in his relationship with his creation.

This is what enables man’s progress, and this in turn is the context of Daniélou’s third certainty, i.e. that history, which is mankind’s movement through time, is pregnant with meaningful events, the most significant of which is God’s intervention in history in revelation. While man can know something of God through his “vestiges” evident in creation,\textsuperscript{317} the inner life of God is made known only through God’s self-disclosure. Daniélou affirms the importance of man’s capacity to probe for knowledge of the creator, yet also makes clear that in actuality it is God who is the subject and man the object of what God desires to communicate. “La tradition chrétienne a toujours affirmé que l’intelligence humaine était capable de connaître Dieu et l’aime. Elle n’a jamais dit que laissée à elle-même l’intelligence humaine pouvait parvenir à connaître Dieu dans la vérité de ce qu’il est.”\textsuperscript{318} In other words, any association of God and man remains a matter of


\textsuperscript{317} Veliath maintains that the self-expression of God in creation confronts the whole of man, both his senses and the depths of his inner nature. He states, “In the experience of truth, beauty, etc. man confronts a reality that exists and persists in existence beyond man, that projects itself on man. In this way man knows God as an expression of the implications of what is deep within.” Veliath, \textit{Theological Approach}, 17.

\textsuperscript{318} Jean Daniélou, \textit{La Culture trahie par les siens} (Paris: Épi, 1972), 73.
God’s initiative and a reminder to man of his utter dependence for existence. 319 Daniéloù describes this as a relationship of fear and wonder, “God is someone whom one confronts, to whom I must adapt. He is precisely what will never be familiar to me and will never cease to be a source of astonishment to me and of holy dread.” 320

These comments lay the foundation for Daniéloù’s discussion of the Sabbath as the greatest gift of revelation wherein man acknowledges total dependence on the creator, and life as gift from a God who instills awe and yet offers rest in his love.

2. Revelation and the Sabbath

The relationship of God and man finds its fullness in revelation. Revelation is in some manner a disclosure of God to man and in some manner also a reception and response on man’s

319 There is an analogy between God’s revelation to man and man’s revelation of himself to the other. As God is mystery, so is man. Daniéloù explains this, “In the last resort, only God speaks of God; we cannot truly know God as he is unless God himself manifests himself directly, for then the base and foundation of our knowledge is no longer the groping search of man but the actual authority of God. Love is a penetration into that mysterious world of the heart of the other which otherwise remains completely closed to us. We can never gain its intimacy by any sort of breaking in. That is precisely what constitutes the person: to be a depth, an inaccessible abyss unlike anything that can be grasped by science. As soon as we rise in the hierarchy of things, scientific knowledge becomes useless, for it can only reach the visible and the external, and we are obliged to enter on another mode of access to the truth, which is testimony speech, that by which the other, in a free gift, reveals himself to us.” In other words, without revelation, whether by God or man, there is no knowledge of the person. Daniéloù addresses this phenomenon with the words of Max Scheler, “Silence is the characteristic of persons.” Jean Daniéloù, Myth and Mystery, trans. P. J. Hepburne-Scott (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1968), 97, 100.

320 Daniéloù, Scandal, 66. Such a perception of the relationship of God and man is seen also in the thought of Abraham Heschel. He states, “Man’s quest for God presupposes God’s quest for man. Thus God is always experienced and thought of as subject and never as mere object. To emphasize that he is not to be conceived as an abstract principle or process but as the living God, he is called a person.” Abraham Heschel, Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism (New York: Free Press Paperbacks Edition, 1997), 26. Because of the personal nature of God, man is the recipient of divine gifts, primarily life and the covenant. Heschel also describes man’s response to these gifts, “The experience of being the object of divine attention has a twofold effect on man: he becomes aware that he is ineluctably placed within the field of divine perception, from which he cannot escape, and he realizes that he is at all times safe and sheltered within God’s care. Man experiences the joy of being found by God and the terror of being found out by him.” Ibid., 25.
part. Because he does not create his own life, but receives life, man is confronted with a
transcendent source for his own existence. Although this may awaken a desire to gain
knowledge of the originator of life, such knowledge will be limited by the capacity of the seeker.
Hence, a gulf exists between giver and recipient, and knowledge of God remains sparse and
inadequate. The knowledge of the transcendent, gleaned by analogy with created things, only
bears further witness to the great gap between God and man. It is Revelation that opens the
pathway to God. Through revelation man has access to God and to the designs of God for
creation. Revelation then, as God’s self-disclosure, orients man in an awareness of God’s
existence that he could never attain through his own resources.

Revelation is God’s breaking into history to disclose what was never known before. As
such, it is analogous to creation where that which never existed before comes forth. In his
description of creation, Daniélou makes a point of indicating that the “new” that comes from
God originates from the fullness of God’s being. Creation as coming forth from the fullness of
God’s being presents a perspective that differs from the image evoked by creatio ex nihilo,
creation out of nothing. That which is created from God’s fullness is more readily perceived as
bearing the mark of the creator and can more easily be seen as sacramental in nature i.e. disposed
toward grace and its reception. It is grace that maintains the life of the creature in newness, in
openness to finding the good in all things. Daniélou singles out creation as the particular
mystery of Christianity precisely because creation expresses the nature of God as a perennial

\[321\] Daniélou looks to metaphysics to found his view of creation. He states, “…from non-existence there
can never come existence. For existence to spring from what does not exist, existence must first be. This leads to
the fundamental statement that the point of departure is not the nothing, but being, and what is original is fullness;
fullness is the reality.” Daniélou, Myth, 62-3.
occasion for newness as is found in Isaiah who provided hope in the time of the Exile by reminding the people that God is the power from above that brings about effects as he wills. The God of Isaiah instructs, “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!” (Isa 43:18-19). The past events referred to here are the negatives resulting from sin and infidelity, which God is willing to forgive and even turn into opportunities for rebuilding the nation.

The newness ever present in revelation is the very path of the sanctification of mankind. Daniélou cites dependence and the constant reception of life from God as the sources of newness. There is nothing static in creation. He explains, “…le mystère chrétien est celui de la création. J’entends par là l’idée non seulement d’une dépendance originelle de l’univers par rapport à un Dieu personnel et transzendant, mais de la dépendance actuelle de toutes choses à son égard et par conséquent d’une présence de Dieu qui donne à l’univers tout entier une valeur sacrale.”

The creational presence of God is central to Daniélou’s understanding of the Judaic Sabbath and to his perception of the nature of pagan religions which do not participate in a specific divine revelation.

The history recorded in the Hebrew scriptures is evidence that God is not remote from his creation but is constantly revealing himself in diverse ways. Such a perception of history is

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322 Daniélou emphasizes that the nature of God remains an enigma to man, even in revelation. The supreme quality of revelation is that the totally other and all-consuming being loves the creation and desires its goodness always. He explains, “Le mystérieux est le tout autre, ce qui nous est étranger et nous déconcerte, ce qui est absolument en dehors du domaine des choses habituelles, comprises, bien connues et partant familières. Devant ce Mystère de Dieu, le sentiment de l’homme est la stupeur.” Jean Daniélou, *Culture et Mystère* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1948), 78.

323 Ibid., 27-28. Creation as ongoing, moving towards the end-time and reflecting God’s presence, is central to the celebration of the Sabbath and provides a ground for dialogue with Christianity.
expressed by Daniélou in his remark that “the substance of Christian revelation is not in a knowledge of God’s existence but in the perception of his activity on the scene of time, his effective interventions in the world of human history.”

Daniélou traces the creative power of revelation from the time of Adam in the garden where the presence of God is immediate and God reveals himself to man in Sabbath rest. However, because of sin, God becomes hidden and man is deprived of immediate access to the divine. Henceforth, Daniélou contends, man could find God only in the sacramental nature of the universe until God deemed fit to reveal something deeper about himself. Such a disclosure came in the revelation of the justice of God in the salvation given to Noah and his family in a world ravaged anew by sin. Then again God’s mercy abounded in the communication to Abraham where God’s desire for man’s fidelity was made evident through specific instructions and promises. Through Abraham a new dynamic of the will of God was made known. In God’s removing Abraham from the general race of men, not by the destruction of the earth as with Noah, but by calling him apart for enlightenment in holiness and love for the benefit of mankind, the beginning of a new people was established. But, even under the direct guidance of the Lord of revelation, even in their special election, Abraham’s people succumbed to the defilements of the world. To counteract this, God gave the gift of the Law to deter his people from the worship of idols and redirect them to the presence of God in the specific place of the Ark of the Covenant and in the specific ritual of Sabbath observance. Thus the Sabbath, an incessant and inevitable recurrence of time, became central to their life as the full expression of the revelation embodied in the Law. Daniélou emphasizes that the Sabbath

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remained the paramount command even when its practice became corrupt, because it moved history toward its goal, the messianic judgment. Later in Israel’s history, when the prophets denounced hypocrisy in observance without moral rectitude and gave warning, the Sabbath still retained its place as the meaningful sign both of God’s presence and of election for the chosen ones who were to inherit the land and be the light of nations.

Daniélou gives this description of the Sabbath which he parallels with the Temple as the other divine institution: “Sabbath expresses the consecration of time to God as the Temple expresses that of space. Just as the Temple, by the consecration of a limited enclosure, was the sacrament and prefiguring of the consecration of the whole universe to be fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus and the creation of the cosmos of the church, so the Sabbath, by consecration of a particular day of the week, is the sacrament of the consecration to God of the whole of history, which was able to find its principle in the resurrection of the Incarnate Word.” Daniélou further points out that Jesus uses the divine institutions of the Sabbath and the Temple to indicate his own divine origins.
As the celebration of God’s presence and God’s desire for peace and justice, beginning with a heart at rest in order to absorb the truth of the Law, the Sabbath for the Jew embodies all that revelation contains for salvation and for Judaism’s call to be the light of nations. The command to be the light of nations is of significant importance in a discussion of Judaism as a moral force of justice, particularly in the formation of the State of Israel. For the Jewish people, the State of Israel is a new creation, a new birth into a land and a dwelling place, into a form of life that was extinguished with the destruction of Jerusalem. Israel has become for the Jew the place of Sabbath, the place of hope. Such an event affirms again a God of wonder, a God who saves.

As the sign of the covenant (Exod 31:13), the Sabbath is the medium of transmission of the truth of revelation. The great events of Jewish history, including in modern times the formation of the State of Israel, are testimony to the blessings conferred for fidelity to the Sabbath, fidelity to the worship of God through time. These words of Isaiah convey the decisiveness of God’s intervention to accomplish his will against any human plan or opposition regarding those who love him in Sabbath worship:

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\text{For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down} \\
\text{And do not return there till they have watered the earth,} \\
\text{Making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows} \\
\text{And bread to him who eats,} \\
\text{So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;} \\
\text{It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will,}
\]

328 Jews consecrate Sabbath time to God through a variety of ways that honor his presence and the presence of others. There are always three Sabbath meals specially pre-prepared in which all take part. All participate in prayer and in the study of Torah and holy literature. There are also recreational activities and assemblies in the synagogue.
In contrast to the Jews who perceive revelation as the Law and correct Sabbath observance as the Law’s fulfillment, Christianity has its definitive revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus, as true God and true man who sits at the right hand of the Father, brings all of creation into the triune love of the Godhead. Revelation means newness, that which has not existed before, although there might be types or prefigures that hint of what eventually comes to pass. As the Law is the Word of God in Judaism, the Word of God in Christianity is the person of Jesus, a divine person, the second person of the Trinity, made man. This is the newness of revelation in Christianity. Daniélou indicates that what Jesus does in his person is reveal the Father as love and open man to love’s divine effects. He comments, “Jesus calls together people dispersed in every direction to knowledge of the Father, not a land…charity enables one to understand the love of God in his Son Jesus.”

The incarnation for the Christian is the final event of salvation in time that brings the promised transformation of the end times into the present so man can truly live in hope. The relationship between profane history and eschatological time is described by Daniélou as an interpenetration of this world by the next. He explains:

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329 Jean Daniélou, *Advent*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1951), 129. In this comment, Daniélou highlights the fulfillment in the message in Isaiah of what the Lord will do with reference to the nations (Isa 66:18-21). The one who has the power to gather in the peoples is truly the Lord. The in-gathering is not through force, but through mercy, healing, and love. Daniélou interprets Isaiah’s perception of the new world as Christ’s transformation of the earth through his life, death, and resurrection. According to Daniélou, the conversion of heart of which Isaiah speaks, is through Christ’s presence in the indwelling Trinity and in the sacraments.
Profane history covers the whole period of this world’s existence, but Christianity is essentially the next world itself, present here and now in a mystery. The fundamental reality of Christianity is “to come” not just in relation to a particular moment of time, but in relation to all historical time, past, present, and future… With Christianity, the end is already achieved. In the mystery of the being and working of the Christian church, this thing which is beyond history exists now in historical fact.  

In this understanding, the future is not a linear conception of time, but rather adventus, the future that comes to meet us in which we see the transcendence of God over time, enabling a choice that is not necessarily contingent on the past. Daniélou further notes that “although the time-process continues, and the last day, or chronological end of the world, is in the future, yet, the ultimate reality is already present in the person of the incarnate Word.” In this sense, Jesus is both the sign and the presence of the end-time, of the final Sabbath for which the Jews long. Because of this, Jesus touches the conscience of mankind and turns it toward moral truth and the rectitude of human behavior which is the essence of the justice the prophets sought. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon the Christian to be an instrument in the accomplishment of this justice through perceiving the image of God in the other. The perception of God in the other brings an eschatological dimension to human relationships that witnesses to the truth that acceptance of the other is an acceptance of Christ and the form of the living reality of the

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330 Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 24. Daniélou’s perception of Christianity points directly to the essence of the Sabbath as being God’s glory brought into time and experienced as expectation of the greater glory to come. However, what is an anticipation in Judaism becomes a reality in the sacramental nature of Christianity.

331 Ibid., 190.

332 In Judaic understanding, the messiah was to embody justice and bring about correct leadership formed in obedience to the Law. The messiah would stand in confrontation with the sinful nature of mankind, and, in refusing to condone it, exposes it for what it is. That Jesus fulfills this description and is the accomplishment of prophecy is the message of the gospel.
kingdom. The judgment of the end-time is already operative in the relationships of the here and now.

Such a notion is embedded in the Sabbath from the beginning, because the Sabbath continually interrupts the flow of time to recognize and bless life in all persons and to deepen through prayer and study sensitivity to the divine plan for the salvation of mankind. The Sabbath reveres the sanctity of personhood. The Sabbath is not only the experience of God’s saving action in the Exodus, but the experience of what is beyond history, the experience of the concentration of time that brings all time together for the sake of creative newness to form the future for God. In this sense, the Sabbath is the ultimate event in Judaism, that event being the presence of God manifested for the sake of man and his salvation. The event of the Sabbath is the glory that is to come existing in the present. Antonio Lopez explains that “event does not indicate sheer novelty, a newness ultimately disconnected from the past and hence without future, but rather the presencing of a being that both contains the memory of its past and tends to the future.” The Sabbath presence of the Shekhinah (שכינה) conforms to this perception of the linkage of past and future, while, in Christianity, the hypostatic union brings all time together in the person of Jesus Christ who leaves his presence to his followers in the Eucharist. The

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334 Daniélou holds that since “some foretold the Messiah as God, while others as man, the hypostatic union harmonizes the testimony.” *The Lord of History*, 190.

335 All persons participate in an individual way in the mystery of time. The elusiveness of time touches everyone. It is expressed in the understanding that what passes into the past has no time, the future, which has not come, has no time, and the present has no time in its constant passing from future to past. The past exists as memory and the future exists as anticipation (expectation), neither of which can be measured. Therefore, their ground is eternity. Eternity exists within time in the capacity for memory and anticipation in persons. This
ever newness of all things celebrated in the Sabbath and experienced in the Eucharist prefigures the eschaton as the final divine transformation of this world. As Daniélou points out, “The sacraments, as the continuation of the great works wrought by God in the Old Testament and in the New, are the prefiguration of eschatology.” The sacraments are the media through which the glory of the risen Lord acts in time to draw all things back to the creator and to affirm the goodness of human nature. The sacraments exist in the church in contrast to the burdensome negativity of the world that assails the spirit. The sacramental grace of the Eucharist, as the life of God mediated through the merits of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, is the way in which the Christian can rise above the negative cast of the world and live as the new man described by Saint Paul.

For the Christian, the resurrection of Christ overcomes death, overcomes the transient nature of time, and overcomes the power of sin. The resurrection is the confirmation that God’s kingdom has already broken into time to reveal a glimpse of what is to come. For the Christian, awesome perception allows all of one’s life to come into the present moment in a stillness of time and be a prefiguration of the experience of the totality of one’s life which one will have in the eschaton. The Sabbath provides a time of stillness for such contemplation.

336 Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, 222.

337 Daniélou sees the general interaction of persons in modern time as diminishing to the dignity of the human being. He observes, “It is perhaps one of the worst perversions of the intellect in our age that it identifies itself with destructive criticism, whereas, when it (the intellect) is really itself and is used in all its nobility, it is precisely that which enables us to attain to the reality of things.” *Myth*, 62.

338 The sacrifices of the Temple were not sufficient to restrain the people from idolatry and sin. The prophets warned of the need to make of the heart a sacrifice to God so that the heart would belong to God and man would be enabled to act with pure motives. The revelation in Christ consists in the sacrifice of the cross, the sacrifice of his pierced heart, from which all benefits flow to man as grace, enabling him to imitate God in goodness. In his letter to the Colossians, Saint Paul affirms that the life of God, mediated through the merits of Christ, is the message of the gospel, and he urges all to accept this new life as truth: “What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new man, one who grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his Creator…Christ is everything in all of you” (Col 3:9-11).
“the gospel is precisely about something new, something which is not rooted in and does not rest upon the inherent potentialities and possibilities of the actual present, but upon the capacities of the God of creation and resurrection who has promised to make all things new.”339 The underlying content of this statement is found in the saying of Jesus which refers to the necessity for pouring new wine into new wineskins. It is recorded in all three synoptic gospels. To indicate the radical disposition needed to absorb his teachings, Jesus comments to the disciples of John the Baptist, “People do not pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and in that way both are preserved” (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-8). The image of the wineskins parallels the pouring out of the glory of God to man, the basic experience of the Sabbath now transformed into the experience of the resurrected Lord as known in Eucharistic celebration. This is a newness for which man needs preparation by becoming a new creation through the paschal mystery, the sacrifice of the cross. The old cannot contain the new. The newness bestowed in Christ is a selflessness that is willing to take on the burdens of others as a form of sacrifice in the innocence of the love of God. This newness of love is accomplished through forgiveness. Forgiveness as the central message of the gospel is found in these words of Saint Paul, “The Father rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins” (Col 1:13).

For the Christian, the strength to live in suffering for the sake of justice is through identity with the cross through which comes resurrection. The suffering of the cross is a

culmination of the suffering of obedience to the Law, essentially obedience to Sabbath observance, and is prefigured in the fidelity of the seven brothers who endured torture and execution for the sake of their faith as recorded in the Second Book of Maccabees (2 Macc 7: 1-42). The messianic kingdom has a price. Gillet makes this comment, “Messianism, either Jewish or Christian, says: bow first your own will in obedience to God’s. The first command is: love God. The attitude which I take before God defines the attitude which I take towards men. I stand before my neighbor in unselfish renunciation only when I stand before God in sacrificial obedience.”

In essence, the desire for the kingdom that is to come finds expression in a humility that recognizes sinfulness and the fundamental need for repentance. Daniélou attests that “the true Sabbath consists not in consecrating only one day to God, but every day, and in abstaining not from corporal work, but from sin…The true Sabbath of which Isaiah spoke, and which consists in ceasing to do evil ( Isa 1:16), is in Christ who is the cessation from sin which he alone fulfills. Christ introduces us into the unique Sabbath, of which the Sabbaths of the Law were only a prophetic prefiguration which did not give what they signified.” In other words, the death and resurrection of Jesus is a confirmation of God’s messianic promise to deliver his people from the hands of the enemy, the true enemy, sin and death. Gillet concurs that in humility there is a genuine openness to the new that God has planned. He has this to say with respect to repentance, newness, and salvation, “All repentance is messianic and eschatological, for repentance or

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341 Daniélou, Bible and Liturgy, 234-5.
atonement and future mean in essence the same: the certainty of the new and the nearness of the far…the way into salvation is to enter on a life of obedience, the obedience of sanctification.”

This is what the Jew is seeking in the holiness brought by the descent of the Shekinah (שֶׁכִּינָה) on the Sabbath. For the Jew, Sabbath observance is the foundation for the strength needed for obedience to Torah which brings about holiness. For the Christian, participation in the paschal mystery through the celebration of the Eucharist, especially in the communion of Sunday worship, is the foundation for the strength needed to live the Gospel and the teachings of the beatitudes. The Eucharist enables the Christian to see the image of God in man and act in charity. The judgment of the end time is thus reflected in the choices of the present.

For both the Christian and the Jew, there is a divine reality concerned with the destiny of man that enters history in wondrous events. For both the Christian and the Jew there has been the pathos of suffering and persecution, which almost defies resolution. However, in Christianity “the history of the suffering and forsaken Christ is so open that the sufferings and anxieties of every loving man and woman find a place there.” The Christian lives through an interiorization of Jesus’ self-giving on the cross, and carries out the mission of Christ in loving solidarity with others in the suffering love of the crucified. Since good works often have a

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342 Gillet, *Communion*, 113.
343 Bauckham, *Theology*, 231.
344 Edith Stein describes this suffering love as the “science of the cross”. She envisions the cross as “a living, real, and effective truth, planted deep like an acorn within a person, taking root and growing. It is effective truth because it influences what one then does or omits…From the interior depths where the truth of the cross makes its impression, one’s view of life arises, including an image of God and the world.” Edith Stein, Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, *The Science of the Cross* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), xxvi.
way of becoming a form of self-justification and ultimately pride, prayerful union with the crucified is needed as a source of love that will not easily devolve into its own self-seeking.

For Jews, the Exodus event confirms that God will keep his promises and give to them a stability of life in their movement into the future. The eschaton, as the fulfillment of the promises, shares its finality with each passing Sabbath such that these days become stepping stones toward eternal rest in God. The Sabbath does not look backwards or cling to what is past, but confirms the truth of what God has brought about and undergirds faith that God will do even greater works. While Judaism moves from Sabbath to Sabbath toward messianic fulfillment, Christianity sees Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, as the fullness of time and the presence of God now, but not yet enacted throughout the earth. For the Christian, the future has a presence in the now, and what one becomes is anchored in every decision.

Daniélou perceives in Jesus a judgment already upon the world. He sees this judgment in terms of the prophets of Israel. In his dialogue with André Neher, Daniélou discusses history as the movement of the people of God toward a future already present. Such an understanding is the heart of the message of the prophets and the essence of Sabbath observance. In explanation of the prophetic nature of Judaism, Neher describes to Daniélou the inter-relationship of prophecy and covenant in salvation history:

L’omniprésence de Dieu et l’omniprésence du prochain sont les fondements de la conception métaphysique des prophètes. La philosophie biblique est une interprétation totale de l’homme et de l’histoire, dont le principe est la bérith…Ce qui est essential c’est que la prophétie se rettache à la bérith, qu’elle en est un appel, qu’elle confronte le péché de l’homme et de la société à la Loi permanent
de Dieu. La prophétie est la revendication d’un ordre permanent non pas extérieur à l’histoire, mais expression de l’histoire telle que Dieu la veut.\(^{345}\)

Daniélyou is in accord with this insight and contends that Christianity sees Christ as the fullness of prophecy incarnate bringing creation to its fullness in the glory of the Father. As the sign of the justice the prophets foretold and the sign of the judgment to come, Jesus is the Sabbath of the end-time right now. Daniélyou cites this difference between the Christian understanding of prophecy and that of Judaism. He explains, “Jésus n’est un prophet d’un ideal de paix et de justice, mais le Sauveur du monde et le Seigneur ressuscité.”\(^{346}\) “Christianity,” he further points out, “is essentially the next world itself, present here and now in a mystery. The fundamental reality of Christianity is “to come” not just in relation to a particular moment of time, but in relation to all historical time, past, present and future.”\(^{347}\) It is because of Christ that everyone is called to evaluate his life and undergo the metanoia necessary to live a life of grace, a life of holiness as the prophets proclaimed.

The implications of this revelation are best expressed in the gospel of John where Jesus himself declares that salvation is from the Jews, because he, a Jew, knows the Father and the proper relationship with the Father in the Spirit.\(^{348}\) The desire of God has been from the

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\(^{346}\) Ibid., 94.


\(^{348}\) In his discourse with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus states, “You people worship what you do not understand, while we understand what we worship; after all, salvation is from the Jews. Yet, an hour is coming, and is already here, when authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth…God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, “I know there is a Messiah coming. When he comes, he will tell us everything.” Jesus replied, “I who speak to you am he.” (John 4: 22-26).
beginning that people know him as loving Father and become holy (Lev 11: 44, 45). Jesus cautioned the Pharisees, “If you knew me, you would know my Father too” (John 8: 19). In contrast, he instructed his disciples, “As the Father has loved me so I have loved you… love one another as I have loved you. (John 15: 9, 12; 17: 11). Jesus offers unity in love.  Such love recognizes distinct persons yet binds in an indissoluble unity. The desire of Christ in his mission from the Father is to effect this unity which is both the foundation and the formation of the kingdom through time. In this love is the proper acknowledgment of personhood from which flows the cooperation needed for the goodness and peace triune love offers. Such is the substance of the Christian Eucharistic worship at the Sunday gathering.

349 Unity is the hallmark of Judaism: one God, one Law, one Temple, one land, one people to be a light to all the nations, one city of God, one mountain of the Lord to which all the earth will come. Daniélou describes Israel in terms of this unity as a prototype of the kingdom of Christ. He states, “L’unité est depuis l’origine la marque du peuple de Dieu. Elle l’était dans l’Ancien Israël. Les prophètes ont souvent comparé l’alliance de Yahweh et de son peuple à celle de l’époux et de l’épouse. Et ceci signifiait entre autres que Yahweh ne pouvait avoir qu’un peuple. L’unité reste la marque du peuple de la Nouvelle Alliance. Mais en face de cette unité qui vient de Dieu, il y a à travers toute l’histoire sainte une force de mal qui travaille à diviser et à séparer.” Daniélou,
Dialogue avec Israël, 149-50.

350 The general concept of unity tends to be a universal perception of being which Daniélou maintains becomes binding, sterile, or all-absorbing. Unity was never achieved in the Old Testament. He points to the significance of moving from a concept of the “one” to a concept of Trinity. He states, “Left to itself, intelligence tends to reduce all things to a certain level of unity. But the whole foundation of Christian revelation rests on the Trinity and the co-existence and communication within the Trinity. Our human communion devolves from communion within the Trinity.” Jean Daniélou, God’s Life in Us, trans. Jeremy Leggat (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1969), 46.

351 Trinity is the central truth in the theology of Daniélou. His psychological perspective that derives from his understanding of Trinity is that life always exists in exchange and communication, a giving and receiving. He correlates the interchange within the Trinity with the interchange between God and man through grace, and the interchange between persons in human communication. He states, “The refusal to give, like the refusal to receive, is a refusal to live…For us, to live is to receive ourselves from love and to bring ourselves back to love…it is precisely because we are created in the image of the triune God that the fact of receiving ourselves in a gift, and so of living in an exchange, is not something which alienates our essence, but rather fulfills it completely.” It derives from this that “our relations with persons are more important than our relations with matter.” Daniélou, Myth, 93, 98.
The Sabbath for the Jews and the Eucharist for Christians offer a stability of life, wherein is celebrated the promise of the future, history as prophetic event, and salvation. Sacred Scripture is essential to both the ritual of the Sabbath and the Eucharistic liturgy, especially Sunday worship. The following section will probe this dimension of the Sabbath and Sunday.

3. Scripture and Worship: Daniélou, the Sabbath, and Early Christianity

The emphasis on event in Daniélou’s understanding of revelation is found also in his interpretation of Sacred Scripture and resonates with the Judaic perception of God’s relationship with man. He states, “The whole of Scripture, Old and New Testament alike, has no other object than to be a testimony to the fact that God has revealed himself… It tells us, not directly what God is, but what God does.” In his discussion of Sacred Scripture, Daniélou addresses the difference between story and theological speculations. He underlines the fact that the Scriptures are the story of God’s salvific intervention in the progress of man in history. This story is not the record of scientific achievement or political dominance or artistic splendor. Civilizations that have attained great heights in such endeavors have come and gone. Consequently, he emphasizes that Scripture is the record of the moral and spiritual path man must follow to be a person and bring about the peace that comes from recognizing personhood as having a destiny beyond the immediacies of life. He is clear that Scripture is not meant to appeal specifically to

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352 According to Daniélou, “ Stability means that the things acquired are acquired forever. Faith has a fundamental stability in that it is no longer at the mercy of the doubt of what is acquired. Faith is always progressing to ever new acquisitions for we shall never exhaust the richness of God. What constitutes stability is the impossibility of going backward… Stability progresses from acquisition to acquisition in a continuous line and is a perpetual movement. Perpetual acquisition is true of all spiritual realities.” Ibid., 88.

353 Ibid., 101-2.
man’s rational nature, but rather serves to confront man with new ways of seeing and novel situations that do not conform to expectations. He attests that the Spirit moves through Sacred Scripture to tame the will and to evoke humility before the things of God that are not the things of man. The categories that work for human expression do not have the same effectiveness in the case of the Divine Word. The Word of God baffles and forces re-evaluation of one’s life. The intellect, which is made to know reality, finds in Scripture dimensions of reality not offered in the material world. For these reasons, Sacred Scripture is a foundational element of worship among both Jews and Christians.

The sacredness of the Word of God is reflected in the manner in which Torah is reverenced in Sabbath worship and the various Judaic liturgical services. Torah is the central focus of each Sabbath observance because it is considered the way to know God. Daniélou recognizes the paramount importance of the Scriptures in Judaism and the influence synagogue prayer had on the first Christian Jews. He remarks, “Le Judaïsme est tout entier informé dans ses conceptions par l’Ancien Testament… dans le Judaïsme contemporain du Christ la Thora est considéré comme une réalité divine, pré-existante au monde. Le rouleau qui la contient sera dans la synagogue l’objet d’un véritable culte: il est comme le sacrament visible de la présence de la Parole divine.”

Because Judaism understood itself in the words of Torah, the original Christian community, a sect of Judaism, had the task of integrating the insights of the teachings of Jesus with the teachings of the Law. In other words, in order to realize more deeply the meaning of Jesus’ life, they interpreted the persons and events of the Scriptures in relation to

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Jesus’ life and message. In particular this was the work of the writers of the gospels who turned to the sacred history of the Old Testament to demonstrate that God’s acts in the present reflect and bring to greater fullness what God has already accomplished with his people in the past. Thus, the scriptures demonstrate that past events are types for the events that occur later.

Daniélou describes the original Christian community as embodying and transforming the types that preceded it in the history of Israel. He explains, “Même si le christianisme était un événement et une révélation neufs, il restait en milieu juif, et il s’était exprimé à travers les formes de ce milieu…” 355

Since the new revelation in Christianity expressed itself through the forms of Jewish traditions, the first Christians observed the Sabbath and continued to go to the Temple or synagogue to pray. They considered themselves Jews, as Jesus was a Jew, who prayed to the God of Abraham as his Father in heaven and who had taught them how to pray. The essential problem was, as Daniélou points out, “comment regarder l’Ancien Testament. Ça c’était une question essentielle pour le christianisme primitif, qui à la fois s’affirmait comme une révélation nouvelle et cependant a considéré l’Ancien Testament comme Parole de Dieu. C’était là le point de départ de l’exégèse chrétienne de l’Ancien Testament, qui montrait dans le Christ la réalisation des figures et des prophéties.” 356

The early Christian community examined Jesus’ life in terms of the persons and incidents of the Hebrew Scriptures, especially with respect to the

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355 Ibid., 101.
356 Ibid.
prophets and the messianic kingdom. This will be discussed in greater detail in the section on typology.

C. The Unique Position of Judaism

1. Event

It has become clear in the course of the discussion of Judaism and of Daniélou’s theology that “the faith of the Jews and the Christians bears not on the fact that God exists, but on the fact that God has intervened in the history of men. It is through his works that God shows what he is and this is the object of sacred history.”

Very early in its history, Judaism turned from seasonal harvest celebrations to celebrations of the interventions of God on their behalf and of his presence in ever new and unforeseen ways. Abraham listened to the voice of God and separated from the tribes of men to form a new people for a God, not of power, but of holiness, who invites to holiness (Lev 11: 44, 45; 19: 2; 20: 7). This event was a form of new creation by an invisible God who was concerned about his chosen people and promised to be with them. The granting of the Law and the words of the Prophets were events that continued this penetration of God into history. Within the Law, the command to keep holy the Sabbath Day insured a continual entrance of God into time, and made the Sabbath a perennial event and, as the presence of God, the eschatological destiny of the people.

Through these interventions, a disposition of hope was created in a people constantly threatened by hostile empires and enmeshed in their own sin. The most significant consideration here is the situation of universal sin. The divine interventions were always for the sake of saving

357 Daniélou, Myth, 102.
man from himself and placing him within the divine presence where there is no sin, but only a right relationship with the whole of creation. The nations were to learn this from Israel. The survival of such a people is the true wonder. It is the definitive witness that God speaks in events that occur as he wills; that his word becomes reality.

That ultimately Jesus was born of the line of Abraham and the family of David, is, for Christianity, the culminating event. Christ’s birth confirms the truth of this extraordinary history. Daniélou draws attention to the fact that it was from Judaism that Christ was born, and that within Judaism the apostles formed the church. Every manifestation of God in their history was a preparation for the Incarnation. The election of the Jews was for the purpose of this glory. Daniélou comments:

Chaque peuple, chaque race a ses grandeurs. Mais jamais aucun peuple n’aura la grandeur d’Israël. Car c’est de la race d’Israël que le Fils de Dieu a pris l’humanité qu’il a assumée. C’est là une grandeur si vertigineuse qu’elle déconcerte nos imaginations et nos raisons. Toutes les autres grandeurs charnelles sont passagères… Jésus-Christ vivra éternellement et sera éternellement juif selon la race, conférant ainsi à Israël un privilège éternellement unique. Israël restera à jamais le peuple “à qui appartiennent l’adoption et la gloire et les alliances et la Loi et le culte et les promesses et les patriarches et de qui est issu le Christ selon la chair” (Rom. 9:4). Les plus grands saints du christianisme sont des juifs: la Vierge Marie avant toute autre… Jean-Baptiste…Joseph…Pierre, Paul et tous les Apôtres. Telle est donc la gloire d’Israël. ³⁵⁸

³⁵⁸ Daniélou, Dialogue, 7-8.
2. History as Prophecy

Just as event in Judaism is the very essence of the movement through time, prophecy is the substance of its history. The prophets are the interpreters of the truth of the happenings experienced by the nation. The mystery of the workings of God permeates history and the prophets are the instruments called by God to make sure that the people do not turn from the true meaning of what confronts them. The prophets are entrusted with the sacred mission of insuring that the progress of time is replete with the message of salvation. In this line of thought, Daniélou gives this description of prophecy:

Un acte immédiat de reconnaissance, une intuition, c’est précisément la prophétie en sa réalité substantielle. Elle consiste à coïncider avec le mouvement qui emporte le temps, à communier par l’esprit avec ce dessein de salut qui est le plan de Dieu sur l’humanité…Cette intuition prophétique transforme l’histoire en mystère. Elle surmonte la résistance qu’offre le monde du temps à l’esprit et réalise ainsi son voeu suprême de prophétie, qui est de rendre le chronologique significatif. L’histoire devient alors la traduction visible et progressive d’une réalité unique et invisible. 359

The visible aspect of the movement of prophecy through history consists in various stages. Prophecy originates in Abraham who is to be the father of nations and continues with the promise to Moses of a greater prophet to come. 360 It finds further expression in the promise to David to whom is assured an enduring dynasty, and ultimately it resides in the message of the prophets who preach a new covenant and a new Jerusalem. Each stage of prophecy reflects what

359 Daniélou, Culture, 34-35.

360 The Lord spoke to Moses, “A prophet like me will the Lord your God raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen….I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. If any man will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it (Deut 18: 15, 18-19).
has come before, but also expresses a deeper and fuller meaning for the covenant and the observance of the covenant demands. Prophecy affirms that the new covenant and the new Jerusalem will be achieved in a new prophet and a new king who will embody the greatness of the tradition and be the rightful ruler in justice and peace. This phenomenon itself will be a new creation, different from all the ineffectual efforts of the past. In this sense, prophecy looks ahead to the end times when all will be set right and the kingdom of God will draw all to its justice.

As the prophets proclaimed the necessity for the people to act in justice and to live the Law in the reality of their lives, they also made known that observance of the Sabbath was not moving the people to live in accordance with this justice. Although the Sabbath was given to remind the people of God’s presence and goodness, and to move them forward toward their final destiny in God’s rest, an imitation of God in this regard was not evident in their working lives. Through the prophets the very meaning of Sabbath observance was called into question. It was not ritual God wanted, but a contrite heart dedicated to goodness and genuine concern for others as Torah (תּוֹרָה) required, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord” (Lev 19: 18). Various rules for virtuous conduct were set down in the Book of Leviticus to ensure that God would be honored and persons would be in right relationship with their neighbor (Lev 19:3-37). These guidelines were prefaced by God’s instruction, “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Lev 19: 2). Such an injunction indicates that proper conduct is not just for the sake of justice, but also for the sake of sanctification. The prophets pointed out that proper Sabbath observance could not be just empty ritual, but required a conversion of heart that would then strive to live the Law in order to become holy, to become as God. The prophets had the insight
to know that the Sabbath was not simply a day but a way of life, infused with the life of God to truly see one’s neighbor as oneself.

There are two strains that figure in prophetic history: the last days when judgment will be passed, and the time of the messiah who will set Israel free and inaugurate a new people. In Judaism, both these aspects of prophetic history are contingent upon the Sabbath as the fullness of the Law that brings persons to God and time into eternity. Although the time of the messiah’s coming remains uncertain, it may be conjoined to the time of the eschaton as a last preparation before the end.

With respect to Christianity, Daniélou sees the essential doctrine of the New Testament as these two aspects of prophecy coming together in the person of Jesus Christ, who, through his presence, is a judgment on conscience, and, through his resurrection, is the new creation that truly enables persons to see the image of God in others. Furthermore, Jesus as messiah inaugurates the church that spans the time from the resurrection to the eschaton in a new holiness centered in the Lord’s words, “This is my body to be given for you…this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood…Do this as a remembrance of me (Luke 22: 19-20). This is what is celebrated in every Mass and in particular in Sunday liturgy.

History, then, is not just a sequence of events or repeated actions that have little relationship to what has gone before and what will follow. Within the revelation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, there is awareness of the significance of specific happenings, and a concern to see in them further insights into the plan of God. There is an acknowledgment that former events have present consequences and meanings. History is replete with types and figures and
circumstances that lay the foundation for other persons and occurrences that manifest in ever
greater and more profound ways the saving nature of God. In this perception of history, no event
is isolated, but rather carries meaning for the future and the affirmation that the will of God will
be accomplished. The following section explains this point more fully and considers various
persons and incidents of the Hebrew Scriptures in terms of a typology of the New Testament.

3. Typology as Promise and Fulfillment: Sunday as Sabbath Fullness

Biblical typology finds its meaning in remembrance and prophecy. Persons, places, and
events in the scriptures interrelate because the profundity of each experience of God’s saving
presence engenders a vision that interprets reality through an ever new lens. Throughout their
history, the Jewish people have anticipated greater and greater divine interventions in their life
story, the greatest anticipation being of the coming of the Messiah. For the Jews, what has
happened in the past foretells what will come to be in the future, although the manner of the
actual materialization of that future intervention remains unknown. Remembrance is the very
vehicle of prophecy, the firm conviction that the truth of the past will prevail in the future, truth
being the saving presence of God. In the Pentateuch, the Exodus is memorialized as manifesting
God’s indisputable concern for the people, while the prophets refer to the past as assurance of a
still more bounteous divine assistance. The new is always greater. Daniélou describes this
phenomenon:

C’est en effet à propos de l’Exode qu’apparaît le mieux l’enracinement de la
D’une part il est rappel d’événements passés qui sont les grands oeuvres
accomplies par Dieu pour Israël…il est en même temps annonce d’événements
futures qui seront des grandes œuvres que Dieu accomplira dans l’avenir pour son peuple... Et on peut ajouter qu’il n’est mémorial que parce qu’il est prophétie, je veux dire que le rappel des grandes œuvres de Dieu dans le passé est ordonné à fonder l’espérance dans l’avenir. Or il est remarquable que les prophètes nous présentent les événements futurs comme une reprise de ceux du passé. It is clear that the events of biblical history are interwoven and relate to one another. They also make clear that the plan of God will prevail and his plan will bring about unprecedented newness such that the old will no longer have relevance, except as indicative of the new, of which it shares nothing of its form. Thus everything in the eternal design of God interrelates and moves toward one end, God's glory. In this sense, there is a parallelism between creation and eschatology. Christianity sees the utter newness of creation brought to another level in the incarnation and the resurrection, and then in the transformation to be experienced at the end time. The interconnectedness of old and new is expressed in the gospels with the analogy of the wine and the wine skins. “People do not pour new wine into old wine skins. If they do, the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. No, they pour new wine into new

Reference has already been made to Isaiah with respect to the immediacy of the creative power of God and its impact on the things of the past whose reality is virtually obliterated by the new (Isa 55: 10-11). God’s ultimate power to do his own pleasure within the creation is attested also in Psalm 104 where everything is shown as dependent upon divine action and the spirit of God alone brings renewal, “If you hide your face, they are dismayed; if you take away their breath, they perish and return to dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” (Ps 104:29-30).

In its attributing to Christ the significance of the Exodus, the New Testament continues the typology designed by the prophets. Daniélon maintains that the future alluded to by the prophets is Christ. He explains, “En montrant dans la vie du Christ la réalité dont l’Exode était l’ébauche et la figure, le Nouveau Testament ne fait que reprendre et continuer la typologie ébauché par les prophètes. La différence essentielle n’est pas dans la typologie: elle est dans le fait que ce que les prophètes présentaient comme un avenir, les auteurs du Nouveau Testament le présentent comme accompli in Jesus Christ. Telle est l’affirmation fondamentale du Nouveau Testament, le fondement de sa typologie...Ceci nous montre la relation organique qui unit typologie et prophétie, τύπος et λόγος. Ce ne sont pas en réalité choses distinctes mais la prophétie est déjà interprétation typologique de l’histoire.” Daniélon, Sacramentum, 135.
wineskins, and in that way both are preserved (Matt. 9:17). Reference to this scripture text has been made before, but its relevance to typology and prophecy cannot be overlooked. The purport of the scripture about the necessity for new wine skins in order to hold the new wine, is that something new requires a complete change compatible with the nature of what is now being introduced. Only a new disposition can accommodate what has never been experienced before.

Daniélou cites the prophets as the figures of the Old Testament who had insight into the phenomenon of God’s intervention into history to effect the unexpected with his plans. He states, “The Prophets in the very heart of the Old Testament are the first who have dwelt on the significance of the Exodus, and their work is of primary importance, for it makes it clear that the principles of typology were to be found already among the Prophets. We have only to add that they think of this New Exodus as something superior to the old and of a more spiritual character (Jer 31:33).” An example of this is Isaiah’s prophecy of radical newness based on the events of the Exodus (Isa 43:14-21), which finds fulfillment in the proclamation of Ezekiel of a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36: 26-28), and in the vision of the dry bones that rise up (Ezek 37:1-14). The new heart is a gift of God to redirect worship, and the raised bones are the assurance that a new people will be formed. The typology continues with Jeremiah and the Law inscribed upon the heart where one knows God by the forgiveness of sins (Jer 31:31-34). In the New Testament Saint Paul’s describes Christ as the first fruits of the dead, which itself is a

364 This analogy is repeated in the two other synoptic gospels. The account in Mark has very similar wording (Mark 2:22). However, the account in Luke has the enigmatic addition, “No one after drinking old wine wants new. He says, ‘I find the old wine better’” (Luke 5:37-39). This addition may be indicative of the difficulty of perceiving and accepting the new, which has different demands and requires change.

prototype of the glorified life all who belong to Christ will experience (1 Cor 15: 20-23). The
ewness foretold in Isaiah is reflected also in Paul’s statement that man is a new creation and the
old order has passed away. As in Ezekiel, where God placed the contrite heart within the people,
the new creation has also been enacted by God through the reconciliation of forgiveness in the
resurrected Christ who fulfills the Sabbath by bringing a new day of a new life. The message of
reconciliation in forgiveness is now the hallmark of the new day, the new life, and a whole new
people (2 Cor 5:17-21).

As can be seen in these examples, the fulfillment of a figure involves a certain
obsolescence of the former because the figure is superseded by a greater perfection. “The figure
has no further part to play when the fact which it proclaims has come to pass.”366 However, the
figure retains its status as figure and remains the reference that manifests the wonders that God
can perform. This is the paradox that the early church fathers encountered in their efforts to
witness to the Christ event, while acknowledging the sacred scriptures as containing the plan of
effet de montrer que les événements de la vie du Christ et de l’église sont la réalisation du
dessein éternel de Dieu. C’est à quoi correspond l’idée de la préexistence en Dieu des réalités
eschatologiques.”367 However, the obsolescence involved in the fulfillment of a figure is
positive, because all the figure’s valuable elements are retained in a transformed manner, and, in
that sense, nothing is lost, but brought to a higher level of significance.

367 Daniélou, Judéo-Christianisme, 434.
The scriptures are replete with images, figures, and memorials that prophesy that saving events will occur again. I will examine here two types, the Sabbath and the Temple, because of their particular significance to the study of Christ as the Sabbath and the Temple that fulfill Judaism. The Sabbath will be considered under the aspects of time and worship; the Temple will be considered as the place of Presence.

The Sabbath comes into existence as the seventh day of creation. It is not a day like the other days, because there is no new creation and there is no reference to evening (Gen 2: 2-3). It is the eternal day in which the presence of God is immediate to man and in which man is to live and work and have his being. In a certain sense there is a creation of “rest”. The implication of the lack of evening is that the Sabbath permeates the other days and informs the work and activity that occurs on them. In other words, the Sabbath is the presence of God at all times which gives meaning and gladness to each moment. Rest has meaning on the Sabbath and spiritually at all other times also. Rest must be recognized and reverenced, just as all the other features of creation, as a gift of God. Sabbath rest becomes the vehicle of spiritual union with God in all moments of life in Judaism.

As a consequence of its singular nature, the Sabbath has precedence over all the days, and rules time. It is the focus of time and the movement through time to God. Because this day consecrates all time, it demands that man recognize that he reverts to nothing without the creator. The Sabbath is the day, the light, and the holiness. The Sabbath is that to which everything in creation is directed and the culmination of time in the end. In his understanding of Sabbath,
Daniélou contends that “the symbolism of the seventh day serves above all to emphasize the character of Christianity as an eschatological event.”

Daniélou sees the Sabbath as a typology of time, which is fulfilled in Christ as the true seventh day and the true rest. Sabbath expresses the consecration of time to God as the temple expresses the consecration of space. In the risen Christ all of the time of history and all of the space of the universe is consecrated to God. The cure of the sick man by the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (John 5: 1-18) is cited by Daniélou to show that the eschatological nature of the Sabbath has its essence in the wholeness of persons in the present moment. This is the true kingdom of God that replaces observances. Jesus tells the weary and those who are burdened to come to him for rest for he is meek and humble of heart (Matt 11: 28-30). The rest that is offered by Jesus does not have time limitations. Daniélou again makes reference to the gospel of John where Jesus describes his Father in heaven as always at work (John 5: 16-17). The work of sanctification and salvation never ceases because the true Sabbath is holiness. Daniélou states, “The working of Christ is seen to be the reality which comes to replace the figurative idleness of the Sabbath.” He continues with this explanation of the foundation of holiness, “In the prophets (Isaiah 1: 16-17) and the Fathers of the Church the true Sabbath is not to cease from physical work but to cease from sinning.” The new creation in Christ has replaced the old with the power to forgive sin and with the new energy of the Christian assembly of the Church.


369 Ibid., 227.

370 Ibid., 224.
Daniélou thus maintains that “When the new reality appears, it disengages itself step by step from the ancient world which is dying”\textsuperscript{371} Furthermore, he describes prayer in the Christian Sunday assembly as a form of contemplation that “is an anticipation of the true Sabbath which will be life beyond death, when the soul, freed from the works of the body prefigured by the six days of creation, will be wholly absorbed in things intelligible and divine.”\textsuperscript{372} In other words, the Eucharistic celebration is bathed in the light of creation which culminates in the seventh day that has no ending but lingers forever in the glory of God. In the New Testament, Christ identifies himself as the light of the world and in this way he indicates that he is both the word of God first spoken as light in Genesis and the Sabbath which has no end.

In his understanding of creation, Daniélou points out that “the word \textit{bara} (בר) designates those things which only God can accomplish, works truly divine.”\textsuperscript{373} Thus, there are implications from the beginning that God will do wonders. In the account of creation in Genesis, what is spoken forth first is light, and God calls the light, day. What is significant here is that the word of God precedes creation, is already in existence with God, and is ever ready to do God’s command.\textsuperscript{374} What issues forth on the first day is light; then all of creation is made in this light

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Ibid., 227.
\item Ibid., 246.
\item Suggestions of a relationship between God and his Word are found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, Psalm 33 proclaims “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made” (Ps 33: 6). Another passage which infers that there is relationship within God, is the description of wisdom attributed to Solomon which states, “Wisdom penetrates and pervades all things by reason of her purity. For she is the aura of the might of God and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty; for she is the refugence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God, the image of his goodness” (Wis 7: 24-26). A similar description of the Son is given by the author of Hebrews “In this, the final age, God has spoken to us through his Son whom he has made heir of all things and
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which proceeds from the word.\(^{375}\) Light and day find culmination in the Sabbath which, as explicitly God’s time, can know no darkness. When Jesus asserts, “I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life” (John 8: 12), he is revealing himself as the Word of God which comes forth as the light that informs everything that is brought into existence. He is speaking as the very embodiment of the Sabbath day which is the presence of God, the fullness of life, and the peace that overcomes the sin-filled grasp of the shadows of evil. In the beginning of Genesis, “God called the light, day” (Gen. 1: 5). Jesus’ proclamation “I am the light of the world” is an appropriation to himself of all that light means as the day of the presence of God and as the day of salvation. Jesus’ avowal that he is the light implies that the plan of God (the Word of God) is now to be fulfilled, because the light and the word are one expression of the divine will. Jesus understands his mission precisely as a combat against the workings of evil. He describes himself as the one who works to do the deeds of him who sent him, because he is the day (the light) in which deeds are accomplished. No one can work in the night, but in Jesus there is perennial day, perennial attention to the will of the through whom he first created the universe. This Son is the effulgence of the Father’s glory, the full expression of the Father’s being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word” (Heb 1: 2-3). In later Judaism, the Shekinah (שיקנ), as divine wisdom and thus the illumination of the Sabbath day, was considered an emanation of the Godhead.) The similarity of expression between the description of wisdom and Saint Paul’s description of the Son is an indication that the Hebrew Scriptures provided patterns for the sacred writers in their formulation of the New Testament.

\(^{375}\) That the word is pre-existent is a very early insight of the Chrch Fathers. Circa AD 132, Clement of Alexandria described the commands of God as his Word and explained that the seventh day is the day of the eschaton (resurrection) which brings forth the true light that illumines creation in knowledge and wisdom. He writes, “And the fourth word is that which intimates that the world was created by God and that he gave us the seventh day …in preparation for the Primal Day, our true rest, which, in truth, is the first creation of light, in which all things are viewed and possessed. From this day the first wisdom and knowledge illuminate us. For the light of truth…is the Spirit of God indivisibly divided to all…” Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, VI, 16. [http://www.earlychurchwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-bok6.html](http://www.earlychurchwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-bok6.html) [accessed January 17, 2013].
Father, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9: 4-5). Daniélou cites the healing of the man with the withered hand as indicative of the conquest of evil Jesus’ mission is to accomplish. He considers that such actions “anticipate the coming of the kingdom, of the true rest.”

For the Christian, Jesus Christ is the substance of the Sabbath, the everlasting light through which life from the Father’s love flows into man and enables the accomplishment of good. This puts a new perspective on the Judaic understanding of observance of the Sabbath. The fulfillment of a figure is a new creation which makes the old outmoded as a sign whose significance has been overpowered by the absolute distinctness of what now exists. “The message of the New Testament,” Daniélou asserts, “is, above all, to point out that Christ is He Who was announced by all the prefigurations of the Old Testament. The New Testament shows us the abolition of the Sabbath and its fulfillment in Christ as an accomplished fact.” The fulfillment of the Sabbath is ultimately the perfect obedience which the prophets said would bring the messiah. Jesus’ death is this perfect obedience and his resurrection and appearance to the gathered disciples on Sunday created the new day of worship. Daniélou describes Sunday as “a continuation of this weekly reunion, a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, the sacrament of his presence in the midst of his own, and the prophecy of his second coming.”

Sunday has a unique significance as the weekly Easter which brings the paschal mystery into the

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376 Daniélou, *Bible and Liturgy*, 226.

377 Ibid., 230.

378 Ibid., 243.
present. In the ritual of the Eucharist, the faithful are enabled to endure suffering for the sake of sanctification. Sunday liturgy is the conquest of the true enemy, sin and death, through forgiveness. The resurrected Christ celebrated on Sunday consecrates all time and makes every day an occasion of grace.

Saint Paul understands the Christ dimension of the Sabbath and addresses the problem of Sabbath observance in the early Christian community. He emphasizes that it is the light of Christ which now mediates living in the presence of God. For Saint Paul the essence of Christian life lies in loving the Father as Christ has loved the Father, and this is not dependent upon one’s manner of eating or drinking or performance of works.\(^{379}\) He states, “No one is free, therefore, to pass judgment on you in terms of what you eat or drink or what you do on yearly or monthly feasts, or on the Sabbath. All these were a shadow of things to come; the reality is the body of Christ” (Col 2:16-17). Here, the body of Christ is both the person of Jesus and the church which is the instrument of the gospel message.\(^{380}\) Since the glory of God and peace among men are the essential meaning of the Sabbath, Saint Paul was accepting of various degrees of observance or non-observance of the Mosaic Law.\(^{381}\) As apostle to the Gentiles, Paul

\(^{379}\) Paul’s concern about eating, drinking, and certain rituals among the Colossians derives from the infiltration of philosophical speculations perpetrated by Gnostic thinkers. These were spreading the notion that astrological beings had powers over the earth and needed to be assuaged by fastings and rites different or beyond the regulations of the traditional law. Paul is not condemning the Law here, but differentiating it from the extremes imposed by these philosophers.

\(^{380}\) Jesus establishes a unique perception of God when he responds to the Jews’ criticism of his curing on the Sabbath by stating, “My Father is at work until now, and I am at work as well” (John 5:17). This work is not just the governance of the universe but more importantly the providence with which God oversees the lives of persons. In other words the continuous activity of God is love. This is reflected in Jesus who, as the Son of God, preaches the message of forgiveness, forgives sins, and heals the broken. All of Jesus’ works glorify the Father and initiate the kingdom which is to be offered back to the Father in the end.
realized that the Law had little relevance to them and, therefore, eliminated the necessity for its observance by Greek converts. Even among the Jewish Christians the old Law rather quickly was recognized as subordinate to the new. Daniélou remarks, “If Sabbath was to die little by little, this was because it was only a provisional institution and a figure of the world to come. Now this world has come: the figure need only disappear.” However, Daniélou simultaneously acknowledges the value of the prototype as indicative of the worth that devolves from it. He recalls that “the study of the Sabbath contains teaching which is always of value even though the institution of the Sabbath as such has been abolished since Christ who is its fulfillment has appeared. It teaches of rest and consecration to God.”

Having examined the Sabbath in terms of prototype and fulfillment, I will turn briefly to the Temple which shares an importance parallel to the Sabbath. Daniélou maintains that “while the Sabbath, as the consecration of a day, prefigured the concentration of the whole of history to God, the Temple, the other essential institution, as the consecration of a limited enclosure prefigured the consecration of the whole universe to God in the resurrection of Jesus.” Jesus’ appropriation of these two institutions to himself clearly indicated to the leaders of the Jews that he was presenting himself as equal to God. The Sabbath and the Temple were transformed

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381 In the letter to the Romans, Paul contends that both the strict and the more lenient observers are all giving honor to God. What is important is not to judge but to live in harmony in Christ (Rom 14:6-10).

382 Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 228.

383 Ibid., 223.

384 Ibid.
through the resurrection into a new time and a new venue for worship: the Lord’s Day and the Eucharistic celebration.  

As the Sabbath is the consecration of time, the Temple is the consecration of space. The Sabbath directs the mind to God for a day, but it does not have the same capacity of influence over the rest of the days. Sabbath time is sacred, but the other days remain outside this time and are, therefore, profane. However, the Sabbath recurs and its inevitable return serves to bring the people back to prayer and the experience of holiness. Its recurrence is the assurance that the presence of God will remain with the people until the end when the perpetual Sabbath of creation will be the promised rest. 

There is a similar situation with the Temple. The Temple marked the physical boundary between the sacred and the profane. Even within its own walls, there were areas of different degrees of sanctity dependent upon their purpose. The holy of holies in the most extreme recess

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385 Daniélou perceives Christ as the epitome of the Sabbath and the Temple in that these institutions are transformed in the new life of glory of the resurrection. The significance of Judaism has passed and the Lord’s Day has supplanted it as a purely Christian feast. He states, “The origin of the Lord’s Day is to be found solely in the fact of the appearance of the resurrected Christ on the day after the Sabbath. The custom of gathering together on this day appears in the very week following the resurrection when the Apostles are gathered in the Cenacle and Christ appears again. Sunday is the continuation of this weekly reunion. It is the commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, the sacrament of His presence in the midst of his own, and the prophecy of His second coming. Sunday has the unique significance of being a weekly Easter.” Ibid., 242-3.

386 “Profane” derives from the Latin word for temple “fanum”. Pro fano translates, “in front of the temple”. As the Temple was considered the place of holiness, that which was outside the Temple did not share this holiness and was termed pro-fano (profane).

387 The recurrence of the Sabbath was seen by the early Church as a form of reprimand of the Jews by God because of their infidelity. They needed the Sabbath to keep focused on what God had done for them. It would force them to remember to worship and pray. Since the patriarchs did not have the Sabbath but served God by their fidelity and were considered justified, the Sabbath can be seen as an institution to keep people faithful who would otherwise have gone astray. The Apostolic Constitutions of the early church saw the Sabbath as a way to oblige the Jews to remember their God. This document contends that “the Sabbath was prescribed for the Jews in order to make them keep God in mind. It is, then, because the Jews were unfaithful to the natural law of divine worship that, to lead them to it, God gave them the Sabbath as a means of education.” Apostolic Constitutions, xix, 6; xxvii, 2; xlv, 3; xlvii, 5, quoted in Daniélou, Bible and Liturgy, 233.
of the Temple was considered the particular place of God’s presence. It could be entered only by
the high priest and only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

A singular purpose of the Temple was to promote oneness: one God: one place of God’s
presence, one center of worship, one assembly of the people. Religious activity outside of the
Temple was considered idolatry. Although the Temple was in Jerusalem, it offered to the
diaspora of Jews a common bond. The Temple was for all Jews the center of sacrifice, the place
for the offering of first fruits and prayers of petition; the Temple was the sanctuary for
atonement. However, the unity envisioned by the establishment of the Temple did not endure.
Almost immediately after the reign of Solomon there was a division in the kingdom and
eventually the Temple was destroyed with the conquest by the Babylonians circa 587 BC. After
the Exile (circa 538 BC) and the rebuilding of the Sanctuary, factions continued to plague
Judaism until the fall of Jerusalem and the final destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. However,
the Temple, even in ruins, maintained its pre-eminence among the Jews and continued to be the
essential focus of a people of ever more manifold diversity and destiny. In the modern diaspora
of the Jews, the Temple site in Jerusalem remains the place of greatest holiness for them. In
Christianity, the association Jesus makes of himself with the Temple is as significant as his claim
to be Lord of the Sabbath.

In the beginning of the gospel of Luke, when the child Jesus is brought to the Temple,
there are two people in attendance who witness his consecration, Simeon and Anna. They are
old and pious Jews, steeped in the tradition of the long awaited messiah who will be the
consolation of the people. For the coming of this day they have devoted themselves to prayer,
day and night in the Temple. They represent the longing of all Israel for redemption. When they encounter the child, they see in him the salvation of the Jews. Simeon’s proclamation of the child as “the revealing light to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel” (Luke 2:30-32) marks the end of the age of waiting and the end for the need of the Temple. Anna’s presence is her witness to the Child God. The Temple has fulfilled its function, just as Simeon has fulfilled his function to pray earnestly for the real presence of God among the people and for justice among the nations. Having seen this, he may die in peace. The hope of Israel has been realized in this child. The Temple has served its purpose; its function is now outmoded.

The life of Jesus confirms what occurred at the presentation. In the Temple in his youth, Jesus identifies himself as being in his father’s house (Luke 2:49). The incident of the money lenders in the Temple court, recorded in all four gospels (Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-21), again shows Jesus’ dominion over the sacred space. Of particular note is the evangelist’s comment in the gospel of John about destroying the Temple and its being raised again in three days, a specific reference to Jesus’ own body as the Temple (John 2:18-23). The Temple is thus a prototype of true worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23) that can occur only in union with the person of Jesus who alone knows the Father and will share his communion with the Father with all those who come to him. Not only is Jesus the temple, he also enables others to become temples of the spirit and participate in a true relationship with each other through sharing in his relationship with the Father. As the true worship of the Father, Jesus is the perfect Sabbath and the perfect place of worship. In his love of God and healing of others through forgiveness, he fulfills the Law and accomplishes what the Temple sacrifices could not
attain. Jesus then leaves with his followers his sacrificial presence in the form of bread and wine, the fulfillment of the prototype, Melchizedek, the king of righteousness and peace. As the Sabbath, all time rests in Jesus, and as the Temple, all space is touched by his love.

D. Summary: Jean Daniélou: Scripture, the Sabbath, and Sunday

Fundamental to any discussion of Jean Daniélou’s understanding of Scripture and Christ’s relationship to the Judaic traditions, is his notion of truth. He holds that truth is one, as God is one, and that sincere dialogue will lead to ever deeper perspectives of the one truth. For Daniélou, the search for truth reveals that man is limited and, therefore, open to the transcendent, which reveals what is beyond man’s scope. This particular aspect of his thought underlies his concept of history. Daniélou posits that there is revelation and that the God of revelation has entered history to interact with man and lead man to a destiny beyond his ability to envision. Revelation provides insights not attainable through reason alone. Therefore, God’s interaction with the created world is the source of meaning in man’s life. Daniélou investigates the revelation of the Judeo-Christian tradition through the lens of both the Decalogue and the Incarnation, the great gift of the former being the Sabbath, and of the latter, the person Jesus Christ.

Daniélou asserts that revelation is not static, but a dynamic process through time that discloses facets of the one truth; there is no contradiction within revelation. As a dynamic of time, revelation begins with creation which, Daniélou holds, finds the fullness of its meaning in the Sabbath. Adam is created to partake of the Sabbath rest of God and to live his life in this

relationship. However, Adam forsakes this gift in the folly of seeking a source of fulfillment on his own. Despite Adam’s consequent loss of God’s presence in the unending Sabbath of creation, Daniélou asserts that God continued to remain accessible through the sacramental nature of creation itself. Moreover, in his goodness, God gave man the Sabbath of the Law and bestowed his presence through the ritual of a twenty-four hour observance meant to encompass time and lead man to eternity, to the original unending Sabbath.

Daniélou describes the Sabbath as an institution parallel to the Temple. He explains that the Sabbath consecrates time to God and the Temple consecrates space. Because these are the central institutions of Judaism, Daniélou explains that Jesus’ appropriation of them to himself reveals his divine origins. He maintains that through his death and resurrection Jesus has created a new order of time and space that touches all history and the entire cosmos. Both the Sabbath and the Temple bring the presence of God. Jesus, as the presence of God, reveals the Father as the fullness of mercy and love made accessible to all through him as the Son. Jesus is the mercy of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. As such, Jesus is the new Temple. The mercy and love of the Father is bestowed through the perfect obedience of the Son in his passion and death. Daniélou explains that the Son does not allow the sinfulness of the world to deter him from bestowing, by obedience onto death, the love that the Father desires for creation. By overcoming the power of sin and death, Jesus is the fulfillment of the messianic promise, the salvation which the Jews were awaiting. Daniélou then points out that, as Son, Jesus reveals God in an intimacy of relationship, a giving and receiving that redefines the glory of the Sabbath as a communion of love. Furthermore, this communion of love is left to the
disciples in the form of Eucharistic bread and wine as the Lord’s body and blood to be shared in communal gathering. The new Sabbath which Daniélou describes is essentially the new time initiated by the resurrection of Christ and the Sunday appearances of the risen Lord.

In contrast to the Sabbath, which brings God’s glory for one day each week so that those participating in the rituals will find strength to live in justice and peace, Daniélou presents Sunday as the day of the new creation in the life of God through the merits of Christ. He describes the Lord’s Day as “the memorial of the resurrection, but it is also the figure (eikon) of the age to come. It has an eschatological meaning… it is the first day of the week, that on which light was created, on which the Saviour rose from the dead … it is the figure of the oneness of the age to come. Sunday is the cosmic day of creation, the biblical day of circumcision, the evangelical day of resurrection, the church’s day of Eucharistic celebration, and the eschatological day of the age to come.”

Daniélou recognizes that for Judaism the Sabbath Day marks a continual entrance of God into time and as such is a perennial event. However, for Christians, the Incarnation is the definitive event that brings the end time, the final Sabbath, into the present for the true glory of God and the sanctity of man. The Sabbaths of the Law were not able to do this; they could not enact what they signified. They were a type of the gift of God’s redemptive presence in Jesus Christ.

Daniélou’s understanding of the Sabbath and his approach to Scripture as typology reflect the nature of the biblical writers’ perception of sacred history and also the methodology of the early fathers of the Church in their efforts to present the person of Christ as the fullness of

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389 Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 263-4; 266.
the revelation of God. Emphasis on the continuity between the old and the new establishes that the Judéo-Christian God is with his people in their specific history, but also manifests that God is doing ever new and greater works culminating in the Incarnation of Christ, the definitive promise of the glory of eternal life.

The understanding of Christ through the lens of the Sabbath roots Christianity in the Jewish traditions and gives dept of insight into the meanings of rest, holiness, and joy. The Sabbath as a memorial of the salvation of the Exodus sheds light on the Paschal mystery as definitive salvation through obedience unto death. Such knowledge of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity is the background for the following study of the life and theology of André Chouraqui and his discussion with Jean Daniélou.

II. André Chouraqui: A Mixed Heritage

A. Childhood in Algerian Judaism: Family Background – Ancient Roots

Wedged between the rugged peaks of the Atlas Mountains and the equally severe terrain of the Sahara Desert lies the Magreb, the stretch of Northwest Africa encompassing Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. Sheltered by its natural location, this area has its own character, as do its inhabitants: Moslems, Christians, and Jews. Such was the environment into which André Chouraqui was born in the summer of 1917. In the town of Aïn Témouchent in Algeria he was circumcised into the blood compact of the spiritual heritage of Abraham and received from his
own father a devout faith, a faith that was visible in the practice of prayer, Sabbath observance, scholarship, and public service. Chouraqui would give this remembrance of his father, “To be a son of Israel for my father and the men of his generation, was to get up each morning before the sun, to go and welcome the day, phylacteries and leather thongs on the head and the left arm, praising the God of Israel for having created the world and chosen his people to serve him.”

Indeed, Chouraqui saw his father as identified with his faith. He explains, “There was no gap for him between believing and being. He was someone…and he took upon himself his spiritual heritage as had a hundred and fifty generations of his ancestors since Abraham, for the rhythms of his life marched to the pulse of their history.”

The Chouraquis were descendent from the diaspora Jews that migrated to Spain in the first centuries after the destruction of the Temple and the razing of Jerusalem in the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian. Although always a people unto themselves, the Jews became well established in Spain. However, their numbers eventually became an awkward presence for the Catholic monarchy, and by the late fifteenth century the Jews were an interdict people forced to convert to Christianity or find refuge in other territories. Those who did not flee suffered persecution and even death for any public demonstration of their faith. Therefore, rather than become underground Jews, or betray their true beliefs and falsify their heritage, the Chouraqui family re-established itself in northern Africa, in the Algerian sector of the Maghreb. Here they were able to practice their faith without any major interference, although the usual tension


391 Ibid., 11.
arising from the close proximity of differing religious groups was an ongoing fact. Nonetheless, the Jews prospered and their children flourished within their own culture and schooling.

André’s education followed a traditional pattern. The first influences on his life were his father and the village rabbi. These men were primarily examples of knowledge and devotion to the traditions of prayer and ritual practices. The synagogue was the school. The manner of learning was through repetition, memorization, and corporal punishment. The ideal of all learning was that the material become a part of the very make-up of the learner. Consequently, to aid the retention process, the young students swayed in rhythmic movements while reciting the texts, a practice known as shuckling. Chouraqui describes this experience, “Body and soul we were embarked upon the adventure; praying, studying… our entire being was involved in the performance. Even our bones had to sing the glory of YHWH, our God, along with our voices and our flesh… Since the Word was divine, its memorization had power to make it incarnate in us; we were lifted up by its divine breath and its sanctifying power. In the weakness of our exile, we were thus fortified to await the coming of the Messiah and the end of the world.”

This rigorous pursuit of the knowledge of Scripture, and the austerity of the process of learning, were deemed appropriate because their purpose was the prayerful appreciation of the readings done on the Sabbath. However, for the young students, the severity of those traditional methods was softened by the sweetness of the honey cakes, which the women of their families baked for them in the forms of letters and words so that they could eat their way through their lessons and savor the delight on their lips.

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392 Ibid., 24.
B. French Influence and University Studies

1. Secular Society: Attraction and Disillusion

“Dans le cadre désormais laïcisé du monde moderne, surgit un type nouveau d’intellectuel juif celui qui, sans être tout à fait déraciné du terroir ancestral, procède de la culture nationale du pays où il est né et qu’il illustre au gré de son inspiration ou de son génie.”\(^{393}\) This statement very much describes André Chouraqui in his new educational environment at the French school in the Rue Pasteur of his town of Aën Témouchent and later at the Lycée of Oran. In these establishments, secular and republican cultures had their influence and, although the roots of his heritage were deep, at least outwardly he became an advocate of the enlightenment. The background that had provided him with poetry and dreams now seemed to him stranded in a past that was irrelevant to the modern situation.

Chouraqui’s further education, which began in Paris in 1935, brought him deeper into this culture. Law school initiated him into the mechanisms of the structure and functioning of society. At the same time, world events bore witness to the devastation society was experiencing from Fascist rulers and dictators like Hitler in Germany. Chouraqui began to realize that, “La pensée nouvelle, d’une rigueur d’acier, récuse l’autorité de la Bible…elle s’érigé sur le témoignage de l’expérience, sur la méthode, sur la critique de la raison. L’humanisme de la Renaissance constitue le milieu culturel que personne en Occident ne peut plus réuser.”\(^{394}\)

Though brilliant and appealing to the intellect, the new culture was for him a shallow world

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\(^{394}\) Ibid., 100.
without the depth of the sincere relationships which he had known in the simplicity of his early life. He admitted the tension he experienced in this new environment:

My sensibilities were put on edge by the contradiction offered by the world to all that I thought and believed. I was obsessed by the despair and emptiness of that world in which I found, horrified, that I must live. I saw the anxiety, the aberrations of the Jewish world to which I was beginning to be reconciled. Ritual was a repetition of a mechanical act, lifeless and soulless. I suddenly discovered the vast extent of evil and its universal sway as well as the all powerful free will of man capable of causing irreparable damage to the harmony of the world.  

These sharp contrasts to what was so deeply rooted in him forced Chouraqui to evaluate the nature of man and God’s place in man’s life. He was witnessing the reality of the inhumanity against which Isaiah had preached, and he recognized profoundly the sacredness of the formation he had received. Consequently, he made the decision to enter the Rabbinical School of France.

2. Personal Philosophy and Understanding of God

The atmosphere of Paris, though intellectual and stimulating, had left in Chouraqui a deep void, an actual horror which he attributed to the absence of God in current scientific and philosophical thought. He recalled the sincerity of faith of his parents who had expected from God the salvation of Israel, the re-building of Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah. In the light of the shallowness of life of the prevalent culture, Chouraqui resolved to maintain his own vision, embedded in the tradition of his parents, the richness of which was now so evident. He made a vow “to have the clear-sighted fortitude never to sacrifice to idols; to live in truth…never

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395 Chouraqui, Man, 98.
to surrender to evil, never to consent to the second-best, and to die rather than betray the truth that lived in him.” 396

Truth for Chouraqui proved to encompass a vision broader than that of the family from which he came. 397 He had read extensively the classics of France, England, and Russia and had met devout Christians and Moslems dedicated to humane endeavors. In his conviction that God exists he professed, “God is in everything and outside of everything, though everything exists in him. As the unique source of all life, I was conscious of my dependence upon him; God as absolute existence who reveals himself to me…is the God of life who wishes the heart, and the heart only opens and gives itself in the mystery of love.” 398

Chouraqui was intrigued by the mystical writings of the medieval Jewish philosopher Bahya Ibn Paqûda and dedicated himself to a translation of his work, *The Introduction to the Lessons of the Heart: a Guide to the Interior Life*. Here he found confirmation of his own perception of love of YHWH, which, he avowed, consisted in being an authentic witness for justice and for love. This is what brought fullness of life. He professed that to do this one had to, “live a contemplative life but among men and in the world…a world that must be freed, changed, and brought into a state of peace through the power of profound love because…true consecration lies behind the shield of love.” 399 God for Chouraqui was not a concept or the

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396 Ibid., 88, 98.

397 Although Chouraqui’s life had brought him out of a parochial situation into a sophisticated modern setting, he identified the God he ultimately espoused as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He attributed to that God “a love stronger, more implacable, more unconquerable than death.” Ibid., 113.

398 Ibid., 98, 104.

399 Ibid., 107.
object of some mental operation, but a penetrating real presence that drew persons together in his
divine heart.

Chouraqui’s translation of Paqûda’s treatise and his translation and commentary on the
Hebrew Bible were an extraordinary contribution to the life of the newly created state of Israel
where he served for so long in so many capacities.

C. Israel and a Jewish Perspective of History

1. Resettlement: The God of Creation as the God of Beginnings

World War II brought an abrupt halt to the normalcy of society in France. The presence
of a foreign power forced a reassessment of values and brought together factions that saw in each
other shared aspirations for the common good. As a member of the maquis of the Central Loire,
in the company of diverse others normally at odds, Chouraqui experienced a renewed hope in
humanity. United against a force of evil recognized by all, he could envision again the
possibility of reassembly of his own people. Consequently, with the Nazi defeat and the end of
the war, he accepted the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Universal Israelite Alliance
and worked toward the establishment of the State of Israel, a dream realized in 1948. His
association with the Alliance continued until 1982. With a permanent home now in Israel, he
became advisor to David Ben Gurion in 1958, and later assumed the position of Deputy Mayor
of Jerusalem in 1965. As president of the Commission of Culture and Foreign Relations, he gave
numerous talks all over the world about Israel, its land, its people, and its mission.
Chouraqui recognized the complex nature of Israel with its diverse population from every corner of the diaspora. He saw the necessity to place in proper perspective the natural development of the land and its supernatural end. He explained the unique situation of this newly formed country with this assessment:

Depuis la résurrection de l’État d’Israël, la pensée hébraïque oscille ainsi entre les deux pôles d’un transcendentalisme qui affirme les valeurs immuables de la Bible et d’un immanentisme orienté vers leur réalisation concrète dans la vie de tous les jours. La tension est grande entre ces deux types de pensées…Ils animent le devenir d’une humanité mise en demeure de ne plus seulement soupirer après la rédemption, mais de la réaliser. Ainsi le grand rêve messianique devient-il exigence et nécessité politique à l’heure où l’ordre surnaturel doit gouverner l’ordre naturel pour permettre sa survie dans l’unité du réel. 400

In the light of these tensions, Chouraqui highlighted three indissoluble elements with respect to Israel: God, the people, and the land. God is creator and merciful Father whose presence is always one of providential care. The people are his elect, chosen to be witness to Torah and to be the light to the nations. The land is the gift of the Creator to be cultivated for his glory. The people of Israel have a task for themselves and for the world. It can be accomplished only in obedience to Sabbath observance, which recognizes God’s sovereignty above all the progressive advancements of the arts and sciences. 401 The Jews who occupied the new state of Israel had maintained their adherence to the tradition, so the Sabbath, in which the Shekinah

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400 Chouraqui, Pensée, 116.

401 In his discussion of modern Judaism, Chouraqui describes the Haskalah as a movement of the nineteenth century that embraced the Enlightenment and sought to modify Jewish laws and customs according to these new ideas. He states, “La Pensée de la Haskalah tente de se débarrasser de l’héritage théologique en affirmant les pouvoirs de la raison. Des écrivains hébraïques se font les champions des lumières et préconisent la sécularisation de la vie juive. Ils prônent les idéaux laïques contre l’ancienne orthodoxie. Le passé n’est plus exclusivement considéré dans son austère rigueur mystique, mais sous l’aspect plus humain…” Ibid., 114.
dwells, has remained the “home” of the people and the manifestation of their fidelity to
the covenant. No matter what the level of participation in observance, Sabbath time is
recognized all over Israel. Chouraqui maintained that the modern country of Israel was a miracle
in itself, a resurrection from a past whose language had vanished and had to be resuscitated from
the ancient writings. As God is an event for the sanctification of the people, Israel is an event of
modern history and has a responsibility to examine anew its purpose as a nation. That purpose
revolves around the Sabbath because intrinsic to the Sabbath is an orientation to the future, to the
time of the Messiah and justice for mankind. Just as her mission in the past was to worship the
one living God, it is now incumbent upon her to direct attention to the will of God, the
establishment of justice and love among people. Each covenant, from the time of Noah, has
been a newness, a greater insight. The Sabbath, as the sign of the covenant, now stands as the
perennial reminder to Israel that gifts are given to be shared. The “rest” that descends upon the
country each week foreshadows a more total reconciliation, the beginning of which is the present
moment. Israel’s gift to the nations, in this global society striving for recognition and peace, is
her ability to bring her own country to rest. Chouraqui makes this comment about Israel’s place
in the world:

By the thrust of its faith, Israel aspires not to the unity of the world but, further, to
its reshaping and rebirth in the splendor of the kingdom of God in the day of the
Lord. Revelation as informing history determines the future of Messianic victory.
The people of Israel are chosen only to the extent that they fulfill the desired
mediation and work for the coming of the Messiah by their conformity to the
revealed order. The Messiah will ensure the triumph of light over darkness and
the spirit over matter by accomplishing a true change of the natural order…Not
only is the daily life of the Hebrews sacred in content, but history itself is
conceived as a rite whose stage is the entire universe and whose mission is the fulfillment and liberation of man.402

This concept of the future implies the need for a renewed recognition of man as the image of God. Essential to Sabbath rest is the acknowledgment of the value of persons. True rest is only in the depths of acceptance and love that comes about when time is taken to share thoughts and experiences as well as meals and prayers. Hence, Chouraqui’s attraction to the work of the eleventh century Jewish philosopher, Paqûda, who wrote of the mitzvot of the heart as the foundation for all other practices of virtue. In his translation of Paqûda’s Guide to the Interior Life, he emphasized its universal message of peace through justice and love set in a thoroughly biblical foundation. In his many years as a representative of Israel to the various nations of the world, Chouraqui has shared these insights of Sabbath peace.

2. The Sabbath as Hope in a Messianic Re-ordering

Judaism may be described as a history of messianic expectation. Moses predicted that God would raise up a prophet like him (Deut 18: 18-19) and in the time of the Exile, Isaiah prayed for “God to rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before him” (Isa 63:19). These ancient views looked for salvation in the direct intervention of God, or in the fulfillment of prophecy in which the Messiah would enact the will of God and bring about reconciliation and peace. However the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement in Judaism, promulgated the view that each individual participates with God in the general work of

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the salvation that has been promised to all. Having grown up in a Hasidic family, Chouraqui was familiar with the kabbalistic concept of *tikkun olam*, “the restoration of the world” through the practice of *mitzvot*, and considered cooperation with God in the pursuit of justice an aspect of election. He writes, “Il y a un aspect fondemental de la pensée juive qui débouche sur l’espérance personnelle des félicités d’au-delà prochain, et sur l’espérance active du salut messianique promis à Israël et à l’humanité entière…Ainsi, le juif trouvait dans sa foi davantage qu’une consolation: la conviction d’être un protagoniste irremplaçable – l’élu de Dieu associé à l’oeuvre du salut.”

In the early twentieth century, a deeper development of this understanding of the participation with God in the process of salvation was formulated by the Jewish theologian Franz Rosenweig who considered Judaism not primarily as a system of teachings, but as a category of being based on relationships. In accord with Rosenweig’s manner of thinking, Chouraqui contends:

> L’existence juive constitue un événement essential qui fonde et permet de retrouver les significations réelles de l’universel et de l’humain…le commandement actuel de la Thora institute entre Dieu et l’homme l’expérience de l’éternel présent de l’amour… Ainsi, la révélation se dirige vers l’avenir du royaume de Dieu qu’elle acccomplit dans la possibilité donnée à toute créature de dire “nous”, qui est “pour le Moi de dire Toi à un Lui… Le Judaisme, assumé comme étant, d’ores et déjà une catégorie de la vie éternelle.”

Revelation, the Law, the manner in which the Law is effective among men, and the participation of man in the work of salvation, all form the essential character of the spirituality of

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404 Ibid., 107-8
Chouraqui who saw salvation as a form of dialogue, a manner of working together of God, man, and nature. He observes, “The entire universe is a totality and the people, created in the image of Elohim, are integral and essential to it. The dialogue both with God and the elements, which depend on his will for global harmony or collapse, is inescapable.”  

Hope for Chouraqui is very much founded upon the seriousness with which the Jewish people assume responsibility in living the revelation which they have been chosen to receive. Indeed, he considers the essence of their election to be their capacity to exemplify to the world the peace and justice that comes from living the hesed (חסד) that is the nature of the God of revelation. Election is a specific model God has offered the world to move the world to its destiny of peace in his love.

Chouraqui turns to the Book of Isaiah to emphasize how ancient has been the call of Israel to the task of promulgating the Law, not just among its own people, but with respect to the foreigners in their midst and with respect to the nations. Knowledge of God is attained through knowledge of God’s precepts. Fidelity to God’s precepts is the basis of personal transformation and the transformation of society. Chouraqui asserts, “The ambition of the Hebrews was not only to give life a new content but to transform Israel and mankind, so that they may have a vision of a new heaven and a new earth where nations will no longer wage war and where the lion and the lamb will live in peace.”

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[405] Chouraqui, People, 11.

[406] Ibid., 92. See Isa 2:4; 11:1-9
The image of a new heaven and a new earth is constitutive of Sabbath celebration. The life that Moses enjoined the people to choose (Deut 30:15-20) was adherence to the Law as centered in the Sabbath. The Sabbath, as the central commandment of the Law, is the medium through which the obedience to Torah of the observant is offered to God. In the time of the Temple, Sabbath sacrifices were offered for atonement. However, with the destruction of the Temple, obedience to *mitzvot* became the Sabbath offering of later Judaism. Observance of the fourth commandment thus differs from observance of the other commandments. The Sabbath asks for quietude of mind and heart to experience God’s presence and to recall the saving acts that give hope for the coming together of nations in peace. As the distinct commandment that anticipates God’s faithfulness to his promises, the Sabbath is oriented to the new heavens and the new earth of Isaiah.\(^\text{407}\)

The Sabbath celebrates not only the coming of the Shekinah (השכינה), but man’s special place before God as his image. Man is reminded of the uniqueness of his nature in the observance of the Sabbath expressed through the distinctive food preparations, special dress, devout prayers, ardent study, select activities, and thoughtful discussions in conversation. Attention to the Sabbath is attention to the entire Law and indicates man’s fidelity to God in response to God’s providential concern for creation. Chouraqui describes this sentiment from the experience of his own background:

> Dressed in fresh clothes, we presented ourselves before the God of heaven and earth, to say to him, not without a suggestion of reproach: ‘You see, even in the

\(^{407}\) Chouraqui expresses the central Sabbath theme, the hope for the coming of the Messiah who would initiate a lasting peace, with this comment from his years in the Maghreb, “There was no hope, either for us, or for our wretched persecutors, but in the coming of an all-powerful savior, the Messiah, who would be able to gather us back into our own country and put order into the affairs of the nations.” Chouraqui, *Man*, 49.
terrible exile in which we live, we still stubbornly remain your witnesses. You seem to have forgotten us, your sons, your people. But we, we will never forget you.408

It is evident from the witness of André Chouraqui that the Sabbath was the sustaining force of his life. The following section gives some vivid insights into this sacred time from Chouraqui’s personal experience.

3. The Sabbath, Time, and Prayer

Chouraqui recalls the poignant image of his family’s devotion to the Sabbath. Engraved in his memory are the Saturday gatherings filled with the joy of music and singing, the solemnity of prayer, enlivened conversations, and savory foods. He remembers especially Friday evening synagogue service when everyone in the village came together for the prayer of the Canticle, the message of the divine love of their God. He gives this description of those irreplaceable moments:

Each year, Saturday after Saturday, we read in our synagogues the whole of the Pentateuch and over and over again the complete book of psalms and a great part of the other books of the Bible. We also read many of the treatises of the Talmud and of the Cabala… The liturgy of the Sabbath began on Friday evening before sunset with the public chanting of the “Song of Songs…Small farmers, craftsmen, tradesmen, civil servants, teachers or doctors, old people or children, men and women, learned or ignorant, we were at one in seeing in this love poem the allegory of the eternal nuptials of God with his people.409

408 Ibid., 27.
409 Ibid., 28.
With the descent of the Sabbath, an image is evoked that is indelible in the minds of almost all Jews. It is that of the mother of the household lighting the Sabbath candles. This singular practice, more than the prayers and liturgies of the day, embodies the warmth and peace that is the heart of the Sabbath. Candle lighting has the power to bring into the Sabbath setting the illumination of the original light of creation. Candle lighting makes manifest the presence of God. Sabbath candles represent the light upon which everything in creation depends: the light of God that existed before the sun, the moon, and the stars were brought forth, the light of the power of his existence. While time and physical light are governed by the heavenly bodies, true light does not depend upon them. Chouraqui explains, “Time is an abstraction that has no reality of its own. Isaiah prophesies the time when the sun will no longer light the world during the day, nor will the moon at night – when YHWH alone will be the light of the universe.” Here the Sabbath, as the eternal within time, is understood as the movement of creation toward the end of history when there will be no time but just the presence of God.

Candle lighting also has the power to summon the Shekinah (שכינה), the last emanation of God that roams the world amid the shards of evil until the Sabbath light beckons. Then, like the figure of wisdom, she pervades everything with her presence and brings peace. Chouraqui describes such a Sabbath setting from his personal remembrance. “The sight of my

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410 Chouraqui, People, 140. Chouraqui further explains time with respect to God’s eternity. He states, “everything is seen in God sub specie aeternitatis, that the past and the future meet in the totality of reality from which they originate and where they blend and, to a certain extent disappear in the transcendence which founds them….Man’s time is one with his acts… his days will be what he makes of them…time has reality in the contents of the acts of man.” Ibid., 141-2.

411 The description of Wisdom as the special light of God is given in the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 7: 24-26). In Judaism, the Shekinah (שכינה) is the spirit of God that is longed for and which must be reunited to God in the fullness of time. Every Sabbath is an intermittent union of God and the Shekinah (שכינה) in which man participates, and which is the substance of peace.
father praying, blessing the wine and the bread; and of my mother blessing the Sabbath candles, were among the memories that most securely bound me to my Jewish religious traditions.” He attests that the entire time of the Sabbath, the preparation as well as the actual day, featured poignant moments, not the least of which were “the fascinating odors that arose from dishes that could be had nowhere but at our house, the songs brought out of Israel and Spain, and the strangeness of certain customs (ritual bathings, the baking of challah, preparing couscous and salads, the broiling of fish and meats with savory herbs, the cooking of tafina which took all night, and the baking of cakes with almonds and honey and wine, not to mention the confections of puff pastry).

Although the immediate time of the Sabbath included both the preparation and the following twenty-four hours, the Sabbath set the rhythm for the whole week, the whole year, and indeed the whole future. This is attested to by the provision of a Jubilee year within the stipulations of Sabbath observance. Although no longer observed as in biblical times, the Jubilee year continued to exemplify the extent to which the meaning of the Sabbath extended. As a time for rectification of major concerns of life related to debt, the ownership of land, and the proper treatment of the earth, the Jubilee year was a way of bringing about justice. The land, as part of the covenant of God with Abraham, assumed a living significance. Chouraqui describes its spiritual and symbolic dimensions, “…the land is continually in the future, promised in a vision and unknown at the start…it is a land of revelation, of promise, but one that man must earn by

412 Chouraqui, Man, 72.

413 Ibid., 72, 26.
his rectitude, his faith, and his strength… The land, like the people, is a person whose face is renewed by each generation and whose every act engages the future. Merits and demerits shape its destiny. Repeatedly the prophets return to this idea: the history of Israel in its land is the result of the virtues and shortcomings of its forefathers. Past informs the present whose nature it determines by shaping the soul of the people.”

The way in which the land was safeguarded and the people made secure from the harm of the enemy, was by observance of the Sabbath. By virtue of the Sabbath, order was kept. Sabbath keeping was the symbol of fidelity to the supernatural order established by God for his people and made evident to the surrounding tribes the wisdom and justice of their laws.

Observance of the Sabbath represented observance of the entire Law. One could not observe Sabbath and then disregard the divine commands.

Such intense participation in the rituals of his faith made a profound impression on Chouraqui. As with the learning process, where every sense was engaged to make knowledge a physical part of his being, so it was with the observance of the Sabbath in his household. The truth of the ways of God became a poignant reality that informed all of his life.

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414 Chouraqui, People, 12, 15.

415 Chouraqui affirms that biblical Israel was intent on making the temporal order informed by the eternal so as to cause the presence and the will of God to become a reality. He ascribed to the kabbalistic notion that everything interacts. He explains, “The land is the essential reality of the Hebrews’ existence… the man-earth relationship is never separate from God. The fertility of the fields or their barrenness, rain or drought, and the sea’s rage or calm are not dependent on the play of natural laws, but are the obvious result of man’s conformity with, or revolt from, the divine order. Ibid., 11.

416 This understanding of obedience was taken up by the Kabbalists who considered the movements of God within his emanations to be the cause of the actions of man. Thus the heavens and the earth are intrinsically linked. See Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah (New York: Meridian Books, 1978), 105-6.
The theology of André Chouraqui is best expressed in his own words about the prophets. Words in Hebrew burn into the soul with the divine power of the Scriptures and incarnate their meaning in the person. He made the vision of the prophets his own. It undergirds his own convictions and his dedication to promoting the unity of all mankind in justice and peace. His description of the Day of the Lord resonates with the substance of Sabbath observance in which rest designates the peace and affirmation all men are to share. Chouraqui makes this comment:

The prophets know that reality has an organic unity; that salvation must be global or it will not be at all. They announce the change, not the progress, of reality. They foresee the arrival of a new man, of a new earth and a new heaven which will be worthy at last of the justice and the beauty of YHWH, the God of life. The Day of the Lord is one of a cosmic change that will bring the universe and man into harmony with creation’s law of life…in the triumph of love. In the kingdom of YHWH no one will ever die. In order that the justice of the God of life be satisfied, the dead must be restored to life and come forth from their graves.\(^{417}\)

Chouraqui died in Jerusalem in 2007, having devoted his life to the faith he cherished and to the cause of the newly established State of Israel.

The background and life work of André Chouraqui made him an extraordinary representative of Judaism. His astute learning and fervent devotion to his faith brought to the table of ecumenical dialogue a wealth of insight and a sincere pursuit of truth. His ability to explain Judaism and the religious meaning of the State of Israel were of paramount significance in promoting discussion about Jewish-Christian relations. The discussion between André Chouraqui and Jean Daniélou brought many things to light and clarified issues that formerly were not addressed. I will turn now to the main considerations of that dialogue.

\(^{417}\) Chouraqui, *Man*, 171.
III. Daniélou and Chouraqui in Dialogue

A. Dialogue: A Form for Validity in Discussion

Both André Chouraqui and Jean Daniélou entered into dialogue with the same conviction: that theology is a living source for understanding and coming into deeper relationship with God and man. They shared at the outset the mutual desire for the openness that is at the heart of the search for truth. As an introduction to an examination of their discussion, I will present here the grounds on which they decided to speak in order that their dialogue might be fruitful and relevant.

“If one wishes to carry on a dialogue,” Chouraqui contends, “one must discover the universe not only as it appears from his point of view, but also as it appears to his neighbor.” He then elaborates on this point in order to put in perspective what have been the hazards in the past when persons of divergent views have attempted to express their thoughts. He states:

A true dialogue does not come into being through scandal, opposition or violence. It supposes a fundamental step – that of penetrating into the thought of the other to discover its real basis. A dialogue requires respect on the part of each speaker and an inner silence that is attentive to find in the other a deeper thought that would be in accord with a pattern of the history of mankind.

In complete agreement with this method of approach, Daniélou makes one other poignant point as foundational, so that nothing may obscure the sincerity of the process. He states:


419 Ibid., 43.
When the religious attitude enters into sociological problems, it brings to them a violence that they do not have of themselves. In this sense, when the religious reality, the highest thing in the world, is set on a plane that is not its own, it brings disturbing elements with it, such as fanaticism. This is a human problem and has nothing to do with the religious problem... Dialogue must first of all imply that we accept one another as we are and that we do not reproach one another for not saying pleasant things that do not correspond to our thought. It is not a question of being pleasant; it is a question of being first of all true.  

Having stated these bases for discussion, both agree that there is a uniqueness to the dialogue between Judaism and Christianity. Each of these faiths is involved in the reality of the covenant which links them irrevocably. However, both are aware that Judaism and Christianity are involved with the covenant in different ways. Christianity sees the covenant as coming to fullness in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jews see the covenant as election as the people of Abraham, as the blessing of the Law, and as the wisdom of the prophets, all gifts of the one true God over against all idols. Daniélou describes the relationship of Christianity to the God of Abraham in this way:

…Pour les Chrétiens, le peuple juif n’est pas un peuple comme les autres, mais un peuple qui appartient à une ordre de réalité à l’intérieur duquel se situe également le Christianisme, et qui est ce que nous appelons l’histoire du salut, l’histoire des interventions du vrai Dieu dans l’histoire humaine… Un Chrétien considère que cette réalité, inaugurée à l’intérieur du peuple juif, s’est continuée à partir de Jésus-Christ sous la forme de cette universalisation qu’est l’Église. Ceci est conformé à ce qu’ont annoncé les prophètes. L’Alliance qui a été celle d’Israël et

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420 Ibid., 66-67, 71.
421 The main focus of their dialogue does not revolve around the acknowledgment of the Jewish people as a now multi-ethnic group with its own country and international recognition. The discussion concerns a deeper understanding of the divergent paths Judaism and Christianity took in the first century and the reasons why this occurred. A clearer knowledge of these circumstances sheds light on the resultant persecutions and dispersions that have been the experience of the Jews through the centuries. It also discloses the grounds for the rarity of genuine interaction between Christianity and Judaism.
qui reste perpétuellement celle dont Israël a été le premier dépositaire, a été élargie aux limites de toutes les nations.422

Daniélou makes it very clear that the initial people that formed Christianity were Jews and that these Christian Jews were an active part of the Temple, participating in prayer, worship, and, especially, observance of the Sabbath. The first church was Judeo-Christian, a sect among the many sects that formed Judaism at that time.423 Daniélou emphasizes that the root of Christianity, embedded in the living God, is Judaism and that the two cannot be separated, although the branches have diverged in sundry directions. He uses the analogy from Saint Paul of the wild olive branch grafted into the tree, “…If the root is consecrated, so too are the branches. If some of the branches were cut off and you, a branch from the wild olive tree, have been grafted in among the others and have come to share in the rich root of the olive, do not boast against the branches (Rom 11:16-17).

Chouraqui acknowledges this truth of the origins of Christianity and points out that the holiness of all the factions of Judaism derives from roots in the revelation to Abraham, from roots “dans une certaine manière d’être, inséparable de l’ordre biblique…dans les trois prières quotidiennes, le Sabbat, et les grandes solennités spécialement le Grand Pardon qui préfigure le jugement dernier.”424 He then presents Judaism as both an inheritance and a free choice based


423 Chouraqui gives this description of Judaism in the time of Christ: “Au siècle de Jésus il n’y a même pas de juifs au sens actuel de ce terme: il y a un phénomène hébraïque, une nation tragiquement diversée contre elle-même … Sur le plan idéologique le judaïsme n’existe pas encore… Le monde juif révèle, au contraire, la pluralité foncière d’un monde en effervescence, brûlant d’idées et de rêves, de doctrines et de ferveur mystique, dominés par une folle espérance messianique.” Ibid., 40, 41.
on the God of Sinai (Law), the people (covenant), and the land (Zion). He concedes that, at this time, adherence to any one of these is sufficient to be recognized as a Jew, and admits, “Il y a aujourd’hui à peu près autant de manières d’être juif, qu’il y a de juifs.” This freedom of choice allows one to practice Judaism anywhere in the world through observance of Sabbath. Sabbath observance, as the focus of the Hebrew Bible, defines and binds the whole of Judaism.

With these understandings as foundational to the dialogue, essential questions which differentiate Christianity and Judaism, questions concerning prophecy, the presence of God, and the Sabbath, come under discussion. My next section will examine these aspects of both faiths in the light of the event of the incarnation as presented by Daniélou and in the light of the Sabbath as explained by Chouraqui.

B. Prophecy, the Presence of God, and the Sabbath

1. Jewish and Christian Views

During the time of the Exile there was no Temple and consequently no music, no joy, no hope. The sacred city of Jerusalem had been razed and with the destruction of the Temple, God had no dwelling place among the people and there was no longer an altar of sacrifice for the expiation of sin. Chouraqui views the state of exile of the Jews as a physical symbol of a more profound exile, that of God from their midst, an exile due to sin. He gives this description of the situation of the people, “L’exil national d’Israël chassé de sa terre n’est que l’image et la

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424 Ibid., 19.
425 Ibid., 21.
426 Psalm 137, “The Exile’s Remembrance of Zion” vividly recounts the depths of emotions of these turbulent times for the Jews.
transcription terrestre d’un exil beaucoup plus absolu, l’exil de Dieu. Dieu est désormais le grand Absent, dont les juifs sont en quête.”

What remained for the Jews in captivity, was the Sabbath, the presence of God in time. In their desolation, the Sabbath became their center of hope, because time is not under the jurisdiction of man. God came for the exiles in Sabbath time and sustained their fidelity to his living word until they re-attained their freedom and established the Temple again. However, the destruction of the second Temple was an even greater catastrophe. This devastation occasioned not only a massive dispersion of the Jews, but an entire reorganization of the whole of Judaism. With sacrificial worship no longer possible, Judaism became entirely dependent upon the Law as its source of relationship with God. Sacrifice was re-interpreted in terms of the circumcision of the heart that devoted itself to mitzvot. At the time of Jesus, the Temple was the place of the presence of God, and the priests were the intermediaries between God and the people. The daily routine of sacrifices brought expiation and peace. Therefore, the consequences of the loss of the Temple were inestimable. Chouraqui explains, “Lorsque le Temple disparaît, les structures spirituelles du monde juif sont asolument bouleversées… Le Temple détruit, Israël connaît les affres d’une tragédie suprême, celle de l’exil de Dieu lui-même… Le Temple était la tête et les prêtres le cœur du peuple juif… Lorsque le Temple est détruit, la vie sacramentale disparaît. Les continuités de l’ordination cessent en Israël.”

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427 Daniélov et Chouraqui, Les Juifs, 67.
428 Ibid., 66,67.
It is difficult to comprehend the significance of this in the modern age, but it would be comparable to Catholicism not having the Eucharist, the sacraments, and the priesthood to continue these institutions. The gravity, and ultimately the glory, of this condition is expressed in the context of a medieval story in which a Jew explains to a king their wretched state, without Temple or priests:

Nous sommes, non seulement un peuple sans tête et sans cœur, mais nous sommes un tas d’ossements désechés. Et telle est notre dignité. Le chrétien et le musulman ont fait l’apologie de la condition méprisée de l’abjection, de ce que vous appelez la croix. Nous les juifs, nous la portons, cette croix, nous incarnons ce sort humilié… la foule est immense des juifs crucifiés pour le témoignage d’un certain honneur de l’homme.”

The dialogue between Daniélou and Chouraqui touches these difficult realities and offers some explanations for these circumstances of history. However, Daniélou sees in this conversation a deeper context that must bring into consideration the meaning of revelation and prophecy within time, man’s life with respect to these, and the manner of worship of God that unfolds from them. He contends that, “Le dialogue judéo-chrétien n’est pas seulement un dialogue qui se pose au niveau de problèmes de civilisations, si graves ces problèmes soient-ils, et ce serait à mon avis le rabaisser que de ne pas penser qu’il se situe aussi au niveau de ce dialogue concernant les destinées fondamentales de l’humanité.”

As a Catholic priest, Daniélou looks upon this dialogue in terms of the person of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy, as witnessed by his relationship to the Sabbath and the Temple as the presence of God. No matter what the conditions of history for either Jews or

429 Ibid., 55.
430 Ibid., 56.
Christians, Daniélou maintains that the person of Jesus, as the final revelation of God, is the essential matter, and that Jesus reveals the God in whom the Jews have always believed. In the light of this understanding, Daniélou presents an historical perspective of YHWH as the divine presence who was the gift of the Jews to the world in the time of idolatry. It was his word in their hearts that was the driving force of their lives and their belief in his saving power. The Law was the instrument of love that guided this relationship. The prophets constantly upheld this perception of God and were unrelenting in holding the people to commitment to their own hearts. They preached righteousness and that the Lord of righteousness would arise among his people. Just as Christianity is rooted in the Old Testament, it is rooted in this concept of prophecy. Daniélou affirms:

Il est évident que le christianisme se situe tout entière dans le cadre de toute la révélation de Dieu dans l’Ancien Testament. Mais il se situe aussi dans l’aspect prophétique…l’essentiel du message des prophètes est d’annoncer que Dieu interviendra à nouveau dans l’histoire du monde –c’est ce que les prophètes appellent le Jour de Yahweh et que cette intervention sera la pleine manifestation par Dieu de sa puissance; il viendra juger les hommes et libérer son peuple.431

Keeping this notion of prophecy in mind, Daniélou asserts that the words and actions of Jesus indicate that he is of this prophetic tradition. Jesus’ presence as a Jew among his own people did not conform to a concept of messiah that would bring about societal reorganization. His presence was that of the prophets who spoke for the reform of the heart and proper justice for all. His words related to the Sabbath and to the Temple, institutions relevant to Judaism rather than to civil authority. Jesus did not claim to be the messiah, but to be the Lord of the Sabbath,

431 Ibid., 34-35.
which meant he fulfilled the whole of the Law. Since the Sabbath is the day of the presence of God, his appropriation of the day to himself indicated his assumption of divine authority. Those who witnessed the works of Jesus knew of his healing powers and his forgiveness of sins. Jesus offered rest from the suffering of illness and the guilt of sin—even on the Sabbath. Such works manifested the power of God whom he also called Father.

Daniélou singles out these sayings of Jesus to illustrate how Jesus used the Jewish tradition of the Word to reveal himself to those who were attentive: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets, I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them” (Matt 5: 17), and “Neither is it a matter of reporting that it is ‘here’ or ‘there.’ The kingdom of God is already in your midst” (Luke 17:21). However, it is especially the reference to the Sabbath that is crucial, “It is mercy I desire and not sacrifice; the Son of Man is indeed Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12: 7-8). Daniélou observes, “Jesus n’est pas simplement comme le Maître de Justice, un grand prophète, mais l’irruption dans le monde de l’événement eschatologique, du geste de Dieu annoncé par les prophètes.”

Jesus’ relation to the Temple is no less a manner of the fulfillment of prophecy. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus, at a young age, astounds the teachers of the Law in the Temple (Luke 2: 46-47), and then, later, as a teacher himself, cleanses the Temple of all that is not of God (Luke 19: 45-48). The Temple incident in John’s Gospel is followed by Jesus’ proclaiming that he will rebuild the Temple in three days, indicating that the power of the presence of God rests on him alone (John 2: 13-21).

432 Ibid., 36.
The Sabbath and the Temple are the time and place of the presence of God that Jesus appropriates to himself as indicative of his divine nature. For this he was accused of blasphemy; he was not accused of claiming messiahship (Matt 12:9-14, 26:61; Mark 3:1-6, 14:58; Luke 6:11, 23:10). Therefore, for Daniélou, the conversation with Judaism must be centered on the person of Christ who reveals himself as the Image of God, and as the medium for man to perceive that image in himself and in others. The first Jews who followed Christ and formed another sect of Judaism, saw in him this new concept of justice that brought to fruition a genuine love of neighbor through the love of God. Daniélou articulates his position in this way, “L’Église ne peut pas pour autant toucher à ce qui relève pour elle de l’expression du message qui est le sien, c’est à dire, ce qui concerne la personne du Christ et la relation de l’Ancien et du Nouveau Testament.”

In full recognition of what Daniélou has affirmed, Chouraqui explains that a person whose heritage is known and who claims a command over the Law and the Sabbath, is a scandal to a Jew. But perhaps more importantly than that, Chouraqui points out that although the number of Jews who had heard Jesus was considerable, the number who were involved in his death was small. Then the dispersion after the destruction of the Temple served to separate Jews from any true knowledge of Christianity and with Constantine’s proclamation of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Jews were marginalized. At that time in history, all Jews were then looked upon as involved in the death of Christ. To have accusations against all Jews for the death of Christ and to have this stigma follow them down through the ages, is also a

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433 Ibid., 92 – 93.
scandal. As early as the time of the exile, the prophet Ezekiel had warned against charging a son with the guilt of his father.\textsuperscript{434} Chouraqui contests:

Dans le cours des siècles, les juifs n’ont jamais rencontré Jésus, et ce qu’ils ont connu des chrétiens n’était pas, hélas, le meilleur. C’est évident, je crois, dans les trois premiers siècles de l’Église: le contact entre la pensée chrétienne et la pensée juive, et l’impact du christianisme sur l’ensemble du peuple juif, a été très faible. En ses débuts, des minorités seulement ont été touchées par la pensée chrétienne. Ces juifs alors ne voyaient dans les missionnaires chrétiens des étrangers à leur peuple mais l’une des sectes sans nombre qui foisonnenta à cette époque.\textsuperscript{435}

Consequently, the Jews had to be resolute in their commitment to the revelation they knew from the God of Abraham, “un Dieu personnel et transcendant, porteur d’une Loi d’amour et de sainteté qui offre à l’humanité et au peuple d’Israël une alliance.”\textsuperscript{436} For a Jew, the Law is the essence of the justice the prophets proclaimed. The task of the Jew is to be the witness to this message in anticipation of God’s fulfillment of his promises. The Jew must endure so that this justice will be realized. Therefore, the Jew cannot assimilate into other cultures; he must remain this distinct witness. Chouraqui explains, “Si un Juif dise oui à quoi que ce soit d’autre, aussitôt il cessait d’être Juif…l’option véritable n’était pas, me semble-t-il, dans la personne du Christ, mais dans l’acceptation d’un calvaire celui de l’exil qui préservait du moins l’existence d’Israël.

\textsuperscript{434} Ezek 18: 20; Jer 31: 29-30.

\textsuperscript{435} Daniélou et Chouraqui, Les Juifs, 100. The twelfth berakah (blessing) in the Jewish Shemoneh (eighteen blessings to be said every day) is a euphemism for a curse against heretics (minim) probably composed by Samuel the Little at the request of Rabban Gamaliel at the end of the first century CE. Heretical Jews (minim) were anti-rabbinic, syncretistic, and assimilatory, not the Christian Jews who continued to observe the Law and were accepted at the Temple. However, later Tannaitic texts make clear that minim can also designate Jewish Christians. Pieter van der Horst, Hellenism-Judaism-Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1994) 99,101,105.

\textsuperscript{436} Daniélou et Chouraqui, Les Juifs, 31.
et sauvegardait les chances d’une rédemption qui puisse accomplir la Promesse.” He further recalls that the Jews have been threatened with extinction down through the ages and this poses a terrible problem because of their obligation before God to pursue justice, “Pour Israël, il y a eu un problème dramatique, c’est qu’Israël n’est pas simplement une éthnie comme les autres, mais représente d’autre part une rencontre avec le Dieu vivant…pendant des siècles, les Juifs ont souffert le martyr pour ne pas disparaître. Ils ont réussi à survivre à toutes les persecutions. Alors, maintenant, ils sont de retour en Terre sainte, où ils rebâtissent une nation nouvelle.”

Chouraqui considers the choice of Christ by the Jews an impossibility because this would entail abandoning Jewish observances, especially the Sabbath. He is aware that the Christian practice of Sunday worship was established in the first century to commemorate the resurrection and the appearances of Christ, and, with the destruction of the Temple, Sunday completely replaced Sabbath observance for the Jewish-Christian community.

Daniélou, on his part, while he sees Judaism as rooted in the living God and the covenant of the Hebrew Scriptures, acknowledges the necessity for Christians to believe in the living God as the Eucharistic Presence, rather than the Sabbatical time. For Jews, the Sabbath is the vehicle of the movement through time to the fullness promised by the prophets. The Sabbath does not have the same import for Christians. For a Jew to replace the Sabbath by another manner of worship would be tantamount to a denial of Judaism and a serious matter of conscience. This is

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437 Ibid., 60.

the mystery of conversion, and such is the dilemma. A further dilemma is the actual meaning in modern times of Israel’s role to be a light to the nations.

Daniélou addresses this complex situation with this insight, “Autant il nous semble mystérieux et grand qu’Israël ait été, à un moment donné, le représentant privilégié de cette destinée qui concerne l’humanité entière, autant, aujourd’hui, le fait que cette destinée ne se déploie pas pour englober tous les hommes dans une totale égalité spirituelle, serait quelque chose qui nous apparaîtrait comme quelque peu scandaleux.”

However, with respect to the suffering which Judaism has endured across the centuries, and in the fact that Christianity has spread the faith it inherited from Israel, Daniélou avers that it remains of vital importance that the two faiths work together for the benefit of mankind. In accord with this sentiment, Chouraqui recognizes their common gift to the modern world and makes this statement, “Je crois que ce que les Juifs et les Chrétiens ont à rappeler au monde, à un monde qui, de plus en plus, s’enforme dans un univers coupé de Dieu, c’est que la relation à un Dieu vivant est quelque chose qui fait partie de la plénitude même de la vie humaine et que les hommes ont autant besoin de Dieu et du vrai Dieu, qu’ils ont besoin de pain et de logis.”

Both interlocutors are in mutual agreement on this point.

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439 Ibid., 76.
440 Ibid., 57.
2. Understanding the Sabbath and Sunday

While both participants express faith in the living God as revealed in the call of Abraham, both also agree that a significant change has occurred with the incarnation of Christ. In the first century of Christianity, the Jewish Law in terms of observance was supplanted by the sacramental system and faith in Christ. For the Jew, God, though always a sustaining providence, continues to have a particular presence as the Shekinah (הֵנָּךְ) every Sabbath. The Sabbath remains the only named day in the Jewish week. All the other days are in reference to it; they reach toward it in anticipation or linger back upon it in reluctance to let it go. Observance of the Sabbath is central to Judaism and sustains the Jew in his adherence to the Law. Obedience to the Law makes for righteousness and moves the world toward the Day of YHWH, to the justice of divine mercy (חסד).

For the Christian, the Incarnation is the eschatological event that brings the presence of God and his loving justice to the present moment in the newness proclaimed by Isaiah and in the sacraments instituted by Christ. Faith in Christ is the ground of the Christian’s renewed vision of the image of God in himself and in others, and the foundation of all relationships.

Both Daniélou and Chouraqui, while aware of these differences, seek to articulate a common mission. In considering the intense dedication that each of them has to his own beliefs, Chouraqui professes that “Le seule rayonnement possible d’une religion c’est l’exemple qu’elle donne; ses oeuvres, ses fruits.”441 He then poses this query to recall the personal responsibility

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441 Ibid., 98.
both Jews and Christians have to convert hearts to the cause of peace and to be the light to the nations:

La vraie mission, en définitive, n’est-elle pas de réaliser l’ordre de justice et d’amour? Est-ce que au lieu d’essayer de convertir autrui, nous ne devons pas, ensemble, essayer de nous convertir à ce que nous prêchons nous-mêmes? Les meilleures missionnaires ne sont-ils pas ceux qui renoncent à agir sur l’autre pour agir sur soi-même et à éclairer le monde par l’exemple?

In response, Daniélou indicates that the Bible is the mutual source of inspiration for such good works, and affirms that both Judaism and Christianity offer the spiritual strength for people to accomplish great things; one through the Sabbath and the other through Sunday Eucharist. There is a caution, though, regarding the carrying out of the mission for a better world. Man must remember that his end is not simply temporal. The Day of the Lord and the second coming of Christ are realities that have their effect on the present and are the spiritual dimensions of existence. The eschatological nature of the celebrations of both the Sabbath and Sunday provides the deeper vision to create truer relations among people and a genuine foundation of peace. Daniélou warns against working for purely social ends. He comments:

The Christian must resemble Christ by the cross. The great temptation in the world today is to sacrifice part of him (Christ) as if the weight of what is divine in him is too heavy for him to bear. They want to reject it, and bring all their efforts to bear on the temporal organization of human life, to make a city to the measure of man reduced simply to his temporal desires whence any suggestion of things eternal is barred. Man must recognize his true vocation-to refuse to allow his destiny to be reduced to his temporal fulfillment and to try to save what is eternal in him…Social exterior action must not be allowed to take first place in our Christianity. We are called to share the intimate life of the divine persons.

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442 Ibid.

443 Daniélou, Advent, 130-131.
With a mutual understanding that efforts for the advancement of civilization must be conducted in a spiritual as well as humane way, and that one’s faith convictions are important for harmony in the world, Daniélou and Chouraqui concluded their dialogue with profound prayers for the triumph of peace over war, love over hate, and light over darkness.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, the Sabbath has been discussed with respect to the understandings of two prominent theologians of the twentieth century, Jean Daniélou S.J. and Rabbi André Chouraqui. The basic ideas of each of these theologians was presented first, and then the main topics of their conversation were discussed. The mutual exchange revealed how minimal communications have been over the centuries, thus contributing to a certain ignorance of their respective religious positions. In dialogue these positions were made known and examined for common elements as basis for cooperation in the shared desire to further God’s kingdom on earth and foster peace. The chapter proceeded in three parts.

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444 In his conviction that one’s faith imbues everything one does, Daniélou describes charity as essentially flowing from the cross, the sacrifice of Calvary celebrated each Sunday. He affirms, “To respect the fundamental make-up of others is essential for unity in charity, which is quite different from unity produced by imperialism, or any sort of outside pressure. Charity supposes the cross. It supposes the giving up of individual egoism, imperialism, the will to impose oneself on others; it supposes instead the will to be the servant of others.” Ibid., 136.

445 Because of the Holocaust in the mid twentieth century, and then the creation of the State of Israel, the world has become very aware of the situation of the Jews. In 1960, the Jewish historian, Jules Isaac, whose wife and daughter had been murdered in the concentration camps of Auschwitz, visited with Pope John XXIII to discuss the Jewish problem of the hereditary and collective blame for the death of Christ. The Pope espoused this cause and initiated the drawing up of a document on the Church’s relation to non-Christian religions. This resulted in the Second Vatican Council’s issuance of Nostra Aetate, which explicitly exonerated the Jews as a people from involvement in the death of Christ and condemned any depiction of the Jews as accursed because of the crucifixion.
In the first part I presented the foundations of Daniélou’s theology as the accessibility of truth and the basic orientation of man to God. On these grounds he maintains that relationship is intrinsic to human nature, that time as history gives meaning to all things, and that matter, person, and the supernatural comprise three distinct but interconnected realms of being. In the light of these ideas, he affirms that history is replete with meaningful events, the most significant of which is God’s intervention in revelation culminating in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. With respect to his discussion with Chouraqui, Daniélou approaches the scriptures and the events of revelation through the methodology of typology which considers the events of history to reflect ever deeper meanings at different times. For Christianity, the Incarnation of Christ is the transforming event that creates a newness in all things that is totally different from the past, contains the past as its recognized foundation, and projects a certainty that ever greater events are to unfold. Daniélou discusses the Sabbath in this dimension of perception. He views the Sabbath in a typology of time as a consecration of time to God, celebrated in Judaism by certain observances now obsolete for Christians. He sees rest as being essentially faith in the person of Christ, who confirms the promise of everlasting life by his resurrection. He avers that Sabbath time has been transformed by the presence of God in Christ, and that creation has been renewed in the raising of Jesus from the dead. Therefore, the true Sabbath is now the worship of God in Spirit and truth through the Eucharistic Christ and a life of virtue in the formation of human relationships which look forward to the final transformation of the earth in the end time.

The second part of this chapter presents the background and thought of André Chouraqui, a Rabbi formed in the tradition of observance in a Jewish community in French Algeria and then
educated in Paris. He discusses the fidelity to prayer of those who surrounded his early life and
the intensity of sacred study that was the norm of a Jewish home. He presents the Sabbath as a
living focus of existence from which all meaning is derived and gives vivid descriptions of the
many aspects he experienced in its observance. Chouraqui contends that the Sabbath unites and
affirms those who participate and is a bastion of strength against the dissipating elements of life.
He sees the Sabbath as gathering time and making it meaningful. The Sabbath moves persons
through time to the time of the Messiah and final justice.

In the third part, Daniélou and Chouraqui discuss the phenomenon of Christianity
as arising from Judaism. Central to the discussion is the person of Christ and the actual
relevance of this event to the larger Jewish community of the first century. The relationship of
Jesus to the Sabbath and to the Temple are reviewed as having significant importance for
Christians, and Chouraqui explains how this relationship is a stumbling block to Jews. Daniélou
asserts that, for Christians, Jesus’ relationship to these institutions is indicative of the fulfillment
of prophecy. The topic of the ultimate destruction of the Temple is also brought up as it serves
to indicate that the subsequent dispersion of the Jews and the later proclamation of Christianity
as the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, so separated Judaism from Christianity that
Judaism never actually had a true experience of the Christian message. Instead, Jews
experienced hostility because of their alleged involvement in the crucifixion of Christ, and
became relegated to the margins of society.

As spiritual leaders dedicated to truth, Daniélou and Chouraqui found common ground
for mutual understanding in their commitment to the living God as they witnessed to that God
through the Scriptures. They acknowledged the need for true justice and equity for the sake of harmony among people. Both affirmed that the truth of the living God dwells with persons and that all must seek the image of God in others if the kingdom of God is to be made known on earth.

This overview of two prominent theologians from the Catholic and Jewish faiths has brought to light the significance and beauty of the interconnectedness of Judaism and Christianity expressed in the Sabbath and Sunday as expressions of belief in a God involved with creation. For Christianity, Judaism is the people chosen and elected to bring forth Christ as the fullness of the Father’s love and the glory of the end time that is present now. For Judaism, Christianity is the “wild olive branch” which can never be separated from its root and which shares in the sacred scriptures to be a light to the world in justice and peace. In dialogue and mutual commitment to the pursuit of truth unhampered by structures of prejudice and misconceptions, these two faiths will grow together in deeper awareness of the depths of revelation and what it means to personhood.
Chapter 5

Dies Domini

On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy

An Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II

Summary and Commentary

Introduction

This chapter will present the main ideas of the five chapters of the Apostolic Letter, Dies Domini, of Pope John Paul II. In his presentation of the Lord’s Day, the Holy Father is clear in showing that early in the Christian tradition Sunday replaced the Sabbath as this specific day of worship. The Pope makes reference to the Sabbath as an initial rest in creation and as commemorating the salvation of the Exodus. In so doing acknowledges the deep roots of the day and its meaning to the Jewish people as the presence of God and redemption. With this as background, the Pope then concentrates on the paschal mystery as the event which changes the focus of time from the Sabbath to Sunday. Sunday, the Pope explains, while recalling the first day of creation and the redemption of the Exodus, recapitulates the life of Christ and looks to the last day, when Christ will turn everything over to the Father. Because Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection, Christians live in a great hope which founds the joy of the day and penetrates into the everyday life of the faithful.
This chapter will consist of a discussion of the Pope’s introduction to the Letter and then a summary of the main emphases of each of the five chapters. This will be followed by a commentary about the points made with respect to what has been discussed throughout this paper. It will be shown that Pope John Paul has used the richness of our Judaic heritage and the heroic fidelity to the Sunday Eucharist of the early Christians to inspire Catholics today to a more ardent devotion to Sunday as the day set aside for Eucharistic worship, prayer, works of charity, and gratitude for the people and events of their lives. His hope is that this deeper look into the meaning of the Sabbath and the paschal mystery of Sunday will evoke a greater awareness of our dependence upon God and our interdependence upon one another in the pursuit of a life of virtue.

The Holy Father further hopes that acknowledgment of the richness of the history of salvation and of the human condition of dependence will bring people to observance of the Lord’s Day.

I. Pope John Paul’s Preliminary Considerations about the Lord’s Day

A. Resurrection and Joy

The title of Pope John Paul II’s apostolic letter is the most appropriate name for the day of worship in the Catholic Church, “The Lord’s Day.” This places the day in its own time and removes it from any confusion with the Sabbath, which is the designated twenty-four hour period of observance under the Judaic Law. The name the Lord’s Day indicates a new time, the time of
the resurrection, the victory of Christ over sin and death. It is the day of “fulfillment in Christ of the first creation and the dawn of the new creation. It is the day which recalls in grateful adoration the world’s first day and looks forward in active hope to the last day when Christ will come in glory and all things will be made new.”

Although the Pope references the Sabbath several times throughout his letter, it is his purpose to define Sunday with respect to the resurrection of Christ and to indicate the preeminence of the gift of the Eucharist for the sake of living a life of virtue practiced in charity.

In the first statements of his letter, the Pope reminds us of the intense joy experienced by those to whom the Lord appeared the Sunday after his passion: the women at the tomb (Mark 16:2), the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 32, 35), and the Apostles in the closed room (John 20:19-23). These appearances, and the joy they elicited, demonstrated that the kingdom of God had become visible on earth, drawing creation to the glory of the time to come. The messianic age had arrived and had brought about the transformation of man through the paschal mystery, Christ’s obedience unto death in the sacrifice of the cross, culminating in the resurrection. The Pope describes the paschal event as “the very heart of the mystery of time” because it unites the beginning when God created through his word to the end time of everlasting glory. He states, “Christ is the mystery of the world’s origin and its final destiny.” The Pope then makes reference to sacramental liturgy, specifically Sunday Mass, as a bringing into the

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447 Ibid., Introduction, #2.

448 Ibid.
present of the original experience of the risen Lord. In other words, every Lord’s Day is the celebration of the salvation of the cross, which is not bounded by time. Pope John Paul emphasizes the joy Sunday celebration should occasion by quoting from the Psalms, “it is the day which the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it (Ps 118: 24).”

It is of particular importance that the Pope proclaims the day as made by the Lord. Jesus, in appropriating the day to himself by showing the power of the living God in him, makes himself the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8; Mark 2: 28; Luke 6:5). In so doing, Jesus moves Sabbath rest from the specific time of the Jewish celebration, to a person, to himself. There is true rest in Christ because of his forgiveness of sins which relieves the burden of guilt and shame, and gives cause for joy. The rest that Christ offers affects man’s whole manner of living in time.

In his preliminary remarks, the Pope points out that the Lord’s Day, as the day of resurrection that initiates the new time, is the first day of the week and symbolizes the new creation. Yet, it is also the eighth day and symbolizes the inbreaking of the eschaton. The eschaton, as the time of judgment, urgently invites all in the present moment to be conscious of what is to come. It is a call to act in accordance with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit that are bestowed in the sacramental observance of the Lord’s Day. The Lord’s Day prefigures glory,

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449 Ibid., Introduction, # 1.
but, at the same time, it carries the awe of God’s righteousness. The Holy Father then presents the Lord’s Day as the ever new mystery God’s graciousness to man whom he created for himself.

B. Easter: the Core Feast of Christendom

1. Meaning of the Mystery

The resurrection, as the source of the amazement and joy of the early Christians, is the central experience of what has been called Sunday since the early second century.

In his letter, the Pontiff calls attention to how far Christians have strayed from the expression of amazement and joy the first witnesses to the resurrection expressed. He attributes this to the diversions of modern society, especially the concept of the weekend with its allurements of entertainment and relaxation. While he admits that “this social and cultural phenomenon is by no means without its positive aspects… yet, when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a weekend, it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see the heavens.” In other words, Sunday should never be confused with planned activities devised for fun and recreation to relieve the stress of the work.

**451** With regard to the life in the Spirit which the sacramental liturgy of the Lord’s Day provides and the eternity to which it points, Dom Vitalis Lehodey attests that “it is in the light of eternity that we must consider all persons. The Sovereign Judge will demand an account of them, the demon is plotting to lead them astray, and perhaps the salvation of many of them depends upon us. Dom Vitalis Lehodey, *Holy Abandonment* (Rockford, II: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc, 2003), 265.

**452** In the “First Apology of Justin,” probably written somewhere in the time of the Jewish War of A.D. 132-135, it is recorded, “Over all that we receive we bless the Maker of all things through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits.” Justin, The Martyr, “The First Apology” in *Early Christian Fathers*, trans. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), 287.

days and to revitalize oneself for the coming week.\textsuperscript{454} So the Pope exhorts the faithful to re-assess time in terms of Christ, to see a deeper meaning of time because of Christ’s gift of self in the sacrifice of the cross and in the Eucharist. He reminds all Christians that worship is owed to God as the creator and the transcendent one who guides the world in his providence and bestows grace. This specific recognition of God is latria, the worship due to God alone and which man is obligated to perform. Therefore, there must be a “renewed sense of the duty to give thanks to the Lord and to pray to him with others in the community of the Church, because time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human.”\textsuperscript{455} This statement reflects the importance of understanding that in the resurrection, all time belongs to Christ and that awareness of this should permeate all the moments of life, but especially the day set aside for the Eucharist. The Pope emphasizes that “the resurrection of Jesus is the fundamental event upon which Christian faith rests.”\textsuperscript{456}

\textsuperscript{454} This observation about Sunday has a direct relation to the understanding of the Sabbath. The twenty-four hour time period of the Sabbath forbids creative or productive work in order to acknowledge that God alone is the Creator and Lord of all. Only within this understanding can proper worship be given to God. Man must recognize his place as creature. The Sabbath is not for the sake of a renewed capacity for work. Walter S. Wurzburger addresses this issue. He states, “The Sabbath was not primarily intended as a day of rest enabling a person to return refreshed to worldly tasks with renewed vigor and zest…The Jew does not rest on the Sabbath to prepare for the tasks awaiting in the following week. The Sabbath experience makes us aware of the fact that our ontological status is based not on what we make but on what we are…Persons must not be thingified and reduced to self-alienated commodities or tools, but must be accorded the dignity due to creatures endowed with infinite, intrinsic spiritual value. A person’s worth does not depend upon social utility as an agent of production but derives from the intrinsic sanctity of the human person” Walter S. Wurzburger, “A Jewish Theology and Philosophy of the Sabbath,” in \textit{A Shabbat Reader: Universe of Cosmic Joy}, ed. Dov Peretz Elkins (New York: UAHC Press, 1998), 32, 33.

\textsuperscript{455} John Paul II, \textit{Dies Domini}, #5, #7.

\textsuperscript{456} Ibid., #2.
2. New Light and New Time

The Pope moves from his initial description of Sunday as the celebration of the resurrection to a consideration of the victory over sin and death the resurrection brings about. In this victory is the new creation. Therefore, Sunday becomes the celebration of the dawn of a new creation. As the first day of the week it commemorates the first gift of creation, light. In the Judaic tradition, this light is a special illumination that is not dependent upon the celestial bodies for its source. Its source is God alone. Everything else in creation is brought forth in this light. It bestows wisdom and knowledge of God on man who is made in God’s image. The glow of the Sabbath candles commemorates this light and sets the atmosphere of the Sabbath evening and the family meal. For the Christian, God creates through the Word which is manifested as light. The Gospel of John bears witness to Christ as this light that enlightens every man who comes into the world (John 1:1-5). Sunday liturgy renews this light of Christ in the soul of all the participants. The light of the first day sheds its radiance on all that follows. In this way, time is transformed through those who have been with Christ in Sunday worship. The Pope urges, “Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! Yes, let us open our time to Christ, that he may cast light upon it and give it direction. He is the One who knows the secret of time and the secret of eternity, and he gives us his day as an ever new gift of his love.” The Pope asserts that this is where our hope lies and where our ability to bring joy into the routines of daily life finds its source.

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457 Ibid., #7.
3. Easter and Sunday

The resurrection occurred on one specific day, but the glorified Lord now has jurisdiction over all time and will bring the faithful into the light of his glory. In other words, the resurrection touches all time. Therefore, it is appropriate to celebrate this mystery in the ongoing cycle of weeks. Celebration is especially appropriate on the first day of each week in recognition of the new creation God has brought about in Christ, and the new time of grace that overcomes death and grants eternal life. “In commemorating the day of Christ’s resurrection not just once a year but every Sunday,” Pope John Paul II explains, “the Church seeks to indicate to every generation the true fulcrum of history, to which the mystery of the world’s origin and its final destiny leads.”

The Second Vatican Council corroborates this reference to Sunday, “Every seven days, the Church celebrates the Easter mystery. This is a tradition going back to the Apostles, taking its origin from the actual day of Christ’s resurrection – a day thus appropriately designated ‘the Lord’s Day’.”

References to the appearances of Christ on the first day of the week as foundational to the practice of Sunday Eucharistic worship gives a very profound basis for understanding the ultimate movement of Christianity away from Sabbath observance. Such an interpretation of Sunday makes the day a Christological phenomenon rather than merely an ecclesiastical

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458 Laurence Hull Stookey comments that there is a necessity to draw out over time the commemoration of the defining moment of a people and that the weekly celebration derives from the one significant event. He states, “No observance that occurs only once a year can connote the continuing work of God in daily life. Therefore, the chief festival occurs weekly and from it all else is derived…” Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 44.

459 John Paul II, Dies Domini, #2.

460 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, #106.
institution. It founds the day on the awe and great joy of the first Christians and their depth of faith in Jesus’ teachings. It makes the day a focus of their unity against all the adverse forces they have chosen to repudiate, mainly the alien gods and the false notions of what is of value. Sunday then is celebrated because of the wonderful event God brought about in the raising of Jesus from the dead.

II. Dimensions of Sunday: A Study of the Five Chapters of Dies Domini

A. Chapter 1: Dies Domini

1. The Sabbath and Rest

In his apostolic letter, Pope John Paul II makes a unique association of rest with obedience. The rest experienced by the tribes of Israel was intermittent, usually interrupted by the infidelity of idol worship and a basic distrust of God’s Providence. God offers rest to Moses because of his willingness to abide by his commands (Exod 33: 14-17). On the other hand, there is also the implication in the Old Testament that rest is achieved only in the designated place of God, and that proper worship can be offered only when there is rest. Thus rest is to be found in the promised land when every enemy has been conquered. This understanding about rest is perceived in the Lord’s instruction about the dwelling place for his name. The Pope cites this passage, “But after you have crossed the Jordan and dwell in the land as a heritage, when he has given you rest from all your enemies round about and you live there in security, then to the place
which the Lord, your God, chooses as the dwelling place for his name, you shall bring all the offerings I command you (Deut 12:10-11).

The rest that comes through co-operation with God in the defeat of idolatrous peoples is seen when, in Joshua’s occupation of the land, “God gave them peace on every side” (Josh 21:43-44), and when, in the defeat of the Canaanites through the destruction of their general, Sisera, “the land was at rest for forty years” (Judg 5:31). However, these situations of peace are temporary. A more realistic evaluation of the circumstances of the history of Israel is given in Psalm 95 where God proclaims, “Forty years I loathed that generation and I said: They are a people of erring heart, and they know not my ways. Therefore, I swore in my anger: They shall never enter into my rest” (Ps 95:10-11). The condemnatory tone of the psalm is ameliorated by the prospect of hope woven into the verses that expresse anticipation of the day when Israel will hear the voice of God and listen to it. The psalm entreats, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts (Ps 95:7-8).” In the light of these scriptural references, the Pope returns to the theme of obedience as the hallmark of faith which keeps one turned to God and receptive to his peace. He quotes the Letter to the Hebrews in this regard, “It is we who have believed who enter into that rest” (Heb 4:3). Thus, faith in Christ, who was obedient onto death, is the only true source of rest. It is Christ’s conquest of the enemy, sin and death, which enables this rest and makes it permanent. Christ is the new Sabbath rest.

\[461\] John Paul II, Dies Domini, # 8.
\[462\] Ibid.
2. Creation and Redemption

The biblical story of creation celebrates the grandeur of the earth, the marvel of living creatures, and the excellence of man as a free agent in the image of God. At the same time, the story of creation highlights the disobedience that caused the disorder in man’s nature and the pervasiveness of the condition of sin. Yet, the Pope calls attention to the reality that “coming as it does from the hand of God, the cosmos bears the imprint of his goodness.”\(^{463}\) The intrinsic goodness of creation founds hope, and the gift of Sabbath rest offers the possibility of a renewed vision of what the creator had in mind in bringing the world into existence. In the Jewish tradition, the Sabbath is the sign of the covenant because, on that day, man sets aside his preoccupations with temporal affairs to turn attention to the things of God alone. Man rests in God and receives all the benefits of divine love. Man’s resting in God is interpreted by John Paul II as a nuptial relationship wherein man comes to know himself as a unique expression of God’s goodness and as a gift to others. He uses words from the prophet Hosea to describe this relationship:

I will make for you a covenant on that day…and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord (Hos 2: 20-22).\(^{464}\)

\(^{463}\) Ibid., #10.

\(^{464}\) Ibid., #12.
The nuptial relationship of God and man cannot be broken, although man may turn from God and refuse to acknowledge what God is offering. The fidelity of God even in man’s sin is evident also in Hosea and demonstrates the redemptive aspects of the Sabbath that flow from the event of the Exodus. Although the Pope does not make this reference, I include it here to illustrate the nature of the covenant as God’s unfailing love for his people in all their instances of infidelity. To unfaithful Israel the Lord speaks:

I will allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart. From there I will give her the vineyards she had, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. She shall respond there as in the days of her youth, when she came up from the land of Egypt. On that day, says the Lord, she shall call me ‘My husband’ (Hos 2:16-18).

Sabbath rest also puts the work of the other six days in perspective. The command to work is as valid as the command to rest (Exod 20: 9), and since the command to work also comes from God, it contains an affirmation of the innate goodness of man’s labor.

Relationships of any kind need attention in order that they remain vital. They require conversation and sharing. It is the same with man’s relationship with God. Prayer, our Holy Father reminds us, is the dialogue which insures that one is living in accordance with the plans of God. Rest, the quietude of one’s inner being, is the disposition most requisite for prayer. Quietude is the whole tone of the Sabbath, and quietude should be the manner of entering into the sacramental worship of Sunday. The Pope affirms that it is the nature of the Sabbath to

\[465\] Pope John Paul II explains the nuptial meaning of the body as grounded in life as the gift of the creator and in freedom. As the image of God, man has the capacity to love and to give of himself freely as God has given himself in creation. The Pope emphasizes that man comes to know himself only through the giving of himself. Thus, the relationship of God and man is expressed through the image of marriage. John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 63-64.
acknowledge that “the universe and history belong to God; and without a constant awareness of that truth, man cannot serve in the world as co-worker of the Creator.”\textsuperscript{466} Unfortunately, man easily degenerates into thinking that he is independent and capable of navigating the world on his own, and that his creative abilities are ends in themselves.\textsuperscript{467} Therefore, man must keep in mind a greater concept of his existence in order not to fall into this sin of pride which deprives him of true relationships.\textsuperscript{468} As the central law of the commandments, the Sabbath radiates the message of dependence throughout all the other demands of the Law.

3. Remembrance and Holiness

Pope John Paul II observes that the Sabbath commandment in both Exodus (Exod 20: 8-11) and Deuteronomy (Deut 5: 12-15) has, as its essential concept, remembrance”. In the former, remembrance refers to creation, where man stands in awe before the majesty of God as in the Book of Job (Job 42: 2-6), and acknowledges his creaturehood. In the latter, remembrance refers to salvation, where the Hebrews were freed from the tyranny of unjust power and alien gods, freed to live a new creation under the jurisdiction of their own God.

\textsuperscript{466} Ibid., #15.

\textsuperscript{467} Norman Wirzba confirms this perspective of the human condition. He states, “Our temptation is to think that we live through our own effort and that the goods we enjoy are ours because we have earned and deserve them...However, at the Lord’s table we open ourselves to the gifts of God and each other, recognizing that it is through these gifts, and not through our own efforts or by our own right, that we truly live.” Living the Sabbath (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 38, 50.

\textsuperscript{468} Wirzba reflects the Pope’s sentiment about the necessity for man to see deeper into the love at the core of his nature. He avers that the Sabbath is the means by which man knows himself because the Sabbath fosters harmony among people. He states, “When we offer the gift of love to others, we are really creating a space for them to become themselves and to most fully realize their God-given potential. In this work we mirror God’s own creativity, which simply and without coercion lets the world be.” Ibid., 48.
people’s liberation from slavery is immediately followed by the granting of the Law with its central emphasis on the Sabbath as the perennial reminder of the saving works of God, his love, fidelity, and mercy. The Sabbath is the day the Law sets apart as blessed by God and holy. The Sabbath, therefore, holds all the events of time together so man can participate in the wonders of God and experience the holiness of God’s presence in earthly matters. Creation and redemption undergird the religious nature of the Sabbath, and those who observe the Sabbath experience these wonders of God as joy and strength for their life tasks.

In his reflection on these two aspects of the very core of Judaism, John Paul II sees their synthesis in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. He describes the Paschal Mystery as “the full revelation of the mystery of the world’s origin, the climax of the history of salvation and the anticipation of the eschatological fulfillment of the world…In Christ the spiritual meaning of the Sabbath is fully realized.” Just as the Sabbath is the source of holiness for Jews, the Paschal Mystery is the source of holiness for Christians. Each of these celebrations is “not just a matter of community religious discipline, but a defining and indelible expression of relationship with God, announced and expounded by biblical revelation.” The Pope is acknowledging here the divine origin of the Sabbath in the revelation of the Law to Moses and the divine origin of the Christian day of worship in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ.

469 John Paul II, Dies Domini, #18.

470 Ibid., #13.
4. Sabbath to Sunday

Creation and redemption in the person of Jesus Christ are a new beginning and necessitate a new day of worship to inaugurate the new time. This newness was experienced by the apostles on the first day of the week when they were gathered at the time of the evening meal and Jesus appeared in his glorified body. The fact that the Lord appeared in a similar way the following Sunday and exhorted them to await the coming of the Spirit served to indicate that Sunday, the day of resurrection, constitutes this new time. Then, in obedience to the Lord’s command, they awaited the Spirit, which gift they received on Pentecost in another Sunday experience confirming the sacredness of the day. In the appearances of the glorified Lord, the disciples recognized the reality of the Messianic promises. In other words, they realized that time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God initiated in Christ was now in their midst, bringing new life. The experience of new life of the first disciples in these Sunday events is described by the Pope in the words of Saint Paul as “the whole creation groaning in birth-pangs while awaiting the redemption of the body” (Rom 8: 23).\footnote{John Paul II, \textit{Dies Domini}, #18.} The appearances of the resurrected Lord, bringing the glory of a new creation and a new time, are the sign that the prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled. Isaiah had foretold that the justice of God would be enacted among the people and that Zion would be made anew.\footnote{Isaiah gives this prophecy of the newness God will bring about and the holiness the people will know in the Lord, “As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations…See, the Lord proclaims to the ends of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, ‘your savior comes!’ Here is his reward with him. They shall be called the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord” (Isa 61:11; 62:11-12).}
While Judaism continues to look forward to the justice Isaiah foretold, and celebrates in anticipation of such fullness on the Sabbath, Christianity rejoices each Sunday in the triumph of the cross and the graces that flow from it. Because of the definitive importance of the Paschal Mystery, “the celebration of the day of the Resurrection acquired a doctrinal and symbolic value capable of expressing the entire Christian mystery in all its newness.”473 His Holiness further asserts that “the identity of this day must be protected and above all must be lived in all its depth.”474

In his letter, Pope John Paul notes that during the first several centuries, even in persecution, a spirit of joy and fellowship permeated the Sunday assembly but “what began as a spontaneous practice later became a juridically sanctioned norm.”475 Since the era of Constantine in the beginning of the fourth century, the Lord’s Day has structured the Church.476

As Judaism believes it is moved to its final justification in the end time by its total submission to God in Sabbath observance, so too Christianity believes it is moved to its final destiny by weekly participation in the sacramental life of God in the Eucharist which gives the strength to live justice and charity in the present.

473 John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, #22.

474 Ibid., #30.

475 Ibid.

476 By the Edict of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 321, Christianity was recognized by the state and quickly became the dominant religion of the empire.
B. Chapter 2: Dies Christi

1. Sunday, the Weekly Feast of Easter

“The Christian Sunday leads the faithful each week to ponder and live the event of Easter, the true source of the world’s salvation.” These words of John Paul II capture the depth of significance of Christian worship. Each Sunday is an occasion for pondering the passion and resurrection of Christ as the great gift of the Father to free mankind from the tenacious grasp of sin and the fear of death. Each Sunday celebrates the Paschal Mystery as the essence of salvation. The Holy Father recalls that each of the Gospels bears witness to the resurrection on the first day of the week (Matt 28: 1-7; Mark 16: 1-9; Luke 24: 1-12; John 20:1-10). Furthermore, he emphasizes that also on the first day the risen Lord appeared to the disciples en route to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35), to the eleven gathered together in the upper room in the evening (Luke 24:36; John 20:19), and a week later to the apostles again, this time with Thomas present (John 20: 26-29). The Pope makes mention also that Pentecost, the day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, was the first day of the eighth week after Passover (Luke 24:49; Acts 1: 4-5). All these significant happenings attest to Sunday’s being the time of the presence of God for the Christian. Their occurrence on the first day after the Sabbath, the eighth day, places them beyond the Sabbath into a different time that fulfills the Sabbath’s intimations of eternity and glory because Christ has brought into time the transformation of life inchoate in the promises. This special time represents the time to come. Sunday surpasses the time of

477 John Paul, Dies Domini, #19.
478 Ibid., #20.
479 Ibid.
Sabbath because all time has been sanctified in the sacrifice of Christ and the new life of glory which is now bestowed on the faithful in grace. Christ is rest from sin and death, and, through Christ, persons are empowered to be a source of peace (rest) to one another through love. Peter announced the truth of Christ’s conquest of sin and death on the Sunday of Pentecost when he offered to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem baptism for the forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit for their new life (Acts 2:38-39). Pope John Paul regards Peter’s proclamation of the resurrection of Christ to the Jews as “the epiphany of the church, revealed as the people into which are gathered in unity, beyond all differences, the scattered children of God.”

Although the Sabbath remained for Jewish Christians the day dedicated to rest, prayer, and common assembly in the synagogue and at home, Sunday became the chosen time for the breaking of bread, the commemoration of the Lord’s Supper. The Pope makes reference to Paul at Troas as an indication that very early on Christians gathered on the first day of the week to celebrate the Eucharist (Acts 20: 7).

Further witness to Sunday worship is found in the writings of the Fathers of the Church as early as the beginning of the second century and in certain pagan documents.

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480 Ibid.
481 Ibid., #21.
482 Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, was martyred under Trajan who reigned as Roman Emperor from 98 to 117 A. D. Ignatius’ Letter to the Magnesians, written sometime in the very beginning of the second century, describes the Jewish Christians as perceiving a new dimension in the practice of their faith. He writes, “Those, then, who lived by ancient practices arrived at a new hope. They ceased to keep the Sabbath and lived by the Lord’s Day, on which our life as well as theirs shone forth, thanks to Him and his death.” The Didache also refers to the Lord’s Day, “On every Lord’s day-his special day-come together and break bread and give thanks...” Another early writing that witnesses to the Christian Sunday is the First Apology of Justin, “on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country.” Cyril C. Richardson, ed., Early Christian Fathers, trans. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), 96, 178, 287. John Paul, Dies Domini, #23.
There was no confusion between the Sabbath and Sunday in the early church. The Sabbath was distinctly the prescription of the Mosaic Law concerning the day of rest. Therefore, Jewish Christians continued to go to the synagogue to pray and observe the Sabbath. However they also observed the first day of the week with meetings for the breaking of the bread. So in the beginning, both days were commemorated. The Acts of the Apostles records, “They went to the temple area together every day while in their homes they broke bread” (Acts 2: 46). The Pope acknowledges that even though the days were distinct, there was an interweaving of the Jewish and Christian ways of prayer in the first century. He notes in his letter, “The Apostles, and in particular Saint Paul, continued initially to attend the synagogue so that there they might proclaim Jesus Christ, commenting upon ‘the words of the prophets which are read every Sabbath’ (Acts 13: 27). Some communities observed the Sabbath while also celebrating Sunday.”

However, by the latter part of the first century, the Christian breaking of bread assumed its own specific weekly time in commemoration of the resurrection. The predominance of Sunday with respect to the Sabbath in the early Christian communities may also be attributed to the decision of the Council of Jerusalem not to require adherence to the Mosaic Law as a prerequisite to becoming Christian. The Acts of the Apostles clarifies the expectations of new converts:

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483 Pliny the Younger (62-115 A.D.), governor of Bithynia from 111 to 113 A.D., in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, described Christians as “meeting together on a set day before dawn to sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god.” Letters 10.96-97. John Paul, Dies Domini, #21.

484 John Paul, Dies Domini, #23.
It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too, not to lay on you any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood from the meat of strangled animals, and from illicit sexual union. You will be well advised to avoid these things (Acts 15:28-29).

There was never an obligation in Christianity to observe the Sabbath; rather, the Mosaic Law was re-evaluated in order to gain a greater understanding of the teachings of Christ in relation to it. The insight of the apostle Peter is significant in contrasting the gospel to the expectations of the Law. He states, “Why, then, do you put God to the test by trying to place on the shoulders of these converts a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? (Acts 15:10).” What is affirmed here is that the gospel, which has demands beyond the scope of Judaism, is easier to live because the incarnate Lord has lived obedience even unto death, has instituted the Eucharist as the food of eternal life, and has left his Spirit to strengthen and console. The Pope singles out the baptismal dimension of Sunday as a particular source of strength for Christians and describes Sunday as “the day above all other days which summons Christians to remember the salvation which was given to them in baptism and which has made them new in Christ. “You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2: 12; Rom 6:4-6).

The hallmark of the Christians was their conviction that God was revealed in Jesus Christ. Early on, the fruits of participation in the Sunday communal Eucharistic meal created a community of strength and love even in the face of persecution.

485 Ibid., #25.
2. New Creation and New Light

The Pope avers that meditation on the resurrection in the light of Baptism enables the faithful to perceive the state of grace and divine life that God has bestowed on them. Meditation on the paschal mystery renews faith in the power of God to bring life from death and to bring spiritual life where sin has wrought its devastation. Meditation also deepens the realization that sin has been overcome and that the power of evil has been diminished. With Sunday as a reminder of baptism, the faithful are renewed in the awareness that they are not subject to Satan and his works, although the situation of temptation remains. Conviction with regard to the radical transformation the resurrection has effected changes the way one perceives one’s capabilities. The new creation initiated by the risen Christ is given as gift in the Eucharist. It provides the spiritual strength necessary to live a life of faith through the promise Our Lord made “to be with us always even to the end of time” (Matt 28: 20). The Pope affirms the importance of the baptismal dimension of Sunday in his reference to “the sprinkling of holy water at the start of Mass as the penitential rite, which recalls the moment of Baptism in which all Christian life is born.”

Baptism shares with Sunday an orientation to the future, to the second coming of Christ. In the sacramental life of grace begun in Baptism and renewed in every Eucharist, the faithful move through time toward the parousia, the eternal rest in Christ. “Sunday,” the Pope explains, “is not only the first day, it is also ‘the eighth day’, set within the sevenfold succession of days in a unique and transcendent position which evokes not only the beginning of time but

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486 Ibid., #25.
also its end in the age to come… In celebrating Sunday, both the ‘first’ and the ‘eighth’ day, the Christian is led towards the goal of eternal life.\textsuperscript{487}

The Christian is led toward this goal because Christ is the light of the world, light being another symbol for Sunday, the pagan designation for the day. A prominent cult in the Roman Empire at the time of Constantine in the fourth century was that of Mithras. Members of this cult worshipped the sun. In contrast to the power of the cosmic light this cult worshipped, the Christian community offered the light of Christ (John 9: 5) and the light of the truth of his message (John 8: 31-32). The Pope summarizes the power of the light of Christ with a reference to the canticle of Zechariah at the birth of John the Baptist:\textsuperscript{488}

\textit{All this is the work of the kindness of our God; he, the Dayspring, shall visit us in his mercy to shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace} (Luke 1:78-79).

These insights into the various ways of perceiving the nature of Sunday find culmination in what was touched on briefly above, in the view of Sunday as the day of the power of the Holy Spirit.

\textsuperscript{487} Ibid., #26

\textsuperscript{488} Ibid., #27.
3. Sunday: the Day of Faith

The fact that the Holy Spirit was experienced by the disciples during their gathering on the first day of the eighth week after Passover, signifies that there is an intimate connection between worship and the indwelling of the risen Christ that the Holy Spirit effects. In other words, it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to participate in the life of God made available to us through the suffering and death of Jesus. In the gospel of John, when Jesus appears to the disciples on the evening of the first day after the Sabbath, he identifies himself by pointing to his wounds. He then bestows upon them the Holy Spirit. The source of the power of salvation, then, is the Holy Spirit and salvation is through the forgiveness of sins.

The gospel relates, “Then he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound” (John 20: 22-23). The cleansing fire of the Holy Spirit is the purification that disposes the soul to humility, the only proper disposition before God that enables us to accept the mystery of the Eucharist and its sanctifying effect. Therefore, Sunday is the particular time when the faithful should be especially attentive to their dependence upon the Holy Spirit in order to benefit from liturgical

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489 The Pope’s emphasis on the necessity for the Holy Spirit in the participation of the faithful in the sacramental life echoes the teachings of the Church Fathers and Saint Thomas. Saint John Chrysostom exhorts, “Let us submit to God in all things and not contradict Him, even if what He says seems contrary to our reason and intellect; rather let His words prevail over our reason and intellect. Let us act in this way with regard to the Eucharistic mysteries, looking not only at what falls under our senses but holding on to His words. For his word cannot lead us astray.” Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew” 82.4 Migne P.G. 58, 743. St. Thomas Aquinas has this assessment of our relationship to the sacred mysteries, “That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and His true Blood is something that cannot be apprehended by the senses, but only by faith which relies on divine authority.” Summa Theologica III Q. 75.
worship and participation in the sacraments.\textsuperscript{490} It is the Holy Spirit that enlivens faith. The Pope is very careful to show the correlation between Easter and Pentecost and to assert that Sunday is a re-enactment of Pentecost as much as it is an Easter event. He states, “Pentecost is not only the founding event of the Church, but is also the mystery which for ever gives life to the Church.”\textsuperscript{491}

These words about the power of the Holy Spirit in disposing the faithful toward the reception of grace are important for a correct understanding of participation in the sacraments, in prayer, and in study.

Sunday, as the Day of Christ, transitions into the Day of the Church through which all the merits of the paschal Mystery flow. In the third chapter of his letter, Pope John Paul discusses this aspect of Sunday.

C. Chapter 3: Dies Ecclesiae

1. Eucharist and the Communal Nature of Church

After the death of Christ, his first followers remained gathered together, uncertain as to their future. It is significant that the group remained together. Jesus’ coming among them was a confirmation that their fidelity was not in vain. The incident of Thomas’ questioning about the Lord’s appearance provides another insight into the importance of remaining together. By being with the group of apostles, Thomas was able to enjoy the presence of the Lord. The gathering

\textsuperscript{490} In his 1965 encyclical \textit{Mysterium Fidei}, Pope Paul VI describes the effects brought about by the merits of Christ in the sacraments through the power of the Holy Spirit: “He restores morality, nourishes virtues, consoles the afflicted, strengthens the weak. He proposes His own example to those who come to Him that all may learn to be, like Himself, meek and humble of heart and to seek not their own interests but those of God. 
http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6myster.htm

\textsuperscript{491} John Paul II, \textit{Dies Domini}, #28.
together of the faithful became the place of the presence of God, the Church, as Christ said, “Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am also” (Matt 18: 20). The first churches were gatherings of people at certain homes. The Acts of the Apostles describes this:

Those who believed shared all things in common; they would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one’s need. They went to the temple area together every day, while in their homes they broke bread. With exultant and sincere hearts they took their meals in common (Acts 2: 44-46).

In his apostolic letter, Pope John Paul II reminds the faithful that one is baptized into a community, and through that community of believers one receives the blessings of salvation. He states, “Those who have received the grace of baptism are not saved as individuals alone, but as members of the Mystical Body, having become a part of the People of God.”

It is the Eucharist that forms this unity and keeps the church together in every part of the world. The bishop is a special sign of this unity and, even though he may not be physically present, the mention of the bishop in the Eucharistic prayer defines his place in relation to the community. Although the Eucharist may be celebrated every day, the unique significance of Sunday as the Lord’s Day, the day of resurrection and new life, makes this first day of the week the particular time of gathering when the entire community comes together. Such assembly creates a lively sense of fellowship that is evident in the sign of peace and the commitment to works of charity. The sign of peace is of particular importance in its has messianic connotation of the final peace of the parousia when Christ will restore all things and give everything over to the Father. In this sense Sunday is an eschatological event in which the glorified presence of Christ moves everyone into the joy of the time to come in the marriage of the Lamb to the new Jerusalem.

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492 Ibid., #31.
Pope explains, “Gathering her children into the Eucharistic assembly and teaching them to wait for the divine Bridegroom, she (the Church) engages in a kind of ‘exercise of desire’ receiving a foretaste of the joy of the new heavens and new earth, when the holy city, the new Jerusalem, will come down from God, ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband’ (Rev 21: 2).” As an eschatological event, Sunday also reminds of the judgment that is to come, that all are responsible before God to be good stewards of the earth and to live a life of virtue. The Eucharistic presence of Christ in the Sunday liturgy requires purity of heart, sorrow for sin, and reconciliation. All aspects of our personhood are confronted with the living God of love and judgment. As the eighth day, Sunday is directed to eternity. Therefore, it is important that the congregation consider also the sacrament of penance and prepare worthily for the reception of grace. John Paul II refers to the passage in Matthew which directs persons to reconcile with one another before presenting their gifts at the altar. He quotes, “If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matt 5: 23-24). Reconciliation is the beginning of the joy we will know when all will be all in God.

The unity of the people who come to the Eucharist reflects the unity of the Trinity. This is expressed in the gospel of John where Jesus expresses his wish that “all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be one in us” (John 17: 21). This is the unity

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494 John Paul, *Dies Domini,* #37.

495 Ibid., #44.
through which the love that permeates the Eucharist will come to fruition, not so much in acts of charity, as in the true seeing of the image of God in persons.\textsuperscript{496} This is the true mystery of the Church. In such love, the movement forward to our destiny in God defines the faithful as a pilgrim people. In the Pope’s words, “Sunday after Sunday the Church moves towards the final Lord’s Day, that Sunday which knows no end. The expectation of Christ’s coming is inscribed in the very mystery of the Church and is evidenced in every Eucharistic celebration…The Lord’s Day recalls the future glory of his return.”\textsuperscript{497} As oriented toward the future and as the culmination of the goodness of creation, Sunday is a day of hope.

The Pope cites all of the above descriptions of Sunday as the reasons behind the obligatory nature of the precept to worship God. In this sense, the obligations of Sunday are analogous to the obligations of the Sabbath.\textsuperscript{498} There is a necessity to love God above all things and to recognize God as creator so that the sin of pride does not overwhelm us and make us think we are self-sufficient. This is the essential sin, especially in the modern age. Joseph Pieper sees this self-sufficiency as grounded in a basic mistrust. He perceives that “there is an over-

\textsuperscript{496} In his study of the church as missional, Darrell Guder observes, “To be attentive to Christian works is not to labor away at works that will save us but to carry out the vocation of witness…The false dichotomy between the enjoyment of the benefits of knowing and following Christ and the calling to serve him as his witnesses will have to be rejected.” Darrell Guder, “Theological Significance of the Lord’s Day for the Formation of the Missional Church,” in Edward O’Flaherty and Rodney L. Petersen ed., Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture. Edward O’Flaherty and Rodney L. Petersen ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 112.

\textsuperscript{497} John Paul II, Dies Domini, #37

\textsuperscript{498} In his discussion of the Sabbath, Norman Wirzba contends that “there is a lack of authentic worship…because we don’t really desire God; what we need and want we can provide for ourselves. Since we are now, thanks to our developing technologies and engineering innovations, masters of our own fate, we can manipulate the world at will. If God appears at all, it is as an ornament filling an emotional gap…However, when we get to the most fundamental levels of human experience we have to admit that we are helpless and utterly dependent on a power other than our own. Living the Sabbath, 156, 157.
emphasis on effort because man mistrusts everything that is without effort; in good conscience he can own only what he himself has reached through painful effort; he refuses to let himself be given anything.”

The Pope recognizes that in the early church the ardor of the apostles and the first disciples permeated the communities. The early church lived in recognition of the discrepancy between the pagan world and Christian love and accepted martyrdom rather than compromise the understanding of God and neighbor Christ had revealed. In a certain sense the early church overcame the idolatry which Judaism did not seem to be able to avoid and which the recurrence of the Sabbath was intended to counteract. But as time progressed and the personal choice of being Christian gave way to the establishment of Christianity as a state religion in the Roman Empire, this foundational ardor was dissipated and the church assumed a more formal character.

The Pope recognizes the transition that occurred over time from the earliest fervor of the church, but sees the worship of God also as a matter of conscience. He states, “Even if in the earliest times it was not judged necessary to be prescriptive, the Church has not ceased to confirm this obligation of conscience, which rises from the inner need felt so strongly by the Christians of the first centuries. It was only later, faced with the half-heartedness or negligence of some, that the Church had to make explicit the duty to attend Sunday Mass:…”

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500 John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, #47. The author of Hebrews addresses the problem of loss of ardor for attending the assembly. He stresses the obligation for all the faithful to encourage one another to be steadfast in faithfulness. He exhorts all to “hold unswervingly to our profession which gives us hope, for he who made the promise deserves our trust. We must consider how to rouse each other to love and good deeds. We should not absent ourselves from the assembly, as some do, but encourage one another. (Heb 10: 23-25).
By exhorting Christians to be faithful to Sunday Mass, the Church is recognizing that we do not know ourselves without God, and that we easily fall away from God and, therefore, from our true selves. Therefore, for the good of all, the Church makes it imperative to regard the Eucharist as the source of Christian identity, because the Eucharist is the life of Christ which the blood of the martyrs passed down to us. The Pope also recalls that the formation of conscience, especially in this regard, is not the task of the magisterium of the Church alone. It is as much the jurisdiction of parents as it is the responsibility of the Church. In this endeavor, the work of catechists is an invaluable aid.

2. Table of the Word and Table of the Body of Christ for Mission

In his discussion of the liturgy of the Word, Pope John Paul shows concern that the Scriptures of the given day be understood. There is a genuine need for the faithful to study and reflect on the sacred Word as well as to pray. The Word of God is a penetrating force that makes its truth known despite resistance and even if it is rejected. The book of Isaiah has this succinct commentary on the Word:

For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it (Isa 55:10-11).

Knowing that this is the power of the Scriptures, the Pope exhorts the faithful to consider the Word as a dialogue between God and his people, “a dialogue in which the wonders of
salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the Covenant are continually restated. Because the Word of God is a dialogue, and not meditation or catechesis, response is the expectation. Fervor and gratitude are the dispositions anticipated at the table of the Lord, because the Eucharist links the sacrifice of Calvary to the present moment and in the same moment brings the glory of the parousia of the resurrected Christ. For these reasons, the Pope asserts, it is very important that the faithful receive communion at every Eucharistic gathering in order to be one in Christ with one another. There is also the personal benefit of the purification the Eucharist brings to each person. One offers the whole of one’s life with the gifts of bread and wine to be accepted and transformed. In the worthy reception of communion this transformation is complete, because the presence of the body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Savior removes all taint of sin. The Pope affirms that “because of the common priesthood received in Baptism, the faithful participate in the offering of the Eucharist. Although there is a distinction of roles, they still offer to God the divine victim and themselves with him. Offering the sacrifice and receiving holy communion, they take part actively in the liturgy.” One then leaves Mass filled with the Word and cleansed in mind and heart to be a witness of the love one has experienced in the sacramental encounter.

Perhaps it may be said that, just as Sunday orients towards the eschaton, the Mass orients towards its concluding prayers. The dismissal at Mass is pregnant with meaning because all of the holiness that has been imparted through the liturgy will now be spread into the world by

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501 Ibid., #41.
502 Ibid. #51.
those who have participated. In a sense, the weekly assembly simulates the disciples gathered around Jesus. Jesus instructs his disciples and then sends them out to impart his message to others.\footnote{503} The Pope understands the mission of the faithful in terms of sacrifice. All are required to make spiritual sacrifices in reparation for the sad condition of sin that stifles the impact of good. He states, “Once the assembly disperses, Christ’s disciples return to their everyday surroundings with the commitment to make their whole life a gift, a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God.”\footnote{504}

Although Christians are not obligated to live Sunday in the manner of Jewish Sabbath observance, awareness of the profound meaning of the Mass should shape the rest of the day, as it is the Lord’s Day and different from the other days of the week. The fellowship shared at church and the renewed perception of the image of God in persons should reshape one’s manner of relating with family and friends especially on that day. The Pope suggests “special times of prayer—especially the solemn celebration of Vespers—or moments of catechesis…to complete the gift of the Eucharist in people’s hearts.”\footnote{505}

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\footnote{503}{\small Guder has this insight about the missionary nature of Sunday, “The disciples were not drawn to Jesus to meet their own religious needs. Their formation was for their mission; they were disciplined in order to be sent out…The seventh day (the Christian Sunday) is the necessary time of public and disciplined practice of being with Jesus so that we can be sent by him. As the gathered community encountering Christ in our midst, we are enabled to embark upon and engage in the apostolate which is our purpose.” “Theological Significance,” 115.}

\footnote{504}{\small The Pope is alluding to the exhortation of Paul to the Christian community in Rome where he states, “And now, brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship” (Rom 12: 1). John Paul II, \textit{Dies Domini}, 45.}

\footnote{505}{\small Ibid., #52.}
3. Mass as Privileged Sacred Time

Because the moments of the liturgy of the Mass are sacred and grace-filled, they should shed light on all the other moments of the day. A spirit of gratitude should pervade this time, especially given the realization that there are areas of the world that are deprived of the possibility of such participation. Also, the shortage of priests has made it impossible to have regular services in many places. In such instances, it is imperative that the people of God come together on their own and have a communion service or solemn prayer. Although the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is always the goal, the continued spiritual union must prevail to keep the faith alive. Recollection of the persecuted and the martyred in places where religious practices are forbidden inspires all to keep a lively spirit. John Paul II calls attention to the present technologies that provide radio and television transmission of Catholic liturgies especially for those homebound or unable to go out to church. Such broadcasts are consoling for the elderly and instructive for all who want to increase their knowledge of the faith. The Pope has a special word of gratitude for those who bring communion to anyone who cannot personally attend Mass.

D. Chapter 4: Dies Hominis

1. Joy and Rest

The joy of Sunday arises from the triumph of Christ over death and the power of sin. The true joy of the Christian is the realization of the life of grace this triumph bestows. As has been said before, the first Christians experienced this joy directly in their encounter with the glorified Lord. The glorified Lord was the foundation of their faith and the source of their love for one
another. They were willing to die for this rather than revert to the empty gods of the empire.
Pope John Paul looks to the gospel of John in noting that Jesus himself consoled his followers by
predicting the joy they were soon to have, “I tell you truly, you will weep and mourn while the
world rejoices; you will grieve for a time, but your grief will be turned into joy…you are sad for
a time, but I shall see you again; then your hearts will rejoice with a joy no one can take from
you” (John 16: 20, 22). With respect to Jesus’ assurance to the Apostles of joy, the Pope asserts
that “the festive character of the Sunday Eucharist expresses the joy that Christ communicates to
his Church through the gift of the Spirit.”
With joy comes renewed hope. Hope is grounded in
belief in the resurrection. The Paschal Mystery encompasses all people, no matter what their
status, and the forgiveness of sins provides peace of conscience. The gifts of Jesus Christ effect
a universal redemption but at the same time faith is a special gift—as is joy. Here Pope John Paul
urges the faithful not to “confuse joy with shallow feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, which
inebriate the senses and emotions for a brief moment, but then leave the heart unfulfilled and
perhaps even embittered.” Therefore, sincere prayer for these gifts is the best preparation for
worship services. Although Pope John Paul makes reference in his letter to Pope Paul VI’s
urging pastors “to insist upon the need for the baptized to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in
joy,” he realizes that such joy cannot be forced, nor can people exhibit what is not present.
However, people can pray for spiritual gifts and have confidence in what Jesus said, “I give you

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506 Ibid., #56.
507 Ibid., #57.
508 Ibid., #58.
my assurance, whatever you ask the Father he will give you in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16: 23-24).

The notion of rest has a similarity to joy. Observance of the Jewish Sabbath consists in rest. However, for Christians rest has been transformed by the person of Jesus who says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will give you rest (Matt 11: 28). In other words, it is not a span of time that can remove the troubles of the heart and mind so that one can contemplate spiritual things, but a person, who loves and cares. Pope John Paul references Saint Ambrose’s unique perception of God’s rest on the seventh day of creation. In the Hexameron, Saint Ambrose writes, “Thanks, then, to the Lord our God who accomplished a work in which he might find rest…God made man and then he rested, finding in man one to whom he could offer the forgiveness of sins.”

With the creation of man in God’s image, there was now someone with whom God could communicate. Creation was complete; God could rest and bring man into his rest. God’s rest, then, is the first experience of man’s existence and man is to live within this divine gift. Thus, the Pope explains Sabbath rest in this way, “The rest decreed in order to honour the day dedicated to God is not at all a burden imposed upon man, but rather an aid to help him to recognize his life-giving and liberating dependence upon the Creator and at the same time his calling to cooperate in the Creator’s work and to receive his grace.”

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509 Saint Ambrose, Hexameron, 6, 10, 76: CSEL 321, 261, quoted in John Paul, Dies Domini, #61.

510 John Paul, Dies Domini, #61.
God’s activity of holding creation in existence does not stop with his rest. God’s rest is rather a contemplative gaze over all that exists and a delight in this.\textsuperscript{511} Man’s rest was disrupted by sin, but man is given the opportunity to partake in this rest again in the Sabbath that is Christ. Resting in Christ allows man to participate in the contemplative gaze of God that sees creation with wisdom and love and grants freedom from work as oppression and leisure as boredom.\textsuperscript{512} In Christ, Creation and the Exodus become one. The Pope maintains, “The Passover of Christ has in fact liberated man from a slavery more radical than any weighing upon an oppressed people – the slavery of sin, which alienates man from God, and alienates man from himself and from others, constantly sowing within history the seeds of evil and violence.”\textsuperscript{513}

\textsuperscript{511} Ibid., #11.

\textsuperscript{512} Josef Pieper avers that it is necessary for man to have the experience of rest in order to be truly human. He describes rest as leisure and explains, “Leisure is the disposition of receptive understanding, of contemplative beholding, and immersion in the real. In leisure there is something of the recognition of the mysterious character of the world...The leisure of man includes within itself a celebratory, approving, lingering gaze of the inner eye on the reality of creation... Leisure is not there for the sake of work, no matter how much new strength the one who resumes working may gain from it; leisure is not justified by providing bodily renewal or even mental refreshment to lend new vigor to further work -- although it does indeed bring such things....The heart of leisure consists in festival and it finds its justification from the very source from whence festival and celebration derive theirs, and this is worship.” In other words, the worship of God uplifts the heart and creates joy which in turn expresses itself in celebration and ultimately a contemplation that seeks to recognize the source from which this all comes. Pieper, Leisure, 31,33,34,50.

\textsuperscript{513} John Paul II, Dies Domini, #63.
2. Solidarity

The Eucharist, as the center of Sunday and as the source of grace, is to be the strength and inspiration, the joy and hope of the faithful who come to Mass and share together this sacred food. Participation in the one Body of Christ becomes a unifying force against evil and has a purpose beyond the time that is spent in church. “The observance of the seventh day (the Christian Sunday) is God’s gift for our formation for our missional vocation on the other six days.” The joy, the fellowship, and the love experienced in the Sunday assembly are to be shared in some way during the remainder of the day and into the ordinary moments of the week. The gifts that come from the Eucharist have a transforming quality that will affect others. The Eucharist disposes us to be sensitive to others and to actively become involved in people’s lives through works of charity or whatever might be the need. In other words, true liturgical participation cannot devolve into indifference; joy by its nature goes out from itself. The Pope reminds of the message of the gospel of Matthew “Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me (Matt 25: 40).” He sees in this passage Christ’s exhortation to take seriously the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to make of Sunday a time for entering into the lives of others and being of help in the wider community. The Pope envisions the Church as a family in

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516 John Paul II, Dies Domini, #71
solidarity with all who are seeking good. He sees this as the essence of peace. He comments, “The presence of the risen Lord in the midst of his people becomes an undertaking of solidarity, a compelling force for inner renewal, an inspiration to change the structures of sin in which individuals, communities and at times entire peoples are entangled.”

Considered in this light, Sunday is the eschatological dimension of time that is drawing all things toward the glory promised in the resurrection and man is God’s instrument in working for justice and peace.

E. Chapter 5: Dies Dierum

1. Christ and Time

“In Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, time becomes a dimension of God, who is himself eternal.” In this statement about time, Pope John Paul II is shifting the traditional Jewish understanding of time as sanctified by God especially in every Sabbath, into a more specific dynamic in the light of the Incarnation by which Jesus has assumed all time onto himself. This is revealed in Jesus’ appropriation of the Sabbath to himself in his proclamation, “The Son of Man is indeed Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12: 8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6: 5). As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus is the beginning through whom all things were made and the end toward whom all things are directed. Although Jesus’ entire life is the center of time, it is because of the resurrection that the glory of the parousia is revealed in the present. This indicates that Jesus has already spanned the eons extending to the goal God has planned for man from the beginning. The Pope explains,

517 Ibid., #73.
518 Ibid., #74.
“every year, every day and every moment are embraced by his Incarnation and Resurrection, and thus become part of the fullness of time.”519 Sunday, as the celebration of the resurrection, gathers time together, rejoices in creation, and thrives in the hope of eternal glory with the risen Christ. In this perspective, it is a day outside of time in its anticipation of the second coming of the Lord. This faith and hope are a constant for the Christian, no matter the epoch of time in which he may live. With respect to Jesus Christ, all time has this focus. In the words of the Pope, “Christians know that there is no need to wait for another time of salvation, since, however long the world may last, they are already living in the last times.”520

Because of the resurrection, the vision of the Christian is permeated by “a sense of time above time”. In other words, all things are done and all relationships are lived in a manner unhampered by time’s restraints which bind and move toward death. Christian time is open and redeeming. Since time belongs to Christ, one is always in the presence of God and the seeds of boredom will have no root. When one lives in this awareness, one is attuned to actual graces and inspirations of the Spirit. These counteract the impulses toward evil that turn time into an empty waste and feed the tristitia saeculi, “the sadness of the world” spoken of in the Bible (2 Cor 7: 10).521 In contrast to all things that might dissipate the spirit, Pope John Paul offers the festive

519 Ibid.

520 Ibid., #75.

521 Pieper attributes waste of time to idleness which he asserts “dissipates the human being into giving up on the very responsibility that comes with his dignity, into not wanting to be what God wants him to be… Then man finally does not agree with his own existence; behind all his energetic activity, he is not at one with himself; and sadness seizes him in the face of the divine Goodness that lives within him.” Leisure, 28.
worship of Sunday, “Keeping Sunday holy is the important witness which Christians are called
to bear, so that every stage of human history will be upheld by hope.”

2. The Liturgical Year

Festival is as essential a part of human nature as is the awareness of the transcendent. In all civilizations there is festival because festival derives from man’s recognition of spiritual forces that are greater than himself. When man acknowledges these forces by worship, he assumes his proper place vis-a-vis divinity, which is cause for celebration. Therefore, festival is always foremost an outflowing from worship. It brings man totally out of the working world and all the practicality of usefulness. It allows man to delight in the spirit of God within him and be himself in the joy of others. Festival brings all people together without judgment. Pieper maintains that “the highest form of affirmation is the festival; to festival belong peace, intensity of life, and contemplation all at once. The holding of a festival means: an affirmation of the basic meaning of the world and an agreement with it; it means to live out and fulfill one’s inclusion in the world, in an extraordinary manner, different from the everyday.”

This is the background against which Pope John Paul regards the events of the Christian calendar, the liturgical year. Easter, as the foremost feast of Christianity, is the great festival. It is celebrated every Sunday so as to effect the penetration of the power of the resurrection into all time. The spirit of Easter permeates every celebration of the Church year, but these celebrations have their own particular focus on the life of Christ. The Pope explains, “The Church wished to

522 John Paul II, Dies Domini, #75.
extend throughout the year the entire mystery of Christ, from the Incarnation and Nativity to the Ascension, to the day of Pentecost and to the waiting in blessed hope for the return of the Lord.\textsuperscript{524} Through the liturgies of the liturgical year, the faithful have the opportunity to meditate upon and derive joy from all the saving events of Jesus’ life. In a similar way, the Blessed Mother and the saints provide examples of discipleship and dedication to doing the will of God in joy. All countries of the world have their special patrons and patronesses as examples to lead them to Christ and to be the occasion for feast day festivals.

Although the Eucharist is celebrated each day of the week, and is given special moments of devotion on the occasion of specific holy days, Sunday remains the Lord’s Day and the particular time for eucharistic worship and the gathering into assembly of the faithful. It is the Dies Dierum, “the day of days”. It is the day set aside for prayer, reflection, and sharing with family and friends so that life is opened out for the benefit of others and the Body of Christ becomes truly realized. The Eucharist, as the center of Sunday, is always the center of Christian life. In the words of the Pope, “The Eucharist is the full realization of the worship which humanity owes to God, and it cannot be compared to any other religious experience.”\textsuperscript{525}

\textsuperscript{524} John Paul II, Dies Domini, #77.

\textsuperscript{525} Ibid., #81.
III. Commentary and Conclusion

The apostolic letter *Dies Domini* was written by Pope John Paul II on the Solemnity of Pentecost on May 31, 1998 in preparation for the great Jubilee Year. This was a most appropriate time, as the Holy Spirit is the power through which the whole of Christ’s life becomes available to the world, the Church, and to the faithful people. The Pope uses these words to remind us of this, “The Spirit is unfailingly present to every one of the Church’s days, appearing unpredictably and lavishly with the wealth of his gifts.”\(^{526}\) The Pope explains that the reason for his letter is “to recover the deep doctrinal foundations underlying the Church’s precept so that the abiding value of Sunday in the Christian life will be clear to all the faithful.”\(^{527}\) He recalls that the Sabbath precept is set within the Decalogue so that the worship of God be seen as the foremost obligation of man. He avers that Christians need to rediscover this precept today.\(^{528}\)

The Pope is very aware of the distractions modern society encounters everywhere and offers Sunday as a prayerful way to counterbalance this influence. The following comment

\(^{526}\) John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, #85.

\(^{527}\) Ibid., #6.

\(^{528}\) There is a legalistic undertone throughout this apostolic letter that continues to seek to explain why it is mandatory to attend Sunday Mass. When certain aspects of the beauty of the Eucharist are presented, they are followed by a comment which indicates that such beauty is the reason the Church mandates Sunday Mass attendance. The Pope describes the early Church as keeping Sunday holy in a joyous way on a regular basis, but infers that this spontaneity has been lost, which necessitates Sunday Mass becoming “a juridically sanctioned norm” (*Dies Domini*, #30). In another section he states, “Because of its special solemnity and the obligatory presence of the community, the Sunday Eucharist expresses with greater emphasis its inherent ecclesial dimension” (*Dies Domini*, #34). This obligatory nature of Sunday is found also in *Dies Domini*, #30, #46, #47, and #49. Joy also is rendered obligatory in the statement, “pastors are to insist upon the need for the baptized to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in joy” (*Dies Domini*, #58).
about the modern situation of a pre-occupied and wasteful society underscores the Pope’s concern about turning to God, and his desire that Christians remember who they are:

Having been reduced to the status of consumers, to people who have little contact with the processes of creation, we assume that whatever we need we can invent ourselves or purchase at the store. The result is that we live in a world mostly of our own making rather than God’s. We have, as our living suggests, ceased to think of ourselves as creatures and have proclaimed ourselves to be gods…there is really very little for which to express to God our thanks and praise.  

Such a view of present conditions, however, brings to mind the fact that the prophets did not simply regard the requirements of the Law as imposed precepts with consequences. They came to a different vision and cried out a greater truth: that the Law was inscribed in the heart as an intimate gift of God; that it was the voice of God himself within (Jer 31: 33-34). Because the Law is inscribed on the heart, and man’s heart has been converted (Ezek 36:26), man knows implicitly his obligations to God and to others. The Law in the book of Jeremiah has become a personal relationship with an all-forgiving God. It is no longer an outside force that punishes disobedience. God has quelled fear through forgiveness. In the new law, God desires man simply to come to him. When Jesus says, “Come to me…for I am gentle and humble of heart” (Matt 11:28-29) he is offering this same mercy as a person in friendship. Jesus’ yoke is easy because it is a yoke of love wherein he has assumed the greater burden. While those at the time of Jeremiah did not adhere to his preaching, the disciples of Jesus were ultimately formed in the

529 Wirzba, Living the Sabbath, 143.
image of divine mercy by the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{530} This is the heritage of the Church; this is the grace that draws to Sunday worship.

Pope John Paul parallels this unique perception of the prophets in his description of the liturgy of the word as a dialogue between God and the faithful. As a dialogue, as opposed to a meditation or a catechesis, it is a personal conversation between the believer and Christ, where Christ reveals what is best for the soul. This profound insight given by the Holy Father underscores that the Word of God accomplishes its purpose in persons. The Gospel is an even deeper communication than the words of the prophets because the Word here is the person of Jesus Christ. Now the table of the Eucharist becomes the true nourishment for each person to go forth from the liturgy to be more dynamically the gift to the world God wants. This perception of the liturgy of the Word is an affirmation that the Holy Spirit is working in the minds and hearts of those who are present. Such inspiration and strengthening are the true reasons for presence at Sunday Mass. It is the holiness that comes from the Spirit that is the witness of Christian love in the world.

In his use of the Sabbath to highlight creation and redemption, Pope John Paul emphasizes the contemplative gaze with which God sees what he has brought into existence.\textsuperscript{531} There is a great sense of sweetness and peace in this image of God and the Pope presents it as a model for man. As the Jews imitate God on the Sabbath in their rest and in their appreciation of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[530] Guder explains the nature of this manner of formation: “One cannot be about mission if one is not in the process of discipline and formation. Jesus calls disciples…In the world of the New Testament, disciples lived with their rabbi twenty-four hours a day; they memorized everything he said, and they watched everything he did, and they learned him and his message.” \textit{Theological Significance}, 115.
\item[531] John Paul II, \textit{Dies Domini}, #11.
\end{footnotes}
the things of nature, so Christians are to imitate God by cultivating a renewed way of seeing which will overcome the diversions and distractions that diminish personhood.\footnote{In the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the prayer immediately before the liturgy of the Eucharist is the thrice sung refrain, “Let us set aside all earthly care.” It is imperative that the trappings of the mundane world not interfere with the mystical banquet about to unfold. And it is also imperative that, before receiving communion, the faithful beseech the Lord to remember them when he comes into his kingdom, as he remembered the good thief on the cross.} The Pope is aware that “Christians today must face the enticements of a culture which has accepted the benefits of rest and free time, but which often uses them frivolously and is at times attracted by morally questionable forms of entertainment.”\footnote{John Paul II, \textit{Dies Domini}, #82.} Sunday worship, which invokes the Holy Spirit to impart his gifts, provides the milieu within which believers are given the grace to truly be the persons God has created them to be. The contemplation of the Christian is the contemplation of his relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. This relationship provides the eyes that see the world correctly and instills the desire to do something to alleviate the squalid conditions that prevail in so many places. The wisdom of the Pope is clear in his exhortation to the faithful to unite in prayer and in service wherever there is need. Such is the solidarity the Pope envisions.\footnote{Ibid., #71.}

In his consideration of the Sabbath, Pope John Paul contends that Jesus was “opposing the excessively legalistic interpretation of some of his contemporaries and developing the true meaning of the biblical Sabbath. Then as ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ (Matt 12: 8; Mark 2: 28; Luke 6: 5), he restores to the Sabbath observance its liberating character, carefully safeguarding the rights of God and the rights of man. This is why Christians, called as they are to proclaim the
liberation won by the blood of Christ, felt they had the authority to transfer the meaning of the Sabbath to the day of the Resurrection.\textsuperscript{535}

The Pope’s statement about the meaning of the Sabbath and its transfer to Sunday needs clarification. The Sabbath is kept holy because of remembrance of creation and the liberation from Egypt. The question of the transfer of worship from Sabbath to Sunday must be Christological on the basis of creation and redemption. Creation is brought about through Christ as the Word of God and redemption is brought about through the liberation from sin and death in the crucifixion which culminates in the resurrection, the eighth day and the first day of the new creation. Jesus declared himself “Lord of the Sabbath” with the result that in his resurrection and ascension to the Father, the Sabbath entered a new time. I have noted that the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15: 1-29) in the mid-first century decided that Christians were not obligated by the Judaic Law, except for the recommendations about sacrificial animals, blood, and illicit sexual unions. This meant that circumcision and Sabbath observance were not obligatory. In other words, Christians lived in the grace imparted by the merits of Christ and the gifts imparted by the Spirit. Through these gifts, and not the Law, they lived a life of virtue assembling on the Lord’s Day to partake in the Eucharist, their sustaining food.

With respect to Jesus and the Sabbath, Pope John Paul considers that Jesus restores its liberating character. Although Jesus does the work of bringing persons to wholeness on the Sabbath, there is a deeper aspect to Jesus as ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ that the Pope does not mention. The passage from the Gospel of Matthew that states, “Come to me all you who are

\textsuperscript{535} Ibid., #63.
weary and find life burdensome, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28) must be considered. In this statement Jesus is presenting himself as the Sabbath, as the true rest. The rest that the twenty-four hour period of the Sabbath offered has been supplanted by the heart of Christ which now, for Christians, is found in the Eucharist. This is a new understanding that is not dependent upon a time interval. The celebration of the Eucharist becomes the center of this way of living. The Gospel of John contains the best description of this manner of love and life. In this gospel, Jesus states, “The Father and I are one…As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you…this is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (John 10: 30; 15: 9, 12). Jesus is revealing the Trinity and the interpenetration of Persons that are undivided, but remain distinct. He is telling his disciples that this is how they are being loved by him, in an interpenetration of persons where their lives are so bound to him that they are as one person, but yet distinct; “I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (John 14: 20). They are to love one another in this way and bring this love to the world for the glory of God. The only way they can do this is to remain in him. So he gives them the Eucharist as the bread of life (John 6: 44-58). God told Abraham that “all the nations of the earth would find blessing in him” (Gen 12: 3). Jesus tells the disciples, “I call you friends…It was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit…the command I give you is this, that you love one another” (John 15: 15, 16, 17). Jesus is telling his disciples to be the fulfillment of the Law. The Holy Father addresses the need to be as one mind and heart in his description of Sunday as a day of solidarity. 536

Toward the end of his apostolic letter, Pope John Paul II leaves the faithful with the beautiful image of the Church as the light of the world. This image does not have the same

536 Ibid., #69-72.
implications as Judaism’s being the light for the nations. This image of light radiates from the Lamb of the Book of Revelation (Rev 21:22-24). In a paraphrase of the last words of the Prophet Isaiah, our Holy Father proclaims, “From Sunday to Sunday, enlightened by Christ, the Church goes forward towards the unending Sunday of the heavenly Jerusalem, which has no need of the sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb.” The Church here are all the faithful who rest in the heart of Christ given in the Eucharist from which flows the true light of the world.

This apostolic letter contains much that provides substance for meditation and renewal of dedication to Sunday Eucharist. Although the Pope has shown a common ground between Sabbath and Sunday in creation and redemption, the Jewish practice of the essential ‘rest’ of the day to show complete dependence upon God, does not really have a corollary in either Sunday liturgy or the remaining time of Sunday. Sunday is a different day and the sacrifice of the Mass is what permeates time for the Christian so that the Christian becomes the sacrificial love for everyone he encounters in the pilgrimage to the Christ of the eternal last day.

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537 The Book of Isaiah concludes, “From one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind shall come to worship before me says the Lord” (Isa 66:23).

538 John Paul, Dies Domini, #84.
Conclusion

The Judaic Sabbath is a rich and holy celebration of time that draws people together week by week to partake in rituals of prayer, shared meals, conversation, and appreciation of the beauty of the gift of life. The Christian Sunday is a day of joy in the resurrection of Christ, a celebration of the new life of grace in the knowledge that sin and death have been overcome, a time for the sacredness of the Eucharistic liturgy, and the occasion for families to be together to recognize their blessings and enjoy time together.

This dissertation was undertaken to understand more deeply the nature of the Sabbath, its history, its course through time as the heart of Judaism, its significance in relation to the future, and especially its meaning with respect to Jesus Christ and Sunday as the new day of worship in Christianity.

In order to adequately address such a study, I divided the dissertation into five chapters. Each chapter has provided a different approach to Sabbath understanding.

Chapter one was formulated in four sections. The first section included an examination of passages in the Old Testament that attest to the serious nature of the Sabbath and its unique relationship to the Law. The essential characteristics of the Sabbath were then discussed to establish how the Sabbath embodies the sacred events of Judaism and elicits delight and hope through them. Reference was then made to the manner of celebration of the Sabbath over time, from the most ancient Temple sacrifices, through the time of the Exile and the second Temple, and finally in Rabbinic Judaism and later Jewish culture.
After this background which demonstrated the importance of the Sabbath. I turned next to a study of the Sabbath in the New Testament and those passages in which Jesus speaks of the Sabbath in terms of himself. In doing so, I showed that Jesus attributes the characteristics of the Sabbath to himself, thus offering God’s presence and the gift of rest in himself. To conclude this part of the study, I examined the resurrection appearances of Christ and the awareness of the Apostles of his glorified form as indicative of the fulfillment of the promise of eternal life and a new creation possible to all. I showed that the Sunday appearances witnessed to a new time, the eschatological time, toward which all time is moving and that the gathering of the Apostles to remember the Lord in the breaking of the bread, and Christ’s Sunday appearances among them, identified the first day of the week as a new time for worship, a new Sabbath, representative of the end time as in Isaiah, “As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall endure before me, says the Lord, so shall your race and your name endure. From one new moon to another, from one Sabbath to another, all mankind shall come to worship before me, says the Lord” (Isa 66: 22-23).

Further justification for the above position concerning Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath and the new time occasioned by the resurrection was presented via an examination of the thought of Saint Paul who indicates that the covenant is binding only on Jews (and the Jewish converts of the Jerusalem Church), but not on Gentile converts to Christianity (Council of Jerusalem: Acts 15:1-12; Gal 2:1-10). In this regard, Paul explains that the Sabbath, as the sign of the Mosaic covenant, no longer places a binding obligation on non-Jews. Paul contends that God’s salvific act is now the life and death of Jesus. Furthermore, according to the Law, crucifixion is
considered a curse of God. But Jesus was vindicated from this curse by God’s raising him from the dead. This action of God transcended the Law and thus transformed the Law. I have pointed out that, according to Saint Paul, Jesus becomes the new Word of God, superseding the Mosaic covenant.

Finally, verification for Christian Sunday worship as early as the end of the first century and beginning of the second was presented by reference to various sources: The New Testament, a letter of the Roman governor Pliny, the Letter to the Magnesians of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, the Epistle of Barnabas, Eusebius’ commentary on Psalm 92, and Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho the Jew.

Chapter two turned attention to the Jewish perception of the Sabbath in an extensive study of the Sabbath understanding of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Such a study needed to commence with a consideration of Heschel’s background in order to comprehend the influences that governed his life and initiated its depth of devotion to Sabbath observance. This chapter proceeded in four parts. The first part gave a summary of Heschel’s educational background to demonstrate the extent of his academic accomplishments and to indicate his position in reference to the modern philosophical trends that prevailed in the German universities in the early years of the twentieth century. The second part examined his depth theology which developed from the intensity of his upbringing in a Hasidic household, his university experiences, and from the influences of the great Jewish masters, notably Menachem Mendel of Kotzk and the Baal Shem Tov. A central truth for Heschel is the interconnection of the Sabbath and mitzvot for understanding man’s relationship to God and man’s function with respect to the earth. For
Heschel, Sabbath prayer and worship find substance in man’s deeds, which have repercussions in the heavens and repair the ruptures caused by sin. The Sabbath according to Heschel is redemptive and a source of unity for mankind. Heschel cites the Prophets to underscore the necessity for man to work for justice as the foundation of peace. He uses the example of the Prophets to emphasize the otherness of God and man’s need to recognize his creatureliness in this light. Because God is the creator, God inspires the awe and wonder that raise man to a constant newness of vision and hope. The Sabbath presence of God and his perennial presence in providential care are, for Heschel, the substance of the sanctity of life.

The third part of this chapter examined the Sabbath specifically as a gift in time. Here Heschel explains that the quietude of a day that is set aside refocuses the mind on the truth of one’s life and relationships. It allows for a refreshing association with family and friends and the prayer, study, and recreation essential for the spirit. As a stillness in time that is mystically out of time, the Sabbath, Heschel contends, affirms faith in the spiritual world and the mystery of God who enters the pathos of life, giving it an infinite dimension.

The fourth and last part of this chapter had as its object to present the Sabbath according to Heschel’s interpretation of its dimension as peace. Heschel attests that the peace derived from the Sabbath has a universal effect because of man’s nature as oriented to the transcendent. Thus, everyone is incorporated into the spirit of the Sabbath and this becomes the grounds for dialogue and cooperation in humane endeavors in the world.
The insights of Heschel served to expand the understanding of the Sabbath and its implications for the Christian understanding of Christ’s words, “The Son of Man is indeed Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12: 8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6: 5).

Through the works of Francine Klagsbrun, the third chapter explored the Sabbath as the future delight in God brought about by present imitation of God in Sabbath devotion for the sake of justice among people and nations. Here the messianic overtones of the seventh day come into prominence. With regard to justice, the interconnection of the Messiah and the kingship of Israel has received attention with respect to the righteousness the kings were ordained to enact, but which was never accomplished under their sovereignty. In the discussion of the kingship, I showed that hope for the Messiah dominated religious thought and intensified awareness that the Sabbath is directed to the messianic deliverance of the end time. The Sabbath is, therefore, a day most mysterious and unique. Klagsbrun describes the uniqueness of the Sabbath in terms of the descent of the Shekhinah (הַשְּׁכִינָה), which brings the presence of God and the beginning of the new world order. In other words, what Klagsbrun points out is that God’s saving actions must permeate man’s endeavors in order to accomplish true peace and move forward. The mystery of the day is reflected in the mystery and dignity of the persons observing the sacred time. Klagsbrun shows that removal from the labors and demands of life reveals the deeper dimensions of persons and puts life in the perspective of eternity. Sabbath family gathering with shared meals, study of Torah, singing, music, and conversation creates, according to Klagsbrun, the sacred atmosphere in which the presence of God is felt and peace is palpable. Such Sabbath observance is the medium through which man is sanctified. Klagsbrun traces the home
celebration of the Sabbath to the time of the Talmudic sages who confirmed the sanctity of the home as fit replacement for the Temple sacrifices.

Klagsbrun also presents areas of concern with respect to the interpretation of candle-lighting and the baking of Challah, activities that specifically involve women, and she explores the differences between mitzvot and humanitarianism. In her study of the spiritual nature of the Sabbath, Klagsbrun is able to present a rational for hope in the face of the suffering of the world. Since Judaism interprets divine providence as God’s presence with man in all the pathos of his existence, man can proceed with confidence in the work of renewal of the earth, and this work must continue even within the horror of persecution. To be chosen means to continue to be the light of nations in all circumstances. In the light of this concept of Judaism, Klagsbrun has argued for the equality of women in all aspects of synagogue leadership.

The conversation of Jean Daniélou and Rabbi André Chouraqui, the focus of the fourth chapter, further explores Sabbath observance and Christian Sunday worship especially in the light of the modern world and the secularization that has made inroads into the practice of faith and has diminished the perception of the sanctity of life. Because of its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures, Daniélou presents Christianity as sharing with Judaism the quest for truth. The dialogue of Daniélou and Chouraqui reveals a common understanding of event in sacred history and the recognition that God has entered history to penetrate it with a dynamic love ordained to bring all nations together in justice and ultimately in the joy of brotherhood. This presupposes that transcendence is constitutive of human nature and that man has a capacity for relating to the divine. With their common view that history is “meaning within time”, Daniélou and Chouraqui
concur that the truth of the past, as the saving presence of God, will prevail in the future. Both agree that the ways of God are a marvel beyond man’s comprehension, and that previous events are not the form of what is to come; rather they serve as witness to God’s unpredictable designs for his creation.

Daniélou’s concept of typology is in accord with this manner of thinking. He considers promise and fulfillment as a typology of the Old Testament for the New. Consequently, he presents the Sabbath as a typology of time in which the risen Christ supplants the Sabbath as the eschatological focus of all creation and all history. According to Daniélou, salvation has been achieved through the power of the paschal mystery to forgive sin, a totally new event in salvation history. The paschal mystery confirms definitively the presence of God with man.

Chouraqui affirms that the Torah institutes between God and man the experience of an eternal presence of love which constitutes the active hope for the messianic salvation promised to Israel and to all humanity through her. God’s choice of Israel to be the instrument of the work of salvation is a consolation for her people and the Sabbath is the vehicle through which this hope continues. He further explains that the state of Israel is an epical event of the modern world, a new beginning to direct the attention of the world to the will of the God of creation, the one living God. He makes reference to the prophets in this regard because they indicated that it is not simply progress the world needs, but rather a change of heart.

The similarities in thought of Daniélou and Chourouqui are evident, even though each understands how the vision of peace and justice will be enacted in terms of his own faith. For Daniélou, Chouraqui’s hope for a messianic future has already come to pass in the life, death,
and resurrection of Jesus. Although Chouraqui and Daniélou have significant differences, nevertheless, they both acknowledge that truth is one and that there is a necessity for those in dialogue to accept one another as they are. Daniélou is careful to point out Christianity’s roots in Judaism and Jesus’ life and work as flowing from the Law, the Temple, and the tradition, which he transformed. He also affirms that through Judaism, Christianity entered into the covenanted love initiated by God with Abraham, which expanded in depth and meaning through the ages, especially in the time of the prophets, a covenanted love rooted in the Sabbath of creation. Because Judaism and Christianity profess the same living God, and have common roots in the same revelation, there is a perpetual bond between them, even though, at the end of the first century with the destruction of the Temple, each followed its own course. Consequently, vast numbers of Jews in the Diaspora during the restructuring of Judaism never experienced the Christian message.

The dialogue of Daniélou and Chouraqui does not fail to touch the abject condition of the Jews throughout the centuries and the way in which Christianity involved them in the death of Christ. Thus, Chouraqui points out that very few Jews were present at the trial of Christ, that the first Christians were actually Jews, that there was a scattering of the Jews when Jerusalem was razed by the Romans, and that Jews were marginalized when Christianity was recognized throughout the empire by the decree of Constantine. Now in modern times, with the whole world aware of the horror of the Holocaust, Chouraqui affirms that it is time to work together on behalf of what the living God desires for all people. The Law has been given for everyone and its justice can be implemented through cooperation on a world-wide basis.
In response, Daniélou makes reference to the Bible as the mutual source for spiritual strength. In Sabbath observance and Sunday Eucharist, both Jews and Christians find the ability to practice virtue and perform works for the benefit of mankind. Above all, these two spiritual leaders agree that the advancement of the peoples of the world will come through recognition of both the sacred dignity of man and the presence of the transcendent power of God.

The fifth chapter examines the apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II, Dies Domini, as a study of the richness of the Sabbath and the place it has with respect to Catholic Sunday worship. The Pope begins his letter with a reference to joy, an experience essential to a true participation in the Sabbath. He then points to the experience of those who first encountered Jesus after the resurrection and equates this with joy, indicating that Jesus has brought them by his presence the fullness of the Sabbath experience. Such a perception of these two events, the Sabbath and the resurrected Lord, merges the meaning and purpose of revelation in the person of Christ. Time has undergone a change in the glorified Christ with all the aspects of the Sabbath centered in a person. In the light of this transformation of the Sabbath, the Pope presents the paschal mystery as the very heart of the mystery of time. Christ is the link between creation and the parousia. Creation is through the Word. The Word as incarnate in Jesus Christ undergoes death and resurrection, is glorified by the Father, and shares that glory in the offer of eternal life to mankind in the age to come. Easter, as the day of resurrection, celebrates this concept of time. As the first day of the week, Sunday represents the start of the new creation and a new era in which sin and death have been made subject to the power of love. Consequently, every Sunday, as the recurrent celebration in time of the timeless event of Easter, is an affirmation of the
fidelity of God to the covenant. God created out of love, redeemed out of love, has brought life from death out of love, and offers eternal love in the promised Sabbath rest of his presence. Sunday is the day of the gift of the Lord’s obedience to the Father in sacrificial love and the day of the gift of the Eucharist to man to participate in Trinitarian love. It is the day of the Lord.

The Pope elaborates on the meaning of Sunday by referring to it under its other aspects: **Dies Christi**, **Dies Ecclesiae**, **Dies Hominis**, and **Dies Dierum**. As **Dies Christi**, Sunday is a remembrance of Christ’s teachings that shed light on the nature of God as loving Father, the one who offers forgiveness and solace. It reminds us of Jesus’ works of compassion and his self-offering on the cross. As such, it is a day of faith. As the day of common Christian celebration, Sunday is the day of the Eucharist, which binds the faithful in the body of Christ. It is therefore the day of the church, **Dies Ecclesiae**, because the church provides the continuous offering of the Mass for the glory of God and the welfare of all people. Christ’s gift of the Eucharist as passed down through the church has been the joy and rest of Christians through the ages. By gathering for Mass each week Christians experience a solidarity in their perception of life and a renewed strength to face the difficulties posed by the prevalent culture. For this reason, the Pope refers to Sunday as **Dies Hominis**, the day of man. Pope John Paul’s final description of Sunday is **Dies Dierum**, the day of days. Such a title encompasses all the previously stated meanings for this holy day, but marks especially the day’s eschatological essence as the glory of the end-time brought into the present for man’s joy and hope.

In describing Sunday in this manner, the Pope is reminding the faithful of the great gift of God in the whole process of revelation and particularly the revelation in Jesus Christ, who gives
the gift of his presence in the Eucharist. The entire liturgical year revolves around this mystery and affords the faithful constant opportunity to recognize their place in humility before God. The Pope concludes that it is necessary for man to recognize the worship which is owed to God and that Sunday is the day in the Catholic Church set aside for worship, prayer, family gathering, and self-giving in service to others.

Each of these five chapters presents elements of the Sabbath that reveal its ever unfolding depths. The Sabbath is both the gift of creation and the gift of redemption. As Adam’s first experience of God, the Sabbath is the covenant for all mankind and therefore, was implicit in the revelation to Abraham whose obedience was witness to the word received. The Sabbath is what makes all revelation one and for Christians, revelation is the person Jesus Christ who initiates a new creation in his resurrection and a new day of worship.

This dissertation has examined the Sabbath and its fulfillment in Christ in the context of the ongoing nature of revelation. This is an approach different from that of typology as presented in the work of Jean Daniélou or in the historical background given in the apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II. Each new facet of revelation discloses God’s knowledge of his creation and his desire for relationship with man. Revelation is God’s fidelity to man in salvation history from the time of the covenant with Abraham to the covenant in Christ in the Paschal Mystery. In the history of Israel, each new disclosure built on what had gone before and offered stability to the nation. Israel was constantly assimilating the events of its past so as to be ever more open to the will of God even in its sinfulness. Israel proved itself the chosen nation in
its unbroken succession of seers, prophets, wise men, and apocalyptists. Its history of divine presence in the Sabbath led to the incarnate Word.

The Law given to Moses was the eternal Word of God. The Sabbath commandment placed the Law in creation. On the seventh day of creation man experienced the love of God as rest. As the experience of the love of God, the Sabbath is the commandment for which the entire Law exists. Because the Word of God is eternal, the Sabbath is the eternal gift of God’s presence. Because the Word of God is one, the Sabbath command permeates the entirety of creation and is present in the revelation to the patriarchs. From the beginning, Man recognizes God in the gift of rest God bestows in his Sabbath presence.

In Judaism, the quietude of Sabbath observance gives knowledge of God through prayer and worship, through blessings bestowed, and through the sharing together of meals. The Sabbath is holiness in the form of time, and the prophets warned that God would be with the people only if they stayed faithful to the Seventh Day. Israel experienced peace (rest from the turmoil of war) when she followed the will of God, and those who sought to obey the commandments and keep the Sabbath were commended by the prophets. The Sabbaths, the Sabbatical years, and the years of Jubilee were the path of social justice for Israel for the fulfillment of God’s plan for the earth. Obedience to these directives made Israel the light for the nations.

Jesus presented himself among Jews as a place of rest from the burdens of life and as the Lord of the Sabbath because Jews knew that the gift of God’s presence was in the Sabbath. In Jesus, the Sabbath was no longer a span of time but the heart of God in his person, and he
offered conversion of heart to any who would come to him. He stood as the offer of justice and mercy the prophets had demanded of Israel and by which Israel had not been able to live. Jesus gathered to himself multitudes that listened and went away refreshed and at peace (cf. Ezek 37: 21, 23). In his blessing of the Passover bread and his giving this as his own flesh, Jesus provided his followers a gift greater than the manna in the desert. His gift of himself sustained not only life, but created from within the actual ability to live a beatitudinal existence and move toward the final Sabbath in brotherly love and peace. In Jesus, the Sabbath is no longer an intermittent period of time. The Sabbath, as the revelation of the presence of God to the Jews, becomes the person Jesus Christ, the presence of God for all men, who gives rest as in the beginning and enables the faithful to be rest for others in his Eucharistic presence in their journey to everlasting life.
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