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THERE REMAINS A SABBATH REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF
GOD: A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL
DEFENSE OF SABBATH REST AS A CREATION
ORDINANCE

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Jon English Lee
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I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely and patient wife, without whose support this entire project would have been *unrestful*.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>2LBC</i>	<i>Second London Baptist Confession of Faith</i>
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
AUP	Andrews University Press
BDF	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, ed., <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LDOS	Lord's Day Observance Society
MHT	Moulton, J. H., and N. Turner, <i>A Grammar of New Testament Greek</i> , vol. 3
<i>NIDNTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. Moisés Silva
NICNT	New International Commenary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
<i>NPNF1</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1
<i>WCF</i>	<i>Westminster Confession of Faith</i>
<i>WLC</i>	<i>Westminster Larger Catechism</i>

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PREFACE

The theme for this dissertation was proposed to me by a dear friend and mentor, Tom Hicks. Originally one of my pastors and now my co-worker, Tom has been a constant source of encouragement and ideas throughout this long process. Also, another great source of encouragement was my advisor, Gregg Allison. He encouraged me to think deeply on the implications of my thesis and to explore other areas of theology that I hadn't even considered.

Finally, and most important, my wife has been a constant source of support. She had to listen to me drone on at the dinner table about the same subjects for months (years?). Without her kind words of encouragement and her thankless labors at home, I could not have finished this work in the time that I did.

This dissertation has been a long and labor-intensive project. I feel that I have not even come close to fully plumbing the depths of God's grace that is manifested in the Sabbath themes of Scripture. Nevertheless, this dissertation has been a wonderful means of God's opening my eyes to see the immensity of his provision for me. And, if nothing else, it has made me long for the final Sabbath rest to come.

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May 2018

CHAPTER 1
SABBATH REST AS A CREATION ORDINANCE

Introduction

The theme of rest permeates the pages of scripture. God rested at the end of his creative activity. God promised the Israelites rest in their own land across the Jordan. Jesus promises rest to the weary and heavy laden. The writer to the Hebrews uses the theme of rest as an encouragement for perseverance. Indeed, church history is filled with authors debating the nature and requirements of rest, Sabbath, and the entire law in general. In contemporary theology, some have focused exclusively on the fulfillment of the law, arguing that the requirement to observe weekly Sabbath rest is done away with entirely. Others, maintaining that Sabbath rest is grounded in creation and still binds believers, instead focus attention too strongly on a list of rights and wrongs and forget that the yoke of Christ is light.

Growing interest in reformed theology coincides with these debates.¹ Young people are learning of the deep theological roots that anchor their reformed traditions. Many are investigating the scriptures for themselves in order to validate the sabbatarian articles in their denominations' confessions.

The renewed interest in reformed theology and the biblical and contemporary calls for rest necessitate a clear biblical understanding of what is required of Christians.² Part of that clear understanding is a proper interpretation of

¹Collin Hansen, "Young, Restless, and Reformed," *Christianity Today* 42 (September 2006): 32–35; Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

²Recent examples of such calls for rest include Daniel Montgomery, "To Rest Is Human: To Demonstrate Is Divine," Taking Back Sunday series, accessed May 19, 2014, <http://daniel->

the creation ordinances, specifically God’s rest in Genesis 2.³ Is there any prescriptive element of God’s concluding act during the creation week? How one answers that question has significant implications for both the church and for individuals.

Thesis

This dissertation argues that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance supported by both biblical-theological and historical evidence and has ecclesial and personal implications. To explain this thesis, this section will give a brief description of each aspect of it: (1) weekly Sabbath rest, (2) creation ordinance, (3) biblical-theological evidence, (4) historical evidence, (5) ecclesiological implications, and (6) personal implications.

First, this dissertation argues for the propriety of weekly Sabbath rest. This means that the normal pattern to be followed by humanity is a week, consisting of seven 24-hour days, six of which are spent in work while the other day is devoted to rest.⁴ This rest includes multiple implications for both the individual (e.g., physical,

montgomery-sojourn.com/to-rest-is-human-to-demonstrate-is-divine; Montgomery, “Dead Ends on the Road to Rest,” accessed May 19, 2014, <http://daniel-montgomery-sojourn.com/dead-ends-on-the-road-to-rest/>; Joseph Pipa, “The Sabbath as a Creation Ordinance,” *New Horizons*, accessed May 19, 2014, http://www.opc.org/nh.html?article_id=600; Jemar Tisby, “What Ever Happened to a Sabbath Day’s Rest?,” accessed May 19, 2014, <http://jemartisby.com/2014/04/28/what-ever-happened-to-a-sabbath-days-rest/>; Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendency of First-day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011); Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

³All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

⁴My default interpretation of the creation narrative is literal 24-hour days. However, I do not think that a reader must agree with me on this point in order to agree with the overall thesis of this dissertation. J. I. Packer frames the discussion properly: “Whether the six days should be understood as 144 of our hours, or as six vast geological epochs, or as a pictorial projection of the fact (the *what*) of creation that gives no information about the time (the *when*) or the method (the *how*) of creation is an interpretive question that need not concern us now. What matters for us here is that on the basis of this presentation God directs that each seventh day be kept as a day of rest from the labors of the previous six. . . . The day is to be kept ‘holy’—that is, it is to be used for honoring God the creator by worship, as well as for refreshing human creatures by the break from their otherwise unending toil.” J. I. Packer, “Leisure and Life-Style: Leisure, Pleasure, and Treasure,” in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 363. For more on the relationship between Sabbath and the historicity of the Genesis creation account, see Jacques Doukhan, “The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation

spiritual) and the church (e.g., meeting days and frequency), which will be discussed and defined in specific detail in subsequent chapters.

Furthermore, this dissertation proposes a mediating position between traditional sabbatarian and non-sabbatarian positions. Historically, the sabbatarians have argued for weekly Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance and non-sabbatarians have argued the opposite. This proposal offers a third option that grounds weekly rest in creation (showing some similarities with sabbatarians), but also highlights the radical transformation of rest found in Christ (showing some similarity with non-sabbatarians while avoiding their idea that fulfillment in Christ removes the biblical ethic of weekly rest).

Second, this dissertation claims that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance. Because there is no agreed upon definition, this dissertation will propose and defend an original definition.⁵ For the purposes of this dissertation, a creation ordinance is defined as a normative, but not uniformly observed, general pattern the exceptions to which must fulfill and contribute to the pattern's fulfillment; moreover, the pattern must be confirmed, not negated or abrogated, by later biblical revelation. Each of these criteria will be defended in turn.

A creation ordinance is defined as a pattern that is normative; that is, all of mankind is ordinarily expected to follow the ordinance's pattern.⁶ For example, Genesis 1 contains the ordinance of marriage.⁷ The normal pattern is that a man and

Story" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1978), 223.

⁵In fact, I could find very few actual definitions for the term *creation ordinance*. Walter Kaiser defines creation ordinances as depicting "the constitution of things as they were intended to be from the Creator's hand," in *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 31. While Kaiser does include Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance, he does not include criteria for determining what is or is not a creation ordinance. See chap. 2 for a discussion of the historical views related to the category of "creation ordinance" and its synonyms.

⁶Unless otherwise noted, the term *mankind* in this dissertation will refer to all human beings, both male and female.

⁷For a discussion of sexuality and marriage as a "creation order" and a "creation

a woman are to be united in a monogamous and heterosexual relationship that produces offspring.⁸ Likewise, the normal pattern for mankind is to diligently work for six days and rest for one.⁹ Second, the pattern is not uniformly observed. While marriage is the norm for most of mankind, nowhere in scripture is marriage demanded of anyone.¹⁰ Instead, the freedom to remain single is preserved.¹¹ The same is the case with work; all those who are able to work are expected to do so following God's pattern.¹² Third, exceptions to the creation pattern must fulfill and contribute to the pattern's fulfillment. Should people not personally follow the pattern, they should live in such a way as to promote the pattern's normal observance. For example, again using the pattern of marriage found in Genesis 1, people who choose to remain single are free to do so. However, they should live in such a way as to promote the normal pattern of healthy marriage and procreation that is found in the creation account.¹³ Or, in terms of the creation ordinance of

ordinance," see Richard Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 554–69.

⁸For a textual examination of marriage in the Genesis account, particularly noting how it is a pattern "for all future human relationships," see Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 43. Related to this dissertation, Davidson notes that the grammatical construction of the passage "finds a striking parallel in the fourth commandment of Exod 20:11: God rested from his work on the seventh day and . . . he commands that Sabbath continue to be observed." Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 43n113. Indeed, Davidson continues: "The narrator has not accidentally paired the Sabbath and marriage—two institutions continuing in salvation history outside Eden. . . . By linking these two institutions, the narrator implicitly indicates that the marriage relationship is holy like the Sabbath." Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 52.

⁹The exact nature of this rest and its observance will be defined according to the covenant under which they are observed. For example, the old covenant gave specific Sabbath observance legislations that were added to the creational rest pattern. Similarly, weekly rest in the new covenant, while maintaining the weekly creation ordinance pattern, does not retain the old covenant Sabbath laws. The exact specifics of Sabbath rest under each covenant will be explained in further detail below.

¹⁰For more on complementarity, creation, and the freedom to remain single, see Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 299–302.

¹¹See 1 Cor 7:7–8.

¹²See 2 Thess 3:10.

¹³This assumption is based on the Gen 1 account of marriage, the prohibitions against sexual immorality found throughout the Bible (both OT and NT), Christ's arguments for marital fidelity that are based on the Genesis account (e.g., Matt 19:8), and the typological picture of what marriage stands for (i.e., the faithful Christ and his bride).

work, the normal pattern is for humans to faithfully engage in a vocation. Should people be unable to work for some reason (e.g., physical or mental disability), they would not necessarily be sinning by not working. However, those people should live in such a way that promotes the normal pattern of work among others (e.g., encouraging others to follow the biblical pattern of work, or not unnecessarily distracting others from their working). So, whether people are able or unable to personally follow a creation ordinance pattern, each person is expected to live in such a way as to promote the normal adherence to the creation-based standard.

Finally, a creation ordinance must be confirmed, not abrogated or negated, by later biblical revelation. Certain rules or patterns found in scripture have been done away with by later revelation (e.g., the old covenant sacrificial system). However, for something to be classified as a creation ordinance, later revelation must in no way negate the pattern.¹⁴ For example, the creation ordinance of monogamous heterosexual marriage is affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:4–6.¹⁵ Likewise, Paul affirms the goodness of the creational-pattern of work in 1 Thessalonians 4:11.¹⁶ Thus, a creation ordinance is a normative, but not uniformly observed, universal pattern, exceptions to which must fulfill and contribute to the pattern’s fulfillment; moreover, the pattern must also be confirmed, not negated or abrogated, by later biblical revelation.

On the importance of the question—the necessity of whether or not weekly Sabbath is a creation ordinance—Lincoln writes, “If the hypothesis of the Sabbath as

¹⁴This does not mean that later revelation cannot give further meaning attached to the pattern. For example, Paul teaches that marriage is a picture of Christ and his church (Eph 5:22–32).

¹⁵See also 1 Cor 7; Eph 5:25–33. While Christ does say that the human pattern for marriage will not continue in the eschaton (Matt 22:30), the pattern will remain, albeit in a transformed way. Christ will be married to his bride for eternity, transforming and fulfilling the picture that human marriage always portrayed. See chap. 2 for more discussion on this fulfillment.

¹⁶See also 2 Thess 3:10.

a creation ordinance could be established, then, whatever the temporary nature of the Sabbath as part of the Mosaic covenant, the appeal could still be made to the permanence of the mandate for one day of rest as inherent to humanity made in the image of God.”¹⁷ Likewise, “All the problems relating to our subject [Sabbath rest] hinge on the question whether or not the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. If the *Westminster Confession* is correct in stating that, by God’s design, one day out of seven is to be kept holy unto the Lord, and that this day was the Sabbath of the Old Covenant and the Sunday since the Resurrection, the area of discussion is limited to minor issues.”¹⁸

Third, this dissertation argues that biblical-theological evidence affirms that weekly Sabbath rest is a normative pattern for mankind. As will be demonstrated, God’s rest at the end of the creation week sets the pattern for the remainder of creation to follow. That pattern, though enjoined by various additional rules (e.g., Old Testament Sabbath regulations, which have been fulfilled by Christ), remains in effect until the second coming of Christ.¹⁹ The New Testament evidence, typological patterns, apostolic teachings, and early church example all confirm this interpretation.²⁰

Fourth, there is significant evidence in church history for this interpretation of Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance. The church in the early, medieval, reformation, post-reformation, and modern eras contains prominent

¹⁷Andrew T. Lincoln, “From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective,” in *From Sabbath To Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 346.

¹⁸R. B. Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” in *Acts of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod–Australia 1972* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Ecumenical Synod Secretariat, [1972?]), 146–47.

¹⁹Some might argue that the weekly rhythm of work and rest extends even into the eschaton. This idea will be addressed further below.

²⁰Sabbath typology is discussed in chap. 2.

leaders who either (1) teach explicitly that God’s creation-week rest is normative, or (2) teach in a way that would not contradict such an interpretation.²¹

Fifth, the interpretation of Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance has many implications for the church. Some of the ecclesiological implications are: Sabbath as a means of grace; Sabbath and the corporate assembly; natural law, Sabbath legislation, and liberty of conscience; and social implications of Sabbath rest.

Sixth, more than having implications just for the church, Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance has universal personal implications. Because creation ordinances are patterns for universal observance, this interpretation has implications for more than just the household of God. Some of the implications are: (1) the relationship between rest and faith, (2) a theology of time, (3) rest and human embodiment, and (4) a discussion of how to determine legitimate and illegitimate uses of Sabbath time.

Background

My interest in the subject grew out of a practical theology question posed by one of my pastors: “Why can you discipline a church member for lack of attendance on Sundays?” The answer was not readily apparent to me. I gave him several responses, but soon I realized that each response was not consistent either hermeneutically or theologically.

The Sabbath issue is appealing to me because of its difficulty and its practicality. The breadth of the study requires interaction with many voices. The question involves nearly every area of biblical investigation (e.g., hermeneutics; exegesis; and biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology), and has

²¹The language of “creation ordinance” is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, this dissertation will argue that even though previous generations did not use such language, they did believe that there are some prescriptive elements for new covenant believers that can be found in the creation account.

immediate impact on the life of a local congregation. The practicality of the question also makes it worth further study. Does the sabbatarian pastor wrongly bind the conscience of his congregants? Or, is a non-sabbatarian wrong if he or she chooses not to worship weekly? Because of the immediate and universal impact of the conclusions, the Sabbath issue is worthy of fresh and further study.

In the past hundred years there has been an abundance of works published on the subject.²² Perhaps the one that most brought the issue into the forefront was *Sunday* by Willy Rordorf.²³ He argues that Sunday has become a day of rest and worship parallel to the Old Testament Sabbath. This position has been re-affirmed by many.²⁴ This interpretation holds that the pattern of six days of work followed by one day of rest, a pattern that is grounded in creation and incorporated into Mosaic law, is formally presented as moral law in scripture. Furthermore, just as the seventh day was the appropriate Sabbath day under the old covenant, the resurrection of Christ on the first day effected the change to Sunday for new covenant believers. Sunday, or Sabbath, observance is a type or shadow of the rest that God's people will enjoy in the new heavens and new earth.

Paul Jewett argues similarly but is much more reserved on the issue of Sabbath day change to Sunday.²⁵ Because he believes that the New Testament

²²Much of this literature review is supplemented by the helpful surveys found in Henry Sturcke, "Encountering the Rest of God: How Jesus Came to Personify the Sabbath" (ThD diss., University of Zurich, 2005); D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999).

²³Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968).

²⁴J. Francke, *Van Sabbat Naar Zondag* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Ton Bolland, 1973); Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *This Is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in Its Jewish and Early Church Setting* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1978); Joseph A. Pipa, *The Lord's Day* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1997).

²⁵Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).

evidence for a change of day is slight, he argues that Sunday worship was the practice adopted by the early church and therefore is the pattern that should be followed today.

The Lord's Day Observance Society (LDOS) officially approved a work in the same tradition, written by F. N. Lee.²⁶ This work, which contains some eccentric, peculiar, and sometimes impassioned arguments, does have some helpful insights.²⁷

The work that has probably most brought interest to the subject was Samuele Bacchiocchi's *From Sabbath to Sunday*.²⁸ This book is his doctoral dissertation from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, even though he himself was a Seventh-Day Adventist. He argues that the Jerusalem church observed Sabbath on the seventh day until the destruction of the city in AD 135. Sunday observance, he explains, did not come about until the reign of Hadrian (AD 117–135) when the Roman persecution of the Jews led the Christians to choose another day of worship. The chosen day, Sunday, was much more palatable to the Romans because of their cultic sun-god activities on that day. Bacchiocchi's work had wide influence, and he even made connections with the LDOS, even though he was an Adventist.

Perhaps the work with most influence in conservative English-speaking churches is *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, edited by D. A. Carson. This work is the fruit of a symposium sponsored by the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research in Cambridge, England, in 1973. In this largely unchallenged work, the authors argue

²⁶Francis N. Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath* (London: The Lord's Day Observance Society, 1974).

²⁷One example of peculiarity is that he bases one of his important conclusions on his determination of the exact hour of the fall.

²⁸Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: Tesar, 1980).

that the New Testament does not develop a “transfer theology,” that the Bible does not teach that Old Testament Sabbath keeping is the norm from creation onward, and that the moral/ceremonial/civil law distinctions are illegitimate.²⁹ Positively, they believe that Sunday worship began in the first century, contra Bacchiocchi.

One of the latest works on the subject is *The Sabbath Complete* by Terrence O’Hare.³⁰ This book argues that “Sabbatarianism is a form of traditional pietism and that the acceptance of the fully ceremonial nature of the Sabbath, though shocking to some, is actually Christ-honoring.”³¹ This volume has much in common with Carson’s. O’Hare rejects the idea of a Sabbath day being a creation ordinance, yet, contra Carson’s volume, retains the traditional categories of moral, ceremonial, and civil law. Trying to retain the tri-fold legal divisions and uphold the traditionally high view of the law in reformed theology, O’Hare argues that Christ himself replaces the Sabbath:

The Mediator is on the first table [of the Decalogue] because, unlike Moses, Christ truly comes from God and is fully God. Yet Christ, by becoming fully man, joins with man to make him complete. Man cannot become complete simply by keeping the law, but he must experience through faith a life-altering union with Christ. The ceremonial Sabbath is the *evangelion* within the Ten Commandments that addresses the redemption of man. It is Christ Himself who takes the place of the Sabbath in the Decalogue.³²

Seeing the Sabbath command in the Decalogue as ceremonial, and therefore abrogated, O’Hare ends up in practically the same place as Carson’s volume. The main difference is that O’Hare is trying to retain the tri-fold division of

²⁹Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, 16.

³⁰Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendency of First-Day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

³¹O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete*, xiii.

³²O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete*, 289.

the law that is enshrined in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's confessional documents.

The previously discussed works represent the main influences in the sabbatarian debates.³³ While other works have been produced, including a whole range of works from a Seventh-Day Adventist position, the ones listed above have attained much greater influence and, typically, contain a higher level of scholarship.³⁴

Outside of the single volume works on the Sabbath/Lord's Day, there are just a handful of discussions of the Sabbath as a creation ordinance. John Murray gives an extended discussion of the Sabbath as a creation ordinance, but his discussion has very little by way of defense or criteria of what determines a creation ordinance.³⁵ Similarly, Greg Beale offers a defense of God's rest in creation as being

³³A large number of popular books have been written on the subject. These works range from every philosophical tradition and religion to even secular arguments for Sabbath appropriations. Here are some of the more popular conservative Christian works: Walter J. Chantry, *Call the Sabbath a Delight* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991); Bruce A. Ray, *Celebrating the Sabbath: Finding Rest in a Restless World* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000); Charles P. Arand, *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011); Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000); Muller, *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999); Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951); Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014); Iain D. Campbell, *On the First Day of the Week: God, the Christian and the Sabbath* (Leominster, MA: Day One Publications, 2005); Richard M. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1988).

³⁴Seventh-Day Adventist works include Kenneth A. Strand and Daniel André Augsburger, *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982); J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*, 2nd ed. (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-Day Adventist Publishing Association, 1873); Kenneth A. Strand, *The Early Christian Sabbath: Selected Essays and a Source Collection*, enl. ed. (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979); Strand, "From Sabbath to Sunday in the Early Christian Church: A Review of Some Recent Literature, Part 1: Willy Rordorf's Reconstruction," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 333-42; Strand, "From Sabbath to Sunday in the Early Christian Church: A Review of Some Recent Literature, Part II: Samuele Bacchiocchi's Reconstruction," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 85-104.

³⁵John Murray, *Principles of Christian Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (London: Tyndale Press, 1957), 82-106.

prescriptive. His work is thorough but focused on tracing certain themes throughout the New Testament.³⁶

This dissertation advances the discussion by proposing a fresh biblical-theological and historical investigation into whether or not weekly Sabbath rest may be called a creation ordinance. Because no scholarly work exists on the subject of Sabbath as a creation ordinance, this work will be original in its undertaking. Combining several fields of study (e.g., biblical studies, systematic theology, hermeneutics), this dissertation will interact with many sources in order to synthesize a theological formulation on a topic that has divided so many for so long.

Furthermore, this dissertation proposes a mediating position between traditional sabbatarian and non-sabbatarian positions by arguing for the weekly pattern in a way that is grounded primarily in biblical theological themes and not necessarily tied to one's interpretation of the abiding validity or invalidity of Mosaic Law. Historically, the sabbatarians have argued for Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance and non-sabbatarians have argued the opposite. This proposal offers a third option that grounds weekly rest in creation (showing some similarities with sabbatarians), but also highlights the radical transformation of rest found in Christ (showing some similarity with non-sabbatarians while avoiding their idea that fulfillment in Christ removes the biblical ethic of weekly rest).

Methodology

This dissertation is a biblical-theological and historical examination of Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance. Thus, this dissertation's structure will generally follow that pattern. First, this dissertation will examine the relevant biblical data.

³⁶G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 775–801.

Second, several key theological issues will be addressed. Third, this dissertation will consider the historical data to see how God's rest in Genesis 2 has been interpreted throughout church history. Lastly, the practical implications will be laid out in the final chapters.

Because of the interconnections that Sabbath rest has with other doctrinal areas, there will be several limitations on the scope of this dissertation.³⁷ First, while this dissertation will give some attention to Sabbath rest in the old covenant, a full-scale look at the relationship between the Law and new covenant believers is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Second, rather than a full historical treatment of the subject, that section will deal with the major relevant theologians at key points in the development of Christian theology. Third, interpreting Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance has implications for many areas of theology. However, this dissertation will be limited to two areas that are directly impacted by Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance (ecclesiological and anthropological). Seeing these limitations confirms the need for further research in this area.

Overview

Chapter 1 introduces the issues surrounding the debate over whether Sabbath rest is or is not a creation ordinance. It offers the thesis of this dissertation, which contends that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance. Then it details the main arguments and works used in the discussion today. Next, it explains the methodology of the dissertation, which is explained with a chapter-by-chapter summary of the material to be covered.

³⁷These limitations are primarily the result of space restrictions. The fact that they are not treated in this dissertation does not mean that they are irrelevant to the subject. Instead, they reveal areas where further research can be done on the topic.

Chapter 2 contains brief introduction to several issues surrounding the creation ordinance and Sabbath discussions. First, the chapter contains a brief historical survey of creation ordinance as a category. Second, the chapter contains a discussion of typology, the relationship between typology and creation ordinances, typology and hermeneutics, and a defense of Sabbath rest a type of a greater rest to come. Finally, this chapter closes with a discussion of inaugurated eschatology and how such understanding is necessary to properly interpret Sabbath rest.

More specifically, regarding the connection between Sabbath and the biblical covenants, this dissertation argues, first, that the covenantal structures in scripture provide the foundational interpretive grid through which rest is to be interpreted. Second, this dissertation argues that the nature of biblical rest is more than mere cessation of activity. Indeed, the Bible links many different themes with rest (e.g., righteousness, justice, *shalom*, peace with enemies, a physical location), all of which need to be examined for a thorough understanding of biblical rest. Third, this dissertation briefly discusses the role and nature of typology in biblical interpretation. Specifically, this dissertation will argue that typology should be governed by four categories: (1) textual warrant, (2) correspondence between type and antitype, (3) escalation in types as the canon progresses, and (4) a typological interpretation that is guided by the covenants. Furthermore, the fulfillment of Sabbath typology in the New Testament indicates that Sabbath rest is salvifically inaugurated by Christ's first advent, spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern between Christ's advents, and awaiting literal fulfillment at Christ's second advent.³⁸ Finally, this dissertation examines the role of inaugurated

³⁸This three-fold fulfillment scheme is based on: Richard Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," *TheoRhēma* 6, no. 2 (2011): 5-48. See chap. 2 for an examination of Sabbath typology and fulfillment.

eschatology in Sabbath theology, arguing that while there is a literal fulfillment of the Sabbath found in Christ alone (i.e., definite discontinuity), there still exists a weekly pattern of rest that will remain until Christ returns (i.e., definite continuity). In other words, because the physical fulfillment of Sabbath in Christ will not be complete until He returns, the creation ordinance of rest retains its typological value.

Chapter 3, the heart of the dissertation, contains an examination of the biblical data related to the Sabbath. This chapter demonstrates that the theme of weekly Sabbath rest runs throughout the Bible, and the ordinance is universally applicable today. Beginning with an examination of God's rest in Genesis 2, this chapter argues that certain textual features demonstrate the possibility of God's rest being prescriptive. Then, this chapter shows how Sabbath was commanded and abused in the old covenant. Next, it shows that Christ's fulfillment of the Sabbath transforms the nature of rest; specifically, Christ is the one who reveals the will of the Father regarding Sabbath observance, and he both secures and inaugurates eschatological rest as the antitype of several Old Testament types. Finally, this chapter examines the Pauline corpus (particularly Rom 14:5–6; Col 2:16–17; Gal 4:9–11) and the letter to the Hebrews in order to demonstrate that weekly rest is either not contrary to or is positively commanded by their teachings.

Chapter 4 contains a survey of historical interpretations from the early church and Middle Ages of Sabbath and God's rest in Genesis 2. This chapter demonstrates that the idea of weekly Sabbath rest is demonstrable during these first two sections of church history, even if the language of "Christian Sabbath" is not always used. The early church is given extended attention in order to refute the argument that, because the church fathers did not use Sabbath language, we should not either. Then this chapter gives a brief section on the medieval church's position on the topic, specifically demonstrating that while the theological underpinnings for

weekly Sabbath shifted to ecclesial authority instead of creation-based patterns, the medieval church nonetheless had a strong Lord's Day observance.

Next, chapter 5 analyzes some of the Reformation and post-reformation era interpretations. Specifically, this section refutes the idea that the English Puritans invented sabbatarian theology. It will do so by examining and comparing the earliest major Puritan work on the subject to the sabbatarian theology of earlier reformers on the continent. Finally, the chapter describes some modern views on the subject. Overall, it will not only document the topic, but also assess variations among the different approaches to the subject throughout the church's history. Chapter five culminates with a reflection on common themes or trajectories that emerge from an evaluation of the historical data.

Chapter 6 explains several implications that the thesis has for the theology, specifically ecclesiology and anthropology. The first section of the chapter examines how the thesis of this dissertation should impact church leadership. Furthermore, this chapter will show that the Sabbath doctrine has implications for the structure and worship of the local church. Pastors must take into account the Sabbatical structure of time if they are to effectively plan worship gatherings in a way that best serves their congregations. Next, this section expounds healthy balances for physical and spiritual rest. Some previous Sabbath theologies focus attention heavily on either physical or spiritual rest. This chapter gives proper attention to both by examining the connections between Sabbath rest and human embodiment, especially in 1 Corinthians 15. Finally, it includes a discussion of exceptions to the Sabbath pattern that is grounded in creation. While seeking not to be legalistic or antinomian, this final section gives practical categories for determining the proper use of one's time.

Chapter 7 offers a conclusion to the dissertation that summarizes the arguments established in the preceding chapters. It demonstrates that a biblical-theological and historical evaluation of Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance confirms that the weekly pattern of six days of work followed by one day of rest is still in place. Additionally, this weekly rest is best understood as including both physical and spiritual aspects. Overlooking either one can lead to either neglect of the physical, embodied nature of mankind or the spiritual atrophy of believers. This final chapter also suggests areas for further study related to the Sabbath debate and the topic of creation ordinances: (1) the nature of Sabbath rest in the intermediate and final states, (2) the role of liturgical formation for Christians as embodied beings, and (3) an empirical examination of the use and abuses of weekly rest and the effects on the vitality and productivity of individuals.

CHAPTER 2
THEOLOGICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL
CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter gives a brief introduction to several issues surrounding the creation ordinance and Sabbath discussions. First, a brief historical survey of creation ordinance as a category is given. Second, Sabbath rest is shown to be a type which Christ has salvifically inaugurated, that the church spiritually appropriates, whose physical pattern is preserved between Christ's advents, and awaits literal fulfillment at Christ's second advent. Finally, this chapter closes with a discussion of inaugurated eschatology and how such understanding is necessary to properly interpret Sabbath rest.

**Creation Ordinances as a Theological Category:
Historical Survey**

This section gives a brief survey of the terminology and usage of "creation ordinances" as a theological category. This background explains some of the context of the discussion, the importance of the discussion, and the need for further research in the area. As this section demonstrates, most recent theologians have tended to use the creation ordinance category mostly in discussions of ethics and divorced from a full biblical-theological treatment.

The idea of a creation ordinance has a long history in the Christian tradition, even though the exact terminology has changed.¹ In the early church, for

¹Much of this historical analysis is drawn from Michael G. Muñoz, "Creation Ordinances and Culture" (MA thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2004).

example, Irenaeus could speak of “natural precepts which God had implanted in humankind from the beginning.”² Likewise, Augustine spoke about a “natural law,” an “eternal law,” and God’s ordering of both the cosmic and the ethical sphere, all very similar to the creation ordinance discussion today.³ Aquinas advanced the discussion by adding the distinction between eternal law and natural law, a concept that will be discussed further below.⁴ Calvin stood in basic agreement with Aquinas’s conception of natural law, although he did have slightly different emphases.⁵ Calvin laid the groundwork for modern conversation by specifically pointing out three ordinances established at creation: dominion,⁶ marriage,⁷ and Sabbath.⁸ The Westminster Divines affirmed these three creation ordinance categories in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.⁹

Muñoz argues that the shift from “natural law” terminology to “creation ordinance” language occurred within the Dutch Reformed tradition, specifically around the time of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck.¹⁰ Kuyper and Bavinck

²Irenaeus, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith: A Condensation of Against Heresies*, ed. James R. Payton (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 4.15.1.

³See, for example, Augustine’s *On Two Souls, Against the Manichaeans* 1.12.16; *Reply to Faustus* 22.27; *City of God* 19.13–15. See also Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 45–48.

⁴See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Perrysburg, OH: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I.I.91; Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 50.

⁵Calvin emphasized the Decalogue as the content of natural law more than Aquinas. R. Scott Clark, “Calvin on the *Lex Naturalis*,” *Stulos Theological Journal* 6, nos. 1–2 (1998): 1–22; Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 52.

⁶John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, ed. and trans. John Owen, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 96.

⁷Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 1:98, 134.

⁸Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 1:106; Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 58; For more on Calvin’s view of the Sabbath, see Richard B. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 1998).

⁹*WCF* 4.2, 24.2, and 21.7, respectively.

¹⁰Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 64–73.

agreed with Calvin regarding the content of natural law, but they “had a proclivity for the term ‘ordinance,’” because they recognized “the institutions of labor and dominion, marriage and multiplication, and Sabbath as constituting a unique set of ordinances given at creation.”¹¹

In modern usage, systematicians have shown a tendency to avoid the language of “natural law” in favor of “creation ordinances.”¹² In fact, systematicians don’t treat creation ordinances as a distinct locus of theology. Rather, Christian ethicists (or systematicians writing in the field of ethics) are the ones who more frequently address the category of creation ordinances.¹³

Once such example is Karl Barth, who wrote addressing the importance of creation ordinances in *Ethics*. He claims that these “orders of creation” are binding and universal in their scope:

When we speak of *existing* orders, we mean orders that do not exist accidentally, that exist in certain historical relations, that stand or fall in these relations. . . . There are . . . *orders of creation*, i.e., orders that come directly into question (and more than that) with the fact of our life itself as representatives of *the* order, as a creaturely standard and basis of knowledge of the will of the Creator, as words which we cannot possibly overlook in obedience to *the* Word, as words that could not be any different in any historical situation: primal words to which all historically developed and fashioned orders, and all serious attempts to change or overthrow them, must always refer back and appeal as at their penultimate basis, primal words which at all events proclaim God’s own Word, which cannot be questioned as representatives of God’s order, which always *are* representatives of that order, which in all circumstances describe the uniform and necessary binding which makes our conduct good and which cannot, therefore, be *not* respected in obedience to God’s command.¹⁴

¹¹Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 73.

¹²Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 78–82.

¹³For example, one of the most clearly articulated examples of a sustained discussion about creation ordinances appears in John Murray, *Principles of Christian Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (London: Tyndale Press, 1957), 27–106; cf. Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 83.

¹⁴Karl Barth, *Ethics*, ed. Dietrich Braun, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (1929; repr., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 215 (emphasis original). See also John K. Tarwater, “The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 66.

Thus, for Barth, God consciously designed such creation orders in the beginning as a way to know and understand his will.

Another recent example of a theologian using language other than natural law is Walter Kaiser, who speaks of the “order of nature,”¹⁵ “orders of creation,”¹⁶ and “created order,”¹⁷ describing the way that God has set up his creation to function. Indeed, his definition of creation ordinances is an improvement, though still lacking in precision:

These ordinances reflect the work of God in creation and depict “the constitution of things” as they were intended to be from the Creator’s hand. They cover and regulate the whole gamut of life: bearing children, superintending the earth as a responsible steward before and under God, responsibility ruling the creatures of all creation, finding fulfillment and satisfaction in work labor, resting on the Sabbath, and enjoying marriage as a gift from above.¹⁸

Kaiser’s conception of creation ordinances, just like Murray’s, maintains a morally and ethically prescriptive element for modern believers.

One final example will highlight the distinction that has grown between the moral law and the creation ordinances. Carl F. H. Henry argues in his *Christian Personal Ethics* that “the whole content of the moral law was not inwardly communicated even before the fall.” Rather, man was dependent upon “the positive commandments in Eden,” which Henry lists as: procreation, the subduction of the earth, labor, keeping of the Sabbath, and monogamous marriage.¹⁹ Thus, the

¹⁵Walter Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 122.

¹⁶Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 148.

¹⁷Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 198, 304.

¹⁸Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 31; Kaiser also cites Murray’s list of creation ordinances approvingly. Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 153n4. See also Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 86. The discussion of creation patterns retaining their ethical significance extends beyond the reformed tradition. For example, Lutheran Otto Piper affirms their ongoing ethical significance in his *Christian Ethics* (London: Nelson, 1970), 151–54. Richard Davidson also describes marriage and sexuality as “creation orders” and “creation ordinances” in *The Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 554–55.

¹⁹Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 242.

terminological move away from language of natural law toward language of creation ordinance/pattern continues. Significantly, Henry views creation ordinances to be “positive commandments” for Adam to obey. That is, these ordinances are special revelation given to Adam in the form of moral/ethical imperatives, imperatives that retain their validity for today.

This brief survey has demonstrated the historicity of the creation ordinance discussion, even though the language has changed over the years. The ongoing usefulness of the category is seen primarily in the realm of ethics; however, for the category to retain the strength of moral imperatives, theologians must continue to keep their ethics closely tied to thorough biblical-theological analysis.

The Nature of Sabbath Typology

This dissertation argues that Sabbath rest is a type pointing toward the antitype of eschatological rest to come, and thus is still valuable today for its typological significance. Thus, this section gives a few brief comments about the nature of typology, the definition of a type, and a brief defense of Sabbath as a type.

What Is a Type?

First, typology²⁰ can be defined as, “the idea that persons (e.g., Moses), events (e.g., the exodus), and institutions (e.g., the temple) can—in the plan of

²⁰For a technical definition and defense of typology, see Leonard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Richard Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical TYPOS Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981); Edward Glenny, “Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 4 (March 1997): 627–38; Richard Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” *TheoRhēma* 6, no. 2 (2011): 5–48. Regarding the nature of typology, I found these more recent sources helpful: B. J. Ribbens, “Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 1 (2011): 81–95; G. K. Beale, “Positive Answer to the Question ‘Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?’ An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus’ and the Apostles’ Exegetical Method,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale, 387–404 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 13; Brent Evan Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 54–55; Richard Lints, *The*

God—prefigure a later stage in that plan and provide the conceptuality necessary for understanding the divine intent (e.g., the coming of Christ to be the new Moses, to effect the new exodus, and to be the new temple).”²¹ Second, for the purposes of this dissertation, a type will be assumed as having (1) textual warrant,²² (2) correspondence to its antitype,²³ (3) escalation across the canon,²⁴ and (4) an

Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). This dissertation will generally follow the typological methodologies of Davidson and Beale.

²¹Graham A Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 289. O’Hare’s definition is similar: “A type is something different than what it is, so there is a conceptual similarity or correspondence between the type and antitype. A type is a real person, event, or institution that represents a forthcoming real person event or institution; and highlights specific redemptive patterns or themes through *intended* similarities.”²¹Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendency of First-Day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 7; cf. Goppelt, *Typos*, 17–18; Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 94–96; Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern,” 55; Samuel Cyrus Emadi, “Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph: A Literary-Canonical Examination of Genesis 37–50” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 26–28. These definitions help distinguish typological interpretation from allegory. Allegorical interpretation is not grounded in the authorial intent and therefore needs an extra-textual means of interpretation.

²²Lints affirms the importance of textuality: “The typological relation is a central means by which particular epochal and textual horizons are linked to later horizons in redemptive revelation. It links the present to the future, and it retroactively links the present with the past. It is founded on the organic connection of God’s promises with his fulfillment of those promises.” Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 304. “Textual warrant” is used here in contrast with allegorical interpretation, which “seeks to find in them [passages], in addition to the literal sense of the text, and, at times, even to the exclusion of it . . .’ another different and presumably deeper meaning. The historicity of what is reported and the literal meaning of the text are of no consequence for allegorical interpretation, but for typology they are foundational (the literal meaning, at least, is foundational also for symbolic interpretation).” Goppelt, *Typos*, 18.

²³France helpfully explains regarding correspondence, “This correspondence must be both historical (i.e., a correspondence of situation and event) and theological (i.e., an embodiment of the same principle of God’s working). The lack of a real historical correspondence reduces typology to allegory, as when the scarlet thread hung in the window by Rahab is taken as a prefiguration of the blood of Christ; both may be concerned with deliverance, but the situations and events are utterly dissimilar. On the other hand, the lack of a real theological correspondence destroys what we have seen as the very basis of typology, the perception of a constant principle in the working of God. This is not, of course, to demand a correspondence in every detail of two persons or events, but simply that the same theological principle should be seen operating in two persons or events which present a recognizable analogy to each other in terms of the actual historical situation. Only where there is both a historical and theological correspondence is a typological use of the Old Testament justified.” R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), 41. This dissertation agrees with France on this point about correspondence, but does not agree with his whole typological framework.

²⁴Beale explains, “By ‘escalation’ is meant that the antitype (the NT correspondence) is heightened in some way in relation to the OT type.” G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 14.

interpretation that is guided by the covenants. Each of these aspects is significant and will be important in understanding how the Sabbath functions as a type.²⁵

Furthermore, as Richard Davidson has demonstrated elsewhere, biblical types have certain basic elements: an historical element, an eschatological element, a Christological-soteriological element, an ecclesiological element, and a prophetic element.²⁶ The main point of contention between evangelical sabbatarians and non-sabbatarians is located in the eschatological element; that is, during the time between Christ's advents, should Sabbath be interpreted as "inaugurated," "appropriated," "consummated," or some combination of all three? This dissertation argues that Sabbath rest is salvifically inaugurated by Christ's first advent, spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern between Christ's advents, and awaiting literal consummation at Christ's second advent.²⁷

Before turning to Sabbath typology in particular, a brief explanation will be given regarding the relationship to creation ordinances in general to typology.

Typology and Creation Ordinances

Before moving into examining Sabbath typology, it will be helpful to give an example of how typology relates to another creation ordinance that also serves as

²⁵This fourfold schema for determining types is very similar to that proposed by Currid. His four essentials are as follows: (1) types must be grounded in history, (2) historical and theological resemblance between type and antitype, (3) intensification from type to antitype, and (4) there must be evidence of the divine intention for the type to represent the antitype: John D. Currid, "Recognition and Use of Typology in Preaching," *The Reformed Theological Review* 53, no. 3 (September 1994): 115–29; cf. Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 247.

²⁶Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," 11; Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 111; Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern," 55n80.

²⁷Davidson describes the eschatological fulfillment variously: "glorious consummated fulfillment, . . . when the kingdom of grace becomes the kingdom of glory, . . . [when] the people of God are literally re-united with their king, . . . glorious, final, universal, and literal fulfillment." Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," 41–44.

a type, marriage.²⁸ As is shown below, marriage has textual warrant, correspondence, escalation, and also ought to be interpreted covenantally.

Textual warrant. That marriage ought to be interpreted as a type is clear from Paul's statements in Ephesians 5:22–23 that explain marriage as a “mystery” pointing to Jesus's relationship with his bride, the church. Most commentators concur: human “marriage is the earthly type, pointing towards the spiritual reality.”²⁹ Thus, the Bible gives clear warrant for interpreting marriage as a type.

Correspondence to antitype. The Bible also demonstrates that the type (marriage) also has correspondence to the antitype (Christ and his bride). This correspondence can be seen in two ways: (1) the nature of the relationship and (2) the costly call of the relationship.

First, we see correspondence between the type (marriage) and the antitype (Christ and his bride) because of the nature of the relationship: covenantal love. From the very beginning we see that Adam greeted his wife with joy (Gen 2:23). She was made from his very own flesh, emphasizing the one-flesh union that is so central to the marriage symbol. They are bound together by their commitment to each other and by their shared life, so pictured by the one-flesh union: “Marriage puts a barrier around a husband and his wife and destroys all barriers between them; they belong fully to one another, and to one another only.”³⁰

²⁸As mentioned above, see Davidson for an explanation and defense of marriage and sexuality as a “creation order” and “creation ordinance.” Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 17–19, 40–53, 554–69, 633–38.

²⁹T. Desmond Alexander, ed., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Leicester, England: Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), s.v. “marriage”; cf. Raymond C. Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 151–57.

³⁰Alexander, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. “marriage.”

This covenantal aspect of marriage corresponds to the covenantal aspect of the antitype. Christ has worked to redeem a bride, covenantally united himself to her (e.g., Eph 5:22–23; 1 Cor 6:17–18; 2 Cor 11:1–3), and will ultimately be with her in paradise for all of eternity (Rev 19:7–8; 21:9).

Second, we see that the marriage type corresponds to the antitype because of the costly call of the relationship: selfless service. Husbands are called to serve their wives in the same manner as Christ does for his bride. Indeed, this service is entirely selfless and includes all areas of life, “marriage;” even up to and including death (Eph 5:25; 29).³¹ Thus, there exists clear correspondence between the type (marriage) and the antitype (Christ and his bride).

Escalation across the canon. The Bible shows clear escalation in the marriage type across the canon. First, marriage is a covenantal relationship between the only two people created: Adam and Eve. Later, God’s covenant with Israel is described in marriage terms (e.g., Isa 54:5; Jer 2:2). Then, Paul’s letters demonstrate that marriage is a picture of Christ and his Church since the beginning (Eph 5:22–23). Finally, in the consummation there will be a marriage supper celebrating the final union of Christ and his bride for eternity (Rev 19:6–9). The marriage type escalates from a relationship between two humans, to being used as a general picture of the relationship between God and his people, to being explained as a special covenantal love that purchases the redemption of God’s elect.

Interpretation guided by covenants. Finally, the marriage type is guided by the covenantal structure of history. That is, careful attention must be made to the

³¹Other areas of correspondence can also be found; for example, the submission of the wife to her head corresponds to the submission of the church to its head, Christ (cf. Eph 5:22–23); the one flesh marriage union corresponding to the union of Christ and his bride (Eph 5:31–32).

covenantal differences and similarities that impact interpretation of types across the canon.

One example of how the interpretation of the creation ordinance of marriage must be informed by the covenants is seen in case of polygamous marriage. For example, one might read the Old Testament, which includes examples of (e.g., Gen 4:19–25) and regulations for cases of polygamy (Lev 18:18; Deut 15:21), and assume that polygamy is the God-ordained pattern. However, the full typological picture given in the New Testament guards readers against interpreting the Old Testament as condoning polygamy. For example, Paul’s explanation of the symbolism found in marriage (i.e., one man and one woman united as a picture of Christ and his bride) rebuffs a pro-polygamy stance.³² Thus, the covenantal structure of scripture must be kept in mind when interpreting biblical types.

In light of the preceding arguments, it is clear that the creation ordinance of marriage serves as a type. As that type moves across the canon, further redemptive revelation is given to the significance of the creation ordinance. Before moving to Sabbath typology, it is worth noting that the creation ordinance is temporary (i.e., no marriage in the new earth, Matt 22:30). Nevertheless, the creation ordinance and the physical expression of the type itself extends past Christ’s initial advent and will remain in effect until the antitype is fulfilled at his second advent.

³²Polygamy is a difficult issue. It is brought up here only as an example of how not properly interpreting marriage in light of the covenantal structure of the Bible can lead interpreters astray. One author makes several arguments in favor of an anti-polygamy conclusion: (1) God consistently “portrays marriage as a “one flesh” relationship of husband and wife”; (2) “the first example of polygamy in the biblical text was in reference to Lamech, the godless murderer”; (3) “the Bible explicitly condemns the taking of many wives by the kings (Deuteronomy 17:17)”; (4) “every biblical narrative that includes mention of polygamy is saturated with strife, jealousy, favoritism and abuse”; and (5) “the New Testament clearly forbids leaders in the church from practicing polygamy (“husband of one wife,” 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).” Geoff Ashley, “Did God Condone Polygamy in the Old Testament?,” *The Village Church*, accessed January 21, 2011, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/the-village-blog/did-god-condone-polygamy-in-the-old-testament/>. For a good introduction to the issues, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 28–33.

Sabbath Typology

This section explains and defends the typological framework used within this dissertation. Next, it examines how Sabbath rest functions as a type; specifically, it demonstrates that Sabbath rest has textual warrant, correspondence to its antitype, escalation, and an interpretation that ought to be guided by the biblical covenants. Furthermore, the fulfillment of Sabbath typology in the New Testament indicates that Sabbath rest is salvifically inaugurated by Christ's first advent, spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern between Christ's advents, and awaiting literal fulfillment at Christ's second advent.³³

Sabbath and typological method. Regarding typological method applied to Sabbath, I draw heavily from the work of Greg Beale and Richard Davidson. I chose their understanding of typology for several reasons. First, Beale explicitly tries to ground the interpretation of New Testament categories in the clear study of and organic development of Old Testament concepts.³⁴ Or, to put it more succinctly, Beale focuses on the Old Testament background of New Testament theology.³⁵

Second, both Beale and Davidson agree that types are prospective, rather than merely retrospective.³⁶ These terms (i.e., prospective and retrospective) are

³³This threefold understanding of the aspects of typological fulfillment is drawn from Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," 36–44; Davidson's threefold understanding of typological fulfillment in the New Testament aligns with Beale's interpretation of Sabbath rest. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 755–801.

³⁴In this area, Beale states that he is following in the tradition of Vos, and he praises the work of Dumbrell. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 20–22. See Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975); Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publications, 2001); William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology*, rev. ed. (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2013).

³⁵See Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 11–13.

³⁶The prospective aspect of types assumes divine intentionality and that types are predictive in nature. For more on the debate surrounding those assumptions, see Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question 'Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?'," 395–401; Davidson, *Typology in Scriptures*, 95, 401–8; Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern," 56–68.

defined in various ways by interpreters with differing understandings of typology. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, types will be assumed to be “prospective, while qualifying that some of the types are grasped or identified in hindsight, retrospectively in terms of epistemological justification.”³⁷ That is, Old Testament types predictively prefigure later patterns in history, rather than merely being resemblances noticed by later New Testament authors.³⁸

Third, and specifically related to Sabbath typology, both Davidson and Beale ground their understanding of Sabbath in biblical theological argumentation, rather than arguments which appeal to moral law and assume a tri-fold division of law.³⁹ Instead, Beale and Davidson draw their conclusion from biblical theological analysis of typological themes, much like I try to do in this dissertation.⁴⁰

Fourth, both Beale and Davidson emphasize the eschatological nature of the New Testament and recognize the importance of inaugurated eschatology in doing all aspects of New Testament theology, rather than viewing eschatology as one of the categories found within New Testament theology.⁴¹ Beale explains that few

³⁷Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern,” 64; Beale, “Positive Answer to the Question ‘Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?’,” 395–401; Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 47. See also Douglas J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1986), 197; Andrew D. Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology: Paul’s Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 127.

³⁸For more on the debates surrounding the prospective/retrospective nature of typology, see Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern,” 60–68.

³⁹See Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 18–22, 755–801; Richard Davidson, “Sabbath, Spirituality, and Mission: Torah’s Seven Dimensions of Sabbath Rest,” in *Encountering God in Life and Mission: A Festschrift Honoring Jon Dybdahl*, ed. Rudi Maier (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2010), 3–19; Richard M. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1988), 11–14.

⁴⁰While Davidson and Beale agree substantially on Sabbath typology, their conclusions are not identical. The main disagreement would be on the day of observance in the new covenant. Davidson is a Seventh Day Adventist, and so believes Saturday to be the Christian Sabbath day; Beale, a Presbyterian who subscribes to the *WCF*, believes Sunday to be the Christian Sabbath day. As is shown below, I am persuaded by Beale’s argumentation (among others) for Sunday to be the Christian Sabbath day.

⁴¹Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 18–22; Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 388–93; Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology.”

authors aim at explaining in a programmatic fashion how inaugurated eschatology relates to and informs major theological doctrines of the New Testament. As is argued below, Beale's treatment of Sabbath, in particular, gives proper emphasis the eschatological nature of Sabbath without over emphasizing the eschatological fulfillment before Christ's second coming. Or, to put it another way, Beale explains the already/not yet tension of Sabbath typology without overemphasizing either.⁴²

Thus, this dissertation borrows from the work of Beale and Davidson because they emphasize the Old Testament background to New Testament types, emphasize the organic developments of types throughout redemption history, agree that types are predictive in nature, don't base their Sabbath analysis on arguments appealing to moral law, and because they both emphasize the importance of inaugurated eschatology for New Testament interpretation. The next section will begin to put their typological methods to use by explaining why Sabbath rest should be viewed as a type.

Textual warrant. First, Sabbath is a type because it has textual warrant. This may be seen in the Old Testament as well as the New.⁴³ This is certainly clear throughout the canon, particularly as the prototypical rest of God is related explicitly to the Fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11; related to God's redemptive work, Deut 5:15) and to the rest of believers (Heb 4:4–10). Indeed, the entirety of chapter 3 of this dissertation stands as a defense of the textual warrant for Sabbath rest. As is

⁴²Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 775. See also Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," 44–47.

⁴³Because types are predictive/prophetic in nature, there will necessarily be some indication confirming their typological nature prior to New Testament fulfillment: "Some indication of the existence and predictive quality of the various OT types should occur already in the OT *before* their NT antitypical fulfillment—otherwise there would be no predictive element. Thus some inherent textual indicators identifying OT types should be apparent already in the OT." Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," 16. See also Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question 'Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?'," 396, 401; Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern," 62–68; Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 197.

demonstrated in chapter 3, the Sabbath is linked to the text and to the original author's intention.

Correspondence to the antitype. Second, Sabbath rest is a type because of its correspondence to its antitype. As the remainder of the dissertation will help explain this correspondence, a few examples will suffice. First, the Sabbath is a day connected with social justice/mercy (e.g., Exod 20:10–11 specifically addresses the treatment of animals, servants, sojourners, etc.) just like the final Sabbath rest will demonstrate God's justice and mercy (Rev 20–21). Second, Sabbath is concerned with doing God's will (Isa 56:2; 58:13), a day whose observance will result in the bestowal of an everlasting name (Isa 56:5), and is a day associated with God's place of rest (Ps 95; Heb 3:11–4:5). Each these aspects (doing God's will, bestowal of an eternal name, and place of rest) are associated with Christ in the new covenant (John 5:17, 36; Ps 72:17; Heb 4:9–11). Third, the Sabbath day is a day of reflecting upon both God's creation (Exod 20:11; Ps 95:4) and God's redemption (both past, Deut 5:15; and future, Ps 92:9). Thus, Sabbath rest is a type that corresponds to its antitype—final, eternal rest with God.⁴⁴

Escalation across the canon. Third, Sabbath rest has clear escalation across the canon.⁴⁵ God rests after creation. Adam sins and is expelled from the garden where he was placed. Later, Noah (whose name is derived from *nuach*, which means “to rest, repose, or be tranquil”),⁴⁶ the second Adam, passes through God's judgment

⁴⁴The already/not yet nature of new covenant rest will be discussed in the section below on inaugurated eschatology.

⁴⁵Davidson lists seven different aspects to sabbath rest that are revealed across the Torah, each bringing deeper meaning (i.e., escalation) to sabbath observance. These seven aspects are as follows: physical (work-free) rest, mental (intellectual) rest, emotional (restorative) rest, creative (celebrative, social) rest, spiritual (gospel) rest, blessed (empowering) rest, and holy (intimate) rest. Some of these ideas are adapted in this section. See Davidson, “Sabbath, Spirituality, and Mission.”

⁴⁶Davidson, “Sabbath, Spirituality, and Mission,” 6; Francis Brown et al., *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), s.v. “נוח.”

and the whole creation is again at peace, as symbolized by God resting his bow in the sky. However, the narrative shows that the problem is within Noah, and that he brings unrest through his own sinful heart (e.g., Gen 9:20–21).

Later, God comes to Abram and makes several promises: offspring (Gen 12:2; 15:4–5), land (Gen 12:7; 15:7, 18–19; 17:8), and peace/rest (Gen 15:12–15; 22:17). This eventually leads to the Israelites being slaves to the Egyptians, the setting of the great exodus. Out of that intense lack of rest, God brings the Israelites and gives them a weekly day of rest. God then gives the day of rest a second significance (i.e., escalation): the day points back to creation (Exod 20:8–11) and back to redemption (Deut 5:12–14). This rest is also intimately tied to the promised land (e.g., Josh 1:13; cf. Deut 28:65).⁴⁷

However, the rest of the promised land is short lived because of Israel's sin. Later, God promises a Davidic heir to the throne that will usher in a place of eternal rest (2 Sam 7:10–16; cf. Jer 17:24–27). The Psalms discuss in various places the rest/reign of this Davidic king. Psalm 72 describes God's king as "having dominion from sea to sea . . . to the ends of the earth" (72:8). All the kings and nations shall fall down and serve him (72:11). He will rule his realm with righteousness (72:2) as the royal son of God (72:1). His enemies will be vanquished ("lick the dust," 72:9) giving him rest from all sides. Finally, Psalm 110 demonstrates even more kingly rest themes.⁴⁸ The royal son is graciously asked to sit at the right hand of the Lord (110:1), which denotes a place of honor and rule.⁴⁹ He will rule (110:2), shatter kings (110:5), execute judgment among the nations, and shatter chiefs over the whole earth (110:6).

⁴⁷Rest and the promised land are discussed below in chap. 3.

⁴⁸The king-priest language also dominates this psalm. However, because the focus of this dissertation is on kingly language, the priestly imagery will not be discussed.

⁴⁹Leland Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), s.vv. "Right hand" and "Seat."

The scope of this king's rule is as large as creation; and the enemies of the king will be made a "footstool" in order that the king might possess eternal rest (110:1). This divine son will rule the people of God, and the whole world, with righteousness and justice, and he will have rest after his enemies have been subdued. This Davidic king is eventually shown to be the true son of God, Jesus.⁵⁰ Demonstrating his satisfaction with the sacrifice made by the Son, the Father resurrects the Son and seats him at his right hand (Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1).⁵¹ The Son, as the obedient messiah, has been given the place of honor at the side of his Father.⁵² Echoing God's placement ("resting") of Adam to rule in the garden, the Father places the Last Adam at his right hand to rule over the new creation.

Additionally, Christ taking his seat and resting at the Father's right hand echoes the Father's rest at the completion of his work (Gen 2:2). Just as the Father's rest bespoke of enthronement and consummation, so too does the Son's rest. Jesus's seat next to the Father shows that his work as messiah is completed (rest) and that he shares with the Father authority over all of creation (kingship).⁵³ Regarding the language of being seated at the Father's right hand, Calvin comments, "Christ was invested with lordship over heaven and earth, and solemnly entered into possession

⁵⁰See the below discussion of Matt 11:25–30 where Jesus claims to be the one who provides rest.

⁵¹For an analysis of the kingly language in Col 3 and its relationship to both Christ's resurrection and Ps 110, see Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 285–86.

⁵²For more on the right hand being a place or seat of honor, see Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. "right hand." Jesus Himself proclaims that he will be seen seated "on his glorious throne" (Matt 19:28), and as seated at the "right hand of Power" (Matt 26:64; cf. Luke 22:69; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 8:1; 12:2).

⁵³Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 285n70, 286, 317, 319, 464, 464n85; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 585. This is the fulfillment of numerous Old Testament prophecies as well. See, for example, Pss 68:19; 89:3–5; 110:1, 4.

of the government committed to him.”⁵⁴ The Son has been given the place of honor by the Father, and is resting at his side as the co-ruler of creation.⁵⁵

In sum, God’s creation-week rest is the initial type. That type is given explicit redemptive significance in the old covenant. Promised rest is given also an eschatological dimension that finds its *telos* in Christ’s person and work. This brief survey of the biblical theme of rest demonstrates that the theme of Sabbath escalates across the canon, and thus may be considered a biblical type.

Interpretation guided by the covenants. Fourth, the interpretation of Sabbath, as a type, must be guided by the biblical covenants. The previous elaboration of the escalation in Sabbath imagery across the canon shows that the crucial turning points in Sabbath typology are linked particularly to the various covenants across the canon. Each covenant reveals new nuances and implications to the previous patterns. It is only by doing justice to the particular covenantal administration that one may properly interpret Sabbath in each dispensation.⁵⁶

Thus, the Sabbath rest has textual warrant, correspondence to its antitype, escalates across the canon, and ought to be interpreted with respect to the covenantal structure of scripture. Sabbath rest, therefore, ought be seen as a type.

Fulfillment. The relationship between the type (Sabbath) and its antitype (eschatological rest) is the main point of debate between evangelical sabbatarians

⁵⁴John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 ed., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 2.16.15. For a list of six aspects of the kingly office of Christ, see Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 624.

⁵⁵Concerning the co-reigning of the Father and Son, Calvin writes that “the Father has given all power to the Son that he may by the Son’s hand govern, nourish, and sustain us, keep us in his care, and help us. . . . And surely, to say that he sits at the right hand of the father is equivalent to calling him the Father’s deputy, who has in his possession the whole power of God’s dominion.” Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.5.

⁵⁶Because the entire next chapter, indeed this entire dissertation, attempts to interpret the Sabbath type in light of the covenantal structure of Scripture, only brief mention is given here.

and non-sabbatarians. What does the fulfillment of the Sabbath type do to the weekly pattern? Indeed, the very definition of “fulfill” is hotly debated.⁵⁷ However, the fulfillment of Sabbath typology in the New Testament indicates that Sabbath rest is salvifically inaugurated by Christ’s first advent, spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern between Christ’s advents, and awaiting literal fulfillment at Christ’s second advent.⁵⁸ Each of these will be explained in turn.

First, the New Testament indicates that the Sabbath type is salvifically inaugurated by Christ’s first advent. Davidson explains that Christ’s first advent “brought a basic fulfillment of the OT eschatological expectations of the Age to Come . . . centering in the earthly life and work of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁹ Specifically,

Christ’s work of redemption is linked not only to the Exodus but to Creation. His work as a redeemer was really an act of re-creation, of restoring in man the image of God given at Creation but lost through sin. In a special way the Sabbath ties together Christ’s redemptive and creative activities. At the end of the six days of Creation, the Creator (Christ, John 1:1–3) finished all His work and began His Sabbath rest (Gen 2:2). Likewise, at the end of His earthly redemptive mission the Re-Creator declared on the cross, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), and entered in to Sabbath rest. The Sabbath of the Garden of Eden and the Sabbath of the Garden near Golgotha stand as twin monuments to the love and work of Christ.⁶⁰

Christ is the awaited messiah who was faithful and able to enter God’s rest unlike the Israelites (Ps 95:11), the messiah whose reign is typified by eschatological

⁵⁷See, for example, the various ways that πληρώω (“to fulfill”) is interpreted: Philip Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010), 357–70; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 1:487; Frederick W. Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), s.v. “πληρώω”; Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1995), 204–7, 363–64; Ulrich Luz et al., *Matthew: 1–7*, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 178.

⁵⁸This section assumes particular interpretations of multiple New Testament texts. The exegesis of these texts is found in chap. 3. Here I am a typological overview showing Beale’s and Davidson’s methodologies applied to the Sabbath type.

⁵⁹Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 40.

⁶⁰Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 58–59. Davidson continues this theme of Christ literally fulfilling the Sabbath by his obedience. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 59–63.

rest and peace through judgment (Isa 11:1–10), the messiah who brings salvific rest for his people (e.g., Matt 11:28). These things were all literally fulfilled (i.e., actually secured) by Christ’s first coming.

Second, the New Testament indicates that during the church age the Sabbath type is spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern. Using Davidson’s second category, ecclesiological fulfillment, readers can see that the New Testament spiritually appropriates Christ’s rest until his second coming. That is, believers no longer strive for their salvation; rather, Christians trust that Christ is the one who has earned salvific rest (e.g., Matt 11:28). Christ has finished his work and is now seated at the right hand of the father (Heb 1:3). Christians now partake of spiritual rest by their union with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Davidson agrees:

After Christ’s ascension and heavenly inauguration at the right hand of the Father, Christ has continued to rule over all things. But it is a hidden rule as far as man is concerned, for the kingdom is essentially a heavenly one, and manifest itself on earth in a spiritual way, i.e., effected by the Holy Spirit. Christ’s presence as king is in heaven, and His subjects throughout the world relate to him only spiritually, by faith. Through His Spirit they receive only the spiritual first-fruits, the partial fulfillment of the ultimate gifts He has promised (Rom 8:23). Thus the nature of the typological fulfillment in the church is spiritual, universal and partial.⁶¹

So, Davidson argues, the fulfillment of types in the church are is spiritual, universal, and partial. Specifically, regarding the spirituality of Sabbath fulfillment, Davidson writes,

What is true of Jesus, the new Joshua, is also available to the church, members of His spiritual body. We can also come by faith to the heavenly Canaan (Heb 12:22–24), conduct spiritual warfare against our spiritual enemies (Eph 6:10–17), enjoy the spiritual rest of grace (Heb 4:9–11), and receive our spiritual inheritance (Acts 20:32; Eph 1:11, 14, 18).⁶²

⁶¹Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 43.

⁶²Richard Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 33. See chap. 3 for detailed analysis of Heb 3–4.

Elsewhere Davidson writes of this spiritual Sabbath rest:

The [author of Hebrews] exhorts his hearers—and us!—to experience the deep redemptive meaning of Sabbath rest. The rest that the . . . Sabbath symbolizes is none other than the “rest of Grace.” It is the spiritual cessation in which man “rests from his own work, just as God did from His (Heb 4:10).” God has completed His work of redemption in Christ, and we do not need to labor to earn that salvation. By faith we can simply reach out and accept the gift, and enter God’s rest.⁶³

Thus, Davidson argues from typology and biblical theology that the nature of Sabbath rest fulfillment in the church age is spiritual.

Christ has brought genuine spiritual rest for his people but has not negated the creation pattern of work and rest.⁶⁴ Beale, like Davidson, also argues from typology and biblical theology that spiritual appropriation does not negate the physical observance of creation ordinances, including Sabbath:

Christ has completely fulfilled for himself the eschatological rest of the last Adam pointed to in Gen 2:2–3, after having built his end-time temple by his resurrection (e.g., John 2:18–22). And, by doing so, Christ has inaugurated Sabbath rest now for all who trust in him, are identified with his resurrection, and thus are represented by him in his position of rest. The inaugurated spiritual rest that saints have obtained presently in identification with Christ’s resurrection rest is one that continues every day of the week and not merely on Sunday. They have not, however, obtained complete end-time rest in their bodily resurrected persons, since the continued expansion of Christ’s temple through them by means of the Spirit is not yet completed. There is, therefore, still a one-day special observance of Sunday for the church, the purpose of which is to look forward to the consummation of end-time rest in the new heaven and earth.⁶⁵

Or, more succinctly, Beale remarks about the ongoing nature of the physical observance of Sabbath: “If the eschatological reality of final Sabbath rest has not consummately come, then it is unlikely that the typological sign pointing to that ultimate rest has ceased. That is, if the weekly Sabbath included the function of

⁶³Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 62–63.

⁶⁴Indeed, Davidson has an entire book devoted to promoting the ongoing observance of the weekly Sabbath pattern. See Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*.

⁶⁵Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 798.

pointing forward to consummate rest, and that rest has not yet come, then that weekly Sabbath should continue.”⁶⁶ Thus, Beale agrees that Christians find genuine spiritual rest in Christ which retaining the physical observance of the weekly pattern.

This pattern (i.e., spiritually appropriated while retaining the physical observance) aligns with the fulfillment of another creation ordinance: marriage. Christ, the glorious groom, has purchased the redemption of his bride; and yet, the physical creation pattern of marriage extends until the eschaton.⁶⁷ Thus, the New Testament indicates that Sabbath rest is spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern until the second coming of Christ.

Third, the New Testament indicates that the final, literal fulfillment of Sabbath will not happen until Christ’s second coming. Davidson comments regarding the future literal fulfillment of Sabbath:

And the Joshua typology will one day reach its consummation in connection with the Second Advent and beyond. We will find literal entry into the Promised Land, heaven. . . . The final conquest of the enemies of God in the Promised Land will at last happen (Rev 20:7–10; cf. Zech 14; Ezek 38; 39), and we will enter final eternal rest in the earthly Canaan (Rev 21; 22), where we can enjoy eternally our ultimate inheritance (Matt 25:34; Col 3:24; Rev 21:7).⁶⁸

Elsewhere he also writes about this literal fulfillment,

As the new Joshua, Jesus wants to lead His redeemed people *literally* into the heavenly promised Land. The ultimate fulfillment of what the Sabbath epitomizes will come when “the dwelling place of God is with men, and he will live with them. . . (Rev 21:3). Eden will be restored! God will remove the curses of sin—death and mourning and crying and pain; thorns and thistles and work by the sweat of man’s brow; hostility between man and beast; physical deformities and mental deficiencies. Best of all, the barrier to face-to-face fellowship with God will vanish forever.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 789.

⁶⁷See the above discussion of marriage as a type and creation ordinance.

⁶⁸Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua*, 33–34. See also Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua*, 96–98, 114, 124, 127.

⁶⁹Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 111.

Sabbath will be literally fulfilled as we enjoy the actual, bodily presence of our savior in a literal place of rest. The physical fulfillment of the Sabbath type will be literally fulfilled in the eschaton.

Thus, the fulfillment of Sabbath typology in the New Testament indicates that Sabbath rest is salvifically inaugurated by Christ's first advent, spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern between Christ's advents, and awaiting literal fulfillment at Christ's second advent.

Related to the Sabbath typology discussion, this dissertation attempts to do justice to the covenantal interpretation of Sabbath rest while also properly applying principles from the realm of inaugurated eschatology. It is only by uniting covenantal interpretation *and* inaugurated eschatological principles that a proper understanding of Sabbath rest may avoid both the traditionally rigorous sabbatarian interpretations that (either implicitly or explicitly) equate new covenant Sabbath observance with old covenant Sabbath observance and the often non-sabbatarian interpretations that argue that God's rest in creation had prescriptive value under the old covenant, but has no prescriptive value under the new covenant. As can be seen, the principles of inaugurated eschatology play an important role in properly interpreting Sabbath rest and are a major source of disagreement in the Sabbath debate. Thus, we will now give our attention to inaugurated eschatology.

Inaugurated Eschatology and Sabbath Rest

This section explains how maintaining a balanced understanding of inaugurated eschatology allows for a biblically faithful and healthy observance of the creational pattern of work and rest while also avoiding an over or under-realized eschatology related to Sabbath rest. To put it another way, a proper understanding of the already and not yet aspects of God's kingdom in this age is necessary for a proper understanding of Sabbath rest. This section begins with a brief introduction

to the doctrine of inaugurated eschatology, then moves to an analysis of the relationship between creation ordinances and inaugurated eschatology, followed by a look at two other ordinances (marriage and work) and their need for a balanced understanding of inaugurated eschatology. Finally, this section will conclude with an examination of Sabbath rest in light of a proper understanding of God's inaugurated kingdom and discussion of the problems that arise when an over or under-developed eschatology is applied to Sabbath.

Creation Ordinances and Inaugurated Eschatology

In short, inaugurated eschatology means that the end times (“eschaton”) has begun, though it is not yet fully here, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.⁷⁰ To put it another way, the kingdom of God is both present and future.⁷¹ The majority of scholars embrace inaugurated eschatology.⁷² Additionally, an interpreter's eschatology may be over-realized (i.e., an over emphasis on the not-yet aspects of the kingdom) or under-realized (i.e., under emphasizing the already

⁷⁰For surveys of the doctrine of inaugurated eschatology and its history, see George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 3–44; Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: In 20th Century Theology* (Dallas: Word, 1997); Russell Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 25–80; Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: P & R, 1962); Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 19–21, 60, 694. Inaugurated eschatology plays a large role in Beale's entire biblical-theological argument proposed in his book: “Jesus's life, trials, death for sinners, and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God's glory.” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 694.

⁷¹For introductions to the already and not-yet nature of the kingdom of God, see Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology*, The Master Reference Collection (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), s.v. “Kingdom of God”; Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), s.v. “Kingdom of God/Heaven”; Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s.vv. “Eschatology” and “Kingdom of God/Heaven.”

⁷²Ladd describes it as an “emerging consensus” in 1974, a consensus that has only grown since. He lists over thirty examples of scholarly works that agree with this view. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, 38n161.

aspects of the kingdom).

Regarding the relationship between creation ordinances and inaugurated eschatology, the key area dividing sabbatarians and nonsabbatarians surrounds fulfillment. Specifically, how has Christ's coming fulfilled the Old Testament Sabbath pattern? In what way has eschatological Sabbath been inaugurated? What aspect(s) of Sabbath remain to be consummated in the eschaton? These questions will be addressed below. However, before addressing the creation ordinance of Sabbath rest, it will be helpful to examine how inaugurated eschatology relates to other creation ordinances: marriage and work. As is shown below in an examination of marriage, work, and Sabbath rest, each of the creation ordinances is given greater (even eschatological) meaning in the New Testament. Or, perhaps it could be better said that the eschatological meaning embedded in the original pattern is more fully revealed in the New Testament.

Marriage. The creation ordinance of marriage continues until the return of Christ.⁷³ That is, the normal pattern of the giving of one man and one woman in monogamous covenantal relationship continues until the final return of our Lord. Paul in multiple places affirms the goodness and on-going usefulness of the creation pattern.⁷⁴ The author of Hebrews likewise teaches: "Let marriage be held in honor by all" (Heb 13:4). However, to this creation pattern the New Testament reveals an eschatologically fuller meaning. Paul explains in Ephesians 5:32 that the union between a wife and a husband is a "profound mystery" that "refers" to Christ and the church. The New Testament reveals that the creation ordinance has an eschatological reference.

⁷³See also the above discussion of marriage as a type.

⁷⁴E.g., 1 Cor 7:9; 1 Tim 5:14. Cf. Prov 12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31.

The New Testament gives no hint of the revocation or the removal of the creation ordinance of marriage. The inaugurated aspect of the kingdom brings with it an eschatological understanding to the creation pattern, but it in no way revokes the validity of the ordinance.

Neglecting this creation pattern creates major theological problems. In fact, examples are seen in church history of the problems that arise with an over-realized eschatology as it relates to the creation ordinance of marriage. Paul warns against the false teachers and their demonic doctrine that forbids marriage (1 Tim 4:3), and he hints at the temptation to lust and adultery when confronting abstinence in marriage (1 Cor 7:1–9). As the creation ordinance of marriage was neglected, several church fathers taught that marriage should be avoided—or even prohibited, in the case of the clergy—and promoted celibacy.⁷⁵ This twisting of the New Testament teaching harmfully minimized the creation pattern by over-emphasizing the future reality of marriage (i.e., that humans will not be married in the eschaton, Matt 22:30). Thus, this one example explains how a healthy understanding of creation ordinances is needed to guard against an unbalanced view of eschatology.

Work. Another creation ordinance illustrates the problems that can arise

⁷⁵For example, Tertullian prioritizes celibacy over matrimony in chap. 3 of “To His Wife,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second.*, vol. 4, ANF, trans. S. Thelwall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1885), 40; Bill Leonard also lists other examples of church fathers that promote celibacy and chastity, even within marriage (e.g., Jerome, Origen, Clement). Bill Leonard, “Celibacy as a Christian Lifestyle in the History of the Church,” *Review & Expositor* 74, no. 1 (1977): 22–25; Peter Harkx, *The Fathers on Celibacy* (DePere, WI: St. Norbert Abbey Press, 1968), 4–53; J. G. Steenken, “Celibacy in the Early Church: By Force of Circumstances,” *Chicago Studies* 42, no. 2 (2003): 188–94; Peter Robert Lamont Brown, “The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 427–43; William A. Heth, “Unmarried ‘for the Sake of the Kingdom’ (Matthew 19:12) in the Early Church,” *Grace Theological Journal Spring 1987* (April 1, 1987): 55–88; Elizabeth Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1983), chaps. 1, 3; David Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); David Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chaps. 3, 7.

when creation patterns are minimized and eschatological realities are prematurely emphasized. Since the beginning of creation God has ordained that mankind is to work (Gen 2:15).⁷⁶ Industry and diligence are praised throughout the Bible (e.g., Prov 10:4; 21:5). Likewise, Paul honors the continued goodness of work both by example and by teaching, going so far as to say that if someone is unwilling to work that he or she should not eat (1 Thess 4:11–12; 2 Thess 3:6–10).

While the New Testament continues the Bible’s “fundamentally positive view of work, including manual labor,” later revelation adds a significant eschatological component.⁷⁷ Man is not merely working in order to continue to exist (i.e., put food on the table). Rather, man is invited to join Christ in his great work, the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20).⁷⁸ New covenant believers are called to join God in his plan to redeem souls for his glory.

Just as with the other creation ordinances, an over-realized eschatology of work creates problems.⁷⁹ Some prioritize more “spiritual” work over and against the more mundane affairs of Christians who are not employed in vocational ministry.⁸⁰

⁷⁶The basic definition of work used in this dissertation will be “all that we are obliged to do to meet our physical and social needs.” Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 16. He likewise says that “in practical human terms, the primary purpose of work is to provide for human needs, both our own and those of others” (Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 229). According to Ryken, work “serves three main purposes in the world. It exists to provide for human needs, to fulfill our humanity, and to glorify God. These goals, in turn, are standards by which we can weigh the worthiness of work.” Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 231–32.

⁷⁷Alexander, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. “rest.”

⁷⁸For more on work and the Great Commission, see *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010); Kevin DeYoung, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); R. C. Sproul, *What Is the Great Commission?* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2015); Jonathan Leeman and Mark Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission* (Nashville: B&H, 2016).

⁷⁹For a balanced survey of the biblical and historically protestant views of work, see Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 159–282.

⁸⁰Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 214. This unbiblical bifurcation between sacred and secular vocations was refuted by the reformers, particularly Martin Luther, and the Puritans. Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 216–18.

A proper understanding of the creation ordinance of work, combined with the Great Commission, rebuffs this unhealthy bifurcation between “spiritual” and “worldly” work. A strong view of God’s original plan for work appreciates “worldly” (i.e., non-vocational ministry) work performed in a way that honors God. In fact, rather than “worldly” work being less than spiritual, all work is a way to honor God *and* a platform upon which to carry out the Great Commission. A clear understanding of the creation ordinance of work chastens an over-realized eschatology that views “worldly” work as of less value than the “spiritual” work of the ministry.

Sabbath rest. Just like the creation ordinances of marriage and work described above, the creation ordinance of a weekly day of rest remains intact until Jesus’s second coming. God gives mankind the example of one day of rest every week in Genesis 2. This pattern was adopted and expanded in the Mosaic covenant. In the new covenant we see a continued pattern of a set day of rest and worship.⁸¹ Christ’s first coming, the inauguration of the kingdom, has not abrogated the weekly rhythm of work and rest that was established in the beginning.

While the creation pattern of rest has not been revoked, the coming of Jesus did bring with it fuller revelation regarding the significance of the day. The New Testament emphasized that weekly Sabbath rest points toward both salvific rest (i.e., justification, rest from our works; Matt 11:28) and a perfect and ultimate rest with God in the final promised land, the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Heb 4:1–11).

Just like described above, problems arise when the creation pattern is minimized. With the Sabbath, over-realized eschatology manifests itself in a tendency to interpret New Testament references to an ongoing Sabbath in terms of

⁸¹See chap. 3.

“resting” from sin. That is, believers rest from their works by not sinning, but are not bound to a pattern of physical resting.⁸² This over-spiritualized eschatology overlooks the goodness of the created pattern, neglects the anthropological continuity we have with Adam, and tries to bring the blessings of the future age into the present.⁸³

However, if the danger described above results from an over-realized eschatology, an opposite and equally damaging error can result from an under-realized eschatology. Positions positing essential continuity between Old Testament and New Testament Sabbath observance may be accused a significant weakness: that the coming of Jesus had no real impact upon Sabbath other than changing the day. Indeed, one characteristic of Sabbath treatises suffering from an under-realized eschatology is that they almost exclusively examine the Old Testament to explain how new covenant Christians should observe the Sabbath. This position can easily fall prey to the rigorous tendencies that were found among the Pharisees with whom Jesus dealt (e.g., Matt 12:7).

A healthy alternative to these two errors (over- and under-realized eschatologies) is a view of Sabbath that affirms both the goodness of the created pattern and the radical effects of Jesus’s first coming while also appreciating the yet unfulfilled aspects of Jesus’s promised rest. Beale explains how proper biblical-theological analysis shows balanced emphasis between the twin dangers of over- and under-realized eschatologies:

⁸²For example, “The Sabbath observance . . . in which the New Testament people of God are to participate is to enter God’s rest by faith and thereby cease from their own works . . . this cessation from dead works is not the mere inactivity but an ongoing process of dying to self and mortification of sinful deeds.” Andrew T. Lincoln, “From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective,” in *From Sabbath To Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 396.

⁸³See the following analysis of 1 Cor 15.

When the Lord's Day is . . . seen as the continuation of the Sabbath, the redemptive-historical nature of this commemoration of the "true Sabbath rest" is expressed even more clearly and with appreciation of its roots all the way back in Gen 2:2–3. But there is a transformation of the Sabbath as it continues into the new age. First, the seventh-day commemoration in Gen 2:3 and Israel's Sabbath ordinance is transferred to the first day of the week because of Christ's resurrection. Second, Israel's way of observing the Sabbath, with all its detailed requirements, falls away, and there is a return to the creational mandate. The observance of this mandate is a day of commemoration of God's creative rest, a celebration that Christ has entered that rest, that believers have begun to enter such rest, and a pointing forward to believers completely entering that rest. In addition, Christ's coming fulfills Israel's unique Sabbath commandment, since he is Israel's Messiah, accomplishing Israel's end-time exodus and representing true Israel and the end-time temple. Christ fulfills all of Israel's types, including that to which Israel's Sabbath pointed.⁸⁴

Thus, Beale's explanation stands as an example of how a balanced view of inaugurated eschatology allows for genuine continuity of Sabbath rest observance since creation (continuity), as well as new spiritual realities to be experienced since the coming of Christ (discontinuity), thereby avoiding the pitfalls of either over- or under-realized eschatology.

Conclusion

This brief survey showed the general contours of the creation ordinance discussion, even as the language has changed over the years. The ongoing usefulness of the category is seen primarily in the realm of ethics; however, for the category to retain the strength of moral imperatives, theologians must continue to keep their ethics closely tied to thorough biblical-theological analysis.

However, merely affirming the category of creation ordinance is not sufficient. As was argued above, Sabbath rest is a type whose fulfillment Christ has salvifically inaugurated, that the church spiritually appropriates, whose physical pattern is preserved between Christ's advents, and awaits literal fulfillment at Christ's second advent.

⁸⁴Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 800–801.

Additionally, biblical interpreters must have a balanced view of inaugurated eschatology and typology if they are to faithfully trace the theme of Sabbath throughout the canon. It is to tracing that theme which we now turn our attention.

CHAPTER 3
SABBATH REST IN THE BIBLE

Introduction

This chapter contains the biblical analysis of the passages related to Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance. Examining Genesis 2 and Hebrews 3-4 in detail, this chapter also includes answers to the typical objections made against sabbatarian interpretations as well as brief notes on the typological significance of weekly Sabbath rest.

Genesis 2

Exegesis

Interpreting weekly rest as a creation ordinance is consistent with the description of God's seventh day activities (Gen 2:1-3). Specifically, the text's grammatical and syntactical patterns point toward weekly rest as being a pattern for ongoing observance. The creation account includes a standard blessing pattern that is decreative and orders creation. God's rest generally follows that pattern, but with a slight shift in grammar. God being the main actor, rather than God speaking to other agents (e.g., Adam and Eve), explains the shift in the grammar surrounding his rest. Thus, the divine rest follows a standard grammatical pattern that is seen among other creation ordinances where God's commands order some aspect of creation (e.g., procreation, "be fruitful and multiply"), thereby confirming the legitimacy of interpreting the weekly work and rest pattern as a creation ordinance.

Throughout the creation account *Elohim* is the active subject: “From beginning to end the emphasis in the passage is on God’s sovereign majesty. He is the subject, his actions, although expressed simply and briefly, are lofty and inspiring.”¹ Moses highlights God as the active agent by using a number of recurring verbs. *Elohim* creates (*bārā’*, used five times); speaks (*‘āmar*, used eleven times); sees (*rā’ā(h)*, used seven times); separates (*bādal*, used five times); calls (*kārāh’*, used five times); makes (*‘āsah*, used ten times); blesses (*bārak*, used three times); and rests (*shābāt*, used twice).²

With three exceptions, the *qal* preterite + *qal* vav-consecutive (+ result) pattern permeates the creation account.³ Table 1 provides an overview of these verbal forms.

Table 1. Verbal forms in Genesis 1

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Qal Preterite</i>	<i>Qal Vav-Consecutive Imperfect</i>	<i>(Qal Preterite)</i>
1:3	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	יְהִי let it be	וַיְהִי and it was
1:6	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	יְהִי let it be	וַיְהִי and it was (v. 7)
1:9	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	יִקְוּ let it be gathered	וַיְהִי and it was

¹Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1988), 101.

²Michael G. Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture” (MA thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2004), 100. Much of this grammatical analysis is built upon Muñoz’s work.

³Adapted from Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 101.

Table 1. continued

1:11	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	תִּדְשָׂא let it sprout	וַיְהִי and it was
1:14	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	יְהִי let it be	וַיְהִי and it was (v. 15)
1:20	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	יִשְׂרְצוּ let them swarm	
1:24	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	תּוֹצֵא let it bring forth	וַיְהִי and it was
1:26	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said	נַעֲשֵׂה let us make	

The qal preterite at the end of all but two of the passages (vv. 20 and 26) is important “because it instructs the reader how to understand the [imperatives] of the passages. These imperatives do not function as wishes, requests, or acts of permission; but are decretive in nature—they order creation.”⁴ These divine imperatives tell how things should be ordered and should behave in God’s creation: the waters should swarm with swimming creatures, the birds should fly, and God should create his image bearers.

God’s blessing is not a mere well wishing, but an implicit promise that the capacity for successful resting will be given. Of particular note is the Hebrew verb “to bless” (*bārāk*) in both 1:22 and 1:28, noting 1:3 for comparison.⁵ Table 2 provides an overview of these verbal forms.

⁴Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 101.

⁵Adapted from Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 102.

Table 2. Verbal form comparison in Genesis 1

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Qal Preterite</i>		<i>Vav-Consecutive</i>
1:3	וַיֹּאמֶר and he said		יְהִי let it be
<i>Verse</i>	<i>Piel Preterite</i>	<i>Use of</i>	<i>Vav-Consecutive Imperative</i>
1:22	וַיְבָרֵךְ and he blessed	לֵאמֹר Qal Preterite— saying	פְּרוּ be fruitful וְרַבוּ and be numerous וּמְלֵאוּ and fill
1:28	וַיְבָרֵךְ and he blessed	וַיֹּאמֶר Qal Preterite— and he said	פְּרוּ be fruitful וְרַבוּ and be numerous וּמְלֵאוּ and fill

Like before, the imperatives function to order creation. The change from piel to qal preterite “has to do with the umbrella of ‘blessing’, not function. It relates to the fact that in these two passages *Elohim* is ordering animate, conscious beings, whereas previously none existed.”⁶

Biblical commentators note that the blessings found in the creation account communicate ability or fertility.⁷ Wenham explains, “Here [vs. 22] the

⁶Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 102.

⁷Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 102; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 36–38; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 172; William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology*, rev. ed. (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2013), 35; James McKeown, *Genesis, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 28–29; Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary*

words of command ‘be fruitful and multiply’ carry with them the divine promise that they can be carried out.”⁸ Later commenting on 1:28, Wenham underscores: “This command, like others in Scripture, carries with it an implicit promise that God will enable man to fulfill it.”⁹ God’s blessing in this case is not a mere well wishing, but an implicit promise that the capacity for successful resting will be given.¹⁰

The final blessing given in the passage, and the one of most interest to this study, is in Genesis 2:3: *Elohim* blesses the seventh day. The expected pattern is missing, “but the overall structure remains the same: *Elohim*’s blessing + *Elohim*, the active agent, bringing about the blessing.”¹¹ Note the pattern in Table 3.¹²

Table 3. Verbal forms in Genesis 2

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Piel Preterite</i>	<i>The Agency and Action of Elohim</i>
2:3	וַיְבָרֵךְ and he blessed	וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ and he set it apart

Some interpreters might agree that the previous piel/qal preterite pattern indicates

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47; K. A. Mathews, *Genesis*, New American Commentary 1 (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1996), 157–58, 179.

⁸Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 24.

⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 36; cf. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., “Bārak,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

¹⁰Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 35. Dumbrell notes that “Blessing refers to what will be the ongoing significance of the seventh day in the shaping of human development, allowing that the seventh-day period acquires the special status as a day that belongs to God alone. Both terms [i.e., to “bless” and “sanctify” the day] in their use *presuppose the continuing existence of the day.*” Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 35 (emphasis added).

¹¹Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 104.

¹²Adapted from Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 104.

that the divine words ordering creation, yet still deny that the same is the case for the seventh day because of the missing qal verbs. However, the change from the peil/qal pattern is instructive, as God is now the one who is doing the action. He does not command another object or being to do something; rather, he is the one who acts (or, more specifically, ceases from action). The Piel preterite form remains (“he blessed”) and the consequent action follows (“and he sanctified”).

Additionally, the shift from the piel/qal pattern to only a piel preterite form can further be explained by an emphasis on the uniqueness of the day: it is the day of completion. Wenham notes, “In this way form and content emphasize the distinctiveness of the seventh day.”¹³ The variation gives emphasis to the idea of completion. Westermann notes, “The stress on the completion of the work in 2:1–3 is directed toward humans, and this is confirmed by the echoes of the language of the Sabbath command [i.e., the Sabbath command confirms the completion]. The conclusion of creation creates a rhythm which will affect the whole of creation.”¹⁴ The echoes of the Sabbath command will be addressed further below. For now it is sufficient to see the emphasis on the uniqueness of the day and the completion of God’s work.

Another reason that explains the grammar is that the seventh day is without a complement, unlike the previous six days. Throughout the previous six days God created various realms and corresponding inhabitants for those realms. Day one saw the creation of light and darkness; correspondingly, day four saw the creation of luminaries. Likewise, day two saw the creation of sky and waters; day five, the fish and fowl. Finally, day three saw the creation of land, seas, and

¹³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 7.

¹⁴Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 170.

vegetation; day six, beasts and mankind.¹⁵ Unlike the previous days, the seventh day is without a complement. Mentioned above, the literary transition and lack of complement further emphasize the uniqueness of the day. The lack of a complement plus the emphasis on completion further explains the grammatical transition from the piel/qal pattern used previously.

This section demonstrated that interpreting weekly rest as a creation ordinance is consistent with the exegesis of God's seventh day activities (Gen 2:1–3). Specifically, the grammatical and literary patterns point toward weekly rest as being a pattern for ongoing observance. The creation account includes a standard blessing pattern that is decretive and orders creation. God's rest generally follows that pattern, and God being the main actor, rather than him speaking to other agents (e.g., Adam and Eve) explains the slight shift in grammar surrounding the divine rest. Thus, the divine rest follows a standard grammatical pattern observed with other creation ordinances, thereby confirming the legitimacy of interpreting the weekly work and rest pattern as a creation ordinance.

Biblical-Theological Significance of God's Rest

Others have ably argued that God's creative actions can be interpreted as the construction of his cosmic temple.¹⁶ This section uses temple construction and

¹⁵For a helpful chart of these days, see Mathews, *Genesis*, 116.

¹⁶See G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical-Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), esp. 29–80; Richard Davidson, "Earth's First Sanctuary: Genesis 1–3 and Parallel Creation Accounts," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53, no. 1 (2015): 65–90; Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), esp. 242, where he explains the cosmic temple construction imagery as seen in extra-biblical ANE literature; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), esp. 33–41; Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404; Moshe Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord: The Problem of the 'Sitz Im Leben' of Genesis 1:1–2:3," in *Melanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles* (Kevelaer, Germany: Butzon and Bercker,

kingly imagery to explain how God's seventh day Sabbath is laying the foundation for many biblical-theological themes.¹⁷ Specifically, God's Sabbath rest is seen (1) at his divine consummation of his creative work, (2) his enthronement in his cosmic temple, and (3) his consecration of his creation.¹⁸ These royal themes will play important roles in subsequent biblical passages (examined below), particularly in Christological and eschatological texts.

First, God's Sabbath rest is seen as the divine consummation of his creative work. Surprisingly however, the language focuses on the cessation of God's activity done on the previous six days (i.e., work), not on the resting (i.e., relaxation) of God.¹⁹ The divine rest is not inactivity; rather, God's actions in the creation week produce a rhythm of work and rest.²⁰ Dumbrell notes:

The completion of creation means that a stable order had been produced and the Sabbath day will recognize this. It will recognize also that the created order has been violated by human rebellion and that the order celebrated is somewhat provisional until the ushering in of the new creation. That will achieve the results: the ordered harmony in which humans and their world co-exist, which had been expected to flow from Genesis 1:1–2:4a. Since this note of divine purpose for creation precedes the human fall, it will clearly continue beyond it.²¹

1981), 501–12; John H. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 147–52; Peter Thacher Lanfer, *Remembering Eden: The Reception History of Genesis 3: 22–24* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 127–58. While Beale's thesis supports this dissertation, the thesis of this dissertation does not depend upon the acceptance of Beale's arguments.

¹⁷God's seventh-day rest is interpreted to be Sabbath rest based upon Heb 4:9–10 which speaks of God's rest as Sabbath. The Hebrews passage will be examined in greater detail below.

¹⁸In this section I lean heavily upon Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 33–41; Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 60–63. The categories of consummation, enthronement, and consecration are from Kline.

¹⁹Cf. Walton, *Genesis*, 146.

²⁰One author writes, arguing against the idea of God's rest being mere idleness and, therefore, an implicit endorsement of our mere idleness on the Sabbath day, "God's rest is not idleness, because He blesses all creation by His Sabbath." Aida Besançon Spencer, "Seven Principles for the Seventh Day," in *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 157.

²¹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 35–36.

Dumbrell's points are significant in several regards. First, he argues that this seventh-day rest is the context in which humankind should operate. That is, man is given a weekly template from which to operate: six days of work and one of rest. Second, Dumbrell argues, "the basis for the later weekly Sabbath is presented as unending" This is important because it gives a theological connection for the later instituted old covenant Sabbath.²² In other words, even if the patriarchs did not observe the weekly Sabbath, God provided a basis for it in the creation week. The institution of weekly Sabbath observance under Moses is not without precedent. Third, Dumbrell emphasizes the "distinctly special and unending" nature of the seventh day, thereby adding even more weight to the thesis at hand.²³

Kline also affirms this theme of God as the finisher of a divine construction work: "as a celebration of the finishing of the world-temple, the Sabbath proclaims the name of the Creator to be the Consummator."²⁴ Every weekly Sabbath is a testament of the successful conclusion of God's construction project. However, there was never any doubt that Elohim would not finish his work: "He who can speak an effective 'let there be' must inevitably arrive at his Sabbath and say, 'it is finished.' None could resist or deny or silence his fiat."²⁵ Nothing could impede Elohim's creative endeavor. Furthermore, the seventh day of rest mustn't be interpreted as "recovery from fatigue . . . It stands for consummation of a work accomplished and the joy and satisfaction attendant upon this."²⁶ Kline agrees: "The

²²Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 36.

²³As will be discussed further below, the grounding of the fourth commandment in God's *pre-fall* activity (or lack thereof) gives further evidence for the ongoing and prescriptive nature of this creation ordinance of rest. See also Glenn N. Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," *Reformed Theological Review* 42, no. 2 (May 1983): 34–35.

²⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 33.

²⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 33.

²⁶Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 140.

effortless fiat character of the work of the six days forestalls any misconception of the Creator as a wearied workman who must recoup his spent strength.”²⁷ God has finished the construction of his cosmic temple and is now able to rest, not because he needed to, but because he is satisfied with his work on the cosmic construction project.

Second, the seventh day rest emphasizes God’s enthronement in his cosmic temple.²⁸ Beale explains,

God’s rest both at the conclusion of creation in Genesis 1–2 and later in Israel’s temple indicates not merely inactivity but that he had demonstrated his sovereignty over the forces of chaos (e.g., the enemies of Israel) and now has assumed a position of kingly rest further revealing his sovereign power. . . . God’s *sitting* in the temple is an expression of his sovereign rest or reign.²⁹

Kline further explains the regal nature of God’s rest: “The royal nature of the rest follows from the royal nature of the work. God created the heaven and the earth to be his cosmic palace and accordingly his resting is an occupying of his palace, a royal session. The dawning of the Sabbath witnesses a new enthronement of Elohim.”³⁰ God has finished the construction of his cosmic temple and the seventh-day serves as his coronation as ruler over the entire universe. This theme of God’s royal enthronement will play a prominent role in the interpretation of later biblical

²⁷Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 34. Kline goes on to explain regarding God’s rest, “The highly anthropomorphic ‘was refreshed’ of Exod 31:17 certainly does not intend to suggest otherwise, nor does ‘he rested’ in Exod 20:11.” These passages will be discussed further below.

²⁸For an examination of the ancient Near East extra-biblical evidence triangulating rest/Sabbath, kingship/royalty, and completion/entrance, see Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath: A Comprehensive Exegetical Approach* (New York: P. Lang, 1988), 86–89.

²⁹Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 62–63 (emphasis original). Regarding Beale’s language of victory over “forces of chaos,” some have speculated that God is celebrating his victory over the forces of chaos or disorder. I find that position lacking. Kline seems more reasonable, “Since, in the case of the original creation, Sabbath enthronement was not preceded by conflict with rebel adversaries but came at the completion of a purely constructive process, there could be no question of an initiation of God’s world dominion by defeat of another god who previously possessed sovereignty.” Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 37.

³⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 34.

passages. For now it is sufficient to see that God has finished the construction of his cosmic temple and now sits enthroned, ruling over all his handiwork.³¹

A third and final theme is prominent in the seventh-day rest of God: consecration. The whole of God's creation is ultimately consecrated to him. It has already been mentioned above that each of the six creation-week days saw the creation of either a realm or a corresponding ruler or inhabitant of that realm. Each of these realm/ruler sets, the highest of which is mankind's rule of the earth, escalates as God approaches the seventh day. Then God bestows upon the seventh day gift that nothing else in creation had been given: holiness. VanGemeran comments, "The God who had *blessed* the first human beings *consecrated* the seventh day. The God who had observed that everything was "good," even "very good," called only the seventh day 'holy.' Creation itself is not marked by perfection or holiness; only the seventh day is so distinguished."³² God has consecrated, set apart, the seventh day in distinction from all the others.

Similarly, Kline notes, "all this pomp and majesty of the six days simply subserves the revelation of the ultimate and absolute dominion celebrated in the

³¹Kline explains that seeing the Sabbath day as divine enthronement does not mean that God was not sovereign before his installation: "To predicate an enthronement of God on the seventh day of creation history is not to deny that the creative activity of God is from the beginning an exercise of an ultimate and absolute sovereignty which he enjoys as an original and everlasting prerogative of his very godhood. It is simply saying that creation produced a new theater for the manifestation of God's eternal majesty. . . . God has assumed his rightful royal place in that new sphere [i.e., creation]." Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 37.

³²Willem VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 46 (emphasis original). He further comments regarding the consecration of the day, "[The author of Genesis] introduces the new concept of holiness, as God consecrated a day by declaring it holy (i.e., set apart)—because he rested on it. The sanctity of the day lies in God's declaration and opens up eschatological dimensions. The male and female were blessed but not consecrated. If human beings are to enter into the sanctity of the day, they too must be holy. To be holy requires divine approval, which individuals did not have merely because they were created in God's image. A probation was required in which the humans had to demonstrate their absolute loyalty to their Creator-King. Only then would they receive their consecration. . . . The seventh day concludes God's creative activities and opens up the question regarding how individuals might enter into the rest from their activities." VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redeption*, 48; cf. 61.

seventh day.”³³ He continues,

Even during the pageant of the creature-kings in the narrative of days four through six, their royal splendor is paled by the surpassing glory of the Creator-King who commands them into existence, identifies them in his fiat-naming of them, and invests them with their subordinate dominions. And then when the creation apocalypse has reached the viceregency of the God-like creature-king of the sixth day, and moves beyond it, we observe the glory of all the creature-kingdoms of all six days being carried along as a tributary offering within the gates of the Sabbath day to be laid at the feet of the Creator-king, now beheld in the brilliance of his epiphany as Sabbath Lord.³⁴

All of the preceding days have built up to the crescendo of God’s rest on the final day: “The rising chain of command does not stop with the six days; it ascends to the seventh day, to the supreme dominion of him who is Lord of the Sabbath.”³⁵ All of the sub-rulers in their corresponding realms of authority point toward the Creator-King resting on his cosmic throne. Mankind is made the vice-regent over earth; but even mankind, the apex of creation, is subservient to God’s rule.³⁶ Nothing is outside the scope of Elohim’s sovereignty.

Each of these three themes (God’s consummation, enthronement, and consecration) is important because later biblical authors will pick them up typologically. Furthermore, these themes are important when related to Adam as created as God’s royal image. It is to that *imago Dei* that we will now look.

God’s Rest and the *Imago Dei*. For centuries theologians have debated the meaning and implications of man being created in the image of God.³⁷ This section

³³Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 39.

³⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 39.

³⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 38.

³⁶More will be said below about mankind’s role in the creation week.

³⁷For good surveys of the history of interpretation of Gen 1:26–28 and the image of God, see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 147–55; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29–34; Catherine Leigh Beckerleg, “The ‘Image of God’ in Eden: The Creation of Mankind in Genesis 2:5–3:24 in Light of the *Mis Pî Pit Pî* and *Wpt-r* Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009), 172–82; John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 3–47.

argues that two aspects of the image of God, the imitation of God by mankind and the love due to God by mankind, are both importantly related to Sabbath rest.³⁸

First, implicit in mankind's being created in God's image is the imitation of God that is expected of mankind. Kline explains,

Man's likeness to God is a demand to be like God; the indicative here ["God created man in his own image," Gen 1:27a] has the force of an imperative. Formed in the image of God, man is formed by a sense of deity by which he knows what God is like, not merely that God is (Rom 1:19ff.). And knowledge of what one's Father-God is, is knowledge of what, in creaturely semblance, one must be himself. With a sense of deity comes conscience, the sense of deity in the imperative mode. The basic and general covenantal norm of the imitation of God was thus written on the tables of man's heart.³⁹

While it is speculative to argue exactly what special revelation was given to Adam before the fall (i.e., exactly what legal or ethical commands he was given), the point remains: if even fallen humanity has a sense of God and a conscience that speaks to the need to imitate God, how much more would a un-fallen Adam in perfect fellowship with his creator have a clearer sense of that need.⁴⁰ God created mankind to imitate him, and he built within mankind a means of pointing toward that imitation: the conscience.⁴¹

³⁸The following ideas of image, imitation, and love are adapted from Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 62–66.

³⁹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 62. There are times when imitation is obviously not expected of mankind (e.g., killing the firstborn of Egypt), but, as Frame notes, "There does not seem to be any metaphysical, ethical, or historical reason why we should not imitate God's cycle of work or rest." John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 531. This discussion of conscience is limited in scope to the general responsibility for mankind to imitate God.

⁴⁰Carl F. H. Henry argues that the responsibility to keep the Sabbath was one of the "positive commandments" given in Eden that were necessary because "man as a moral agent is dependent upon external Divine command if he is to know what pleases God in all spheres of life." Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 242–43. For Henry, the *Imago Dei* alone is insufficient for man to know what moral standard he is to keep, even in an un-fallen state.

⁴¹The implied imitation required of mankind is further supported by the covenantal language of sonship: "Both image of God and son of God language bring out man's secondary or subordinate position in relation to God, even while both call attention to the dignity of man's likeness to God. Though the image is like the Spirit-Archtype [God], the image is not the original but secondary. Though the son is like the Creator-Father, the son is derived and therefore under the authority of his Author, obliged to render obedience to his divine parent. To be image-son is, in covenantal terms, to be the covenant servant and imitator." Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 63.

Second, mankind's creation in the image of God further obliges the whole race to serve God in love: "Love in the covenantal vocabulary was not a term for an affective attitude that was resistant to delineation in specific legal obligations. On the contrary, to love the suzerain meant to precisely serve him by obeying the particular demands stipulated in his treaty."⁴² Or, to put it another way, our love is demonstrated by our obedience (e.g., John 14:21, 23).

If weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance, then mankind is bound by covenantal image-bearing duty both to obey that ordinance and to love God through obedience to that ordinance. Kline summarizes the interplay between obedience and love: "Viewed from the perspective of the imitation-of-God principle, the command to love God is one expression of that principle. Viewed from the perspective of the command to love God, the imitation of God is the way in which that commandment is to be fulfilled."⁴³ Love to God is demonstrated through obedience. Man is to properly magnify God's image by living in consonance with the patterns that God has installed in his creation from the beginning, including the pattern of work and rest.⁴⁴

God's rest as a creation ordinance. The previous section argued that mankind ought to imitate the divine pattern of work and rest. But does the fact that God rested mean that Adam, and all humanity, should keep the Sabbath? Not all think so.⁴⁵ By contrast, Frame offers three arguments for man to imitate God by

⁴²Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 64.

⁴³Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 65. Jesus's own teachings confirm this covenantal obedience and love interplay when he explains that his disciples are the ones that has and keeps his commandments (John 14:21; cf. John 14:14; 15:14; 1 John 5:3).

⁴⁴The themes of love, covenantal obedience, and image will be important subsequent sections.

⁴⁵For example, see Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*; Terrence D. O'Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendancy of First-day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011).

resting on the Sabbath: (1) the work/rest pattern; (2) Mosaic authorship, the audience, and the timing of Genesis; and (3) the basis of the fourth commandment.⁴⁶ First, the cycle of six days of work followed by one day of rest would be difficult to understand if God had not made it for the benefit of his creatures. Because God never needs rest himself, he takes a day off to set a pattern for his people: “Given that God does not actually grow weary so as to need literal rest, the celebratory rest might have easily occurred after three days, or after two, or even after one. . . . It seems obvious to me that God intended the six-plus-one pattern for man’s edification and imitation.”⁴⁷ God’s pattern of six days of work and one day of rest was not necessary for him; rather, it was for the benefit of mankind.

Second, Jewish readers would understand that the divine rest in Genesis 2 was the basis for mankind’s work and rest pattern:

We should remember that Moses is the primary author of Genesis and that he wrote it for the Israelites . . . , who became God’s special people through the covenant of Exodus 19–24. Part of that covenant is the fourth commandment. Surely a Jewish reader of Genesis during the wilderness period would see Genesis 2:2–3 as the beginning of the Sabbath observance, the background of the fourth commandment. . . . The Jewish reader would see that, as in the fourth commandment, God in Genesis 2 institutes a day of rest, which he blesses and makes holy.”⁴⁸

The context makes it unnecessary for Moses to give explicit defense of the Sabbath pattern’s origin. That is, because of the authorship (Moses), the audience (Hebrews), and the timing (during the wilderness wandering and very near the time of the formalization of old covenant Sabbath laws), it would be immediately apparent to the Jews that God worked and rested in a specific way for mankind to imitate.

The third argument made by Frame for the Sabbath as a creation

⁴⁶Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 531ff.

⁴⁷Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 532.

⁴⁸Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 532.

ordinance is the fourth commandment itself: Israel should keep the Sabbath because, “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath and made it holy” (Exod 20:11). God rested,

From his creative labors and rested on the seventh day, which he hallowed and blessed, he also hallowed and blessed a human Sabbath, a Sabbath for man (Mark 2:27). In other words, when God blessed his own Sabbath rest in Genesis 2:3, he blessed it as a model for human imitation. So Israel is to keep the Sabbath, because . . . God hallowed and blessed man’s Sabbath as well as his own.⁴⁹

The claim of our Lord, that “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,” was applicable to Adam and Eve preeminently.⁵⁰ He was the only man present when the Sabbath was made. The Sabbath was a gift given to him at the end of the creative week.⁵¹ This gift was meant to be a perpetual reminder of God’s masterful work in creation. Because man is made in God’s image and should therefore imitate Him, because of the pattern of six work days and one day of rest, because of Mosaic authorship, and because of the fourth commandment itself, the Sabbath is established as a prescriptive creation ordinance along with work and marriage.

Responses to Some Objections

Several objections have been made against the idea that Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance. They are listed and addressed below.⁵²

⁴⁹Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 532.

⁵⁰This verse from Mark 2 will be examined in more detail below.

⁵¹Richard Barcellos states that it would be ‘clumsy’ to separate the creation of man from the creation of the Sabbath by thousands of years (Eden and Sinai). He argues, “Since we know that man was created . . . in the Garden of Eden, Christ would have us to conclude that the Sabbath . . . was made at the same time and place. This corresponds to what we saw in Exod. 20:11.” Richard Barcellos, “The Old Testament Theology of the Sabbath,” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 3, no. 2 (July 2006): 32.

⁵²R. B. Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” in *Acts of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod—Australia 1972* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Ecumenical Synod Secretariat,

Objection 1: Patriarchal non-observance. The first objection is that the Bible does not speak of the patriarchs observing the Sabbath. In fact, the objection argues, the Bible does not speak of any Sabbath observance until Exodus 16. Therefore, they surmise, Sabbath rest cannot be a creation-based ordinance.⁵³ Several comments may be made in response. First, and most obvious, this claim pointing out the lack of Sabbath observance by the patriarch is an argument from silence. The fact that the Bible does not narrate that the patriarchs observed or forsook the Sabbath pattern does not mean that they were unaware of God’s weekly pattern built into creation. Additionally, the seeming institution of weekly Sabbath after the exodus could merely be the reinstatement of a pattern that was lost during the time of slavery in Egypt. Beckwith and Stott explain,

It seems better therefore to see Exodus 16 and 20 not as imposing some new ordinance but as reiterating a much older one (that of Gen. 2, to which Exod. 20 . . . refers), in a manner comparable to the reiteration of the institution of circumcision in Exodus 4 and Leviticus 12, long after its first institution in Genesis 17. Exodus 16 may indeed be the *revival* of the Sabbath, as something *relatively* new, after its inevitable disuse during the Egyptian bondage. This would account for the absence of the article before ‘Sabbath’ until v. 29, and for the mild treatment of Sabbath-breaking in vv. 25–30, as contrasted with Numbers 15:32–36.⁵⁴

Thus, that the first explicit mention of weekly Sabbath doesn’t occur until after the Exodus need not necessarily rule out the idea of weekly rest being a creation ordinance.

[1972?]), 147–66. This report delivered to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in Australia offers two appendices: one from the pro-sabbath as creation ordinance committee members and one appendix from the anti-sabbath as creation ordinance members.

⁵³For example, Dressler makes his position very clear, “The biblical view is unequivocal: the Sabbath originated in Israel as God’s special institution for His people. . . . Genesis 2 does not teach a ‘creation ordinance’ in our opinion; the institution of the Sabbath for the people of Israel, however, was based on the creation account and became a sign of God’s redemptive goal for mankind.” Harold Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament,” in *From Sabbath To Lord’s Day* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 23, 30.

⁵⁴Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *This Is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in Its Jewish and Early Church Setting* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1978), 4–5 (emphasis original).

A second reason that the post-exodus appearance of the term “Sabbath” does not conflict with viewing Sabbath as creation ordinance is given by Gaffin:

This is true in the sense of the New Testament teaching that the period from Adam to Moses was one which was “before the law” (Rom. 5:13f; Gal. 3:17, 19), that is, not a period in which the basic demands of the law were not in force or law (and sin) were non-existent (Rom. 4:15; 5:13), but a period in which the law had not yet been given the explicit and pointed revelation it received at Sinai, so that some of its requirements were only dimly perceived, if at all.⁵⁵

Though a pattern was built into creation from the very beginning, God progressively revealed the exact nature and meaning of his creation week example.⁵⁶

Furthermore, this same phenomenon (patriarchal disregard of a creation ordinance) occurs with marriage:

An at least roughly analogous instance having a bearing on the Sabbath question is the fact that during the patriarchal period the institution of monogamous marriage was violated in the covenant community apparently without either the expression of divine disapproval or scruples on the part of those involved, even though our Lord himself says, referring in his teaching on divorce to Genesis 2:24, that “from the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:8).⁵⁷

The lack of observance of the Sabbath by the patriarchs need not be an argument against Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance any more than the observance of polygamy by the patriarchs is an argument against monogamous marriage as a creation ordinance. Instead, the lack of observance can be explained by sin and the

⁵⁵Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 159.

⁵⁶Beckwith and Stott agree and postulate that the lack of explicit mentioning of patriarchal Sabbath observance could mean “either that the ordinance is so taken for granted that it is not mentioned (compare the absence of reference to circumcision from the narrative books of the Old Testament after Joshua, and to the Sabbath itself from the books between Deuteronomy and 2 Kings), or that for one reason or another it was not observed, although it had undoubtedly been instituted (compare the non-observance of circumcision in the wilderness, and the non-observance of the ceremony of booths for many centuries, Josh 5:2–9; Neh 8:17). The former explanation is the more likely one, since the existence of the seven-day week (probably implying the Sabbath as the division between one week and the next) is reflected right through the books of Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus. Periods of seven days (counting exclusively) or eight days (counting inclusively) are repeatedly referred to (Gen 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12; 17:12; 21:4; 31:23; 50:10; Exod 7:25; 12:15ff., 19; 13:6ff.), three being the only other number of days which occurs with comparable frequency; and in Gen. 29:27ff. technical reference seems to be made to a ‘week.’” Beckwith and Stott, *This Is the Day*, 4.

⁵⁷Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 159.

fall of mankind.⁵⁸

A third option for explaining for the patriarchs' non-observance of Sabbath is that God set a pattern in creation for *later* inauguration.⁵⁹ This idea, similar to Jesus breathing on the apostles in anticipation of the fullness to come at Pentecost (John 20:22), posits that the Sabbath pattern laid in Genesis was a precursor to the formal institution of the weekly Sabbath promulgated first in Exodus 16 and 20.⁶⁰

In sum, whether God's rest in Genesis laid a foundation that was observed but not recorded, neglected, or a foundation for later inauguration, the lack of explicit observance by the patriarchs need not be stumbling block for those who believe that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance.⁶¹

Objection 2: The change of day. A second objection against interpreting weekly Sabbath as a creation ordinance is the day change or day transference (i.e., Saturday to Sunday). This seems to be the biggest hurdle to be overcome: "The Achilles' heel of the creation-ordinance doctrine is the replacement of the Sabbath day by the first day of the week."⁶² Some will claim that the early church had no

⁵⁸Knecht likewise agrees, "It must be granted that there are stretches of Bible history which contain no allusion to the Sabbath, but the same may be said for sacrifice which is not mentioned from the time of Abel until the Flood. We hear nothing of the important rite of circumcision for a period of eight hundred years, from the death of Moses to the time of Jeremiah. We have not mention of Sabbath in the books of Joshua, Ruth, First and Second Samuel, and First Kings, yet this was during the period of the Mosaic Law, and we must assume that the keeping of the Sabbath was a part of Jewish life. Through all these centuries the seven-day week continued." Glen Knecht, *The Day God Made* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003); see also Robert Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath: The Permanent Obligation to Observe the Sabbath Or Lord's Day* (Edinburgh: William Whyte & Co., 1842), 343-44.

⁵⁹I am thankful to Gregg Allison for this idea.

⁶⁰This option would fit well with those who would interpret the creation week not in terms of literal twenty-four hour days. Beckwith and Stott comment that God "may have appointed the literal day [i.e., Mosaic Sabbath] as being merely analogous to the figurative 'days' on which he himself worked and rested, but it was a literal day that he appointed and he did appoint it at the creation. On this, the fourth commandment leaves us in no doubt." Beckwith and Stott, *This Is the Day*, 6.

⁶¹See also Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 223-24.

⁶²Gaffin et al., "Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue," 148. The issue of transference will be addressed further below in the section on New Testament evidence for Lord's Day

conception of the Lord's Day as the "Christian Sabbath;" therefore, there must not be any connection between Sabbath and Lord's Day.⁶³ However, within the scope of all redemptive history, it can be argued that a change of day is fitting:

The change of day from the seventh to the first was almost essential to fit in with the redemptive emphasis in the New Testament connected with our Lord's resurrection. When Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week He entered into the rest that was a consequence of His redeeming work. From the New Testament evidence it is clear that the first day of the week continued to have distinctive religious significance and could be truly called "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). The New Testament church came to observe the Sabbath on the day of Christ's resurrection triumph by which His people are brought to attain with him to eternal rest. . . . It is altogether fitting that our Sabbath should now be upon that day of the week on which our Lord rose from the dead and entered into the rest from his work.⁶⁴

It was fitting for the New Testament church to worship on Sunday because it was the day of Christ's resurrection. Similarly, both the Old and New Testament days of rest were fitting in light of their place within the history of redemption:

There is something peculiarly fitting in the Old and New Testament order of days in relation to the Sabbath. As in the Old Testament the people were still looking ahead to the Messiah's work, the six days of work came first, then the day of rest pointing ahead to the eternal rest which the Messiah was to accomplish. But in this era, though the Sabbath still has future reference, it is fitting that we should celebrate on the first day of the week the historic event of redemption upon which our salvation depends. That event for the early Christians was indeed a new, a second creation, and if the first creation required a certain sequence of days, the second creation required a different sequence. Christ died on the eve of the Jewish Sabbath at the end of a week of labour, and rose and entered into His rest on the first day of the week, so that the Jewish Sabbath lies between, disposed of and buried in the grave.⁶⁵

Rather than the change of day being seen as the Achilles' heel of sabbatarians, the change of day is fitting because the Jews looked forward to the historical

observance.

⁶³See Gaffin et al., "Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue," 149; Richard Bauckham, "The Lord's Day," in *From Sabbath To Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 240.

⁶⁴Gaffin et al., "Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue," 161-62.

⁶⁵Gaffin et al., "Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue," 161-62.

actualization of their salvation (Jesus's life and work) and also looked forward each week to rest.⁶⁶ Correspondingly, new covenant believers start from a position of redemption and therefore may start their week from a position of and day of rest.⁶⁷ Therefore, the change of day need not eliminate the possibility of weekly Sabbath being a creation ordinance.

Objection 3: Sabbath is the old testament day of worship. A third objection leveled against those who interpret weekly Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance is that “too much is made of the OT Sabbath as a day of worship.”⁶⁸ This is a fair critique and definitely a flaw present in the arguments of many strict sabbatarians who seem to present nearly direct continuity between the Old Testament Sabbath

⁶⁶This explanation of the fittingness of the day is reminiscent of what Warfield said on the subject: “The Sabbath came out of Christ’s hands, we see then, not despoiled of any of its authority or robbed of any of its glory, but rather enhanced in both authority and glory. Like the other commandments it was cleansed of all that was local or temporary in the modes in which it had hitherto been commended to God’s people in their isolation as a nation, and stood forth in its universal ethical content. Among the changes in its external from which it thus underwent was a change in the day of its observance. No injury was thus done the Sabbath as it was commended to the Jews; rather a new greatness was brought to it. Our Lord, too, following the example of his Father, when he had finished the work which it had been given him to do, rested on the Sabbath—in the peace of his grave. But he had work yet to do, and, when the first day of the new week, which was the first day of a new era, the era of salvation, dawned, he rose from the Sabbath rest of the grave, and made all things new. As C. F. Keil beautifully puts it; ‘Christ is Lord of the Sabbath, and after the completion of his work, he also rested on the Sabbath. But he rose again on the Sabbath; and through his resurrection, which is the pledge to the world of the fruit of his redeeming work, he made this day the Lord’s Day for his Church, to be observed by it till the Captain of its salvation shall return, and having finished the judgment upon all his foes to the very last, shall lead it to the rest of that eternal Sabbath which God prepared for the whole creation through his own resting after the completion of the heaven and the earth.’ Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with him and brought the Lord’s Day out of the grave with him on the resurrection morn.” B. B. Warfield, “Foundations of the Sabbath in the Word of God,” in *Sunday the World’s Rest Day*, ed. Duncan McMillan et al. (New York: New York Sabbath committee, 1916), 75–76.

⁶⁷Furthermore, there is nothing in the creation account that necessitates a weekly day of rest on a particular day (i.e., Saturday). Rather, naming the days in relation to their sequential order in the six-and-one pattern allows for the observance of the pattern to be picked up and used by any one, regardless of the type of calendar from which they are coming. For example, the Jews coming out of an Egyptian ten-day work week, who may not have been able to maintain the normal cycle of a seven day week, are able to pick up the Sabbatical week pattern regardless of whether or not their “Sabbath” corresponds exactly to the “Sabbath” day of the Lord in creation. This idea is further necessary if one interprets the creation week to be referring to non-literal “days.”

⁶⁸Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 149.

and new covenant worship.⁶⁹ However, given the definition of creation ordinance provided in this dissertation and the discussion of the nature of new covenant rest below, this critique does not necessarily apply to the thesis at hand. Ceremonial elements were certainly added to the creation pattern of weekly Sabbath rest; however, these were, in a sense, secondary to the primary emphasis of Sabbath: cessation. Just as God ceased from his activity on the previous six days, so also does the biblical evidence emphasize that old covenant believers were to cease from their activities of the previous six days.⁷⁰ Indeed, a balanced biblical understanding of Sabbath rest will admit: “to conclude that a day of rest is commanded simply in order to facilitate worship, to free a period of time for public and private exercises of worship, constitutes a significant reduction and distortion of the biblical perspective.”⁷¹ Therefore, the objection that sabbatarians make too much of the worship elements commanded for Old Testament Sabbath observance does not conflict with the thesis that weekly Sabbath is a creation ordinance.

Objection 4: The multiplicity of motivations for Sabbath. A fourth objection to viewing Sabbath as a creation ordinance is the seeming multiplicity of motivations given in addition to creation in the Old Testament for Sabbath observance. Nehemiah 9:6–14 lists God’s gift of his “holy Sabbath” as one such

⁶⁹The report to the committee argues that “constant reference to the Sabbath as a day devoted to the worship of God is more a theological interpretation from our perspective, than a judgment based on the reading of the OT laws on the Sabbath. And it must be the same pious conviction of ‘what the Sabbath ought to be’ that stimulates the persistent search for evidence of synagogue assemblies before the exile.” Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 150. While this critique is certainly true of some sabbatarian tendencies, especially those that see mostly continuity in Sabbath observance across the covenants, the critique need not necessarily rule out the thesis at hand. In fact, in so far as the critique is levied against those who define new covenant worship by seemingly studying only old covenant Sabbath observance patterns, I agree with the critique.

⁷⁰Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 149.

⁷¹Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 161.

motivation for Sabbath observance in Israel's history. Ezekiel 20:10–12 says that God gave Sabbaths so that the Israelites would know that it is he who sanctifies them. Deuteronomy 5:15 names the exodus specifically as the reason for Sabbath observance.⁷² In response, multiple motivations do not rule out other creation ordinances. For example, the creation ordinance of work is promoted for various reasons: so that one may eat (2 Thess 3:10), earn wages (2 Tim 5:18), earn a reward (Col 3:23–24), and find satisfaction (Eccl 2:24). Likewise, the creation ordinance of marriage is promoted for various reasons: fruitfulness and childbearing (Gen 1:28; 9:7; Ps 127:3), happiness (Prov 5:18–19; 12:4a; 31:10), to combat lust (1 Cor 7:9), comfort after tragedy (2 Sam 12:24), and to honor God through the picture (Eph 5:32). Therefore, multiple motivations for Sabbath observance do not invalidate the interpretation of weekly Sabbath observance as a creation ordinance.

Objection 5: Sabbath as a sign for Israel. A fifth objection often posed is how can the Sabbath be both a sign for Israel *and* a universal “life-norm which pertains to every creature (as the worship of the true God and monogamous marriage)”⁷³ An answer to this critique looks to another creation ordinance: marriage. Marriage is a pattern built into creation for the normal observance by all humanity; yet, later revelation gives special covenantal and redemptive significance to this universal sign. Paul explains in Ephesians 5:32 the fuller salvific significance to what was initially a creation pattern for universal observance. The same can be said of the passages that indicate that Sabbath observance is a sign for Israel (e.g., Isa 56:4). God took a universal creation ordinance, Sabbath, and explained how from the beginning that ordinance pointed to a larger covenantal reality, salvation. Using

⁷²Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 148.

⁷³Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 148.

the faithful observance of a creation ordinance (Sabbath) as representing his special covenant with Israel was a way for God to separate his people from an unbelieving gentile world, and to uniquely prepare them for the salvation to come that was typified by weekly Sabbath rest.

Thus, many of the objections raised against interpreting weekly Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance fail. Most problems stem from defining a creation ordinance based upon its relation to the moral (Mosaic) law or from defining new covenant rest based upon old covenant Sabbath laws. However, the definition of creation ordinance proposed in this dissertation need not fall to any of those critiques.

Sabbath Rest and the Fall

This section briefly explains how the entrance of sin into the world not only compounded the necessity of weekly rest but also provided the opportunity for God to prophecy about future rest. If Adam needed to have weekly rest before the fall, there would be an even greater need for it after the fall. The entrance of sin into the world brought great inefficiency, great toil and struggle, and great temptation toward over-working. God cursed the ground and the man: “cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you . . . by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Gen 3:17b–19a). Adam’s transgression brought with it both weakness and frailty for his body and the difficulty of toil.

The introduction of toil and futility into the world compounded mankind’s need for physical rest: “If, even in a state of innocence, the Sabbath was a blessing to man, how much more is it necessary for him in a state of sin, degradation, and

toil?”⁷⁴ Adam remained in essential anthropological continuity both before and after the fall; however, because of the entrance of sin the need for weekly rest was even greater after the fall.⁷⁵ However, this entrance of sin also was the occasion for God to prophecy about the future rest he would give to this fallen race. God promised one who would defeat the enemy by crushing the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). This early promise of the gospel included in it, as later revelation makes clear, the future final rest of mankind. Thus, the fall of mankind brought with it both an increased need for physical rest and the opportunity for the typological promising of future rest. Indeed, the fall of man provided the very occasion for the necessity of redemptive rest.

The Old Covenant and the Sabbath

This section explains how the rest of the Old Testament informs our understanding of Sabbath rest.⁷⁶ The old (Mosaic) covenant added many and various laws to the creation-based pattern, all of which have been fulfilled in Christ.⁷⁷ However, the creation ordinance aspect of Sabbath observance remains.⁷⁸

That being said, there is much that the Old Testament can teach new

⁷⁴Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 343.

⁷⁵This anthropological continuity will be discussed further below in the section examining 1 Cor 15.

⁷⁶For an examination of the extra-biblical hypotheses about the origins of weekly Sabbath, see Theophile James Meek, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament: Its Origin and Development,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 33, no. 3 (January 1914): 201–12; Charles Wayne Kiker, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament Cult” (ThD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968), 114–17.

⁷⁷The fulfillment of old covenant Sabbath laws will be discussed in the New Testament section.

⁷⁸Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament”; Barcellos, “The Old Testament Theology of the Sabbath”; Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath*; Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972); Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 62, 113–20, 146–48, 177, 210, 294, 311, 343, 521; Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), esp. 186–87; Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*.

covenant believers about the nature and observance of Sabbath. This section will explain how the Sabbath day is both typological and bi-perspectival; that is, much like the Roman god Janus who looked backward and forward, the Sabbath looks backward (to creation) and forward (to the coming messiah, and ultimately to the final state). It is to the backward looking nature of the Sabbath, found most clearly in Exodus, that we will now look.

Exodus 16:22–30

The first explicit reference to weekly Sabbath rest is found in Exodus 16. The Israelites had been taught a ten-day workweek while in Egypt;⁷⁹ hence, the Lord gives a full explanation of the command: “a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath” (v. 22). Exactly why God gave this command is not stated. It could be that he is getting his people back into the rhythm of weekly Sabbath, because that rhythm had been lost in Egypt. It could be that he wanted to get them ready for the formal institution of Sabbath to come in the Decalogue. The text just does not say. Either way, the main emphasis is that the Israelites should cease from their labors for a solemn day and trust in the Lord for his provision.⁸⁰ Even without an explicit rationale for their resting, the Israelites were expected to have faith that God would provide. Resting from their work was evidence that they trusted God.

⁷⁹Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament,” 24.

⁸⁰Some have argued that Exod 16 seems to be the first institution of Sabbath, not Gen 2. Daniel C. Timmer, *Creation, Tabernacle, and Sabbath: The Sabbath Frame of Exodus 31:12–17; 35:1–3 in Exegetical and Theological Perspective*, Forschungen zur religion und literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 227 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 45; Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament,” 24. Timmer’s proposal, similar to Vos’s sacramental view, is that “the pre-fall Sabbatical principle is indeed probationary, but in a more overt way: there was to be no human Sabbath until probation was passed. Pre-fall eschatology was present in God’s rest, not in a pre-fall human Sabbath.” Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament,” 70. Either way, as has been addressed above, observance or non-observance of the Sabbath by the patriarchs need not undermine the idea that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance. Furthermore, another option (also addressed above) that has been proposed is that weekly Sabbath could be a pattern built into creation for the formal inauguration at a later day.

Exodus 20:8–11

This section argues that the Sabbath command in Exodus 20 is (1) a creation reality and, therefore, not a new command, and is (2) a call to remember creation. First, while the Mosaic Law brought peculiarly Jewish ceremonial and civil laws built off of the Sabbath commandment, the core of the Sabbath law (i.e., the fourth commandment) was derivative of God’s example in creation.⁸¹ Furthermore, that the Sabbath is a creation reality not uniquely tied to the Jewish experience is clear because, unlike the other commandments, the fourth begins with “remember” (the Qal infinitive absolute functions as an emphatic imperative).⁸² The command to remember is telling for two reasons: (1) this is not a new command (i.e., the command to “remember” assumes prior knowledge) and (2) some were already guilty of not keeping the Sabbath, as is the sinful tendency of all mankind. As William Perkins wrote, “This clause doth insinuate, that in times past there was great neglect in the observation of the Sabbath.”⁸³ The call to remember raises another question: to whom or what are the Jews pointed when reminded to remember? It was not to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. It was to the very beginning: specifically, the Lord’s rest at the end of his creative week. The Jews were already aware of the pattern of work and rest that God built into creation.⁸⁴ While the

⁸¹Some scholars believe that the weekly Sabbath was not originally based upon divine example or divine command. Rather, they argue that the Sabbath started off as a cultic or festal occasion at the conclusion of an annual seven-day festival (e.g., Kiker, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament Cult,” 114–16; Gnana Robinson, “The Idea of Rest in the Old Testament and the Search for the Basic Character of Sabbath,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche wissenschaft* 92, no. 1 (January 1980): 32–42). This view, however, is built upon etymological speculations and presumes the documentary hypothesis. This author finds such an interpretation speculative and counter to the plain reading of the text.

⁸²John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 289. Durham notes that remember has the idea of “observe without lapse” or “hold as a present and continuing priority.”

⁸³William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine, or the Description of Theologie Containing the Order of the Causes of Salvation and Damnation, According to Gods Word*, trans. Robert Hill (London: University of Cambridge, 1612), 61.

⁸⁴Chantry cites Cain and Abel bringing their sacrifices ‘at the end of days,’ which he takes to mean they understood one day a week was devoted to worship. He also mentions that, “Noah gave

Mosaic Law brought peculiarly Jewish ceremonial and civil laws built off of the Sabbath commandment, the core of the Sabbath law (i.e., the fourth commandment) was derivative of God's example in creation.⁸⁵

Second, the fact that the fourth commandment grounds Sabbath observance in creation is crucial, because it represents "God's activity and rest as a divine paradigm for man."⁸⁶ Even Dressler acknowledges this: "In retrospect we are told that God 'rested' . . . and was 'refreshed.' . . . Both anthropomorphic terms are employed not to tell us about God's activities but to inform us *what man is to do*."⁸⁷ However, Dressler fails to acknowledge the implications of this pattern and its pre-fall location. Davies summarizes nicely:

Since the reason given for its [Sabbath] observance is one that antedates the entrance of sin it is strange exegesis that regards this as a new law for God's covenant people. In fact, none of the Ten Commandments were new *per se*, inasmuch as the narrative prior to Exodus 20 contains violations of each of the commandments with the attending disapproval of God.⁸⁸

The rationale for the fourth commandment was a pre-fall event. God's rest is prescriptive for mankind.

great attention to the seven day cycle of time," and that the Jews in the wilderness were to respect the Sabbath when the manna was given. Walter J. Chantry, *Call the Sabbath a Delight* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 26.

⁸⁵Some scholars believe that the weekly Sabbath was not originally based upon divine example or divine command. Rather, they argue that the Sabbath started off as a cultic or festal occasion at the conclusion of an annual seven-day festival (e.g., Kiker, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament Cult," 114–16; Gnana Robinson, "The Idea of Rest in the Old Testament and the Search for the Basic Character of Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche wissenschaft* 92, no. 1 [January 1980]: 32–42). This view, however, is built upon etymological speculations and presumes the documentary hypothesis. This author finds such an interpretation speculative and counter to the plain reading of the text.

⁸⁶Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," 34.

⁸⁷Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 28 (emphasis added).

⁸⁸Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," 34 (emphasis original). Davies notes, regarding the breaking of all the commandments before Sinai, "The first commandment is broken by Adam and Eve, the tenth and sixth by Cain, etc. The fourth is violated by Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16:26f.) which in the narrative precedes Sinai. It might also be observed that Abraham obeyed God's 'commandments, statutes and laws' (Genesis 26:5), which suggests a body of legislation in some form to which Abraham was obedient." Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," 34n14.

Furthermore, if God’s displeasure was the result of Israel’s breaking his commandments (including Sabbath) before Sinai, we can conclude that some knowledge of these commandments was present before their formal giving at Sinai:

Since “sin is not counted where there is no law” (Rom 5:13) we can rightly infer that a knowledge of these commandments had existed prior to the Mosaic form of their legislation. No one can deny that each of the other commandments of the Decalogue was recognized by God-fearers from the beginning of creation. It is strange then, that the one commandment whose obedience requires a reflection of God’s activity at the time of creation should be considered a ‘new’ commandment.⁸⁹

The fourth commandment did not start a new pattern without precedent. Rather, it built upon a previously established pattern, adding new ceremonial elements for Jewish observance (e.g., celebration of Yom Kippur, the “Sabbath of Sabbaths” [Lev 16:31], laying out the showbread every Sabbath [Lev 24:8]), and more typological structures that ultimately pointed to Christ (e.g., circumcision, discussed below).

In summary, the description of the fourth commandment given in Exodus grounds Sabbath observance in nothing peculiar to the Jewish experience, explicitly calls believers to remember God’s creation week activity, and explains that Sabbath observance was an older, pre-fall pattern for mankind to follow. This pattern was adorned with ceremonial legislation under the mosaic dispensation; however, the creational core of the commandment was retained.

Exodus 31:12–17; 34:21; 35:2–3

These passages restate the Sabbath command and add a few nuances to the Sabbath principle under the Mosaic covenant. First, the Sabbath was a sign of

⁸⁹Davies, “The Christian Sabbath,” 34–35. It is speculative to argue exactly what (if any) parts of God’s law were given before the Mosaic dispensation of the law. Some interpreters have argued that the full moral law (i.e., Ten Commandments) was given to Adam in the garden. While that interpretation does seem a bit speculative, I do believe that some form of moral legislation was given before Sinai. Again, the thesis of this dissertation does not depend on this conclusion about the law; one could believe that the Sabbath was in no way observed before Sinai and still see that God’s rest was the pattern built into creation from the beginning.

the covenant. Second, it was a day on which God was “refreshed.”

First, the Sabbath was to be a sign of God’s covenant with his people: “It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth” (Exod 31:17). Other biblical covenants had signs that serve/served as reminders of those structured relationships.⁹⁰ The Sabbath legislation joined to the creation-based pattern served as a weekly reminder to the Israelites that they were in a covenantal relationship with God.⁹¹ Miller explains the importance of the Sabbath and Jewish identity: “The Sabbath . . . was and is one of the marks of the people of God. As much as anything except the First and Second commandments, the Sabbath was the reality that identified and distinguished Israel. Like circumcision, it was a visible sign of the covenant, of the relationship between the Lord and Israel.”⁹² To be an Israelite meant to be a Sabbath keeper, just as Yahweh was. God’s choice of Sabbath as a sign of the covenant will be an important theme in later Old Testament passages that use Sabbath disobedience in place of disobedience to the entire law (e.g., Ezek 20:18–21; cf. Lev 26:14–16, 34–35).⁹³

Second, the Sabbath day was a day on which God “rested and was

⁹⁰Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary 2 (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 457. As examples of covenantal signs as reminders, Stuart lists the rainbow as a sign of the Noahic Covenant and the Lord’s Supper as a sign of the New Covenant (Stuart, *Exodus*, 457n46).

⁹¹Fersterer argues well against the idea that the Sabbath command was primarily for children or for servants. Instead, he asserts that the commandment was for Israelites of all ages and that the liberating aspect of the commandment was linked to the prologue of the Ten Words where God is proclaimed as the liberator: Anton Fersterer, “Exegetische Notizen Zum Sabbatwort: Exod 20, 8-11 Bzw. Dtn 5,12-15,” *Protokolle zur Bibel* 3 (1994): 41–63; See also Stuart, *Exodus*, 457n47.

⁹²Patrick D. Miller, “The Human Sabbath: A Study in Deuteronomic Theology,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (1985): 90.

⁹³Regarding the fact that Exod 31:17 states that the Sabbath will be a sign “forever,” Lincoln’s analysis is satisfactory and affirms Kline’s work. Lincoln concludes, “biblical covenants and their various aspects can similarly be said to be ‘forever’ and yet subject to change according to God’s sovereign purposes in accomplishing redemption in the midst of the historical process.” Andrew T. Lincoln, “From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 352–53; Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 54.

refreshed” (Exod 31:17b; cf. Exod 23:12; 1 Sam 16:23). This sheds further light on the nature and purpose of Sabbath rest. Some commentators simply say that God’s being “refreshed” is merely instructive about how the Israelites should observe Sabbath and nothing more.⁹⁴ While there is certainly an instructive element to the description, the fact that God “rested” and “was *refreshed*” indicates something more.⁹⁵ The indication that God, an eternally tireless being (cf. Isa 40:28), derives some sort of benefit by resting (“was refreshed”) shows us that the benefit of the Sabbath pattern is not merely a reprieve from tiredness. Indeed, in addition to any benefits to the physically weary, the Sabbath contains something more: a spiritual benefit. There remains the promise of refreshment on the Sabbath day because of the opportunity to commune with the one who originally rested and who is the source of all rest.

So how ought God’s refreshment be interpreted in light of the biblical-theological themes of the creation account? Exodus 31:17 comments on this very text. Moses writes, “for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased [*shabath*] from labor, and was refreshed.” Building on the imagery of God being the cosmic temple builder, as one author comments:

It cannot be that resting and being refreshed are necessary because God was tired. Resting and being refreshed are somewhat opposite to working . . . since God’s work was the work of a master temple-builder, once he finished the work of cosmic temple-building, he went from one activity to another. The earth had become his footstool. He went from royal work to royal rest as King of creation completed. He went from making the heavens and the earth, and everything in them, to a position of enthronement over the sphere he created.⁹⁶

⁹⁴For example, “Both anthropomorphic terms [“rested” and “refreshed”] are employed not to tell us about God’s activities but to inform us what man is to do.” Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament,” 28.

⁹⁵There is a surprising dearth of theological reflection upon the fact that an immutable and tireless God “was refreshed.” Most make little more than a passing comment citing Gen 2:1–3; the rest argue that this was a mere anthropomorphism illustrating how Israel should act.

⁹⁶Richard Barcellos, personal correspondence with the author, August 20, 2016. Barcellos continued, “The Creator is the divine Exemplar in both working and resting. He took six days (i.e., it

The refreshment of God was that he finished his work, delighted in its completion, and moved on to his next labor.

Thus, we see in Exodus the confirmation of the creation-week pattern, the addition of various Jewish laws to the Sabbath pattern, and the indication that, based on God's own refreshment, there exists on the Sabbath a promise for something more than mere physical rest for the weary. Indeed, the Sabbath holds out a promise of spiritual refreshment, even if physical rest is not necessarily needed.

Deuteronomy

The Deuteronomic form of the fourth commandment adds a redemptive element to the meaning of the day. This typological escalation is significant because it draws out fuller meaning to the type and it builds anticipation for the antitype to come.

The Deuteronomic recount of the commands recalls the Israelite deliverance from Egypt as a reason for Sabbath (Deut 5:15).⁹⁷ The Sabbath, as is argued below, is not merely retrospective, but prospective: retrospective, by looking back to creation and redemption (the exodus); prospective, by looking forward to

did not take Him six days) for us, as an example; the same goes for rest. This is from where our seven-day week comes. The work is a work of temple-building; the rest illustrates His approval of His work and an enthronement over it. The entailment for Adam is that he is to be like his Creator. He is to work as a temple-builder then finally be exalted. This he failed to do. The state of exaltation is that to which our Lord takes all believers. That which the first Adam failed to do our Lord does, while also dealing with sin and guilt. This is where the concepts sufferings and glory and humiliation and exaltation find their tap-roots." See also the discussion of cosmic temple imagery above; Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 62–63.

⁹⁷Miller, building upon the work of Norbert Lohfink, argues that in the Deuteronomic Decalogue the Sabbath is the center and central point: "One of the ways in which it [Sabbath] is central is the very fact of the more extensive differences in the form and language of the Sabbath commandment when compared with its form in Exodus. . . . Second, one sees the Fourth commandment being given central place by the way motifs from the beginning of the Decalogue and the ending of the Decalogue are brought into the center of the Sabbath commandment. . . . The third way in which Deuteronomy, unlike Exodus, makes the Sabbath commandment the center of the Decalogue is structurally by creating five blocks in the Decalogue, of which the Fourth commandment is the central block." Miller, "The Human Sabbath," 83–84.

Christ's work and to the Promised Land (and ultimately the new creation).⁹⁸ The different motives for Sabbath obedience are not competing, nor does the second (redemption) nullify the first (creation). Regarding the different motives given for the Israelites to obey the fourth commandment, Frame explains, "Creation and redemption are not antagonistic. Redemption is the work of the Creator. Creation and redemption do not generate two different ethics, but rather the same one."⁹⁹ Indeed, the two complementary forms of the commandment "give us the true Scriptural perspective of the connection of the Sabbath with both creation and redemption."¹⁰⁰

These two different versions of the Sabbath commandment point to the same ethic but offer complementary understandings of the meaning and function of the Sabbath. Regarding the Exodus commandment, Miller explains, "One is to remember the created work of God and the rest of our God. . . . [I]f you remember the created work of God and the rest of God, then that will lead you to keep a rest and set it apart to the Lord."¹⁰¹ In contrast, the

Deuteronomistic structure . . . in terms of logic, it is not *remember* what the Lord has done and by remembering that you will be impelled to *keep*, but it is more the reverse: *Keep* the Sabbath, and by keeping the Sabbath, two purposes are accomplished. You will remember the redemptive work of God on your behalf, and you will provide rest for your slaves.¹⁰²

So, in Exodus, it is because of God's past action (i.e., creation) that the Israelites were called to obey the Sabbath command; in Deuteronomy, the Israelites were

⁹⁸Miller, "The Human Sabbath," 87–88. Miller reflects, "If Exodus was God's redemptive activity to give Sabbath to slaves, then Sabbath now is human non-activity to remember the Exodus redemption. In breaking free from your labors, you will be reminded of God's breaking you free from your labors and bondage." Miller, "The Human Sabbath," 88.

⁹⁹Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 514.

¹⁰⁰Gaffin et al., "Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue," 160.

¹⁰¹Miller, "The Human Sabbath," 85.

¹⁰²Miller, "The Human Sabbath," 85 (emphasis original).

commanded to obey in order both to keep alive the memory of God’s past action (i.e., redemption) and to serve the entire community by providing rest.¹⁰³ These complementary themes add further understanding to the pattern of work and rest that God has built into creation.

Furthermore, this deuteronomic Sabbath type anticipates the change to the Lord’s Day under the New Covenant.¹⁰⁴ Gaffin explains,

The redemption from Egypt is the analogue of the greater redemption wrought by Christ. It was an anticipation of that fuller redemption which would be accomplished in the fullness of time. If the Sabbath was a creation ordinance and also intimately connected with redemption, then it is to be expected that not only would it continue throughout the New Testament era but it would take on added significance as a result of the redemptive work accomplished by Christ. . . . The reference to redemption in Deuteronomy 5 paves the way for a further change in regard to the Sabbath in the New Testament and the fact that it has an intimate connection with redemption helps to place in its proper perspective the Christian observance of the Sabbath, the Lord’s Day.¹⁰⁵

The escalation of the Sabbath type by the addition of a redemptive element heightens the anticipation of a future rest to come.

While the addition of another layer of significance (redemption) to the Sabbath day is not conclusive evidence that the day was built upon a creation pattern, this does help give new covenant Sabbath observance even more meaning, as Gaffin argues.¹⁰⁶ While ultimately pointing toward the “rest for the people of God hinted at in the visions of the Day of the Lord and the mountain of the Lord, where all shall come together in shalom (cf. Is. 66:23),” the forward pointing nature of the

¹⁰³Miller, “The Human Sabbath,” 85–86.

¹⁰⁴Miller, “The Human Sabbath,” 88.

¹⁰⁵Gaffin et al., “Supplement No. 5, Committee on the Sabbath Issue,” 160.

¹⁰⁶Gaffin’s interpretation of the Deuteronomic Sabbath command is built upon his reading of Heb 4 and his understanding of the perpetuity of the moral law (i.e., Ten Commandments). While one need not necessarily agree with Gaffin’s understanding of moral law to agree with his interpretation of the Deuteronomic fourth commandment, it is easy to see both the escalation of the type (Sabbath rest) toward the final antitype to come (eternal rest in the eschaton) and how the addition of a redemptive element to Sabbath rest will have an impact in the New Covenant where Christ has begun sharing his redemptive rewards with those united to him.

deuteronomic Sabbath day does make explicit another theme built into the creation pattern of work and rest that will continue until Christ returns.¹⁰⁷

Sabbath in the Remainder of the Old Testament

This section will be brief because the theological foundations for Sabbath observance (i.e., God’s resting and the exodus) do not change; therefore, not every mention of Sabbath need be addressed. Many and various laws for Sabbath observance are sprinkled throughout the Pentateuch and some nuances are emphasized (e.g., the universality of the sabbatical pattern) in various texts discussed below, but the rationale for Sabbath observance (creation and redemption) does not change.

Psalms. Psalms contains several connections with Sabbath rest and further affirms the creational nature of the sabbatical pattern. Psalm 92 has a superscription containing an explicit Sabbath connection, thus making it the “only psalm assigned a day in the Hebrew Psalter.”¹⁰⁸ It contains language directly reminiscent of God’s creative activity. Just like the deuteronomic Sabbath command mandates, this Sabbath day psalm reflects upon God’s redemptive work: “For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. How great are your works, O LORD!” (92:4–5a). And what are these works? The context indicates that the divine works are the judgment of Israel’s enemies (7–9, 11) and the redemption of God’s people (10). God’s people were to break from their normal work cycle in order to reflect upon his acts of judgment and redemption, while also looking ahead to the final

¹⁰⁷Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 82.

¹⁰⁸Walter Brueggemann and William Bellinger Jr., *Psalms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 399; cf. James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 299–300.

Sabbath to come, “when all evil doers will perish,” and God’s enemies are scattered (9). Thus we see that Psalm 92, which is specifically and uniquely assigned to the Sabbath, prescribes weekly reflection upon God’s works, specifically redemption, and looks forward to a future judgment and redemption. Psalm 92 continues the Sabbath themes from earlier in the Bible (reflection upon God’s works), while also continues to point God’s people toward a future reality, a rest to come.¹⁰⁹

Isaiah 56:2,4; 58:13–14. Isaiah’s treatment of Sabbath issues is significant because he expands Sabbath observance beyond ethnic Israel and confirms the universality of the sabbatical pattern founded at creation.¹¹⁰ Rather than speaking of Sabbath observance as *the* sign of the covenant made with Israel, Isaiah includes foreigners as the beneficiaries of God’s promises, indicating that Sabbath is incumbent upon more than just ethnic Israel: “For thus says the Lord: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths . . . I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name . . . I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off” (Isa 56:4–5). Isaiah continues: “And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord . . . everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it and holds fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain” (56:6–7a). Responsibility for observing God’s Sabbath commands extends beyond the ethnic borders of Israel; in keeping with the universality of the creation ordinance, God expects one day a week to be devoted to worship, regardless of one’s national or ethnic ties.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Similarly, Ps 95 also links the themes God’s work (v 5) with rest (v 11). This passage will be addressed below in the section on Sabbath in Hebrews.

¹¹⁰It is also worth noting that Isa 58:13–14 is used to argue for the prohibition of “recreation” on the Sabbath (e.g., *WCF* 21.8). For a modern example of this logic, see Lane Keister, “The Sabbath Day and Recreations on the Sabbath: An Examination of the Sabbath and the Biblical Basis for the ‘No Recreation’ Clause in *Westminster Confession of Faith* 21.8 and *Westminster Larger Catechism* 117,” *Confessional Presbyterian* 5 (January 2009): 229–38. This view stems on a questionable translation of a single word as either “business” or “pleasure.” The legitimacy of “recreation” on the Sabbath will be defended in subsequent chapters.

¹¹¹For further discussion of the theme of Sabbath in Isaiah, see Kline, *Images of the Spirit*,

Some Observations and Reflections on Sabbath in the Old Testament

The following section will examine briefly the themes of Sabbath, rest, messiah, land promises, and ceremonial law in the Old Testament and make a few concluding remarks about the nature of the Sabbath pattern as a creation ordinance.

Sabbath/rest, messiah, and land promises. Throughout the Old Testament a correlation gradually builds between God's command of rest, God's promise of rest, God's provision of rest, and a physical place of rest. The theme of rest in the Old Testament creates a tension because of seeming contradictions: rest is both conditioned upon performance and unconditionally promised. This tension is ultimately resolved in the coming messiah who meets the required conditions, earns the promised rest, and provides it for spiritual Israel.

To "have rest" in the Old Testament very often refers to military victory over one's enemies (e.g., Josh 1:15; 22:4). God grants his people rest from their enemies. Conversely, God's judgment can be seen in his revocation of rest (e.g., Neh 9:28; 2 Chr 36:21). Israel is found guilty for her abandonment of God's Sabbath commands (e.g., Ezek 20:21–24), thus bringing God's judgment upon itself.

This rest is also clearly linked with the place of rest that God provides (e.g., Ps 95:11)¹¹² and the promised provider of rest: "Note that for Jeremiah the keeping of the Sabbath command will bring about the permanent role of the Davidic line and the enduring habitation of Jerusalem (Jer. 17:24–26)."¹¹³ The rest of God is also intimately linked with a promise of rest to be given in the new heavens and new

112–15; cf. Alexander, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. "sabbath"; Miller, "The Human Sabbath," 88.

¹¹²For an in-depth discussion of land promises and rest, see Oren Rhea Martin, "Bound for the Kingdom: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), esp. 255–58.

¹¹³Miller, "The Human Sabbath," 88n6.

earth (e.g., Isa 11:10; 65:17–25).¹¹⁴

The Old Testament makes clear several themes that appear to be contradictory: (1) rest is tied to Israel’s covenant faithfulness; (2) rest is found in a land given by God; and (3) rest is procured by the Davidic son sent by God. These seeming contradictions (i.e., rest as both conditioned upon performance and unconditionally promised by God) will eventually be resolved in the New Testament with the coming of the faithful True Israel who meets the required conditions and earns the final rest that ethnic Israel could never achieve.

Sabbath as ceremonial law. Some claim that the Sabbath command is a ceremonial law that is no longer binding.¹¹⁵ This author finds it strange that some would deny the continuing validity of one of the Ten Commandments when the whole Ten Words were always treated as a unit. Specifically, the creational imperative may have been given ceremonial and civil trappings under the old covenant, but the moral imperative built into creation remains unchanged. John Murray shows the flawed logic found in arguing that only nine of the Ten Commandments are still binding:

If we say the fourth commandment is abrogated and the other nine are not, we must understand what we are saying. It would indeed be an amazing phenomenon that in the heart of the decalogue there should be one commandment — and one given such prominence and meticulous elaboration — that is totally different from the others in this regard that they are permanent and it is not. Surely no one will dispute that in the Old Testament the ten commandments constitute a well-rounded and compact unit. And surely no one will dispute that the Old Testament is itself throughout conscious of that fact.

As Murray underscores,

¹¹⁴Space does not permit a full treatment of these ideas, but they are also linked with the eschatological “Day of the Lord” and the “Mountain of the Lord.” See, for example, Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 112.

¹¹⁵See O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete*, esp. 87–88.

If the ten commandments were a loose and disjointed collection of precepts, there would be nothing very extraordinary about the supposition we are now discussing. But that is precisely what the decalogue is not. . . . As we read the Old Testament we do not find any warrant for discrimination between the fourth and the other nine. Nor indeed do we find any intimation in the Old Testament that in the Messianic age the Sabbath law would cease. If any commandment is emphasized it is the fourth.¹¹⁶

That the Decalogue was a distinct unit separate from the other “judgments” has been demonstrated elsewhere.¹¹⁷ The laws of the Decalogue were never to be of varying application and duration, unlike the latter. The Sabbath command in the Ten Commandments is an official codification of the creation ordinance. The creational imperative may have been given ceremonial and civil additions under the Mosaic code, but the moral imperative built into creation remained unchanged. Murray concludes,

If there had been in the Old Testament some evidence that would create a presumption in favour of discrimination, if there had been even something that would justify a strong suspicion that in the Messianic age the Sabbath law would no longer bind, then, of course, even slight confirmation from the New Testament might clinch that suspicion and warrant the inference that the fourth commandment had been abrogated. But no such suspicion is created and the evidence is altogether against such a supposition.¹¹⁸

While one does not have to agree with Murray’s conclusions about the ongoing validity of the Mosaic law, the unity of the Decalogue does seem to point toward the Sabbath as being a creation ordinance. If the Decalogue does serve as a single unit for acceptance or rejection, then the fourth commandment—the one commandment explicitly tied to creation—is as abiding as the other Ten Commandments.

In closing, Moises Silva provides a summary of Old Testament Sabbath theology:

¹¹⁶John Murray, “The Fourth Commandment According to the Westminster Standards,” accessed April 30, 2013, http://www.the-highway.com/Sabbath1_Murray.html.

¹¹⁷See also Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 305–9.

¹¹⁸Murray, “The Fourth Commandment According to the Westminster Standards.”

The [Old Testament] regards the Sabbath as a divine ordinance that was universal but esp. relevant to Israel as a redeemed people. Negatively, it was observed by a cessation of labor. The insistence on the laying aside of work (even in the busiest times of plowing and harvest, Exod 34:21) and the infliction of the death penalty for its breach (31:14; Num 15:32) show the supreme importance attached to this command in the life of Israel. Yet, positively, it was to be viewed not as a burden but as a joyful feast, an opportunity to concentrate in private and in public on the things of God. It was a delight, holy to the Lord (Isa 58:13). Special blessings were attached to its observance (56:2).¹¹⁹

Let us examine the New Testament evidence related to Sabbath rest.¹²⁰

Sabbath in the New Testament

In the New Testament (1) Jesus affirms his Lordship of the day, (2) the apostolic-era church continues the sabbatical pattern, and (3) the day of worship is transferred from Saturday to Sunday.¹²¹

Sabbath in the Gospels

Jesus repeatedly questions the rabbinic Sabbath traditions without halting the observance of the day. Rather, by his statements referencing creation (e.g., Mark 2:27–8), Jesus affirms that the observance of the creation week pattern is a benefit to man and universal in scope. Furthermore, Jesus’s statements about being “Lord of the Sabbath” indicate that he controls the manner of observance.¹²²

¹¹⁹Moisés Silva, ed., *NIDNTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), s.v. “σάββατον.”

¹²⁰For a survey and discussion of the intertestamental development of Sabbath doctrines, see C. Rowland, “A Summary of Sabbath Observance in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era,” in *From Sabbath To Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 43–56; D. A. Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” in *From Sabbath To Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 57–98; Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάββατον”; Yong-Eui Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 139 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 53–99.

¹²¹For a full listing and discussion of the almost 70 uses of σάββατον in the NT, see Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάββατον”; Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. “σάββατον.”

¹²²These topics are usually dominated by discussions over Jesus’s relationship to the law. The thesis of this dissertation can be affirmed by proponents of most, if not all, positions in the debate surrounding Jesus and the law’s fulfillment. For an introduction to the debate surrounding Jesus and the fulfillment of the law, particularly the Sabbath, see Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 76–80; Philip Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010), 357–70.

Matthew 11:25–30

Before moving to the passage in Matthew 12 that deals directly with Sabbath, we must examine Jesus's statements in Matthew 11:28–30. After having thanked the Father for hiding his truth from the “wise and understanding” (v. 25) and having explained that the Son chooses who receives the revelation of the Father (v. 27), Jesus makes a jarring change in rhetoric. He switches from addressing the narrowing of revelation (i.e., those “to whom the Son chooses,” v. 27) to a universal statement of invitation: “come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (v. 28–30).

Jesus's invitation contains two most-relevant components, each addressed below: “come to me all who labor and are heavy laden,” and, “I will give you rest.” Jesus's invitation, especially within the context of Old Testament typological themes and themes in Matthew, means that the rest that Jesus offers is primarily concerned with the inner self and is in contrast to the legalistic pharisaical interpretations of the law, and therefore is consistent with the thesis of this dissertation. Furthermore, the placement of Jesus's invitation right before the Sabbath controversy stories is significant. Jesus's statements in the very next passage (Matt 12:1–14) do not assume the temporary nature of Sabbath observance, but the ongoing validity of Sabbath, and demonstrate how to properly apply Sabbath within the context of love, not pharisaical legalism.

Rest for the weary. First, Jesus invites those who “labor [or “are weary”]; οἱ κοπιῶντες] and are heavy laden” to come to him. Scholars present various possibilities for the identity of this group: (1) those who are burdened by “sin” in general, (2) those who are burdened by the “yoke” of legalistic interpretations of the

law by the Pharisees, (3) those burdened with a lack of assurance of salvation, (4) those suffering from the costly nature of discipleship, (5) those laden by religious observances (cf. Matt 23:4), or (6) those perhaps burdened by the sorrows of life.¹²³

Talbot explains the best answer to the question:

Who are the ones becoming wearied and burdened? The preceding narrative context (vv. 11:25–27) suggests that these may well correspond to the “simple ones” (νηπίοις). The ones becoming wearied and burdened are not the wise and intelligent in their own opinion, nor the religious elite, but those who, “like infants,” are willing to come to rest in Jesus. The participle πεφορτισμένοι (v. 28b) forms an inclusion with φορτίον in v. 30b, when Jesus attests that his burden is light. Later in the Gospel, Matthew uses the noun once again when Jesus exposes the heavy load of excessive Pharisaic regulations; “They [the scribes and Pharisees] tie up heavy burdens (φορτία) and lay them on people’s shoulders (v. 23:4).¹²⁴

Thus, Jesus is making an invitation to any “simple one” or “infant” who is willing to come to him for rest, rest especially from burdensome, pharisaical interpretations of the law.

The rest-giver and Old Testament typology. Jesus’s promise of rest brings together several Old Testament typological expectations. For example, the language that Jesus uses brings to mind Mosaic connections.¹²⁵ The claim of reciprocal knowledge of the father (11:27) is reminiscent of language from Exodus 33:11–23,

¹²³Jon Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest: The “Rest” Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4*, Wissenschaftliche untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 98 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 241; Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Sabbath in the New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1995), 268; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel*, 157; Elizabeth V. Talbot, “Rest and Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel: An Investigation of Matthew 11:25–12:14 in the Contest of the Gospel’s Theology and Setting” (PhD diss., University of Gloucestershire, 2013), 78.

¹²⁴Talbot, “Rest and Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel,” 73; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel*, 157; Laansma gives a similar, but slightly different, explanation: “The more likely explanation is that the heaviness consisted in, or maybe better, resulted from the absence of mercy, justice, and faith as the controlling principles of Pharisaic religion.” Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 124.

¹²⁵Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 219–33; Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 243–51; Talbot, “Rest and Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel,” 66–91; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:285–97.

Numbers 12:1–8, and Deuteronomy 34:9–12, where Moses is said to speak with the Lord “face to face” or “mouth to mouth.” Similarly, Jesus’s claim to meekness recalls the statement that Moses was the meekest man on the planet (Num 12:2). Jesus fills the role of the “greater Moses” who knows the Father perfectly and perfectly reveals the will of the Father.

Similarly, Jesus is pictured in this Matthean passage as the eschatological Davidic son. Again, Talbot explains the Old Testament background, especially looking at the ἀνάπαυσις word group in the LXX:

A Davidic eschatological background has also been proposed as a possible background for the use of ἀνάπαυσις word-group in Jesus’ offer of rest in v. 28 because ἀναπαύσω appears only three times in the LXX exclusively in this context (2 Kdgm 7:11; 1 Chr 22:9 and Ezek 34:15). The presence of the eschatological kingdom was often promised in terms of “rest” (ἀνάπαυσις), as can be seen from the majority of usage of the word ἀνάπαυσις with the force of “the final dwelling of the people of God” in the prophetic books of the LXX (e.g., Isa 11:10; 65:9, 10). In later traditions, the kingdom is often spoken of in terms of ἀνάπαυσις (cf. 2 Clem. 5:5). The promise of Yahweh that he will give ἀνάπαυσις to Israel through the coming Davidic prince is of decisive importance in v. 29. In Ezek 34:15–27, Yahweh promises rest and the breaking of the “yoke” that enslaves the sheep of Israel. The prominence of “rest” and “yoke” is observed in Matt 11:28–30.¹²⁶

Laansma agrees that Jesus’s statements are laden with Old Testament imagery:

As it stands in Matthew the saying is soteriologically, eschatologically, and messianically charged. . . . It seems reasonable to think that the *general* hope of the eschatological age as a time of rest and peace—which was characteristic of Judaism and which was sources in the OT rest tradition as well as the Sabbath—had become a din in Matthew’s ears, sounding out to him from the invitation and promise of 11:28–30. The specific indications of Matthean redaction suggest that he understood it in this manner *and that he himself related it directly to the OT hopes surrounding the Davidic dynasty, rest, temple, and Sabbath.*¹²⁷

¹²⁶Talbot, “Rest and Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel,” 84; cf. Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 246–51.

¹²⁷Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 247 (emphasis original). Yang also postulates Davidic imagery in Jesus’s words: “Such an interpretation fits not only the eschatological character of the present pericope as I have interpreted it but also the immediately following pericopes which, as we shall see, deal with the Sabbath issue in terms of Jesus’s fulfillment of it. Moreover this interpretation also fits well the overall plot of the Gospel which is focused on Jesus the messiah who has fulfilled the whole revelation of the Old Testament and inaugurated the eschatological kingdom of heaven (which is to provide the eternal rest for his people).” Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel*, 160.

Thus by promising to personally (i.e., “come to *me*”) provide rest, Jesus proclaims his place as the eschatological Davidic son that would bring peace to the kingdom.¹²⁸

The nature of Jesus’s rest. Now that Jesus’s identity as the greater Moses and Davidic son has been confirmed, we can examine the nature of Jesus’s rest. Following Davidson’s typological framework described in Chapter 2, interpreters should see Jesus’s promise of rest as primarily concerned with salvific rest, or rest of the inner self (i.e., soul). This rest is the initial fulfillment of the Old Testament expectation of promised rest, but still anticipates a future fulfillment.

First, Jesus’s promise of rest in this age (i.e., until his second coming) is primarily concerned with rest of the inner self. Indeed, Jesus himself promises that those who take his yoke will find “rest for [their] souls” (11:29). Additionally, Talbot explains that the language that Jesus uses affirms this interpretation:

In the LXX, the force of “soul” (ψυχή) is primarily portrayed as the center of the inner life/self of a person, as the individual or living being. “Rest” and “soul” are used together in the LXX. Of relevance is the instance found in Deut 28:65, where God does not allow his people to find rest among the nations due to their disobedience, and he gives them despair of soul. In Deut 28:65 there is a parallelism between “no rest” and “despair of soul.” In the connection which each other and all occurrences use “soul” with the force of inner self: Ps 22(23):2, 3; Ps (114)116:7; Prov 29:17; Sir 6:26, 28; Sir 51:26, 27. The narrative of Ps 22(23):2, 3 proposes that the waters of rest and restoration of soul are related to each other. In Ps 114(116):7, the writer uses both words when he orders his own soul (inner self) to return to its rest. The two words (rest and soul) appear in Prov 29:17 in parallel relation to each other: rest is paralleled to *delight of soul*.¹²⁹

Talbot concludes,

The prominent force of *soul* in connection with *rest* in the LXX is that of *inner self*. In the Matthean narrative (11:29), when Jesus says that those who take his yoke upon them will find ἀνάπαυσις for their souls, he is promising a benefit

¹²⁸Other possible Old Testament allusions/typological connections suggested include (1) the promise of rest in Jer 6:16, (2) the promise of rest in Ps 116:7, and (3) Jesus as the embodiment of Wisdom. See Talbot, “Rest and Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel,” 80–86; Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 246–51.

¹²⁹Talbot, “Rest and Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel,” 85.

experienced in the inner self that can be interpreted against a three-fold background: an inner sabbath rest offered by the new and greater Moses (Pentateuch), a present eschatological rest brought about by the Davidic shepherd/king (Historic/Prophetic books) and the inner repose realized through the presence of personified Wisdom (poetic books).¹³⁰

Thus, in light of the Old Testament background of Jesus's language and the typological connections seen in the text, interpreters should see Jesus as initially providing salvific rest, that is, rest for souls. To use Davidson's language:

The basic literal fulfillment centers in Jesus at His first advent: "All the promises of God [including typological predictions] in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor 1:20). For example, Jesus is the antitypical Israel (Matt 2:15), the antitypical Exodus (Matt 1-5; Luke 9:31), and the antitypical temple (Matt 12:6; John 1:14; 2:21). . . . Just as the goal of Joshua was to bring rest to the people of Israel (Josh 1:13-15; 14:15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1), so the antitypical Joshua says, "I will give you rest."¹³¹

Davidson continues,

What is true of Jesus, the new Joshua, is also available to the church, members of His spiritual body. We can come by faith to the heavenly Canaan (Heb 12:22-24), conduct spiritual warfare against our spiritual enemies (Eph 6:10-17), *enjoy the spiritual rest of grace* (Heb 4:9-11) and receive our spiritual inheritance (Acts 20:32; Eph 1:11, 14, 18).¹³²

Christ, as the greater Moses (and greater Joshua) has procured for his people the initial fulfillment of all the rest promises in the Old Testament.¹³³ From this initial fulfillment the church derives spiritual benefit in the time of the tension between the "already" and the "not yet."¹³⁴ That is, in the time between Christ's comings the church can partake of the salvific sabbath rest procured by Jesus, as well as retain the creational pattern of weekly rest that remains a valid type of the final, consummated

¹³⁰Talbot, "Rest and Sabbath in Matthew's Gospel," 85.

¹³¹Richard Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 32-33.

¹³²Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua*, 33.

¹³³This fulfillment scheme (initial, spiritual fulfillment then later a final, literal fulfillment) is described above in chap. 2. See also Richard Davidson, "The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology," *TheoRhēma* 6, no. 2 (2011): 34-48.

¹³⁴For Davidson's explanation of the three phases or aspects of the one end-time fulfillment, see Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua*, 40-48.

rest to come at his second coming.

Specifically, this invitation to inner repose is the initial fulfillment of the final rest to come: “What makes this saying [Jesus’s promise of rest] effective, however, is the way in which it recalls specific and repeated promises made by God to his people, promises which looked toward an ultimate fulfillment in some future, cosmic, redemptive work.”¹³⁵ Christ’s rest is a spiritual rest of the soul that anticipates final, eschatological, and literal fulfillment at his second coming. Each weekly observance of rest stands as a reminder of the believer’s present spiritual rest, as well as the ultimate, final sabbath that Christ will bring about by his second coming.

**Matthew 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–26;
Luke 6:1–5**

Right after Jesus’s invitation of rest, Matthew places two significant Sabbath conflict stories (12:1–8, 9–14). Hultgren explains the significance of both of these stories, especially noting their placement within Matthew:

They fall within a section of the gospel (Matt 11 and 12) which portrays a growing opposition against Jesus on the part of his critics. Both stories have to do with the breaking of Sabbath law and serve to demonstrate the growing hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees. Matthew adds to the first a couple of sayings (12:6–7) which heighten the cleavage, and the second contains the reference to the plot of the Pharisees . . . against Jesus (12:14), which . . . marks the irreparable breach between Jesus and his adversaries. Closely thereafter Matthew places the Beelezbub controversy (12:22–32) and the refusal of a sign (12:38–42), which also illustrate the hostility.¹³⁶

Both of these Sabbath Conflict stories illustrate the growing conflict between Jesus

¹³⁵Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 248.

¹³⁶Arland Hultgren, *Jesus and His Adversaries: The Form and Function of the Conflict Stories in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), 185. For more on the placement and function of these Sabbath conflict stories within the gospel, see Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:296; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel*, 161; Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 74–76.

and the Pharisees, especially regarding the interpretation of the law, but also are useful for highlighting significant christological truths: Jesus is the greater Moses, and it is he, and not the Pharisees, who perfectly reveals the will of the Father (and therefore the proper way to observe the Sabbath); Jesus is the eschatological Davidic son who brings rest, unlike the Pharisees who only bring burdens; Jesus's healing on the Sabbath is a foretaste of what the Sabbath ultimately pictures (the eschatological rest which will commence at his second coming).¹³⁷

In the first Sabbath conflict story (Matt 12:1–8), the religious leaders accuse Jesus, along with his disciples, of breaking the Sabbath by plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day.¹³⁸ Jesus gives two questions in response to the Pharisees' accusations. He asks about David eating the showbread in the temple (Matt 12:4), which was illegal on David's part because the bread was only to be eaten by the priests. While scholars do not agree on the reason why David was justified in eating the bread, it is clear from Jesus's response that the regulations of the Sabbath can (and should) be superseded in certain circumstances.¹³⁹ Or, perhaps a better conclusion is that a proper interpretation of the Sabbath law would conclude that

¹³⁷These themes are discussed in more detail above in the previous section. Similarly, one author concludes that "We can say that Jesus' *ἀνάπαυσις* is the new creation in seminal form, available 'in Christ.'" Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 249; cf. 249–51.

¹³⁸Matthew's account of this pericope gives the most detail; thus it will be the one handled here. Mark's account includes the statement about the Sabbath being made for man and not vice versa; because of the importance of and debate around that statement it will be handled below in its own section.

¹³⁹For a listing of some of the many proposed reasons given for David's (and Jesus's) justification for apparently breaking the law, see John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 483; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew's Gospel*, 171–77; O'Hare, *The Sabbath Complete*, 174–82. O'Hare, seeking to retain the trifold division of the law but classify Sabbath as completely ceremonial and typological, argues that David and Jesus were justified in their actions because of their kingship and not in any way related to the circumstances. However, this interpretation seems doubtful bases on a plain reading of Matthew 12:4 where Jesus speaks of the Showbread as "not lawful for him to eat" and on Mark 2:25 when Jesus explains that David "was in need and was hungry." Both of these statements by Jesus were unnecessary if David (and by implication Jesus) were innocent of any law-breaking because of the mere fact they were kingly.

mercy is greater than ceremonial exactness (12:7), and that feeding a starving man ceremonial bread is the proper fulfillment of the law (cf. Rom 13:10).

In his second question, Jesus questions why priests are permitted to break the law: “Have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?” (Matt 12:5). Here Jesus uses a lesser to greater argument. If the priests were guiltless in their service to the temple on the Sabbath, how much more will the disciples be guiltless in their service to the greater temple (i.e., Christ, 12:6)?¹⁴⁰ Hendrickson explains, “If even an earthly temple, which was but a type, demanded modification of the fourth commandment, literally interpreted, would not its far superior Antitype, namely, Jesus Christ, who was addressing the Pharisees here and now, and in whom ‘all the fullness of the godhead dwells bodily’ . . . have the right to make a similar demand?”¹⁴¹ The disciples were guiltless because they were serving the greater temple, just as the priests were guiltless when they served in the lesser temple.

Further undermining the legal interpretation of the Pharisees, Jesus makes clear that the rigor of ceremony should never take precedence over mercy (12:7). Jesus implicitly condemns the Pharisees here, implying that their understanding of Sabbath law violates the “weightier matters of the law” (cf. 23:23). Additionally, Jesus intimates another point: “the non-work requirement of the Sabbath is not absolute.”¹⁴² Indeed, his quotation of Hosea 6:6 (“I desire mercy, and not sacrifice”) points to the need to “understand the Sabbath command itself in relation to the

¹⁴⁰See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 202.

¹⁴¹William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1982), 514.

¹⁴²Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 484–85.

Sabbath intentions of the One who is himself gracious and merciful.”¹⁴³ Jesus’s interpretation of the Sabbath law brings rest to weary souls, rather than weariness due to legal precision devoid of mercy and love.

Jesus, the true revealer (11:27), defends his interpretation over and against the Pharisees’ interpretation of the law with the statement that “the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath” (12:8). Nolland comments, “The account is about justified violation of the normal non-work requirement of the Sabbath. What Matthew asserts is that Jesus is of such importance that he can arbitrate as to which are the justified violations of the non-work requirement of the Sabbath.”¹⁴⁴ Jesus justifies his statements about the law because he is the greater temple and he is the Lord of the Sabbath.¹⁴⁵ Contrary to the Pharisees’ burdensome interpretation of the law, especially their halakic traditions, Jesus reveals the proper interpretation, and cites his place as the “Lord of the Sabbath” to demonstrate his authority in the matter.¹⁴⁶

**Matthew 12:9–14; Mark 3:1–6;
Luke 6:6–11**

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath because he heals a man who had a withered hand. When asked if it was legal to heal on the Sabbath, Jesus responds with a question: “It is lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to

¹⁴³Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 485; Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel*, 187. Yang comments, “The Sabbath thus is not a burden in its origin but an expression of God’s grace and mercy . . . [citing Isa 1:13–17]. The Old Testament thus already shows that legalistic observance of the Sabbath without the merciful attitude toward the oppressed, the orphan and the widows cannot achieve God’s original will for the Sabbath. We may then suggest that the Sabbath institution from its origin has an intimate relation with God’s mercifulness, especially with his merciful plan of redemption for his people.” Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel*, 187.

¹⁴⁴Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 484.

¹⁴⁵The title “Lord of the Sabbath” will be discussed more below in the Mark 2 section.

¹⁴⁶Carson explains that the γάρ introducing verse 8 indicates that, “The disciples are innocent *because* Jesus as the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 67.

save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:4; cf. Luke 6:9). This answer is telling because, “again there is no challenge to the law itself; in fact, *the wording assumes its relevance*.”¹⁴⁷ The Sabbath is intended for restoration, refreshment, and healing: “The right use of the law does not obstruct healing; on the contrary, the salvation of the whole person is the great object behind the law and therefore the healing is justified.”¹⁴⁸ Jesus’s statement makes clear that the observance of the Sabbath pattern in no way violates God’s law. Sabbath is meant to be a blessing, but the Pharisees turn it into a curse.

This pericope, just like the previous one, emphasizes Jesus’s rebuke of the Pharisees. Jesus unmask their legalistic self-righteousness and shows the true meaning of the day: restoration. This passage, just like the one preceding it, concerns the wrong application of the mosaic law.¹⁴⁹ However, Jesus does not speak against the law itself, Sabbath as a weekly institution, or the creation week pattern.

Matthew 24:20

In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples to pray regarding the coming destruction of Jerusalem, “that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath” (cf. Mark 13:18).¹⁵⁰ This need not be interpreted as Jesus assuming that his followers would continue to observe all the Sabbath regulations. Jesus simply tells his disciples that the flight to avoid disaster would be difficult on the Sabbath: “it would be imposs[ible] to get help or buy what was needed in the emergency on a Sabbath day in the vicinity of Jerusalem.”¹⁵¹ This verse emphasizes the severity of the coming

¹⁴⁷Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάββατον” (emphasis added).

¹⁴⁸Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάββατον.”

¹⁴⁹Carson has a helpful discussion of Jesus’s implicit attack on the Halakah. Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 70–71.

¹⁵⁰For a succinct examination of the possible interpretations of this passage, see Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:3:349–50.

¹⁵¹Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάββατον”; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 914–15; Craig

judgment by exhorting prayer for the minimization of travel difficulties. Thus, this passage is not concerned with the weekly Sabbath pattern, and it burdens the text too much to argue that Jesus is assuming Sabbath observance in the future.¹⁵²

Mark 2:27–28

Jesus makes two crucial statements about the Sabbath. Each will be examined individually. By claiming that the Sabbath was made for man, Jesus affirms that weekly Sabbath rest was the original pattern present not only before Sinai but also before the fall. Jesus’s claim of Lordship over the Sabbath, rather than negating the Sabbath pattern, instead gives believers the proper source of interpreting Sabbath usage: not the Pharisees’ or man’s opinions, but God’s intention.

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Scholars have debated to whom Jesus is referring as “man,” as well as exactly what Jesus is trying to do with this phrase. This section argues that “man” in these verses refers back to creation—to Adam in particular or to mankind in general.

On the one hand, some commentators contend that the *ἄνθρωπος* in v. 27 is neither referring to Adam specifically nor to mankind in general.¹⁵³ For example, Carson argues,

The word “man” is used neither to limit the reference to Jews, nor to extend it to all mankind; that question is not considered. . . . The meaning of the verse is that, “The absolute obligation of the (Sabbath) commandment is . . . challenged, though its validity is not contested in principle.” Jesus is not suggesting that every individual is free to use or abuse the Sabbath as he sees

Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 358; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 974; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:3:350. Davies and Allison comment, “This does not mean that Matthew himself would have firmly opposed such a flight, for he might have recognized circumstances which overrode the keeping of the Sabbath. But he nonetheless knew that among his readers were some who would be sorely tried to flee on a Sabbath.” Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:3:350..

¹⁵²See, for example, Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 74.

¹⁵³Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 65, 65n56, 65n57.

fit, but that Sabbath observance in the Old Testament was a beneficial privilege, not a mere legal point—an end in itself, as the Pharisees seemed to think.¹⁵⁴

Thus, for Carson, Jesus does not address the point in time that the Sabbath was created, although that point in time cannot be creation and must be at the giving of the law.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, interpreters argue that the “man” to whom Jesus is referring is humanity. For example, Stein comments, “‘Man,’ that is, humanity, was not created for the Sabbath. How could humanity have been created for the Sabbath, since humankind was created on the sixth day, whereas the Sabbath came on the seventh!”¹⁵⁶

Against Carson, the second view has stronger warrant for interpreting “man” as either Adam specifically or humanity in general.¹⁵⁷ Grammatically, the

¹⁵⁴Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 65; Carson cites Eduard Lohse, “Jesus worte über den Sabbat,” in *Judentum, urchristentum, kirche*, ed. W. Eltester (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1960), 22.

¹⁵⁵Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 65n57.

¹⁵⁶Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 148. Many other commentators that address the issue agree: James A. Brooks, *Mark*, New American Commentary 23 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 67; William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, Baker New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 108; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 245–46; David E. Garland, *Mark*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 107; John Calvin et al., *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 16.2.51; Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 203; Mikeal C. Parsons, “Mark 2:23–28,” *Interpretation* 59, no. 1 (January 2005): 59; Barcellos, “The Old Testament Theology of the Sabbath,” 33; Lamar Williamson, *Mark*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 75; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, Word Biblical Commentary 34a (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 124; Yongbom Lee, *The Son of Man as the Last Adam: The Early Church Tradition as a Source of Paul’s Adam Christology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 2n6. Guelich argues that “man” cannot have the “universalizing for of ‘humanity’ here which would imply the extension of the Sabbath law from Israel who saw herself as one specially gifted by God with the Sabbath (e.g., Jub. 2) to all humanity . . . ‘Man’ in this context stems from the creation setting of Gen 1 (cf. ‘was made’ [ἐγένετο]).” Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 124. However, it seems strange for Jesus to be referencing the creation of Adam and not having in mind the universal nature of his claim. Indeed, if the Sabbath was made for Adam, the logical implication is that it was also made for all those in Adam.

¹⁵⁷Carson argues, “The noun ἄνθρωπος occurs in Mark as follows: (1) in the expression ‘sons of men,’ 3:28; (2) in ‘Son of Man,’ 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21 (twice) 41, 62; (3) with reference to a particular man or men, 1:23; 3:1, 3, 5; 4:26; 5:2, 8; 8:24, 27; 12:1; 13:34; 14:13, 21 (twice), 71; 15:39; (4) as ‘man’ generically, 1:17; 7:7–8, 15 (three times), 18, 20 (twice), 21, 23; 8:33, 36–37; 10:7, 9, 27; 11:2, 30, 32; 12:14. The distinction between (3) and (4) may be artificial, as in 12:1 or the parables. Neither the article nor the number changes the meaning of the noun itself (cf. 7:21 and 7:23). It must be concluded, therefore, that 2:27 cannot refer to “mankind” merely on the

articles and the use of singular words (“*the Sabbath*” and “*the man*”) bring to mind the original Sabbath of the creation week.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the majority of biblical commentators agree that this passage as an Adamic allusion makes the most sense within the context of the passage.

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Immediately after making the point that man is free on the Sabbath, Jesus qualifies his statement.¹⁵⁹ In other words, while the Sabbath was made for man and not vice versa, man is not free to do whatever he wants on the day. Rather, the Son of Man is the “figure of authority who ultimately sanctions the disciples’ (community’s) conduct.”¹⁶⁰ As the Lord of creation and the giver of the original Sabbath, Jesus claims the right to proclaim what is proper and improper activity on the Sabbath.

Several comments can be made regarding the way Jesus handled the Sabbath in Mark 2:27–28. First, it is noteworthy that Jesus takes the Sabbath back to creation, not to Sinai, which is more evidence of the Sabbath as a creation ordinance.¹⁶¹ Second, Jesus’s claim of Lordship over the Sabbath creates an

basis of the word ἀνθρώπος.” Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 65n56.

¹⁵⁸Both the Sabbath and Man are singular and articular. Barcellos argues, “Jesus did not say ‘The Sabbath was made for the Jews’ or ‘the Sabbaths were made for the Jews.’ He said ‘the Sabbath’ was made for ‘the man.’ ‘The man’ refers either to Adam as the head of the human race or, more likely, to mankind. Either way, Christ goes back to the creation account and sees both man and the Sabbath as being made then.” Barcellos, “The Old Testament Theology of the Sabbath,” 33; contra Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 65n56.

¹⁵⁹Edwards has ably shown that “Son of Man” here must refer to Jesus and not to mankind in general. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 96–97; see also R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 147–48. The argument that “Son of Man” refers to mankind is made from the idea that the Aramaic behind the Greek text is improperly translated. This hypothesis has been ably refuted by the commentators listed above, among many others.

¹⁶⁰Guelich, *Mark 1-8*, 126. Guelich goes on, “Whereas 2:27 offers a general maxim of human freedom regarding the Sabbath, 2:28 limits the scope of this freedom to the authoritative discretion of the Son of Man.” See also Stein, *Mark*, 149; Brooks, *Mark*, 67; Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 97.

¹⁶¹John Giarizzo remarks, regarding Jesus’s references to creation patterns, “Jesus himself shows us the perpetual nature of creation ordinances, in regards to marriage (Matt 19:4–6), where he assumes in his argument that God’s structure for human life, instituted at creation, remains in force and effect. Paul argues in a similar fashion (1 Cor 11:7–12; 1 Tim 2:13), as he appeals to creation for

expectation that the Sabbath pattern will continue in the New Covenant. John Murray explains,

What the Lord is affirming is that the Sabbath has its place within the sphere of his messianic lordship and that he exercises lordship over the Sabbath because the Sabbath was made for man. Since he is Lord of the Sabbath it is his to guard it against those distortions and perversions with which Pharisaism had surrounded it and by which its truly beneficent purpose has been defeated. But he is also its Lord to guard and vindicate its permanent place within that messianic lordship which he exercises over all things—he is Lord of the Sabbath, too. And he is Lord of it, not for the purpose of depriving men of that inestimable benefit which the Sabbath bestows, but for the purpose of bringing to the fullest realization on behalf of men that beneficent design for which the Sabbath was instituted. If the Sabbath was made for man, and if Jesus is the Son of man to save man, surely the lordship which he exercises to that end is not to deprive man of that which was made for his good, but to seal to man of that which the Sabbath institution involves. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath—we dare not tamper with his authority and we dare not misconstrue the intent of his words.¹⁶²

Jesus does not abrogate the Sabbath pattern when he claims his authority over it. Rather, by giving a divine interpretation of the Sabbath law, Jesus displays his own authority over his creation. Regarding this authority, Warfield comments, “It is in the power of no man to unmake the Sabbath, or to remake it—diverting it from, or, as we might fondly hope, adjusting it better to, its divinely appointed function.”¹⁶³ God’s gift of the Sabbath pattern to man remains since creation, and that gift is properly observed under the lordship of the Son of Man. By claiming that the Sabbath was made for man, an allusion to the creation week, Jesus affirms that weekly Sabbath rest was the original pattern present not only before Sinai but also before the fall. Jesus’s claim of Lordship over the Sabbath, rather than negating the

support of role and gender distinction. The point is well made that ‘If creation ordinances do not remain normative for human life, then Jesus and Paul could not have argued as they did.’ John Giarizzo, *The Lord’s Day Still Is* (Carlisle, PA: Reformed Baptist Publications, n.d.), 9; Samuel Waldron, “Lectures on the Lord’s Day” (unpublished essay, August 2007), 35.

¹⁶²John Murray, “The Sabbath Institution,” in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Carlisle, PA: Banner Truth Trust, 1976), 1:208.

¹⁶³Warfield, “Foundations of the Sabbath in the Word of God,” 65.

Sabbath pattern, instead gives believers the proper source of interpreting Sabbath usage: not the Pharisees or man's opinions, but God's intention.

Luke 13:10–17

In this passage, Jesus heals a woman who had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. However, because Jesus performs this merciful act on the Sabbath, the ruler of the synagogue charges Jesus with breaking the Sabbath. This passage clarifies proper activity on the Sabbath. Whereas previous passages address the issue of Jesus's authority over the Sabbath (e.g., Luke 6:1–11), this passage instead deals with the meaning of the day.¹⁶⁴ Jesus rebukes the religious leader for his ceremonial strictness that inverts the proper meaning of the day. If an ox deserves merciful effort from its owner, how much more does a human being, made in the image of God, deserve merciful effort on the Sabbath day? Jesus explains how much more valuable humans are than animals (Luke 12:4–7). The synagogue leader, the ruler appointed to maintain the reading and faithful teaching of the law, stands condemned.¹⁶⁵ Bock affirms:

When official Judaism chose to disregard God's mercy toward people as desperate as a woman crippled for eighteen years, that religion was doomed; judgment would be forthcoming. Looking for the true fruits of OT piety—justice, mercy, and humility (Mic 6:8)—Jesus found instead the worst of all sins: hypocrisy. Therefore the fig tree would be cut down (13:8).¹⁶⁶

Jesus condemns the religious leaders for turning the law, which was supposed to promote mercy, into a burden.

Jesus explains here that the true purpose of the day cannot be separated from love of neighbor. Bock comments, "In effect, Jesus argues that his act does not

¹⁶⁴Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary 24 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 373.

¹⁶⁵Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 523.

¹⁶⁶Stein, *Luke*, 375.

violate the Sabbath, but fits the very spirit of the day.”¹⁶⁷ Indeed, deeds of mercy are entirely fitting on a day that is set apart for time with the Lord. Many other themes could be highlighted from this Lukan text;¹⁶⁸ however, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees because merciful acts should be done on the Sabbath and do not constitute breaking of Sabbath rest.¹⁶⁹

Luke 14:1–6

Jesus again heals a man on the Sabbath, and asks the lawyers and the Pharisees whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 6:9). The emphasis here is “less on Jesus’s authority to perform miracles on the Sabbath than on his opponents’ concern for rituals and traditions above their brothers and sisters.”¹⁷⁰ Jesus heals the man and teaches, “the healing of the sick is in fact just as much an act of mercy as the pulling out of an animal from a well.”¹⁷¹ Jesus’s response leaves the men in stunned silence: “the fact that the experts could offer no reply suggests that they agreed that Jesus was not challenging the Sabbath law.”¹⁷² Jesus confronts the Sabbath distortions taught and enforced by the religious leaders, but does not disregard the creation pattern.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 1219.

¹⁶⁸For example, the releasing of the oppressed from the bondage of Satan, the liberation of a child of Abraham, the immediate context of passage being placed just after the parable of the barren fig tree. See Bock, *Luke*, 1212–20; Stein, *Luke*, 374–45; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 557–59.

¹⁶⁹Carson agrees that “there is no obvious attempt to overthrow the Sabbath” in this passage.” Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 73.

¹⁷⁰Stein, *Luke*, 387.

¹⁷¹Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάββατον.”

¹⁷²Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “σάββατον.”

¹⁷³Carson agrees, “Jesus does not argue that His healings are emergency cases, in order to submit to the framework of the Halakah. Rather, He performs what is good and defends it on the that [sic.] ground, attacking His critics for their own inconsistency. Thus, He implicitly rejects the framework of the Halakah.” Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” 73.

John 5 and John 9

In the fifth and ninth chapters of John, Jesus heals the sick on the Sabbath and the Pharisees again accuse him of breaking the law (John 5:9b; 9:14). Several important conclusions arise from these passages: (1) Following God's own example, resting on the Sabbath does not mean idleness;¹⁷⁴ (2) resting on the Sabbath does not exclude deeds of mercy. Indeed, Jesus implies that providing rest for those in need is the very work of God, preeminently signified by the Sabbath day itself; (3) Jesus's actions bear christological significance: "The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me" (10:25). Furthermore, these actions point to Jesus's true identity as the God-man in order that they may believe: "if I do them [works of the Father], even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father," (10:38).

Much debate surrounds the interpretation of these passages.¹⁷⁵ However, the main elements of the story are (1) Jesus is equal with the Father and (2) keeping Sabbath does not preclude the "work" of mercy. Jesus, who perfectly kept every jot and tittle of the law, "worked" by healing the man on the Sabbath day, and thereby affirms the legitimacy of deeds of mercy to be done on Sabbath.

Conclusion

Jesus did not abrogate the creation-based Sabbath pattern. Rather, he, as the greater Moses and perfect revealer of the will of the Father, properly interprets

¹⁷⁴See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 274.

¹⁷⁵See, for example, O'Hare, *The Sabbath Complete*, 170–73; Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," 80–85. Not even these two authors, who are arguing for the *same* non-sabbatarian conclusion about Sabbath today, agree on how to interpret the John passages. For example, O'Hare argues that Jesus told the man to break the Sabbath commands of God by picking up his mat; but, the man is guiltless in his disobedience because Jesus was just demonstrating that he is "Lord of the Sabbath" and can circumvent the normal Sabbath legislation (O'Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 170). Carson, however, concludes that Jesus's command to the man "contravenes no clear proscription in Torah" (Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," 81, cf. 84).

the Sabbath, over and against the interpretation of the Pharisees. Jesus explains that proper Sabbath observance should emphasize mercy, rather than ceremonial rigor; legal observance was never meant to be at the expense of mercy and love.

Furthermore, by claiming Lordship over the Sabbath, Christ not only demonstrates that the Sabbath was under his reign, but that also, “as Son of man at the Father’s right hand he retains that same lordship. And Jesus’s lordship was shown in his declaring the full meaning and intent of the Sabbath—not in abrogating it.”¹⁷⁶

Paul and the Sabbath

Some present Romans 14:5–6, Galatians 4:9–11, and Colossians 2:16–17 as evidence that the Sabbath is no longer binding, thus posing some of the most persuasive arguments against the traditional sabbatarian position. However, the creation week pattern of rest was not rescinded by Paul; rather, Paul’s comments about the Sabbath refer to the particularly Jewish ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic law that Christ’s work fulfilled. Indeed, “most commentators agree that all three texts involve false teachings that entailed a return to Israel’s old laws in disregard of how Christ’s coming has changed those laws.”¹⁷⁷ Even if one believes Paul to be teaching the abrogation of old covenant Sabbath law, that abrogation does not render weekly Sabbath rest incompatible with Pauline theology.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶Richard Gaffin et al., *Report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters*, 1973, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.opc.org/GA/Sabbath.html>.

¹⁷⁷Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 792. I am in agreement with Beale that the entire system of old covenant Sabbaths has been fulfilled in Christ, yet the creation based pattern of work and rest remains. The shadow is gone now that the reality has come. However, as has been argued, if “Israel’s Sabbath ordinance is based partly on the creational mandate of Gen. 2:2–3, then part of this ordinance has not ceased. Its eschatological goal pointed not only to Christ’s final resurrection rest and believers’ inaugurated salvific rest in Christ, but also to the final and completed rest of God’s people in the new heaven and earth, a goal that I have contended is embedded in Gen. 2:2–3 itself. . . . Thus, the creational mandate and its goal that predates Israel’s Sabbath and was partially expressed through the nation’s Sabbath continues on after Israel’s institutions find their completion in and are abolished in Christ,” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 793–94.

¹⁷⁸The scholarly discussion of Paul and the law is voluminous. For a start into that discussion, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*

Romans 14:5–6

In Romans 14:5–6 Paul discusses how the weaker and stronger brothers judge “days.” When Paul wrote of the “days,” he referenced the Jewish ceremonial regulations because of: (1) the example of the early church, (2) the contextual connection with dietary restriction, (3) the difficulties that come with interpreting “days” as including Lord’s Day observance, and (4) the nature of new covenant worship. This passage affirms that Christ frees believers from Jewish ceremonial regulations.

Paul writes in Romans 14:1–6,

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Scholars debate the identification of the “days” being esteemed/judged (*κρίνω* word group): do the “days” (vs. 4, 5) refer to Jewish special feast/fasting days, the weekly Sabbath, or both? Some argue that Paul refers to the weekly Sabbath (and probably the special feast days too).¹⁷⁹ Others argue that Paul does not address the weekly observance of a day, but specifically Jewish ceremonial days.¹⁸⁰

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013); Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 878–79.

¹⁷⁹Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 653; Schreiner, “Goodbye and Hello: The Sabbath Command for New Covenant Believers,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, 174–80 (Nashville: B&H, 2016).

¹⁸⁰Everett Harrison, *Romans*, in vol. 10 of *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 144; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), s.v. “Holy Days.”

Some commentators interpret Paul's argument to mean that any Sabbath observance, just like ceremonial diet laws, was not required and was left up to the conscience of individual believers. For example, Moo writes that

Whether the specific point at issue was the observance of the great Jewish festivals, regular days of fasting, or the Sabbath is difficult to say. But we would expect that the Sabbath, at least, would be involved, since Sabbath observance was, along with Food laws (cf. vv. 2–3), a key Jewish distinctive in the first century, and surfaced as a point of tension elsewhere in the early church. . . . Inclusion of Sabbath observance among the matters of dispute in Rome demonstrates that it was not considered by Paul to be an obligation binding on Christians.¹⁸¹

For Moo, just as the weaker brother is bound by his conscience to observe dietary laws, so too is the weaker brother is compelled to observe Sabbath, even though he is free in Christ not to observe any weekly pattern. Similarly, Schreiner agrees that the strong brother “rejected the notion that the Sabbath or any other day should be specially observed.”¹⁸² The conscience dictates the observance of days.

Other commentators interpret the “days” as the special holidays on the Jewish calendar¹⁸³ (e.g., Sabbaths¹⁸⁴, new moon festivals), and not the weekly observance of a day of worship.¹⁸⁵ First, this interpretation is preferable because of

¹⁸¹Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 842; cf. Thomas R Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 703–10.

¹⁸²Schreiner, “Goodbye and Hello,” 177.

¹⁸³For example, see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 805; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 694–95, 705; Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14:1–15:13 in Context*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 103 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 150.

¹⁸⁴Reasoner illustrates from multiple secular sources (e.g., Ovid, Seneca, Persius) how the Roman culture both mocked the Jewish Sabbath, and yet seemed infatuated with the observance of it. Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 150–54.

¹⁸⁵Kasemann argues that the observance of days refers to “Christians . . . who are convinced that days stand under lucky or unlucky stars” in Earnst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 370 However, Kasemann's lack of evidence, plus Rom 14:6a, makes this astrological interpretation unconvincing. See also, Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 147–48.

Paul's statement that some consider "every day alike." If Paul had in mind the weekly day of worship, it seems doubtful that he would leave that day of worship up to the conscience of believers. Indeed, the evidence of the early church argues against such an interpretation. If it were true that believers are free to choose whichever day they prefer for worship, how can we explain the universal observance of the Lord's Day (Sunday)?¹⁸⁶ We cannot. Indeed, the overwhelming evidence across a vast geographical area demonstrates that the early Christians convened weekly for worship on Sunday, not on another day as determined by their conscience or by convenience. The evidence from the early church rebuffs the idea that believers were free to choose their day of worship according to preference, conscience, or convenience. Even unbelievers in the early church era knew that believers were meeting on a "fixed stated day."¹⁸⁷ Christians are free from the Jewish observance of Sabbath; however, the weekly rhythm of one day out of seven for religious worship, built into creation by God's own example, remains.

Second, because of the connection that Paul makes with the dietary customs in the preceding verses, interpreters should understand "days" as referring to the special holidays of the Jewish calendar and not the weekly observance of a day of worship: "The close contextual association with eating suggests that Paul has in mind a special day set apart for observances as a time for feasting or a time of fasting."¹⁸⁸ Dunn agrees, "the most obvious reference to v. 5 is to a concern on the

¹⁸⁶Reasoner argues that it is most likely that the Roman church was observing Sunday as the Lord's Day. He lists several arguments, including: earlier attestation for Christian observance of days, Sunday observance, occurring in the NT (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10; See also *Didache* 14.1). Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 148-49.

¹⁸⁷See the discussion in chap. 4 about Pliny the Younger's letter to Trajan. Indeed, if the observance of any day was permissible, why would Christian servants gather before sunrise on the Lord's Day to worship Christ? Surely they would choose a more convenient time to worship, if they had been free to pick the day.

¹⁸⁸Harrison, *Romans*, 146.

part of some Jewish Christians and others who had been proselytes or God-worshippers lest they abandon a practice of feast days and Sabbath commanded by scripture and sanctified by tradition.”¹⁸⁹ Christians are free to participate in those Jewish customs, but they may not participate or abstain in a way that harms the weaker brother’s conscience on the issue.

Third, those who interpret “days” as referring to (or, at least including) Lord’s Day observance encounter several difficulties. Similar to the point made above, it is unlikely that Lord’s Day observance “would have been the point around which the attitudes toward days differed” if Lord’s Day observance was universal at the time.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, the statement in 14:6 that “The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord,” seems “awkwardly tautologous if the attitude Paul is describing has primary reference to the Lord’s Day.”¹⁹¹ It seems redundant for Paul to write, “one observes the Lord’s Day in honor of the Lord.” Rather, it is fitting to interpret Paul as arguing for Christian freedom to participate in or abstain from participation in Jewish ceremonies.

Fourth, the very nature of new covenant worship requires some portion of time set aside for corporate worship. If the Bible does not prescribe the observance of a particular day and a particular proportion of time, then churches and pastors have no reason to require faithful weekly attendance from their congregants. While Christians are free to observe or not observe Jewish days (“every day is alike”), there needs to be some biblical precedent for a weekly pattern of worship. To interpret Paul’s statement that “every day is alike” to mean that Christians are free to worship purely according to conscience, Christians are now free to worship once a month, or

¹⁸⁹Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 806.

¹⁹⁰Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 149.

¹⁹¹Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 149.

once a year, or once a decade.¹⁹² Certainly Paul would not condone such a licentious understanding of liberty of conscience.

Romans 14:1–6 should not to be interpreted as abrogating the weekly creational pattern, but referring to the Jewish ceremonial regulations, because of (1) the example of the early church, (2) the contextual connection with dietary restriction, (3) the difficulties that come with interpreting “days” as including Lord’s Day observance, and (4) the nature of new covenant worship. Rather than removing the creational pattern and leaving the Christian conscience as the only guide for establishing a rhythm of work and rest, this passage affirms that Jewish ceremonial regulations no longer bind Christians.

Galatians 4:9–11

In Galatians 4:9–11, Paul writes against the keeping of days as a necessity for justification. The letter argues against returning to Jewish practices (namely circumcision) as a means necessary for salvation. Even though the letter speaks of those who “observe days, months, seasons, and years” (v. 10), because of the context of the passage and the letter (i.e., a polemic against the Judaizers) this passage does not argue against keeping a Sabbath for non-salvific purposes.¹⁹³

¹⁹²This line of reasoning is examined more below in the section that examines the ecclesiological implications of weekly Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance (see chap. 5).

¹⁹³What Paul means by the phrase “days and months and seasons and years” is not certain. It could be referring to Jewish law. Moo comments, “at the same time, however, it is striking that Paul’s list contains no ‘technical’ references to Jewish religious celebrations in this respect, contrast the very similar Col. 2:16). . . . Paul may therefore choose a rather vague way of referring to the Jewish observances to tie them as closely as possible to the ‘elements.’ And perhaps also to the religious observances in the Galatians’ pagan past.” It could also be a reference to Genesis 1:14, “as a way of emphasizing the relationship between the observance of holy days and the created world.” Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 278; cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 205; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 279.

Paul's interjection of "You observe days and months and seasons and years!" (v. 10) seems abrupt, but is connected to the previous verse.¹⁹⁴ Paul has just addressed religious observances that are tied to the movements of the heavenly bodies, an important component of the Jewish calendar.¹⁹⁵ The Galatian gentiles adopted some type of Jewish calendar as a means to bring their Christian faith to completion.¹⁹⁶ The Galatians, ironically, endangered their own salvation by adopting more religious laws. Because of the context of this letter (i.e., a rebuke for adding ceremonial obedience as a requirement of salvation), Paul urged the Galatians to forsake the teachings of the Judaizers and to see that they are free from Jewish law. However, such a rebuke from Paul need not necessarily undermine the principle of weekly rest found in the creation account. Indeed, regardless of how one sees the law's ongoing validity for new covenant believers, the definition of weekly Sabbath rest can still be affirmed, even in light of Paul's teaching in this passage.

Colossians 2:16–17

Colossians 2:16–17 is the more difficult passage of the three Pauline texts that relate to the Sabbath question because it actually contains the word "Sabbath" (v. 16).¹⁹⁷ Paul's problem with the Colossians is not with their weekly observance of a

¹⁹⁴Bruce argues that it is possible to interpret the sentence as a question (i.e., Are you actually observing . . . ?) Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 205. Either way, it seems that Paul is displeased with "the news which he has just received, to the effect that the Galatians were actually adopting the Jewish calendar," and thereby were becoming enslaved again to the "elementary principles of this world" (v. 9). Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 205.

¹⁹⁵Moo, *Galatians*, 277; cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary 41 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 181; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 205–6. This idea is addressed more in the section on Col 2:16–17 below.

¹⁹⁶Longenecker, *Galatians*, 183; cf. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 206; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 279; Moo, *Galatians*, 278.

¹⁹⁷Much ink has been spilled on the nature of the Colossian heresy. For further discussion of that heresy, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 218–24; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 171–77; Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).

day of rest. Rather, he rebukes the false teachers for imposing Jewish cultic rituals upon other believers. Therefore, Paul's letter to the Colossians does not conflict with understanding Sabbath as a creation ordinance.

Paul urges the Colossians not to be led astray by those who pass judgment on them (*κρινέτω*, v. 16) and their salvation based on their observances of dietary restrictions and special days. The dietary restrictions can be understood "in light of both the discussion of ethnic identity of Jewish Christians and the preparatory rites for visionary experiences."¹⁹⁸ This combination of abrogated Mosaic ceremonial law, plus a Jewish cultism, was leading the Colossians astray.

Paul's arguments indicate that the problem is not with the Colossians' calendar, but with the imposed cultic practices. The reference to a "festival, new moon, or a Sabbath," clearly indicates some Jewish background to this heresy.¹⁹⁹ These three terms are found together in multiple Old Testament passages.²⁰⁰ None of which are in "the law of Moses strictly speaking."²⁰¹ Moo affirms, "What is missing in Colossians, in comparison with Romans, is any direct reference to the Mosaic law or to divisions between Jews and Gentiles. These omissions are especially significant in light of the fact that Paul explicitly mentions just these matters in some passages in Ephesians that are closely parallel to ones in Colossians (cf. esp. Col. 1:24–29 with Eph. 3:1–3 and 2:14–15 with Eph. 2:11–22)."²⁰² Indeed, "when these

¹⁹⁸David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 185.

¹⁹⁹Weiss agrees, "There is general agreement that the author of Colossians was arguing against a syncretistic phenomenon, in which the Jewish elements have become separated from their Jewish matrix." Herold Weiss, "Paul and the Judging of Days," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 86, no. 3–4 (1995): 140.

²⁰⁰See 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:4; 31:3; Ezek 45:17; cf. 2 Kgs 4:23; Neh 10:33; Isa 66:23; Ezek 46:1; Hos 2:11; Amos 8:5.

²⁰¹Christopher R. Seitz, *Colossians*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 135; Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 219.

²⁰²Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 219–20.

terms [festival, new moon, and Sabbath] are listed together in the OT, it often refers to cultic rituals linked with these festal days. If so, Paul is not opposed to the Jewish calendar per se but to the imposition of practices related to these feasts.”²⁰³ Paul does not have a problem with resting one day a week; he has a problem with imposing Jewish cultic rituals upon other believers.

Similar to the Romans passage discussed above, Paul does not remove the creation pattern for one Sabbath day of rest per week. He addresses the ceremonial and cultic patterns that the false teachers used to “pass judgment” upon believers.²⁰⁴ Whether one believes that Paul merely addresses the ceremonial aspects of Mosaic law,²⁰⁵ or one interprets Paul to condemn the Mosaic Sabbath entirely, one can still affirm the observance of a weekly day of rest. Sabbath as a creation ordinance need not be ruled out by this (or any) Pauline passage.²⁰⁶

²⁰³Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 185; cf. H. Ross Cole, “The Christian and Time-Keeping in Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 2 (2001): 273–82.

²⁰⁴This author finds it strange to interpret v. 17 as Paul to be condemning Sabbath—part of the Decalogue—while every other issue that he is addressing (circumcision, 2:11, 13; dietary laws, 2:16, 18, 21; ritual purity laws, 2:18, 21) is not part of the Decalogue, but part of the later ceremonial Jewish law. Why would Paul be addressing all these ceremonial shadows and singling out one of the Ten Commandments? I think that the ceremonial aspects of Jewish law were combined with the Colossian syncretistic heresy and that this weird ascetic heresy became a benchmark for self-righteous judgmentalism.

²⁰⁵Timothy C. G. Thornton, “Jewish New Moon Festivals, Galatians 4:3-11 and Colossians 2:16,” *JTS* 40, no. 1 (April 1989): 97–100. Thornton’s interesting proposal is that Jewish observance of New Moon Festivals required the actual citing of the new moon itself. Thus, each person “going on about the things he had seen” (2:18) was a reference to an actual sighting. Similarly, when Paul argues [in Gal 4:10] that “You observe days and months (μῆνας) and seasons and years’ he may be referring not only to the observance of the Jewish Calendar, but to the practice of observing the sky for the appearance of the new moon,” (99). Thornton cites, among other patristic sources, the *Letter to Diognetus*: “And their attention to the stars and moon for the observance of months and days . . . who would regard this as a proof of piety and not rather a proof of foolishness” (98). Thus, Paul would be releasing the Christians from the spiritually-binding astronomical [i.e., ceremonial] aspects of Jewish law, not necessarily from the creation-based pattern weekly rest. See also Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 185n18.

²⁰⁶For a detailed examination of this verse, see Ronald Du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16* (Berrien Springs, MI: AUP, 2008).

In summary, the notion of weekly Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance need not conflict with Paul's theology. It is the cultic (or ceremonial, Jewish) components of the law that Paul argues against. "With this understanding, Col. 2:16f. and Gal. 4:10 [and Rom 14:5–6], which are usually problematic for traditional sabbatarians, cause no difficulty at all. For it is not the creational aspect to which Paul refers, but the cultic aspect of worship with its various provisions of ceremonial and sacrificial regulations."²⁰⁷ However, the shadow has passed away because the archetype has come. The weekly day of rest points believers back to creation, back to Jesus's work, forward to the consummation of all things, and forward to the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God.

The Letter to the Hebrews and the Sabbath

Interpreting Hebrews 3:7–4:11 properly is key to properly understanding the role of Sabbath and rest in the Bible.²⁰⁸ In fact, the recent differences between sabbatarians and non-sabbatarians often can be linked to differing interpretations, thus necessitating an analysis of the traditional interpretations. Specifically, the nature and timing of the promised rest in Hebrews 4 are key areas of disagreement. As demonstrated below, the promised rest in Hebrews 3:7–4:11 is future and not the weekly Christian Sabbath observance. Yet, it is fitting in light of a future Sabbath rest that believers observe the sabbatical pattern of the creation week.

Future Rest in Hebrews 3:7–4:11

In Hebrews 4 the argument shifts from a description of the previous

²⁰⁷Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," 39.

²⁰⁸This section will examine a few key interpretive points that typically are battlegrounds between sabbatarians and non-sabbatarians when it comes to interpreting Hebrews. For a good analysis of Heb 3–4, particularly with respect to the theme of "rest," see Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest*, SBL Dissertation Series 166 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 51–98.

generation to an exhortation for the current generation. The previous generation failed to enter God's rest because they were disobedient (4:6). However, the promise of rest remains for all who hear, because God has "set another date for the fulfillment, the 'today' of the psalm (vs. 7)."²⁰⁹ Unlike the former generation that did not gain rest because "they were not united by faith with those who listened" (4:2), the current generation must heed the warnings and persevere to the end.

Some commentators argue that people can attain the promised rest fully (or, perhaps, mostly) in this life.²¹⁰ However, D. A. deSilva defends the idea that "entering" the rest should be viewed as a progressive or continuous present, for believers are "crossing the threshold into the 'better promised land', but still must 'strive earnestly to enter.'"²¹¹ Similarly, Tom Schreiner, argues against interpreting rest as *entirely* future:

Certainly, the emphasis is on the future nature of the rest. Nevertheless, most of the arguments made by [Peter] O'Brien [*The Letter to the Hebrews*] still stand if the rest has an already not yet character. This is seen most clearly when we compare the rest to the heavenly city. Believers are already members of the city (12:22), and yet they seek the city to come and must strive to enter the city. If they fall away, they will not be members of the city. Believers are even now part of the corporate eschatological gathering (12:22–23), and yet there is an eschatological fulfillment still to come for such a gathering. It seems as if the same tension could be true of the rest, particularly since the rest describes from a different angle the final reward for believers. O'Brien's best argument is that believers do not rest from their labors until the eschaton. I would concur. Still, it seems that in this verse the author focuses on the consummation of rest. When we speak of the already not yet character of rest, it is not necessary to argue that every aspect of the rest has a present fulfillment. In the same way, believers are now members of the heavenly Zion, but they do not fully enjoy the

²⁰⁹Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 123.

²¹⁰For example, Lincoln writes about the "present availability of the rest," and that, "Those who have believed can be said to enter the rest already." Andrew T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath To Lord's Day* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1982), 211–12; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 73n17; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 47a (Dallas: Word, 1991).

²¹¹David Arthur DeSilva, "Entering God's Rest: Eschatology and the Socio-Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews," *Trinity Journal* 21, no. 1 (March 2000): 32.

benefits of their citizenship.²¹²

Thus, Schreiner argues that while there is an emphasis on the future nature of rest, there is also some realized sense of rest for believers today.

Given the already-not yet tension, DeSilva's and Schreiner's interpretation is certainly preferred over understanding the rest as entirely present. However, the question of principal importance to this dissertation is "how does the author present rest in this specific passage (Heb 3:7-4:13)?" As will be demonstrated below, interpreters should understand rest as a future gift.²¹³

In Hebrews 3:7-4:13 the author exhorts his readers to persevere. The rhetoric assumes that believers will enter promised rest (*κατάπαυσις*, 4:3) in the future, conditioned upon their perseverance. Note the following considerations.²¹⁴ First, the present tense of *εἰσέρχομαι* ("we . . . enter"; 4:3) is not necessarily used for action occurring in the present; rather, it can be future.²¹⁵ Second, the imagery of the

²¹²Schreiner, "Goodbye and Hello," 184.

²¹³This is not to say that there are not "already" elements within the book of Hebrews. (e.g., 6:4; 12:28). Rather, this section is demonstrating that within the passage being examined (Heb 3:7-4:13), the author of Hebrews is using rest in an exclusively future sense.

²¹⁴These arguments are drawn principally from Jon Laansma's thorough analysis of the theme of "rest" in scripture. Laansma, *"I Will Give You Rest,"* 306-10.

²¹⁵See Matt 11:3; John 8:14; BDF 323; MHT 3:63. Many take it as "futuristic" here: Laansma, *"I Will Give You Rest,"* 306; Richard Gaffin, "A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God," in *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, ed. Charles Dennison and Richard Gambel (Philadelphia: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 48; Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 782-87; Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 170-71; Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3, A Grammar of New Testament Greek (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 3:63; Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), sec. 323; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 51; Otto Michel, *Der brief an die Hebräer*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1966), 194; Herbert Braun, *An die Hebräer*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 14 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984), 108; Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der brief an die Hebräer: übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 279; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: a Commentary on the Greek text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 246; Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis: die vorstellung vom endzeitlichen ruheort im Hebräerbrief*. (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1970), 108n352; Mathias Rissi, *Die theologie des Hebräerbriefs: ihre verankerung in der situation des verfassers und seiner leser*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987), 18n43; John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 203n2.

passage and of the quoted Psalm 95 suggest a *corporate* entrance into the promised rest, which would imply a future event. Laansma comments,

At least in the case of the “fathers” the “entrance” is not so much a process as the event which *follows* (or does not follow) the period of testing. Thus the present call for mutual encouragement (3:12–14; 4:11) followed by the comparison of *communities* (the “fathers” and “us”) and the assertion of a σαββατισμὸς “for the people of God” seem to betray a primary interest in persevering *as a group* toward the ultimate goal of entering God’s κατάπαυσις.²¹⁶

The exhortation’s corporate nature implies a future entrance.

Third, the good news of the κατάπαυσις comes to believers as a “promise” (4:1, 6, 10), “which suggests that it is an outstanding feature of the hope.” Thus, what believers have today is the *promise* rather than the *entrance*.²¹⁷ The repeated commands to “make every effort” to enter that rest (e.g., 4:11) position the reader/hearer before, rather than after, the act of entering into the rest, especially in light of the immediacy of the present found in the passage (e.g., emphasis on “listening” and “today”). Furthermore, both the contingent nature of the entrance into rest (v. 11), as well as the tension between “effort” and “rest from works” (v. 10), point toward a future rest.

Fourth, the language of “rest from works” (4:10), properly seen in light of the biblical-theological context, underscores a future rest. Just as God finished his work and then rested, so too should Christians finish their work (i.e., persevere in the wilderness), and thereby enter their rest.

When the promise of rest is given, the question “rest from what?” comes to mind. The author of Hebrews does not consider the exact character of the works (v. 10), “but rather the parallel (ὥσπερ) with the divine rest is stressed and the whole is

²¹⁶Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 306; Cf. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 202n2.

²¹⁷Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 306; contra—Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 112; Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” 212.

subordinate to v. 9, so that a more general understanding of the ‘works’ seems most likely.”²¹⁸ Rather than seeing works in an outright negative sense (i.e., in some sense as “dead works”),²¹⁹ the parallel with God’s own works ought to lead to a less pejorative understanding. Furthermore,

The idea of “toils” recalls the paradigm of escape from oppression in Egypt and the hardships that preceded entrance into the *κατάπαυσις*. . . . Additionally, it is hard to suppress a note of “completion” in v. 10 which derives from the function of the seventh day in the biblical account; the Sabbath celebration of believers is assumed to be yet future.²²⁰

In Genesis 2 God finished his creative work, the construction of his cosmic temple, and rested. Likewise, Christ has finished his work, rules over God’s house (3:6), and rests at the right hand of the Father (1:13) in his cosmic house/temple. Similarly, God’s people must imitate God by finishing their work (i.e., persevere in the wilderness) in order that they may be built into God’s house (3:6), and thus be able to enter into the rest that God has since the beginning of the creation week (4:10). Thus, the parallel between resting from human works and God’s resting from his works points toward good works rather than evil works, thereby further emphasizing the future nature of the rest.

Fifth, the whole exhortation is “keyed to the Parousia (3:14; *μέχρι τέλους*).”²²¹ Unlike other passages that speak of rest in terms of a realized eschatology

²¹⁸Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 296.

²¹⁹Buchanan takes the “works” specifically as “grumbling.” Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 74; Others take the “works” to mean some form of works righteousness. See Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 67; Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” 213; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen, Calvin’s Commentaries (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1853), 98; The idea of works righteousness is dismissed by Attridge as “a homiletic interpretation of Pauline categories that are not in the evidence,” *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 131n110; cf. Braun, *An die Hebräer*, 115; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 257.

²²⁰Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 297.

²²¹Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 307.

(e.g., Matt 11:28–30), this passage operates under the assumption that the promise of rest requires believers to persevere. Thus, how could one have any meaningful sense of rest in this life if the condition of entering rest is to keep “working” (i.e., persevering in the wilderness)? Therefore, the promised rest is tied to Christ’s second coming.²²²

In light of the preceding arguments, the rest into which believers enter will be a future event conditioned upon perseverance in the wilderness. While certainly elements of realized eschatology exist in Hebrews, the rhetorical assumption in Hebrews 3:7–4:11 is that the promised rest is a future reality into which the faithful will enter if they persevere. This paradigm fits the protological pattern from Genesis 2: God completed his task and then rested (or was enthroned in his cosmic temple). Presumably, Adam too would have entered into God’s rest had he persevered in faithful obedience in the garden. However, unlike Adam, Jesus continued his great work (e.g., 3:3; 4:15; 5:7–10), completed his task (e.g., 9:11–12, 15; 10:10), and is now enthroned at the right hand of the Father (e.g., 1:3; 10:12). So too the faithful who finish their work (i.e., persevere in the wilderness) and complete their assigned task will enter into the divine rest.

If rest in Hebrews 3–4 is a future reality, how do we reconcile it with the realized elements in the remainder of the book (e.g., “you *have come* to Mount Zion,” 12:22)? Judith Wray argues that Hebrews 3:7–4:11 serves as an extended sermon illustration, a negative example of unfaithfulness surrounded by bookends highlighting Christ’s faithfulness (3:1–6; 4:14ff.).²²³ The theme of rest is not,

²²²Guthrie argues that, structurally, Heb 4:3–11 is related to 10:32–39 which, if true, would confirm that 3:7–4:11 points to the consummation. George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 136.

²²³Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 90–93. While some of her arguments are not entirely convincing (e.g., that rest is not at all being used as instructive in eschatological doctrine), her rhetorical analysis of Heb 3–4 in light of other extra-biblical sources on rest is helpful.

however, picked up later in the book. Unlike several other motifs that are used multiple times, the author neither speaks of σαββατισμός nor κατάπαυσις again.

While the theme of “entering” does come up multiple times,

No texts in Heb[rews] suggest that the author made a connection between REST or even God’s REST and the heavenly city. Whether or not a future generation of Christians will define that eschatological promise as the promise of a place of REST, Heb[rews] does not do so. The heavenly city and its accouterments are clearly within the Christological framework of Heb[rews] Rest is not.²²⁴

The theme of rest does not appear again after Hebrews 4 and “never becomes significant as a christological metaphor.”²²⁵ Thus, because of the way that the author of Hebrews uses the motif of rest, and because the theme of rest is not picked up again and not connected explicitly with the heavenly city, rest in Hebrews 3–4 may be interpreted as a future reality while also agreeing there are realized elements within the book.²²⁶

Rest and Weekly Christian Sabbath

Some sabbatarians point to Hebrews 4:9 (“there remains a Sabbath rest for

²²⁴Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 93 (capitalization original); for further analysis of the rest/land connection, see Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 278; Martin, “Bound for the Kingdom,” 254–59.

²²⁵Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 92.

²²⁶Pace Schreiner, “Goodbye and Hello.” Hawley rightly concludes, “The difficulty with applying the *proleptic* view [i.e., realized rest] to Hebrews 3:7–4: 11 . . . within the pericope is that this understanding places more weight upon the wider biblical context than it does on the immediate context. There are no doubt passages in the book of Hebrews that clearly offer *proleptic* promises. For example, Hebrews 10:14 says that, ‘For by a single offering he (Christ) has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.’ Christ is being presented to the letter’s recipients as the one who has already perfected them ‘for all time,’ yet God is also in the process of sanctifying them. Thus the passage contains both ‘the already’ and ‘the not yet.’ However, the appearance of this *proleptic* framework at other locations in Hebrews does not mean that it is being utilized throughout the author’s argumentation. What is called for methodologically is careful examination of each pericope and its relationship to the wider thematic emphasis. In interpreting the Sabbath rest of 4:9 as both present and future experience, this position gives insufficient weight to the textual evidence within 4:1–11 and the sermonic burden and the ‘promise’ themes of the author connecting 4:1–11 to the broader epistle.” Martin L. Hawley, “There Remains a Sabbath Rest for the People of God: Interpreting *Sabbatismos* in Hebrews 4:9” (MA thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2005), 73–74 (emphasis original).

the people of God”) as clear evidence that the weekly observance of Sabbath remains as a Christian duty. This argument is mostly found among Seventh-Day Adventist scholars. For example, G. H. Hasel writes,

Physical Sabbath-keeping on the part of the new-covenant believer as affirmed by “Sabbath rest” epitomizes cessation from “works” (4:10) in commemoration of God’s rest at creation (4:4=Gen 2:2) and manifests faith in the salvation provided by Christ. Heb 4:3–11 affirms that physical “Sabbath rest” (*sabbatismos*) is the weekly outward manifestation of the inner experience of spiritual rest (*katapausis*) in which the final eschatological rest is proleptically experienced already “today” (4:7).²²⁷

However, the prescription of weekly Sabbath observance based on Hebrews 3–4, while not new, is generally rejected by commentators. Scholars on both sides of the debate agree that the passage does not *directly* speak to weekly Sabbath observance. They make several arguments in favor of this interpretation. For instance, some claim that the author of Hebrews seems to have carefully chosen his vocabulary in such a way as to “distinguish his view of Sabbath-rest (*σαββατισμός*) from that of Jewish seventh-day Sabbath observance (*σάββατον*).”²²⁸ Thus, it appears that the author to the Hebrews intentionally avoided addressing weekly Sabbath observance.

Rest, Eternal Sabbath, and the Weekly Sabbatical Pattern

The author of Hebrews’ exhortation to pursue and enter into God’s rest is a call for perseverance amid persecution. However, just because that rest is future (or even mostly future) and does not speak directly of weekly Sabbath observance does not mean that it is irrelevant to this argument. Rather, final rest makes the weekly sabbatical pattern even more fitting.

²²⁷Freedman, David, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. “sabbath.” The same basic interpretation can be found in almost any Seventh-Day Adventist literature on the subject.

²²⁸David Rancier Darnell, “Rebellion, Rest, and the Word of God: An Exegetical Study of Hebrews 3:1-4:13” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1980), 309.

Interpreters argue that the Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ;²²⁹ commentators on both sides of the Sabbath debate generally accept this statement. However, not all creation patterns find their fulfillment in Christ's first coming. For example, Paul explains the eschatological meaning and goal of the creation ordinance of marriage (Eph 5:32). Still, the creational marriage pattern remains in place until Christ's second coming. Likewise, the creational pattern of six days of work, followed by one day of rest, is a pattern that was built into creation (Gen 2:1-4), and given fuller meaning by later revelation (Heb 3-4). It will continue, along with work, until the Lord's second coming.²³⁰

In conclusion, the author of Hebrews uses the idea of future rest to encourage present endurance. That he doesn't speak directly to weekly observance does not negate the relevance of this passage to this discussion, however. Instead, the author's argument for a future rest gives validity to the interpretation of weekly Sabbath rest as a creation-based pattern that points typologically to the future rest.

Sabbath/Lord's Day in the New Testament and the Day "Transfer"

Non-sabbatarians often object that there is no direct evidence of Sunday observance in the New Testament; therefore, there must not have been any command to continue any sort of weekly Sabbath observance in continuity with the Old Testament Sabbath.²³¹ However, this section demonstrates that evidence for the change in day of rest is both foreshadowed in the Old Testament and expressly demonstrated in the Lord's Day (Sunday) worship by the New Testament church. Furthermore, the seemingly universal observance of Sunday in the early church

²²⁹See Schreiner, "Goodbye and Hello."

²³⁰*Pace* Schreiner, "Goodbye and Hello."

²³¹Bauckham, "The Lord's Day," 236.

indicates an early apostolic origin to the practice, perhaps even stemming from Jesus's direct teaching.

Old Testament Shadows of the Day Change

Several institutions and patterns in the Old Testament serve as types that foreshadow the change in Sabbath day. Two of these are: the difference between Sabbath motivations in the two givings of the law, and the eighth day references in Mosaic law.²³²

First, different motivations for Sabbath observance are found in the Exodus and Deuteronomy Sabbath commands. The fourth commandment in Exodus 20 states that the Sabbath should be remembered because of God's rest after creation: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (20:11). The Deuteronomic version of the fourth commandment offers a different motivation: "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (5:15). This additional redemptive impetus for Sabbath observance points forward to the great redemption to be found later in the new covenant.

Haldane explains,

That God purposed to appoint the day of his resting from the work of this new creation, as the Sabbath which he was afterwards to bless and hallow in remembrance of it, in place of that day which he had formerly consecrated to the memory of his resting from the first creation, appears from his commanding the Israelites to observe the Sabbath in remembrance of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. That deliverance was an eminent type of

²³²These points on the foreshadowing of the change of day are drawn principally from Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 380–87.

the redemption of his people by Christ from the bondage of Satan.²³³ Thus, because the day pointed typologically to a greater redemptive rest to come, a rest secured by Jesus, then it is fitting that when Jesus's resurrection secured the antitype, the day of commemoration changes. Sunday observance as the Lord's Day is fitting. Just as the Israelites commemorated their redemption from Egypt on Saturday (Deut 5:15), so too Christians should commemorate their redemption from slavery on the day that their redemption was secured: Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection.

A second example of types foreshadowing the change in Sabbath day in the new covenant is the eighth day theme. Again, Haldane explains,

The change of the day of weekly rest, from the last to the first day of the week, that is from the seventh to the EIGHTH day, is indicated in various places throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. The work of creation was finished in six days, and on the seventh day God rested from his work, which completed a week, or the first series of time. The eighth day, then, was the first of a new series, and on this, the day of his resurrection, the Lord Jesus rested from the work of the new creation. The eighth day is accordingly signaled in the Old Testament, pointing . . . to the day when Jesus entered into his rest, and when the commemoration thereof, his people are to rest.²³⁴

Various examples illustrate this eighth day theme in the Old Testament that is fulfilled in the New Testament: circumcision, sacrifices, consecration, cleansing, atonement, the dedication of the temple, and the conclusion of the feast of tabernacles. An examination of just a few will suffice.

First, Jews circumcised boys on the eighth day as a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham. As a sign of the righteousness that Abraham received by faith, Abraham's posterity was circumcised on the eighth day: "a day on which that [justifying] righteousness was, by the resurrection of the Messiah, to be 'brought in.' As soon as the pledge was thus redeemed, the rite of circumcision

²³³Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 379.

²³⁴Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 381.

ceased. At that early period, then, we find a clear indication of the high distinction which, in a distant age, was to be conferred on the eighth day.”²³⁵ Christians commemorate Christ’s final circumcision and his triumph over the “rulers and authorities” every Sunday, the day to which every previous eighth day pointed.

Other aspects of the old covenant likewise point toward the eighth day fulfillment in the new covenant. The firstborn of cattle, which belonged to God, were not offered or received by him until the eighth day (Exod 22:30). Not until the eighth day were animals accepted in sacrifice (Lev 22:27). Aaron’s consecration was not completed until the eighth day (Lev 9:1). On the eighth day of cleansing, lepers were pronounced clean, typical of the cleansing from sin that Jesus would procure (Lev 14:10; cf. Lev 15:14, 29). On the eighth day too atonement was made for the defiled Nazarite (Num 6:10). These all point toward the fulfillment of the eighth day:

The eighth day corresponds with the first day of the week, on which, according to all these typical appointments, Jesus was *received* as the first-born from the dead, his sacrifice was *accepted*, and on which, as the great High Priest, he was “*consecrated* for evermore,” and when he made atonement for his people, by which they are *cleansed from sin*.²³⁶

Thus, the difference in motivations between the two Sabbath commands, circumcision, and the ceremonial types tied to the eighth day in the old covenant (e.g., circumcision) all point toward a greater reality that has its antitype on the Lord’s Day. Therefore, the old covenant contained many aspects that pointed typologically toward the change of day.

New Testament Evidence of Lord’s Day Worship

Moving on to the New Testament, the same pattern remains. The change

²³⁵Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 381–82.

²³⁶Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 382 (emphasis original).

of day that was foreshadowed in the Old Testament is actualized in the resurrection of our Lord, and it is confirmed by apostolic example. New Testament evidence that confirms the change of day includes: (1) the honor conferred on the day by the Lord; (2) the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; (3) the practice of the apostles; and (4) the title given to the day (i.e., “Lord’s Day”).²³⁷

After the resurrection, Jesus always appeared to the disciples on Sunday, giving the day honor. One example is the occurrence of every recorded post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to the disciples on Sunday.²³⁸ Jesus appears “on the evening of . . . the resurrection day (e.g., John 20:19). Likewise, eight days later, “counting inclusively, as the Jews did,” Jesus came to the disciples again on a Sunday (John 20:26).²³⁹

Second, God poured out the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The giving of the law fifty days after the Exodus foreshadowed this event:

Here [in Pentecost] we have the explanation of the mystery in the Old Testament of the fiftieth day. . . . On the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt, the law was delivered from Mount Sinai, which, corresponding with the first day of the week, was 1500 years afterwards fulfilled on that day. That the law was delivered, accompanied with thunderings and lightings, and now, on the corresponding day, came “a sound from heaven, as a mighty rushing wind,” and “cloven tongues, like as of fire” sat upon each of the disciples.²⁴⁰

The striking similarities between Pentecost and the giving of the law in Exodus affirm: “the coming of the promised Comforter, being thus vouchsafed on the first

²³⁷These arguments are adapted from: Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 388–96.

²³⁸Keister, “The Sabbath Day and Recreations on the Sabbath,” 235.

²³⁹Keister, “The Sabbath Day and Recreations on the Sabbath,” 235.

²⁴⁰Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 389. Haldane explains other connections, “The day of Pentecost, too, was the fiftieth day from the resurrection of Jesus Christ when he ‘became the first fruits of them that slept,’ and the day of the first fruits of the Christian Church. The fiftieth year of jubilee, when every man returned into his own possession, which he had sold or forfeited, also corresponded with that fiftieth day, the day of Pentecost, on which so remarkable a proof was given that the price of the redemption of Christ’s people had been paid, and that for them he had entered into the possession of his and their eternal inheritance.” Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 389–90.

day of the week, confirmed the newly instituted season,” that is, the new Sabbath pattern for the new people of God—Lord’s Day rest.²⁴¹ Just as the law given at Sinai gave Israel the Jewish Sabbath, so does Pentecost inaugurate the new covenant day of rest—Sunday.

Third, the apostolic example found in the New Testament affirms the day change. While the New Testament does not expressly command weekly observance of the Lord’s Day, there does exist much apostolic precedent. Haldane affirms, “The duty of sanctifying the first day of the week is taught in the New Testament, not by direct precept, but in a way of approved example or reference, in which several other institutions are enjoined.”²⁴² Indeed, because the Lord gave details about the administration of the church directly to the apostles (e.g., administration of the sacraments, the ordering of worship), not publicly during his earthly ministry, apostolic teaching and example retains the force of divine command (e.g., 1 Cor 14:37).²⁴³

Whether the transfer of Saturday to Sunday as the day of worship came from direct command of Jesus to the apostles or by the leading of the Holy Spirit, what is clear is that the apostolic-era church gathered on Sundays.²⁴⁴ One passage

²⁴¹Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 390. It is also significant that “not merely the Apostles, but all the disciples . . . were in one accord—as being the day of their stated meeting—in one place.” Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 390.

²⁴²Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 387.

²⁴³This argument drawn principally from Benjamin Keach, *The Jewish Sabbath Abrogated, Or, The Saturday Sabbatarians Confuted in Two Parts: First, Proving the Abrogation of the Old Seventh-Day Sabbath: Secondly, That the Lord’s-Day Is of Divine Appointment: Containing Several Sermons Newly Preach’d upon a Special Occasion, Wherein Are Many New Arguments Not Found in Former Authors* (London: Printed by John Marshall, 1700., 1700), 176–279. Keach argues that there are many things comprehended in the great commission which are not expressed, including the day of worship—Sunday. Keach argues that Christ probably gave this teaching, among others, during His 40 days before His ascension. Keach, *The Jewish Sabbath Abrogated*, 176–80. See also Iain H. Murray, *Rest In God: A Calamity in Contemporary Christianity* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2010), 18–23; Knecht, *The Day God Made*, 62–66.

²⁴⁴Keach offers three reasons to believe that the transfer was taught directly to the apostles by Jesus. (1) “Consider Jesus Christ, Son of God, as Mediator, is the only Head, Sovereign Lord, and Lawgiver to his Church; and therefore it may seem strange, that the special Day or Time of Gospel-

indicating Lord's Day worship is found in 1 Corinthians where Paul tells the church at Corinth to make a collection "on the first day of every week" (16:2). This injunction was not limited to just the Corinthian church, for Paul explains, "as I directed the church of Galatia, so you also are to do" (16:1). This passage assumes that the church met regularly on the Lord's Day, a command that Paul taught in all the churches (cf. 1 Cor 4:17; 7:17). Acts 20:7a also indicated that the Lord's Day was the day of worship: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread."²⁴⁵ The breaking of bread refers to the partaking of the Lord's Supper. As one (non-sabbatarian) notes, that Luke specifies the day is significant:

We are faced with the conclusion that Luke's specification of the day of the week in Acts 20:7 probably should not be relegated to the category of irrelevant personal reminiscence. It represents a state in the growing consciousness of, and ecclesiastical importance of, the "first day of the week." The brevity of Luke's notice would suggest that he considered such meetings to be uncontroversial and to require no further explanation, from which we may infer that they were relatively widespread and regular.²⁴⁶

worship in his own Kingdom-state should not be given forth by himself." (2) "Now no doubt but during these 40 days [between the resurrection and the ascension], he fully settled all things appertaining to his Spiritual Kingdom, and instructed them in all matters they should both do and teach. And can any rationally judg [sic.] that he did not then command them which day in seven he would have observed as a Day of Rest and Solemn Worship?" And (3) "Consider, that from the day of his ascension into Heaven, till the day of Pentecost, there were but ten days, during which we do not read they had any special general Assembly for Religious Worship, tho on the two first days some were together, and on both those days he appeared to them. And remarkable it is, that there were two Jewish Sabbath-days between his Ascension and the day of their first general solemn meeting. Now had not the old Sabbath been gone, certainly they had assembled on both those days: but no doubt our Lord had told them on what day they should first meet together, in expectation of the Gift and Promise of the Father; which hay he purposed to ratify as the only Day of Gospel-Worship, by a marvelous effusion of the Spirit. To me nothing deserves more to be observ'd than this, viz. on what day of the week the first general Gospel-Assembly was held, after our Lord's Resurrection, and just upon (or soon after) his Ascension: for no doubt that the day which Christ did settle in his Gospel-Church. And that they were bit to be altogether on this day, and to wait till it was come, seems plainly implied [sic.] in the very words of the Text, Acts 2.1 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come;' fully come, doth not that denote they waited for it?" Keach, *The Jewish Sabbath Abrogated*, 182-85. While his mildly speculative arguments are interesting, it does not matter whether Christ gave the commands directly or if the Apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gave the commands to the church; either way, the pattern immediately and universally shifts by divine command from Saturday to Sunday worship.

²⁴⁵For a defense of this passage speaking of Sunday evening, not Saturday evening, see Max Turner, "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts," in *From Sabbath To Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 130.

²⁴⁶Turner, "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts," 132.

Thus, the transfer of Saturday to Sunday was set as early as pre-Pentecost and was affirmed by apostolic example.

Fourth and finally, the title “Lord’s Day” affirms the honor given to the day as the appointed time for the church to meet. John uses this term without remark or explanation (Rev 1:10), affirming that it must have been in general use and well understood by the audience.²⁴⁷ The very term demonstrates something special about the day. This term

established beyond contradiction, that under the Christian dispensation there is a Lord’s day. All days are his. If, then, one of them is called the Lord’s day, in distinction from all the rest, it must be his day in a peculiar sense. It must be devoted to his honour. It must be his as the Lord’s Supper is his. As, then, the Lord’s Supper distinguishes and separates as holy communion of the bread and wine from an ordinary social meal, so the Lord’s day distinguishes and separates one day from the rest in the week.²⁴⁸

Similarly, the parallel between the Lord’s Day and the Sabbath day in the old covenant is instructive. The Sabbath belonged to God in the Old Testament because it was his; likewise the Lord’s Day belongs to Christ because it is his.

The reason given in the fourth commandment for abstaining from work, and for hallowing the seventh day, is, “Six days shalt thou labor, and do all they work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.” And, therefore, the same obligation must follow as to the “Lord’s Day,” because it is the day of the Lord. In the Lord’s Supper, we have a symbolical representation of the death of Christ, and in the Lord’s day we have a commemoration of his resurrection every week.²⁴⁹

Thus, the title of Lord’s Day affirms that God is the owner of the day in special distinction from the rest of the days. This day has become the weekly reminder of Jesus’s resurrection.

To conclude this section, Scott summarizes the New Testament evidence

²⁴⁷Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 238–45; Turner, “The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts,” 132; Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 391.

²⁴⁸Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 391–92.

²⁴⁹Haldane, *Sanctification of the Sabbath*, 392. The connection between Lord’s Day observance and the Lord’s Supper will be examined further below in chap. 5.

about the Lord's Day.

From what we have seen of the institution of the Sabbath in the OT with its humanitarian and spiritual advantages, of Christ's insistence that it was made for man, of Paul's insistence that . . . we [are not] to be involved in the Jewish ritual calendar, we may fairly assume that the Christian church was guided by the Holy Spirit to attach the same privileges and blessings of one sacred day of rest in seven to the new Lord's Day. This was the day on which Christ in his resurrection was revealed as Lord, and the day would be celebrated with this thought in view.²⁵⁰

Concluding thoughts about Sabbath in the New Testament

The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus abolished everything Jewish about the Sabbath pattern by rescinding ceremonial observances. Yet, even with the shift in the day of observance, major continuity remains: to reflect upon what God did in creation. However, with the discontinuity comes a new emphasis: to reflect upon what God has done to begin his new creation, especially the resurrection of Jesus.

Concluding Thoughts about Sabbath in the Bible

The creator of the universe took six days to create everything. However, his task was not completed on the sixth day; rather, he took a seventh day to rest. This rest was purposeful, to create a pattern for the creatures made in his image. The rest day was also typological of a greater rest to come. The Old Covenant gave the day of rest greater meaning: the promise of salvific rest, the promise of a place of rest, and the promise of an eschatological son that would provide rest.

Christ proclaims himself to be that promised giver of rest in the New Testament; he brings salvific rest for his people (Matt 11:28). As the one with true

²⁵⁰Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), s.v. "Lord's Day."

knowledge of the Father's will (Matt 11:25–27), Christ corrects the false interpretations of the Pharisees and any others that burden his people (Matt 12:1–14). Nothing in the teaching of Christ undermines the creation-week pattern of work and rest.

Furthermore, the writings of Paul and the book of Hebrews do not conflict with the idea of rest being a creation ordinance. In Paul, the shadow has passed away because the archetype has come. The weekly day of rest points believers back to creation, back to Jesus's work, forward to the consummation of all things, and forward to the Sabbath rest that remains for God's people. Similarly, Sabbath in Hebrews uses the promise of future rest as a means of encouraging perseverance. Yet, in light of that future rest, it is fitting for believers to observe the sabbatical pattern of work and rest that is grounded in God's creation-week work. These typological themes, combined with the example of the apostles, indicate that the weekly pattern of rest ought to continue for believers.

CHAPTER 4
INTERPRETATIONS OF SABBATH REST IN THE
EARLY CHURCH AND MEDIEVAL ERA

Evidence almost unanimously favors the Sunday (Lord’s Day) observance by the church since the time of the apostles.¹ Therefore, this chapter will examine the theological rationale behind that observance throughout two periods of the church—the early church era and medieval era. This chapter and the one that follows will demonstrate that though the theological foundation of Lord’s Day observance has changed in its emphasis over the life of the church, there exists a history of interpreting God’s rest in Genesis as prescriptive, even if the language of “creation ordinance” does not appear until the last couple hundred years.

Early Church and the Sabbath

Contrary to the claims of authors like Bacchiocchi, whose work will be examined below, Christians in the early church observed Sunday as the day of worship from the very beginning. Bauckham summarizes the evidence nicely:

Sunday worship appears, when the evidence becomes available in the second century, as the universal Christian practice outside of Palestine. There is no trace whatsoever of any controversy as to whether Christians should worship on Sunday, and no record of any Christian group that did not worship on Sunday. This universality is most easily explained if Sunday worship was already the Christian custom before the Gentile mission, and spread throughout the expanding Gentile church with the Gentile mission. It is very difficult otherwise to see how such a practice could have been imposed universally and leave no hint of dissent and disagreement.²

¹For a discussion of the Second Temple Jewish Sabbath tradition, see N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1:91n64. See also Philo’s psychological allegory of the Sabbath: *Fug.* 173, 174; *Cher.* 87; *Leg. All.* 1.16; *Deus imm.* 12; *Spec. leg.* 2.59; *Migr. Abr.* 28–30.

²Richard Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” in *From Sabbath To Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson

This section on the Sabbath in the early church demonstrates that, contra Bacchiocchi's claim, Sunday observance was nearly universal from the beginning of the early church and that, while the idea of a Christian Sabbath is not found, the idea of weekly Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance is not inconsistent with the theology of many of the early church theologians.³

Pliny the Younger

While not an early church father, Pliny does offer one of the earliest extra-canonical testimonies of Christian worship practices. Pliny the Younger, a Latin author who was appointed a Roman consul by Emperor Trajan in AD 100, was also later the governor of the provinces of Pontus and Bithynia. In a letter written to the emperor between AD 111–113, Pliny wrote that the Christians met on a “fixed stated day.”⁴ While this “fixed” day of meeting is not explicitly named and therefore cannot be assumed as a reference to the Sabbath or the Lord's Day,⁵ it is clear that the Christians in Bithynia met weekly, presumably for corporate worship.⁶

(Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 236.

³Much of this section on Sabbath and the early church is adapted from Jon English Lee, “Second Century Witnesses to the Sabbath and Lord's Day Debate,” *Churchman* 128, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 231–45.

⁴For an examination of the authorship of the letter, see Enrico Tuccinardi, “An Application of a Profile-Based Method for Authorship Verification: Investigating the Authenticity of Pliny the Younger's Letter to Trajan Concerning the Christians,” *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 32, no. 2 (June 2017): 435–47. Tuccinardi concludes, with the inherited tradition, that Pliny was most likely the author, contra some modern interpretations.

⁵Contra, for example, Rordorf, who posits regarding this day, “No one seriously argues that the designation ‘on a fixed day’ (*stato die*) does not refer to the weekly Sunday.” Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 254–55.

⁶For more on Pliny's interpretation of early Christian piety, see Robert L. Wilken, “The Piety of the Persecutors,” *Christian History* 9, no. 3 (August 1990): 16.

Didache

Didache 14:1. “And on the Lord’s Day gather to break bread and to give thanks, after having confessed your offenses so that your sacrifice may be pure.”⁷ The phrase often rendered “on the Lord’s Day” is translated from *κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου*, literally “on (or according to) the Lord’s of the Lord.”⁸

Translation and interpretation. Contrary to the traditional interpretation of 14:1a (*κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου*), Bacchiocchi believes that the author implies the noun *διδασχῆ*, rather than *ἡμεραν*, so that the phrase should read “according to the sovereign doctrine of the Lord.”⁹ Bacchiocchi makes several arguments supporting this interpretation, the most compelling of which include: (1) the context of chapter 14 deals not with time, but with prerequisites to the Lord’s table; (2) the quotation from Malachi 1:10 further emphasizes not the specific time, but rather the manner of the sacrifice (14:3); (3) the *Didache* contains six other instructions using the “according to (*κατὰ*)” construction (1:5; 2:1; 4:13; 6:1; 11; 13:6); and (4) 14:1 is linked to the previous sentence by an “and (*δὲ*)” conjunction, which allows for the omission of the word “commandment” or “doctrine.”¹⁰

⁷*Didache* 14.1, translated from Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier, *La doctrine des douze apôtres = Didachè* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1998), 129–35; see also, Lawrence J. Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 1:40. For a full discussion of the *Didache* 14.1 textual variants, see Francis N. Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath* (London: The Lord’s Day Observance Society, 1974), 298.

⁸Holmes translates the disputed phrase as, “on the Lord’s own day,” in his *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 365; Lanfranchi agrees with Holmes in, “Attitudes to the Sabbath in Three Apostolic Fathers: Didache, Ignatius, and Barnabas,” in *Jesus, Paul, and Early Christianity*, ed. Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, Harm Hollander, and Johannes Tromp (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 250.

⁹Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977) 114n73.

¹⁰Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 114n73.

However, Bauckham argues, “It is doubtful whether readers would have been able to supply διδαχή, since the only other attested usage of κυριακήν (“Lord’s”) with a noun implied is with ἡμέραν (“day”) implied.” Further adding doubt to Bacchiocchi’s proposal is the *Apostolic Constitutions*, in which the phrase refers to the “Lord’s day.”¹¹ Furthermore, κυρίου would be both redundant and unexplained by this proposal. Others make even less convincing proposals.¹²

A more plausible interpretation is that the context of κυριακήν “strongly suggests the regular weekly worship of the church.”¹³ In light of the context of the passage, as well as the usage of κυριακήν in other works of the time period,¹⁴ readers can reasonably affirm this interpretation of weekly corporate worship.

Significance. This reference to the Lord’s Day worship in the *Didache* gives evidence of very early second-century convictions regarding the day of worship.¹⁵

Significantly, the (presumably) Jewish-Christian author advises a gentile believer to

¹¹Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 228; Milavec agrees: Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities* (Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2003), 125. Interestingly, Bacchiocchi himself points this out. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 120.

¹²Bauckham lists and judges several other proposals. Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 228. For example, Rordorf argues that this neoplasm emphasizes the solemnity of the day. Dugmore proposes that κυρίου designates Easter Sunday; however this proposal is “self-defeating in the context of his argument for a reference to Easter in Revelation 1:10, because it too requires that κυριακήν alone already meant Sunday in common usage.” Audet interprets the text as having κυριακήν as an “explanatory marginal gloss” that eventually replaced ἡμέραν in the text. Jean Paul Audet, *La didachè: instructions des apôtres* (Paris: J. Gabald, 1958), 210n4. However, Bauckham shows that this interpretation is doubtful because elsewhere ἡμερα κυρίου “always means the eschatological Day of the Lord, never a day of worship.”

¹³Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 228; Lanfranchi likewise assumes that the same weekly pattern is in place. Lanfranchi, “Attitudes to the Sabbath in Three Apostolic Fathers,” 250. Milavec agrees, “The *Didache* offers the earliest evidence of a weekly celebration of the eucharist . . . probably on a Sunday evening.” Milavec, *The Didache*, 125.

¹⁴For example, see Ignatius’ *Epistle to the Magnesians* discussed below.

¹⁵For more on the dating of the *Didache*, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 334–43; Milavec, *The Didache*, xv–11; Magnus Zetterholm, “The Didache, Matthew, James—and Paul: Reconstructing the Historical Developments in Antioch,” in *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 73–90; Lanfranchi, “Attitudes to the Sabbath in Three Apostolic Fathers,” 247.

worship on the Lord's Day. Unlike Paul's and Ignatius' judaizing opponents, who presumably would advocate keeping a weekly Sabbath, the Jewish-Christian author of the *Didache* does not speak of God's rest after creation, of the exodus, following Jewish law, or of the fourth commandment. Sadly, he does not provide theological reasoning for this Lord's Day observance; however, the presence of such a command does demonstrate a very early pattern of weekly Lord's Day worship found in the early church, even in the thought of a (presumably) Jewish-Christian author.¹⁶

Ignatius of Antioch

Epistle to the Magnesians 9:1. "If, then, those who had lived according to the ancient practices came to the newness of hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord's day [μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες ἀλλά κατά κυριακὴν ζῶντες], on which our life also arose [ἀνέτειλεν] through him and his death. . . ."¹⁷

Interpretation. Similar to the *Didache* translation issues, Ignatius' *Letter to the Magnesians* garners controversy over the translation of κυριακὴν. Unlike the *Didache*, however, the use of κυριακὴν in this letter has a referent—ζῶντες.¹⁸ Most scholars translate the disputed phrase following the "Latin text (*secundum dominicam* [literally, 'according to Sunday']), omitting ζῶν and translating 'living according to the Lord's Day.'"¹⁹

¹⁶Milavec, *The Didache*, 125.

¹⁷Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 208.

¹⁸Three manuscripts have only κυριακὴν (the Latin translation of the middle recension, the Greek manuscripts of the long recension, and the Armenian version of the middle recension). One manuscript changes ζῶντες to ζῶνη (Codex Parisiensis-Colbertinus). Because the bulk of the manuscripts contain κυριακὴν ζῶντες, that is the text that will be interpreted here. See Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 208.

¹⁹Bauckham, "The Lord's Day," 228; Kenneth J. Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch: A New Translation and Theological Commentary* (Zanesville, OH: CHRresources, 2008), 78; William

Some scholars advocate translating the phrase as “living according to the Lord’s life.”²⁰ However, this proposal renders the following clause confusing at best: “no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord’s life, on which our life also arose.”²¹ Others argue that the phrase possibly refers to Christians rising with Christ in their baptism on Sunday.²² Proponents of this minority interpretation cite the verb ἀνέτειλεν, a verb that “refers to the rising of heavenly bodies rather than naturally to [the] rising of the dead, [which] may indicate that Ignatius has in mind the pagan name for Sunday, ‘the day of the sun’ . . . and therefore compares Christ’s resurrection on Sunday with the rising of the sun.”²³

A more plausible interpretation exists: Ignatius uses synecdoche to speak of Sabbath as representing Judaism. Ignatius intends to highlight the contrast “not between days as such but between ways of life, between ‘sabbatizing’ (i.e. living according to Jewish legalism) and living according to the resurrection life of Christ.”²⁴ The Sabbath becomes a natural representation of Judaism as a whole,

Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 122–23.

²⁰For example, see Kenneth A. Strand, “Another Look at Lord’s Day In the Early Church and in Rev. i. 10,” *New Testament Studies* 13, no. 02 (1967): 1978–79; Fritz Guy, “The Lord’s Day’ in the Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 2 (1964): 13–14; Robert A. Kraft, “Some Notes on Sabbath Observance in Early Christianity,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 1965): 27–28; Richard B. Lewis, “Ignatius and the Lord’s Day,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 1968): 46–59; Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 214–15.

²¹Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 123n3. Schoedel doubts this interpretation, saying, “Awkward . . . efforts to evade the reference to Sunday in the interest of Seventh-day Adventism are strained.” Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 123n3.

²²For example, see Jacques Liébaert, *Les enseignements moraux des pères apostoliques*. (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1970), 51; cf. Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 247n31.

²³Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 228.

²⁴Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 229; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 123; Lanfranchi, “Attitudes to the Sabbath in Three Apostolic Fathers,” 251–53. Lanfranchi notes, “The compiler of the long recension of Ignatius’ letters, who is also his first exegete, already interpreted Magn. 9 as a reference to Sabbath Observance.” Lanfranchi, “Attitudes to the Sabbath in Three Apostolic Fathers,” 251.

which is “radically incompatible with Christianity.”²⁵ Read within this context, Ignatius is teaching the Magnesians that “observing the Lord’s day means acknowledging that salvation is by the real death and resurrection of Jesus[;] ‘sabbatizing,’ the practice of the judaizers, Ignatius associates with . . . denial of the Lord’s death.”²⁶

Finally, some scholars interpret Ignatius to be writing about Easter, instead of Sunday.²⁷ However, given the context of this passage, in which Ignatius emphasizes ways of life, “reference to a weekly Lord’s Day would seem more natural.”²⁸ Indeed, Rordorf insists that, “This almost necessitates the translation ‘Sunday.’”²⁹

Significance. A first significance found in Ignatius’ arguments is the “sharp contrast he draws between ‘sabbatizing’ and ‘living according to the Lord’s Day.’” The contrast between these two expressions, “serve primarily to characterize two whole ways of life.”³⁰ Ignatius is not arguing, as Paul often does, with concern for Gentile freedom from the law. Rather, his words betray a “more thorough-going distinction between Judaism and Christianity.” Furthermore,

²⁵Richard Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” in *From Sabbath To Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 260; Lanfranchi, “Attitudes to the Sabbath in Three Apostolic Fathers,” 252–53.

²⁶Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 260.

²⁷Clifford William Dugmore, “Lord’s Day and Easter,” in *Neotestamentica et Patristica: eine freundesgabe, Oscar Cullmann zu seinem 60 geburtstag* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 279; cf. Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 247n36. Dugmore’s interpretation is so strained that most Ignatius commentators choose not to even address the possibility.

²⁸Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 229.

²⁹Rordorf, *Sunday*, 212; cf. Stott, who writes, “It is most unlikely that there is a comparison of a weekly observance with a yearly one.” W. Stott, “A Note on the Word KYPIAKH in Rev. I. 10,” *New Testament Studies* 12 (June 1965): 70.

³⁰Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 123.

The Sabbath, for Ignatius, is the badge of a false attitude to Jesus Christ, while Eucharistic worship on the Lord's Day defines Christianity as salvation by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is an early witness to the dissociation of Christianity from Judaism which characterizes the second century, and to the wholly negative attitude to Sabbath observance that was the corollary of that.³¹

Ignatius demonstrates the growing tendency for Christians to separate themselves from Jewish customs as he advocates a distinctively Christian practice of Lord's Day gathering.

Also significant is the foundation that Ignatius gives for Lord's Day observance: the resurrection. The church father, less than a generation removed from the apostles, shows the beginnings of a Lord's Day theology that will begin to blossom over the coming centuries.

Finally, what is left unsaid by Ignatius is also significant: he neither grounds the Lord's Day in any creation language nor with the eschatological language of eighth day. Unlike some theologians who come after him, Ignatius does not insinuate that the weekly observance of the Lord's Day is an explicit pattern set in place as a creation ordinance. Furthermore, nowhere does Ignatius tie the Lord's Day observance in with the eschatological eighth day. For Ignatius, the Lord's Day is a weekly declaration of the resurrection of the Lord, particularly seen in the performance of the ordinances of baptism and the Eucharist.

Justin Martyr

Justin shows continuity with Ignatius on several points. First, he defends Lord's Day worship and condemns weekly Sabbath day observance. Second, Justin argues that the Sabbath commands of the Old Testament were for the Jews, not for everyone.

³¹Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," 261.

However, Justin shows discontinuity with previous authors regarding his theological foundation for Lord's Day worship. Justin grounds his Lord's Day observance upon typological promise and fulfillment themes. Believers meet on Sundays because Christ is the true circumcision and the New Law.

Apology 1.67. "And on the day that is called Sunday all who live in the cities or in rural areas gather together in one place, and memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time allows." Justin goes on to state the reasons for this worship: "But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly since this day is the first day on which God . . . it was on this very day that Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead."³²

Interpretation. Unlike Ignatius, who wrote to a body of believers, Justin writes to the emperor in order to explain and defend Christian beliefs and practices. He explains the Christian practice of gathering on Sundays and gives a brief description of what believers did at the gatherings.³³ Justin seeks to quell some of the emperor's suspicions about questionable Christian practices. Justin also provides justification for this weekly pattern: creation and resurrection.

Significance. Justin's references to the Lord's Day are significant for several reasons. First, his *Apology* is one of the first defenses of the faith given by the church. Notably, the weekly gathering pattern is part of that defense. By explaining

³²Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 1:68.

³³Regarding the gathering of believers, Minns and Parvis argue that "it is highly improbable that large numbers of Christians gathered, even in the one city, for the Sunday eucharist, and even more unlikely that they travelled from rural areas to attend a eucharist with city-dwelling Christians." Denis Minns and P. M. Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 259n3. The physical location of the gatherings is not of primary interest in this dissertation; instead, the weekly pattern of gathering is of concern.

exactly what the Christian gatherings entailed, Justin corrects any rumors that the emperor had heard about Christian immorality.³⁴ Furthermore, Justin explains and defends Christian practices over and against the Roman pagan practices and Jewish traditions of the day. Justin defends Christian practices by showing that no moral impropriety occurs, and yet shows discontinuity with surrounding customs because of the motivation for their gatherings.

Justin gives another significant motivation for gathering on the Lord's Day: God's work of creation and re-creation. It is proper for the church to worship on Sunday, rather than Saturday, because this commemorates both God's creative work in the first week and God's resurrecting work done on Easter Sunday. The latter reason aligns with Ignatius' theological reasoning for Lord's Day worship. However, by making the creation week an additional reason for ongoing weekly worship gathering, Justin broadens the theological foundation for Lord's Day worship.

Interestingly, unlike those who argue for a perpetually binding Sabbath creation ordinance, Justin does not ground Lord's Day worship in God's rest. Rather, he grounds weekly worship in God's activity, specifically the first day. This is significant for two reasons: (1) he can keep the creation week as a prescription for weekly worship while simultaneously (2) distancing himself from the Jewish custom of weekly Sabbath worship, which was also based on the creation week. By grounding weekly Lord's Day worship on both creation and re-creation, Justin successfully shows continuity with other Fathers (e.g., Ignatius) while also demonstrating to the emperor that Christians do not carry the same traditions of the Jews.

³⁴For example, Christians were charged with cannibalism because of language about eating Christ's "flesh" and drinking His "blood." See Andrew McGowan, "Eating People: Accusations of Cannibalism Against Christians in the Second Century," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 4 (1994): 413–42. Justin also mentions this slanderous charge in *Dialogue with Trypho* 10.

Dialogue with Trypho the Jew. Writing specifically to defend Christianity as the proper interpretation of the Old Testament and to show that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, Justin naturally deals with issues regarding the Jewish law. Specifically, he addresses the question of Sabbath observance multiple times. He ties the issue of the Sabbath to a proper understanding of the fulfillment of old covenant law and to the proper interpretation of new covenant law. Key points include: (1) the Jews never properly understood old covenant law and do not understand how the new law relates to it; (2) the Sabbath was not a perpetually binding obligation for Old Testament believers, therefore it is not inconceivable for the command to be removed in the new covenant; (3) in the new law, the Sabbath command calls for perpetual obedience, not weekly; and (4) circumcision, along with the rest of the old covenant law, pointed to and has been fulfilled in Christ. This fulfillment, along with Christ's resurrection, combines to give typological resolution to Old Testament patterns and gives the basis for new covenant worship on Sundays, the eighth day.

First, Justin claims that the Jews understand neither the old covenant law nor the new covenant. After explaining that the Mosaic Law is old and belongs only to the Jews, Justin argues that a new law has been enacted and has "abrogated that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one." Furthermore, this new law is an "eternal and final law—namely, Christ— [which] has been given to us."³⁵ Christ himself is the new law, and he has personally fulfilled and abrogated the Old Covenant commands, including the Sabbaths.

³⁵Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 10, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, *ANF* 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

Second, regarding the perpetual nature of the Sabbath command, Justin argues that the Jews have wrongly understood the universality of the command.

Consider Justin's observation:

Moreover, all those righteous men already mentioned [Adam, Abel, Enoch, Lot, Noah, Melchizedek, and Abraham], *though they kept no Sabbaths*, were pleasing to God; and after them Abraham with all his descendants until Moses . . . And you [fleshly Jews] were commanded to keep Sabbaths, that you might retain the memorial of God. For His word makes this announcement, saying, "That you may know that I am God who redeemed you."³⁶

Furthermore, "if there was no need of circumcision before Abraham, or of the observance of Sabbaths . . . before Moses; no more need is there of them now."³⁷

According to Justin, because the Sabbath command was not observed before the Mosaic Law was given, the Sabbath was neither an eternal command nor was universal in its application. Rather, the Sabbath commands were given to a specific people, the Jews, for a specific purpose: "God enjoined you to keep the Sabbath . . . on account of your unrighteousness, and that of your fathers."³⁸

Third, regarding the Jewish observance of the law, Justin accuses the Jews of having an improper understanding of what it means to obey the Sabbath commands.

This same law [New Covenant Law, or Christ] you have despised, and His new holy covenant you have slighted; and now you neither receive it, nor repent of your evil deeds. 'For your ears are closed, your eyes are blinded, and your heart is hardened,' Jeremiah has cried; yet not even then do you listen. . . . You have now need of a second circumcision, though you glory greatly in the flesh. The new law requires you to keep perpetual Sabbath, and you, because you are idle for one day, suppose you are pious, not discerning why this has been commanded you. . . . The Lord our God does not take pleasure in such observances: if there is any perjured person or a thief among you, let him cease

³⁶Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 19 (emphasis added).

³⁷Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 23.

³⁸Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 21.

to do so; if any adulterer, let him repent; then he has kept the sweet and true Sabbaths of God.³⁹

The new law brings with it the command to observe a perpetual Sabbath. In other words, new covenant believers should be constantly “resting” in Christ. This rest is only attained by repenting from and avoiding sin.

Fourth, and most importantly, Justin explains that the Sabbath observance as a day of rest and worship has been replaced by the eighth day. *Dialogue with Trypho* 24 explains the nature of the eighth day:

It is possible for us to show how the eighth day possessed a certain mysterious import, which the seventh day did not possess, and which was promulgated by God through these rites. But lest I appear now to diverge to other subjects, understand what I say: the blood of that circumcision is obsolete, and we trust in the blood of salvation; there is now another covenant, and another law has gone forth from Zion.⁴⁰

Additionally, in Chapter 41, Justin writes,

Furthermore, the command to circumcise, requiring that children are always to be circumcised on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision by which we are circumcised from error and iniquity through our Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead on the first day after the Sabbath. This day, the day that is the first day of the week, is called the eighth day according to the cycle of all the days of the week, and yet it remains the first day.⁴¹

For Justin, the old covenant commands regarding the Sabbath and circumcision served as typological forerunners fulfilled by Christ. The circumcision of Christ on the cross replaced the eighth-day circumcision of Jewish boys.⁴² Eighth-day (i.e., Sunday) corporate worship gatherings now stand as a weekly reminder of Christ’s resurrection on that sacred eighth day.

³⁹Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 12.

⁴⁰Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 24.

⁴¹Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 41.

⁴²Justin also sees the eighth day signified by the eight people saved on Noah’s ark: “For righteous Noah, along with the other mortals at the deluge, i.e., with his own wife, his three sons and their wives, being eight in number, were a symbol of the eighth day, wherein Christ appeared when He rose from the dead, for ever the first in power.” Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 138.

Significance. Justin shows continuity with Ignatius on several points. First, he defends Lord's Day worship and condemns weekly Sabbath day observance. Also like Ignatius, Justin argues that the Sabbath commands of the Old Testament were for the Jews, not for everyone. However, Justin shows discontinuity with previous authors regarding his theological foundation for Lord's Day worship. Justin grounds Lord's Day observance upon typological promise and fulfillment themes. Believers meet on Sunday to worship Christ as the true circumcision and the New Law.

It is worth noting that in his *First Apology* Justin argues that Lord's Day worship is grounded in creation, but that the Sabbath command is not, contra Exodus 20.⁴³ The different audiences of the two works (Gentiles and Jews, respectively), or perhaps an evolution in his theological framework could explain this disparity. Either way, Justin does see the creation week as somehow underpinning new covenant Lord's Day worship.

Tertullian

Tertullian (fl. ca. 195–212) only briefly mentions the Lord's Day or Sabbath; however, he does make clear that the Jewish Sabbath has been replaced.⁴⁴ For example, Tertullian writes, "Whence we (Christians) understand that *we* still more ought to observe a Sabbath from all 'servile work' always, and not only every seventh day, but through all time. And through this arises the question for us, *what* Sabbath God willed us to keep? For the Scriptures point to a Sabbath eternal and a Sabbath temporal."⁴⁵ The temporal Sabbath was the Jewish Sabbath. But, Tertullian explains,

⁴³See Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 19.

⁴⁴For more on Tertullian and his thought, see Gerald Lewis Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979); Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁴⁵Tertullian, *Answer to the Jews*, ed. Allan Menzies, trans. S. Thelwall, *ANF* 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1885), chap. 4.

the pre-Sianaitic Jewish patriarchs did not observe the Jewish Sabbath, and Christians are not commanded to observe the Jewish Sabbath. The Mosaic Sabbath command was temporary: “Manifest accordingly it is, that the precept was not eternal nor spiritual, but temporary. . . . Whence it is manifest that the force of such precepts was temporary, and respected the necessity of present circumstances; and that it was not with a view to its observance in perpetuity that God formerly gave them such a law.”⁴⁶ God purposely made Sabbath commands of the Old Testament as provisional and to point to a greater eternal Sabbath.⁴⁷

However, even though Tertullian believes that Christ’s coming removed the Old Testament ethical commands concerning the Sabbath, he does indicate that certain behavior is not proper on the Lord’s Day. He wrote:

In the matter of *kneeling* also prayer is subject to diversity of observance, through the act of some few who abstain from kneeling on the Sabbath; and since this dissension is particularly on its trial before the churches, the Lord will give His grace that the dissentients may either yield, or else indulge their opinion without offence to others. We, however (just as we have received), only on the day of the Lord's Resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling, but every posture and office of solicitude; *deferring even our businesses* lest we give any place to the devil.⁴⁸

For Tertullian, observing the Lord’s Day takes precedence over worldly business. Tertullian makes clear that the Jewish Sabbath was a temporary ordinance; Christ does not require his followers to submit to those temporary precepts. However, Tertullian also sees some type of ethical (even vocational) restraint incumbent upon Christians on the Lord’s Day.

⁴⁶Tertullian, *Answer to the Jews*, chap. 4.

⁴⁷Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian’s Aduersus Iudaeos: A Rhetorical Analysis*, North American Patristics Society Patristic Monograph Series 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 73–75.

⁴⁸Tertullian, *On Prayer*, ed. Allan Menzies, trans. S. Thelwall, *ANF* 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1885), chap. 23 (emphasis added).

Eighth Day Theology

In the time of Justin an eighth-day theology grew in popularity. Multiple authors used this new term in various ways, often quite symbolically. Because in the Old Testament eight people were saved from the flood, and boys were circumcised on the eighth day, the eighth day could “signify the day on which salvation arrived with Christ’s resurrection and the day on which baptism was administered.”⁴⁹

Significantly, the eighth day language enabled “a correlation of Sabbath and Sunday. . . . Sabbath rest was such a common characterization of the eschatological hope that when Sunday as the ‘eighth day’ was understood to prefigure the world to come, it was no great step to an association of Sabbath and Sunday.”⁵⁰ Indeed, while there is no second-century evidence that Sunday was seen as a day of rest, Sunday was a weekly day of worship for the Christians, as the Sabbath was for the Jews.⁵¹ The groundwork was laid for later generations of Christians to more clearly see the Lord’s Day as the Christian day of rest.

One example of an early Christian writer linking God’s rest in Genesis 2, Sabbath, and eighth day theology is the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*.⁵² The author writes in the 15th chapter these words about God’s rest and how believers relate to the Sabbath command today.

“And he rested on the seventh day.” This means that when his Son comes he

⁴⁹Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 273–74. He examines various theories for the origin of eighth day language.

⁵⁰Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 274.

⁵¹“We do not know how much of the day was taken up by Christian corporate activities, but both persecution and economic circumstances must have kept many Christians at work during the working hours of the day.” Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 274–75.

⁵²Holmes dates the epistle sometime in the early second century. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 373; cf. Clayton N. Jefford, *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 14–16; James Paget, “The Epistle of Barnabas and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,” in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 229–49.

will put an end to the age of the lawless one, judge the impious, and alter the sun, moon, and stars; then he will indeed rest on the seventh day. Moreover, it says, “Make it holy with pure hands and a pure heart.” We are very much mistaken if we think that at the present time anyone, by having a pure heart, can make holy the day that the Lord has made holy.⁵³

The author believes that God’s rest in Genesis 2 points toward the final rest to come, the great eighth day, when God will finally vanquish his foes and restore what was ruined by the fall. Furthermore, anyone is mistaken if he or she believes that the Sabbath command could even be obeyed in this age. Believers could only possibly obey the Sabbath command if they were holy themselves, but this has yet to come.

And so you see that at that time, when we are given a good rest, we will make it holy—being able to do so because we ourselves have been made upright and have received the promise, when lawlessness is no more and all things have been made new by the Lord. Then we will be able to make the day holy, after we ourselves have been made holy.⁵⁴ Only when believers have been made holy on the eighth day can they truly obey the Sabbath commandment.

However, just because the eighth day has not yet arrived does not mean that we do not observe it now. Rather, each eighth day (i.e., the Lord’s Day) is a joyful celebration of the day that our savior rose from the grave:

Moreover he says to them, “I cannot stand your new moons and Sabbaths.” You see what he means: It is not the Sabbaths of the present time that are acceptable to me, but the one I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make a beginning of an eighth day, which is the beginning of another world. Therefore also we celebrate the eighth day with gladness, for on it Jesus arose from the dead, and appeared, and ascended into heaven.⁵⁵

The final day, the great age of the eighth day, will be a new world full of joyful rest. Until then, the author insists that Christians celebrate the Lord’s Day: “the only

⁵³ *The Epistle to Barnabas*, ed. and trans. Bart D. Ehrman, LCL 25 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15.5–6.

⁵⁴ *The Epistle to Barnabas* 15.7.

⁵⁵ *The Epistle to Barnabas* 8–9.

point that is really clear here is the only point that Barnabas really wished to make: the Jews with their Sabbaths are wrong, the Christians with their Sundays are right.”⁵⁶

Barnabas strongly separates Christian “rest” from Jewish Sabbath rest, to the point that he suspends Sabbath observance until the eschaton (15.7): “Barnabas is . . . hostile to the [Jewish Sabbath] observances, but, in contrast to Ignatius, his point of view is that of a messianic Jewish-Christian who believes that the precepts only have a symbolic and spiritual meaning.”⁵⁷ Barnabas assumes observance of Christian “celebration” on the eighth day (presumably weekly).⁵⁸ Barnabas links God’s rest in Genesis 2, Sabbath, and eschatological rest on the eighth day.⁵⁹

Clement of Alexandria and Origen

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215), drawing on the allegorical exegesis of Philo and Aristobulus, views the Sabbath as preparation for the “true Sabbath rest of the eighth day, for the eighth day is the first day and the first day is

⁵⁶C. K. Barrett, “The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honor of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 370.

⁵⁷Lanfranchi, “Attitudes to the Sabbath in Three Apostolic Fathers,” 257.

⁵⁸William Cunningham, *A Dissertation on the Epistle of S. Barnabas*. (London: Macmillan, 1877), 116. For more on Barnabas, Sabbath, and millenarianism, see Jean Daniélou, *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea: The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. John A. Baker (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 396–404.

⁵⁹Hippolytus is another example of an interpreter that links Sabbath and eschatological interpretation. Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *ANF* 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1886), 179. He writes, “And 6,000 years must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day ‘on which God rested from all His works.’ For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they ‘shall reign with Christ,’ when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for ‘a day with the Lord is as a thousand years.’ Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled. And they are not yet fulfilled, as John says, ‘five are fallen; one is,’ that is, the sixth; ‘the other is not yet come.’”

Christ the ἀρχή of creation and the light of men.”⁶⁰ He continues, commenting on the fourth commandment,

And the fourth word is that which intimates that the world was created by God, and that He gave us the seventh day as a rest, on account of the trouble that there is in life. For God is incapable of weariness, and suffering, and want. But we who bear flesh need rest. The seventh day, therefore, is proclaimed a rest—abstraction from ills—preparing 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—a light true, casting no shadow, is the Spirit of God indivisibly divided to all, who are sanctified by faith, holding the place of a luminary, in order to the knowledge of real existences. By following Him, therefore, through our whole life, we become impassible; and this is to rest.⁶¹

For Clement, the Sabbath was a guide that prepared God’s people for the future rest to be found in Christ and the future rest of the eternal state. Thus, Clement begins to link the idea of Sabbath rest to the first day; however, his concern is more with a spiritual rest rather than with days of the week or with physical rest.⁶²

Clement’s disciple Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254) argues in a similar manner. For Origen, spiritual rest and Lord’s Day observance are superior to Jewish Sabbath observance, and the former have always been preferred to the latter:

Let the Jews understand that even then the Lord’s Day was preferred to the Jewish Sabbath, that even then it was indicated that on their Sabbath none of God’s grace [i.e., manna] descended to them from heaven, none of the heavenly bread, which is the word of God came to them. . . . But on our Lord’s Day the Lord always rains down manna from heaven.⁶³

⁶⁰Clement, *Stromata*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. W. L. Alexander, *ANF 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1885), 6:16. For more on Clement’s life and thought, see Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Clement of Alexandria: A Project of Christian Perfection*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2008); Eric Francis Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶¹Clement, *Stromata* 6:16.

⁶²Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 276. See also Clement’s *Stromata* 4:25; 5:6, 14; 7:10.

⁶³Origen, *Hom. In Ex.* 7.5, translated and cited in Daniel J Niles, “Allegory and Spiritual Observance in Origen’s Discussions of the Sabbath,” in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser and William Petersen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 132–33.

Origen believes that the spiritual rest brought by Christ has fulfilled the literal and physical rest commanded by the Jewish Sabbath commands.

Similarly, Origen wrestles with the dilemma of doing justice to weekly observance of the Lord's Day and the Pauline idea that for Christians the whole week is devoted to the Lord. Like Clement, Origen interprets the Sabbath spiritually in terms of the entire Christian life.⁶⁴ Sabbath is not so much "in terms of abstention from sin, as in previous writers, but rather in terms of contemplation."⁶⁵

However, even though Origen views the Lord's Day as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Sabbath, he does not think that the two are unrelated. For example, He argues against the practice of attending both church and synagogue by using the old Sabbath laws and "by interpreting the word of scripture that is shared during the worship as a Sabbath meal. To hear the word in both places is therefore to transgress the law that prohibits the eating of the Sabbath meal in more than one house (Exod 12:46)." Origen writes, "If you eat the word of God in one house, namely in the church, and then leave it on the opinion that you are made a partaker of God in the synagogue, although the law says, 'in one house it is to be eaten,' you do not eat in one house."⁶⁶ He uses similar argumentation against those who would violate the law by discussing in synagogue what they heard in church: "And you

⁶⁴For example, see this discussion of Origen's rebuke of "literal" interpretations of the Sabbath commandment in Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Sabbath Law and Mishnah Shabbat in Origen De Principiis," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (June 2010): 166–67.

⁶⁵Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," 280. Bauckham also notes that it is possible "that already in Origen's Alexandria this tendency resulted in a kind of Christian Sabbatarianism which elsewhere arose only much later. A Coptic fragment attributed to Peter of Alexandria (d. 311) includes this passage: 'I order you to do nothing on the Lord's holy day, and not to allow yourself to go to disputes, lawsuits or contests, but to give attention to the reading of the holy scriptures, and to give bread to the needy. . . . Cursed is he who on the Lord's holy day performs any business except that which is beneficial to the soul or concerned with the care of cattle,'" Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," 278n168. The dating of this document is highly debated. However, the term "Lord's Holy Day" is quite relevant to the discussion of the origin of Christian Sabbatarianism.

⁶⁶Origen, *Selecta in Ex.*, translated and cited in Nides, "Allegory and Spiritual Observance," 134.

shall not take from the flesh and carry it out of the house.’ It is not permitted to teach the Church’s word outside the Church, just as you are not to take meat outside the house.”⁶⁷ Thus, Origen uses Sabbath law in

a somewhat naive yet positive way. The metaphor maintains the validity of the old dispensation’s law in the support of the new dispensation’s practice of worshipping in a new place on a new day. Although Origen surely was not prepared to invoke this law in the reverse direction and to suggest that the Sabbath meal must be eaten only in the synagogue, his line of reasoning does establish a positive link with the Sabbath tradition, employing and revalidating rather than abandoning the law.⁶⁸

Origen clearly sees some links between the old Sabbath laws and the Christian observance of the Lord’s Day.

Origen’s Sabbath interpretations try to reconcile the spiritual demands of believers with an emphasis on the uniqueness of the Lord’s Day. Thus, while not the explicit theology of a Christian Sabbath seen in later generations, a trajectory toward an idea of a Christian Sabbath is present.

Constantine, Sunday, and Post-Constantinian Sunday Observance

In AD 321 Constantine enacts legislation prohibiting all official business and artifact legislation on “the venerable day of the sun,” only exempting farmers.⁶⁹ Later that year, he promulgates a law permitting the fulfillment of vows as appropriate on Sundays and regulating the transactions and manumission of slaves.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Origen, *Selecta in Ex.*, translated and cited in, Nides, “Allegory and Spiritual Observance,” 134.

⁶⁸Nides, “Allegory and Spiritual Observance,” 134.

⁶⁹*Codex Theodosianus* 2.8.1 and *Codex Justinianus* 3:12:2, cited in Timothy Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 51–52; see also Willy Rordorf, *Sabbat et Dimanche dans l’église ancienne*, Traditio Christiana (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1972), no. 111.

⁷⁰Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 51–52; Charles M Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 172–73; Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 280–81.

Constantine's aims are clear: he is not merely promoting some vague monotheism. Rather, as Eusebius explains in his *Vita Constantini*, Constantine's legislation are aiming at specifically Christian ends.

He also ordained that one day should be regarded as an occasion for prayers: that is the day which is truly the first and chief of all, the day of our Lord and Savior. The entire care of his court was entrusted to deacons and to other ministers consecrated to the service of God, and distinguished by gravity of life and every other virtue; while his trusty bodyguard, strong in affection and fidelity to his person, found in their emperor a teacher in the practice of piety, and like him held the salutary day of the Lord in honor, and performed on that day the devotions which he loved. The same observance was recommended by this blessed prince to all classes of his subjects since he earnestly desired to lead all humanity gradually to the worship of God. Accordingly, he enjoined all the subjects of the Roman Empire to observance the day of the Lord as a day of rest.⁷¹

Constantine is a man trying to promote Christianity through the legislative means at his disposal.

But, some might ask, what about the inconsistencies in Constantine's approach? Why does he still speak of the "day of the sun" (*dies Solis*), rather than the "Lord's Day?" Why does he not completely rid the empire of obviously pagan practices (e.g., gladiatorial games, divination)? Why do the imperial mints continue to produce coins that portray the originally pagan "Sol Invictus as the emperor's divine *comes*, protector, and patron for several years more?"⁷² An expert on Constantine responds,

That fact [iconographic coinage] attests not imperial devotion to a vague solar monotheism, but the dead weight of iconographic tradition. It is Constantine's innovations and deliberate actions which reveal his true beliefs and the strength of his Christian convictions. The apparent ambiguity of his religious attitudes is a sign of caution, not of doubt or hesitation in his own mind; it represents the shrewd assessment of a skillful statesman that he must make haste slowly.⁷³

⁷¹Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 18, quoted in Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, 173.

⁷²Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 48.

⁷³Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 48.

Constantine is seen by ancient (e.g., Eusebius) and modern historians as deliberately trying to bless the church through his Christian example and legislation.

Constantine's legislation is the earliest clear reference to Sunday as a day free from work, a move no doubt intended to benefit Christendom.⁷⁴ He officially codified the link between the Lord's Day and rest, a link that will only be strengthened in coming generations.⁷⁵

Theologians during this time also move toward a correlation of the Sabbath and Sunday; indeed, the "two were sometimes compared as respectively the Jewish and Christian days of worship."⁷⁶ However, unlike the Jewish Sabbath that emphasized physical inactivity, many theologians condemn idleness on the Sabbath.⁷⁷

Eusebius of Caesarea (d. ca. 339) makes the first extant Christian reference to the transference of the Sabbath to Sunday. Following Origen, Eusebius's commentary on Psalm 91 defines Sabbath rest as turning from the things of the physical world to the contemplation of heavenly things, such is the "spiritual

⁷⁴Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," 281.

⁷⁵Hartog comments on the link between Sunday observance and rest, "A universal prohibition of Sunday labor would have proved extremely difficult if not impossible for pre-Constantinian Christians to enforce." Paul Hartog, "Constantine, Sabbath-Keeping, and Sunday Observance," in *Rethinking Constantine: History, Theology, and Legacy*, ed. Edward Smither (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 65. Similarly, Rordorf asserts, "The Christians, who for a long time belonged principally to the lower strata of society and in particular to the slave class, could not observe a day of rest which recurred after every six days, in addition to observing the official days of rest; their economic and social circumstances would never have permitted this." Rordorf, *Sunday*, 155. Hartog agrees, "Especially in times of persecution, Sunday rest would have immediately set the Christians off from society." Hartog, "Constantine, Sabbath, and Sunday Observance," 65n492.

⁷⁶Bauckham lists *Didascalie* 26; Ps.-Athanasius, *De sabbatis et circumcissione* 5; Jerome, *In Eccles.* 2.2; Ambrose, *Ep.* 31 (44) *ad Orontianum*. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," 281n190.

⁷⁷Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," 281n198, n199; cf. Rordorf, *Sunday*, 84n1. Examples of the condemnation of idleness include: Victorinus, *De fabrica mundi* 5; Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 4; Ps.-Athanasius, *Hom. De semente* 1; Origen, *In Num. Hom.* 23:4; *C. Cels.* 6:61; *Didascalia* 26; *Const. App.* 2:36:2, 6:18:17; Ps.-Athanasius, *De sabbatis et circumcissione* 1.

Sabbath” that belongs to Christianity.⁷⁸ For Eusebius, the “activity of Christians on the Lord’s Day is analogous to the activity of the priests on the Mosaic Sabbath; it is the service of God in worship. It is this priestly activity of worship that has been transferred from the Sabbath to Sunday.”⁷⁹ Eusebius’ Sabbath theology shares many similar emphases with this dissertation: (1) Christians rest in imitation of God’s rest after creation, (2) the Christian Sunday is an image (εἰκὼν) of the eschatological rest to come, and (3) men will share in the true Sabbath rest in the world to come.⁸⁰ However, Eusebius’ original contribution to this history of Sabbath rest is the presentation of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath.

As time goes on, the church increasingly teaches that rest is appropriate on the Lord’s Day. For example, the Council of Laodicea (343–81) decided that “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ.”⁸¹ Other councils made similar statements, up to and including anathemas and excommunication threats.⁸²

⁷⁸Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 101. For more on Eusebius’ understanding of the Old Testament, see R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture*. (London: SCM Press, 1959), 187–95, 287–95.

⁷⁹Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 284.

⁸⁰Eusebius, *Ps. 91 Comm.*; see also, Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 283–84.

⁸¹Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath*, 247.

⁸²For example—Council of Gangra, Council of Sardica, Council of Eliberis. Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath*, 247.

Augustine and Sabbath

Augustine (354–430) wrote much about Sabbath and rest.⁸³ Augustine speaks at length about the spiritual nature of Sabbath rest and Sabbath observance, and he provides very little regarding right and wrong ways to observe the Lord’s Day. His reflections on Sabbath, particularly God’s rest in Genesis 2, were more philosophical in nature than any before him. He wrestles with theology proper, particularly ontology, and how it could be said that an eternal, tireless God could rest. He also speaks of rest as being the goal of both cosmic history and of individual eschatology. For Augustine, God’s rest is a gift for his creatures, the gift of himself, which was prefigured in Genesis 2:1–3 and will be tasted fully in the final Sabbath to come.

The nature of God’s rest. In his commentary *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine spends many pages reflecting upon God’s rest in Genesis 2.⁸⁴ He first wrestles with how an eternal, tireless God could be said to rest. It makes no sense, writes Augustine, to say that God wearied himself by creating: “It would be the height of absurdity, utter nonsense, to think that [creation] was hard, laborious toil . . . for God.”⁸⁵ Instead, Augustine argues that God rests when we rest:

So all that remains for us to understand, perhaps, is that he granted rest in himself to the rational creation in which he also created man . . . so that we should be borne along by the impetus of desire to the place where we shall rest, the place, that is, where we shall look for nothing further, when we reach it.

⁸³For more on Augustine’s life and influence, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Henry Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); James Joseph O’Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006); Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten, eds., *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine: Three Volume Set* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸⁴Augustine, *On Genesis: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, vol. 13, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), IV.8.15.250–10.20.252. Subsequent citations of *On Genesis* use the following pattern: book number, original section number, Hill’s section number, page number.

⁸⁵Augustine, *On Genesis* IV.8.15.205.

After all, just as God is rightly said to do whatever we do by his working in us, so God is rightly said to rest, when we rest thanks to his munificence.⁸⁶

He further explains,

We are indeed quite right to understand it in this way, because for one thing it is true, and for another it does not call for great perspicacity to see that God is said to rest when he makes us rest, just as he is said to come to know when he ensures that we come to know something. God, after all, does not come to know in time something he did not know previously, and yet he says to Abraham: “Now I have come to know that you fear God (Gen 22:12), where we cannot take it to mean anything else, can we, but “Now I have made you come to know”? It is by these manners of speech, when we speak of things that do not happen to God as though they did, that we acknowledge it is he who makes them happen to us.⁸⁷

So, Augustine understands Genesis 2:1–3 to be teaching that God’s “rest” after creation provides a “rest” for the rational creatures that he had just made, because when God “rests” he is not himself resting. Rather, God’s resting is instead providing the means and the ability for his creatures to rest—defined as being in a place “where we shall look for nothing further.”

Similarly, he later writes, “God’s resting by finding bliss in himself ought to suggest to us the right way to understand how he is also said to find rest in us; he is only said to do so when he bestows on us rest in himself.”⁸⁸ God’s resting is in himself and is a gift to his creatures: “God’s rest therefore, to those who understand it correctly, means his being in need of no one else’s good; and for this reason his resting in us is certainly in himself, because we too find bliss in the good which he is, not he in the good which we are.”⁸⁹

Additionally, Augustine answers a related question: Why does this text speak of God resting? Augustine answers, “by mentioning his rest to us he was

⁸⁶Augustine, *On Genesis* IV.9.16.250.

⁸⁷Augustine, *On Genesis* IV.9.17.251.

⁸⁸Augustine, *On Genesis* IV.16.27.257.

⁸⁹Augustine, *On Genesis* IV.16.27.257.

advising us to hope to find our final rest in him.”⁹⁰ The Holy Spirit includes the Genesis account of God’s resting in order to induce the rational creation to come and rest in God. So, Augustine interprets God’s rest in Genesis 2 as not a literal rest of repose; rather, God’s rest is a call for and a means of his rational creatures to find their spiritual rest in Him.

Finding personal rest. Perhaps Augustine’s most famous statement is from the beginning of his *Confessions*: “you made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.”⁹¹ Augustine uses the theme of rest—and the lack of it—as a major part of his interpretive framework, especially in the *Confessions*. He cries out, “Who will grant me to rest content in you?”⁹² Augustine goes on to answer his own question. God must, and will, grant that rest.

God it is who “arouses” us to praise Him (*tu excites*), to take “delight” in praising Him. . . . Restless and “unquiet,” our soul plunged rather into the “delight” of this embodied existence; but having found no rest, its restlessness now is salutary, makes it a “seeker” after that Sabbath “rest” which Augustine lyrically describes in the final pages of his work.⁹³

Mankind has been wandering, seeking rest ever since the fall. Augustine confesses that he sought rest in, among other things, sexual indulgence and contemplation.⁹⁴

⁹⁰Augustine, *On Genesis* IV.10.20.252.

⁹¹Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), I.1.21. Citations from *Confessions* use the following pattern: book.section.page number. Subsequent citations will come from this translation unless otherwise noted. For more on the Augustine’s *Confessions*, see James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine Confessions: Introduction and Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine Confessions: Commentary on books 1–7*, vol. 2, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine Confessions: Commentary on Books 8–13*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁹²Augustine, *Confessions* I.5.24

⁹³Robert O’Connell, *St. Augustine’s Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 37.

⁹⁴See Augustine, *Confessions* VIII.20; IX.5, 8, 11, 12. Cf. O’Connell, *St. Augustine’s Confessions*, 93, 106.

Augustine indicates in other places that Christians rest and experience the Sabbath by abstaining from their sin. Believers rest spiritually, not physically like the Jews, as he explains in his commentary on Psalm 92,

This Psalm is entitled, a Psalm to be sung on the Sabbath day. Lo, this day is the Sabbath, which the Jews at this period observe by a kind of bodily rest, languid and luxurious. They abstain from labours, and give themselves up to trifles; and though God ordained the Sabbath, they spend it in actions which God forbids. Our rest is from evil works, theirs from good; for it is better to plough than to dance. They abstain from good, but not from trifling, works. God proclaims to us a Sabbath. What sort of Sabbath? First consider, where it is. It is in the heart, within us; for many are idle with their limbs, while they are disturbed in conscience. . . . That very joy in the tranquility of our hope, is our Sabbath. This is the subject of praise and of song in this Psalm, how a Christian man is in the Sabbath of his own heart, that is, in the quiet, tranquility, and serenity of his conscience, undisturbed; hence he tells us here, whence men are wont to be disturbed, and he teaches thee to keep Sabbath in thine own heart.⁹⁵

Augustine believes that Christ has freed believers from the physical, Jewish Sabbath observance.

Similarly, in his treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*, Augustine makes clear that believers do not rest according to the Jewish pattern of Sabbath: “Well, now, I should like to be told what there is in these ten commandments, except the observance of the Sabbath, which ought not be kept by a Christian.”⁹⁶ He goes on to explain that the Sabbath commandment is not to be observed literally like the other nine: “Every man that still observes that [Sabbath] day in its literal appointment is carnally wise, but to be carnally wise is nothing else than death? And must the other nine commandments, which are rightly observed in their literal form, not be regarded as belonging to the law of works by which none is justified, but to the law of faith by whereby the just man lives?”⁹⁷ Thus, Augustine clearly believes that the

⁹⁵Augustine, *Exposition of the Book of Psalms*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, NPNF1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 8:453.

⁹⁶Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, trans. Robert Wallis and Benjamin Warfield, vol. 5, NPNF1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 23.93. References to this work will be cited as chapter.page number.

⁹⁷Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 24.94; cf. 27.95 and 36.98. Similarly, in *Contra*

Old Testament commands for observing the Sabbath do not apply literally to Christians. For believers, rest is a heart-level posture that avoids sin, trusts in God, and looks forward to the final Sabbath.

Augustine closes his *Confessions* with a prayer for rest, the peace of the Sabbath.

O Lord God, grant us peace, for all that we have is your gift. Grant us the peace of repose, the peace of the Sabbath, the peace which as no evening. . . . The seventh day is without evening and the sun shall not set upon it, for you have sanctified it and willed that it shall last forever. . . . In that eternal Sabbath you will rest with us, just as now you work in us. The rest that we shall enjoy will be yours, just as the work that we now do is your work done through us. But you, O Lord, are eternally at work and at rest. It is not in time that you see or in time that you move or in time that you rest: yet you make what we see in time; you make time itself and the repose which comes when time ceases.⁹⁸

It is in this final state, the eschatological Sabbath that we will find rest.⁹⁹ We will share in his rest; but in this life we can only partially taste of it.

This final state is the goal of both personal and cosmic history; it is the recapitulation, the return to the original state of rest that God provided us on the seventh day. In the end

there shall be a great Sabbath which has no evening, which God celebrated among his first works. . . . For we shall be ourselves the seventh day, when we shall be filled and replenished with God's blessing and sanctification. There we shall be still and know that He is God; that He is that which we ourselves aspired to be when we fell away from Him. . . . But when we are restored by Him, and perfected with greater grace, we shall have eternal leisure to see that He is God, for we shall be full of Him when He shall be all in all. For even our good works, when they are understood to be rather His than ours, are imputed to us that we may enjoy this Sabbath rest.¹⁰⁰

Faustum 18.2–6, Augustine reiterates his belief that the Sabbath observance of the Old Testament was a ceremonial shadow that Christ fulfilled.

⁹⁸Augustine, *Confessions* XIII.35–37.346.

⁹⁹Of this state O'Connell explains, "The principle of 'ordered love' (*ordo amoris*) is what presides over the entire process of the second creation. Its purpose is to restore the original order. . . . In short, to lead us back from the feverish actions of time to the eternal sabbath rest of joyful contemplation." O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions*, 179.

¹⁰⁰Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 22.30.866. Citations from *City of God* follow this pattern, unless otherwise noted: book number.section number.page number.

Augustine continues to describe the eternal state. After describing the division of redemptive history into ages that correspond to each of the days of the creation week, Augustine concludes his *City of God* with another reflection on the final Sabbath, the eighth day.

Suffice it so say that the seventh [age] shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord's day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end.¹⁰¹

For Augustine, the future for all believers will be rest in and with their God, which was originally pictured on the seventh day of creation.

Conclusion

Thus, the early church features a nearly universal Lord's Day observance. Across a wide geographical area, various cultures, and varying language bases, the young church worships on the first day. Schaff draws a proper conclusion: "Nothing short of apostolic precedence can account for the universal religious observance [of the Lord's Day] in the churches of the second century. There is no dissenting voice."¹⁰²

However, the theological underpinnings for Lord's Day worship are not uniform. Over time, the church begins to see a correlation between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. Eventually, legislators began to regulate a day of rest for worship: "For the patristic church, the corollary of freedom from work on Sunday had to be the complete devotion of Sunday to worship."¹⁰³ However, the church's Lord's Day

¹⁰¹Augustine, *The City of God* 22.30.867.

¹⁰²Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 201; see also Lee, "Second Century Witnesses to the Sabbath and Lord's Day Debate."

¹⁰³Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," 286. For a historical description of the rise of the prohibition of work, see Lawrence Leslie McReavy, "Servile Work: The

pattern is a practice in search of a theological rationale. As the church approaches the medieval era, ecclesial authority becomes the prominent ground for Lord's Day observance.

Medieval Church and the Sabbath

Broadly speaking, the medieval church continues the trajectory of strong Lord's Day observance and a growing call for the abstention from "servile work" on the day.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the church increasingly grounds Lord's Day observance in ecclesiastical authority.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) believes that God's rest in Genesis 2 is prescriptive for mankind because the worship of God is prescriptive for mankind. He interprets the Sabbath commandment according to the fourfold method.

Hence according to the dictate of reason, man sets aside a certain time for spiritual refreshment, by which man's mind is refreshed in God. And thus to have a certain time set aside for occupying oneself with Divine things is the matter of a moral precept. But, in so far as this precept specifies the time as a sign representing the Creation of the world, it is a ceremonial precept. Again, it is a ceremonial precept in its allegorical signification, as representative of Christ's rest in the tomb on the seventh day: also in its moral signification, as representing cessation from all sinful acts, and the mind's rest in God, in which sense, too, it is a general precept. Again, it is a ceremonial precept in its analogical signification, as foreshadowing the enjoyment of God in heaven. Hence the precept about hallowing the Sabbath is placed among the precepts of the decalogue, as a moral, but not as a ceremonial precept.¹⁰⁵

According to Aquinas, the Sabbath commandment contains a moral component (a regular time of worship was due God¹⁰⁶) and a ceremonial component (a certain time

Evolution of the Present Sunday Law," *The Clergy Review* 9 (1935): 269–84.

¹⁰⁴An in-depth treatment of medieval Sabbath/Lord's Day ideas can be found in: McReavy, "Servile Work"; Richard Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West," in *From Sabbath To Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 299–310; Daniel Augsburger, "The Sabbath and Lord's Day during the Middle Ages," in *Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 190–214.

¹⁰⁵Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.122.4.

¹⁰⁶Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.100.3–5, 2.122.4; Paul Glenn, *A Tour of the Summa* (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, 1960), 172–78; Stephen J. Loughlin, *Aquinas' Summa Theologiae: A Reader's Guide*, T&T Clark Reader's Guides (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 215–30;

of worship legislated by the Law).¹⁰⁷ In Christ, the ceremonial component has been fulfilled.

Rather than worshipping on the Jewish Sabbath day, Christians observe the Lord's Day. "In the New Law the observance of the Lord's day took the place of the observance of the Sabbath, not by virtue of the precept but *by the institution of the Church* and the custom of Christian people."¹⁰⁸ Thus we see the crucial medieval emphasis: grounding weekly Lord's Day observance in ecclesiastical authority. The church chose to worship on Sunday; therefore, Christians ought to faithfully observe the Lord's Day. Aquinas' arguments placing the Sabbath commandment firmly within the abiding moral precepts of the Decalogue (and even as natural law¹⁰⁹) become the prevailing view of the late medieval era and traditional Roman Catholic theology: "Sabbatarianism grounded in Natural Law was propagated by the casuistic manuals of the late Middle Ages and set out again in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, where a full exposition of the scholastic doctrine will be found."¹¹⁰

McReavy, "Servile Work," 279; Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West," 306.

¹⁰⁷For an examination of Aquinas' theology of Sabbath and its connection to the beatific vision, see Isaac Augustine Morales, "With My Body I Thee Worship": New Creation, Beatific Vision, and the Liturgical Consummation of All Things," *Pro Ecclesia* 25, no. 3 (2016): 345–49.

¹⁰⁸Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.122.4 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁹For further discussion of Aquinas and natural law, see D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: Macmillan, 1968); Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West," 307n42.

¹¹⁰Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West," 307; McReavy, "Servile Work," 279–80.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATIONS OF SABBATH REST FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE MODERN ERA

Reformation/Post-Reformation and the Sabbath

Evidence almost unanimously favors the Sunday (Lord's Day) observance by the church since the time of the apostles. Therefore, this chapter will continue to examine the theological rationale behind that observance throughout two periods of the church: the reformation/post-reformation era and the modern era. During the Reformation and post-Reformation eras the interpretation of weekly Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance grows in popularity, precision, and depth. The generation after the Reformation gives more focused attention to the Sabbath than perhaps any other generation in the church's history. This chapter, along with chapter 4, demonstrate that although the theological foundation of Lord's Day observance has changed in its emphasis over the life of the church, there exists a history of interpreting God's rest in Genesis as prescriptive, even if the language of "creation ordinance" does not appear until the last couple hundred years.

Continental Reformers and Post-Reformers

Martin Luther (1483–1546) believes that there must be a regular stated time of corporate worship for believers, but that the weekly Jewish pattern had been abrogated. For example, Luther writes in the Larger Catechism of 1529 that worship "with us is not so tied to certain times in the way it was with the Jews, as this or that

day in particular should be ordered or enjoined for it.”¹

For Luther, the day of worship need not necessarily be tied to a certain day because it was ceremonial and national in nature, just like circumcision. In his letter “Against the Sabbatarians,” Luther explains that “although [the Sabbath] commandment is a general and natural commandment, its choice of particularly the seventh day is only a ‘timely adornment’ with which Moses embellishes it; the patriarchs knew nothing of this either, so it is equally immaterial to us.”² Luther believes that Christ has rescinded the ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath commandment and that the church may decide which specific day to observe.

However, Christians may not flippantly disregard the ancient pattern “seeing that those who preceded us chose Sunday for them, this harmless and admitted custom must not be readily changed.”³ Likewise, Luther approves the Augsburg Confession:

For those who judge that by the authority of the Church the observance of the Lord’s Day instead of the Sabbath-day was ordained as a thing necessary, do greatly err. Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day; for it teaches that, since the Gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted. And yet, because it was necessary to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church designated the Lord’s Day for this purpose; and this day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary.⁴

¹This comes from the section on the third commandment in Luther’s Larger Catechism, quoted in John Nevins Andrews and Ludwig Richard Conradi, *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*, (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1912), 605; see also Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath*, 253.

²“A Letter of Martin Luther Against the Sabbatarians” quoted in Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, ed. Victor I. Gruhn, trans. Eric W. Gritsch and Ruth C. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 126–27; Luther had harsh words for the “Sabbatarians,” a Christian sect which stressed the observance of the seventh day, circumcision, and other aspects of the Old Testament law. See, for example, Frank Sherman, ed., Introduction to *The Christian in Society IV*, Luther’s Works 47 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

³Andrews and Conradi, *History of the Sabbath*, 605; Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath*, 253.

⁴“Augsburg Confession,” Article XXVIII, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php>.

Additionally, Luther believes that the weekly day of rest is fitting: “Nature teaches that the working classes . . . who have spent the whole week in their work . . . absolutely require a day in which they can . . . rest and refresh themselves; and . . . attend to the worship of God.”⁵

Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75) is another important teacher during this time period.⁶ His influence on later English Puritans was direct and evident: “Bullinger’s 124 books, not counting his thousands of tracts and letters, were initially in greater demand than Calvin’s. . . . Bullinger’s works were widely circulated in England some thirty to thirty-five years before Calvin’s. . . . Indeed, throughout the sixteenth century, Bullinger was the most read Continental Reformer in England.”⁷ Patrick Collinson states that Bullinger, along with Peter Martyr, “represented the center of theological gravity” in the Elizabethan Church, even more so than Calvin’s *Institutes*.⁸ Found within Bullinger’s 350-page exposition of the Ten Commandments, his sermon “Of the Fourth Precept of the First Table” gives readers the clearest explanation of Bullinger’s sabbatarian theology.⁹ Bullinger taught that the Sabbath is creation-based, universal, perpetual, moral, and partly ceremonial.¹⁰

⁵This is also from Luther’s Larger Catechism question on the third commandment quoted in Andrews and Conradi, *History of the Sabbath*, 606; see also Francis N. Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath* (London: The Lord’s Day Observance Society, 1974), 253.

⁶For a good summary of Bullinger’s life and work, see Bruce Gordon, “Heinrich Bullinger,” in *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Carter Lindberg, The Great Theologians (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 170–83.

⁷George Ella and Joel Beeke, “Shepherding the Churches,” in *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, ed. Thomas Harding (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 1:lxviii.

⁸Patrick Collinson, “England and International Calvinism, 1558–1640,” in *International Calvinism, 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 214–15.

⁹Heinrich Bullinger, “Of the Fourth Precept of the First Table,” in *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas Harding (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 2.4.259–65. Citations from *Decades* use the following pattern: decade number.sermon number.page number.

¹⁰This section on Bullinger is adapted from: Jon English Lee, “The Origins of English Puritan Sabbatarianism,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 7, no. 1 (2015): 103–19.

In the first place, for Bullinger, the Sabbath began when God rested on the seventh day: “And the seventh day he rested, and ordained that to be an appointed time for us to rest in. On the seventh day we must think of the works that God did in the six days . . . we must consecrate to him all our words and our deeds.”¹¹ Just as God did not spend the seventh day idle, but continuously preserved the world, so also “we upon that day must rest from handy and bodily works, but we must not cease from the works of well doing and worshipping God.”¹² For Bullinger, the Sabbath pattern was set into the very creation of the world. More than just the rhythm of rest and work, Bullinger’s conception of weekly Sabbath rest imitates the very actions of God toward His creation.

Second, related to the notion of a creation-based Sabbath, Bullinger believes that it is good for everyone to observe the Sabbath, not just believers. Commenting on Jesus’ statement that the Sabbath was made for man, Bullinger writes that we “very well know that God ordained the Sabbath for the preservation, and not the destruction, of mankind.”¹³ Indeed, after citing Constantinian regulations for Sabbath work, the Swiss reformer shows that “the countrymen, as well as of the townsmen, are looked for due honour done to God, and the keeping of the fourth commandment.”¹⁴ Furthermore, he argues that it was the responsibility of Christian magistrates to ensure that the Sabbath was upheld. After describing how the people of Israel stoned a man for gathering sticks on the Sabbath, Bullinger writes, “Why then should it not be lawful for a Christian Magistrate to punish by bodily imprisonment, by loss of goods, or by death, the despisers of religion of the

¹¹Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.259.

¹²Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.259.

¹³Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.265.

¹⁴Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.266.

true and lawful worship done to God, and of the sabbath day?”¹⁵ Bullinger believes that the Sabbath has been observed by “natural and divine law, ever from the first creation of the world, and is the chief of all other holy days.”¹⁶ Hence, according to this reformer, the command to observe weekly Sabbath rest is universally incumbent upon all people.

Third, related to the universality of the fourth commandment, Bullinger argues that the command for weekly Sabbath rest is perpetual: “In respect that on the Sabbath-day religion and true godliness are exercised and published . . . it is perpetual.”¹⁷ Because the worship of God is a perpetual obligation, the sanctification of one day a week specifically for rest and worship is a perpetual necessity. While he does not argue that the Lord specifically mandates Sunday as the day of rest, he does argue that one day a week should be set apart for preaching, prayers, sacraments, and the giving of alms to the poor.¹⁸ Without a perpetually binding command for Sabbath observance, these congregational necessities might be neglected; however, according to Bullinger’s interpretation, the perpetual nature of the Sabbath prevents such neglect.

Fourth, weekly Sabbath rest was not only perpetual; its acceptance or rejection has moral consequences. Those in authority are obliged to ensure that the Sabbath is not profaned. Indeed, “it is the duty of a Christian magistrate, or at least likewise of a good householder, to compel to amendment the breakers and contemners [sic] of God’s Sabbath and worship.”¹⁹ Bullinger even lists abuses of the

¹⁵Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.262.

¹⁶Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 3.5.163.

¹⁷Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.259.

¹⁸Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.261. See more on the Sabbath as a day of rest below.

¹⁹Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.261.

Sabbath: “They transgress this commandment, that cease not from evil works, but abuse the Sabbath’s rest to the provoking of fleshly pleasures.” After then listing many different vices to be avoided on the Sabbath day, he then warns, “Whosoever do contemn [sic] the holiness of the Sabbath-day, they give a flat and evident testimony of their ungodliness and light regard of God’s mighty power.”²⁰ Clearly, for Bullinger the Sabbath is a serious weekly event whose observation carries equally serious moral consequences if profaned.

Fifth, while the Sabbath certainly retains morally binding status for New Testament believers, Bullinger does admit that the fourth commandment was not entirely moral. He writes that “the sabbath is ceremonial, so far forth as it is joined to sacrifices and other Jewish Ceremonies, and so far forth as it its tied to a certain time: but in respect that on the sabbath-day religion and true godliness are exercised . . . therein, I say, it is perpetual, and not ceremonial.”²¹ Bullinger does admit that the change of the Sabbath day to Sunday is not explicit in the New Testament; however, he argues that believers are still bound by the fourth commandment: “in this fourth precept of the first table, we are commanded to have a care of religion and the exercising of godliness.” Because there remains a command to tend to the things of religion, because “of the Lord’s glorious resurrection upon” Sunday, and because “the outward worship of God cannot consist without an appointed time of space and holy rest,”²² believers are now to sanctify Sunday as the Christian Sabbath.

Being one of the most widely read of the continental reformers, Bullinger’s influence was far reaching. In England, the impact of his *Decades* was felt on

²⁰Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.262–63.

²¹Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.259.

²²Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 2.4.259.

generations of pastors and theological students. Bullinger's sabbatarian theology introduced many themes that are clearly repeated throughout the works of many English Puritans. However, before looking at the English Puritans, we will now examine the thought of another Reformer who had a lasting impact on Puritan theology—John Calvin.

John Calvin's (1509–1564) view on the Sabbath is a complicated.²³ Indeed, some of Calvin's statements seem even contradictory. Some scholars argue that Calvin's interpretation of the Sabbath is "consciously anti-Sabbatarian" because Calvin is very clear that the Sabbath was a shadow that Christ has fulfilled.²⁴ And yet, as will be seen below, Calvin also exhorts Lord's Day observance that is in keeping with many of the strict sabbatarians that came in the generations after him. In short, Calvin teaches that the Sabbath, first, pre-figured spiritual rest found in Christ. Second, Calvin teaches that the Sabbath commandment trained God's people to assemble, hear God's word, meditate on God's works, and be trained in piety. Third, Calvin teaches that the fourth commandment entails, in keeping with God's own example in Genesis 2, that Christians ought to devote the entire Lord's Day to God. Because the last of the three points is the most relevant to this dissertation (and the most controversial), most of the section below will be spent on that (i.e., how Christians should spend their time on the Lord's Day).

²³For more on Calvin and the Sabbath, see John Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, trans. Benjamin W. Farley (Pelham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2011), 97–132; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 ed., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 2.8.28–34; Richard B. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 1998); Richard Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition," in *From Sabbath To Lord's Day* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 311–41; John H. Primus, "Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath," in *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. David Howlerda (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 40–75; Stewart E. Lauer, "John Calvin, the Nascent Sabbatarian: A Reconsideration of Calvin's View of Two Key Sabbath-Issues," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007): 3. For a description of Calvin's Sabbath theology on later generations, see James Dennison, *The Market Day of the Soul: The Puritan Doctrine of the Sabbath in England, 1532-1700* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 5–10.

²⁴For example, see Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.34n44.

First, Calvin argues clearly that the Sabbath was a “figure” or “shadow” that pre-figured spiritual rest that would come from Christ.²⁵ The Old Testament Sabbath was designed as a ceremony that reminded the Jews of their need for separating themselves from the world and their need to gather to “hear the law, call upon the name of God, and offer sacrifices and everything which concerns the spiritual order.”²⁶ Even more than separation from the world, God’s Sabbath command is a “call to abandon completely our own works as a basis for our relationship with God, for that relationship is grounded in grace.”²⁷ Having been freed from the law, Calvin writes, Christians are no longer required to observe the external requirements of the fourth commandment: “Now we are no longer subject to this ancient servitude of observing the Sabbath day, for it is necessary for us to render this honor to Jesus Christ, to content ourselves with what he himself has brought us without any longer having what was exterior under the law. . . . As far as the ceremony goes (as I have said) that is in the past.”²⁸ Because the Sabbath command was from the beginning meant to be a type of spiritual rest, Christ’s coming has removed the shadow, and with it, the external requirement of the commandment.

Second, although Christians are called to experience spiritual rest every day of the week, obedience to the first and second commandments necessitates a

²⁵Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.28; Calvin, “Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12–14,” in *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, trans. Benjamin W. Farley (Pelham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2011), 98.

²⁶Calvin, “Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14,” 98.

²⁷Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 60.

²⁸Calvin, “Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14,” 101. He goes on to say similar statements: “We are no longer subject to this ceremony which was kept so narrowly under the law. . . . Therefore it is highly inappropriate for us to keep asking for those things which were under the law.” (Calvin, “Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14,” 102).

time of regular corporate worship.²⁹ The Sabbath commandment trained (and trains) God's people in piety by stipulating a stated time for corporate worship and acts of piety. The Jewish Sabbath filled that need in the Old Testament: "This complete [spiritual] cessation [of sinful works (i.e., rest from sin)] was represented to the Jews by the observance of one day in seven, which, that it might be more religiously attended to, the Lord recommended by his own example."³⁰ Calvin teaches that in keeping "the seventh day the Jew was urged to imitate his Creator—a spur to zeal."³¹ And the ancient church came to replace the Jewish Sabbath with the Lord's Day as the day of stated public worship. For Calvin, bodily rest from labor is "not an end in itself, but a means to the end of meditation and public worship."³²

Third, the fourth commandment teaches that, in keeping with God's own example in Genesis 2, there is a divinely ordained "holy order" to weekly assembly, and that Christians ought to devote the entire Lord's Day to God. Calvin teaches very clearly that Christians have an ongoing responsibility to imitate their creator.

Do we therefore wish to keep spiritual rest? *Everything, then, that is said about God desisting from his works applies to us*, for we must so conduct ourselves as to cease doing whatever seems good to us and what our nature craves. If *God's example* does not motivate us, we only demonstrate that we really do not want anything [from him] and that by no means do we seek our happiness, but prefer to live by our own knowledge in our poverty and misery.³³

The necessity to observe this spiritual rest in imitation of our creator implies that believers should take great pains to ensure their Sunday's are free for worship.

²⁹For examples of Calvin exhorting daily "spiritual rest," see Calvin, "Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14," 101, 104, 105.

³⁰Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.30.

³¹Ford Lewis Battles and John R. Walchenback, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 128; see also Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 30–33.

³²Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 143.

³³Calvin, "Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14," 104 (emphasis added).

Nevertheless, we have to note that there is more and that indeed it would be a meager thing to have a rest regarding physical activity but not involving anything else. What is necessary then? That we should strive toward a higher end than this rest here; that we should desist from our works which are able to impede us from meditating on the works of God, from calling upon his name, and from our exercising his Word. If we turn Sunday into a day for living it up, for our sport and pleasure, indeed how will God be honored in that? Is it not a mockery and even a profanation of his name? But when shops are closed on Sunday, when people do not travel in the usual way, its purpose is to provide more leisure and liberty for attending to what God commands us that we might be taught by his Word, that we might convene together in order to confess our faith, to invoke his name, [and] to participate in the use of the sacraments. That is the end for which this order must serve us.³⁴

Calvin very clearly believes that Christians should spend (at least) the entire Lord's Day in public and private worship.

Consider also this warning from Calvin, condemning the selfish abuse of Sunday:

Now let us consider whether those who call themselves Christians require of themselves what they should. There is a large group which thinks that Sunday exists for the purpose of enabling them to attend to their own affairs and who reserve this day for that [purpose] as if there were no others throughout the week for deliberating their business. For though the bell tolls the sermon, they seem only to have time for their own affairs and for one thing and another. The rest glut themselves and are shut up in their houses because they do not dare display a manifest scorn on the streets; in any case, Sunday is nothing more than a retreat for them in which they stand aloof from the church of God.³⁵

Rather than Sunday being a day to tend to unnecessary affairs, Calvin teaches that the day has been divinely instituted for something more. He continues, exhorting his hearers to set apart the entire day for worship:

Moreover, let us realize that it is not only for coming to the sermon that the day of Sunday is instituted, *but in order that we might devote all the rest of time to praising God*. Indeed! For although he nurtures us every day, nevertheless we do not sufficiently meditate on the favors he bestows on us in order to magnify them. It is true that it would be a poor thing if we did not think about the benefits of God except on Sunday, but on other days, seeing that we are so occupied with our affairs, we are not as much open to serve God as *on a day which is totally dedicated to this*.³⁶

³⁴Calvin, "Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14," 109.

³⁵Calvin, "Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14," 109.

³⁶Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, 110 (emphasis added).

For Calvin, Sunday is a divinely-appointed day of blessing. Christians should contemplate the works of God (especially creation), the benefits of redemption, and the promised eschatological rest to come.

Calvin continues his defense of proper Sunday observance by describing such observance as the beginning of proper week-long worship:

Thus we ought to observe Sunday as if from a tower in order that we might climb high upon it to contemplate the works of God from afar, in a way in which we are neither impeded by nor occupied with anything else, so that we might be able to extend all our senses to recognize the benefits and favors with which he has enlarged us. And when Sunday is able to help us practice that, that is to consider the works of God, then certainly once we have meditated on his works for a long time in order to know how to benefit from them, we will surrender to him all the rest of time. For this meditation will already have formed and polished us, [and] we shall be induced to thank our God on Monday and all the rest of the week. But when Sunday is spent not only in pastimes full of vanity, but in things which are entirely contrary to God, it seems that one has not at all celebrated Sunday [and] that God . . . has been offended in many ways. . . . Thus when people profane in this manner *the holy order which God has instituted* to lead us to himself, why should they be astonished if all the rest of the week is degraded?³⁷

In order for a Christian's Sunday observance to impact the rest of the week, Calvin teaches that the entire day must be devoted to God. Such distraction-free observance is the way for believers to withdraw from this world, contemplate God, and fully dedicate the day to him:

We no longer have this figure and shadow for the purpose of keeping a ceremony as rigid as it was under the bondage of the law. Rather its purpose is to gather us in order to devote ourselves better to the service of God, that we might have this *day fully dedicated* to him, to the end that we might be withdrawn from the world and, as we have said, that it might serve us for the rest of our life.³⁸

For Calvin, proper Sunday observance means that the entire day is devoted to the Lord. Believers are to ensure their Sundays are free for attending public and private acts of piety.

³⁷Calvin, "Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14," 110 (emphasis added).

³⁸Calvin, "Sermon Five: Deuteronomy 5:12-14," 111 (emphasis added).

In sum, Calvin's view of the Sabbath shows much continuity with the sabbatarians to come after him. Calvin teaches that the Sabbath pre-figured spiritual rest found in Christ. Second, Calvin teaches that the Sabbath commandment trained God's people to assemble, hear God's word, meditate on God's works, and be trained in piety. Third, Calvin teaches that the fourth commandment, in keeping with God's own example in Genesis 2, entails that Christians ought to devote the entire Lord's Day to God.

Francis Turretin (1623–87) emphasizes that the Lord's rest in Genesis 2 is the foundation of the moral Sabbath command today. Commenting on God's blessing of the seventh day, "For God cannot be said to have blessed the seventh day and sanctified it unless by the institution of the Sabbath."³⁹ He makes other arguments to confirm this interpretation: Exodus 16:23, the words of the fourth commandment, and the piety and religion of the ancient fathers. Turretin is a strong advocate of weekly Sabbath rest being grounded in Genesis 2.

Puritans

Some historians have argued that Sabbatarianism is perhaps the only true English Puritan addition to the Reformed tradition.⁴⁰ This idea goes back at least to Peter Heylyn, whose interpretation has influenced many other studies of English Puritanism.⁴¹ The English Puritans perhaps spend the most time thinking and

³⁹François Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), 2:79.

⁴⁰For example, Knappen describes the Puritan sabbatarian doctrine as "a bit of English originality and is the first and perhaps only important English contribution to the development of Reformed theology in the first century of its history." M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 442; Solberg also states, "Sabbatarianism became a distinguishing characteristic of Puritanism as early as the 1590s." Winton U. Solberg, *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 59; see also Lee, "The Origins of English Puritan Sabbatarianism," 103.

⁴¹Kenneth L. Parker, "Thomas Rogers and the English Sabbath: The Case for a Reappraisal," *Church History* 53, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 332n2; Parker lists many works that adopt this interpretation, including: Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain, from the Birth of*

writing about the Sabbath.⁴²

Nicholas Bownd authors the first published English Puritan treatise devoted to the subject.⁴³ Indeed, Bownd's work, according to Robert Cox in his impressive compendium of Sabbath literature, represents the first time that sabbatarian opinions were "broadly and prominently asserted in Christendom."⁴⁴ His *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath* is highly influential and has a striking similarity with the sabbatarian thought coming from the continent.⁴⁵ Like Bullinger and Turretin before him, Bownd grounds weekly Sabbath rest in God's creation week pattern. Here is a survey of Bownd's thought:

The purpose of "the seventh day, and the Rest in it tended unto this end: first, that we might know God to be the creator of all things; and then that by the

Jesus Christ until the Year MDCXLVIII (London: T. Tegg, 1837), 5:219; Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, 442; Solberg, *Redeem the Time*, 27–80; Richard L. Greaves, "The Origins of English Sabbatarian Thought," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 12, no. 3 (1981): 19–34; Keith L. Sprunger, "English and Dutch Sabbatarianism and the Development of Puritan Social Theology (1600-1660)," *Church History* 51, no. 1 (1982): 24–38; cf. Lee, "The Origins of English Puritan Sabbatarianism," 103n3.

⁴²For more on the Puritans and the Sabbath: John H. Primus, *Holy Time: Moderate Puritanism and the Sabbath* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989); Patrick Collinson, "The Beginnings of English Sabbatarianism," in *Studies in Church History* (London: Nelson, 1964), 1:207–21; Patrick Collinson, *English Puritanism* (London: The Historical Association, 1983), 6; Wilfred B. Whitaker, *Sunday in Tudor and Stuart Times* (London: Houghton, 1933).

⁴³Or "Bownde," "Bound," "Bounde." There is considerable confusion about the spelling of his name. See Edward Martin Allen, "Nicholas Bownde and the Context of Sunday Sabbatarianism" (Fuller Theological Seminary, 2008), 2n6. This section on Bownd is adapted from Lee, "The origins of English Puritan Sabbatarianism." Because Bownd is the classic example of Puritan thought on the issue, his work will be examined in detail here, and will be representative of most of the Puritans on the issue.

⁴⁴Robert Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1865), 146.

⁴⁵Nicholas Bownd, *Sabbatum Veteris et Noui Testamenti: Or the True Doctrine of the Sabbath, Held and Practised of the Church of God, Both before, and Vnder the Law; and in the Time of the Gospell Plainly Laid Foorth and Soundly Prooued by Testimonies Both of Holie Scripture, and Also of Old and New Ecclesiasticall Writers: Fathers and Councels, and Lawes of All Sorts, Both Ciuill, Canon, and Common. Declaring First from What Things God Would Haue vs Straightly to Rest Vpon the Lords Day: And Then by What Meanes We Ought Publikely and Priuately to Sanctifie the Same. Together with the Sundrie Abuses of Men in Both These Kindes: And How They Ought to Be Reformed. Diuided into Two Bookes by Nicolas Bovvnd Doctor of Diuinitie: And Now by Him the Second Time Perused, and Inlarged with an Interpretation of Sundrie Points Belonging to the Sabbath* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1606); see also a newly reprinted edition, Nicholas Bownd, *Sabbatum Veteris et Noui Testamenti: Or, The True Doctrine of the Sabbath* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015).

example of God we might rest from our own works; and by meditating upon the works of God might know whose great things those are, that God hath prepared for those that love him, after the end of this world.” The Sabbath serves as a signpost for this forgetful world: “As they that are ignorant, or may easily mistake the way, have marks set up in the highways for them, to guide them: so this was a notable and famous sign set up by God himself, to teach the forgetful world, that God made it in six days, and all things in it.”⁴⁶

For Bownd, the weekly day of rest is a means of emulating God and a means of being reminded that God is the creator.

Bownd makes clear that God purposely chose to number seven days in a week, and that the sanctification of the seventh day points so clearly to the creation week that heathens, who chose not to observe the Sabbath, were therefore made ignorant of the true creation story. Bownd argues that the purpose of “the seventh day, and the Rest in it tended unto this end; first, that we might know God to be the creator of all things; and then that by the example of God we might rest from our own works; and by meditating upon the works of God might know whose great things those are, that God hath prepared for those that love him, after the end of this world.” The Sabbath serves as a signpost for this forgetful world: “As they that are ignorant, or may easily mistake a way, have marks set up in the highways for them, to guide them: so this was a notable and famous sign set up by God himself, to teach the forgetful world, that God made it in six days, and all things in it.”⁴⁷ The day of rest is a weekly reminder that God is the creator.

Furthermore, from this logic Bownd warns that should people today forsake Sabbath observance, they would likewise be made ignorant of the redemption to which the Lord’s Day now points. From the purpose of the Sabbath we see, “how it is to be feared, that if we also did not keep the memory of this

⁴⁶Lee, “The Origins of English Puritan Sabbatarianism,” 112–13, summarizing Bownd, *Sabbatum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 247.

⁴⁷Bownd, *Sabbatum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 247. Quotes have been updated to reflect modern spelling.

seventh day, that we do, that the memory of Christ's death and resurrection should be in time clean forgotten. . . . For if the ignorance of that first seventh day bred that heresy [earlier], why may not the ignorance of this seventh day also work the like effect in the wisest of our time, or of the posterity?"⁴⁸ Bownd believed that because of the things signified by Sabbath observance—God's creative work and work of redemption—to forsake the Sabbath is to forsake God. Furthermore, because Sabbath observance is based in creation, the duty to sanctify the Sabbath is incumbent upon all of creation.

Because Sabbath rest is installed at the beginning of time and part of the covenant that God made with creation, every created being is duty-bound to sanctify the day. Bownd, quoting Zanchinus, argues that God "would have none excluded from the sanctification of the Sabbath, because that both servants and masters; as well children as parents; and the strangers as well as those that are borne at home, are bound unto the Lord, and are made for his worship and service." Furthermore, Bownd explains that the pattern of six days of work and one day of rest be "just and equal in the eyes of all men both Grecian and Barbarian, bond and free."⁴⁹ No one is free from the duty of Sabbath observance—neither Jew nor Gentile, rich nor poor.

Specifically, the responsibility is given to heads of household and those in positions of authority to instruct and enforce Sabbath observance among those under their care. Indeed, masters are not to overwork their slaves because the Lord has ordained that one day in seven should be given them for rest. Bownd argued for universal Sabbath obedience; rest for the wealthy alone was not an option. Instead, all of creation was granted the blessing and duty of weekly Sabbath rest.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 64–65.

⁴⁹Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 247.

⁵⁰Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 172–73.

Similar to the universal nature of the Sabbath, Bownd also argued for the perpetual nature of the command. Citing “Master [William] Perkins’s,” commentary on Galatians 4:10, Bownd writes that these words “‘Six days shalt thou labor, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,’ are moral and contain a perpetual truth.” Bownd then describes how the heathens search in vain for the proper means, object, and times of worship. Instead, “herein doth the glory of the church and the people of God consist, that the Lord by his word has given them the truth, and has not left them to their own inventions . . . but as they have the manner of their religion prescribed by God himself; so have they also the time, which he for that purpose has himself sanctified.” God is forever worthy of worship, and has given the church explicit instructions on how to properly ascribe glory to Him. Thus, the Sabbath worship of His people should continue until the Lord Christ returns.⁵¹

The “should” found in the previous statement, together with the Perkins quote in the same paragraph, both evidence Bownd’s belief that the Sabbath commands of the Old Testament retain their morally binding status for New Testament believers. Bownd gives several reasons to believe that Christians are “straightly bound to rest upon the Lord’s Day as the Jews were upon their Sabbath.” First, the fourth commandment is one of the moral commandments and it “bindeth as well as them, for they are all of equal authority.” The placement of the Sabbath command inside the moral law (i.e., Ten Commandments) of God makes it a perpetually binding moral standard. Second, Bownd argues that we are just like the Jews. By that, Bownd means that Christians are in need of God’s moral commands just as were the Jews: “As in keeping ourselves from Images, from blasphemy, from murder, theft, adultery and such like: why should we then imagine that in this one

⁵¹Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 66–67.

the Lord had privileged us above them [the Jews]?” Third, and related to Bownd’s belief in the perpetuity of the Sabbath command, he argues that there is no reason given in the New Testament to believe the Sabbath command has been removed: “we do not find in the Gospel that Christians have any further liberty granted to them in these days; then we may safely concluded, that Christians are as precisely to rest, as the Jews were.” This does not, for Bownd, mean that believers are then placed under the yoke of the Law, like the Jews. Rather, Christians are free from the manner of Sabbath observance mandated to the Jews. Believers are not required to do all the demands of the ceremonial law; instead, they have “fewer things to do, and they are more simple, plain, and easy, as the hearing of the word, receiving of the sacraments and prayer.”⁵² For Bownd, the moral core of the fourth commandment remains binding, even though the ceremonial yoke of the Jewish dispensation has been lifted. Thus, we see that the fourth commandment, for Bownd, was and is a moral command.

Bownd shows that the logic of the Sabbath command extends even to Christian magistrates. Citing the “within thy gates” portion of the Exodus passage detailing the fourth commandment, Bownd writes, “for even as the walls and the gates of the city are the furthest part of it; and whatsoever is within the gates, is under the government of him that rules the city: so by a figurative speech he means utmost coasts, and the furthest boarder of the jurisdiction of any.” Every square inch of a magistrate’s reign should observe the Sabbath command, even foreigners and those of other religions: “as he enjoys the benefit of his government, so he should yield to this outward practice of the church at least.” Magistrates were not merely to suggest weekly Sabbath rest; they were bound to ensure Sabbath sanctification.

⁵²Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 247–49.

Bownd writes that it behooves governors to produce laws “for the preservation of this rest, with civil punishments to be inflicted upon them that shall break it.”

Bownd’s hopes for Sabbath regulation are extensive: that “there should be no Faïres kept upon that day . . . no such carrying of wares from town to town . . . no such haunting of Tavernes, Alehouses, and Innes, no buying and selling of vittuals [*sic*] anywhere . . . no such working in the time of hay, seed, and harvest in the fields.” If these and other laws be added to those already in effect and the “malefactors and offenders in this way might be severely punished,” Bownd explains, then the mouths of the wicked might be stopped, offences unto the godly would be removed, and “sin be taken away from among us.”⁵³

Bownd saw no distinction between the religious and the secular on the matter of Sabbath observance. Instead, the Christian magistrate had the duty to promote the good of mankind and punish the evildoers by creating and enforcing Sabbath legislation. Because of his understanding that the Sabbath was universal, perpetual, and moral, Bownd was unwavering in his belief that those in authority were required to use their power to promote Sabbath sanctification.

Thus, for Bownd, the weekly Sabbath observance is grounded in God’s creation-week pattern, is a perpetual pattern for observance, and is universal in scope. Bownd’s work is foundation for many theologians that will come after him. Many other Puritans write on the subject and agree substantially with Bownd’s work. Lewis Bayly, Henry Scudder, William Gouge, Thomas Shepard, Richard Baxter, and George Swinnock all write practical treatises on the Lord’s Day.⁵⁴

⁵³Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 185–86. Bownd also cites specific examples of legislation. For example see Bownd, *Sabbathum Veteris et Noui Testamenti*, 252ff.

⁵⁴Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian How to Walk, That He May Please God* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994); Henry Scudder, *The Christian’s Daily Walk, in Holy Security and Peace* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1984); William Gouge, *The Sabbaths Sanctification Herein I. The Grounds of the Morality of the Sabbath, II. Directions for Sanctifying It, III. Proofs That the Lords Day Is the Christians Sabbath, IIII. Aberrations about the Sabbath, V.*

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* solidifies the idea of weekly Sabbath rest as creation ordinance. Article 21 begins by explaining that it is God who ordains how mankind should worship; thus: “he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.” On the contrary, divine command found in Holy Scripture must regulate true worship. Then, after explaining what elements are proper for Christian worship, the document addresses the day of worship:

As it is of the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, *from the beginning of the world* to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord’s Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath.⁵⁵

The *WCF* emphasizes that the day of worship was set from the very beginning of the world and had been (or, perhaps, ought to have been) observed ever since the garden. Thus, the Westminster divines believe that God ordains the regularity of worship and the day of worship, breaking with the interpretation shared by Luther

Motives to Sanctifie the Sabbath (London: G. M. for Joshua Kirton, and Thomas Warren, 1641); Thomas Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticæ, Or, The Doctrine of the Sabbath Wherein the Sabbaths I. Morality, II. Change, III. Beginning. IV. Sanctification, Are Clearly Discussed, Which Were First Handled More Largely in Sundry Sermons in Cambridge in New-England in Opening of the Fourth Commandment: In Unfolding Whereof Many Scriptures Are Cleared, Divers Cases of Conscience Resolved, and the Morall Law as a Rule of Life to a Believer, Occasionally and Distinctly Handled* (London: T. R. and E. M. for John Rothwell, 1650); Richard Baxter, *The Divine Appointment of the Lords Day Proved: As a Separated Day for Holy Worship, Especially in the Church Assemblies, and Consequently the Cessation of the Seventh Day Sabbath* (London: Nevil Simmons, 1671), accessed April 12, 2018, <http://archive.org/details/divineapp00baxt>; George Swinnock, *The Christian-Mans Calling, Or, A Treatise of Making Religion Ones Business Wherein, the Nature and Necessity of It Is Discovered: As Also, the Christian Directed How He May Perform It, in Religious Duties, Natural Actions, His Particular Vocation, His Family Directions, and His Own Recreations* (London: Printed by J. B. for Tho. Parkhurst, 1662).

⁵⁵Westminster Assembly, *Westminster Confession of Faith: The Larger and Shorter Catechisms, with the Scripture Proofs at Large: Together with the Sum of Saving Knowledge, (Contained in the Holy Scriptures, and Held Forth in the Said Confession and Catechisms,) and Practical Use Thereof* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Press, 1985), 94 (emphasis added).

and Calvin. The Sabbath pattern of weekly rest is both grounded in God's creation-week activity and binding because it is found in scripture.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) continues to teach the same Sabbath theology in New England. His sermon on the perpetuity and change of the Sabbath repeats similar Puritan arguments and even addresses what he perceived to be errors in Calvin's Sabbath theology. Edwards argues that it is sufficiently clear that a certain proportion of time is proper to devote to the worship of God. Furthermore, if certain proportions of time are more suitable than others, great care must be taken to select the proper proportion of time for such observance. Thus, if the previous propositions is true, wouldn't it be proper for God to determine such proportion? He believes so. Furthermore,

it is unreasonable to suppose any other, than that God's working six days, and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it, was to be of general use in determining this matter, and that it was written, that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it. What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day and hallowing and blessing it, which he did before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he within himself might observe it: as that is most absurd. And it is unreasonable to suppose that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up above two thousand years after.⁵⁶

For Edwards, it is clear that God's creation week pattern was to be the pattern for mankind to follow.

Additionally, Edwards makes several arguments for the transfer of the day of worship to the Lord's Day (Sunday), rather than the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday), under the "gospel dispensation". His arguments include, first, that the words of the fourth commandment "afford no objection against this being the day that should be

⁵⁶Jonathan Edwards, "The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Edward Hickman (Banner Truth Trust, 2009), 2:95. He makes several other arguments. For example, he refutes the idea that the fourth commandment is "not moral law," like the rest of the Decalogue; and he defends the transfer of the day of worship to Sunday. Edwards, "The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath," 2:95–103.

the Sabbath, any more than against any other day.”⁵⁷ Second, that the “ancient church was commanded to keep a seventh day in commemoration of the work of creation, is an argument for the keeping of a weekly Sabbath in commemoration of the work of redemption, and not any reason against it.” That is, Lord’s Day Sabbath observance commemorates the completion of Christ’s work of the new creation (e.g., Isa 65:17–18), just like the observance of the old Sabbath day commemorated the completion of the first creation week. Third, the scripture speak of “Christ’s resting from the work of redemption [as] being parallel with God’s resting from the work of creation.”⁵⁸ Fourth, the Holy Spirit has implicitly told believers that the “Sabbath which was instituted in commemoration of the old creation, should not be kept in gospel-times. Isa 65:17, 18. There we are told, that when God should create new heavens and a new earth, the former should not be remembered, nor come into mind. If this be so, it is not to be supposed, that we are to keep a seventh part of time, on purpose to remember it, and call it to mind.”⁵⁹ Edwards goes on to make ten more arguments to bolster his case for the transfer of the Sabbath, including: the fact that Christ was buried on the Jewish Sabbath, that Christ was raised on Sunday, that Sunday is called the Lord’s Day, and that church history confirms this fact.⁶⁰

Furthermore, Edwards corrects those who interpret the Sabbath commandment only in terms of spiritual rest: “And, if it [the Sabbath commandment] stands in force now only as signifying a spiritual, Christian rest, and holy behaviour at all times, it doth not remain as one of the ten commands, but as a

⁵⁷Edwards, “The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath,” 2:96.

⁵⁸Edwards, “The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath,” 2:98.

⁵⁹Edwards, “The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath,” 2:98.

⁶⁰Edwards, “The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath,” 2:98–100.

summary of all the commands.”⁶¹ Thus, Edwards stands squarely in the tradition of the Westminster Divines by interpreting weekly Sabbath rest as being grounded in Genesis 2 and still binding for Christians.

Modern Era and the Sabbath

The modern era in the Western church saw a further increase in the promotion of weekly Sabbath rest.⁶² Indeed, theologians on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and in many different theological traditions all write in favor of grounding Sabbath rest in God’s creation pattern. Robert Murray McCheyne (1813–43),⁶³ Robert Dabney (1820–98),⁶⁴ B. H. Carroll (1843–1914),⁶⁵ Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920),⁶⁶ Louis Berkhof (1873–1957),⁶⁷ John Murray (1898–1975),⁶⁸ and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45),⁶⁹ all write in favor of regarding weekly Sabbath rest

⁶¹Edwards, “The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath,” 2:95.

⁶²The amount of Sabbath related literature from this era is immense. For an extensive bibliography of the field, see Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*.

⁶³Robert Murray McCheyne, “I Love the Lord’s Day,” in *The Works of Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne: Complete in One Volume*, ed. Andrew Bonar (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1874), 324–30.

⁶⁴Robert Dabney, “The Christian Sabbath: Its Nature, Design, and Proper Observance,” in *Discussions*, ed. C. R. Vaughan, (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 1:496–550.

⁶⁵B. H. Carroll, *The Book of Genesis, An Interpretation of the English Bible* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1913), 84–91; see also Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland, 1907), 109–10.

⁶⁶Abraham Kuyper, “Foundations of the Sabbath,” in *Sunday the World’s Rest Day: An Illustrated Story of the Fourteenth International Lord’s Day Congress Held in Oakland, California, July 27th to August 1st, 1915, During the Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, ed. Duncan McMillan et al. (New York Sabbath Committee, 1916), 47–62. For a survey of the Sabbath debate in the Dutch Reformed tradition, see Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath*, 261–66; Jochem Douma, *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life*, trans. Nelson Kloosterman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1996), 142–56; Byoung Gi. Kim, “The Idea of Creation Ordinances in Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism” (Calvin Theological Seminary, 2000).

⁶⁷Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 6th ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1959), 153.

⁶⁸John Murray, *Principles of Christian Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (London: Tyndale Press, 1957), 82–106.

⁶⁹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1–3* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 69–70.

as being grounded in God's creation week activity.⁷⁰

By way of example, Charles Hodge (1797–1878) writes clearly regarding God's rest as instituting weekly Sabbath. Here is one small section from his nearly thirty pages on the subject:

It is easy to say that this [God's rest] is a prolepsis; that the passage assigns the reason why in the time of Moses, God selected the seventh, rather than any other day of the week to be the Sabbath. This is indeed possible, but it is not probable. It is an unnatural interpretation which no one would adopt except to suit a purpose. The narrative purports to be an account of what God did at the time of the creation. When the earth was prepared for his reception, God created man on the sixth day, and rested from the work of creation on the seventh, and set apart that day as a holy day to be a perpetual memorial of the great work which He had accomplished. This is the natural sense of the passage, from which only the strongest reasons would authorize us to depart.⁷¹

Hodge is just one of many theologians of his day that interpreted God's rest in Genesis 2 as prescriptive for believers today.

The papal encyclical *Dies Domini* (May 1998) written by Pope John Paul II (1920–2005) is a more recent example.⁷² He links Sunday observance with God's creation-week pattern: "In the first place . . . Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day 'blessed' by God and 'made holy' by him, set apart from the other days to be, among all of them, 'the Lord's Day.'"⁷³ Thus, theologians in both protestant and Roman Catholic traditions interpret God's rest in Genesis 2 as prescriptive. The interpretation of Genesis 2 as including a prescriptive element based on God's own example remains a popular interpretation in the Western church well into the modern era.

⁷⁰This list is by no means exhaustive; it merely serves to illustrate the breadth of the interpretive tradition: from Scottish Presbyterian and Lutheran, to Dutch Reformed and Baptist, seeing God's rest as prescriptive for weekly rest was a trans-denominational idea.

⁷¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1981; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 3: 325–26.

⁷²John Paul II, "*Dies Domini*," May 31, 1998, see esp. secs. 11–14, accessed June 23, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini.html.

⁷³Paul II, "*Dies Domini*," sec. 14.

Conclusion

This brief survey of Sabbath themes in church history describes the general trajectory of major arguments typically surrounding the issue. The early church has near unanimous Sunday (Lord's Day) observance and initially interprets Sabbath in terms of "spiritual rest" from sin. As the church approaches the medieval era, interpreters not only continue to interpret Sabbath in "rest from sin" language, but also begin to add the idea of physical rest. However, medieval interpreters tend to ground the weekly Sabbath in ecclesial authority, rather than in God's example.

With the Reformation's emphasis on *sola scriptura* and *ad fontes* comes renewed examination of the church's practices. Scholars continue to speak of Sabbath in terms of rest from sin, but shift the grounding for the weekly rest from ecclesial authority to apostolic example. Interpreters vary in the rigor with which they impressed Sabbath observance upon believers (and unbelievers).

In the modern era, many continue to ground weekly Sabbath rest in creation. Theologians from various traditions and locations continue the trajectory that had been set in previous generations: God rested; therefore we should rest.

Evidence almost unanimously favors the Sunday (Lord's Day) observance by the church since the time of the apostles. The previous two chapters have examined the theological rationale behind that observance throughout the history of the church. As has been shown above, although the theological foundation of Lord's Day observance has changed in its emphasis over the life of the church, there exists a history of interpreting God's rest in Genesis as prescriptive, even if the language of "creation ordinance" does not appear until the last couple hundred years.

CHAPTER 6

ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SABBATH AS A CREATION ORDINANCE

This chapter examines ecclesiological and anthropological implications of weekly Sabbath as a creation ordinance. As will be seen, the biblical Sabbath pattern remains important for the new covenant people of God, and that pattern significantly impacts our understanding of human embodiment, physical rest, and leisure.

Sabbath and Ecclesiology

Because weekly Sabbath provides the time for local bodies to assemble and avail themselves of the means of grace, weekly rest impacts several areas of practical ecclesiology: the relationship between Sabbath theology and church leadership, attendance and discipline, corporate meetings, Christian witness, and the means of grace.

Sabbath and Church Leadership

One practical question often arises around Sabbath and Lord's Day discussions: "Should preachers take another day off from work because they have to 'work' on the Sabbath?" Those who answer "yes" usually respond by saying that if what is usually affirmed about the benefits of weekly physical rest is true, then pastors should avail themselves of those benefits on another day.¹ It is assumed that

¹For example, Eugene H. Peterson, "The Pastor's Sabbath," *Leadership* 6, no. 2 (March 1, 1985): 52–58; "A Pastor's Reflections: My Day Off," last modified June 18, 2013, accessed April 11, 2018, <http://wscal.edu/blog/a-pastors-reflections-my-day-off>; Brian Croft, "Should a Pastor Have a

the preacher spends the Lord's Day busily working on Sunday morning and preparing for his evening sermon in the afternoon. Thus, because unable to have the same rest afforded to other believers, he should take another day off.

Conversely, others argue that pastors should rest on the Lord's Day along with their congregation. Pipa offers his reasoning:

First, you [pastor] have the privilege most work days of spending much more time in the Word and reading than the people you serve. What a glorious privilege it is to work daily in the Scriptures! Second, if you manage your work well, you will not need Sunday afternoon to prepare. In fact, I doubt that such preparation is proper use of the Sabbath. Have your sermons completed, so that you have time for your wife and children on the Lord's Day.²

Thus, the argument goes, if the pastor manages his time well, he should be able to rest on the Lord's Day along with the remainder of his congregation.

This author sympathizes with the arguments of Pipa and others, but hesitates to strictly enforce such a demand on pastors. The variety of situations and circumstances in which pastors find themselves does not allow for universal application of such a demand. For example, what about bi-vocational pastors who struggle to have enough sermon preparation time throughout the week through no fault of their own?

For this reason, pastoral work could be classified as a work of necessity, analogous to the priests in the temple (cf. Matt 12:5). Ideally, congregations should give pastors adequate time to prepare their Lord's Day work throughout the week so pastors can enjoy the rest of the Lord's Day like other believers. Otherwise, congregations ought to freely allow the pastor to take another day off during the week and so enjoy the same benefits of rest that the rest of the congregation enjoys.

Day off Every Week?," *Practical Shepherding* (blog), last modified October 5, 2011, accessed April 11, 2018, <http://practicalshepherding.com/2011/10/05/should-a-pastor-have-a-day-off-every-week/>. Because of the exceedingly context specific nature of this question, combined with the apparent lack of biblical data on the issue, very few scholarly works even address the issue.

² Joseph A. Pipa, *The Lord's Day* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1997), 181.

Admittedly, this solution bifurcates the physical/spiritual link defended below. However, because of the necessity of pastoral work, theologians should not necessarily oppose classifying the work of a pastor as a “work of necessity,” and thus permit him another day off so that he might enjoy the same physical rest enjoyed by the flock he so diligently labors to feed.³

Sabbath and Worship

Does proper New Testament Sabbath rest necessarily include an element of worship, or was the worship element of the old covenant fulfilled in Christ, leaving only the creation pattern of rest?⁴ Hebrews makes clear the spiritual component to rest that is added to the physical component of rest that is needed because of our current physically embodied nature.⁵ Bifurcating physical rest and spiritual rest, both of which are needed for holistic health, needlessly removes one of the two necessary components of a healthy rest pattern.⁶ As embodied beings, our spiritual health and our physical health are intimately tied. One cannot thrive while the other is neglected. Thus, the biblical standard combines the spiritual component of weekly rest (i.e., corporate and private means of grace) and the physical component of weekly rest.

³For more, see Pipa, *The Lord's Day*, 75.

⁴Glenn N. Davies, “The Christian Sabbath,” *Reformed Theological Review* 42, no. 2 (May 1983). Davies argues this way, even though he does say that worship on the day of rest is wise and suggested.

⁵For more on the spiritual component of rest, see the above analysis of Heb 3–4. See the below discussion on Sabbath and human embodiment from 1 Cor 15.

⁶Because of this union in the physical and spiritual nature of rest, taking a physical Sabbath on one day and a spiritual Sabbath on another is shown to be less than the biblical understanding of Sabbath.

Church Attendance and Discipline

The ongoing nature of the Sabbath ordinance, along with other commands in the New Testament, require the weekly gathering of believers for worship. Without a prescriptive creation ordinance, requiring *weekly* church attendance to worship becomes problematic. The only passage in the New Testament explicitly commanding a gathering of saints for the purpose of worship is Hebrews 10:25: “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” *Ἐγκαταλείποντες* (from *ἐγκαταλείπω*) means “totally abandoned, or utterly forsaken.”⁷ That means a believer could, conceivably, come to church faithfully once a year on Easter without facing church discipline because he has not “totally abandoned” church attendance. While certainly less than the biblical standard, such a scenario is consistent with the removal of the creation-based foundation for Sabbath.

Additionally, without a creation-based pattern for weekly observance, a charge of legalism could be levied if weekly church attendance is required. For example, if the church believes that members are no longer bound to keep one day per week specifically devoted to God, and then that church disciplines a member for lack of attendance, the church would be guilty of adding laws to (its interpretation of) God’s word. By removing or neglecting the command of God for a weekly Sabbath and then enforcing attendance that is (in their system) no longer required, the church would be guilty of legalism; that is, it would require something that God does not. Therefore, removal or neglect of the weekly Sabbath pattern as a binding

⁷Joseph H. Thayer and G. Abbott-Smith, “ἐγκαταλείπω,” *The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon*, accessed May 2, 2013, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/egkataleipo.html>. See also Frederick W. Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), s.v. “ἐγκαταλείπω.”

creation ordinance leaves the church open to the charge of legalistic addition to God's law.

Sabbath Pattern and Corporate Meetings

The weekly Sabbath pattern protects Christians from both overzealous and antinomian worship patterns. For example, if there is no longer a single day out of the week that is set apart for corporate worship, then churches worship corporately any day of the week. Overzealous church leaders could stipulate that corporate worship should be held twice a week, or even every day of the week, and require congregants to attend. On the other end of the spectrum, church leaders could proclaim that worship would be held once a month, or even once a year, and require attendance at those meetings. A strong view of the weekly pattern grounded in creation allows for protection from either of these tendencies. While the Bible certainly allows corporate worship more than weekly, the clear biblical pattern would never be less than that.

Sabbath and the Second Service

Sabbath studies usually address another practical ecclesiology question: does Sabbath observance necessitate a second corporate service on Sundays? This argument stems from a strong doctrine of the Lord's Day that emphasizes that the entire day belongs to the Lord. The arguments in favor of an additional evening service generally fall into two streams: (1) Psalm 92 as a model for corporate worship,⁸ and (2) the second service is a "reformed" tradition.⁹

⁸For example, see Pipa, *The Lord's Day*, 155–69.

⁹For example, see R. Scott Clark's chapter entitled, "Whatever Happened to the Second Service," in *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub, 2008), 293–342. I realize his argument includes biblical analysis; however, the main thrust of his book is to draw Reformed churches back to their tradition, which includes a strong history of two corporate services on the Lord's Day.

Both of these streams of arguments fail to convince. Arguments from Psalm 92 fail because they mandate new covenant corporate worship based off of old covenant worship patterns. These types of mandates suffer from an under-realized eschatology; that is, they insufficiently address the significance of Christ's first coming and thereby force the new covenant church to worship according to old covenant worship patterns.

Arguments for a second service because "it is reformed to do so" fail to convince for two reasons. First, to make such a clear demand without New Testament warrant reveals the tendency addressed in the previous paragraph. Second, some churches may find it impractical (or impossible) to mandate two gatherings on the Lord's Day. Such a mandate could prove exceedingly burdensome to congregations that exist within cultures that do not condone (or even permit) corporate gatherings for Christians on Sunday.

That being said, congregations stand to receive many blessings if they are able to gather more than once on the Lord's Day. Principally, the addition of a second corporate service at the end of the Lord's Day emphasizes the fact that the entire day belongs to God. Rather than just giving a couple of hours to God in the morning and spending the rest of the day in leisure, the second service offers a healthy way to bookend the entire day in corporate worship. This emphasizes the entirety of the day and the Godward focus of the day.

Additionally, and related to the discussion of the means of grace, the addition of a second service provides two other practical benefits. First, it can allow those providentially hindered from attending the morning service the opportunity to gather with other members and participate in corporate worship. Second, the evening service allows for the entire body to enjoy the corporate means of grace for a second time. A second service offers a practically attainable and reasonable amount

of the day devoted to the corporate assembly without unduly diverting from the personal and familial observance and responsibilities of the day. A second service observance on the Lord's Day, while not an obligation for new covenant churches, does affirm the goodness of the entire day as the Lord's without unnecessarily distracting the believers from other responsibilities and opportunities for blessing on the Lord's Day.

Sabbath and the Means of Grace

A high view of the weekly Sabbath pattern complements a strong view of the means of grace, defined as those things which "Christ, working through the Holy Spirit, uses for the gathering of the elect, the edification of the saints, and the building up of his spiritual body."¹⁰ If Christ uses the ordinary means of to build his church, then believers should eagerly anticipate the weekly chance to partake of such blessings.¹¹

Conversely, a low view of the Lord's Day exposes a potentially low view of the means of grace and of Christ. For pastors not to encourage members to attend weekly corporate services is unloving, if God has given the corporate means of grace as a primary means of edification and sanctification.

¹⁰Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 6th ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1959), 604. List of the means of grace usually include: the preached word, sacraments (Lord's Supper and baptism), prayer, and fellowship (cf. Acts 2:42).

¹¹Regarding Christ's chosen means of edification, I agree with these questions from the *WLC*, question 154: "*What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?*" The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances; especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation"; question 155: "*How is the Word made effectual to salvation?*" The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace; and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation"; and question 162: "*What is a sacrament?*" A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another."

Some have contended that weekly Sabbath rest is itself a means of grace instituted for the edification of believers.¹² However, this imprecise classification confuses the opportunity for observing the means of grace with the actual means themselves. That is, weekly Sabbath observance provides the space in which the ordinary means of grace may be performed and received. Puritan Richard Greenham referred to the Lord's Day as "the great means of the means"—whereby all the means of grace are made available to the people of God.¹³ Without a weekly space devoted to the corporate meetings, the church unnecessarily withholds the means by which God has promised to edify his people.

Human embodiment

Weekly Sabbath rest affirms the physical nature of human existence now and in the eschaton, aids in the formation of personal identity, and underscores the goodness of human leisure.

Sabbath Rest and Physical Embodiment

The Sabbath pattern takes into account the embodied nature of our existence. By that I mean that physical rest is a human necessity because of the physical aspect of our being, and that weekly Sabbath observance creates space for the regular and proper care of human physical bodies.¹⁴

As embodied beings, human beings have limits, further exacerbated by the

¹²For example, see Theodore Dehon, *Sermons, on the Public Means of Grace: The Fasts and Festivals of the Church; on Scripture Characters; and Various Practical Subjects* (Charleston, SC: E. Thayer, 1821), 142–62.

¹³John H. Primus, *Richard Greenham: Portrait of an Elizabethan Pastor* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 150–77. For more on Greenham's practical theology and Sabbath views, see Primus, *Richard Greenham*, 150–77.

¹⁴I am not saying that there are no non-physical benefits to weekly Sabbath rest (e.g., spiritual, emotional, intellectual). I am merely emphasizing the physical benefits in this section.

effects of the fall.¹⁵ To try and live as if one has no body (i.e., by refusing to accept the physical limitations inherent to our current existence) is to live in a state of self-deception.¹⁶ Ryken writes concerning this self-deception: “When people deceive themselves in this way they operate on the premise that their spiritual energy and service to God have nothing to do with their bodies.” He goes on to describe this way of life as “self-defeating” and “heresy” because of the clear biblical affirmation of the importance of our bodies in both the doctrines of creation and the resurrection of the body.¹⁷ Living in a way that minimizes, ignores, or denies the physicality of human existence is problematic. Instead, the Sabbath pattern exposes a limit to our human activity: “Thus we are reminded of our creatureliness, of the fact that our very existence is from God.”¹⁸ Weekly Sabbath rest offers a physical break from work that embodied human beings need.

Embodiment and 1 Corinthians 15. Paul’s discussion of the natural and spiritual body in 1 Corinthians 15:42–49 has many complex issues and has been discussed in depth elsewhere.¹⁹ It is sufficient here to highlight that Paul emphasizes

¹⁵For example, see Matthew Lee Anderson, *Earthen Vessels: Why Our Bodies Matter to Our Faith* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011), 68; J. I. Packer, “Leisure and Life-Style: Leisure, Pleasure, and Treasure,” in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 319.

¹⁶Wayne E. Oates, *Your Right to Rest* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 25.

¹⁷Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 208.

¹⁸Packer, “Leisure and Life-Style: Leisure, Pleasure, and Treasure,” 319.

¹⁹This brief discussion of Paul’s argument will merely defend the physical state of man (both before and after the fall) and that his physical state does not change until his resurrection (or Christ’s return). Jeffrey Asher has called this passage, “One of the most controversial passages in the New Testament.” Jeffrey Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15: A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection*, Hermeneutische untersuchungen zur theologie 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 110. For a history of interpretation on this passage, see François Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel: interprétation de 1 Cor. 15, 35-49 par les auteurs chrétiens des quatre premiers siècles* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 52–231; cf. Hans Clemens Caesarius Cavallin, “Life after Death: Paul’s Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in I Cor. 15” (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1974).

Adam's (and all humanity's) *psychical* (σῶμα ψυχικόν, v. 44) body, that that *psychical* state of being will continue until the resurrection, and that the *pneumatic* (σῶμα πνευματικόν, v. 44) body brought by Christ will not be assumed until the resurrection (or Christ's return).²⁰ Brown agrees, "A σῶμα ψυχικόν is an apt descriptor for a person before the resurrection regardless of whether they are dead or alive, worldly or spiritual [cf. 2:13–15]; this is a critical observation. Furthermore, σῶμα πνευματικόν can only refer to someone after the Parousia."²¹ It was appropriate for Adam, as a *psychical* being, to have weekly rest. Or, since the physical benefits of redemption will not be given until after the resurrection, mankind's current anthropological continuity with prelapsarian Adam makes it fitting for mankind to retain the same pattern of resting that he was given *before* the entrance of sin into the world.

God made Adam with a *psychical* nature, but his *psychical* nature was not the final state for which God made him. Adam was created from the dust (15:47), and as such he possessed a certain "exhaustion factor," or limit to his capacity:

²⁰Paul J. Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15: Connecting Faith and Morality in the Context of Greco-Roman Mythology*, Wissenschaftliche untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 202–07; Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 308; Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publications, 2001) 106. Vos comments about the *pneumatic* and *psychical* that it would be a mistake to supply σῶμα. Rather, "they designate the successive reign of two comprehensive principles in history, two successive world-orders, a first and a second creation, beginning each with an Adam of its own." Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, 106.

²¹Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15*, 203. The timing of the two different bodies is the primary concern for this dissertation (i.e., when a human being gets his or her spiritual body), rather than the exact meaning of a "spiritual" vs. "natural" body. On the last point, scholars basically fall into two camps, "Either the body (person) is *animated and motivated by* the ψυχή or πνεῦμα the or the body is *made of the substance of* ψυχή the or the πνεῦμα." Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15*, 203 (emphasis original). Brown concludes, "Paul does not entirely answer the question regarding the nature of the transformed body since he continues to explain the distinctions between the two. There is still room for clarification and qualification. He needs to further identify the spiritual body as a body not precisely like an angel *nor the prelapsarian Adam*, but like the risen and glorified Jesus." Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15*, 207 (emphasis added).

“Adam’s body was constitutionally made so that it needed rest from the labour God had prescribed for Adam (Gen. 2:15). This *psychical* state was not the ultimate goal that God had for Adam:

There lay beyond [Adam’s original prelapsarian state] the eschatological state of confirmed righteousness (i.e. without the possibility of sinning). This state would have been achieved by Adam had he been obedient. In Paul’s words he would have progressed from the *psychical* state (of his creation) to the *pneumatic* state, and this would have involved for Adam a new body commensurate with this new existence.²²

Paul contrasts the resurrection body with the fallen body in vs. 42. However, in verse 44 Paul changes to a contrast between the original created body of Adam (his *psychical* body) and the body of the Spirit (eschatological, *pneumatic* body).²³ Paul explains to his readers that “if there is a physical (*psychical*) body, there is also a spiritual (*pneumatic*) body” (vs. 44b), which is true,

Paul is saying, even before the Fall, i.e. the anticipation of the *pneumatic* body, precedes the necessity of redemption. Thus Adam, in his state of probation in the Garden of Eden, upon the successful completion of that probation would have proceeded to the *pneumatic* state. It is not for us to speculate upon the mechanics of such a transition, or more properly, progression; yet the fact that such a consummation awaited Adam cannot be denied on the basis of Paul’s language in this text.²⁴

Even before the fall a pneumatic body was anticipated. However, given the entrance of sin into the world, Adam lost the ability not to sin, and “consequently, all hope of gaining the *pneumatic* apart from redemption. It is at this point that the eschatological became necessarily soteriological.”²⁵

²²Davies, “The Christian Sabbath,” 35.

²³For a discussion of and defense of this rhetorical shift in Paul’s argument in vs. 44, see Duane Watson, “Paul’s Rhetorical Strategy in 1 Corinthians 15,” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 90 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 246; Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15*, 113n50.

²⁴Davies, “The Christian Sabbath,” 35.

²⁵Davies, “The Christian Sabbath,” 35 (emphasis original). This idea is reminiscent of Vos, “The eschatological is an older strand in revelation that the soteric. The so-called ‘Covenant of Works’ was nothing but an embodiment of the Sabbatical principle.” Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975), 140.

Because Adam had an inherent “exhaustion factor” even before the fall, and because the *psychical* body remains, even for believers, until the resurrection, it is entirely fitting that man gets a day each week for the gift of rest. Asher explains the logic of Paul’s argument:

What Paul is saying is: if his readers accept the fact that the first man was of the earth and dusty and what naturally follows that all humans are from the earth and dusty, then they must also accept the fact that a second Adam who is from heaven exists and humans also acquire his characteristics. . . .Nevertheless, since the progeny of the second Adam has not yet acquired this heavenly body, then it must lie in the future as a result of an eschatological resurrection. This final point is made in v. 49. In this verse, Paul makes it clear that these two antithetical forms of existence, a *soma pneumatikon* and a *soma psychikon*, are not coexistent, but successive.²⁶

Davies agrees,

It was also entirely appropriate to Adam’s *psychical* body to have a weekly rest, knowing that the day would come when he would be given a new body in which to enjoy God’s eternal Sabbath rest. For then he would run and not be weary, walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31). The eschatological state would not be devoid of activity, rather the activity of the *pneumatic* body would be non-exhausting activity. The contrast for the wicked in that state would be “no rest” (Rev. 14:11).²⁷

Human beings bear anthropological continuity with Adam’s pre-fall body; thus, they should observe the same work/rest patterns.

While the Holy Spirit dwells in believers, that does not negate the physicality of their bodies. Rather, because they will not experience the fullness of the *pneumatic* gift (i.e., the glorification of their bodies into *pneumatic*

²⁶Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15*, 115–16 (emphasis original). He continues explaining the future nature of the *pneumatic* state, “Here [vs. 49] he is alluding to an eschatological resurrection, a point that he does not make explicit until vv. 50–57 in the following section of his argument. In v. 49, he simply says that the antithesis of heavenly and earthly, as a result of the influence of the prototypes, is acquired by human being successively. In v. 49a, he shows that we bore the image (alluding to the *soma psychickon*) of the man of dust (the terrestrial human form, acquired from the first Adam). The past tense of this verb (we bore) shows that the influence of the first prototype began in the past as the first human, terrestrial being. However, this clause is followed by a future verb indicating that sometime in the future we, that is, terrestrial beings, will bear the image (an allusion to the *soma pneumatikon*) of the second Adam, the prototype who is from heaven” Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15*, 116.

²⁷Davies, “The Christian Sabbath,” 35 (emphasis original).

constitutions) until after the resurrection,²⁸ weekly rest befits humanity's current embodied state.²⁹ Thus, the continuity of man's physical embodiment both before and after the fall until the resurrection is another affirmation of weekly Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance.

Interpreters who argue that weekly Sabbath rest is abrogated have no biblical basis for enjoining upon people the command/gift of rest. Their interpretations' best argument is that it is wise for believers to rest, possibly even to say that it is wise to rest weekly. Continuing the discussion of inaugurated eschatology, those positions would be guilty of an over-realized eschatology in the realm of anthropology. Their position neglects the anthropological continuity that mankind retains both before and after the fall, and these positions over-emphasize the anthropological (i.e., physical) benefits of Christ's first coming. Their arguments don't properly account for the physically situatedness of our current existence.³⁰

²⁸Regarding the temporal succession of the two natures, see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987), 786–90; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 734–37; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1275–90. Regarding the succession of the two natures, Thiselton comments, “*Eschatological discontinuity* implies that the Corinthians cannot yet live as if the triumph is complete: first, *the natural, everyday order of life with all its constraints and contingencies*, i.e., the purely human, *continues*; only after that does “Christlikeness,” i.e., bearing the imprint of the last Adam, become wholly transposed into following Christ in the realm of the Spirit without constraint or qualification.” Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1285 (emphasis original). The implication that the Corinthians cannot live as if the triumph is complete is important, as will be discussed below.

²⁹Ciampa and Rosner comment, “Paul’s language [natural vs. spiritual body] reflects what is called inaugurated eschatology, including the idea that Christians have already begun to experience the blessing and realities of the last days, including the Spirit, such that they may be called ‘spiritual.’ Here, however, for the sake of the point he wants to make about the radical contrast between the two types of bodies, he describes a strict dichotomy between the life animated by the soul, or ordinary human life, and life fully animated by God’s Spirit, which are *two mutually exclusive experiences*. To live in a resurrected body is to experience a new mode of existence, life directed and empowered by the Spirit, suitable to the age to come, in a body untainted by sin and death in any sense.” Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 817 (emphasis added).

³⁰Again, Thiselton is helpful: “Paul calls for eschatological realism. Humankind remains *human and fragile* prior to the resurrection of the last day. Already the new order has begun a transformation at the level of Christlikeness or being ‘from the Holy Spirit’ in a limited sense that still eaves fallibility and constraint. Those at Corinth must not think and act as if they were already ‘there.’” Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1288.

When combined with a strong sense of work as a creation ordinance, these interpretations could easily lead to a neglect of the physical needs of the body and/or a guilty conscience when one does decide to (or is forced to) rest. Both pitfalls can be avoided with the following thesis: God has given a pattern for normal weekly resting from the foundation of the world.

Physical embodiment and the eschaton. Finally, weekly Sabbath rest befits the physical nature of the final Sabbath. Because our eternal state is a physical embodied state that is characterized by final rest, the temporary weekly Sabbath rest pattern should include a portion of physical rest as a weekly reminder of the eventual perpetual rest to come. Davies agrees that for the redeemed, “the eschatological state [will] not be devoid of activity, rather the activity of the *pneumatic* state [will] be non-exhausting activity. The contrast for the wicked in that state [will] be ‘no rest’ (Rev. 14:11).”³¹ The physicality of the weekly rest stands as a recurring reminder of the physical need for rest for embodied human beings, as well as the physicality of the promised rest to come.³²

Sabbath Rest and Personal Identity

Weekly Sabbath observance also aids in the formation of a personal identity by creating a space for engaging in activities that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to do because of the constraints of work. If people are bound

³¹Davies, “The Christian Sabbath,” 35 (Emphasis original).

³²For more on Sabbath, rest, heaven, and the final state, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 789; Iain D. Campbell, *On the First Day of the Week: God, the Christian and the Sabbath* (Leominster, MA: Day One Publications, 2005), 204–19; Errol Hulse, “Why I Believe In the Sabbath,” accessed April 11, 2018, <http://www.reformationtoday.org/papers/WhyIBelieveintheSabbath.pdf>, 38 Hulse, following Owen, argues that the eternal state will continue the cycle of work and rest. Thus, there will be the same sabbatical cycle in the eternal state. While an interesting position, it is a highly speculative understanding that has not had much support throughout history. Hulse and Owen seem to miss the point that the Sabbath day pictures the eternal rest to come; thus, the weekly day of rest should be fulfilled once the final rest (the antitype) has been achieved.

to work all the time, little or no time would remain for activities that cultivate and highlight the various virtuous and creative aspects of humanity.

Local church attendance and involvement in worship are the chief means of forming one's identity.³³ Church involvement is the primary means through which God forms and sanctifies his people: the preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments reaffirm the believer's status and identity as united to Christ and adopted into the family of God. Faithful weekly church attendance and participation in worship nurtures Christian identity, the most crucial of all aspects of personal identity.

Additional identity formation can occur through leisure time, created through weekly Sabbath observance. One author argues that in leisure people pursue their "ideal identity" that they have created for themselves.³⁴ In leisure time, people can partake in identity forming activities of their choosing: they can read a book, enjoy nature, play music, or paint a picture. Simply put, a weekly day of rest creates space for people to be who they want to be, and to enjoy and express the gifts that God has given them.

Ryken highlights the need for a Christian worldview in order to truly understand rest and leisure: "The Christian faith supplies depth to the very idea of leisure as personal fulfillment. The person in Christ has an identity toward which to aspire."³⁵ Indeed, because leisure and rest time is "the growing time of the human spirit" and provides space for "rest and restoration, for rediscovering life in its

³³Other means of identity formation exist besides those listed here. This section merely argues that weekly Sabbath provides a regular time to engage in those activities. Identity formation is used here in the sense of individuation: the process by which individuals differentiate themselves based on their personal preferences, abilities, and gifts.

³⁴Ralph Glasser, "Leisure Policy, Identity and Work," in *Work and Leisure*, ed. J. T. Haworth and M. A. Smith (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Book Company, 1976), 36–52.

³⁵Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 236.

entirety,” believers are freed to pursue re-establishing that identity.³⁶ One author writes that observing Sabbath is “taking time . . . time to be holy . . . time to be human.”³⁷

The Christian worldview supplies the proper understanding of virtue and identity, along with the biblical basis for the setting aside of time each week to pursue that identity. Sadly, in a secular society, “the ideal identity that people hold is confused and emaciated.”³⁸ One leisure sociologist explains, “Separated from [a] spiritual view, the idea of recreation has the aimless circularity of simply restoring us to a state in which we can best continue to work.”³⁹ Divorced from an understanding that Christians glorify God through both work and labor, people merely see rest as either an interruptive interlude between work sessions, or as the entire reason for work (i.e., working for the weekend). These sub-Christian understandings of work and rest imply that a significant portion of life is merely tolerated in order to get back to the other portion of life.

Instead, humans are more than just utilitarian-driven laborers or leisure-driven gluttons. A balanced biblical understanding of work and rest patterns gives meaning to and provides space for both. Weekly Sabbath rest provides the “rhythm of life (which includes a quantitative dimension of leisure) and the quality of life” that God offers us in his creation-week pattern.⁴⁰

³⁶Robert Lee, *Religion and Leisure in America*. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), 35.

³⁷Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 87.

³⁸Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 236.

³⁹Stanley Parker, *The Sociology of Leisure* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), 107.

⁴⁰Paul Heintzman, “Implications for Leisure from a Review of the Biblical Concepts of Sabbath and Rest,” in *Christianity and Leisure: Issues in a Pluralistic Society*, ed. Paul Heintzman, Glen E. Van Andel, and Thomas L. Visker, rev. ed. (Sioux City, IA: Dordt College Press, 2006), 14.

Leisure and Non-Utilitarian Enjoyment

Previous generations of Christians would balk at the idea of a Christian spending regular time in rest or leisure. For example, some Puritan authors would denounce the sin of “idleness” even if that “idleness” looked exactly like what today would pass as rest or leisure.⁴¹ This section gives a short argument for the legitimacy of leisure in the life of believers.⁴² Specifically, by examining the non-utilitarian aspects of God’s creation, this section demonstrates that leisure is both biblically permissible and encouraged.⁴³

First, God did not create a purely utilitarian world. Rather, “he created a world in which much exists for the sake of beauty, delight, and refreshment.”⁴⁴ The beautiful colors of the flowers, the breathtaking artistry of a sunset, the majesty of the Grand Canyon, each of these was not necessary for the functioning of our world. Yet, God in his infinite goodness has chosen to create them for our enjoyment and his glory. God created this world with countless features that, when strictly considered, were not utilitarian.

Indeed, many passages in Scripture encourage non-utilitarian enjoyment of the good things that God has created. For example, the preacher speaks of the joy

⁴¹For example, “An idle person is the devil’s tennis ball, which he bandies up and down with temptation till at last the ball goes out of play.” Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture: Some Characteristic Marks of a Man Who Is Going to Heaven*, Puritan Paperbacks (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1992), 169.

⁴²Rest and leisure have nearly identical semantic ranges of meaning. However, in this short section, I will use leisure to mean the free use of a person’s time in good (i.e., non-sinful) but not-required activities of their choosing. This leisure time could be found on any day of the week, but principally on the Sabbath. This is distinct from Sabbath rest, which some define as merely the cessation of normal work in order to partake in a different kind of holy work (i.e., deeds of mercy and piety). Again, the meanings are similar. However, the aspect of leisure that I am emphasizing is the non-regulated or required aspects of leisure, as opposed to (what some see as) the legislated aspects of rest time. Leisure, as I and others argue, is permissible on the Sabbath, contra those who might say that the entire day should be spent engaged wholly in the explicit service of God (deeds of mercy and deeds of corporate and private piety).

⁴³These categories are taken from Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 177–82, 260–68. Indeed, this section on the goodness of non-utilitarian leisure leans heavily on Ryken’s work.

⁴⁴Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 179.

that comes from food, drink, and relationships (e.g., Eccl 2:24; 9:7–10).⁴⁵ Likewise, Song of Solomon extols the joy that comes from a healthy sexuality, which certainly would not be classified in the category of “work.” Indeed, the most basic aspect of Old Testament Sabbath is *non-work*: “sprinkled throughout the Old Testament are festivals, dances, and examples of hospitality which bring a wholeness to life.”⁴⁶ Thus, the Bible affirms that the enjoyment of God’s creation is not only permissible, but is encouraged.

Second, God did not merely create non-utilitarian aspects of creation. He also “infused the same quality of nonutilitarianism into human life.”⁴⁷ He created man and placed him in a beautiful garden, which was full of fruit that was pleasing to the eye (Gen 2:9). God gives wine “to gladden the heart of man” and oil “to make his face shine” (Ps 104). Even Jesus encouraged beholding nature (Matt 6:25–34) for the purpose of curbing “the human impulse to be acquisitive and . . . [the reduction of] life to ceaseless striving.”⁴⁸ Much of human life has non-utilitarian aspects.

Furthermore, this dissertation argues that God has created a weekly time for the specific purpose of worshipping and enjoying him and for the good of his creation. God has created a beautiful world to be enjoyed.⁴⁹ God has given and prescribes a weekly day that fosters space for enjoying the goodness of his creation.

⁴⁵It is noteworthy that “without having the ultimate assurance that Christ’s further revelation brings, that is, without knowledge of our re-creation, Qoheleth can still argue that we are created to play and to work. It should be perhaps easier for Christians, who know that the Creator is also the Redeemer, to rest in this reality” Robert Johnston, “Work and Play: A Biblical Perspective,” in *Christianity and Leisure: Issues in a Pluralistic Society*, rev. ed. (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2006), 9. Merely reflecting upon the nature of the created order, the preacher in Ecclesiastes can see that both work and rest/leisure are good gifts.

⁴⁶ Johnston, “Work and Play,” 7.

⁴⁷Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 180.

⁴⁸Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 180.

⁴⁹For further discussion, see Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 181; Donald Demaray, *Watch Out For Burnout* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 63–72.

Man may have some non-utilitarian time without being guilty of “idleness.”⁵⁰ In fact, it could be the most fruitful time of his week.⁵¹

Conclusion

Because the Sabbath provides the time for local bodies to assemble and avail themselves of the means of grace, weekly rest impacts several areas of practical ecclesiology: the relationship between Sabbath theology and church leadership, attendance and discipline, corporate meetings, Christian witness, and the means of grace. Furthermore, the weekly Sabbath pattern rest affirms the physical nature of human existence now and in the eschaton, aids in the formation of personal identity, and underscores the goodness of human leisure.

⁵⁰For a secular humanist perspective on leisure time, see Sebastian De Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 91–138.

⁵¹For more on a Christian understanding of leisure, see Harold Lehman, *In Praise of Leisure* (Scottsdale, PA: Harold Press, 1974); Demaray, *Watch Out For Burnout*, 63–72, 129–38; Waldo Beach, “The Weight of Leisure,” in *The Christian Life* (Richmond, VA: CLC Press, 1966), 214–31; Leonard Doohan, *Leisure: A Spiritual Need* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1990); Paul Heintzman, *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives*, Engaging Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance supported by both biblical-theological and historical evidence, and that that creation ordinance has ecclesial and personal implications.

Specifically, this dissertation has argued for the propriety of weekly Sabbath rest. This means that the normal pattern to be followed by humanity consists of a week, of seven 24-hour days, six of which are spent in work while the other day is devoted to rest. This rest includes multiple implications for both the individual (e.g., physical, spiritual) and the church (e.g., meeting days and frequency).

Furthermore, this dissertation proposed a mediating position between traditional sabbatarian and non-sabbatarian positions by arguing for the weekly pattern in a way that is not necessarily tied to one's interpretation of the abiding validity or invalidity of Mosaic Law. Historically, the sabbatarians have argued for Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance and non-sabbatarians have argued the opposite. This proposal offers a third option that grounds weekly rest in creation (showing some similarities with sabbatarians), but also highlights the radical transformation of rest found in Christ (showing some similarity with non-sabbatarians while avoiding their idea that fulfillment in Christ removes the biblical ethic of weekly rest).

Creation Ordinance

This dissertation has claimed that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance. Because there is no agreed upon definition, this dissertation proposed and defended an original definition. For the purposes of this dissertation, a creation ordinance was defined as a normative, but not uniformly observed, universal pattern, exceptions to which must fulfill and contribute to the pattern's fulfillment; moreover, the pattern must be confirmed, not negated or abrogated, by later biblical revelation.

This definition, while more precise, is consistent with the church's body of thought on the issue. The idea of a creation ordinance has a long history in the Christian tradition, even though the exact terminology has changed. In the early church, for example, Irenaeus could speak of "natural precepts which God had implanted in humankind from the beginning."¹ Likewise, Augustine spoke about a "natural law," an "eternal law," and God's ordering of both the cosmic and the ethical sphere, all very similar to the creation ordinance discussion today.² Aquinas advanced the discussion by adding the distinction between eternal law and natural law, a concept that will be discussed further below.³ Calvin largely agreed with Aquinas's conception of natural law, although he had slightly different emphases.⁴ Calvin laid the groundwork for modern conversation by specifically pointing out three ordinances established at creation: dominion,⁵ marriage,⁶ and Sabbath.⁷ The

¹Irenaeus, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith: A Condensation of Against Heresies*, ed. James R. Payton (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 4:15.1.

²See, for example, Augustine's *On Two Souls, Against the Manichaeans* 1.12.16; *Reply to Faustus* 22.27; *City of God* 19.13–15; Michael G. Muñoz, "Creation Ordinances and Culture" (MA thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2004), 45–48.

³For example, see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.I.91; Muñoz, "Creation Ordinances and Culture," 50.

⁴Calvin emphasized the Decalogue as the content of natural law more than Aquinas. R. Scott Clark, "Calvin on the *Lex Naturalis*," *Stulos Theological Journal* 6, no. 1 and 2 (1998): 1–22; Muñoz, "Creation Ordinances and Culture," 52.

⁵John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, ed. and trans. John Owen, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 1:96.

Westminster Divines affirmed these three creation ordinance categories in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.⁸

The shift from “natural law” terminology to “creation ordinance” language occurred within the Dutch Reformed tradition, specifically around the time of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck.⁹ Kuyper and Bavinck agreed with Calvin regarding the content of natural law, but they “had a proclivity for the term ‘ordinance,’” because they recognized “the institutions of labor and dominion, marriage and multiplication, and Sabbath as constituting a unique set of ordinances given at creation.”¹⁰

In modern usage, systematians have shown a tendency to avoid the language of “natural law” in favor of “creation ordinances.”¹¹ In fact, systematians don’t treat creation ordinances as a distinct locus of theology. Rather, Christian ethicists (or systematians writing in the field of ethics) are the ones that more frequently address the category of creation ordinances.¹²

Another recent example of a theologian using language other than natural law is Walter Kaiser, who speaks of the “order of nature,”¹³ “orders of creation,”¹⁴

⁶Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 98, 134.

⁷Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 106; Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 58. For more on Calvin’s view of the Sabbath, see Richard B. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 1998).

⁸WCF 4.2, 24.2, and 21.7, respectively.

⁹Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 64–73.

¹⁰Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 73.

¹¹Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 78–82.

¹²For example, one of the most clearly articulated examples of a sustained discussion about creation ordinances appears in John Murray, *Principles of Christian Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (London: Tyndale Press, 1957), 27–106; cf. Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 83.

¹³Walter Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 122.

¹⁴Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 148.

and “created order,”¹⁵ describing the way that God has set up his creation to function. Indeed, his definition of creation ordinances is an improvement, though still lacking in precision:

These ordinances reflect the work of God in creation and depict “the constitution of things” as they were intended to be from the Creator’s hand. They cover and regulate the whole gamut of life: bearing children, superintending the earth as a responsible steward before and under God, responsibility ruling the creatures of all creation, finding fulfillment and satisfaction in work labor, resting on the Sabbath, and enjoying marriage as a gift from above.¹⁶

Kaiser’s conception of creation ordinances, just like Murray’s, maintains a morally and ethically prescriptive element for modern believers.

One final example will highlight the distinction between the moral law and the creation ordinances. Carl F. H. Henry argues in his *Christian Personal Ethics* that “the whole content of the moral law was not inwardly communicated even before the fall.” Rather, man was dependent upon “the positive commandments in Eden,” which Henry lists as: procreation, the subduction of the earth, labor, keeping of the Sabbath, and monogamous marriage.¹⁷ Thus, the terminological move away from language of natural law toward language of creation ordinance/pattern continues. Significantly, Henry views creation ordinances to be “positive commandments” for Adam to obey. That is, God gave Adam these ordinances as special revelation in the form of moral/ethical imperatives, imperatives that retain their validity for today.

¹⁵Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 198, 304.

¹⁶Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 31. Kaiser also cites Murray’s list of creation ordinances approvingly. Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 153n4; see also Muñoz, “Creation Ordinances and Culture,” 86. The discussion of creation patterns retaining their ethical significance extends beyond the reformed tradition. Lutheran Otto Piper affirms their ongoing ethical significance in his *Christian Ethics* (London: Nelson, 1970), 151–54..

¹⁷Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 242.

This brief survey sought to demonstrate the historicity of the creation ordinance discussion, even though the language has changed over the years. The definition of creation ordinance proposed in this dissertation fits squarely within the trajectory of thought throughout church history on the issue.

Sabbath, Typology, Hermeneutics, and Biblical Theology

Chapter 2 contained an examination of interpretive issues surrounding the Sabbath discussion. It was argued, first, that typology can be defined as,

The idea that persons (e.g., Moses), events (e.g., the exodus), and institutions (e.g., the temple) can—in the plan of God—prefigure a later stage in that plan and provide the conceptuality necessary for understanding the divine intent (e.g., the coming of Christ to be the new Moses, to effect the new exodus, and to be the new temple).¹⁸

Second, for the purposes of this dissertation, a biblical type was assumed as having (1) textual warrant, (2) correspondence to its antitype, (3) escalation across the canon, and (4) an interpretation that is guided by the covenants. Sabbath has each of these aspects, and is therefore a type.

Furthermore, this dissertation has defended the idea that inaugurated eschatology should play a central role in interpreting Sabbath (and all types) properly. Specifically, this dissertation argued that creation ordinances ought to be seen as continuing until the *second* coming of Christ. Or, to put it another way, while Christ's first advent has inaugurated the Sabbath reign of Christ, the type

¹⁸Graham A Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 289. O'Hare's definition is similar, "A type is something different than what it is, so there is a conceptual similarity or correspondence between the type and antitype. A type is a real person, event, or institution that represents a forthcoming real person event or institution; and highlights specific redemptive patterns or themes through *intended* similarities." Terrence D. O'Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendency of First-day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 7. These definitions help distinguish typological interpretation from allegory. Allegorical interpretation is not grounded in the authorial intent and therefore needs an extra-textual means of interpretation. Cf. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 102.

retains typological value until the second coming of Christ because the ultimate antitype (the eschaton) has yet to arrive. Just as work and marriage, both creation ordinances and types), continue until Christ returns, so too should weekly rest.

While the creation pattern of rest has not been revoked, the coming of Jesus brought fuller revelation regarding the significance of the day. He explained that the weekly Sabbath rest pointed toward both salvific rest (i.e., justification, rest from our works; Matt 11:28) and a perfect and ultimate rest with God in the final promised land, the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Heb 4:1–11). Or, to put it another way, the fulfillment of Sabbath typology in the New Testament indicates that Sabbath rest is salvifically inaugurated by Christ's first advent, spiritually appropriated while preserving the physical pattern between Christ's advents, and awaiting literal fulfillment at Christ's second advent.

Problems arise when the creation pattern is minimized. With the Sabbath, interpreters who claim that any New Testament references to Sabbath remaining are spiritual encounter problems of over-realized eschatology. That is, we rest from our works by not sinning; thus, they might say, new covenant believers have no binding pattern of physical resting. Rather, Christians fulfill the Sabbath requirements all the time by abstaining from sin.¹⁹ This over-spiritualized sense of rest neglects the goodness of the created pattern, neglects the anthropological continuity we have with Adam, and tries to bring the blessings of the future age into the present.²⁰

However, if the danger described above results from an over-realized

¹⁹For example, "The Sabbath observance . . . in which the New Testament people of God are to participate is to enter God's rest by faith and thereby cease from their own works . . . this cessation from dead works is not the mere inactivity but an ongoing process of dying to self and mortification of sinful deeds." Andrew T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in *From Sabbath To Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 396.

²⁰See the analysis of 1 Cor 15 in chap. 6.

eschatology, an opposite and equally damaging error can result from an under-realized eschatology. Those interpreters that argue for essential continuity between Old Testament and New Testament Sabbath observance imply that the coming of Jesus had no real impact upon Sabbath other than changing the day. Indeed, one characteristic of Sabbath treatises suffering from an under-realized eschatology is that they almost exclusively examine the Old Testament to explain how new covenant Christians should observe the Sabbath. This position can easily fall prey to the legalistic tendencies that were found among the Pharisees with whom Jesus dealt.

A healthy alternative to these two errors (over and under-realized eschatologies) is a view of Sabbath that both affirms the goodness of the created pattern and also affirms the radical effects of Jesus's first coming while also affirming that there are as of yet unfulfilled aspects of Jesus's promised rest.

Sabbath in the Bible

In chapter 3 this dissertation argued that the pattern of weekly Sabbath rest is a type, built into the rhythm of creation, which escalates across the canon, and remains valid until the second coming of Christ.

Genesis portrays Elohim as the working and resting God. Having completed his cosmic temple, God rests on the seventh day, thereby establishing the proportion of time his subjects should spend in work and rest. Adam's sin in the garden disrupted the regular pattern of work and rest, and resulted in the curse, which increased mankind's need for regular physical rest. The remainder of Genesis does not give explicit evidence of patriarchal observance or non-observance of the rhythm of weekly rest; however, if the spiraling trajectory away from other creation ordinances (e.g., moving from the creation pattern of marriage toward polygamy) is

any indicator, then interpreters may safely assume that the patriarchs also neglected the pattern of work and rest established in creation.

In Exodus 16 God commands his people to not gather manna on the Sabbath, which assumes that the creation-based pattern of work and rest was still an abiding principle. This weekly pattern was next built into mosaic law; God enshrined the weekly pattern into his decalogue. He then expands the typological value of the day to include a salvific element. In the Deuteronomic version of the Sabbath command, we see that the weekly day of rest was also created to point toward the redemption of God's people.

Because of the sin in their hearts, the mosaic Sabbath commandment ultimately became a burden, rather than a blessing, for God's people. They chose not to obey God's command, and they chose to add laws in order to promote their own self-righteousness. The prophets contain many passages that explain how Israel was guilty because of the violation of the Sabbath laws.

In the New Testament, Jesus exposes this guilt through his interaction with the Pharisees. He teaches how the Sabbath day was meant as a blessing for mankind from the very beginning (Mark 2:27–28), and explains how the Pharisees completely misunderstood the day. Jesus's statement that he is "Lord of the Sabbath" demonstrates that he properly interprets that day, that he was equal with the God that rests in Genesis 2, and that he is the one to whom that day ultimately points.

Later, Paul makes several statements that are related to the weekly Sabbath rest discussion, but those do not remove the weekly pattern. Romans 14: 1–6, Galatians 4:9–11, and Colossians 2:16–17 all explain how the uniquely Jewish aspects of Sabbath have been removed, although believers are free to engage in those things according to their conscience. Weekly observance is not a means to procuring our

salvation (Gal 4), but rather is a gift of our salvation, and a picture of our salvation. Nothing that Paul wrote abrogates the weekly pattern of work and rest.

In the section on Hebrews I argued that the rest in Hebrews 3:7–4:11 is: (1) future; (2) not speaking directly to the issue of weekly Christian Sabbath observance; and yet, (3) it is fitting in light of a future Sabbath rest to come that believers continue to observe the sabbatical pattern of the creation week.

This section concluded with some observations related to the transfer of the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday. These observations included, first, that two things foreshadowed the change of day: the differences between the Sabbath motivations in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and the eighth day references built into the law. Second, this section observed how the New Testament evidence confirms the transfer of the day by: (1) the honor bestowed upon the day; (2) by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost; (3) by the practice of the apostles; and (4) by the title given to the day (i.e., the Lord's Day).

The conclusions of the above biblical analysis point toward affirming the abiding validity of God's creation-week pattern of work and rest.

Sabbath in History

Chapters 4 and 5 argued that while the theological foundation of Lord's Day observance has changed over the life of the church, there exist a long history of interpreting God's rest in Genesis as establishing the normative pattern of work and rest for believers, even if the language of "creation ordinance" doesn't appear until the last two centuries.

The early church section demonstrated that Sunday observance was nearly universal from the very beginning and that, while the idea of a "Christian Sabbath" is not clearly stated until Eusebius of Caesarea, the idea of weekly Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance is not inconsistent with the theology and practice of many early

theologians, including: the evidence from Pliny, the *Didache*, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement and Origen, and Augustine. The remainder of chapter 4 examined how Medieval theologians slowly began to ground weekly observance more in ecclesiastical authority than in biblical example.

Next, chapter 5 examined the thought of the Reformers and Puritans on the issue. The theologies of the continental Reformers and the Puritans contain probably the most pro-creation ordinance views of the Sabbath of any time in Church history.

However, within the modern era there exists much agreement with this dissertation's thesis across various traditions. Most confessional denominations (e.g., those that hold to the *WCF*, the *2LBCF*, or the Three Forms of Unity) have held to this weekly work and rest rhythm. Even the Roman Catholic tradition uses language that links Sunday observance with God's rest in Genesis 2.

The church's history demonstrates a variety of different theological foundations for Sunday (Lord's Day) observance in keeping with God's pattern. However, there is contained within church tradition a strong stream of thought that would be very consistent with the definition of weekly rest as a creation ordinance that has been proposed in this dissertation.

Theological Implications

The thesis of this dissertation impacts several areas of theology, including ecclesiology and anthropology. Because the Sabbath provides the time for local bodies to assemble and avail themselves of the means of grace, weekly rest impacts several areas of practical ecclesiology: the relationship between Sabbath theology and church leadership, attendance and discipline, corporate meetings, Christian witness, and the means of grace.

Furthermore, the final chapter argued that weekly Sabbath rest both takes seriously the embodied nature of human existence. Paul's argumentation within 1 Corinthians 15 was examined in order to prove that Paul saw anthropological continuity between pre-fall Adam and current believers. Thus, if God saw fit to give Adam a weekly day of rest before the fall, and if such continuity exists between pre-fall Adam and new covenant believers now, then how much more would believers today need that weekly day of rest after the fall? Paul's understanding of anthropological continuity comports with weekly rest being a creation ordinance.

Also, the concluding section of this chapter contains a brief discussion of the role of leisure in a Christian's life, as well as several practical suggestions for determining how to spend one's rest time, such as: refraining from sin, gathering with a local assembly of believers to worship, private means of piety, and deeds of mercy. Furthermore, believers can spend his or her Lord's Day time in activities that are wise, that is, conducive to the point of the day: worship and rest.

Further Research

This project exposed many areas of possible future study related to the Sabbath and creation ordinance ideas. One example would be the ecological impact of Sabbath observance. Widespread and long-term Sabbath observance could make a positive impact on the environment. This would be a popular avenue to research given the several works on evangelical ecological theology that have been published recently.²¹

²¹For example, Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010); Daniel L. Brunner et al., *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); see also Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 15; Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 222; William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology*, rev. ed. (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2013) 44.

Similarly, someone in the physiological fields could study the psychological and physiological impact of regular Sabbath observance. While smaller studies have been done, a larger study that is not limited to Jewish participants could confirm many of the health benefits associated with regular Sabbath observance.

Politics could also benefit from sustained research on the Sabbath issue. How do citizens protect the observance of Sabbath? Should legislators regulate its observance? Should Sabbath breaking be criminalized, incentivized, or both? Worthwhile research could aid in the construction of legislation that would fairly apply the principles put forth in this study.

Theologically, more research could be done in several areas. For example, researchers could explore what is meant by God “being refreshed” when he rested in Exodus 31:17. While the phrase has been studied linguistically, researchers have reflected surprisingly little on that statement and its relation to theology proper.²² Also, how does the Sabbath theme play out in the final state? Do believers still work and rest in the new heavens and new earth?²³ Researchers could study these questions further.

A final area of research involves more of a historical focus. An inquiry into the reasons for the shift from natural law language to the more modern categories of creation ordinance would aid future researchers. Does the rise of dispensationalism

²²As an example of linguistic explanation without proper theological reflection, here is one author’s conclusions on the passage, “In Ex. 31:17 there is added to the word *shabat* the word *waj-jinnapas*: ‘he took a deep breath.’ Here God’s rest has a double significance: (1) Now he is able to rest, for his entire work, all that man needs, is completed. (2) Besides this, the additional word ‘he took a deep breath,’ or ‘he refreshed himself’ subtly suggests that he *must* rest; he had become exhausted from his work of creation. We are able to comprehend this fully only in the light of Jesus Christ’s exhaustion in his work of redemption, as it is expressed in his cry: ‘It is finished.’ In offering up himself, God gave us everything.” Hans Walter Wolff, “Day of Rest in the Old Testament,” *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (July 1972): 70.

²³Beale argues that the weekly observance will cease at Christ’s final coming. I tend to agree, since the type will be finally, literally fulfilled. However, the Bible gives us minimal indications of what work and rest will look like in the eschaton.

and the push back against traditional covenant theology relate to the decline in Sabbath and natural law language so prevalent from the later medieval age through the post-reformation? Has the rise of modernism and post-enlightenment hermeneutics played a part? Has the secularization of the political realm forced the jettison of religious categories (natural law) for a softer approach (creation ordinance)? These questions deserve more research.

Conclusion

It is my hope that the research that is stimulated by this dissertation would produce fruit that would bless individuals, churches, and societies, but that would most of all honor our Lord. It is in Him that lasting rest may only be found.

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ABSTRACT

THERE REMAINS A SABBATH REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD: A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL DEFENSE OF SABBATH REST AS A CREATION ORDINANCE

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This dissertation argues that weekly Sabbath rest is a creation ordinance supported by both biblical-theological and historical evidence, and has ecclesial and personal implications. Furthermore, this dissertation is proposing a mediating position between traditional sabbatarian and non-sabbatarian positions. Historically, the sabbatarians have argued for Sabbath rest being a creation ordinance and non-sabbatarians have argued the opposite. This proposal offers a third option that grounds weekly rest in creation (showing some similarities with sabbatarians), but also highlights the radical transformation of rest found in Christ (showing some similarity with non-sabbatarians while avoiding their idea that fulfillment in Christ exhausts the biblical instruction about weekly rest). This mediating position will allow for avoiding both the legalistic tendencies of traditional sabbatarian theology and the antinomian tendencies that can be found in some non-sabbatarian positions.

For the purposes of this dissertation, a creation ordinance is defined as a normative, but not uniformly observed, universal pattern, exceptions to which must fulfill and contribute to the pattern's fulfillment, moreover, the pattern must be confirmed, not negated or abrogated, by later biblical revelation.

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