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ABSTRACT

GOD, TIME, AND THE SABBATH:  
A BRIEF HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL SURVEY

by

Francis Gayoba

Adviser: Denis Fortin

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: GOD, TIME, AND THE SABBATH: A BRIEF HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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Date Completed: August 2020

### Problem

This study takes Fernando Canale's work as a starting point, which has demonstrated that unbiblical philosophical presuppositions have undergirded many forms of Christian theology. Of specific interest to this thesis is the presupposition of divine timelessness or temporality, which may have consequences on various doctrines. This study examines the possible influence of these presuppositions on the meaning of the Sabbath, as seen in the writings of Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Andreas Carlstadt, Oswald Glaidt, Andreas Fischer, Nicholas Bownd, and Theophilus Brabourne. The problem this thesis addresses is whether an observable

connection can be made between one's view of divine time and one's view of Sabbath time, as seen in the writings of these authors.

### Method

This study examines the writings of selected authors that address the theology of Sabbath (regardless of which day they espouse) and attempt to identify concepts that come as a result of their presuppositions. Four historical segments are examined: (1) medieval Christianity, (2) the Magisterial Reformation, (3) the Radical Reformation, and (4) the English Reformation. Authors were selected based on whether they had substantial writings on the theology of the Sabbath. To provide background and context to their view of Sabbath time, key relevant areas of Sabbath theology will be examined, namely: creation, the Decalogue, the nature of rest, and any relevant theological positions that may be unique to these individuals. The positions of each author will be described in turn, followed by a comparison and analysis at the end of each section. Some observations will also be made as to the progression of ideas, and the possible influence of one theologian to another. All observations from these Sabbath theologies are synthesized and some implications in the divine time-Sabbath relationship are proposed.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that a correlation between divine time and Sabbath time is observable in the writings of these authors. Those who appear to subscribe to a timeless view of God tend to view the Sabbath atemporally, minimizing the need for a specific temporal observance. On the other hand, there is an apparent openness to the temporal

view of God's time on the part of those who view the Sabbath temporally, emphasizing a specific day of observance based on creation and the fourth commandment. The relationship between divine time and Sabbath time is observably more of correlation than causation.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

GOD, TIME, AND THE SABBATH:  
A BRIEF HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL SURVEY

A Thesis  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Religion

by  
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Date Approved



Dedicated to Tatay, Nanay, Bingbing, and my Andrews family.

Your love and friendship have been to me a resting place.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Problem

Theological presuppositions regarding divine ontology affect not only hermeneutical methodology but also doctrines that result from interpreting Scripture through a particular lens. This study takes Fernando Canale’s work as a starting point, which has demonstrated that unbiblical philosophical presuppositions have undergirded many forms of Catholic and Protestant theology and argues that Adventist theology has originated from a different set of presuppositions in some significant respects.<sup>1</sup> He affirms the biblical sanctuary as the hermeneutical key for Adventist theological interpretation and argues that the Adventist understanding of the sanctuary indicates a God who has some form of temporality.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, classical theism espouses divine

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<sup>1</sup> Fernando Canale, “From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology Part I: Historical Review,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15.2 (2004): 5–39; Fernando Canale, “From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Biblical and Systematic Theologies—Part II,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16.1–2 (2005): 114–42; Fernando Canale, “From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology Part III Sanctuary and Hermeneutics,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17.2 (2006): 36–80; See also Fernando Canale, “Toward a Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> “Sanctuary” refers to the structure-system that was first established by Moses in the biblical narrative—the earthly sanctuary being a copy of the heavenly sanctuary (Ex 5:9, 40; Heb 8:1, 2)—that depicts the way God relates to human beings, particularly in the plan of salvation. “From the perspective of [Ex 25:8] the sanctuary [*miqdaš*] appears as a building where God plans to dwell [*šakan*] among human beings [*btokam*]. Thus, the idea of sanctuary is not reduced to a building but emerges as a God-building-human-beings structure.” Fernando Canale, “Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 36.2 (1998): 184. “As presented in scripture, the sanctuary is not primarily a doctrine but a reality. This means that when biblical authors wrote about the sanctuary they were interpreting reality. The reality of the sanctuary is not primarily a building but a Being, God. This means that we cannot understand the meaning of the sanctuary by focusing on the building. Instead, we

timelessness.<sup>3</sup> In the Adventist framework, the sanctuary motif is aligned with the Great Controversy metanarrative.<sup>4</sup> Scripture depicts God as acting “in a real historical chronological progression.”<sup>5</sup> Though Adventism is not unique within Christianity in subscribing to a temporal view of God, its theological framework is particularly inclined toward divine temporality.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis focuses on the presupposition of God’s timelessness or temporality. Canale comments that the view of divine timelessness is “ingrained so deeply in the collective consciousness of [many] Christian theologians that it is difficult if not impossible to replace its assumed role as hermeneutical vision.”<sup>7</sup> According to this view, God “does not exist at any moment of time” and “has no past, present, or future,” and

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should focus on the Being who inhabits and relates through the building. The sanctuary is the ‘house of being.’” Canale, “From Vision to System Part III,” 46. See also Denis Kaiser, “The Biblical Sanctuary Motif in Historical Perspective,” in *Scripture and Philosophy: Essays Honoring the Work and Vision of Fernando Luis Canale*, ed. Tiago Arrais, Kenneth Bergland, and Michael F. Younker (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2016), 154–93.

<sup>3</sup> The view of divine timelessness depicts God as having “no succession of moments. There is no before or after for God. God does not experience one moment then another or do one thing, then another. If God is timeless, then God’s being is *incompatible* with temporal succession (the succession from one moment to the next).” John C. Peckham, *The Doctrine of God: Introducing the Big Questions* (New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 69. In contrast, the view of divine temporality affirms that God can have a succession of moments, with a past, present, and future.

<sup>4</sup> Canale, “From Vision to System Part III,” 62.

<sup>5</sup> Canale, “From Vision to System Part III,” 53. “If God is analogically temporal, we should understand His works in the sequential order presented in scripture. God operates the works of salvation not by unleashing the full force of His omnipotence, but from within the limitations of created time and space. In scripture, this progression takes place within the divinely established parameters articulated in the sanctuary-covenant structure.” Canale, “From Vision to System Part III,” 61.

<sup>6</sup> Many contemporary theologians believe that God experiences temporal succession. For some examples, see Peckham, *Doctrine of God*, 85–94.

<sup>7</sup> Canale, “From Vision to System Part III,” 50–51.

instead exists in the timeless sense.<sup>8</sup> If God is timeless, then He has no duration and has no temporal succession.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, those who argue for a temporal God see Him as a personal being who “has experientially a past, a present, and a future.”<sup>10</sup> God exists within time, though not necessarily experiencing time as human beings do. Because these are contradictory concepts, one must choose either timelessness or temporality as a philosophical starting point.<sup>11</sup>

Such presuppositions affect not only philosophical perspectives concerning reality but also theological doctrines that deal with the relationship between God and humanity. If God is timeless, in what manner does He relate to temporal human beings?<sup>12</sup> For example, was God within time when He created the universe and planet Earth?<sup>13</sup> How one interprets the manner with which God created the world is largely influenced by

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<sup>8</sup> William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 7. Pike is here expounding on Friedrich Schleiermacher’s concepts of divine timelessness and spacelessness.

<sup>10</sup> Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> “Often, laymen, anxious to affirm both God’s transcendence (His existing beyond the world) and His immanence (His presence in the world), assert that God is both timeless and temporal. But in the absence of some sort of model or explanation of how this can be the case, this assertion is flatly self-contradictory and so cannot be true.” Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 15. On the spectrum of views of divine time, see Gregory E. Ganssle, ed., *God & Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Peckham, *Doctrine of God*, 69–107.

<sup>12</sup> One of the larger issues is divine foreknowledge and human freedom. See George Pattison, *Eternal God/Saving Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15–28.

<sup>13</sup> Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 217–37; Thomas D. Senior, “Divine Temporality and Creation Ex Nihilo,” *Faith and Philosophy* 10.1 (1993): 86–92. Even evolutionists build their framework on the notion that a timeless God is incompatible with the spatiotemporal continuum. Fernando Canale, *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University LithoTech, 2005), 63–64.

one's presuppositions of God's timelessness or temporality.<sup>14</sup> A timeless view of God also lends itself to a Platonic dualism in human ontology, which affects the process of revelation and inspiration. A timeless view of God dictates that it is impossible for Him to communicate with human beings who exist within time, apart from God's supernatural elevation of the timeless human soul to comprehend timeless truths. Thus, the view of God's time determines how one views how God worked with temporal human beings to produce the Scriptures as we know them today.<sup>15</sup> A timeless view of God also requires that one interpret God's involvement in the biblical narrative as proceeding from God's timeless pure actuality, and not as a personal temporal involvement in human history.

With Canale's framework in mind, this work seeks to explore how such a presupposition of God's timelessness or temporality may have affected the understanding of the Sabbath throughout history.<sup>16</sup> If a presupposition of the nature of God (specifically

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<sup>14</sup> Canale, *Creation, Evolution, and Theology*, 124–28.

<sup>15</sup> Fernando Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration: The Classical Model," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 32.1–2 (1994): 7–28; Fernando Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration: The Liberal Model," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 32.3 (1994): 169–95; Fernando Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration: The Historical-Cognitive Model," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 33.1–2 (1995): 5–38.

<sup>16</sup> There is even a direct relationship between the sanctuary and the Sabbath, as shown by other studies. John Walton's study of ancient cosmology ties together the concepts of divine rest, temple, and enthronement in the Genesis account, where after the completion of creation, God takes rest in his temple. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 71–76. Jared Calaway's study of the Old Testament, Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice from Qumran, and the New Testament book of Hebrews has shown that these sources equate the holiness of the Sabbath and the sanctuary. Calaway also sees a similarity with the ANE narrative patterns, particularly the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, of "creation, sanctuary, enthronement, and rest." Jared C. Calaway, "Heavenly Sabbath, Heavenly Sanctuary: The Transformation of Priestly Sacred Space and Sacred Time in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2010), 2. For Israel Stein, just as holiness can be found in the space of the tabernacle, holiness can also be found in the time of the Sabbath. Israel C. Stein, "Sacred Space and Holy Time," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34.4 (2006): 244–46. The Sanctuary is "the temporal means to approach, enter, and experience sacred space: The elevation of the Sabbath to the sanctity of the sanctuary allows one to experience the sanctuary's sanctity every seven days." Jared C. Calaway, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary: Access to God in the Letter to the Hebrews and Its Priestly Context*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 89.



divine time) has influenced the doctrines mentioned above, could the same be true of Sabbath theology?<sup>17</sup>

The Hebrew concept of time is a prime example of the relationship between divine time and the Sabbath. According to Diana R. Engel, the Hebrew concept of time was linear, where God can manifest Himself in historical time, in contrast to the ANE concept of time, which is cyclical.<sup>18</sup> “While the deities of other peoples were associated with places or things, the God of Israel was the God of events: the Redeemer from slavery, the Revealer of the Torah, manifesting Himself in events of history rather than in things or places.”<sup>19</sup> Simon DeVries argues that within the Hebrew view, time is a quantitative actuality, where time is “a succession of essentially commensurate entities—a given number of days or months or years,” and a qualitative actuality, where time is “a succession of essentially unique, incommensurate experiences.”<sup>20</sup> Engel reasons that it is these perspectives that enable the Hebrew to perceive the Sabbath as holy time: “it is

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<sup>17</sup> Sigve Tonstad has identified many dangers of Hellenistic philosophical influences on the theology and practice of the Sabbath. “No Sabbath is conceivable apart from time and space, meaning that time and space are realities of the external world. By consecrating the Sabbath God sets a mark on the nature of the world, commissioning human beings to relate to reality according to the way it is created.” Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 368. While he has primarily focused on Plato’s separation of the material and immaterial world and the dichotomy of the human body and soul, I will instead focus on the concept of divine time in relation to Sabbath time.

<sup>18</sup> Diana R. Engel, “The Hebrew Concept of Time and the Effect on the Development of the Sabbath” (Master Thesis, The American University, 1976), 1–7.

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2003), xv.

<sup>20</sup> Simon John DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 343. It is important to note that DeVries presents a dichotomy between ‘man’s time’ and ‘God’s time,’ as falling “wide of the mark with respect to the data.” This is true regarding biblical theology. However, in historical and theological discussions the dichotomy between divine time and human time certainly exists.

holiness in time; it stands apart from the other six days. It is qualitative time, i.e., meaningful and God-filled; it is quantitative time, i.e., it is calculated with regularity, and in some instances it is eschatological time, i.e., it represents the world to come.”<sup>21</sup>

Because God, not man, sanctified the Sabbath, its holiness remains regardless of human unfaithfulness.<sup>22</sup>

Time for the Hebrew, then, is a reality within which God may be present.<sup>23</sup>

According to Abraham Heschel, “Time is the presence of God in the world of space” such that “a world without time would be a world without God.”<sup>24</sup> The Hebrew teaching of the Sabbath is anchored in the doctrine of God—God able to be present in human time. The Sabbath is holy because God’s temporal presence makes it holy.

If this is true, then a study of the Sabbath may directly be tied to the issue of divine timelessness or temporality. These concepts provide the backdrop for the historical-theological survey of this thesis.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The presupposition of divine timelessness or temporality may have consequences on various doctrines. Of particular interest to this study is the possible influence of the

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<sup>21</sup> Engel, “Hebrew Concept of Time,” vi. Engel adds “eschatological” to DeVries’ “qualitative” and “quantitative” as another Hebrew concept of time.

<sup>22</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 77.

<sup>23</sup> Heschel comments: “For where shall the likeness of God be found? There is no quality that space has in common with the essence of God. There is not enough freedom on the top of the mountain; there is not enough glory in the silence of the sea. Yet the likeness of God can be found in time, which is eternity in disguise.” Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 5. The main difference between the Sabbath and other days is “in the dimension of time, in the relation of the universe to God.” Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 92.

presupposition of divine timelessness or temporality on the meaning of the Sabbath, as seen in the writings of Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Andreas Carlstadt, Oswald Glaidt, Andreas Fischer, Nicholas Bownd, and Theophilus Brabourne. The problem this thesis addresses is whether an observable connection can be made between one's view of divine time and one's view of Sabbath time, as seen in the writings of these authors. Could their view of Sabbath time be influenced by their view of divine time?

### **Purpose**

This study aims to explore and articulate examples of Sabbath theology throughout history through the views of the authors mentioned above, make observations as to how their understanding of divine time may have influenced their Sabbath theology, and identify significant logical outcomes of the intersection between their views of divine time and Sabbath time.

### **Justification**

The development of Sabbath theology throughout history is an important discussion and this study aims to contribute to it, specifically in relation to the concept of divine time. Sabbath theology as a whole may benefit when seen through the lens of how God acts in relationship to time. Furthermore, this study will provide additional evidence of how ontological presuppositions may affect Christian doctrine, particularly in the theology of the Sabbath.

## **Delimitations**

This research is not historically exhaustive. Instead, I have chosen authors from various stages of Christian history. These representatives present their theology in broad strokes, and there may be more details and nuance to the Sabbath theology of the historical period than expressed by the authors.

It is not my intention to argue which position on the spectrum of divine time—whether temporality or strict timelessness—is best supported by Scripture. Instead, I aim to explore how theologians of the past have presented their theology of the Sabbath as a result of their presuppositions of divine time.

I have chosen to exclude discussions on Sabbath ethics (i.e. right and wrong practices on Sabbath) except if it relates to theology and time. Instead, the focus is on the selected authors' theology of the Sabbath, particularly its nature in relation to God's nature, regardless of which particular day they espoused. As such, the focus will be on writings pertaining more to Sabbath theology than Sabbath practice.

## **Presuppositions**

I am subscribing to Canale's view that Greek philosophy and the ontological presupposition of timelessness have influenced Christianity even until the Reformation.<sup>25</sup> While this thesis does not attempt to discuss which view—timelessness or temporality—is best supported by Scripture, it is my view that God experiences some form of

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<sup>25</sup> Rodrigo Galiza, "A Study of Canale's Historiography," in *Scripture and Philosophy: Essays Honoring the Work and Vision of Fernando Luis Canale*, ed. Tiago Arrais, Kenneth Bergland, and Michael F. Younker (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2016), 146–47. Galiza's work identifies strengths and weaknesses in Canale's historiography, emphasizing that care must be taken not to generalize or oversimplify history. The study of the authors below should thus not be taken as absolute representatives of the broad theology of their historical setting.

temporality analogous to human beings, but not necessarily like it in every way. This means that God can experience a sequence of time. It is my goal not to impose my own views as I examine and critique these authors.

I also believe that Scripture teaches the seventh-day Sabbath originated in Eden and continues to the end of the world's history, the meaning and practice of which was enhanced, not abrogated, by Christ's ministry on earth.

### **Methodology**

This study shall examine the writings of selected authors that address the theology of Sabbath (regardless of which day they espouse) and attempt to identify concepts that come as a result of their presuppositions concerning divine time. Four historical segments are examined: (1) Medieval Christianity, (2) the Magisterial Reformation, (3) the Radical Reformation, and (4) the English Reformation. Authors were selected based on whether they had substantial writings on the theology of the Sabbath. To provide background and context for their view of Sabbath time, key relevant areas of Sabbath theology will be examined, namely: creation, the Decalogue (specifically the Sabbath commandment), the nature of rest, and any relevant theological positions that may be unique to these individuals. The positions of each author will be described in turn, followed by a comparison and analysis at the end of each section. Some observations will also be made as to the progression of ideas, and the possible influence of one theologian to another.

Many of these writers do not explicitly make the connection between their presuppositions of divine ontology and its impact on their theology of the Sabbath. I shall thus be making logical inferences as to how their statements on the Sabbath may reflect on God's time, or vice versa. The last section synthesizes all observations from these

Sabbath theologies and proposes some implications for the relationship between divine time and the Sabbath.

### **Definition of Terms**

The historical practice of calling Sunday the “Sabbath” necessitates making some distinctions in order to avoid confusion.<sup>26</sup> For clarity, the following terms will be used.

The term “Sabbath” is used in a broad and general sense, referring to a day of worship, whether Saturday or Sunday, regardless of how strictly or loosely the proponent’s theology is dependent on Scripture.

The term “seventh-day Sabbath” will be used to mean specifically the seventh day observed in the Old Testament and the early Christian church.<sup>27</sup> I do not use “seventh day” to mean the seventh in any sequence of days, but specifically the last day of the week, i.e. Saturday.

The term “Christian Sunday” (or “Lord’s Day”) will be used to mean the first day of the week. While I do not necessarily agree with the theological implications of the term, for the sake of clarity I am appropriating the terminology of Christianity in general.

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<sup>26</sup> Justo L. González, *A Brief History of Sunday: From the New Testament to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 117–18; Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord’s Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 121–22.

<sup>27</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi, “The Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 132–50; A. T. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 197–220. It was only in the post-apostolic period that the observance was transferred to Christian Sunday. See R. J. Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 251–98.

I will at times use the term in contrast to the seventh-day Sabbath, considering a majority of Christians hold Sunday to be the Christian day of worship.

The term “Sabbatarian” refers to one who keeps a day as the Sabbath, whether the seventh day or the first day. In a broader sense, it refers to the perceived theological connection between Christian Sunday and seventh-day Sabbath based on creation and the Ten Commandments, and the endeavors of some to anchor the Christian Sunday in the Old Testament, making the Sabbath commandment a “natural, universal law.”<sup>28</sup> As such, it is “not merely a piece of Mosaic legislation but rather, along with the other elements of the Decalogue, is an expression of a creation ordinance.”<sup>29</sup> I am not, however, using John Primus’ “second theological pillar” of Sabbatarianism that attempts to base Christian Sunday as a divine institution.<sup>30</sup> Both first-day Sabbatarians and seventh-day Sabbatarians aim to anchor their Sabbath theology in creation and the Decalogue, though not all first-day Sabbatarians argue that a change of day was divinely instituted.

With all these considerations in mind, we turn to the historical-theological study of selected individuals, spanning from Medieval Christianity to the English Reformation.

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<sup>28</sup> John H. Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath: A Comparative Study,” in *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. David E. Holwerda (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 45.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath: The Controversy of Applying the Fourth Commandment* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 1998), 13.

<sup>30</sup> Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 46–50.

## HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL SURVEY

### Medieval Theologians

Medieval Christianity largely inherited the Lord's day observance from the church fathers, including the "spiritualizing" of Sabbath theology.<sup>31</sup> The perceived spiritual significance of the Sabbath, however, did not keep the medieval church from enforcing its practice. Richard Gaffin comments that during this time, "keeping the Lord's day became integrally related to a system of ecclesiastically sanctioned legalism that rivaled any exercise of Pharisaic ingenuity."<sup>32</sup>

The Sabbath theology of two of the most recognizable names of medieval Christianity will be examined here: Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, who established the foundation for scholastic Sabbatarianism. Much of later discussions on Sabbath theology draw on the concepts espoused by these two, making an examination of their views foundational.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel Augsburger, "The Sabbath and Lord's Day During the Middle Ages," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 190.

<sup>32</sup> Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 17.

<sup>33</sup> Parker presents Aquinas' Sabbath theology as "crucial for all subsequent developments of sabbatarianism," specifically that he identifies a dual moral-ceremonial nature to the Sabbath commandment, a position adopted by a majority of later thinkers. Kenneth L. Parker, *The English Sabbath: A Study of Doctrine and Discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 20.



## Augustine of Hippo

Augustine adhered to a classical view of God and divine time. For him, God's experience of time has "no succession, no passage from one time to another like that of a creature. God has all His existence simultaneously."<sup>34</sup> Augustine says of God "Thy years are one day, and Thy day is not daily, but to-day; because Thy to-day yields not with tomorrow, for neither doth it follow yesterday. Thy today is eternity."<sup>35</sup>

As will be shown below, the presupposition of divine time affects Augustine's theology of the Sabbath primarily in the form of spiritualizing the significance of the Sabbath, as opposed to any weekly temporal meaning.

### **Sabbath and Creation**

For Augustine, God's creation of the universe includes the creation of time.<sup>36</sup> Time did not exist before creation but began alongside the creation of the world.<sup>37</sup> God's

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<sup>34</sup> Han Yong Sun, "The Problem of Temporality in the Thought of St. Augustine" (Ph.D. diss., Aquinas Institute of Theology, 1979), 54.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 11.13.16, in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 1:168.

<sup>36</sup> "Since then, God, in whose eternity is no change at all, is the Creator and Ordainer of time, I do not see how He can be said to have created the world after spaces of time had elapsed, unless it be said that prior to the world there was some creature by whose movement time could pass." Augustine, *The City of God* 11.6 in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 2:208. Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960), 190–91. Augustine proposes that God did not create each day themselves, but "created only one day, so that by its recurrence many periods called days would pass by." Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 4.20.37, trans. John Hammond Taylor, *Ancient Christian Writers* 41 (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 128.

<sup>37</sup> Geisler, Norman L., ed., *What Augustine Says* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 62–67. Because Augustine viewed God as atemporal, it does not matter *when* God created the universe, since "any point in the infinite past is as good as any other." Ganssle, *God & Time: Four Views*, 17. However, Augustine differentiates between two "moments of creation," distinguishing the creation of the world from "the administration of creatures by which He works even now." In the former God acted atemporally, but in the latter He "works within the course of time." Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 5.11.27, 162. Paul Helm

act of speaking in creation did not have temporal duration.<sup>38</sup> “In creating no change takes place in the divine nature; God, remaining untroubled in His eternal duration produced what He willed.”<sup>39</sup> Consequently, when God “saw” that the creation was good, this was not in time.<sup>40</sup> The creation account of Genesis, then, is figurative, not literal. There was no temporal duration of six days’ work followed by a rest on the seventh day. All these events occurred “in one single non-temporal blow.”<sup>41</sup> Augustine’s view of the creation event is consistent with his view of divine time.

This view of creation naturally affects Augustine’s view of the Genesis Sabbath. He spiritualizes God’s rest and sanctification of the Sabbath. Revealing his understanding of divine aseity, Augustine also asserts that God’s rest does not mean He is “taking delight in any work in such a way as to imply that He needed to make it, or that He would have lacked something if He had not made it, or that He was happier after He had made it.”<sup>42</sup> God’s institution of the Sabbath, then, cannot be a celebration of the completion of

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clarifies that the latter should be understood from a human standpoint, which can only view divine actions temporally. Ganssle, *God & Time: Four Views*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> “For what was spoken was not finished, and another spoken until all were spoken; but all things at once and for ever. For otherwise have we time and change, and not a true eternity, nor a true immortality.” Augustine, *Confessions* 11.7.9, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:166. See Thomas Oliver Buford, “The Idea of Creation in Plato, Augustine, and Emil Brunner” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University Graduate School, 1963), 173.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher J. O’Toole, *The Philosophy of Creation in the Writings of St. Augustine* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1944), 10.

<sup>40</sup> Augustine depicts God as saying, “When ye see those things in time, I see them not in time; as when ye speak them in time, I speak them not in time.” Augustine, *Confessions* 13.29.44, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:205.

<sup>41</sup> Buford, “Creation in Plato, Augustine, and Brunner,” 174.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.15.26, 120–21. God’s rest is “His independence of any need for any good outside Himself.” Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.16.27, 121. God is completely self-

creation. The Sabbath is not a memorial of creation, else God would have sanctified the sixth day.<sup>43</sup> The sanctification of the Sabbath merely signifies resting in God, just as God rested in Himself in the original Sabbath. God’s sanctification of the Sabbath was “to indicate that even in Himself... repose is more important than activity.”<sup>44</sup> Augustine adheres to a spiritual interpretation of both God’s resting and sanctifying the Sabbath in the Genesis creation.

### **Sabbath Commandment**

Augustine differentiated the Sabbath commandment from the other nine in that it was primarily symbolic and typological, not literal.<sup>45</sup> The “bodily rest” was a “means of our instruction, but not as a duty binding also upon us.”<sup>46</sup> The Sabbath is “a figure...of the spiritual rest” found in God, while all other commandments have no symbolical fulfillment and must thus be obeyed. Unlike the other nine, the Sabbath commandment is “a temporary ceremony of the Mosaic economy” and is a “shadow of grace to come.”<sup>47</sup>

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sufficient that He does not rest in His creation. Instead, He rests in Himself. Human beings cannot rest in themselves as God does, thus their rest is in God.

<sup>43</sup> Augustine saw the sixth day as signifying the completion and perfection of all creation, not the seventh. Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.2, 104–7. God did not sanctify the sixth day, “lest there appear to be an increase in His joy because of the undertaking or completion of these works.” Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.15.26, 121.

<sup>44</sup> Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.14.25, 120.

<sup>45</sup> “The fathers observed the rest of the Sabbath, not because they worshipped Saturn, but because it was incumbent at that time, for it was a shadow of things to come” Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean* 18.5, in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:238. By “fathers,” Augustine is likely referring to the Israelites of the Exodus based on his reference to Jer 31:32 earlier in the text.

<sup>46</sup> Augustine, *Letters* 55.12.22, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:310.

<sup>47</sup> Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendency of First-Day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 261.

For Augustine, the other nine commandments are to be kept literally, but the Sabbath spiritually:

But we are not commanded to observe the day of the Sabbath literally, in resting from bodily labour, as it is observed by the Jews; and even their observance of the rest as prescribed is to be deemed worthy of contempt, except as signifying another, namely, spiritual rest. From this we may reasonably conclude, that all those things which are figuratively set forth in Scripture, are powerful in stimulating that love by which we tend towards rest; since the only figurative or typical precept in the Decalogue is the one in which that rest is commended to us, which is desired everywhere, but is found sure and sacred in God alone.<sup>48</sup>

The rest from physical work symbolizes sanctification (not committing sin).<sup>49</sup>

This is a “prefiguring shadow” the meaning of which was concealed in the Old Testament and only revealed by the death of Christ in the New Testament.<sup>50</sup> Christians are thus not expected to observe the Sabbath as the Jews did, for “every man that still observes that day in its literal appointment is carnally wise, but to be carnally wise is nothing else than death.”<sup>51</sup> The essence of the Sabbath, then, is not a physical and temporal rest but a spiritual one, which the Sabbath commandment points to symbolically.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Augustine, *Letters* 55.12.22, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:310.

<sup>49</sup> Though he agrees with Augustine’s view that the Sabbath is part of the ceremonial law, O’Hare also comments that “the spiritual significance of the work prohibition is not about refraining from sin, but refraining from works-righteousness.” O’Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 261.

<sup>50</sup> Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 27, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 5:95.

<sup>51</sup> Augustine, *Spirit and the Letter* 24, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 5:94. Augustine is here citing an opposing view, but he does not necessarily disagree with the statement itself; he is against the view that the Sabbath commandment is what makes the Decalogue “the letter that killeth” (2 Cor 3:6). Instead, Augustine argues that it is the entire Decalogue that kills, not just the Sabbath, because the observance of the law without God’s grace leads to death. In the same treatise Augustine does state that Sabbath observance is the only command in the Decalogue that ought not be observed by Christians. Augustine, *Spirit and the Letter* 23, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 5:93.

<sup>52</sup> It was not Augustine, but later writers (such as Isidore of Seville) that drew the focus of the Sabbath away from a “realized eschatological reality” and toward a “parallel between Sabbath and Sunday in terms of the cessation of physical labor.” Jewett, *The Lord’s Day*, 90.

## Sabbath Rest

In the creation account, Augustine creates a dichotomy between God's work and human work, and between God's rest and human rest. Because human beings are unlike God, the manner in which humans observe the Sabbath is different from God's. Human rest is more than a physical cessation of activity. Spiritual rest is found only in God: "Just as [God] rested from all His works because He Himself, and not His works, is His good and the source of His happiness, so we must hope that we shall find rest only in Him from all works, whether ours or His."<sup>53</sup>

Christians ought to celebrate the Sabbath spiritually, not in the "carnal fashion," but with "spiritual tranquility."<sup>54</sup> Augustine applauds the example of Mary to be emulated by Christians, who sat at Jesus' feet and "rested in His word" as opposed to Martha who

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<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.17.29, 123.

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *St. John* 20.2, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 7:132. Augustine rejects the Jewish manner of celebrating the Sabbath. Commenting on their reaction to Jesus' healing on the Sabbath in John 20, Augustine asserted that Jews observed the Sabbath in the "carnal" sense. Augustine, *On the Gospel According to St. John* 20.2, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 7:132. It is carnal "by a kind of bodily rest, languid and luxurious. They abstain from labours, and give themselves up to trifles." Augustine, *Exposition on the Book of Psalms* 92.2 [Ps 91 in Lat.] in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 8:453. They indulge in amusements, "abusing their leisure to do mischief." Augustine, "Exposition 2 of Psalm 32," in John E. Rotelle, ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 2000), 3/15:398. The Jews also "observe the sabbath in worldly idleness" and "like the free time to spend on their frivolities and extravagances." Augustine, *Sermons* 9.3, in John E. Rotelle, ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1990), 3/1:261. Augustine further comments that "the Jew would do better doing some useful work on his land instead of joining in faction fights at the stadium. And their women would do better spinning wool on the sabbath than dancing shamelessly all day on their balconies." Furthermore, "They would be better off digging all day long than spending the day dancing." Augustine, "Exposition 2 of Psalm 32," in Rotelle, *Works of Saint Augustine*, 3/15:398. It is interesting that though Augustine often depicts Jewish Sabbath keeping as a burden to its observers, he also describes them as dancing on the Sabbath. R. J. Bauckham comments that this is a "common patristic caricature of the idleness and sensuality of the Jewish Sabbath." R. J. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 300.

was busy laboring.<sup>55</sup> For him, the Christian Sabbath is “in the heart, within us” such that “a Christian man is in the Sabbath of his own heart, that is, in the quiet, tranquility, and serenity of his conscience, undisturbed.”<sup>56</sup> The right practice of the Sabbath is through “a regular periodical holiness – quietness of heart, tranquility of mind, the product of a good conscience.... We are told to have a kind of sabbath in the heart, the sanctification of the Spirit of God.”<sup>57</sup>

This spiritual rest deals with the problem of sin: “You must abstain from working like slaves. Anyone who commits sin is a slave of sin, and it is better to be enslaved to another human being than to sin.”<sup>58</sup> While Jewish rest is from good works, Christian rest is from evil works, “for it is better to plough than to dance.”<sup>59</sup> In this sense, the “inactivity” of the Jewish Sabbath should become “rest in activity” in the Christian Sunday.<sup>60</sup> Augustine views Sabbath rest primarily as spiritual, and not literal or physical.

### **Sabbath and Eschatology**

In addition to the spiritual rest, there is also a future eschatological rest. Augustine believes that the command to observe the Sabbath was given “not to make us suppose that we attain to rest in this present life, but that all our labours in what is good may point

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<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.14.25, 120.

<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *Psalms* 92.2, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 8:453.

<sup>57</sup> Augustine, *Sermons* 8.6, in Rotelle, *Works of Saint Augustine*, 3/1:244.

<sup>58</sup> Augustine, “Exposition 2 of Psalm 32,” in Rotelle, *Works of Saint Augustine*, 3/15:398.

<sup>59</sup> Augustine, *Sermons* 9.3, in Rotelle, *Works of Saint Augustine*, 3/1:261.

<sup>60</sup> Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *This Is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday* (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1978), 138.

towards nothing else than that eternal rest.”<sup>61</sup> Sabbath practices, such as fasting, are meant to “foreshadow that eternal rest in which the true Sabbath is realized, and which is obtained only by faith.”<sup>62</sup>

Augustine emphasizes that God’s work in creation is “mystical,” so that Christians will be “looking for rest after this life.”<sup>63</sup> Thus “eschatological Sabbath becomes eternal Lord’s Day.”<sup>64</sup> God’s rest on the seventh day of creation “presented a type of that future rest which He purposed to bestow on us men after our good works are done.”<sup>65</sup> A Christian who does good works is keeping a “perpetual Sabbath... in the hope of the rest that is to come.”<sup>66</sup> The spiritual observance of the Sabbath is done “in hope of

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<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *Letters of St. Augustine* 55.11.20, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:309.

<sup>62</sup> Augustine, *Letters* 36.11.25, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:268. Against the Manichaeans, Augustine opposed enforcing a fast on the Lord’s Day. Augustine concludes by saying that it is a matter of conscience and that one should not judge another on this matter, citing his early conversation with Ambrose of Milan, who advised that “whatever church you may come to, conform to its custom, if you would avoid either receiving or giving offence.” Augustine, *Letters* 36.14.32, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:270.

<sup>63</sup> Augustine, *St. John* 20.2 (Schaff, *NPNF*, 7:132).

<sup>64</sup> Bauckham, “Medieval Church,” 301.

<sup>65</sup> Augustine, *Letters* 55.10.19 (Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:309). This eschatological meaning is coupled with the significance of the “eighth day.” Building on *The Epistle of Barnabas*, Augustine drew a parallel between the days of the week and periods in history. Augustine, *City of God* 22.30 (Schaff, *NPNF*, 2:511). On the usage of “eighth day,” see Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 275–85; Beckwith and Stott, *This Is the Day*, 117–24; Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, vol. 3 of *University of Notre Dame Liturgical Studies* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 262–86. For Augustine, “Friday depicts the Christian life, with its crossbearing; the Saturday, the sabbath, the inactivity of the life between earth and resurrection; and the Sunday, the final ‘rest in activity’ of the resurrection life in the world to come.” Beckwith and Stott, *This Is the Day*, 138. The rest of the souls of the dead is also symbolically connected to the Sabbath, and the resurrection of the body occurs on the eighth (first) day, just as Jesus was resurrected on the Lord’s day. Augustine, *Letters* 55.13.23 (Schaff, *NPNF*, 1:310).

<sup>66</sup> Augustine, *Meaning of Genesis* 4.13.24, 119.

the future rest,” and a person who performs earthly labor with this hope, “already has the sabbath in hope, though he does not yet have it in fact.”<sup>67</sup>

Such a rest is possible only after death. When humans “have departed this life shall we attain to that perfect rest.”<sup>68</sup> In the heavenly city of God, “we shall ourselves be the seventh day, when we shall be filled with and replenished with God’s blessing and sanctification.”<sup>69</sup>

### **Sabbath Time**

Bauckham points out that “Augustine’s own treatment of the Sabbath commandment carried over the dominant patristic tradition of spiritualizing its meaning” and that he “never treated Christian obedience to the Sabbath commandment as the observation of a day.”<sup>70</sup> Instead, he emphasized the spiritual (non-temporal) and symbolic nature of the Sabbath, pointing to the eternal rest experienced after death. There is, then, no need for a weekly time-oriented observance of the Sabbath, as long as its spiritual significance is celebrated.

For Augustine, the significance of the Sabbath is simply to “show your love to God by having a conscience that is quiet, and look forward to the world to come.”<sup>71</sup> Augustine completely separates any temporal observance of the Sabbath from its

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<sup>67</sup> Augustine, *Sermons* 9.3, in Rotelle, *Works of Saint Augustine*, 3/1:261.

<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *St. John* 20.2 in Schaff, *NPNF*, 7:132.

<sup>69</sup> Augustine, *City of God* 22.30 in Schaff, *NPNF*, 2:511.

<sup>70</sup> Bauckham, “Medieval Church,” 300.

<sup>71</sup> Beckwith and Stott, *This Is the Day*, 137.



significance, as well as any theological connection to the Old Testament. Thus, any discussion of which day is the Sabbath would be irrelevant to Augustine, for the spiritual nature of the Sabbath transcends any specific day.

It appears that Augustine's view of divine time, among other things, influences him to view the Sabbath primarily as spiritual, separating the meaning of the Sabbath from any temporal observance, making it unnecessary to keep the Sabbath on a specific day.

### Thomas Aquinas

Like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas's view of divine eternity also stems from Neoplatonic philosophy, which requires no further elaboration here.<sup>72</sup> Put simply, Aquinas believed that because God does not change in any way, He cannot experience time.<sup>73</sup>

While Aquinas did not write about the Sabbath as extensively as Augustine did, he drew on Scholasticism to develop a view of the Sabbath in relation to natural and

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<sup>72</sup> Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 103–4; Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 29–32.

<sup>73</sup> Time is “merely the numbering of before and after in change.” Whatever is “lacking in change and never varying in its mode of existence [i.e. God] will not display a before and after” and is therefore timeless. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.10.1, trans. Timothy McDermott (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 2:137. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.10.1, trans. Timothy McDermott (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 2:137. However, Brian Davies argues that in Aquinas's view, timelessness does not necessarily mean the absence of duration. “Aquinas seems to hold both that God has duration and that he exists at all times.” For Davies, Aquinas's “distinction between time and eternity is simply a distinction between what undergoes real change and what, though enduring, really changes in no respect.” Davies, *Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 107–9. God can experience duration, although his eternity is “without any potency” such that “God actually endures, but he endures as Pure Actuality.” Norman L. Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 105. If true, Aquinas's view of divine time would be similar to Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann's view of eternal-temporal simultaneity. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “Eternity,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 78.8 (1981): 429–58.

moral law. Bauckham observes that “in Thomas Aquinas, the medieval view on sabbatical observance came to its most definitive and influential expression.”<sup>74</sup> In opposition to the argument that the Sabbath commandment, whether Saturday or Sunday, is out of place, Aquinas affirms its significance, which contrasts with the views of Augustine.<sup>75</sup> According to Aquinas, there are moral and practical reasons for the Sabbath as long as one does not insist on keeping the literal seventh day, which is ceremonial in nature.

### **Sabbath and Creation**

Aquinas’s view of how events transpired in the Genesis creation week is highly dependent on Augustine.<sup>76</sup> His view of divine aseity requires that God did not derive any happiness from His creatures, only in Himself. God’s timelessness does not allow God to have a real relationship with His creation, only a conceptual one.<sup>77</sup>

Like Augustine, Aquinas believes that the world came into existence as a result of God’s pure timeless actuality and that the heavens and earth came into existence together

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<sup>74</sup> R. J. Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 305.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, trans. T. C. O’Brien (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), 41:301–3.

<sup>76</sup> For example, Aquinas places God’s will as the cause of all things. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.46.1, trans. Thomas Gilby (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 8:69.

<sup>77</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.45.3, 8:37. Aquinas’s view is that “God would be the same whether creatures existed or not. He therefore does not stand in real relations of sustaining, knowing, or loving His creatures.... God undergoes no extrinsic change in creating the world.” Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 88.

with time.<sup>78</sup> Aquinas echoes Augustine in his affirmation that in creation God produced “the whole being of things all at once” outside of time.<sup>79</sup> The biblical description in the arrangement of days is merely for taxonomical purposes, though in the seventh day “the world acquired a new state, viz. that nothing would now be added to it anew.”<sup>80</sup>

Regarding the Sabbath, God’s rest on the seventh day meant God “rested in himself, because he is sufficient unto himself and the fulfilment of his own desires.”<sup>81</sup> It is notable that for Aquinas, the “sanctifying” of the Sabbath is disconnected from any notion of temporal significance. Instead, something is sanctified because it rests in God. The seventh day neither adds nor detracts from God, but is sanctified because “God adds something to creatures through their multiplying and finding rest in him.”<sup>82</sup> Aquinas is here implying that it is the people who observe the Sabbath that are sanctified and not the day itself. Aquinas consequently spiritualizes the nature of the seventh day.

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<sup>78</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.46.3, 8:89. For Aquinas, “Since God is immutable, the new relations predicated of Him at the moment of creation are just in our minds; in reality the temporal world itself is created with a relation inhering in it of *dependence on God*. Hence, God’s timelessness is not jeopardized by His creation of a temporal world. . . . God’s act of being is His power and His act of creating. Thus, in creating the world God does not perform some act extrinsic to His nature.” Craig, William Lane, “Timelessness, Creation, and God’s Real Relation to the World,” *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 56.1 (2001): 97–98. For a comprehensive study on Aquinas’s theology of creation, see Matthew R. McWhorter, “Aquinas’ Theology of Creation in the *Summa Theologiae*: A Study and Defense of Select Questions” (Ph.D. diss., Ave Maria University, 2011).

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.74.1, trans. William A Wallace (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 10:153. Aquinas makes the allowance that the substance of all things were created together, but their differentiation and ornamentation did not occur at the same moment. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.74.2, 10:161.

<sup>80</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.74.1, 10:155.

<sup>81</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.73.2, 10:145. For Aquinas, rest is not “opposed to work or to movement” but is the “production of new things” and “a desire that tends toward something else.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.73.2, 10:147. To emulate God, human rest must be found in Him.

<sup>82</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.73.3, 10:149.

Aquinas finds the creation Sabbath replete with symbolism. The Sabbath is “the symbol of his most general benefaction towards man, i.e. as a representation of the work of creating from which God is said to have rested on the seventh day. It is as a symbol of this that the seventh day is ordered to be kept holy, i.e. set aside to be devoted to God.”<sup>83</sup> The Sabbath is thus the culmination of God’s creative work, an initial completion of the perfect completion at the end of the world: “On the seventh day of creation came the consummation of nature; in the Incarnation of Christ, the consummation of grace; and at the end of the world, the consummation of glory will come.”<sup>84</sup> Keeping the sabbath is a sign of “a general benefaction, the production of all creation.”<sup>85</sup> Aquinas sees the Sabbath as a historic and ongoing symbolic representation of God’s creative work in the world.

There is truth to Daniel Augsburger’s claim that due to Aquinas’s distancing from the literal seventh-day application of the Sabbath, “the bond with Creation had been totally lost.”<sup>86</sup> While Aquinas does make a symbolic connection between Sabbath and creation, the literal (or temporal) application is missing. The seventh-day Sabbath was just for the Jews to remember God’s work of creation.<sup>87</sup> God’s rest on the seventh day is seen as a “ceremonial” element and thus its literal temporal observance can be done away with. Consequently, one negative implication of this is that if the Sabbath is viewed as

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<sup>83</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:303–5.

<sup>84</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.73.1, 10:141.

<sup>85</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:305.

<sup>86</sup> Augsburger, “Middle Ages,” 206.

<sup>87</sup> Lyle D. Bierma, “Remembering the Sabbath Day: Ursinus’s Exposition of Exodus 20:8-11,” in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 276.

having been fulfilled by Christ, Christians lose a tangible and regular reminder of creation.

### **Sabbath Commandment**

Unlike Augustine, who saw no moral obligation to keep the Sabbath literally, Aquinas saw in the Sabbath commandment both ceremonial and moral elements. Aquinas differs from Augustine in that he sees a moral element (drawn from natural law) in the Sabbath commandment, which is essential to the moral condition and wellbeing of human beings.

The Sabbath is moral because “man should set aside some time in his life for concentration upon the things of God,” and “reserve some time for spiritual nourishment whereby his spirit is fed on God.”<sup>88</sup> The Sabbath is “a moral precept, inasmuch as it enjoins man to set apart some time for the things of God.”<sup>89</sup> Terrence O’Hare comments that “Aquinas took the first step toward Sabbatarianism” when he introduced moral elements to a perceived ceremonial command.<sup>90</sup> Aquinas saw a moral obligation to give some time of the week to God, one that is inherent in human nature and found in natural law.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:305.

<sup>89</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.100.3, 29:67.

<sup>90</sup> O’Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 265.

<sup>91</sup> “Aquinas seems to have thought that Natural Law required a man to set apart a regular stated time for divine worship. Whether (as later writers thought) it required him to set apart specifically a *seventh* of his time is unclear.” Bauckham, “Medieval Church,” 306. For a discussion on Sabbath and natural law, see Tonstad, *Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*, 425–35.

Among other reasons, the Sabbath commandment is ceremonial because “a particular time is determined in order to signify creation.”<sup>92</sup> The rest of Aquinas’s view of the ceremonial aspects of Sabbath is similar to Augustine’s: allegorically as Christ’s rest in the tomb on the seventh day, morally as resisting sin and resting in God, and anagogically as a foretaste of the eternal rest in heaven.<sup>93</sup>

Though Aquinas affirms that the Sabbath commandment “is listed in the Decalogue on the grounds of its being a moral, not a ceremonial precept,” the consequences of these perceived ceremonial elements are not insignificant.<sup>94</sup> Of relevance to this study is his claim that the Sabbath “is comprised among the precepts of the Decalogue, but not as to the time appointed, since in this regard it is a ceremonial precept.”<sup>95</sup> Augsburg says that “by his distinction between the way Mosaic judicial and ceremonial commands had become void, Thomas made the literal [seventh day] keeping of the Sabbath commandment a very grievous sin.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:305.

<sup>93</sup> Aquinas is here using the medieval fourfold interpretation of Scripture: literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. Thomas Aquinas 1a.1.10, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Thomas Gilby (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 1:37–41.

<sup>94</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:305. For Aquinas, ceremonial laws are “not only *dead*, but also *deadly* to those who should keep them after Christ had come” because “their observance would militate against the truth of faith, in which we profess that those mysteries are now fulfilled.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.104.3, trans. David Bourke and Arthur Littledale (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), 29:261. Grounding the Sabbath commandment in the moral law instead of the ceremonial law protects against this perceived danger.

<sup>95</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.100.3, 29:67. Hence O’Hare comments that it became necessary for Aquinas “to find *spiritual* ways to observe it without *literally* observing it.” O’Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 268.

<sup>96</sup> Augsburg, “Middle Ages,” 206. See footnote 94 for Aquinas’s view regarding the danger of Christian observance of the ceremonial law. Augsburg understands this to mean that in Aquinas’s view, to insist on keeping the seventh day, which is a ceremonial element of the Sabbath commandment, is to reject Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

For Aquinas, the New Law is the perfect form of the imperfect Old Law, and the New “fills up the Old Law, but supplying what was lacking in the Old.”<sup>97</sup> Consequently, the New did not abolish the Old “except in regard to ceremonial practices.”<sup>98</sup> Because the Sabbath commands in the Old Law were figures of what was to come, Sabbath practices are not as strict as that of Judaism.<sup>99</sup> The Sabbath, then, “which signifies the first creation, is replaced by the Lord’s Day, in which is commemorated the new creature begun in the resurrection of Christ.”<sup>100</sup> Thus, Aquinas, though maintaining that ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath commandment are void, still draws connections between the Old Law and New Law.

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<sup>97</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.107.2, trans. Cornelius Ernst (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), 30:29.

<sup>98</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.107.2, 30:31. Yet Aquinas himself even “blurs the foreshadowing features of Jewish ceremonies and analogous spiritual realities of the church; hence, the figurative sense in which a ceremonial command was fulfilled becomes a new figure for the church.” O’Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 267.

<sup>99</sup> In the New Law, accommodations can be made depending on “circumstances of time and place.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:309. On the matter of working on the Sabbath, Aquinas identifies two types of “servile” work the commandment prohibits: being a slave to sin, and manual works done by a slave for his master. A third kind of “servile” work is acceptable: servitude to God. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:305–7. Aquinas, citing Augustine, argues that some forms of work are lawful on the Sabbath, and may even be better than some Jewish Sabbath practices like “scheming in the theatre” or “dancing lewdly.” Any physical work that deals with “preserving the well-being of one’s own body,” such as eating, is also acceptable. Similarly, it is acceptable to do work for someone else’s well-being. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:309. In Jesus’ practice of Sabbath-keeping in contrast to the Pharisees, “he did not annul the sabbath in its true reality.” Instead, “he annulled the sabbath in the superstitious meaning given to it by the Pharisees, who believed that one should abstain even from beneficial works on the sabbath; this was contrary to the intention of the Law.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.107.2, 30:33. Moreover, someone who has sinned “venially” on the Sabbath has not broken the commandment, since “venial sin does not take away holiness.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:307.

<sup>100</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.103.3, 29:245.

## Sabbath Time

Like Augustine, Aquinas would find the question of which day is the Sabbath to be irrelevant. Justo González concludes that for Aquinas, “while keeping the Sabbath rest is a commandment still to be obeyed, those elements of the Sabbath that were pointing to the one to come are no longer to be followed.”<sup>101</sup> In other words, the moral aspect (rest) is to be observed, but not the ceremonial (on which day to rest). O’Hare argues that “though Aquinas derives from the Sabbath a general moral duty to set aside time for God, he correctly guards against the implication that the Sabbath should fix the time of worship with regard to frequency and duration.”<sup>102</sup>

It is unclear how Aquinas concluded that the issue of which day to observe the Sabbath is a ceremonial aspect that is voided by Christ.<sup>103</sup> Regardless, Aquinas’s identification of both moral and ceremonial elements in the Sabbath commandment allows for flexibility in the *when* and *how* of Sabbath-keeping as long as the essence of rest is observed. This allows for the “Church and the custom of the Christian people” to establish the keeping of Sunday.<sup>104</sup> There is, then, a literal sense of Sabbath observance,

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<sup>101</sup> González, *Brief History of Sunday*, 94. González also observes that most medieval theologians follow Aquinas’s distinction between the ceremonial (laws and practices) and the moral (essence of rest) elements of the Sabbath.

<sup>102</sup> O’Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 268. I agree with his observation of Aquinas’s distinction between the moral element and time element of the Sabbath, but I do not necessarily agree that such a distinction is biblically sound.

<sup>103</sup> O’Hare comments that “the Sabbath rest is figurative and ceremonial, but that same rest is interpreted literally to assert a moral obligation to suspend work for worship. The ceremonies of the old covenant find their fulfillment in Christ, but they are replaced by ceremonies in the new covenant that vouchsafe the same graces and relay the same message.” O’Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 268. Such a view, however, loses the theological connection with the Genesis creation.

<sup>104</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:309.



primarily in rest from servile work and attendance in church services, but not in the obligatory observance of a specific day.<sup>105</sup>

It appears that Aquinas's view of divine time, among other things, influences him to view Sabbath time as ceremonial, separating the meaning of the Sabbath from any temporal observance, making it unnecessary to keep the Sabbath on a specific day because it has been voided by Christ.

### Medieval Theologians: Summary and Observations

From the Sabbath theology of Augustine and Aquinas, the observation can be made that the spiritualizing of Augustine and the "ceremonializing" of Aquinas concerning Sabbath time appears to be influenced by timeless ontological presuppositions. For Augustine, the temporal aspect (the day of observance) of the Sabbath is irrelevant because the Sabbath is spiritual in nature, while for Aquinas Sabbath time is ceremonial and done away with.

One's theology of the Sabbath is anchored in how one views how God instituted the first Sabbath in Genesis. If God is timeless, then God's act of creation in Genesis (including the Sabbath) came as a result of His timeless actuality, and God could not have kept the Genesis Sabbath temporally. God's "sanctifying" of a day did not occur in time, and therefore the spiritual significance is disconnected from time. In following His example, human beings, then, are not obligated to keep the Sabbath temporally, only spiritually.

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<sup>105</sup> David M. Allen, "Rest as a Spiritual Discipline: The Meaning and Manner of Sabbath Observance" (D.Min. diss, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991), 170–71.

Augustine and Aquinas's view of divine time affects the nature of the God-human relationship, which is also evident in the Sabbath. Aquinas's view that God has no real relationship with the world means that the Sabbath was not instituted for the purpose of a personal and temporal God-human relationship. The Sabbath cannot be a temporal meeting place between God and human beings, which contrasts with the Hebrew depiction of Sabbath holiness based on God's temporal presence.

A timeless view of God means that the primary significance of the Sabbath becomes disconnected from any temporality. The emphasis of Augustine and Aquinas, then, is primarily on the deeper spiritual meaning of the Sabbath that is divorced from the temporal observance. They can speak against a literal seventh-day observance because the *when* and *how* matters less than the observance of spiritual rest. The essence of the Sabbath command is that one should rest, and not the specific day on which this rest should occur. For them, the meaning and observance of the Sabbath is primarily spiritual, not temporal.<sup>106</sup>

A timeless view of God's establishment of the Sabbath in creation also opens the possibility of transferring the significance of the Sabbath from one day to another, since its meaning was not temporally bound in the first place. A transfer of the day is possible as long as its essence is still observed. Consequently, Aquinas argues that "in the New Law the keeping of Sunday supplants that of the sabbath not in virtue of the precept of

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<sup>106</sup> Aquinas draws on Augustine's symbolic interpretation of Sabbath but also sees in it a practical (though not necessarily literal) application. Augsburg is correct that in Aquinas's work "the spiritual value of Sabbath [taken from Augustine] was linked with the absolute requirement of rest for the worshiper." Augsburg, "Middle Ages," 206. Yet this rest is not to be taken in the literal sense of the seventh day.

the law, but through determination by the Church and the custom of the Christian people.”<sup>107</sup> Because the specific day of Sabbath is ceremonial and not temporally fixed, it can be changed by an ecclesiastical authority as long as the essence of rest is retained. The basis of their day of observance, then, is not on God’s institution of the Sabbath in creation, but on ecclesiastical authority.

Aquinas makes the temporal aspect of the Sabbath a part of the OT ceremonial laws, a concept which is adopted by later authors. He isolates the day of observance as ceremonial while the spiritual rest is moral. Notably, Aquinas applies the ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath only to the time element and nothing else. This view of the Sabbath may be a result of their broader attempt to establish a Christianity that is distinct from its Jewish roots. Influenced by the Greek philosophical understanding of divine timelessness, Aquinas’s “ceremonializing” of Sabbath time contrasts with the Hebrew understanding of the Sabbath that inseparably links the meaning of the Sabbath to the specific day of observance. This allows Aquinas and Augustine to address the spiritual significance of the Sabbath day without placing any obligation to observe the day itself, i.e. spiritualizing or “ceremonializing” the Sabbath.

The desire to distinguish Christianity from Judaism may have been at the forefront of Augustine and Aquinas’s thinking, but their understanding of divine timelessness gives them the freedom to separate the day from the meaning of the Sabbath, which is a freedom that is absent in the Hebrew view of the Sabbath that emphasizes its temporal observance. The Hebrew view, which Augustine and Aquinas

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<sup>107</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.122.4, 41:309.

oppose, is anchored on the idea that God enters human time and is present temporally, thereby placing higher importance on the literal weekly observance. This comparison will be discussed further as more authors are explored below.

Augustine and Aquinas's understanding of Sabbath time aligns with their view of divine timelessness. A timeless view of God's act in creation and the Genesis Sabbath does not require a human temporal observance of a specific day, because God Himself did not keep the Sabbath temporally.

There appears to be an observable connection between Augustine and Aquinas's view of divine time and their view of Sabbath time, in that their timeless view of God influences them to view the Sabbath atemporally by spiritualizing or "ceremonializing" the Sabbath, separating the meaning of the day from any temporal observance. A timeless view of God does not necessarily require this to be the case, but it allows for it.

One practical implication of this is the logical de-emphasis in the ecclesial obligation to observe the Sabbath (i.e. go to church) on Sundays. In this sense, the medieval church would be inconsistent in requiring the observance of Sunday if the meaning is purely spiritual. This implication is picked up by the Magisterial Reformers, whose Sabbath theology will be discussed next.

### **Magisterial Reformers**

The early Protestant Reformation did not make great changes to Sabbath theology. Kenneth Strand notes that "major Reformers as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin continued the pattern of Sunday observance, though with changes in the rationale for

keeping the day and in attitude toward abstinence from work.”<sup>108</sup> Bauckham mentions that while Luther and Calvin held the opinion that Christians are not commanded to set aside a specific day for rest and worship, human authority has prescribed Sunday.

However, other Protestant theologians “fell back on the scholastic position of a weekly day of rest for worship as the natural law content of the Sabbath commandment.”<sup>109</sup>

Three Magisterial Reformers—Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Andreas Carlstadt—will next be explored.

### Martin Luther

Though Luther’s Reformation movement sought theology based on *sola Scriptura*, he was not able to completely break away from presuppositions based on Neoplatonic philosophy. Luther believed that “philosophy leads to Christ,” and that “the Platonic philosophers have stolen much from the fathers and the Gospel of John, as Augustine says that he found almost everything in Plato which is in the first chapter of John.”<sup>110</sup> Consequently, Canale argues, the ontological framework of his Protestantism “points to temporality, but the epistemological framework still, through the accepted traditional framework for intelligibility, points to timelessness.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Kenneth A. Strand, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Reformation Era,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 215.

<sup>109</sup> Bauckham, “Protestant Tradition,” 317–18.

<sup>110</sup> Martin Luther, “The Disputation Concerning the Passage: ‘The Word Was Made Flesh’ (John 1:14),” in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Martin E. Lehmann and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 38 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

<sup>111</sup> Canale, “Criticism of Theological Reason,” 183 n. 1.

Though Charles Arand presents Luther's treatment of the Sabbath commandment as a prime example of his "radically Christocentric hermeneutic," Skip MacCarty responds that it is more "Lutherocentric [and is] philosophically and speculatively based on his 'natural law' theology."<sup>112</sup> As will be seen below, Luther's Sabbath theology builds on both Augustinian and Thomistic arguments.<sup>113</sup>

### **Sabbath and Creation**

As with medieval Christianity, Luther upheld the notion that time did not exist before the creation. For him, "In the beginning" (Gen 1:1) indicates the beginning of time in the Genesis creation.<sup>114</sup> He admits that due to human intellectual and temporal limitations, it is fruitless to discuss God's actions before time because He is outside of time.<sup>115</sup> Luther does, however, contradict Augustine's view that creation was made all at once, instead choosing to believe that the days in creation are the same seven-day week observed throughout history, and not mystical or allegorical.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Charles P. Arand, "Luther's Radical Reading of the Sabbath Commandment," in Christopher John Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: Four Views* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 217. Skip MacCarty, "Responses to Charles P. Arand," in Donato, *Perspectives on the Sabbath*, 269. Luther is observably even more dependent on natural law as the basis of Sabbath observance than Aquinas was.

<sup>113</sup> Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 25; O'Hare, *Sabbath Complete*, 275–76.

<sup>114</sup> Martin Luther, *A Critical and Devotional Commentary on Genesis*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker, trans. Henry Cole (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1904), 1:47.

<sup>115</sup> Luther, *Genesis*, 1:48.

<sup>116</sup> Luther, *Genesis*, 1:40–41. Luther does not explicitly address this seeming discrepancy with divine timelessness, though this may be aligned with a view of God's timeless causation if a distinction is made between creation from the divine point of view and the human point of view. God as pure timeless actuality (see footnote 78) brings the world into existence, but from the human temporal perspective its effects are seen during the period of one literal week. Compare with Calvin's view on page 46.

In his Genesis commentary, Luther identifies the seventh day as that which God sanctified: “God did not sanctify to himself the heaven nor the earth nor any other creature. But God did sanctify to himself the seventh day.”<sup>117</sup> Adam observed the seventh day and taught it to his children. Thus, the seventh day is specifically made for worship to God “from the beginning of the world.”<sup>118</sup>

Luther’s Sabbath theology focuses on the need for physical rest and worship, not the day of observance. “God has appointed a day of rest and on that day our bodies are to rest from physical labor.”<sup>119</sup> The Genesis Sabbath had prepared the way for worship days which give “time and opportunity for the preaching and hearing of the Word and in turn are made holy through that Word.”<sup>120</sup> The Sabbath thus becomes a day “on which God speaks to or talks with us [through the Word], and we in turn speak to and talk with him in prayer and by faith.”<sup>121</sup>

Luther does not make a strong theological connection between the Sabbath commandment and the Sabbath in creation. For Luther, Sabbath theology does not hinge on God temporally selecting a specific day as the Sabbath. On the contrary, in terms of the day itself, Luther argues that the Sabbath command’s reference to creation as a basis

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<sup>117</sup> Luther, *Genesis*, 1:138. Luther defines “sanctified” as “that which is appropriated to God and exclusively separated from all profane uses.” Luther, *Genesis*, 1:139.

<sup>118</sup> Luther, *Genesis*, 1:139–40. Luther also argues that this is evidence that human beings were created for immortality, and for the purpose of knowing and worshipping God.

<sup>119</sup> Luther, “Ten Sermons on the Catechism,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:143.

<sup>120</sup> Charles P. Arand, “Luther’s Radical Reading of the Sabbath Commandment,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: Four Views*, ed. Christopher John Donato (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 257.

<sup>121</sup> Luther, *Genesis*, 1:141.

for the seventh-day Sabbath is merely a “temporal adaptation” that Moses makes for the Jewish people at the time.<sup>122</sup> It is a “temporary addendum and adaptation” that is not to “endure forever, any more than was the whole law of Moses.”<sup>123</sup>

Luther also distinguishes between an old creation and a new creation, which Sun-Young Kim summarizes:

Though the last day of the week was set with reference to the completion of creation and that was the most prominent and determining factor for a long time, God has ushered in a new reign through a new creation in Christ, which is in some respects greater than the original creation. This new reign reshapes the substance of sabbatical observance; hence, for Luther, tracing it back into the creation story in Genesis is not as definitively revelatory as finding it in the framework of the new creation.<sup>124</sup>

### **Sabbath Commandment**

For Luther, it is within the context of the first commandment that the Sabbath commandment—and even all other commandments—should be understood.<sup>125</sup> The Sabbath is observed primarily in the context of worship: “hearing mass, praying, and

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<sup>122</sup> Luther use of quotation marks in “seventh day” in his Genesis commentary indicates that he understands the day to have more than a literal meaning.

<sup>123</sup> Martin Luther, “Against the Sabbatarians: Letter to a Good Friend,” in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Franklin Sherman and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 47:92.

<sup>124</sup> Sun-Young Kim, “Luther on ‘Sabbatical Observance,’” *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 87 (2013): 84.

<sup>125</sup> Arand, “Luther’s Radical Reading,” 230–32. The first commandment “tells how our inmost heart should think about God; the second, how the words of our mouth should express this,” while the third “tells us how we should relate ourselves to God in works” (Luther is here using the medieval numbering of the Ten Commandments). Martin Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” in *Luther’s Works*, ed. James Atkinson and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 44:54. He later reiterates: “The first work is to believe and to have a good heart and confidence in God. From this flows the second good work, to praise God’s name, to confess his grace, to give all honor to him alone. Then follows the third, to worship God by praying, hearing the sermon, meditating upon and pondering God’s benefits, and, in addition, chastising oneself and keeping the flesh subdued.” Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” in *Luther’s Works*, 44:79.



hearing a sermon on holy days.”<sup>126</sup> This reinforces Luther’s view that the central purpose of the Sabbath is the speaking and hearing of God’s Word and the response of prayer within the context of the mass.<sup>127</sup> With the right practice, any day could theoretically be the Sabbath.<sup>128</sup>

For Luther, the Christian observance of the Sabbath is not based on divine command but on natural law.<sup>129</sup> Luther implies that the substance of the Ten Commandments, as distinct from the ceremonial “Law of Moses” is found in natural law,

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<sup>126</sup> Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," in *Luther's Works*, 44:54–55. However, Luther emphasizes that these must be done in an attitude and manner dependent on God’s grace, for these works in themselves have no worth. He laments what he observes to be unsanctified observances of mass, where “the mass and the sermon are heard without edification, and the prayer is said without faith” to the point where it seems to Luther that Christians are attempting to enter heaven through their unsanctified works. Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," in *Luther's Works*, 44:55. As a whole, “Luther’s vision of sabbatical observance operates not in the medieval scholastic framework in which human beings collaborate with God for the attainment of their eternal life and a mass is offered as a sacrifice and a good and meritorious human work to God. Instead, it operates in the framework in which soteriology is built on the givenness of Christ’s merit and its reception by human beings through faith alone.” Kim, “Sabbatical Observance,” 89. A participant in the mass must have a heart of faith while the preaching must “induce sinners to grieve over their sins and should kindle within them a longing for the treasure.” Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," in *Luther's Works*, 44:57.

<sup>127</sup> Luther understands that the human experience in worship (in the mass) is completely passive. Human beings are merely recipients of what is given. “For there are but two things in the mass, the divine promise and the human faith, the latter accepting what the former promises.” Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Luther's Works*, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 36:48.

<sup>128</sup> “Everything that is done in such an assembly of the whole congregation or church is nothing but holy, godly business and work and is a holy sabbath.” Luther, "Sermon at the Dedication of Castle Church, Torgau," in *Luther's Works*, 51:343.

<sup>129</sup> Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," in *Luther's Works*, 44:72. “The natural laws were never so orderly and well written as by Moses.” Martin Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments," in *Luther's Works*, ed. Conrad Bergendoff and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 40:98. It is also important to note Luther’s Christocentric view of the purpose of the law comes as a reaction to what he perceived to be Catholic legalism, though he himself is not antinomian. Allen, “Rest as Spiritual Discipline,” 171–72. Luther was extremely wary of the “possibility that Sunday might be seen as a ‘work’ that believers must do in order to attain salvation—even the ‘work’ of not working.” Gonzáles, *Brief History of Sunday*, 102.

where we again see his dependence on existing philosophy, notably Aquinas.<sup>130</sup> He argues that “we and all human beings are obligated to hear his word, to honor father and mother, to refrain from killing, from adultery, from stealing, from bearing false witness, from coveting one’s neighbor’s house or anything else that is his. All the heathen bear witness to this in their writings, laws, and governments.”<sup>131</sup> The natural law basis of the Sabbath is the same: “Nature teaches and demands that the common people— menservants and maidservants who have gone about their work or trade all week long— should also retire for a day to rest and be refreshed.”<sup>132</sup> Luther believes the requirement for physical rest is a naturally known phenomenon and as such applies to Christians.

The Sabbath commandment is “per se a commandment that applies to the whole world; but the form in which Moses frames it and adapts it to his people was imposed only on the Jews.”<sup>133</sup> Instead, “the true meaning of the third commandment is that we on that day should teach and hear the word of God, thereby sanctifying both the day and ourselves.”<sup>134</sup> What matters is that “we are to come together at a time and place which we are agreed upon, deal with and listen to God’s Word, bring to God our ordinary and

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<sup>130</sup> See John T. McNeill, “Natural Law in the Thought of Luther,” *Church History* 10.3 (1941): 220–21.

<sup>131</sup> Luther, “Against the Sabbatarians,” in *Luther’s Works*, 47:89–90.

<sup>132</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 397. Luther even exhorts employers to require their employees to attend weekly worship for at least an hour. Luther, “Ten Sermons on the Catechism,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:144.

<sup>133</sup> Luther, “Against the Sabbatarians,” in *Luther’s Works*, 47:91. “As far as outward observance is concerned, the commandment was given to the Jews alone.” Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 397. This “outward meaning” has no practical application for Christians.

<sup>134</sup> Luther, “Against the Sabbatarians,” in *Luther’s Works*, 47:92.

unusual needs and those of others and thus launch up to heaven a strong effectual prayer, and also together laud and praise God's goodness with thanksgiving."<sup>135</sup> Just as the first command had elements applicable and inapplicable to Christians, so does the Sabbath command.<sup>136</sup> Here we find a similarity to Aquinas's distinction between moral and ceremonial elements of the Sabbath.

Which elements, then, apply to Christians and which do not? Similar to Aquinas, Luther believed that the ceremonial commandments "were expressly addressed to those descendants who had the promise and the possession of the land of Canaan."<sup>137</sup> Not only was the day of Sabbath fixed for the Jewish people, but also "a specified place, a special tribe or [group of] persons, and a particular priesthood or service of worship was appointed."<sup>138</sup> Such observances of the Sabbath are only limited to a specific time (the seventh day), place (the temple of Jerusalem), and people (the Levites serving Israel). "Therefore, when the land ceases to be and is lost, the Law also ceases; so do the kingdom, the priesthood, the Sabbath, circumcision, etc."<sup>139</sup>

For Luther, the "outward use" of the Sabbath refers to "to time, hour, or place," in contrast to the spiritual use of the Sabbath, which is the study of the Word, including

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<sup>135</sup> Luther, "Dedication of Castle Church," in *Luther's Works*, 51:338.

<sup>136</sup> Luther argues that the first commandment is applicable to Christians but God's statement of bringing Israel out of bondage applies only to the Jews. However, a Christian could claim that God "did lead me out of *my* Egypt and *my* exile." Similarly, while all are called to honor their father and mother, the promise that their "days will be long in the land which the Lord gives" is inapplicable to Christians. Luther, "Against the Sabbatarians," in *Luther's Works*, 47:90, 94.

<sup>137</sup> Martin Luther, "Lectures on Genesis" in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Daniel E. Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960), 2:362.

<sup>138</sup> Luther, "Dedication of Castle Church," in *Luther's Works*, 51:335.

<sup>139</sup> Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," in *Luther's Works*, 2:362.

“necessary works of love.”<sup>140</sup> This is similar to Aquinas’s understanding of the ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath. The essence of rest, based on natural law, is eternal and unchangeable, while the time and manner of such an observance are temporary and changeable.

## **Sabbath Rest**

Luther identifies two types of rest espoused in the Sabbath commandment. The first is the bodily rest where “we put aside the work of our hands... so that we may gather in church, see mass, hear God’s word, and offer common, single-minded prayer together.”<sup>141</sup> The second type is a spiritual rest where “we let God alone work in us and that in all our powers we do nothing of our own,” drawing some parallels with Aquinas’s concept of resting in God.<sup>142</sup> One must through prayer battle against their sinful nature and allow God to govern their entire life.<sup>143</sup> As with medieval theologians, Luther also

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<sup>140</sup> Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:341–42.

<sup>141</sup> Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” in *Luther’s Works*, 44:72. However, Luther also cautions against the danger of excessive rest, lamenting the numerous holy days and wishing that the only holidays would be Sundays so that the added work days could elevate the people from poverty. “Since the feast days are abused by drinking, gambling, loafing, and all manner of sin, we anger God more on holy days than we do on other days,” thus “all festivals should be abolished, and Sunday alone retained.” Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,” in *Luther’s Works*, 44:182.

<sup>142</sup> Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” in *Luther’s Works*, 44:72. Luther also draws a connection between Sabbath and the Christian experience of suffering. Resting in the Sabbath teaches a Christian to find patience and peace amidst suffering, as exemplified by Jesus’ rest in the tomb on the Sabbath. Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” in *Luther’s Works*, 44:77. There is also a soteriological connection to the Sabbath. Luther opposes meritorious human works, instead focusing on “Christ’s merit and its reception by human beings through faith alone. Kim, “Sabbatical Observance,” 89. Wiersma calls this a “middle way” between legalistic Sabbath keeping and Sabbath neglect. Hans H. Wiersma, “On Keeping the Sabbath Holy in Martin Luther’s Catechisms and Other Writings,” *Word & World* 36.3 (2016): 238. As such, “Luther’s conviction of justification by faith in Christ alone forms the basis for his stance on a holy sabbatical observance.” Kim, “Sabbatical Observance,” 86.

<sup>143</sup> Luther finds a parallel in the phrase in the Lord’s Prayer “thy kingdom come” where “we pray for the proper sabbath and true, quiet rest from our own works, so that only God’s work is done in us and

draws parallels between the Sabbath and eternal heavenly rest.<sup>144</sup> Arand notes that the younger Luther emphasized the spiritual rest espoused by Augustine, while an older Luther focused on the “creational” physical Sabbath rest.<sup>145</sup>

In what manner should this Sabbath rest be carried out? Luther believed that this rest is not merely the absence of activity, for God’s rest in creation was a cessation of his creative work, but not His providential work.<sup>146</sup> In contrast to the Jews, Luther emphasizes “sanctifying” the Sabbath over “celebrating” it.<sup>147</sup> He castigates the Jews of Jesus’ time who overemphasized inactivity as opposed to Jesus’ practice of healing on the Sabbath.<sup>148</sup> Kim observes that for Luther, a focus on an external observance of

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that in this way God rules in us as in his own kingdom.” Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” in *Luther’s Works*, 44:80.

<sup>144</sup> “But when these days of the earth come to an end, everything will come to an end, and there will follow days of heaven, that is, eternal days, which will be Sabbath after Sabbath” Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” in *Luther’s Works*, 2:129–30. Describing the climactic transformation of the physical world, Luther declares “the earth will be adorned with another garment, and heaven and the heavenly bodies will be much more splendid.... In the same manner God also cleanses us from sins and frees us from death. This is the work of the six days of this world. But when these are past, when we have entered into His rest, then our torn and filthy garment will be changed into the garment of the eternal Sabbath.” Martin Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966), 8:67.

<sup>145</sup> Arand, “Luther’s Radical Reading,” 255.

<sup>146</sup> Luther, *Genesis*, 1:132. “He has ceased from his creation-work, but he has not ceased from his government-work.” Luther, *Genesis*, 1:133.

<sup>147</sup> Luther, “Against the Sabbatarians,” in *Luther’s Works*, 47:92. By “sanctifying” Luther means through “the teaching and preaching of God’s word.” It does not mean the absence of activity but “to do something on that day which is a holy work; which is owing only to God” such as the preaching of God’s Word. Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:342. Luther does not particularly explain what he means by “celebrating” the Sabbath. If used in contrast to “sanctifying,” it may refer to what he perceived to be a superficial outward observance of Sabbath rest without the teaching and preaching of the word: “For non-Christians can spend a day in rest and idleness, too, and so can the whole swarm of clerics in our time who stand day after day in the church, singing and ringing bells, but without keeping a single day holy, because they neither preach nor practice God’s Word, but rather teach and live contrary to it.” Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 398.

<sup>148</sup> Luther paraphrases Jesus’ rebuke in Luke 13:15-16 this way: “Can’t you understand or learn how much more necessary it is to help a person when he needs help? No, you are such utter blockheads that you even forbid anybody to help a person when he is in distress.” Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in

Sabbath is a distraction “at the cost of attending to the substance of sabbatical observance” and that such strict enforcement diminishes Christian freedom.<sup>149</sup> Instead, “the power and force of this commandment consists not in the resting but in the hallowing” through the Word of God. The purpose of Sabbath is to receive the Word of God.<sup>150</sup> It is through the Word that the command to rest is fulfilled.<sup>151</sup> Naturally, when God’s Word is preached, it is necessary to be quiet, rest, and set aside any preoccupation, and so some form of rest is a byproduct of listening to the Word.<sup>152</sup>

### **Sabbath Time**

Because of the freedom found in Christ, Christians are lords of the Sabbath and should not “attribute special holiness or service of God to a particular day, as the Jews or our papists do.”<sup>153</sup> Christians are freed from such limitations and thus not bound by people, place, or time, and are even free to observe the Sabbath “whenever, wherever, and as often as we are able and are agreed together.”<sup>154</sup> Since “the seventh day does not

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*Luther’s Works*, 51:339–40. He calls them hypocrites who only see the “external work of observing the day and consider that this is the only thing necessary” instead of addressing human need when it presents itself. Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:342. Instead, the Sabbath commandment does not prohibit works of love, as exemplified by Jesus’ going to the synagogue *and* carrying out good works on the Sabbath. Luther also makes allowance for “incidental and unavoidable” work. Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 398.

<sup>149</sup> Kim, “Sabbatical Observance,” 94–95.

<sup>150</sup> Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:342.

<sup>151</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 399.

<sup>152</sup> Luther, “Against the Sabbatarians,” in *Luther’s Works*, 47:92.

<sup>153</sup> Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:337. In his attacks against the Jewish Sabbath, Luther is closely following Augustine’s approach. Daniel Augsburg, “Calvin and the Mosaic Law” (Ph.D. diss., Universite des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, 1976), 252 n. 24.

<sup>154</sup> Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:339.

concern us Gentiles” then a Christian must “rest, celebrate, and keep the Sabbath on whatever day or at whatever hour God’s word is preached.”<sup>155</sup> Consequently, every day can be a Sabbath with the study of the Word, and worship should be a daily reality. Nonetheless, “if the sabbath or Sunday does not please us,” it is theoretically acceptable “to take Monday or any other day of the week and make a Sunday of it; though this must be done in an orderly way.”<sup>156</sup>

Like Peter Martyr, Luther adopts distinctions of the Sabbath elements, which Aquinas already had, to an extent, identified, where there is a distinction between the “‘perpetual and eternal’ and the ‘changeable and temporal’ elements *within the ‘ceremonial’* aspect of the Sabbath commandment. To set apart one day in seven for the ‘outward worshipping of God’ is perpetual; *which* day of the week that should be is mutable.”<sup>157</sup>

Luther treats the day of observance as a ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath. Kim observes that Luther “does not associate a specific place or time with the notion of ‘holy.’”<sup>158</sup> Luther claims that “in itself no one day is better than another.”<sup>159</sup> However, he

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<sup>155</sup> Luther, "Dedication of Castle Church," in *Luther's Works*, 47:92–93.

<sup>156</sup> Luther, "Dedication of Castle Church," in *Luther's Works*, 51:336. Luther also repeatedly emphasizes that a specific place of worship is not divinely appointed, and that any place is acceptable, even by the fountain in the church courtyard. Elsewhere, Luther argues that though natural law teaches a regular physical rest, “he who does not need rest may break the Sabbath and rest on some other day, as nature allows.” Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets," in *Luther's Works*, 40:98.

<sup>157</sup> Bauckham, “Protestant Tradition,” 318.

<sup>158</sup> “Dissociating the idea of “holy” from spatial and temporal confinement, Luther proclaims that not only the sabbath but also Sunday have nothing to do with a divinely predetermined appointment as the only day for worship and rest for Christians.” Kim, “Sabbatical Observance,” 85.

<sup>159</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 398.

also claims that the command to “keep holy” the Sabbath does not mean that the day itself needs to be made holy by human beings, “for it was created holy.”<sup>160</sup> But it is God’s “Word of blessing” that makes the day holy.<sup>161</sup> This holiness must be applied to the individual through the Word. Without the Word, the Sabbath could be made unholy, even with a physical rest.<sup>162</sup> It is through God’s Word that Christians are made holy.<sup>163</sup>

Thus, “by making the Sabbath commandment about the hearing and learning of God’s word, Luther in a sense *expanded* the commandment to cover *all* days on which the word could be heard.”<sup>164</sup> The essence of the Sabbath is in the study of the Word, and not any particular temporal observance. In this sense, any day could be made the Sabbath.

Despite these freedoms, Luther affirms some practical considerations. Not everyone has time and leisure.<sup>165</sup> It would also be impractical for everyone to constantly change their day of worship. Thus, it is still more practical to choose Sunday because it has “been appointed...from ancient times” and is “now universally accepted as our

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<sup>160</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 398. What Luther may actually mean by the day being “holy” is that the purpose of the Sabbath (hearing and preaching the Word) is holy, not the day itself.

<sup>161</sup> Arand, “Luther’s Radical Reading,” 257.

<sup>162</sup> One other violation of Sabbath is when those who listen to God’s Word take it for granted and treat it as “any other entertainment” and do not allow the Word to transform them. Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 399.

<sup>163</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 399. “If you have learned nothing [from the preaching], then you have done nothing holy on the sabbath day.” Luther, “Ten Sermons on the Catechism,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:145.

<sup>164</sup> Wiersma, “On Keeping the Sabbath Holy,” 240.

<sup>165</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 398.



sabbath” as long as “we remain lord over it, and not it over us.”<sup>166</sup> It is better to observe a day on which everyone is in agreement. “[Sunday] is a necessity and is ordained by the church for the sake of the imperfect laity and the working class so that they may also come [to hear] the word of God.”<sup>167</sup> For the sake of order, the church designated Sunday as the day of worship, not as a theological transfer from Saturday, but for practical reasons of assembly.<sup>168</sup> The basis for the day of Sabbath observance, then, is ecclesiastical authority.

It appears that Luther’s view of divine time, among other things, influences him to view the Sabbath atemporally, separating the meaning of the Sabbath from any obligatory temporal observance, and giving him the freedom to observe the Sabbath on any day, albeit with practical considerations supporting the observance of Sunday.

### John Calvin

According to Canale, John Calvin subscribed to the ontology of classical theism.<sup>169</sup> Calvin built much of his theology on Augustine, commenting that “Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with

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<sup>166</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 398. Luther, “Dedication of Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, 51:336.

<sup>167</sup> Luther, “Treatise on Good Works,” in *Luther’s Works*, 44:72. The clergy, by virtue of their daily practice of spiritual disciplines “have a holy day every day, and they do the works of a holy day every day.” Luther implies that they who study God’s Word daily do not need the weekly Sabbath because every day is a Sabbath for them. It is those who do “secular” labor that need the weekly Sabbath.

<sup>168</sup> *The Augsburg Confession*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 101.

<sup>169</sup> “Even though Calvin’s theological synthesis closely follows biblical language, the God and nature principles still rest on the classical understanding of God’s timeless eternity and spacial ubiquitousness.” Canale, “Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary,” 193. Canale makes a similar claim about Luther’s view (see footnote 111).

all fulness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings.”<sup>170</sup> His anthropology adheres to the Platonic dualism of an immortal incorporeal soul “set in the body... as in a house.”<sup>171</sup>

Calvin’s writings on the Sabbath are the most extensive of all the individuals examined in this study, clearly indicating the thinking of a systematic theologian. There is some disagreement regarding whether Calvin was Sabbatarian or not, but these may be clarified in the discussion below.<sup>172</sup>

### **Sabbath and Creation**

In his comments on Gen 1:5, Calvin disputes those (such as Augustine and Aquinas) who believe that the world came into existence in merely a moment. Instead, like Luther, he subscribes to the idea that “God himself took the space of six days for the purpose of accommodating his works to the capacity of men.”<sup>173</sup> It seems Calvin viewed

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<sup>170</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Calvinism: Treatises on the Eternal Predestination of God the Secret Providence of God*, trans. Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2006), 38. Regarding soteriology, their ontological presuppositions could only “fund a Catholic ordering of regeneration and justification.” Bruce L. McCormack, “What’s at Stake in Current Debates Over Justification? The Crisis of Protestantism in the West,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 84. While Calvin made a distinction between justification and sanctification, McCormack argues that his break from a Catholic conflation of justification and sanctification was not complete and some elements of Catholic thought, carried over from Greek ontology, remained in Calvin’s soteriology.

<sup>171</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.15.6, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 1:192. Calvin also follows Augustinian sacramental theology. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.14.1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:1276–77.

<sup>172</sup> Kyle J. Dieleman, *The Battle for the Sabbath in the Dutch Reformation: Devotion or Desecration?*, *Reformed Historical Theology* 52 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, 2019), 37–39.

<sup>173</sup> John Calvin, *Genesis*, ed. Alister E. McGrath and J. I. Packer (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 19. For a discussion on Calvin’s usage of “accommodation,” see Vern S. Poythress, “A Misunderstanding of Calvin’s Interpretation of Genesis 1:6-8 and 1:5 and Its Implications for Ideas of Accommodation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 76.1 (2014): 157–66.

God's act of creation as spread out instead of a single moment because of the human limitation to comprehend and appreciate His work. "God, to whom one moment is as a thousand years, had no need of this succession of time, but he wanted to engage us in the consideration of his deeds."<sup>174</sup> Although Calvin does not explicitly state in his Genesis commentary whether he believes God's act of creation was within time or outside of time, his presupposition of divine timelessness logically leads to the idea of creation resulting from God's pure timeless actuality.<sup>175</sup>

God's rest on the seventh day was not a cessation of his governing or providential works, but a completion of His creative work.<sup>176</sup> God did not need to rest, but did so "to invite us to contemplate his works that we might concentrate on them and nevertheless conform ourselves to him."<sup>177</sup> Additionally, when God sanctifies the seventh day, he "renders it illustrious, that by a special law it may be distinguished from the rest."<sup>178</sup> However, Calvin is also careful to echo the sentiments from his *Institutes* that the Sabbath figuratively points to the spiritual rest fulfilled in Christ, hence the significance

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<sup>174</sup> Calvin, *Genesis*, 30.

<sup>175</sup> Calvin is more explicit than Luther in his distinction between the divine and human view of creation (see footnote 116). Referencing Augustine, Calvin acknowledges human limitations in understanding the infinity of time and space, commenting that "the eternity of God's existence and the infinity of his glory would prove a twofold labyrinth." Calvin, *Genesis*, xiii.

<sup>176</sup> Calvin, *Genesis*, 29.

<sup>177</sup> John Calvin, *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, ed. and trans. Benjamin W. Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 104.

<sup>178</sup> Calvin, *Genesis*, 30. For a discussion about whether there is a contradiction between Calvin's comments herein about a specific day of worship and his seeming attitude of indifference in the *Institutes*, see Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 73–81.

of the day itself “was but for a season,” but the necessity of worshipping God “should continue to the end of the world.”<sup>179</sup>

Calvin does make a historical connection between Sabbath and creation, noting that to observe the Sabbath is to imitate the Creator.<sup>180</sup> Calvin admits the seventh-day Sabbath existed prior to the promulgation of the Law at Sinai.<sup>181</sup>

Gaffin notes that for Calvin the Sabbath commandment “reflects a creation ordinance and, therefore, is perpetually binding on all.”<sup>182</sup> Calvin states that the Sabbath rest is a “perpetual rule” and is sacred “in all ages.”<sup>183</sup> However, due to the scarcity of explicit statements, it is challenging to definitively argue that Calvin saw a strong theological connection between the Sabbath and creation.<sup>184</sup> His emphasis is still on

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<sup>179</sup> Calvin, *Genesis*, 31. There is merit to Gaffin’s argument that Calvin’s usage of “Sabbath” in this selection refers more to “a principle or guiding rule” rather than the day itself. Thus, the Sabbath that perpetually continues is not the day, but the principles of rest from sin, meditating upon God’s works, observing church-appointed times of worship, and physical rest for laborers. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 78–79.2

<sup>180</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.31, 1:397. Gaffin cites the 1536 edition, where Calvin indicates that God’s rest after creation is an example for humankind to cease from their labors and “seek our rest in him.” Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 51.

<sup>181</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses: Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, trans. Charles William Bingham (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852), 1:271; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses: Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, trans. Charles William Bingham (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1853), 2:439–40. However, he expresses uncertainty that it was observed by the patriarchs, though it is probable.

<sup>182</sup> Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 81. See also Stewart E. Lauer, “John Calvin, the Nascent Sabbatarian: A Reconsideration of Calvin’s View of Two Key Sabbath-Issues,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 12 (2016): 152–56.

<sup>183</sup> Calvin, *Genesis*, 31.

<sup>184</sup> Gaffin admits such a scarcity, but still argues that “the notion of the Sabbath institution as a creation ordinance... is consonant with and perhaps even implied in the teaching of the *Institutes*.” Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 31. In contrast, Primus argues that Calvin “falls short” of making this connection. Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 64. The above statements, although not extensive, suggest that Calvin did see the Sabbath as a creation ordinance.

physical and spiritual rest, where God's rest in creation is merely an "alluring example," a "model for our imitation."<sup>185</sup>

Calvin sees the Sabbath only in light of the fall. No connection is made with God's purpose in building the Sabbath into the very structure of the universe at Creation. Thus, the Sabbath is not addressed in the sermons as positively as it could be, and Calvin neglects many aspects of God's intended blessings with regard to the Sabbath.<sup>186</sup>

Like Luther, Calvin did not make a strong theological connection between Sabbath and creation. Instead, the majority of the discussion is based on the Decalogue.

### **Sabbath Commandment**

Calvin had a more positive view of the Decalogue than Luther did.<sup>187</sup> There is some disagreement as to whether Calvin viewed the OT Sabbath commandment as abrogated in relation to the moral-ceremonial distinction within the commandment.<sup>188</sup>

Calvin rejects this distinction in the scholastics, though Lyle Bierma points out that he misunderstands Aquinas's position, even adopting the same while using different

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<sup>185</sup> Primus, "Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath," 72; Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:436.

<sup>186</sup> Lawrence A. Gilpin, "An Analysis of Calvin's Sermons on the Fourth Commandment," *Presbyterian* 30 (2004): 101.

<sup>187</sup> Allen, "Rest as Spiritual Discipline," 173–75.

<sup>188</sup> Albertus Pieters, "Three Views of the Fourth Commandment," *The Calvin Forum*, January 1941; Albertus Pieters, "A Review of the Sabbath Discussion," *The Calvin Forum*, September 1941. Pieters argues that Calvin viewed the Sabbath commandment as abrogated. For Strand, in Calvin's theology "there is no connection between the Sabbath commandment and the observance of the Christian Sunday." Strand, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Reformation Era," 220. In contrast, Gaffin believes Calvin saw this commandment as still applicable. There are elements of truth in both, since Calvin saw the elements of physical rest and corporate worship as still applicable, basing both on the Sabbath commandment, while the command to observe the seventh day was ceremonial and therefore abrogated. Overall, I am more inclined to agree with Gaffin, for there is more in Calvin's writings arguing for its continuation rather than abrogation.

terminology.<sup>189</sup> Calvin saw both a perpetual and temporary element in the Sabbath commandment.

For Calvin, the moral element of the Sabbath commandment is perpetual. Calvin saw in the first half of the Decalogue commands to “worship God with pure faith and piety” and the second half as a command “to embrace men with sincere affection.” The moral law is, therefore, an expression of God’s “eternal and unchangeable will that he himself indeed be worshiped by us all, and that we love one another.”<sup>190</sup> Regarding the fourth commandment, it is Calvin’s “firm conviction” that it “applies to all people in every age.”<sup>191</sup>

Calvin’s description of the purpose of the Sabbath commandment is similar to Luther’s, although he presents the purpose as threefold.<sup>192</sup> First, it is a representation of spiritual rest in God where one becomes dead to their own works and allows God to work in them.<sup>193</sup> For Calvin, the Sabbath is a reminder of God’s grace and the complete human

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<sup>189</sup> Bierma, “Remembering the Sabbath Day,” 277–78. The misunderstanding lies in the definition of the moral aspect of the Sabbath commandment, which remains binding for Christians. According to Bierma, Calvin mistakenly represents Aquinas’s position of the moral aspect as “one day in seven” which Calvin objects to because for him this idea still follows Jewish thinking though it changes the day of observance (see footnote 205). Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.34, 2:400. Bierma believes that Aquinas’s real definition of the moral aspect of the Sabbath commandment actually agrees with Calvin—as setting aside time for God (see footnote 88).

<sup>190</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 4.20.15, 2:1503.

<sup>191</sup> Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 47.

<sup>192</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.28, 1:395. This was earlier iterated in Calvin’s first catechism (1538). I. John Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 12–13.

<sup>193</sup> The Sabbath was given for the Jews to know that “their lives could not be approved by God unless, by ceasing from their own works, they should divest themselves of their reason, counsels, and all the feelings and affections of the flesh” and that “as if dead to themselves and to the world, they might wholly devote themselves to God.” Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:434. The Sabbath reminds all that “they cannot purely honor [God] without renouncing themselves, or being separated from the pollutions of

inability to contribute anything to their relationship with God. Second, it is to provide a day of assembly to participate in the rites of the church and meditation on God's Kingdom.<sup>194</sup> Third, it is to provide physical rest to servants and workers. For Calvin, the latter two reasons are fully still applicable to Christians and thus need no further elaboration here.<sup>195</sup> The first reason, however, Calvin views as having been fulfilled by Christ but still partially applicable to Christians. This distinction deserves more attention.

### **Sabbath Typology**

As will be shown below, it was the typological rest (in Calvin's first reason for the Sabbath) that Calvin views as having been fulfilled in Christ, while the other reasons for the Sabbath still fully remain, hence the commandment is still valid for Christians.

For Calvin, there is a symbolical and typological aspect to the Sabbath commandment. Calvin accepts that in creation God chose the seventh day specifically.<sup>196</sup> But there is nothing beyond a symbolic significance to the day itself, seven being the number of perfection, which denotes perpetuity. Contrastingly, there is also a sense of incompleteness in the Sabbath, for it "would never be perfected until the Last Day should

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the world and of their own flesh." Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, 100. See also Primus, "Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath," 59–60.

<sup>194</sup> Calvin argues that the original Sabbath was ordained for the purpose of assembly and worship. Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, 108.

<sup>195</sup> "The two latter reasons for the Sabbath ought not to be relegated to the ancient shadows, but are equally applicable to every age." Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.32, 1:397–98.

<sup>196</sup> "Either because [God] foresaw that it would be sufficient; or that, by providing a model in his own example, he might better arouse the people; or at least point out to them that the Sabbath had no other purpose than to render them conformable to their Creator's example." Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.31, 1:397.

come.”<sup>197</sup> One purpose of the weekly observance of the Sabbath, therefore, is to point people toward its end-time perfection.

The Sabbath message of rest is also typological. Like those before him, Calvin emphasizes that there is more to the Sabbath than the cessation of physical labor.<sup>198</sup> “The day is not to be holy, in the sense of being devoted to idleness” but in the sense of meditating on spiritual things.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, there is an eschatological sense to the “mystery” of the Sabbath as it points to the “perpetual repose from our labors.”<sup>200</sup> This spiritual significance is the essence of the Sabbath: present and eternal rest from sin. The Sabbath commandment, then, not only requires a cessation from present sin but also anticipates a future state where sin is eradicated.

The “figure” or “shadow” (i.e. typological aspect) of the Sabbath commandment was fulfilled by Christ.<sup>201</sup> Christ himself is the “true fulfillment of the Sabbath.”<sup>202</sup> Calvin then applies this “ceremonial part” of the Sabbath to the observance of a particular day, and thus its obligatory observance becomes abrogated.<sup>203</sup> Like Aquinas, Calvin here applies the typological/ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath only to the day of observance.

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<sup>197</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.30, 1:396.

<sup>198</sup> Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:434.

<sup>199</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 3:493.

<sup>200</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.31, 1:397.

<sup>201</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.34, 1:400.

<sup>202</sup> See Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:435; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1853), 99.

<sup>203</sup> “In order to demonstrate the liberty of Christians, the day has been changed, seeing that Jesus Christ in his resurrection has delivered us from all bondage of the law and has severed that obligation [to keep the seventh day].” Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, 111. Gaffin understands Calvin’s



The first purpose of the Sabbath commandment still applies to Christians in the sense of resting in God but is fulfilled and no longer applicable in its obligation to observe a specific day. Because the Sabbath is but a “shadow” pointing forward to Christ, Calvin claims “Christians ought... to shun completely the superstitious observance of days.”<sup>204</sup> Calvin takes issue with “false prophets” who proposed that the “moral part,” namely resting one day in seven, was still applicable.<sup>205</sup> Calvin rejected any obligatory observance of a day, even if just one day in seven. For Calvin, Christians are not tied to the seven-day creation pattern.<sup>206</sup> It is merely convenient to follow God’s pattern, hence the seven-day week is still followed. Though Christians continue to practice the essence of the Sabbath commandment, Christ’s coming has fulfilled the temporal aspect and given it a deeper meaning than the Old Testament.

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view of the “ceremonial part” to refer to the foreshadowing of rest from sin. He also finds no contradiction in Calvin’s identification of both Jesus’ first advent and the eternal rest, since both are virtually identical in the sense of the “newness of life” that God’s people possess. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 34. “Whatever was spoken of under the Law as eternal, I maintain to have had reference to the new state of things which came to pass at the coming of Christ; and thus the eternity of the Law must not be extended beyond the fulness of time, when the truth of its shadow was manifested, and God’s covenant assumed a different form.” Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:443.

<sup>204</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.31, 1:397. Primus takes Calvin’s use of “superstitious observance” to mean “keeping of holy days as a means of salvation.” Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 62. I would not go so far as to say it was for salvific reasons, merely the preference of one day over another, which is, in Calvin’s view, “ceremonial” in nature.

<sup>205</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.34, 1:400. What Calvin takes issue with is the notion that nothing has changed between the Old and New Testaments except the change of the day. John McNeill comments that Calvin is here “consciously anti-Sabbatarian” (Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.34, 1:400.), though I would argue that Calvin is not against Sabbatarianism per se (connecting the NT Sabbath with Creation and the Decalogue), but against a mere transfer of day that excluded the significance of the spiritual rest provided by Jesus Christ, resulting in a legalism that surpasses “the Jews three times over in crass and carnal Sabbatarian superstition.” Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 43–44.

<sup>206</sup> Addressing the seeming contradiction between Calvin’s emphasis in the *Institutes* that Christians are free from the “one day in seven” cycle and his emphasis in the Genesis commentary that God’s creation pattern is foundational, Primus proposes that “one day in seven for worship is a *minimal* requirement.” Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 65.

## Sabbath Rest

Calvin argued that the necessity of rest is just as equally applicable to Christians as it was to the Jews.<sup>207</sup> Lawrence Gilpin observes that Calvin understands “rest” primarily in a symbolic way, referring to a cessation of sinful human works.<sup>208</sup> God held the Sabbath in high esteem and commanded strict obedience to its observance because it directly relates to sanctification:

If our sanctification consists in mortifying our own will, then a very close correspondence appears between the outward sign and the inward reality.<sup>209</sup> We must be wholly at rest that God may work in us; we must yield our will; we must resign our heart; we must give up all our fleshly desires. In short, we must rest from all activities of our own contriving so that, having God working in us [Heb. 13:21], we may repose in him [Heb. 4:9], as the apostle also teaches.<sup>210</sup>

Calvin’s understanding of God’s grace is at the root of the spiritual nature of Sabbath rest. “It is a redemptive rest, an ‘eternal cessation,’ which for the Jews was represented by the observance of the seventh day of rest.”<sup>211</sup> Because the experience of resting in God’s grace is not limited to a particular day, Christians may celebrate their salvation at any time. The redemptive symbolism of the seventh-day Sabbath has been

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<sup>207</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.32, 1:398.

<sup>208</sup> Gilpin, “Analysis of Calvin’s Sermons,” 94.

<sup>209</sup> It appears Calvin is using sacramental language here. On one occasion he does refer to the Sabbath as a sacrament, using the phrases “outward symbol...that... contained a spiritual mystery” and “a visible figure of an invisible grace.” John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas Myers (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1850), 2:302. Later he refers to the Sabbath as a “sacrament of regeneration.” Calvin, *Ezekiel*, 2:311. Gaffin argues that Calvin’s overall usage of “sacrament” should be taken in the broader sense, as a “means of grace,” which in this case refers to the Old Testament Sabbath. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 93–94.

<sup>210</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.29, 1:396.

<sup>211</sup> Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 61.

fulfilled by Christ, hence the “ceremonial” aspect (the temporal observance of a specific day) of the Sabbath need not be observed by Christians. “What was in the old order represented by the observance of one day in seven, is now in the new order represented by the living Christ, namely, spiritual life and redemptive repose in God.”<sup>212</sup> Christians rest from sinful works, and God sanctifies His people.

### **Sabbath Time**

For Calvin, spiritual rest can be done any day of the week, enabled by Jesus’ death. Unlike Old Testament Law, which required the observance of specific days for the Sabbath and festivals, those under Christ experience “constant and uninterrupted solemnity” because there are no “fixed and stated days of sacrifices” for the perpetual Sabbath.<sup>213</sup>

Like Luther, Calvin underscores the essentials of Sabbath observance divorced from the day itself, leading to flexibility in the issue of the day of worship. Calvin claims he will not “condemn churches that have other solemn days for their meetings, provided there be no superstition.”<sup>214</sup> In contrast to Judaism, Christians do not approach the Sabbath with “the most rigid scrupulousness” which Calvin considers superstitious.<sup>215</sup> In

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<sup>212</sup> Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 61–62.

<sup>213</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1853), 4:438–39. “When we, in the present age, make a distinction of days, we do not represent them as necessary, and thus lay a snare for the conscience; we do not reckon one day to be more holy than another; we do not make days to be the same thing with religion and the worship of God; but merely attend to the preservation of order and harmony.” John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 124.

<sup>214</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.34, 1:400.

<sup>215</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.33, 1:399. Calvin is here speaking against “restless spirits” who argue that Christians are too Jewish in that they “keep some observance of days” and would prefer not requiring a

actuality, the ideal is to have a daily meeting, but such practice is perhaps unrealistic, for the “weakness of many” makes this impossible, thus a compromise based on “the rule of love” accommodates a weekly gathering instead of a daily.<sup>216</sup>

Based on the above, therefore, it does not become necessary to observe a particular day based on Calvin’s first reason because the first advent of Christ has provided the fulfillment of this function. The Sabbath no longer functions as a type of spiritual rest, for spiritual rest can already be found in Christ.

Calvin views Paul as speaking against the “distinction of days” (based on Gal 4:10–11; Rom 14:5) where those who misunderstand the NT Sabbath “imagined that by celebrating the way they were honoring mysteries once commended.”<sup>217</sup> Calvin was not against observing a particular day, but the idea that “it still typified something spiritual for Christians.”<sup>218</sup> Yet this does not mean that the Sabbath as a whole has been abolished, for its essence is still applicable to Christians.<sup>219</sup> The “external observation” of the Sabbath has been abrogated, but it is still “eternal in its reality.”<sup>220</sup>

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specific day of worship at all. These may have been individuals influenced by Anabaptist theology. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 39.

<sup>216</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.32, 1:398. Calvin pictures God saying to the Israelites at Sinai: “Since you cannot be instant in seeking me with all your affection and attention, at any rate give up to me some little undistracted time.” Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:438. See also Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, 108–9.

<sup>217</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.33, 1:399.

<sup>218</sup> Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 39.

<sup>219</sup> “The law is not altogether abolished, as it does not fail to retain the substance and truth for us, but the obscurity has been abolished with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, 98.

<sup>220</sup> Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:444.

There is, however, a practical consideration. Like Luther, Calvin emphasizes the necessity of choosing a particular day on the basis of decency and order: “Because it was expedient to overthrow superstition, the day sacred to the Jews was set aside; because it was necessary to maintain decorum, order, and peace in the church, another was appointed for that purpose.”<sup>221</sup> The “ancients” (perhaps referring to the church fathers) substituted the Lord’s Day for the Sabbath day on the basis of Jesus’ resurrection.<sup>222</sup> The early Apostles kept the seventh-day Sabbath, but later, “constrained by the superstition of the Jews, they set aside that day and substituted another.”<sup>223</sup> “The action of the ‘ancients’ in substituting the first day for the seventh, although personally acceptable to [Calvin], was solely their own and not based on revelation.”<sup>224</sup> Regardless, the second reason for Sabbath observance, namely the necessity of weekly worship, is still applicable to

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<sup>221</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.33, 1:399. Calvin attempts to base the “decency and order” argument on the Sabbath commandment, but this argument is not found in the commandment itself. Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.32, 1:398.

<sup>222</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.34, 1:399. Calvin does not directly address the question of upon whose authority such a change was made. Gaffin observes that Calvin does not make divine authority the basis of this change, thereby leading to a more flexible view of Sabbath observance. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 41.

<sup>223</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 2:68. For Calvin, such a change was not based on any religious reasons, but for “political necessity” and “common order” which are acceptable in light of his theology of the Sabbath. Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 104–5. Calvin may be using “constrained” to mean that the church fathers wanted to distinguish Christian Sabbath observance from the “superstition” of Jewish observance, hence they were compelled to change the day.

<sup>224</sup> Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 42. Lauer disputes this based on Calvin’s sermon (Calvin, *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, 110.) where he takes Calvin’s statements “the day of Sunday is instituted” and “the holy order which God has instituted” to mean that Calvin saw God as acting through the “ancients” to change the day of Sabbath. Lauer, “Calvin the Nascent Sabbatarian,” 158. The ambiguity of Calvin’s statements here leads me to agree more with Gaffin. It is conceptually easier to connect Calvin’s phrase “holy order [or command] which God has instituted” to the Decalogue, indicating that Calvin is here referring to Sabbath theology as a whole. Calvin also does not make a clear statement that God specifically commanded the change of day.

Christians.<sup>225</sup> The consequence of this view is that Calvin, like Luther, bases the day of observance on ecclesiastical authority, and not on divine command.

Calvin seeks to balance between two viewpoints of the Sabbath: those of the “restless spirits” (Roman Catholics) and those of “false prophets” (some Anabaptists).<sup>226</sup> For him, the former too closely applied the OT Sabbath, while the latter departed too far. For Calvin, Christian Sunday partially replaces and partially continues the seventh-day Sabbath. It is continued on the basis of the Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue but discontinues the typological/ceremonial application of the seventh day specifically.

It appears that Calvin’s view of divine time, among other things, influences him to view the Sabbath atemporally as it does Luther, separating the meaning of the Sabbath from any obligatory temporal observance by making the time aspect ceremonial (like Aquinas), and giving him the freedom to observe the Sabbath on any day, albeit with practical considerations supporting the observance of Sunday.

#### Andreas Carlstadt

Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt (or Karlstadt) was an older but lesser-known contemporary of Luther. He was, in fact, the Dean of Faculty at Wittenberg when Luther

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<sup>225</sup> “In this respect we have an equal necessity for the Sabbath with the ancient people, so that on one day we may be free, and thus the better to prepared to learn and to testify our faith.” Calvin, *Four Last Books of Moses*, 2:437. Gaffin takes issue with Calvin’s connection of this principle to the Sabbath commandment, which does not exist. He postulates that “Calvin viewed spiritual rest and public worship as so intimately associated, that to affirm the perpetual character of the former is to imply the daily propriety of the latter.” Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 38.

<sup>226</sup> “Each is the polar opposite of the other on the Sabbath question. The ‘false prophets,’ reflecting a Roman Catholic viewpoint, held that the Lord’s Day is a strict continuation of the Jewish Sabbath. The ‘restless spirits,’ representing an Anabaptist outlook, opposed any distinction of days.... There is no warrant for concluding that he limits himself exclusively or even predominately to any one particular front or group of readers.” Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 44.

received his doctorate in 1512. Carlstadt's work may be considered a precursor to the Radical Reformation.<sup>227</sup> Though Carlstadt does not write as extensively as Luther and Calvin on the Sabbath, his writings have had some influence and deserve some attention here.

Though originally trained in the works of Aquinas, Carlstadt's interactions with Luther and Johann von Staupitz led him to a new theological orientation, and eventually "the Thomistic scholastic became an Augustinian theologian"<sup>228</sup> In this orientation both Luther and Carlstadt were united.<sup>229</sup> His theological love for Augustine makes it probable that Carlstadt also adhered to Augustine's philosophical presuppositions of divine time, though he did not express it explicitly in any works I have examined.

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<sup>227</sup> Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Andreas Bodenstein of Carlstadt, Prodigal Reformer," *Church History* 35.4 (1966): 396–97; Gordon Rupp, "Andrew Carlstadt and Reformation Puritanism," *Journal of Theological Studies* 10.2 (1959): 322; Calvin Augustine Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements: The Emergence of Lay Protestantism*, Toronto. (University of Toronto Press, 1984). He has also been described as "a singular compound of Zwinglian, Lutheran and Anabaptist ingredients." Barnas Sears, *The Life of Luther: With Special Reference to Its Earlier Periods and the Opening Scenes of the Reformation* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1850), 402. In the way he translated and systematized Luther's ideas, he may also be considered a "forerunner of Melanchthon." Hillerbrand, "Carlstadt, Prodigal Reformer," 395.

<sup>228</sup> Hillerbrand, "Carlstadt, Prodigal Reformer," 381. In April 1517 (six months before Luther famously nailed his 95 theses), Carlstadt published his own 151 theses, which contained some identifiable Augustinian themes.

<sup>229</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt: The Development of His Thought, 1517-1525* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 43–44; Rupp, Gordon, *Patterns of Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 55–63. Hillerbrand makes one distinction, that "Luther was a mixture of Augustine and Paul" while Carlstadt was a "combination of Augustine and the German Theology." Hillerbrand, "Carlstadt, Prodigal Reformer," 389. Rupp comments that Carlstadt became "more Augustinian than Luther himself." Rupp, "Karlstadt and Reformation Puritanism," 309. Carlstadt angrily protested Luther's attack against the pseudo-Augustinian tract "Of True and False Penitence." Rupp, Gordon, *Patterns of Reformation*, 56.

## **Sabbath Commandment**

Closer to Calvin than Luther, Carlstadt has a more positive view of the role of the Law in Christian life. Whereas Luther saw the Law's function as convicting man of sin, Carlstadt saw the law as a guide for sanctification.<sup>230</sup> Carlstadt also rather emphatically affirms that "we may not, even without notable diminishment, stray even by a hair's breadth from the reason for the Sabbath."<sup>231</sup> Such statements like this may have been the cause for his being accused of legalism by other Reformers such as Luther.<sup>232</sup> Carlstadt proposes that "Christ is the perfection of the Sabbath."<sup>233</sup> Those who observe the Sabbath must follow His example.

## **Sabbath Rest**

Carlstadt identifies two main purposes in God's institution of the Sabbath. The first purpose of the Sabbath is for human beings to become like God in holiness, motivated by love for Him. Conversely, its misuse can be rejected by God: "When the soul does not become aware of its clarity and inwardness and does not surrender

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<sup>230</sup> Edward Allen, "Was Carlstadt a Proto-Sabbatarian?," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 44.1 (2006): 134.

<sup>231</sup> Carlstadt, "Regarding the Sabbath," in *Essential Carlstadt*, 320. Allen describes this as a characteristic overstatement of Carlstadt. Allen, "Karlstadt a Proto-Sabbatarian?," 136. Carlstadt also uniquely saw the Sabbath commandment as obligatory for angels and humans alike. Carlstadt, "Regarding the Sabbath," in *Essential Carlstadt*, 321.

<sup>232</sup> "Since Dr. Carlstadt pursues the same way and in so many books does not even teach what faith and love are, ... but stresses and emphasizes external works, let everyone be warned of him." Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets," in *Luther's Works*, 40:81–82. Sider comments that this treatise was "a consummately devastating, delightfully satirical polemic. It is also violent—so violent, indeed, that even Melancthon complained about its tone." Ronald J. Sider, ed., *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther: Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 92.

<sup>233</sup> Carlstadt, "Regarding the Sabbath," in *Essential Carlstadt*, 322.



darkness, impurity, wickedness, and unholiness, it is far from and alienated from the reason for the instituted Sabbath.”<sup>234</sup> Like Luther, Carlstadt emphasizes that this holiness can only come from God and not through personal ability or merit: “We must not have our own will but must let go of our will, and accept and do God’s will.” These statements parallel the “resting in God” concept of those before him.<sup>235</sup>

The second reason for the Sabbath is a love for one’s neighbor. Knowing human nature and needs, “God ordered the seventh day to be celebrated for the well-being of humankind.”<sup>236</sup> As such it is expected of employers to provide physical rest for their workers.<sup>237</sup> Physical rest is a necessity, but must also be used to serve the first reason for the Sabbath. In and of itself, physical rest is not the *telos* of the Sabbath. Rest is necessary because “our works impede God’s work.”<sup>238</sup> Therefore, Christians on the Sabbath should “be idle, do nothing, and endure the long time.”<sup>239</sup> At the same time, Carlstadt also notes that the command to rest on the seventh day is a command to work on the other six.

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<sup>234</sup> Andreas Bodenstein Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath and Statutory Holy Days,” in *The Essential Carlstadt: Fifteen Tracts by Andreas Bodenstein (Carlstadt) from Karlstadt*, ed. and trans. E. J. Furcha (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 320.

<sup>235</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 322. Carlstadt strongly espoused “Gelassenheit,” an abandonment of self a complete submission to God’s will through suffering and self-denial which would result in an inner peace and tranquility. See Carlstadt, “Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 27–39; Carlstadt, “The Meaning of the Term Gelassen and Where in Holy Scripture it is Found,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 133–68.

<sup>236</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 320.

<sup>237</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 323–27.

<sup>238</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 333.

<sup>239</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 332. Carlstadt claims “The Sabbath has been instituted for the spirit to reach a point of boredom and learn something during the idle time. For idleness and getting bored is a spiritual circumcision and preparation to receive God’s work, since boredom and ennui drive out human desires.” Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 332–33. See Allen, “Karlstadt a Proto-Sabbatarian?,” 145–46; Sider, *Karlstadt*, 180–81. Luther vehemently opposed this “doing nothing” view of Sabbath observance, claiming that Carlstadt “would truly make us Jews in all

Carlstadt makes a distinction between the external and internal observance, noting that God favors the latter more. “God prefers a broken heart—where that is found it matters little whether we fast or eat, drink or suffer thirst, sacrifice or not, celebrate or work, as long as we do not come to God while we are empty within [Ps 51:17]. Although we might come empty-handed externally, it does not endanger us before God.”<sup>240</sup> This “inner, spiritual Sabbath will determine the form of the external, physical observance of the Sabbath” and is “virtually indistinguishable from an experience with Christ.”<sup>241</sup> Carlstadt uses the dichotomy between soul and body as a parallel to indicate that the internal observance of Sabbath is superior to the external.<sup>242</sup>

From this he concludes that “it is not always good for [the inner being] to be bound to time and place, wherefore, God set him above all external Sabbaths.”<sup>243</sup> “But when the external cover is removed and we look at the spiritual Sabbath, then every day is a Sabbath and one Sabbath flows from the other.”<sup>244</sup>

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things.” Luther, “Against the Heavenly Prophets,” in *Luther’s Works*, 40:94. Luther saw this “not working” as still a works-oriented righteousness, the same accusations he held against the Jews. See Gonzáles, *Brief History of Sunday*, 103–4.

<sup>240</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 328. Carlstadt allows for work when it is necessary for human need or welfare, which he calls a work of brotherly love.

<sup>241</sup> Allen, “Karlstadt a Proto-Sabbatarian?,” 137. This inner spiritual Sabbath is also connected to the concept of “Gelassenheit.”

<sup>242</sup> “Just as the inner being is master of the external, and the spirit [master] over the flesh, so also the soul or spirit is above all lower creatures.” Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 332.

<sup>243</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 332.

<sup>244</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 334.

## **Sabbath and Eschatology**

Carlstadt also distinguishes between the current Sabbath and the future Sabbath, the latter being higher than the former. The current lower Sabbath is characterized by “fear and work,” “bitter resignation” and “labor and anxiety” for human beings through the Sabbath are on guard against any hindrances to salvation. In contrast, the future higher Sabbath is characterized by “total love, complete rest, and nothing but inexpressible, heavenly, eternal joy and freedom” for this salvation is already actualized.<sup>245</sup> “In our Sabbath [here below] this was merely promised and indicated from a distance. [Above] the small spark of the Sabbath has become a major fire. There is then only one bright shining day and an eternal Sabbath.”<sup>246</sup>

## **Sabbath Time**

Carlstadt adheres to a “one-day-in-seven” understanding of the Sabbath, not necessarily Saturday, but the seventh in a sequence of days: “it is clear that you must celebrate on the seventh day and allow your servants to celebrate whenever they have worked for six days.”<sup>247</sup> He claims that God did not institute a specific day, so the matter of which day to observe is debatable, although “it is no secret that human beings instituted Sunday.”<sup>248</sup> Like Luther and Calvin, Carlstadt is flexible regarding the day of worship, though R. Willard Wentland notes that Carlstadt’s recognition of the human

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<sup>245</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 335.

<sup>246</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 336.

<sup>247</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 333.

<sup>248</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 333. On this point we see an echo of Aquinas’ view.

origin of Sunday ought to have provoked him to reach a logical conclusion as to the right day of worship rather than this ambiguity. However, theoretically, Carlstadt could still “ceremonialize” the day of observance.<sup>249</sup>

Like Luther and Calvin, Carlstadt warns against the possible disorder of various personal Sabbath days, so he advises that those in authority choose a day of Sabbath that would be uniformly observed by households, “if it is not to the detriment of the word of God or to preaching,” even suggesting the possibility of a daily Sabbath.<sup>250</sup> For Carlstadt, the nature of the Sabbath is not bound in time and there is, then, freedom to choose which Sabbath day to observe as long as it is done in harmony with others.

If Carlstadt viewed God as timeless, then this, among other things, influences him to view the Sabbath atemporally as it does Luther and Calvin, separating the meaning of the Sabbath from any specific obligatory temporal observance, and giving him the freedom to observe the Sabbath on any day, albeit with practical considerations supporting the observance of Sunday.

### Magisterial Reformers: Summary and Observations

The Magisterial Reformers are not far removed from Augustine and Aquinas in their spiritualizing or “ceremonializing” of the Sabbath, though they take one step closer

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<sup>249</sup> R. Willard Wentland, “The Teaching of Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt on the Seventh Day Sabbath” (Master Thesis, Andrews University, 1947), 34. Though Wentland concludes that Carlstadt believed in the seventh-day as the OT Sabbath, I find more ambiguity in Carlstadt’s statements, particularly considering Carlstadt used “seventh day” to refer to “one-day-in-seven” rather than Saturday specifically. Wentland, “Carlstadt on the Seventh Day Sabbath,” 35.

<sup>250</sup> Carlstadt, “Regarding the Sabbath,” in *Essential Carlstadt*, 334.

to biblical teaching in that they see an obligatory weekly observance, though the day itself is loosely understood.

Luther, like Aquinas, saw both ceremonial-temporary and moral-eternal elements to the Sabbath commandment. On the basis of natural law, He identified physical rest as an eternal element while the particular time or day of worship was temporary and specific only to the Jews and replaced by the new creation. Because he saw the study of the Word as the essential moral component of the Sabbath, any day could be considered the Sabbath through a study of the Word.

Calvin approaches Sabbath theology more comprehensively and systematically than Luther or Carlstadt and is observably more developed than Luther. Though at times he uses strong language, he does not come across as hostilely as Luther concerning the Jewish nature of the Sabbath.<sup>251</sup> In contrast, he sees more connection between the seventh-day Sabbath and Christian Sunday than Luther does, seeing the Sabbath commandment as still applicable to Christians, and making a minor connection to creation. I support Lauer's description of Calvin as a "nascent" Sabbatarian rather than a fully developed Sabbatarian.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Calvin still did not approve of the Jewish theology of the Sabbath, and commented on their many faults. Dieleman, *Sabbath in the Dutch Reformation*, 60–61.

<sup>252</sup> Some of Gilpin's critique of Calvin's Sabbath theology (e.g. a lack of connection to Creation, a lack of redemptive focus, and the obscurity of some statements) are a result of analyzing only his sermons and not his writings as a whole. Gilpin, "Analysis of Calvin's Sermons," 97–99. Granted, some of Gilpin's critique is valid, such as that "Calvin seems at times to approach the Sabbath from the perspective of pragmatism rather than from that of biblical theology," which resonates with my own wishes that Calvin were more Sabbatarian. Gilpin, "Analysis of Calvin's Sermons," 98. However, as noted above, Calvin is, in fact, more Sabbatarian than some realize.

Like Calvin, Carlstadt is somewhat Sabbatarian, but I agree with Edward Allen that there is little in his writings that make him explicitly Sabbatarian.<sup>253</sup> Calvin may even be considered more Sabbatarian, for unlike Calvin, Carlstadt does not theologically base the Sabbath on creation, which is a pillar of Sabbatarianism as defined by Gaffin.<sup>254</sup> Allen comments that Carlstadt's "readiness to dispense with 'external celebration' suggests that he would not have supported the positions advocated by the 'Sabbatarians' of later years.<sup>255</sup> Unique to Carlstadt, though perhaps "uneasily joined" as Gordon Rupp puts it, is "the attempt to add to it his own mystical notions of an inward 'sabbath rest', in which men must spend their time in penitence and meditation."<sup>256</sup>

Like the medieval theologians, the meeting point of Sabbath theology and divine time is most explicitly evident in the discussion of the day of observance. Luther differs from Aquinas in that he is much freer in his acknowledgment that the Sabbath could be any day of the week. Likewise, Calvin allows for the "freedom" to choose the day of Sabbath observance. Carlstadt's "one-day-in-seven" position also allows for flexibility.

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<sup>253</sup> "At best, Karlstadt was only one third of a 'Sabbatarian.' He accepted the Sabbath as part of the law that had ongoing validity. But since he did not believe any particular day was of divine command, there was no way a Sabbath culture could develop. And since he did not advocate a program of positive and negative Sabbath disciplines and, in fact, he idealized idleness, it was unlikely that a positive Sabbath practice could develop from his ideas." Allen, "Karlstadt a Proto-Sabbatarian?," 152. Allen requires three components to Sabbatarianism: Sabbath commandment as moral law, the seventh-day as the Sabbath day, and the necessity of rest. Allen, "Karlstadt a Proto-Sabbatarian?," 135–36.

<sup>254</sup> Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 13. Beyond immediately identifying Genesis as the origin of the Sabbath, Carlstadt makes no further connection. Carlstadt, "Regarding the Sabbath," in *Essential Carlstadt*, 319.

<sup>255</sup> Allen, "Karlstadt a Proto-Sabbatarian?," 141.

<sup>256</sup> Rupp, "Karlstadt and Reformation Puritanism," 318–19.

Still, all three approve of Christian Sunday for practical, historical, or organizational reasons.

Insofar as Luther, Calvin, and Carlstadt viewed God as timeless, they do not depict God as keeping the sabbath temporally, so they do not make this the basis for human Sabbath observance. Therefore, they turn to ecclesiastical authority as the basis for the day of Sabbath observance, and not as a memorial of God's rest in the Genesis creation.

Like the medieval theologians, these three authors may have wanted to distinguish Christianity from Judaism with Sunday observance as a key visible hallmark. However, though the connection between divine time and Sabbath time was not at the forefront of their thinking, viewing God as timeless is consistent with separating the time aspect of the Sabbath from its meaning and observance.

The Magisterial Reformers' understanding of Sabbath time is consistent with a timeless conception of God. A de-emphasis in the temporality of the original Sabbath in creation, where the meaning of the Sabbath is divorced from the day itself, lends itself to seeing the freedom to choose any day for Sabbath.

There appears to be an observable connection between Luther, Calvin, and Carlstadt's view of divine time and their view of Sabbath time. Their timeless view of God influences them to view the Sabbath atemporally, separating the meaning of the day from any temporal observance. In their case, this is seen in the freedom to observe any day as Sabbath, albeit with practical considerations supporting Sunday observance. Again, a timeless view of God does not necessarily require this to be the case, but it allows for it.

We find in these three individuals a departure from spiritualizing Sabbath toward a more literal and practical (though not obligatorily temporal) observance. The radical reformers examined next, however, take it one step further as we shall now explore.

### **Radical Reformers**

Before exploring the Sabbath theology in the Radical Reformation, it is important to note that Anabaptism was made up of varied groups and that the views of the individuals examined here—two contemporary Anabaptist leaders, Oswald Glaidt and Andreas Fischer—are not representative of the diverse Radical Reformation.<sup>257</sup> A majority did not make radical changes from the rest of Christianity regarding Sabbath theology, except to simplify the worship service.<sup>258</sup> Still, I have chosen to study these individuals because they address the Sabbath question directly.<sup>259</sup>

Unfortunately, precious little is written about these individuals' Sabbath theology compared to other historical groups studied in this thesis. The scarcity of writings makes it difficult to ascertain the ontological presuppositions of the Radical Reformation as a

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<sup>257</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century: Part I," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 5.2 (1967): 101–6. A 1573 list of sects places a small group of Sabbatarians in Moravia who are described as observing the Sabbath and recognizing only the Father in the Trinity. Harry A. DeWind, "Sixteenth Century Description of Religious Sects in Austerlitz, Moravia," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 29.1 (1955): 48.

<sup>258</sup> Gonzáles, *Brief History of Sunday*, 106.

<sup>259</sup> Some viewed the OT Sabbath as ceremonial. For example, Sebastian Franck groups the Sabbath with circumcision, kingship and Temple worship. Sebastian Franck, "A Letter to John Campanus," in George H. Williams and Angel M. Mergal, eds., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation*, Library of Christian Classics 25 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 152. Melchior Hofmann borrows Augustine's spiritualizing of the Sabbath, viewing it eschatologically as an eternal heavenly rest. Melchior Hofmann, "The Ordinance of God," in Williams and Mergal, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 191. Balthasar Hubmaier had no intention of abolishing Sunday worship. Martin Rothkegel, "Anabaptist Sabbatarianism in Sixteenth-Century Moravia," trans. James M. Stayer, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 87.4 (2013): 540–41.



whole, for theological issues of divine ontology did not appear to be at the forefront of their thinking. They were more interested in practical holiness than with philosophical discussions.

However, their hermeneutical principles provide a clue regarding their ontology.<sup>260</sup> For the radicals, the OT is preparatory for the NT and is thus not as binding.<sup>261</sup> Thus, in addition to the literal or historical sense of the OT passage, there was “a continuation or recombination of the traditional Catholic or medieval sectarian resort to allegory, concordance, typology, and the other nonliteral interpretations.”<sup>262</sup> In their interpretation of the New Testament, however, the Anabaptists were literalists. Ben Ollenburger concludes that “the Anabaptists grew out of the Middle Ages and used its methods. Sometimes they allegorize; sometimes they are literalists. Sometimes they are mystic-spiritual, but always they use the hermeneutical methods at hand to support the

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<sup>260</sup> Martin Luther did not differ from medieval hermeneutical methodology except on the question of authority. Ben C. Ollenburger, “The Hermeneutics of Obedience: A Study of Anabaptist Hermeneutics,” *Direction* 6.2 (1977): 20. For Luther, Christians do not have to submit their interpretation to the judgment of Rome. Anabaptists used a similar methodology to their contemporaries, though the radicals were more consistent in applying *sola scriptura* than the Magisterial Reformers. Ollenburger, “Hermeneutics of Obedience,” 21; John C. Wenger, “The Biblicism of the Anabaptists,” in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, ed. Guy F. Hershberger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1957), 171. Wenger uses “biblicist” to mean someone who uses the Bible extensively, and not necessarily as a methodological approach. George Williams argues that the Anabaptists’ hermeneutical principles were even closer to Catholic methodology than the Magisterial Reformers in their interpretation of the Old Testament. The Anabaptists “sought by several hermeneutical means and dispensational schemes to utilize and yet to distinguish the Old from the New Testament” where there is “an active principle transcending the limits of the written Word in both a Godward and a manward direction.” Williams, George H., *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 828.

<sup>261</sup> Wenger, “Biblicism of the Anabaptists,” 176–77. “The Anabaptist genius lay not in any exegetical technique or hermeneutical novelty or even in any theological discoveries, but rather in the simple (and expensive) commitment to do what Jesus says. Their separation of Old Testament from New Testament grew out of this commitment and as a result of difficulties which arose when they were not separated.” Ollenburger, “Hermeneutics of Obedience,” 22.

<sup>262</sup> Williams, George H., *Radical Reformation*, 830.

central thesis: *Nachfolge Christi*” [Imitation of Christ].<sup>263</sup> It is difficult to ascertain precisely their presuppositions, but these hermeneutical methods hint at some remaining influence of classical theology and its ontological presuppositions, though their hermeneutical keys of Christology and obedience was a departure from many of their contemporaries.<sup>264</sup> Glaidt and Fischer, however, may not necessarily align with these presuppositions.

### Oswald Glaidt

Oswald Glaidt (or Glait) was a former Lutheran minister who later became an Anabaptist.<sup>265</sup> Unfortunately, Glaidt’s writings are not extant, and it is only through the writings of his opponents that we glean the contents of his Sabbath theology. For example, we have Wolfgang Capito’s response to Glaidt, though it does not contain much concerning Glaidt’s Sabbath theology.<sup>266</sup> Capito implies that Glaidt presents the Sabbath as “our hope and intermediary between God and man, the firm rock and foundation of our spiritual building,” which makes Christ of no value.<sup>267</sup> More relevant is a response from

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<sup>263</sup> Ollenburger, “Hermeneutics of Obedience,” 29.

<sup>264</sup> For example, though Menno Simons read the Bible literally and contextually, “he read the Bible much like the medieval who were his contemporaries. Ollenburger, “Hermeneutics of Obedience,” 24.

<sup>265</sup> There was a point when Glaidt was an Anabaptist but not yet a Sabbatarian. Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 110.

<sup>266</sup> Wolfgang Capito, *The Correspondence of Wolfgang Capito*, ed. and trans. Erika Rummel and Milton Kooistra (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 2:469–90. Capito’s response here primarily deals with the relationship between law and the gospel. The latter part which may have dealt on the Sabbath issue more in-depth, is lost.

<sup>267</sup> Capito, *Correspondence*, 2:472.

Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig that has not been lost and upon which is based the description of Glaidt's Sabbath theology below.<sup>268</sup>

In common with the rest of Anabaptism, Glaidt makes “a serious attempt to creatively relate the Old to the New Testament.”<sup>269</sup> Unlike the spiritualistic Anabaptists, Glaidt does not make a “dichotomy of letter-spirit, external-internal, and law-gospel” between the two Testaments and views the Old Testament more literally than his counterparts.<sup>270</sup>

### **Sabbath and Creation**

Based on the responses of his critics, it appears Glaidt does not write extensively on the relationship between the Sabbath and creation. He does mention that the Sabbath originated in creation and its observance continued with Adam's descendants, finally expressed in written form at Sinai.<sup>271</sup> The Sabbath is “an eternal sign of hope and a memorial of creation” and should be kept for the entirety of the earth's history.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Caspar Schwenckfeld, *Letters and Treatises of Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig*, ed. Chester David Hartranft (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914), 4:452–518. My limitations with the German language have prevented me from performing a thorough study of this document. I have instead relied on secondary literature. See also Daniel Liechty, *Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists: An Early Reformation Episode in East Central Europe*, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History 29 (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), 52–54.

<sup>269</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, “Capito, Schwenckfeld and Crautwald on Sabbatarian Anabaptist Theology,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 46.1 (1972): 46.

<sup>270</sup> Hasel, “Capito, Schwenckfeld and Crautwald,” 46. See Aaron Schubert, “Dirk Philips' Letter and Spirit: An Anabaptist Contribution to Reformation Hermeneutics,” *Religions* 8.3 (2017): 1–5. The spiritualists believed that they did “not need the outer ceremony of baptism, Bible reading, church attendance, or Lord's Supper because God is a Spirit and therefore is not to be sought in the externals of life.” William Klassen, “Anabaptist Hermeneutics: The Letter and the Spirit,” *MQR* 40.2 (1966): 88.

<sup>271</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 119.

<sup>272</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 119.

## Sabbath Commandment

Against a majority of Anabaptists, Glaidt believed in a more literal application of the OT and the validity of its prescribed moral law.<sup>273</sup> “Only those parts of the Old Testament and its law which ‘refer to the priesthood are a shadow . . . and have ceased in Christ as the letter of the New Testament witnesses about the entire Old Testament, both law and covenant.’”<sup>274</sup> Glaidt believed that although the ceremonial laws have been abolished, the moral law remains.<sup>275</sup> Since the Sabbath commandment is not a ceremonial law, it is binding for Christians alongside the entire Decalogue.<sup>276</sup> If one commandment is to be rejected, so must the rest.

Moreover, Christ did not seek to abolish the law. Instead, Christ and His apostles faithfully kept the Sabbath.<sup>277</sup> The change came only later. Glaidt comments that “Sunday is the pope's invention” and it is “the Devil's work” to change the Sabbath day.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 117.

<sup>274</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 117.

<sup>275</sup> Hasel, “Capito, Schwenckfeld and Crautwald,” 47.

<sup>276</sup> One of Glaidt’s arguments is that since owners are commanded to let their animals rest on the Sabbath, then Sabbath observation cannot merely be spiritual. Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 54. Glaidt even believed that government officials should enforce obedience to the Decalogue and punish violators, potentially even with the death penalty. Rothkegel, “Anabaptist Sabbatarianism,” 528–29.

<sup>277</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 118.

<sup>278</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 121.

## Sabbath and Eschatology

Glaidt acknowledges that there is an “eternal Sabbath” (Heb 4:3) that is to come. The Sabbath is a “figure of the eternal Sabbath” and a “sign of hope.”<sup>279</sup> Glaidt would agree with Augustine and Carlstadt on this point. But contrary to these individuals, Glaidt believed that the reality of a future eternal Sabbath does not negate the obligation to keep the literal weekly Sabbath even as it points to the future eternal Sabbath. “Glaidt held firmly to the *literal* obligation of keeping the Sabbath against the *spiritual* keeping of the Sabbath proposed by Schwenckfeld, who concluded that the Sabbath is to be kept on every day of one's life.”<sup>280</sup>

Like Calvin, Glaidt also sees a typological sense in the Sabbath, but in contrast, it is a sign of and finds its fulfillment in, the second coming of Christ, not the first coming.<sup>281</sup> “The Sabbath will be spiritual only when people are spiritual, that is, after the coming of the resurrection and the kingdom of Christ.”<sup>282</sup> Since the eternal rest has not yet come, Christians ought to keep the weekly Sabbath.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Glaidt formed a “triadic schema” by identifying baptism as the sign of faith, the Lord’s supper as the sign of love, and Sabbath as the sign of hope. These three ceremonies are kept “in memory of [Christ’s] work, merit, and promise.” Rothkegel, “Anabaptist Sabbatarianism,” 531–32.

<sup>280</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part I,” 120.

<sup>281</sup> Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 54.

<sup>282</sup> Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 54.

<sup>283</sup> The future hope has arrived (Heb 4:3) only in the sense of the present reality that hope can bring. Hasel, “Capito, Schwenckfeld and Crautwald,” 49.

## Sabbath Time

In contrast to the medieval theologians and Magisterial Reformers, Glaidt emphasizes a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath. For Glaidt, there was no doubt that the seventh day of the week (i.e. Saturday) was the Sabbath in both Old and New Testaments. From creation to ascension it still ought to be observed by Christians, and its meaning and practice are enhanced, not abolished, by Christ's first advent.

### Andreas Fischer

Andreas Fischer is described as “the most important missionary of the Radical Reformation in [the Hungarian-Moravian] area.”<sup>284</sup> He was quite knowledgeable in biblical languages and the church fathers.<sup>285</sup> Repeatedly persecuted and displaced because of his Anabaptist teachings, Fischer escaped with his life on numerous occasions.<sup>286</sup> Fischer was a coworker of Glaidt and adopted his Sabbatarian beliefs. Like Glaidt, Fischer applied *sola scriptura* to his Sabbath theology, drawing on both the Old and New Testaments, and using the hermeneutic of the “*sensus litteralis*.”<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Bela Krisztinkovich, “Glimpses into the Early History of Anabaptism in Hungary,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 43.2 (1969): 130.

<sup>285</sup> He references Augustine, Tertullian and the “eighth day” from the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 57.

<sup>286</sup> On one instance Fischer is said to have been hung from a tower for hours when he escaped, perhaps when the rope broke. Daniel Liechty, “Andreas Fischer: A Brief Biographical Sketch,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 58.2 (1984): 129.

<sup>287</sup> Hasel, “Capito, Schwenckfeld and Crautwald,” 56.

Unfortunately, like Glaidt, the contents of Fischer's theology are lost to history, and can only be seen through the writings of his opponents.<sup>288</sup> Valentine Crautwald's second treatise is the only source available to glean information regarding Fischer's theology.<sup>289</sup> Though Crautwald's work is a polemical book, he does attempt to be fair in his presentation of Fischer's position.<sup>290</sup> Daniel Liechty points out that "Fischer's Sabbatarianism was not simply a peculiar doctrine tacked onto his otherwise generally Anabaptist faith. It was an essential and integral part of his whole approach to Christian reform, an approach characterized by the restitutionist pattern of thought."<sup>291</sup>

### **Sabbath Commandment**

Fischer does not have much to add to Glaidt's position on the Sabbath commandment.<sup>292</sup> Fischer's main argument is that it is part of the Decalogue, which must be observed by Christians in its entirety. The Decalogue, including the Sabbath, was kept in the OT even before Moses and was sanctioned by Christ and the apostles in the NT,

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<sup>288</sup> Liechty, "Andreas Fischer," 126–27. Fischer has been described as an Arian, who favored some sort of polygamy. Krisztinkovich, "Anabaptism in Hungary," 139.

<sup>289</sup> Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 55–59. "The story of Anabaptism in that area had to be reconstructed piecemeal by searching a great variety of sources wherever available. No original Anabaptist sources survived, and the historian had to put together his evidence in mosaic fashion, which inevitably makes his story incomplete and less dramatic. Obviously that is one of the reasons why literature on Anabaptism in Hungary, as far as it existed there, is so little known outside a few Hungarian publications rather unknown to Western scholars." Robert Friedmann, "Additional Remarks on Bela Krisztinkovich's Essay on Anabaptism in Hungary," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 43.4 (1969): 328.

<sup>290</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century: Part II," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 6.1 (1968): 22.

<sup>291</sup> Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 105.

<sup>292</sup> Rothkegel does comment that "Fischer went beyond Glaidt's argument and examined biblical texts from both the Old and New Testaments with the goal of proving that Christ, the Apostles, and the early Church Fathers honored the Sabbath and that the Sabbath was the customary day of assembly for early Christians." Rothkegel, "Anabaptist Sabbatarianism," 523.

thus the Sabbath is not a ceremonial institution and should be kept by Christians.<sup>293</sup>

Consequently, a failure to keep the Sabbath is a violation of the moral law.

Like Glaidt, Fischer presupposed the scholastic distinctions that divided the Mosaic law into the *praecepta moralia*, summarized in the Decalogue; the *praecepta ceremonialia*; and the *praecepta iudicialia*. Fischer understood that only the *praecepta ceremonialia* were abolished by Christ, thus seeming to assert that the *praecepta iudicialia*— though here it is unclear whether he meant some or all of the laws — remained in force.<sup>294</sup>

For Fischer, the law is eternal: “The commandments of God stand and remain forever, Ecclesiastes 12; Baruch 4. Even if all letters would burn up, as the Jews lost the tables long ago, the Ten Commandments remain until the end of the world, because they are the everlasting commandments.”<sup>295</sup> Thus there is more to the law than what was written on the tablets of stone, implying that the moral law existed before Sinai. He identifies the Decalogue with natural law that should not be discarded as merely “written law.”<sup>296</sup> It is not the moral law but the priestly law that has been abolished.

Fischer was against the spiritualist interpretation of the Sabbath in its attempt to separate the inner and outer meaning, for it “implied categorical separation between body

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<sup>293</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part II,” 24–25. Fischer argues that since the fifth commandment is identified as the first with promise, there is no element of promise and fulfillment in the fourth, thus it cannot be ceremonial. One weakness of this argument is that it implies that any commandment with promise and fulfillment is ceremonial. Daniel Liechty, *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century: A Page in the History of the Radical Reformation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), 38.

<sup>294</sup> Rothkegel, “Anabaptist Sabbatarianism,” 523.

<sup>295</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part II,” 27.

<sup>296</sup> Liechty, *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century*, 39.



and soul. He rejected this separation and said that the Christian must come to Christ in body and soul together.”<sup>297</sup> In this, he appears to depart from classical theology.

### **Sabbath Time**

Like Glaidt, Fischer emphasizes a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath. He believed in the seventh-day Sabbath (i.e. Saturday), though his writings depend more on the Decalogue than creation as the foundation of his Sabbath theology. His view of the perpetual nature of the moral law, including the seventh-day Sabbath, makes the day of observance an inseparable element of his Sabbath theology.

### **Radical Reformers: Summary and Observations**

Even with the limited evidence, some observations can be made concerning Glaidt and Fischer’s Sabbath theology. They are drastically different from medieval theologians and Magisterial Reformers, though the lack of writings on their ontological presuppositions and creation theology makes a comprehensive comparison difficult.

Of note is Glaidt and Fischer’s literal application of the OT, which appears to be a departure from the majority of Anabaptism. Their practice of *sola scriptura* “regarded the Old and New Testaments as inseparable and indivisible.”<sup>298</sup> Glaidt was more concerned than Fischer with “establishing the Sabbath as part of a legal code” also connecting the Sabbath with paradise lost and the paradise to come at the literal second coming.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 59.

<sup>298</sup> Hasel, “Sabbatarian Anabaptists, Part II,” 28.

<sup>299</sup> Liechty, *Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists*, 61.

Other key issues for this study regarding Sabbath theology in relation to divine time and creation are not treated as extensively in their works as in the other authors examined in this study. Any writings on their understanding of how God created the world and instituted the Sabbath in Genesis would have given further evidence regarding their ontology. It is unclear whether their view of the Genesis creation was timeless or temporal.

What is evident, however, is that their emphasis on a specific day likely comes from a literal understanding of creation and the fourth commandment, which specifically requires the observance of the seventh day. Their literal approach to Scripture may have interpreted God's act in creation as temporal, and not timeless as their contemporaries believed.

Glaidd's depiction of the Sabbath as a "memorial of creation" clearly anchors the Sabbath in creation, which is absent in the previous authors studied here. It may not have been expanded extensively in Glaidd and Fischer's writings, but the logical implication is present. A temporal view of God's creation and sanctification of the Sabbath lends itself to placing a temporal significance on the seventh day. Their insistence on a literal seventh-day observance suggests a temporal understanding of the institution of the Sabbath in creation and its subsequent obligatory observance. It also implies that they viewed the meaning of the Sabbath as inseparable from the day of observance.

There appears to be an observable connection between Glaidd and Fischer's view of divine time and their view of Sabbath time. The views would be consistent with a temporal understanding of God and His relationship with the world, which influences them to view the Sabbath temporally, wherein the meaning of the day is tied to its

temporal observance, leading them to specifically emphasize the seventh day. Again, a temporal view of God lends itself to emphasizing a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath.

It is unfortunate that though “the Sabbatarian interpretation was firmly rooted in the Anabaptist hermeneutic of restitution and Christian primitivism,” this early Sabbatarianism “gained only limited acceptance among Anabaptists.”<sup>300</sup> We find in these two radical reformers a budding Sabbatarianism, though not yet fully developed, which will be later seen in English Protestantism.

### **English Reformers**

As with Glaidt and Fischer, it is difficult to ascertain what presuppositions concerning divine time the Anglican and Puritan authors below held. Puritans generally subscribed to a presupposition of divine timelessness.<sup>301</sup> The same is true for Anglicans.<sup>302</sup> The individuals studied below, however, may not necessarily align with these presuppositions.

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<sup>300</sup> Liechty, *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century*, 41.

<sup>301</sup> For example, Stephen Charnock’s understanding of divine eternity uses the common descriptive language of classical theism. Edward Hindson, ed., *Introduction to Puritan Theology: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 65–102. See also Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), Kindle edition, ch. 4 “Stephen Charnock on the Attributes of God.” A Puritan contemporary of Bownd, William Ames, also describes God’s essence with the language of classical theism. William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. and trans. John D. Eusden (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1983), 83–87. However, not all Puritans aligned completely with Calvin’s view of divine providence. Ronald J. VanderMolen, “Providence as Mystery, Providence as Revelation: Puritan and Anglican Modifications of John Calvin’s Doctrine of Providence,” *Church History* 47.1 (1978): 27–47.

<sup>302</sup> The Anglican *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* (1571) describes the nature and attributes of God using the language of classical theism. God is depicted as timeless and existing in an eternal present, and does not act within time. See Oliver O’Donovan, *On the Thirty-Nine Articles: A Conversation with Tudor Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2011), 11; E. J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.,

English reformers initially aligned with Luther's position on the Sabbath against the medieval Catholic position, though its external observance became more emphasized later on.<sup>303</sup> Puritans were generally Sabbatarian, though a majority were not seventh-day Sabbatarians.<sup>304</sup> Anglicans were primarily non-Sabbatarian.<sup>305</sup>

Examined below are two individuals, whose Sabbath theology do not necessarily represent the English Reformation as a whole: Nicholas Bownd, a Puritan first-day Sabbatarian, and Theophilus Brabourne, an Anglican seventh-day Sabbatarian.

### Nicholas Bownd

Nicholas Bownd's (Bownde or Bound) 1595 work *The Doctrine of the Sabbath* and its later 1606 edition, *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath* became the foundation of Puritan Sabbatarianism.<sup>306</sup> At the time of its writing, there already were early Sabbatarian

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1919), 35; A. P. Forbes, *An Explanation of the Thirty-Nine Articles: With an Epistle Dedicatory to the Late Rev. E. B. Pusey*, 5th ed. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1875), 5.

<sup>303</sup> Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 32.

<sup>304</sup> Gonzáles, *Brief History of Sunday*, 117. "By the turn of the [17<sup>th</sup>] century, Sabbatarianism had become the badge of Puritanism." Primus, "Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath," 43. The Puritan position was a "one-day-in-seven" interpretation of the Sabbath commandment, not any day specifically. They understood the Jewish position of Saturday observance as based on Exodus 16, but for the Puritans, specific Saturday observance is not part of the "moral substance" of the commandment. James T. Dennison Jr., *The Market Day of the Soul: The Puritan Doctrine of the Sabbath in England, 1532-1700* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 37 n. 139.

<sup>305</sup> For an overview of English non-Sabbatarian positions, see Bauckham, "Protestant Tradition," 329–32. "The church establishment is dedicated to legislating Lord's day observance on the basis of its own hierarchical and Erastian say so. That would never do for the Puritans; for it was a clear indication that the Church of England was 'but halfly reformed.'... Strict logic would compel the obvious development (against the background of the Puritan principle of hermeneutics, i.e. the sole and explicit testimony of Scripture in matters ecclesiastical)—a day for divine service free from profane distractions must have its ground in something more substantial than apostolic succession and tradition, or the via media." Dennison, *Market Day of the Soul*, 15.

<sup>306</sup> Nicholas Bownd, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath, Plainly Laid Forth, and Soundly Proven by Testimonies Both of Holy Scripture and Also of Old and New Ecclesiastical Writers* (London: Printed by the Widow Orwin, for John Porter and Thomas Man, 1595); Nicholas Bownd, *Sabbatum Veteris et Novi Testamenti: Or, The True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, ed. Chris Coldwell (Grand Rapids: Reformation

elements in the Anglican Church.<sup>307</sup> Still, there is value in studying Bownd's work because it "represents an entirely new position in the history of the Sabbath in England and ... colored the whole question of Sabbath reform for more than three hundred years."<sup>308</sup> Influenced by Bownd, Puritans became clear Sabbatarians with strict guidelines for its literal observance.

Bownd sought to ground the Christian Sunday on more biblical OT grounds, arguing for a stricter observance of the Sabbath than was practiced by the Church of England.<sup>309</sup> Though he repeatedly emphasized the biblical teaching of the *seventh* day, Bownd believed that the transfer from the seventh day to the first day was done by the apostles, which was authorized by Christ, while his opponent, Thomas Rogers, claimed it was by the authority of the church.<sup>310</sup>

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Heritage Books, 2015). See Primus, "Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath," 43; Allen, "Rest as Spiritual Discipline," 185–86.

<sup>307</sup> Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 41.

<sup>308</sup> Walter B. Douglas, "The Sabbath in Puritanism," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 236. Though many contemporaries accepted Bownd's views, some felt it too Jewish and legalistic. William Hodgkins, *Sunday: Christian and Social Significance* (London: Independent Press, 1960), 55.

<sup>309</sup> "[Bownd's] works served to crystallize the thought of an expanding group of Sabbatarians. He provided just what they needed: an authoritative statement, based on divine command, for strict Sunday observance." Primus, "Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath," 43.

<sup>310</sup> Gonzáles, *Brief History of Sunday*, 121. For Rogers the Sabbatarian movement's "doctrine was double-edged, and with both edges it cut away the authority of the Church." Hodgkins, *Sunday*, 56. Much of Rogers' accusations against Bownd is unfounded, and may have been motivated by political ambition. Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 93–97.

## Sabbath and Creation

Being a Puritan, Nicholas Bownd may have subscribed to a timeless view of divine ontology.<sup>311</sup> However, he also seemingly approves of Jerome Zanchius's depiction of a pre-incarnate Christ temporally conversing with Adam and Eve on the first Sabbath in Eden.<sup>312</sup> This suggests that Bownd views God as able to be temporally present, which would go against the theism commonly held within Puritanism.<sup>313</sup>

Unlike the medieval theologians who only made minor theological references to creation (if any), Bownd repeatedly and unequivocally identifies creation as the foundation of the Sabbath:

To teach us assuredly, that this commandment of the Sabbath was no more than first given, when it was pronounced from heaven by the Lord, than any other [of] the moral precepts; nay, that it has so much antiquity as the seventh day has being. For so soon as the day was, so soon was it sanctified; that we might know that, as it came in with the first man, so it must not go out but with the last man, "and as it was in the beginning of the

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<sup>311</sup> See footnote 301. Ames affirms that time came into existence alongside creation, but that the world was created in six successive days and not in one moment. Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 102. This is similar to the views of Luther and Calvin (see footnote 116). Bownd may have believed likewise. On Bownd's Puritanism, see Edward Allen, "Nicholas Bownde and the Context of Sunday Sabbatarianism" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2008), 37–41.

<sup>312</sup> Bownd quotes Zanchius: "The Son of God taking upon Him the shape of a man, was occupied that whole seventh day in most holy colloquies with Adam; and that He did also fully make Himself known unto Adam and Eve, and did reveal the manner and order which He had used in creating of all things, and did exhort them both to meditate upon those works, and in them to acknowledge their Creator, and to praise Him.... Christ did spend that whole day in instructing our first parents, and in exercising them in the worship of God, and in admonishing them, that they should teach the same things unto their posterity." Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 53.

<sup>313</sup> However, Brian Leftow argues that it is *prima facie* plausible for God to be timeless and incarnate. Brian Leftow, "A Timeless God Incarnate," in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 273–99.

world, so it must continue to the ending of the same.”<sup>314</sup> And as the first seventh day was sanctified, so must the last be.<sup>315</sup>

Because the Sabbath was founded at creation, not at Sinai, Bownd argues that it is a perpetual institution. He also clearly emphasizes that God sanctified the seventh day and blessed it, “to exempt [it] unto a holy use.”<sup>316</sup> Bownd claims that this same Sabbath was not forgotten and was kept from Adam to Moses.<sup>317</sup> The same meaning is carried over to the Christian church. Bownd applies the meaning of Sabbath as a memorial of creation to the seventh day: “so the benefit of our creation might always with praise be remembered in the Church.”<sup>318</sup> Bownd thus believes that this meaning of the Sabbath can be transferred from the seventh-day Sabbath to Christian Sunday. To lose the Sabbath as a creation memorial is to become ignorant of the creation of the world, as the Greeks and Romans had.<sup>319</sup>

### **Sabbath Commandment**

Displaying the influence of medieval Christianity, Bownd borrows from Aquinas and Luther in that he sees the Decalogue, specifically the Sabbath, as an expression of

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<sup>314</sup> Bownd is here quoting Heinrich Bullinger.

<sup>315</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 41.

<sup>316</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 48. “God has bestowed a special blessing upon this day distinct from the rest, even the blessing of sanctification. And therefore it is not lawful for us to use it to any other end, but to this holy and sanctified end, for which God in the beginning created it.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 39.

<sup>317</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 42–55.

<sup>318</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 103.

<sup>319</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 92.

natural law: “this commandment is natural, moral, and perpetual.”<sup>320</sup> In the Sabbath commandment is found the practice of all the other commandments and the expression of true Christianity.<sup>321</sup> “Bownd's entire Sabbath theology and practice are based on the assumptions that the Ten Commandments are the most basic authority in morals and ethics and that the fourth commandment is not different in quality from the other nine.”<sup>322</sup>

Bownd identifies a threefold reason for the Sabbath as expressed in the fourth commandment. First, against some who believe that no day or any day should be observed, God “*has given us six days to be occupied in for ourselves*; and therefore it is good reason that we should rest upon the seventh from our own works, to attend upon his business, as it were.”<sup>323</sup> Second, as God rested on the seventh day in creation, “we should rest upon the seventh day from our own works... and so be like unto our Creator.”<sup>324</sup> Third, “because God has bestowed a special blessing upon this day distinct from the rest, even the blessing of sanctification.”<sup>325</sup> The Sabbath must then only be used for its sanctified purposes.

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<sup>320</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 55. “Nicholas Bownd had adopted a simple equation of natural law = moral law = Decalogue.” Bauckham, “Protestant Tradition,” 324. Bauckham comments that by this time Puritans had largely abandoned basing the Sabbath commandment on natural law.

<sup>321</sup> “In the practice of it, consists the practice of all the other, and in the neglect of it is the neglect of all religion.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 36. “The Sabbath ought still to be continued with us; because without this persuasion, all doctrine or exhortation tending to the true manner of sanctifying it, falls to the ground and is unfruitful.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 40.

<sup>322</sup> Allen, “Bownde and Sunday Sabbatarianism,” 42.

<sup>323</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 39.

<sup>324</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 39.

<sup>325</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 39.



Bownd agrees with Aquinas that there is a moral element to the Sabbath, where it is natural to set aside time for spiritual matters.<sup>326</sup> In contrast to the medieval theologians and Magisterial Reformers, however, Bownd argues that the fourth commandment still applies to Christians “in its proper force” for Christ and the apostles established it through their practice.<sup>327</sup> While some ceremonial practices like circumcision, Passover, and the sacrificial system have been fulfilled by Christ, the Sabbath commandment “stood upon a surer ground than the whole ceremonial law, and therefore could not with [Christ’s death] be taken away.”<sup>328</sup> Here, then, Bownd disagrees with Aquinas and Calvin, in that there is no ceremonial aspect to the Sabbath commandment.<sup>329</sup> Indeed, it is completely moral, for a commandment cannot be both moral and ceremonial.<sup>330</sup> Bownd would thus disagree with Calvin and Aquinas that the time aspect of the Sabbath is

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<sup>326</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 56.

<sup>327</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 57. “For it has been substantially proved, that this commandment did no more begin with the people of the Jews, than any other; nay, that it was 2000 years and more, before ever they were a people, and it has continued now almost 1600 years in the Church, since the Jews were no people. And when all Jewish things have been abrogated, only this has continued still in the Church in his own proper force, that it might appear that it was of a nature far differing from them, having neither beginning nor ending together with them.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 66–67.

<sup>328</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 57. “The Sabbath was none of those ceremonies which were justly abrogated at the coming of Christ, as being appointed of God for no further time; but that it continued in the practice of the Church when all others ceased.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 58.

<sup>329</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 157. Bownd quotes Johann Wolphius’s statement that the Sabbath “is not to be reckoned among the figures and ceremonies of the Jews, both because it was ordained in Paradise before the fall of man for the worship of God, and also it is commanded in the Decalogue, which contains in it nothing ceremonial, nothing typical, nothing to be abrogated” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 67. See also Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 72–74.

<sup>330</sup> Bownd “invokes the scholastic distinction *membra dividuntia nonpossunt confundi* (two several and distinct kinds of anything cannot become both one).” Allen, “Bownde and Sunday Sabbatarianism,” 45. Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 70.

ceremonial.<sup>331</sup> Still, Calvin would agree with Bownd that the Sabbath commandment is not abrogated, though Calvin would add that some elements have been fulfilled.<sup>332</sup>

### **Sabbath Rest**

In answer to those who argue that Sabbath rest is spiritual in nature (such as Aquinas and Augustine) and refers to resting from sin, which does not necessitate the observance of a particular day, Bownd responds that Moses “does oftentimes speak of *a set day*. The *seventh day* is oftentimes repeated, and he stands upon *a day*.”<sup>333</sup> Like Glaidt, Bownd acknowledges the necessity of spiritual rest *on* the Sabbath day, and the absence of such a rest is an abuse of the purpose of the Sabbath. But the necessity of spiritual rest does not nullify the command to rest on a specific day, “not altogether taking away the Sabbath day, but showing what fruit should come thereof, without the which the other was but an outward, and bare and unprofitable ceremony.”<sup>334</sup>

An emphasis on the temporal observance of the Sabbath does not diminish its spiritual significance. Bownd adds that Christians ought to “carefully spend the day of rest upon the holy service of God alone,” which is the purpose of the rest, “and without which the other is imperfect, and as it were, a shadow without the body.”<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Allen paraphrases Bownd’s position: “If the actual day is ceremonial, when did it become ceremonial? Since it was given to Adam before the fall, it could not be a shadow of the coming of Christ.” Allen, “Bownde and Sunday Sabbatarianism,” 45.

<sup>332</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 84–86. Bownd quotes Calvin’s argument that when Jesus came, He did not teach that the Sabbath was temporary, but taught the proper observance of the Sabbath.

<sup>333</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 82.

<sup>334</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 82.

<sup>335</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 286.

Rest is needed so that “men might be the more fit to sanctify [the Sabbath] in the holy service of God.”<sup>336</sup> To worship God, one must rest from worldly affairs and abstain from anything that hinders from God’s service.<sup>337</sup> Like Luther, Bownd emphasizes the preaching of the Word on the Sabbath, though not at the same level of necessity.<sup>338</sup> Physical rest is also needed so that “being refreshed, might be more enabled even in the strength of their bodies, to do the works of their calling cheerfully.”<sup>339</sup>

Like Luther, Bownd identifies aspects of the Sabbath that more especially apply to the Hebrews, citing Deut 5:15, that their deliverance was a type of the eternal rest from sin.<sup>340</sup> Christians no longer keep the Sabbath as a “badge of our deliverance” from Egypt, yet the rest remains.<sup>341</sup> Christians consequently have more liberty than the Jews in keeping the Sabbath.<sup>342</sup>

### **Sabbath Time**

Bownd does not spiritualize the Sabbath, instead emphasizing the temporal observance of the “seventh” day. Only God has the authority to sanctify a day, an

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<sup>336</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 152, 286–93.

<sup>337</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 175.

<sup>338</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 322–23.

<sup>339</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 153.

<sup>340</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 155. However, Bownd would disagree with Luther that the day of observance is limited to the Jews, because the Creation basis for the Sabbath was present before the Exodus, and though this particular aspect is fulfilled by Christ, the Sabbath remains.

<sup>341</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 158.

<sup>342</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 256–57.

authority He has not bestowed on the church.<sup>343</sup> Bownd reprimands those who believe that the Sabbath day “may be changed by the Church without offense.”<sup>344</sup>

It appears that Bownd oscillates between two different usages of “seventh day.” On the one hand, he seems to refer to a “one day in seven” concept.<sup>345</sup> On the other hand, he appears to emphasize that God intentionally chose a specific day out of the week, i.e. Saturday.<sup>346</sup> This oscillation leads Primus to comment that Bownd uses “sleight of hand” in utilizing two different senses of “seventh day.”<sup>347</sup> It appears that Bownd, like Carlstadt, actually subscribes to “the seventh day in a sequence of seven days” concept of the Sabbath, making it possible for both Saturday and Sunday to be the “seventh” day, depending on when one begins the sequence.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Bownd quotes Wolfgang Musculus: “It is not in our power to make holy at our pleasure the things that God has not sanctified.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 89.

<sup>344</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 90. Bownd rejects the notion that the Church has the authority to change the day of observance. Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 112–15.

<sup>345</sup> Bownd quotes Peter Martyr (“of every seven days one must be reserved unto God... it is perpetual that one day in the week should be reserved for the service of God”) and William Perkins (“every seventh day in the week must be set apart in holy rest unto God, for this is in the substance of the fourth commandment”). Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 89, 95.

<sup>346</sup> Citing Gen 2:3 and Ex 20:10, Bownd asserts that the Sabbath “must needs be upon that [seventh] day and upon none other, for the Lord Himself sanctified that day, and appointed it for that purpose, and none but it.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 88.

<sup>347</sup> Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 47.

<sup>348</sup> Bownd calls the OT Sabbath the “first seventh day” while Christian Sunday is “this seventh day.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 130. This would also shed light on Bownd’s claim that the Church has no authority to substitute the seventh day with “either the eighth or the ninth, much less the tenth or twelfth,” which leaves room for the possibility of changing the day of observance from one seventh day (Saturday) to another seventh day (Sunday). Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 103. Though Carlstadt and Bownd adhere to similar concepts of the “seventh” day, Bownd significantly differs from Carlstadt in that he is explicitly Sabbatarian in his anchoring of the Sabbath in the OT and in his emphasis on the obligatory observance of a specific day.

If the above definition is correct, then Bownd's statement on the change of Sabbath day would make sense:

But now concerning this very special *seventh day* that we now keep in the time of the gospel, that is well known, that it is not the same that was from the beginning which God Himself did sanctify, and whereof He speaks [to the Jews] in this commandment. For it was the day going before ours, which in Latin retains its ancient name, and is called the *Sabbath*; which we also grant, but so, that we confess it must always remain, never to be changed anymore; and that all men must keep holy this seventh day, and none other; which was unto them not *the seventh*, but the first day of the week, as it is so called many times in the New Testament; and so it still stands in force that we are bound unto *the seventh day*, though not unto that very seventh.<sup>349</sup>

Bownd gives a historical explanation for this change, claiming that during their time the Apostles changed the day.<sup>350</sup> This transfer was a gradual process but was based on divine command.<sup>351</sup> By divine guidance, the Holy Spirit gave the Apostles the authority to change the day.<sup>352</sup> Moreover, Christ Himself gave clear instructions to enact this change.<sup>353</sup> The apostles chose the first day "upon special grounds and most singular

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<sup>349</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 103–4.

<sup>350</sup> Bownd cites Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:2 as evidence that the early Christian church met on the first day of the week. The apostles "for their excellent gifts were able to see further into things than all the Church besides. Who for their great apostolical authority could prevail more than any other; who were appointed by Christ, to be the chief builders and planters of the churches, both in doctrine and discipline?" Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 109. He also references church fathers and contemporary reformers to support his claim. Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 106–8.

<sup>351</sup> "The Sabbath day of the Jews [was] by little and little wearing away with the rest of the Jewish worship. Neither could so great a matter be done all at once, and generally be practiced in every Church together.... But as the gospel did enlarge itself and further spread abroad, and men did willingly give their names unto it, so they did consent unto this exchange, as unto other decrees of the Church." Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 105.

<sup>352</sup> "The Lord furnished them with His Holy Spirit, used them according to his good pleasure like worthy instruments, to convey unto us the holy scriptures, which we receive from their hands, without all gainsaying; so we believe that they had his extraordinary direction in *abrogating the former day*, and placing this in the room of it." Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 110.

<sup>353</sup> "They did it by the direction of Christ, and that not only from His Spirit, which led them into all truth, but from His own mouth, who after His resurrection gave them precepts concerning the kingdom

reasons,” specifically Christ’s resurrection.<sup>354</sup> The transfer of the day of Sabbath observance, then, is not based on any human initiative but on divine command.<sup>355</sup> In this sense, the observance of Christian Sunday could still be in obedience to the fourth commandment and in memorial of the Genesis creation, while at the same time celebrating Christ’s resurrection.<sup>356</sup> For Bownd, “the fourth commandment continues forever and the Lord's Day is the proper successor to the Jewish Sabbath.”<sup>357</sup>

Bownd also draws a parallel between the original creation in Genesis, and the new creation brought by Jesus Christ:

That the most famous and worthy memory of His second creation might not be inferior to the first, but that the beauty and glory of it might shine more excellently in the Church, than that of the other, as indeed it was greater.... Therefore *this day* was ordained by special advice, and none but *this day* could be chosen to be the Sabbath and day of *rest*, in which Christ Jesus the Creator of the new world, rested from his work of the new creation<sup>358</sup>

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of God (Acts 1:3). And so it was not their doing so much as Christ’s, and He it was that changed the day.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 110. John Owen, another Puritan, later makes a similar conclusion, perhaps echoing Bownd: “For as that rest which all the world was to observe was founded in his works and rest who built or made the world and all things in it; so the rest of the church of the gospel is to be founded in his works and rest by whom the church itself was built, that is Jesus Christ; for he, on the account of his works and rest, is also Lord of the Sabbath, to abrogate one day of rest and to institute another.” Beeke and Jones, *Puritan Theology*, Kindle edition, ch. 41, “John Owen on the Christian Sabbath and Worship.”

<sup>354</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 119.

<sup>355</sup> The historical evidence indicates that Sunday observance was instituted much later than Christ or the Apostles’ time. Bacchiocchi, “Rise of Sunday Observance.” Despite the issues with historical accuracy, Bownd’s view is still internally logically consistent.

<sup>356</sup> “So that we have not in the gospel a new commandment for the Sabbath, diverse from that, that was in the law; but there is a diverse time appointed: namely, not the seventh day from creation, but the day of Christ’s resurrection and the seventh from that, both of them at several times being comprehended in the fourth commandment.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 98.

<sup>357</sup> Allen, “Bownde and Sunday Sabbatarianism,” 48.

<sup>358</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 127. Bownd transfers the meaning from the old creation to the new, claiming that the new Sabbath “freshly represents the memory of the first creation also, and so by a double mark is more highly commended.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 145. Bownd presents the meaning of the Genesis creation as being carried over in the new Sabbath, quoting Wolphius:

He argues that though the day was once changed, it never should be changed again until the end of the world.<sup>359</sup> Though the priesthood, sacrifices, and sacraments of the OT were changed, “*this day was so changed, that it yet remains; which shows, that though all the other were ceremonial, and therefore had an end, this only was moral, and therefore abides still.*”<sup>360</sup>

Bownd’s insistence on a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath would be consistent with a temporal understanding of God and His relationship with the world, though his appeal to divine command allows him to transfer the meaning from one “seventh” day to another. In the case of Bownd, it appears that a temporal view of God lends itself to emphasizing a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath.

#### Theophilus Brabourne

Theophilus Brabourne was an Anglican priest who was influenced by Puritan Sabbatarianism, described as having “sounded the first trumpet” to the seventh-day Sabbath.<sup>361</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint his view on divine time. As an Anglican, he may have adhered to the Church’s ontology, but his view of the Sabbath may indicate otherwise, as will be discussed below.

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“Therefore as in the time of the creation, that day which was first of the creation finished, was made holy for the worship of God; so now in the time of the redemption, that day which is first after the finishing of it, is to be accounted holy of us.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 121.

<sup>359</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 131.

<sup>360</sup> Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 118–19.

<sup>361</sup> Douglas, “The Sabbath in Puritanism,” 237. “There is equally little doubt that his Seventh-day views were seminal to the seventeenth-century Sabbatarian movement as it was being formed and as it developed in England and Wales, and later in North America.” Bryan W. Ball, *The Seventh-Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2009), 60.

Brabourne’s Sabbath theology was not aligned with the orthodox Anglican position, which caused some friction.<sup>362</sup> Still, his goal was not a schism in the Church of England, but a reformation of his own church, evidenced by the dedication of his second work to Charles I.<sup>363</sup> However, his views were attacked by Puritans and Anglicans alike.<sup>364</sup>

Throughout his lifetime, Brabourne wrote four volumes—more than a thousand pages—in defense of the seventh-day Sabbath.<sup>365</sup> Brabourne saw the Sabbath doctrine as another point in the reformation, breaking free from “Romish doctrine” and returning to primitive Christianity.<sup>366</sup> After serving prison time for his beliefs, Brabourne was forced to sign a document that was interpreted as a recantation, though he worded it in such a way as to satisfy the Church’s demands without compromising his beliefs.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> This is best represented by Francis White’s response to Brabourne’s writings and indirectly, Bownd’s). Francis White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath-Day: Containing a Defence of the Orthodoxall Doctrine of the Church of England, Against Sabbatarian-Noveltie* (London: Richard Badger, 1635). Using common arguments of the time, White appeals more to church authority than Scripture. Ahva John Clarence Bond, *Sabbath History: Before the Beginning of Modern Denominations*, 2nd ed. (Plainfield, NJ: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1927), 1:59–60; Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 199–200.

<sup>363</sup> Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 199.

<sup>364</sup> Dennison, *Market Day of the Soul*, 67.as

<sup>365</sup> Bond, *Sabbath History*, 1:53.

<sup>366</sup> Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-Day Adventist Belief*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2014), 155. Brabourne lays less blame on his own church, the Church of England, “for our Church as the wheat was covered in the chaff of popery... so that this error is to be imputed to the Romish Church, and what wonder is it, if Rome hath a long time lain in an error? And doth not Rome whence by succession we had the Lord’s day, affirm they kept it but as a Tradition, whereof as they say, they had no ground in God’s word?” Theophilus Brabourne, *A Discourse Upon the Sabbath Day*, 1628, 62. The place and publisher is not indicated in the book. This treatise uses 17<sup>th</sup> century English spelling, and I have taken the liberty to modernize it for easier reading.

<sup>367</sup> Nikolaus Satelmajer, “Theophilus Brabourne and the Sabbath,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26.1 (1988): 47–48; Ball, *Seventh-Day Men*, 67.



We examine the first of his works which is foundational to the rest, *A Discourse Upon the Sabbath Day*, which deals primarily with the question of Saturday versus Sunday, and not Sabbatarian theology as a whole.<sup>368</sup> Interestingly, a significant portion of the statements in the book appear to be refutations of Bownd's arguments in favor of Sunday. However, from Brabourne's arguments, there are still relevant details that can be gleaned about his Sabbath theology.

### **Sabbath and Creation**

For Brabourne, it is indisputable that in creation God sanctified the seventh day.<sup>369</sup> The seventh-day rest is a commemoration of God's creative work during the previous six days.<sup>370</sup> The Sabbath, then, is a "sign of the work of creation."<sup>371</sup> Brabourne's emphasis in the sequential numbering of creation days indicates he believes in a literal creation that took place in the span of one week, allowing for his emphasis on

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<sup>368</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*. Due to the conditions caused by COVID-19, I have been unable to access Brabourne's second publication, *A Defence of that Most Ancient, and Sacred Ordinance of Gods, the Sabbath Day*, 1632. I have relied on Satelmajer ("Brabourne and the Sabbath"), who covers this second work, which is an expansion of the first.

<sup>369</sup> God "enjoineth not a day at random, but a particular day, such a day as hath this reason, of Gods Rest; belonging to it; now this belonged only to the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week; not to the 8<sup>th</sup> day, nor to the first day of the week, our Lords day, for God the creator rested not upon our Lords day, when he had finished the work of creation, but upon our Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> day which goeth next before the Lords day." Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 94.

<sup>370</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 39. Brabourne argues that it is Jewish practice to set commemorate a deliverance the day after it occurs. Hence, if Christ's resurrection is to be celebrated, it should be on Monday instead of Sunday.

<sup>371</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 195. Brabourne does not mean "sign" in the sense of a typical symbol to later be fulfilled, but as "helps and means to bring to mind or keep in memory the things whereof they be signs." Satelmajer, "Brabourne and the Sabbath," 194.

the seventh day specifically.<sup>372</sup> Strangely, Brabourne’s understanding of “day” in creation only covers the light period of the day, not the dark.<sup>373</sup>

Brabourne refutes the argument that the seventh-day Sabbath pertains to creation, while the Lord’s Day Sabbath pertains to redemption, and that the latter is superior to the former, hence the observance of the Lord’s Day Sabbath supersedes the seventh-day Sabbath. Brabourne responds that creation is universal, and its commemoration (seventh day) applies to all, while redemption is only for believers, hence not all are expected to observe the Lord’s Day (first day). In its scope of application, the seventh-day Sabbath is superior. He concludes:

Though the work of redemption be greater than the work of creation, and therefore doth require a Sabbath, as well as the creation, yet doth it not require for general & universal a Sabbath as did the work of creation; all men are not bound to the one, as they are to the other: Nor can I conceive how any more men should be bound to keep this Sabbath, by this reason, then only a few which do actually believe in Christ, an handful of men only.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Though this is similar to Luther and Calvin’s understanding of a week-long creation, the fact that Brabourne insists on the seventh day observance specifically indicates that he believes that God acted temporally to sanctify that day, while in Luther and Calvin no such insistence is present.

<sup>373</sup> The biblical “day,” according to Brabourne, is not a 24-hour period of time. Instead, it is “namely all that space of time and light from day peep or day break in the morning, until day be quite off the sky at night: that by Day is meant the light.” Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 85. In this sense, the dark part of the day (i.e. night) is not covered by Sabbath. Brabourne understands the Genesis account of “evening” to mean “post-noon” and “morning” to mean “pre-noon.” Brabourne also prefers the “natural day” using sunlight as a guide, with variable lengths of the day throughout the seasons, as opposed to an “artificial day,” using a fixed 12-hour period. Brabourne claims the Lev 23:32 argument of “evening to evening” applies to ceremonial Sabbaths (festivals, holy days, etc.), not the weekly moral Sabbath. Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 90. Brabourne leaves to “Christian discretion” what to do during the evening before or after the Sabbath, as God left no clear command in this case. One may sleep, or spend the time in “holy preparation” through reading, meditation, singing, and prayer. Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 87–88.

<sup>374</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 47–48.

## Sabbath Commandment

*Discourse Upon the Sabbath* contains a thorough examination of the biblical evidence concerning the nature of the Sabbath, and whether it is a moral or ceremonial commandment. Brabourne maintains that the Sabbath commandment is entirely moral and that it would be illogical for God to combine in the Decalogue both temporary and perpetual elements.<sup>375</sup> The Sabbath never was “made a type of Christ incarnate, and therefore never to be abolished.”<sup>376</sup> In truth, “Christ himself ratified the Moral Law, and every iota and title of it unto the worlds end”<sup>377</sup>

Against Luther and Bownd, Brabourne does not see Deut 5:15 as a valid argument for the Jewish/ceremonial nature of the Sabbath.<sup>378</sup> Brabourne differentiates between the basis of the institution and the motive for observation. The basis of the Sabbath institution is creation, not the deliverance from Egypt, though this event can provide a greater motive for its observation.

Like Bownd, Brabourne appeals to divine command as the basis of the Sabbath: “Whatsoever Commandment was delivered by the voice of God, and after wrote by the

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<sup>375</sup> “Oh monstrous, what a hotch potch have we here! What a mingle mangle, what a confusion & jumbling of things so far distant together, as when morals and ceremonials are supposed to be here mingled together: the one to last but for a time, the other to last forever.” Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 101–2.

<sup>376</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 9–10.

<sup>377</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 183.

<sup>378</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 116–17. On this matter, Bownd has a slightly different view than Luther. See footnote 340.

finger of God in Tables of stone, that is, moral.”<sup>379</sup> Brabourne then opposes any appeal to church fathers and contemporary reformers:

Whereas in matters of such weight as is this of establishing a Sabbath, we ought to bring arguments necessarily and demonstratively proving; and not contingencies, and specially since the raising up this new Sabbath, which hath no Commandment for it, from Christ or his apostles, makes way for the throwing down the old Sabbath, which stands by an express commandment from God. Let us beware therefore of matching probable human reasons, with an infallible divine precept: yea, do we not lean more to our human reasons in this point, then to God’s express 4<sup>th</sup> commandment?<sup>380</sup>

Brabourne sees first-day Sabbatarianism as an attempt to use human reasoning on equal grounds with—in reality even superseding—divine command.<sup>381</sup> He emphasizes that human reason should not be the basis for religious practice.<sup>382</sup> If the seventh-day Sabbath were indeed abrogated, Christians “are left destitute of any Sabbath” for there is no clear commandment establishing a new Sabbath.<sup>383</sup> “Nothing but a Commandment will establish a Sabbath day”<sup>384</sup> Referencing Dan 2:21, he emphasizes that “it is a

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<sup>379</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 173.

<sup>380</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 10–11. He laments the misplaced appeal to human authority, “yielding too much confidence in antiquity, and trust to the labors of our worthy forefathers in this point.” Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 100–101.

<sup>381</sup> The Jews “stayed for a Commandment from the God of the creation to command them a Sabbath by his 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment and to tell them which day of the 7 to keep,” a fact that is left out in Sunday proponents’ arguments, “as if Gods Commandment were but a by thing and not necessarily presupposed in every Sabbath.” Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 43.

<sup>382</sup> The “learned Divines... dare not deliver a doctrine collected by reason out of their text, unless they can soundly prove the same by some plain text or other.” “[D]are they not trust to their reason until they find God in his word to back them.” Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 54–55.

<sup>383</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 37–38.

<sup>384</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 14. Responding to an argument against infant baptism on the same grounds, Brabourne answers that at worst Scripture is indifferent to the subject, while the Sabbath issue has a clear command. Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 26–28.

propriety of God to change times and seasons.”<sup>385</sup> Unlike the biblical Sabbath, the Lord’s day is “not by any express command from Christ or his Apostles, but by an ordinance of the church”<sup>386</sup> Brabourne would thus disagree with Calvin and Luther that for the sake of order an ecclesiastical authority could institute the day of observance.

Brabourne acknowledges that there are two elements to the Commandment: the essence, namely holiness and rest, and the day itself.<sup>387</sup> Brabourne then rejects the idea that the time espoused in the Sabbath commandment is merely adjunct. Instead, it is an essential part of the commandment, “the time being no less commanded then the duties of Holiness and Rest”<sup>388</sup> Unlike the medieval theologians and Magisterial Reformers, Brabourne does not see the time of the Sabbath as ceremonial and therefore temporary, while the essence is perpetual. Instead, he sees all elements of the Sabbath commandment as still binding.<sup>389</sup>

It is here we find a key element of Brabourne’s argument, at least in relation to the Sabbath question: that the command to observe a specific day is inseparable from the

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<sup>385</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 28.

<sup>386</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 59.

<sup>387</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 64.

<sup>388</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 65. “Why then I say, did not the Lord content himself to have once mentioned the word Day, but that he will tell us which Day? thus, the 7<sup>th</sup> Day is the Sabbath: what and if the time be a small thing?” Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 66. He later seems to overstate his case in arguing that the duties of holiness and rest are subservient to the time. Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 97.

<sup>389</sup> Brabourne views God’s rest in Creation as a “similitude,” not a type of the eternal heavenly rest (Heb 4:1011), hence it is not temporary. Even if it the Sabbath were typical, Brabourne argues that in the Hebrews passage its fulfillment would still be in heaven, thereby making Sabbath observance still binding on earth. Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 111–12.

other aspects of the commandments.<sup>390</sup> It is not merely a circumstantial temporal setting in which the essence of the Sabbath is to be carried out. Instead, it is tied to Sabbath theology itself. It is unclear what Brabourne's ontological presuppositions are, but his views here would align with a temporal understanding of God in creation that necessitates a specific temporal observation of the Sabbath.

### **Sabbath Time**

Brabourne repeatedly emphasizes that Sunday is not the Sabbath referred to in the fourth commandment.<sup>391</sup> Brabourne rejects the argument (e.g. Luther) that any day can be a Sabbath as long as its essence is observed.<sup>392</sup> Contrary to Bownd, Brabourne makes a clear distinction that the fourth commandment "enjoineth the seventh day, which is the last day of the week; but the Lord's day is the 8<sup>th</sup> day, or the first day of the week, by the account of all men. And it is no less absurd to press the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment which enjoins the 7<sup>th</sup> day for a Sabbath, to the 8<sup>th</sup> day, or to the first day."<sup>393</sup> Brabourne argues that the day God blessed was demonstrably the seventh.

Though Brabourne does not directly reference Bownd, he rejects several of Bownd's propositions. He denies that the apostles changed the day, arguing that the best

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<sup>390</sup> This could also be logically inferred from the arguments of Glaidt and Fischer, though they do not state it explicitly like Brabourne does.

<sup>391</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 2–3.

<sup>392</sup> "No, say you it matters not which, why then did God take such care to decipher out the very day wherein he would be served, by those 3 marks, 1. he telleth you tis the Sabbath day. 2. that tis the 7<sup>th</sup> day. 3. that tis that 7<sup>th</sup> day whereon himself rested?" Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 71.

<sup>393</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 3.

case to be made from Scripture was that they added a day instead of a change.<sup>394</sup> This same Sabbath was practiced in the primitive churches.<sup>395</sup> Brabourne refutes any “analogical binding” of the day, i.e. the idea that the concept of rest and holiness remains, but the day of observance alone is transferred, for all are enjoined: “Why should this one particle only, the 7<sup>th</sup> day or the Sabbath day, be expounded improperly and analogically?”<sup>396</sup> Brabourne also rejects any linguistic sleight of hand to make Sunday the Sabbath. He rejects a renumbering of the days of the week, calling Sunday the seventh.<sup>397</sup> He also rejects calling Sunday, a “Sabbath” for it wrongly bases the Lord’s Day on the fourth commandment.<sup>398</sup>

Though Brabourne earlier states that his goal is not schism, his conclusion forces his readers to make a decision: “If you keep the Lords day, but profane the Sabbath day, you walk in great danger and peril (to say the least) of transgressing one of Gods eternal and inviolable Laws the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: but on the other side, if you keep the Sabbath day, though you profane the Lord’s day, you are out of all gunshot and danger, for so you transgress no Law at all.”<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 4, 202–13. Unlike baptism connected to the OT circumcision or the Lord’s Supper connected to the OT Passover, there is no clear statement in Scripture to necessitate a change of day.

<sup>395</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 216–17.

<sup>396</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 6.

<sup>397</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 50–52.

<sup>398</sup> “Do not miscall days by wrong names: Let our Saturday be called Sabbath day.” Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 79–80.

<sup>399</sup> Brabourne, *Discourse Upon the Sabbath*, 220.

Brabourne's insistence on a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath would be consistent with a temporal understanding of God and His relationship with the world, where the day of observance—which in Brabourne's case is Saturday—is inseparable from the meaning of the Sabbath.

### English Reformers: Summary and Observations

In the English Reformers, we find the emergence of a Sabbatarianism that is even more explicit than the Radical Reformers. Bownd and Brabourne both endeavor to anchor their Sabbath theology in creation and the fourth commandment, although they arrive at different conclusions regarding the day of observance. The relationship between divine time and Sabbath time may not have been at the forefront of their thinking, but some observations may still be made.

Bownd may have perceived Luther and Calvin's position on the Sabbath day to be untenable, in that they believed that any day could be the Sabbath, but for the sake of order, an ecclesiastical authority could decide upon a day. To remedy this, he endeavors to combine a temporal understanding of the Sabbath, anchored in the Genesis creation and the fourth commandment, with Sunday observance.

Bownd's writings do not indicate whether he believes the world came into existence from God's timelessness or temporality, though it appears he believed in a literal creation and that God could be temporally present in His creation.<sup>400</sup> His emphasis

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<sup>400</sup> See page 82. If Bownd viewed God as timeless, his view of timelessness would have to be one that allows God to be temporally present in creation, which seems to be a logical contradiction. Another possibility is that Bownd does subscribe to a timeless view of God, but his attempt to anchor Christian Sunday on biblical foundations leads him to describe God's temporal presence in the Genesis Sabbath, and he is unaware of its logical contradiction seeing as the connection between divine time and its effect on creation is not at the forefront of his thinking. Admittedly, this is merely speculative at this point.



on a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath also differs from the authors examined above who explicitly come from a timeless view of God. It, therefore, seems more likely that Bownd subscribes to some form of divine temporality.

Based on the Genesis Sabbath, Bownd argues for the perpetuity of the “seventh” day, although he allows for a transfer of day based on divine command. Bownd’s espousal of Sunday observance differs from the medieval theologians and Magisterial Reformers. They refrain from basing their Sabbath theology literally on the OT, giving them freedom regarding the day of observation. In contrast, Bownd bases his Sabbath theology on the OT and then aims to transfer the theology and practice of the Sabbath from one “seventh” day to another. Because of divine command, Sunday simply carries over the theological significance of Saturday, so that Bownd “simply takes the literal sense of the fourth commandment and applies it to the Christian Sabbath.”<sup>401</sup> In this sense, a temporal view of the Sabbath day could conceptually hold the significance of both the Genesis creation and Christ’s resurrection.

For Bownd, a transfer of day does not necessarily mean that the time aspect is ceremonial.<sup>402</sup> However, although he rejects the day of observance as a ceremonial aspect

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<sup>401</sup> Primus, “Calvin and the Puritan Sabbath,” 49.

<sup>402</sup> “And for the change of this day at the death of Christ, that does not simply argue that it was ceremonial. For though all ceremonies then had an end, yet all things that were then changed were not ceremonial. For the cause of the change of the day must be fetched from the first institution of it, which was to keep the memory of the creation unto the coming of Christ; at what time the world was to be renewed by his death and resurrection. Which being finished as a greater work, the memory of it to the honor of Christ was more specially to be continued in the Church, and above the other. Therefore a new day was appointed, and the other must of necessity (though no ceremony at all be annexed unto it) have an end. Not that the creation should be forgotten, but that the redemption should most of all be remembered; which does also necessarily imply the creation, for it is the repairing of that which was first made.... And so now this day is a sign of the redemption, as the other day was of the creation: or rather of them both, but of the former most principally.” Bownd, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, 80.

of the Sabbath, in practice he produces the same result by changing the day of observance based on Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>403</sup>

Contrary to the position of the Anglican Church, Brabourne's Sabbatarianism is almost identical to Bownd's except that his conclusion regarding the day of observance is different, instead aligning more closely with Glaidt and Fischer in his insistence on the seventh-day Sabbath. Brabourne, like Bownd, anchors his Sabbath theology in creation and the fourth commandment. Unlike Bownd, Brabourne does not perceive any divine command for the transfer of Sabbath observance and insists on the same seventh day observed in the OT. Brabourne's seventh-day Sabbatarianism aligns with a temporal understanding of God and the Genesis Sabbath.

There appears to be an observable connection between Bownd and Brabourne's view of divine time and their view of Sabbath time. The views would be consistent with a temporal understanding of God and His relationship with the world, which influences them to view the Sabbath temporally, and emphasize a specific day of observance, whether Saturday (Brabourne) or Sunday (Bownd). As seen in their writings, a temporal view of God lends itself to emphasizing a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath.

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<sup>403</sup> Jewett's comments on Puritanism in general apply here to Bownd: "While the Puritans insisted on the perpetuity of the fourth commandment, they in fact altered it in a very significant way. By failing to observe the seventh day, they acknowledged that in some sense the commandment has been abrogated. Yet, by failing to make any significant distinction between the Lord's Day and the [Saturday] Sabbath, they declared that the fourth commandment was still valid and binding upon the Christian conscience." Jewett, *The Lord's Day*, 117.

## SUMMARY AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Having examined the Sabbath theology of the individuals above, spanning from medieval Christianity to the English Reformation, some comparative observations can be made. As has been shown in this study, the biblical teaching of the Sabbath is connected to several biblical points: creation, the moral law and the nature of rest, eschatology, and even ecclesiology in the attempts of some to base the day of observance on church authority. Potentially underlying all of these is the view of a Creator God who instituted the Sabbath and the manner with which He relates to humankind.

For the medieval theologians and Magisterial Reformers, their apparent presuppositions of divine timelessness directly correlate to their theology of the Sabbath. God's timeless act of creation lends itself to a divorcing of the Sabbath from obligatory temporal observance. In the case of Augustine and Aquinas, this comes in the form of spiritualizing or "ceremonializing" its meaning. In the case of Luther, Calvin, and Carlstadt, it comes in the form of the freedom to choose the day of worship, albeit with practical and ecclesiastical considerations. The Reformers' attempt to return to biblicism is limited by their apparent loyalty to Sunday observance and the underlying traditional reasoning behind it. Consequently, it can be seen in their writings that the main basis for their day of observance is not on their understanding of God, but on ecclesiastical authority.

For the Radical and English Reformers examined, we find more tensions as the drive to have more biblically based theology develops. There is a struggle with how to return to a biblical understanding of the Sabbath, attempting to coherently consolidate their doctrine of God, creation, and the moral law. Bownd endeavors to incorporate OT Sabbath theology and a temporal observance of the Sabbath, with an obligatory Sunday observance based on divine command. In Glaidt, Fischer, and Brabourne, we find their attempt at biblicism leads them to an emphasis in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, though Brabourne's theology is more developed than the others. Their views align with a temporal understanding of creation as the foundation of Sabbath observance.

Below are key theological implications regarding the relationship between God, time, and the Sabbath.

### **Sabbath and Creation**

The discussion above emphasizes the strong relationship between Sabbath theology and the Genesis creation. Any attempt to anchor the Sabbath in Scripture must connect it with creation where it was first instituted. Those who disconnect the Sabbath from creation tend to minimize any need for temporal Sabbath observance, while those who emphasize this connection tend to emphasize a specific day of observance.<sup>404</sup>

Whether one's view of God's work in creation is temporal or timeless directly correlates to Sabbath theology. If God is timeless, it follows that His act of creation

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<sup>404</sup> It does not appear that they spiritualize other aspects of the Genesis creation, seeing as they view the results of the creation as literal and temporal, albeit an outworking of God's timeless pure actuality. However, since the seventh day depicts God sanctifying a portion of time, then it requires an explanation that does not present God as being *in* time, which lends itself to spiritualizing its meaning and observance.

occurred atemporally (Augustine and Aquinas explicitly, Luther and Calvin implicitly), including the sanctification of the Sabbath in Genesis. A non-literal, non-temporal creation lends itself to viewing the establishment of Sabbath in creation as also non-literal and non-temporal.<sup>405</sup> This results in a divorcing of the significance of time in the establishment of the original Sabbath.

If God is temporal, however, then He is able to exercise His creative power within human space and time. God can be part of human time and keep the seventh day temporally, which is the basis of Jewish observance—that human beings keep the Sabbath because God kept it. The sanctifying of the Genesis Sabbath occurred within time, hence the time element is an inseparable aspect of the Sabbath (as Brabourne affirms). A temporal view of the Genesis Sabbath also emphasizes the temporal boundaries of the sanctified day. In other words, if God sanctified a specific full day, then it must be observed in its full 24-hour period.

A timeless view of God in creation does not necessarily lead to an atemporal understanding of the nature of the Sabbath, but it certainly allows for it. In contrast, a temporal view of God makes lends itself to a temporal understanding of the Sabbath. When one views God as temporally acting in creation and sanctifying a particular day of the week, it follows that that day itself, bound in time, becomes sacred.

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<sup>405</sup> For example, Jewett argues that the biblical description of creation as recorded in Genesis “is not a literal, empirical description of how the world came to be” and should thus not “be understood scientifically, but theologically.” Jewett, *The Lord’s Day*, 121.

## **Sabbath Commandment and Sabbath Rest**

One's view of the Genesis creation naturally affects the fourth commandment that is directly related to it. Those who come from timeless presuppositions tend to spiritualize or "ceremonialize" the meaning of the Sabbath. The rest espoused by the Sabbath is primarily spiritual, dealing with one's relationship with God, such as resting from sin, resting from works, and resting in God. The day matters less than observing this spiritual rest.

There is also a typological view of the Sabbath, where the ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath (in this case the day of observance) has been fulfilled by Christ and no longer needs to be literally observed by Christians. The Sabbath commandment is still applicable but not in the day of observance. The day is separated from the command. There is a distinction between the ceremonial and eternal, and the external and the internal, that finds its key expression in the question of time (i.e. the day itself). The day of worship is ceremonial and external (hence temporary or changeable) while the meaning or essence is eternal and unchanging. It is significant how it is primarily the time aspect of the Sabbath that is perceived as ceremonial, and not any other aspect of the Sabbath commandment.

A temporal view of the Sabbath tends to lead to a literal physical rest, though this does not exclude a spiritual rest as well. This does not minimize the importance of spiritual rest but emphasizes that the Sabbath commandment requires this rest to be done on a specific day. The day is understood as an inseparable aspect of the commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your

work, but the *seventh* day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God” (Ex 20:8–10, NKJV, emphasis supplied).

### **Sabbath Time**

It is important to reiterate that the relationship between divine time and Sabbath time is not necessarily at the forefront of the thinking of the authors studied here. Still, the nexus of the concepts of God, time, and Sabbath finds its clearest expression in the different views regarding the relationship between the essence of Sabbath and its temporal observance.

This does not mean that the central issue of the Sabbath is the day of observance. Certainly not. In fact, there is much truth in what the authors studied here have presented regarding the broad meaning of the Sabbath. The theology of the Sabbath certainly carries more weight than the day on which it is observed. However, regarding the relationship of divine time and the Sabbath, the day of observance becomes the focal point, specifically the reasons used for its observance.

For those who believe God is timeless, there appears to be less of a need to discuss which day is the Sabbath, as seen in the writings of the medieval theologians and Magisterial Reformers. A timeless view of God lends itself to viewing the Sabbath or Sunday question as less significant compared to a temporal view of God. The day itself matters less than the purpose of the Sabbath is fulfilled. A “spiritualizing” view of the Sabbath means that the day itself is irrelevant as long as the spiritual significance of the day remains. Whatever the day of the week, as long as one celebrated the meaning of the Sabbath, the instructions of the commandment would be kept.

A non-temporal view of God also opens the possibility for the change of the Sabbath by human beings. Because the time aspect of the Sabbath is separable from its meaning, and the day of observance is not necessarily based on divine command, then Christians are free to celebrate whichever day they choose, or historically speaking, an ecclesiastical authority may be exercised to make that decision.

A non-temporal view of God means that the Sabbath is primarily a human spiritual activity. It is a day for human beings to rest, to reflect on spiritual matters. It is not a day within which God participates. It is conceivable that God, outside of time, may spiritually relate to human beings, but this could only be on a rational level, not a real relationship, which Aquinas points out. Luther sees God relating to human beings on the Sabbath solely through His Word.

Those who believe in a form of divine temporality tend to emphasize a specific day of Sabbath observance. The issue of which day is the Sabbath takes more space in their writings. When the Sabbath is understood temporally, the question of which specific day is the Sabbath becomes more relevant. If God is able to enter human time and has temporally appointed a specific day as sacred, it follows that that day should also be the same observed. If God has some temporality and can enter human time, then on the day that He has appointed, He is able to be present in a special manner.<sup>406</sup> The Sabbath, then, becomes a weekly encounter between God and man, although it may be difficult to fully explain the nature of this encounter. Additionally, the temporal nature of God and the

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<sup>406</sup> If, as Bownd argues, God Himself has transferred the Sabbath day, it implies that God's weekly temporal presence has transferred as well.



Sabbath further emphasizes the temporal boundaries of the day—a weekly twenty-four-hour sanctified period, as distinct from other days of the week.

### **Future Study**

There is much more to discover regarding this topic than space allows in this thesis, and more study is needed. Of interest are more modern thinkers who have written on Sabbath theology such as John Wesley, Karl Barth, and Abraham Heschel.

More study is also needed to address the issue of divine time in relation to the Sabbath from a biblical perspective. For example, is the Sabbath primarily a human activity to participate in spiritual activities toward God, or does God somehow also temporally participate in the Sabbath. The writers I have examined do not attribute any ongoing divine activity on the Sabbath, apart from historical creation. But could Scripture indicate that God somehow is also active every Sabbath? If so, this would open the possibility of the Sabbath as a weekly event in which both God and human beings participate, a regular mutual encounter in time, rather than a one-sided human affair.

## CONCLUSION

This study has sought to examine the views of selected authors on the Sabbath in relation to their presuppositions of divine time, from medieval Christianity to the English Reformation. Observations were made concerning how presuppositions of divine time may have affected selected authors' Sabbath theology.

We return to the main question of this study: whether an observable connection can be made between one's view of divine time and one's view of Sabbath time, as seen in the writings of these authors. The answer I propose is yes, though the relationship between divine time and Sabbath time is more of correlation rather than causation. The relationship between divine time and Sabbath time is observably not at the forefront of these authors' thinking. Also, the connection is more evident in some more than others, particularly those who explicitly state their views of divine time.

Still, the observation can be made that those who appear to subscribe to a timeless view of God tend to view the Sabbath atemporally, minimizing the need for a specific temporal observance. A timeless view of God and His creative work in Genesis tends to separate the temporal observance of the Sabbath from its meaning, thereby giving individual freedom as to which day to observe the Sabbath and allowing for a human change from Saturday to Sunday. The theological significance of the day is separable from the day itself. Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Carlstadt align with this view.

On the other hand, there is an apparent openness to the temporal view of God's time on the part of those who view the Sabbath temporally, emphasizing a specific day of observance based on creation and the fourth commandment. An ambiguity or deemphasis on the timelessness of God lends itself to a specific temporal observance of the Sabbath, whether Saturday or Sunday. The meaning of the Sabbath is tied to the day on which it is observed, though Bownd's view allows for a change of day based on divine command. Glaidt, Fischer, Bownd, and Brabourne are consistent with this view.

As noted above, it appears that the relationship between divine time and Sabbath time is observably more of correlation, though it does not eliminate the possibility of causation which is more difficult to prove. As seen in the authors above, a certain view of divine time occurs alongside a certain view of Sabbath time. Their belief regarding divine time potentially, but not necessarily, leads to their belief regarding Sabbath time. Other factors may have more strongly influenced their views regarding Sabbath time, such as Christian tradition, natural law, their understanding of Christianity in distinction to Judaism, and their understanding of the role of the Church in instituting a day of observance. Still, the correlation between divine time and Sabbath time is significant and deserves further study.

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