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Soul Rest and Seventh-day Rest

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Matthew 11:25–30 is a Synoptic logion\(^1\) so uniquely Johannine in tone and flavor that it could be parachuted into the Fourth Gospel without causing the least disturbance.\(^2\) The second part of it is one of the most beloved passages in the New Testament: “Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (anapausō humas). Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am

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\(^1\) Evidently from Q; the first part is closely paralleled in Luke 10:21–22.

\(^2\) Besides the content of the logion itself, even the form is reminiscent of the Fourth Gospel. The use of *apokrinesthai* in this location to introduce this saying is somewhat unexpected, though not quite unique. One would expect this word to introduce a formal reply to a charge or a challenge (as in John 5:17), but here no one has said anything for Jesus to reply to, for Matt 11:7–24 is pure monologue. The word is characteristically, though not exclusively, used to introduce Jesus’ replies in controversies, especially in the Fourth Gospel. A simple count of occurrences of the word in all contexts yields 55x in Matthew, 30x in Mark, 46x in Luke, and 78x in John.

R. McL. Wilson called the saying a “Johannine thunderbolt in the Synoptic sky,” quoted in Jan Helderman, *Die Anapausis im Evangelium Veritatis: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung des valentinianisch-gnostischen Heilsbotes der Ruhe im Evangelium Veritatis und in anderen Schriften der Nag Hammadi-Bibliothek* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 66. Helderman noted, however, the striking fact that the word *anapausis* is lacking in the Fourth Gospel, perhaps because the author wanted to avoid a word, which had developed Gnostic associations, and used instead the words *chara* (joy) and *eirēnē* (peace).
gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest *(anapausin)* for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (vv. 28–30).\(^3\)

Unfortunately an artificial chapter division obscures the fact that these words are the introduction to the Sabbath controversies in the next chapter (12:1–14), where Jesus defends the lawfulness of his liberal use of the Sabbath day. Human need, he says, may legitimately be succored on the holy day, for “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (12:12). Indeed, Jesus is the final authority on the subject of Sabbath-keeping, “For the son of man is lord of the Sabbath” (v. 8). The issue here is not whether the Sabbath is to be kept, but how it is to be kept.

In the Septuagint *anapauō* and *anapausis* are Sabbath words.\(^4\) Often they translate the Hebrew *šabat* and *šabbat*, as well as other words associated with the Sabbath, such as *nuach*, although they also are used for rest in a more generic sense. Frequently, this rest is a gift of God, as in Isa 25:10 LXX, a fact that is a significant background of Matt 11:28. Davies and Allison saw the verse as dependent upon the Lord’s word to Moses in Exod 33:14, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”\(^5\)

What is important for us to see is that Jesus, in Matt 11:28–30, introduces a new dimension to the idea of the Sabbath.\(^6\) Already in Judaism the Sabbath had become a metaphor or a foretaste of something more than a day of the week.\(^7\) One idea was that the Age to Come was to be a millennial or a perpetual Sabbath. Thus *m. Tamid* 7:4 entitles Psalm 92: “A Psalm, a song for the time that is to come, for the day that shall be all Sabbath and rest in

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\(^3\) The words are probably a parody of Sirach 51:23–27, where Wisdom is the speaker. Cf. Craig S.Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 349. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

\(^4\) This can easily be seen by surveying dozens of occurrences listed by Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 80, 81). For example, see Exod 16:23; 23:12; Lev 23:3; Deut 5:14. *Katapauō* and *katapausis* are synonyms of *anapauō* and *anapausis*.

\(^5\) W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 2:288. Against this, however, is the fact that Exod 33:14 LXX has *katapauwein*, not *anapauwein*.

\(^6\) Augustine, however, probably overstated matters when he said, “Christ is the true Sabbath” (cited in Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:287). Jesus says not that he is the Rest, but that he gives the Rest.

the life everlasting.”8 We may call this idea the eschatological Sabbath.9 Yet another idea is found in the writings of Philo, a contemporary of Jesus and Paul. Philo said that God in heaven keeps Sabbath all the time. Thus he wrote:

God alone in the true sense keeps festival. . . . And therefore Moses often in his laws calls the sabbath, which means ‘rest,’ God’s sabbath (Exod. xx.10, etc.), not man’s, and thus he lays his finger on an essential fact in the nature of things. For in all truth there is but one thing in the universe which rests, that is God. But Moses does not give the name of rest to mere inactivity. . . . God’s rest is rather a working with absolute ease, without toil and without suffering. . . . But a being that is free from weakness, even though he be making all things, will cease not to all eternity to be at rest, and thus rest belongs in the fullest sense to God and to Him alone.10

We may call this idea the transcendental Sabbath.

However, the idea that is introduced in Matt 11:28–30 has no parallel in Jewish literature, though it is not incompatible with the two ideas just mentioned. We may call it the existential Sabbath, the rest that God in Christ gives to the soul. According to one possible interpretation, the same or a similar conception is seen in Heb 4:1–10.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to note yet another variation because of its later Gnostic development in relation to the foregoing concept. In Rev 14:11, 13 we are told that they who die in the Lord will rest (anapaēsontai) from their toil, in contrast to the worshipers of the beast, who will have no rest (anapausin), day or night, from their torment.11

The question may be raised whether these spiritualized understandings of the Sabbath supersede the literal seventh-day Sabbath. A negative answer is obvious in the cases of the eschatological Sabbath and the transcendental Sabbath, for both the Rabbis and Philo carefully kept the seventh-day of the week as the Sabbath. But what is the relationship of the Anapausis of Matt 11

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8 Mishnah quotations are taken from Herbert Danby, trans., The Mishnah (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).
9 There are hints of this idea in the book of Revelation, and it is taken up by Christian writers. See Johnston, “Eschatological Sabbath.”
to the literal seventh-day Sabbath, about which a discussion immediately follows this saying?

A close analogy can be seen in the antitheses of Matt 5:21–32, where Jesus deals with the commandments, “Thou shalt not kill” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” He intensifies their force by underlining their interior meaning. However, by showing their spiritual and larger meaning he does not nullify their literal meaning. One breaks the commandment against murder by hating someone, but a mafia hit-man cannot say, “Friend, I have nothing against you personally, but my job is to rub you out. Sorry.” One breaks the commandment against adultery by lusting in his heart, but Jesus is not saying that sexual relations outside of marriage is excusable if one feels no attraction to the woman involved. Similarly, the deeper meaning of the Sabbath in Matt 11:28–30 does not negate the significance of the literal, seventh-day Sabbath, as indeed we see in the controversies that follow in the next chapter. Rather, the weekly Sabbath day is ideally the school of Christ for receiving that rest of soul to which the day points. Thus, this saying does for the Sabbath commandment what Matt 5:21–32 does for the commandments against murder and adultery.\(^\text{12}\)

According to Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were missing this meaning of the Sabbath. They had the Sabbath day, but not the Sabbath experience. They kept the Sabbath outwardly, but not inwardly. They represented one kind of error regarding the Sabbath. They separated the day from the experience and discarded the experience.

\(^\text{12}\) The antitheses of Matt 5 when formally analyzed have three parts. First comes the protasis that states the conventional teaching, “You have heard it said . . .” (e.g. Matt 5:21), then the epitasis in which Jesus contrasts his own teaching, “but I say unto you. . .” (e.g. 5:22), and finally the catastasis in which he reinforces his teaching in various ways, such as practical examples, “Therefore. . .” (e.g. 5:23–26). The passage in Matt 11:28–12:13 does not follow this neat pattern, but its elements are there by implication. The protasis is the Pharisaic rules about sabbathkeeping. Thus m. Shabbath 7:2 forbids reaping and threshing, a reasonable deduction from Exod 34:21. When the disciples of Jesus plucked ears of grain and rubbed off the husks to satisfy their hunger it was seen as breaking this rule. Although the halakhah permitted the Sabbath to be overridden in the case of a life-threatening emergency (the principle of pekkuach nephesh, mortal danger; see e.g., Mekilta Shabbata 1 on Exod 31:13), Jesus in Matt 12:9–13 healed a chronic affliction that was not life-threatening, as was the case in nearly all of his Sabbath healings. The implied epitasis was, “I, who am the Lord of the Sabbath, give rest from your burdens by alleviating human physical need that distracts from devotion to God and that symbolizes spiritual need. The Sabbath is a day for physical and spiritual healing and doing good.” The catastasis is the two examples of applying this insight in 12:1–13.

\(^\text{13}\) Many Jews did and still do find great joy in their keeping of the Sabbath day. See Johnston, “Rabbinic Sabbath.” However, one cannot study all the minute rules of sabbathkeeping found in the mishnaic tractates Shabbath and Erubim, reflecting Pharisaic tradition, without sighing at their burdensomeness. Yet for Essenes, Samaritans, and Sadducees the Sabbath rules were in some ways even more restrictive than those of the Pharisees.
The opposite error is represented by the Gnostics. They also sought to separate the day from the experience but discarded the day. If the Pharisees put too much emphasis on externals, the Gnostics despised externals. Their radical dualism meant a rejection of everything material and physical, and of everything literal, for the literal meaning of the Scriptures was like the body, without value. The only thing of value is the spirit, and the “spiritual” meaning of the text. Accordingly, the true Sabbath rest is not a literal day, but an exalted experience or mystical state. So for the Gnostic Christians the Anapausis of Matt 11:28–30 became a point of departure for doctrines that would have been recognized by neither Jesus nor Matthew.

The process of transition from literal to “spiritual” is illustrated in perhaps the best-known work in the Nag Hammadi collection, the so-called Gospel of Thomas (GT), in Codex II. It is of special interest for several reasons, but two stand out.

First, fragments of the work in the original Greek, discovered at the site of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, have been known for a century. The earliest of the Greek fragments comes from the second century, and when compared to the fourth century Coptic version they reveal that the text was somewhat fluid, undergoing various modifications. It is possible to detect a subtle

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15 Our knowledge of ancient Gnostic thought has been greatly expanded by the discovery and publication of the trove of fourth century Coptic language codices discovered near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. The most authoritative English translations with introductions are those provided by many scholars in James M. Robinson, general editor, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). To the Nag Hammadi codices are added two other manuscripts from the separately discovered Berlin Papyrus 8502. The various translators are not consistent, however, in their translation of anapausis: some have “rest,” others say “repose.” For this reason I will use an eclectic translation where necessary and consistently render anapausis “rest.” Though these manuscripts were translations from Greek into Coptic, many Greek terms including anapausis were taken over unchanged.

intensification of the Gnostic flavor with the passage of time, and indeed even in its Coptic form it lacks some Gnostic features.\(^{17}\)

Second, the work consists of a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus, without any narrative setting and without any obvious logical order.\(^{18}\) The discovery of this document gave credence to the reality of the putative Q source assumed to have been used by Matthew and Luke, which was also a collection of sayings. Many of the sayings in GT have parallels in the canonical gospels, but many do not.\(^{19}\) Scholars have long debated whether GT is dependent on the canonical gospels, and therefore secondary to them, or whether it represents an independent witness to the transmission of Jesus’s sayings. It is the second view which has largely prevailed.\(^{20}\) The picture that we are getting is that there was an original Jewish-Christian collection of the teachings of Jesus,\(^{21}\) quite likely dating from the first century, which in the hands of people with a Gnostic orientation suffered transformation into a document setting forth their views. This is not unlike what the other Gnostic literature does with the canonical Scriptures.

The Jesus of GT is a dispenser of enigmatic wisdom. As Meyer aptly said, “In contrast to the way in which he is portrayed in other gospels, particularly New Testament gospels, Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas performs no physical miracles, reveals no fulfillment of prophecy, announces no apocalyptic kingdom about to disrupt the world order, and dies for no one’s sins.”\(^{22}\)

Salvation does not come by his blood, but by understanding his mysterious sayings: “Whoever finds the interpretation (\textit{hermeneia}) of these sayings will not taste death” (GT 2).


\(^{18}\) Modern editors have numbered the sayings, finding 114 of them. Consequently we now refer to the work in terms of the saying number.


\(^{20}\) Thus Helmut Koester, \textit{Introduction to the Gospel of Thomas} in Robinson, \textit{Nag Hammadi}, 125; Marvin Meyer, trans. and ed., \textit{The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus} (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 13. This does not mean, however, that everyone agrees with Koester’s judgment that the GT transmits a more original version of the sayings than the canonical gospels.

\(^{21}\) Even in its fourth century form, GT still bears marks of its Jewish-Christian roots. Thus in saying 12, when the disciples ask Jesus who will be their leader after he departs, Jesus says: “Wherever you have come, you will go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.” Parallels to this manner of speaking are common in the rabbinic literature. See, for example, b. Sanhedrin 98b.

Six sayings in GT speak of Sabbath or Rest (anapausis): 2, 27, 50, 51, 60, 90. One uses the word Sabbath, and the others Rest. GT 27 survives in both Coptic and Greek (P.Oxy. 1). The Greek has: “Unless you fast to the world, you shall in no way find the Kingdom of God; and unless you sabbatize the sabbath (ean mē sabbatisête to sabbaton), you shall not see the Father.”

The only significant difference in the Coptic is the change of “Kingdom of God” to simply “Kingdom,” which represents a closer conformity with Gnostic thought.

Tjitze Baarda has studied this saying very intensively. He acknowledged that the saying may go back to a Jewish-Christian form criticizing the wrong observation of the Sabbath, “so that the sense may be ‘If you do not truly keep the Sabbath,’ or ‘If you do not keep the true Sabbath,’ or also ‘If you do not make the Sabbath a real Sabbath.’” This would be in line with what Jesus apparently meant in Matt 11:28–30. But Baarda concluded that, whatever the saying may have meant in its original source, the GT as we have it has transformed the meaning of the saying so that its significance is quite different.

The two parts of the saying make a parallelism and thus say the same thing. “Fasting from the world” means the same as “Sabbatizing the Sabbath,” and “world” and “Sabbath” are equivalent. However, GT opposes literal fasting (GT 6, 14, 104). “These passages demonstrate that within a Gnostic setting there is a rather critical attitude towards religious duties or ceremonial prescriptions commonly found in Judaism and early Christianity. . . . [These] are merely outward expressions of religion which the Gnostic believer due to his interiorization of faith or knowledge, does not value.”

Fasting from the world is therefore a metaphor for “the total denial of present

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23 P.Oxy. 1 dates from the second century and is the oldest of the three fragments.
24 The Coptic translator also apparently had difficulty with the expression “sabbatize the Sabbath” (which is indeed awkward also for the English translator!) and so rendered it roughly as “keep the Sabbath as Sabbath.”
26 Ibid., 199. Baarda cited authors supporting each of these renderings. The first part of the saying, he said, may have originally come from an encratite or ascetic source. Meyer said, “keeping the sabbath as sabbath seems to imply that one should rest in a truly significant way and separate oneself from worldly concerns.” Gospel of Thomas, 81.
Baarda found that “Sabbath” is almost synonymous with “world” and its creator, Yaldabaoth, the demiurgic god of the Jews, the god of this world. To sabbatize the Sabbath means to come to rest with respect to the Sabbath/world,⁹ that is, to become fully detached from it. So “Sabbath” represents a negative thing. But Rest (anapausis) is, on the contrary, the ultimate goal of the Gnostic. Thus the Gnostics radically separated and placed in opposition to each other Sabbath and Rest, just as they separated body and spirit, and Christ and Jesus.

We now turn to GT 2, which also has been preserved in both Greek (P. Oxy. 654) and Coptic. As we compare the two versions we find that the Coptic drops the reference to Rest. The Greek reads as follows: “[Jesus said]: Let him who seeks not cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall wonder; having wondered he shall reign (basileusei), and reigning he shall rest (anapaēsetai).” The Coptic has: “Jesus said: Let him who seeks not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All.”⁴¹ Koester and Pagels saw the saying as presenting “an eschatological timetable. . . . The disciples have sought and found and marveled, but their ruling and resting will come only in the future. At the present time, they still carry the burden of the flesh . . . .”⁴²

The idea is somewhat unpacked in another work from Nag Hammadi, called the Dialogue of the Savior (DS).⁴³ In DS 49, 50 Judas says, “Behold! The archons dwell above us, so it is they who will rule over us!” The Lord

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⁹ Baarda, “If You Do Not Sabbatize the Sabbath,” 199. As is well known, Gnostics despised the creation of the material world and the creator god, who (in their view) is a bungling inferior god or demiurge. The God of light, the Father, is not responsible for the mess that is the material world, or for the physical bodies in which the spirits have been entombed. For a comprehensive account of Gnostic teachings, see Rudolph, Gnosis, 53–272.

⁰ Baarda, ibid., 200–201.


⁴² Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels, Introduction to Dialogue of the Savior in Robinson, Nag Hammadi, 245.

⁴³ DS is commonly referred to in terms of its location in the Nag Hammadi library: Codex number, page number, line number, thus: III, 121.4. But it is susceptible to being divided up into sayings (logia) of Jesus and his disciples, and this has been done by its modern editors. I shall thus refer to it, using the saying numbers in Robinson, Nag Hammadi, 246–55.

⁴⁴ In Gnostic thought, the Archons are the principalities and powers that, together with the god of this world, rule over the world and the souls imprisoned in it, imposing onerous law and fate.
Says, “It is you who will rule over them!” In DS 65, 66 Matthew says, “Why do we not rest right now?” The Lord says, “When you lay down these burdens.” This will happen “when you abandon the works which will not be able to follow you, then you will rest” (DS 68). (It is difficult not to see here a contradiction to Revelation 14:13.) We find here, then, the meaning of ruling and resting. The Gnostics will overcome the rule of the archons and will find rest. When? Ultimately when at death they are liberated from the flesh born of woman. Using a metaphor also found in GT (21, 37) DS 85 the release will come when they strip off their bodies: “But you, as children of truth, not with these transitory garments are you to clothe yourselves. Rather, I say to you that you will become blessed when you strip yourselves!” Then they will find Rest in Him who is always at Rest.”

When the soul of the Gnostic rises from the world to return to the Realm of Light from which it had been separated and cast into a stinking body it is interrogated by the archons, which it must pass. In GT 50 Jesus coaches them about what to say:

If they say to you: “From where have you originated?” say to them: “We have come from the Light, where the Light has originated through itself. It stood and it revealed itself in their image.” If they say to you: “Who are you?” say “we are His sons and we are the elect of the Living Father.” If they ask you: “What is the sign of your Father in you?” say to them: “It is movement and Rest (anapausis).”

That is, they have internalized the attributes of the God of Light, who always lives and rests.

GT 51 introduces another dimension: “His disciples said to him: ‘When will the Rest of the dead come about and when will the new world come?’ He said to them: ‘What you await has already come, but you know it not.’” We find here the Gnostic realized eschatology. Because the Gnostic knows that the Father is Rest, he himself is already resting in the Father, he is already resting with respect to this world and its creator/sabbath. It is a case of “already-but-not-yet,” a future hope yet a present experience. The Kingdom of the Father is known to the Gnostic, though the world sees it not. The Gnostic knows that he came from the Kingdom and will return to it, and because of this enlightenment he has the Rest. It is within him. The Gospel of Truth, a Valentinian Gnostic work explains it thus:

35 Baarda, “If You Do Not Sabbatize,” 201.
Since the deficiency came into being because the Father was not known, therefore, when the Father is known, from that moment on the deficiency will no longer exist. As in the case of the ignorance of a person, when he comes to have knowledge (gnōsis), his ignorance vanishes of itself, as the darkness vanishes when the light appears, so also the deficiency vanishes in the perfection” (GTruth 24–25).

By dying to the world through knowledge the Gnostic is already perfect, already at rest. By definition he cannot sin. He is free from all law, because he is no longer subject to the archons and the demiurge. He is not of the material world, and he is not wedded to his body. He is detached from all of that.

GT 60 uses an extravagant metaphor: “You too, look for a place for yourselves within Rest, lest you become a corpse and be eaten.” As Rudolph remarked, “Repose and safety are expressions for the possession of redemption which is attained already in this world.”

Finally we come to GT 90, “Jesus said, ‘Come unto me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild, and you will find Rest for yourselves.” Here Helderman pointed out an important difference from the canonical version that should not be overlooked. In Matthew Jesus gives rest (11:28), but the Gnostic himself achieves the Rest through his renunciation and forsaking of the material world.

Anapausis, as Helderman abundantly demonstrated, is a major motif in the Gospel of Truth, but here I must limit myself to one passage, one mentioning the Sabbath:

He is the shepherd who left behind the ninety-nine sheep which were not lost. He went searching for the one which had gone astray. He rejoiced when he found it, for ninety-nine is a number that is in

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36 One is sometimes struck by the similarity of the concept of Rest in Gnosticism to the concept of Nirvana in Buddhism and classical Hinduism.

37 Gnosis, 221.

38 Gnostic use of the saying in Matt 11:28–30, whether quotation, allusion, or parallel, was frequent. See Helderman, Anapausis, 114.

39 Ibid. Of course, if one took only Matt 11:29 without verse 28 the case would not be as clear. However that may be, Helderman was right in pointing out that after the Gnostic has received the enlightening revelation it is up to him after that.

40 The Gospel of Truth probably dates from the middle of the second century, and whether or not it was written by Valentinus himself, it certainly represents the Valentinian brand of Gnosticism. It exhibits a reconceptualizing of the New Testament writings upon which it is based. See the introduction by Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae in Robinson, Nag Hammadi, 38, 39.
the left hand which holds it. But when the one is found, the entire number passes to the right hand. As that which lacks the one—that is, the entire right hand—draws what was deficient and takes it from the left-hand side and brings it to the right, so too the number becomes one hundred. It is the sign of the one who is in their sound; it is the Father. Even on the Sabbath, he labored for the sheep which he found fallen into the pit. He gave life to the sheep, having brought it up from the pit in order that you might know interiorly—you the sons of interior knowledge—what is the Sabbath, on which it is not fitting for salvation to be idle, in order that you may speak from the day from above, which has no night, and from the light which does not sink because it is perfect. (GTruth 31.36–32.31.)

This is an interesting passage for several reasons. It is partly, as I have argued elsewhere, a permutation of an apocalyptic passage. But here we are concerned to know what the Gnostics understood by it.

It is part of a passage derived from Matt 12:11 (and possibly John 5:17), exhorting the spiritual Gnostics to do the “mission work” of awakening the imprisoned spirits to their true nature, it holds up no less an example than the Son as Savior. He was active on the Sabbath, but with what meaning? GTruth goes on to say: “Say, then, from the heart that you are the perfect day and in you dwells the light that does not fail (32:31–33).” Baarda argued for the implication that the Sabbath, by contrast, is not the perfect day (indeed, the “perfect day” is not a day), and the passage describes the saving activity of the Savior in the world. The Sabbath is identified with the created world and the creator demiurge, as Baarda interpreted it in GT 27. He is able to cite also other Gnostic references, such as The Interpretation of Knowledge 11, where spiritual slumber brought labor and “the Sabbath which is the world.”

All this be as it may, whether the Sabbath represents something positive (like the Pleroma), or something negative (like the world or the demiurge god of the Jews who created it), it can be agreed that it is being used in Gnostic literature as a metaphor for something that is not a day of the week. It is clearly not identical with the Rest (anapausis), which is reabsorption into the Father of Light who is always at rest.

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41 Johnston, “Eschatological Sabbath,” 49.
There is a great number of other relevant passages that we cannot review here, nor is it necessary to do so. They will only reinforce what we have already seen in the Gnostic literature. Basically this can be summarized as follows. The Sabbath and the Rest are quite different things. Whether literal or metaphorical, the Sabbath is representative of this dark world. The Rest to which the Savior summons the spiritual people (Gnostics) is the Rest from which they primordially fell. It is a return to the Father’s Realm of Light, so that which was lost from the Deity is restored. They came from it and they return to it. Rest is thus an eschatological goal, but it is not only that. Even before liberation from the body it can be experienced now when the enlightened soul spiritually detaches itself from the world, the flesh, and the demiurge, and all their works. It is thus both a future destiny and a present experience. Gnostics have heaven in their heart. In modern terms, eschatology and psychology are one. The Sabbath day means nothing good; the Rest is everything to hope for.

Now we turn back to the Great Church, represented by the great early defender of the faith, Justin Martyr. Justin flourished in the middle of the second century, at the same time as great Gnostic teachers Valentinus and Marcion. He knew about them, opposed them, and even wrote a tract against them. But he breathed the same air as they, and it is not surprising to find similarities as well as differences.

Justin deprecated external observances that are devoid of interior experience, such as he charges the Jews with. Thus in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, a Jew, Justin wrote:

> For what is the use of the baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone? Baptize the soul from wrath and from covetousness, from envy, and from hatred; and lo! the body is pure. For this is the symbolic significance of the unleavened bread, that you do not

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43 Helderman listed and examined all the relevant passages of the Gospel of Truth in *Anapausis*, 85–231, as well as others on 282–330.
44 Justin, *Apology* 1:26. After attacking the Simonians and Marcion, specifically deploring the doctrine that the Creator God is inferior to another Great God, he concluded: “But I have a treatise against all the heresies that have existed already composed, which, if you wish to read it, I will give you.” He repeated his attack in chapter 58. The tract that he mentioned has not survived, but it was apparently used by Irenaeus in his massive *Against Heresies*, wherein great attention is given to the Valentinians. See Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 4.6.2. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* 35 Justin specifically listed Marcians, Valentinians, Basilidians, and Saturnilians.
commit the old deeds of wicked leaven. But you have understood all things in a carnal sense.45

This desire to spiritualize at the expense of what Justin regarded as “a carnal sense” carries over to his understanding of the Sabbath, about which he said:

The new law requires you to keep perpetual sabbath, and you, because you are idle for one day, suppose you are pious, not discerning why this has been commanded you: and if you eat unleavened bread, you say the will of God has been fulfilled. The Lord our God does not take pleasure in such observances: if there is any perjured person or thief among you, let him cease to be so; if any adulterer, let him repent; then he has kept the sweet and truth sabbaths of God.46

For Justin, then, true sabbathkeeping is ceasing from sin.

Justin differed from the Gnostics in not giving the word Sabbath a negative connotation, representing the world or an inferior Jewish god. Neither did he believe that a spiritual enlightenment about one’s true identity and destiny renders one beyond sinning or accountability to law. But he resembled them in completely spiritualizing it, giving it a meaning somewhat analogous to the Gnostic anapausis: true sabbathkeeping is an interior experience of the soul, divorced from any external observance such as a day of the week; but it does have behavioral consequences—one no longer sins. One attains to the Rest not by gnōsis but by repentance.

Justin does not look like a radical innovator. He is probably representative of many in his time who were seeking to establish Christian identity in distinction from Judaism, on one side, and Gnostic modes of thought on the other. In fleeing from one they could run into the arms of the other. Looking back we can see now that both the Scilla and the Charybdis involved divorcing external from internal, Sabbath day from Sabbath experience. Having separated them they discarded one or the other.

Many years ago Burkitt made a striking observation. In the third century Tertullian wrote a long refutation of the doctrines of Marcion. Shortly afterward either Tertullian or someone closely associated with him compiled a treatise against the Jews. The interesting thing is that about half of the treatise against the Jews was copied out of the Third Book against Marcion.

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46. Ibid., 12. Justin also argued that the Old Testament patriarchs, like nature itself, did not “sabbatize.” Chs. 19, 23.
“The important thing is that the same arguments that were thought appropriate to use against the Jews were thought appropriate to use against Marcion the anti-Jew. Surprising as it seems at first sight, the Church had to a great extent the same controversy with both opponents.”

Perhaps we can draw an analogy to this. Those who cherish the Sabbath have the same controversy with both Pharisees and Gnostics: both separate the day from the experience. Matt 11:28–12:13 puts them together. What God hath joined let no man put asunder.

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